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Preaching against Phallic Glasses in Fifteenth-Century Vienna

An exploration of Johann Geuss' *Sermo de Clave*

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Ungefähr 1430 prangerte der Wiener Prediger und Theologe Johann Geuss eine in den europäischen Städten weit verbreitete Praxis an: den Kauf und Verkauf von Gläsern in Phallusform, die häufig anlässlich städtischer Feste stattfanden. Dieser Artikel stützt sich auf den lateinischen Text seines *Sermo de clave* und untersucht die kulturellen und sozialen Einblicke, welche die Predigt – neben verwandten Texten – in volkstümliche Traditionen gewährt. Der Beitrag untersucht die fortdauernde Präsenz des Phallusglases, sowohl als materielles Objekt als auch als literarisches Motiv, über mehr als fünfzehn Jahrhunderte hinweg und befragt die verschiedenen Zwecke, die ihm zugeschrieben werden, von spielerischen Trinkgefäßen bis hin zu einem Instrument der sexuellen Lust. Geuss' Behauptung, dass das phallische Glas als ‚Schlüssel‘ bezeichnet wurde, veranlasst zu einer Untersuchung der Schlüssel-Penis-Analogie in mehreren europäischen Sprachen. Zurückkehrend zur Predigt analysiert dieser Beitrag die argumentativen und rhetorischen Strategien, die zur Förderung der moralischen Erziehung eingesetzt werden, und bietet eine genaue Lektüre der relevanten Passagen mit besonderem Augenmerk auf die Gender-Dynamik bzw. ihre narrative Konstruktion. Im Anhang werden die erste kritische Ausgabe der Predigt sowie eine philologische Studie zu ihrer textlichen Überlieferung vorgestellt.

Around 1430, the Viennese preacher and theologian Johann Geuss denounced a widespread practice in European cities: the buying and selling of phallic-shaped glasses, often during urban celebrations. Drawing on the Latin text of his *Sermo de clave*, this article examines the cultural and social insights it provides – alongside related texts – into popular traditions. The study explores the enduring presence of the *Phallusglas*, both as a material object and as a literary motif, over more than fifteen centuries, interrogating the varied purposes attributed to it, ranging from playful drinking vessels to instruments of sexual pleasure. Geuss' claim that the phallic glass was referred to as a 'key' prompts an exploration of the key/penis analogy in several European languages. Returning to the sermon, the article analyzes the argumentative and rhetorical strategies employed to promote moral education, offering a close reading of relevant passages, with particular attention to gender dynamics and their narrative construction. The appendix presents the first critical edition of the sermon, along with a philological study of its textual transmission.

Mephistopheles: Here, take this key.

Faust: That tiny thing!

Mephist.: Seize and esteem it, see what it may bring!

Faust: It's growing in my hand! It flashes, glows!

Goethe, Faust II, 6257–60.¹

1. Introduction

This article² covers a rare and curious case in the cultural history of the late Middle Ages, as it focuses on a Latin sermon against the production, sale, and purchase of phallic glass handicrafts. Its author is the theologian and preacher Johann Geuss, active in Vienna, and the sermon (along with its subsequent Latin translation and reworking) was probably preached in the 1430s. After an overview of the author's life and literary production, the article highlights the folkloric elements of this tradition, comparing them with the data available at material and literary levels, and discussing the interpretations proposed by scholars on its actual use; the study then focuses on the sexual double entendre of its name ('key'). I am going to analyze the moral critique of the theologian and subject some relevant passages to a close reading which will bring out their latent meanings, with special attention to the gender dimension and its staging. After the conclusion, the reader will find a philological study of the

transmission of the text, as well as the first critical edition based on the five known manuscript witnesses.

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The author of this sermon is Johann Geuss.³ Born in Deiningen (Bavaria) around 1390, he moved to Vienna for university studies, and in 1416 he started teaching different disciplines at the Faculty of Arts (logic, metaphysics, natural philosophy, astronomy, and music theory). Parallel to this, he studied at the Faculty of Theology, while giving lectures on the standard texts and textbooks. In 1433, he finally became a Master of this Faculty too. He was one of the twenty-four canons of the important church of St. Stephen; in 1436 he earned the prestigious position of dean (*decanus*) of that same church, and took part in the city's public life and its surroundings, also dealing with matters of civil and religious administration. In the same period, he became the confessor of Duchess (and later Queen) Elizabeth of Luxembourg (1409–1442), consort of Albrecht V of Habsburg, Duke of Austria. Geuss' interaction with both popular and upper strata of the Vienna population allowed him to see their habits and customs up close; these were the theme of many of his treatises.

Geuss is the author of a large, 'standard' theological production, connected to the University (set of biblical questions, treatises) and preaching activities (sermons on saints and feasts). Alongside these, he wrote many texts related to Late-Medieval society, which deal with rituals, practices, and typical moments of city life. It is worth giving an overview of the content of these texts, to place the object of this article, the *Sermo de clave*, within his broader program of analysis and regulation of some dimensions of urban life through the lens of moral theology, with a strong casuistic approach. They have different lengths, and some were originally conceived as *sermones ad populum*, before being reworked into treatise form. They cover a wide range of topics, such as the morality of music and dance in *De ludo choree et instrumentorum musicalium*, and the critique of dice, gambling, and board games in the two *Sermones de ludo alearum et taxillorum*. Notably, his *Sermo de Septuagesima* (often found

1 Goethe 1997 [1808–1831], p. 183: "Mephistopheles: [...] Hier diesen Schlüssel nimm! – / Faust: Das kleine Ding! / Meph.: Erst faß ihn an und schätz ihn nicht gering. / Faust: Er wächst in meiner Hand! er leuchtet! blitzt!"; translation above: Priest 1952, p. 153.

2 Part of the content of this article was the object of two papers: "A Theological Sermon against Phallic Handicrafts in Fifteenth-century Vienna: Johann Geuss' *Sermo de Clave*", during the workshop *Textual Intersections of Academic Genres at the University of Vienna*, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, 15 February 2024; and "Théologie et Régulation des Pratiques Populaires: à Propos du *Sermo de Clave* de Johann Geuss", during the seminar *12^{ème} Journée des Jeunes Chercheurs du LabEx Hastec*, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris, 23 April 2024. Some of the digital reproduction of the manuscripts were purchased through the financial support of projects ERC-DEBATE n° 771589, and HORIZON-RESTORY n° 101132781. I am thankful to Matthias Däumer for his careful advice during the drafting of the article, to Anna Vierlinger and Tiresia Tagliarino for language correction, and to an anonymous reviewer for useful comments (especially the reference to Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan* in Section 4).

3 Biographical and literary informations are drawn from Esu 2025 (forthcoming).

with the subtitle *De iociis et ludis tempore Carnisprivialis*) discusses the legitimacy of celebrating marriages during Shrovetide, and it criticizes the deviation from penance, highlighting the prevalence of sin and intemperate behaviors among the population. Given that the Septuagesima Sunday marked the start of the Carnival period, the sermon/treatise also explores the permissibility of disguising oneself as animals, and of cross-dressing. In *De superfluitate et pretiositate indumentorum*, Geuss examines the morality of extravagant and rich clothing, acknowledging situations where this is justified and permitted. *De vitiis linguae* (or *De peccatis oris*) is his longest work of this kind, and it offers an analysis of communication-related vices; it had a huge success, boasting over forty manuscript witnesses and an incunabulum edition (Nuremberg 1479). The attribution of these texts to Geuss is not free from uncertainty and should be studied with greater attention; but the majority of witnesses, as well as most of the secondary bibliography, agree in identifying Geuss as their author.

Clearly, our theologian was not the only one to show interest in these social aspects, and similar sermons were preached in many major European cities: one can think of other more famous names, such as Bernardino of Siena (1380–1444), John of Capistrano (1386–1456), and – some decades later – Olivier Maillard (1430–1502), all Franciscans. However, it is worth underlining the attention that Johann Geuss had for phenomena that we would now call ethno-anthropological, spanning from the Carnival celebrations that subverted the city of Vienna for entire days, up to the market-sale of phallic-shaped crafts. It is precisely this last practice that is the object of the *Sermo de clave* (full title: *Sermo de clave que est ymago verendorum virilium*, “Sermon on the key that is the image of the male private parts”), on which I will focus on the following pages.

2. Folklore elements in Geuss' *Sermo de clave*

The *Sermo de clave* constitutes a criticism of a specific custom of Viennese society, which Geuss had the opportunity to witness during his long stay in the city; it is, therefore, necessary to explore its folklore dimension first, looking

at the historical-ethnological information provided in the text. The theologian directly addresses the production, sale, and purchase of handicrafts of phallic shape (more precisely, in the shape of male genitalia). The buying and selling took place during feast days, in the time of dedication of some churches. The practice was public, as it took place in the public space (*publice*), and – Geuss adds – also in sacred places. The reader can find these data in the first lines of the sermon, in its Prologue:

During dedications [of the churches], certain inappropriate items, namely images of male genitalia, are commonly bought and sold publicly in sacred places. Laypeople typically refer to this image with the term ‘key’.

The material of which this craft object was made, according to the description offered in other passages, was glass, as he speaks of “glass key” (*clavis vitrea*) and of “drinking from glass”, (*bibere ex vitro*, both in I.4). However, it could also be made of wood: “It is made of glass or elderberry mellow, as some craftsmen (*mechanici*) have done in some years” (I.1). The temporal information could raise a doubt: whether it is referring to the craftsmen’s generic production of the object, or only to the use of wood as material. The answer is the latter: throughout the text, Geuss does not seem to speak of a past practice, but of something that is often repeated, and in his sermon he focuses more on the glass material, which could partially justify its purchase and sale. Therefore this object was usually made of glass, although in a few years, wood was also used.

According to the *Sermo de clave*, the object had a possible primary function: it could contain liquids, serving as a small mug. This is the statement attributed to the craftsmen responsible for its production, to which Geuss responds that, if it really served this function, the obscene form would not have been necessary:

If a craftsman says: ‘the glass key is suitable for drinking from’, I tell him that it is more respectable to drink from a glass that is not shaped like a key; indeed, it is shameful for an honorable person [...] to touch with his/her mouth such an indecent figure (I.4).

The sermon offers no explicit pieces of information regarding the city in which the sale took place; however, it is easy to imagine that it was Vienna, with its many markets located in the economic and cultural center of the city. Geuss carried out his preaching activity above all as *canonicus* and then *decanus* of the very central church of St. Stephen (also known as the church of All Saints). The religious building stood between two markets, and after leaving mass, a citizen could head North and reach the main market, the *Hohen Markt*, in just a few steps; otherwise, towards the South, there was the *Neuer Markt*. To these, we could add two large annual fairs, which in the period of Geuss' life fell on the day of the Ascension (a movable feast, between the end of April and the beginning of June) and on the day of Saint Catherine (November 25), and could last up to two weeks.⁴ Nonetheless, Geuss in the *Sermo de clave* refers only to a specific type of religious holiday, namely the *dedicatio ecclesiae*: the term indicates the ritual with which a sacred building was consecrated and dedicated to a saint or another figure, and by extension the anniversary and its celebration the following years.⁵

We can retrieve more information on this under-studied folkloric practice through another text of Geuss, as he touches on the topic of phallic craftsmanship in his *Sermo ad vulgus de dedicatione Ecclesie*;⁶ although the space dedicated to the *clavis* is more limited here, it allows us to gather further data. The *Sermo de dedicatione* starts with the episode of Jesus' entry into Jericho, as narrated in the Gospel of Luke. About halfway through the sermon, Geuss uses a passage (Lk. 19:2–3: "Zacheus [...] wanted to see Jesus") to criticize the behavior of the faithful who flock to church not to practice worship, but for other reasons; to them, he opposes the good example of Zacheus, leader of the tax collectors of Jericho, who climbed a sycamore tree precisely to see

Jesus, and not "the multitude or crowd, nor the women who were present".⁷ The theologian points out the immorality of going to church to enjoy the celebrations that certain occasions (such as the anniversary of the dedication of the building) entailed, and he lists some of the reasons why many crowd these religious moments, in a sort of 'phenomenology of the bad spectator'. Among the various incorrect purposes, Geuss mentions those who go:

To see the crowd or multitude of people coming there, and to observe various individuals with different manners, gestures, and attires, and to see the things that are inside [the church], and what is sold there, which at times may be inappropriate (*turpia*), as will be said later.⁸

Further on, Geuss criticizes those who go to church to make purchases. This is the occasion to write again about the *turpia* sold during the celebrations, with words very similar to those we have already seen in the *Sermo de clave*; with an important difference: here he specifies the sacred, public places in which these 'keys' would have been sold.

There are some who sell certain inappropriate items in a consecrated place, in the churchyard, or the church porch, which [items] have the shape of male genitalia and are referred to by some as 'key'.⁹

⁴ About those markets and fairs, see Gruber 2021, pp. 204–206.

⁵ The *Liber Extra* (V.38.14), compilation of Canon Law completed in 1234 by Raymond of Peñafort at the request of Pope Gregory IX, already shows that indulgences could be granted during the anniversaries of the dedication of a church, and posits some limitations to them. See Friedberg 1881, col. 889.

⁶ The text was commented by Linsenmayer 1893, pp. 827–829; this article is plagiarized in Niedermeier 1970.

⁷ Johann Geuss, *Sermo ad vulgus de dedicatione*, in ms. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 11751, ff. 160r–171r at f. 166v: "Sed circa hoc quod Ewangelista dicit, quod Zacheus querebat videre Ihesum – et non dicit quod Zacheus querebat videre multitudinem sive turbam, nec dicit quod querebat videre mulieres in illa turba aut multitudine existentes – queritur quale documentum deberet ex hoc recipere isti qui vadunt ad patrocinia aut dedicationes, ubi concurrunt turbe et multitudini homines, tam viri quam mulieres."

⁸ Geuss, *Sermo de dedicatione*, f. 167r: "Ut videant turbam aut multitudinem hominum illuc venientium, et ut videant diversos homines diversorum modorum et gestium et ornatuum, et ut viderant insitas [sic] et ea que ibi venduntur, que quandoque sunt turpia, ut dicetur postea."

⁹ Geuss, *Sermo de dedicatione*, f. 169r: "Sunt aliqui qui in loco consecrato sive in cimiterio aut porticum ecclesie vendunt quasdam res turpes que habent figuram virilium verendorum, et que ab aliquibus vocantur 'clavis' [sic] tales."

The consecrated places were, therefore, the *coemeterium*, which generally indicated the space surrounding the church (usable for burials, i.e. as a cemetery, but not only), and the *porticus* (porch). Those are the folklore-related pieces of information that one can find in Geuss' *Sermo de clave*, enriched by what is specified in his *Sermo de dedicatione*; but there is more: in one of the manuscripts transmitting the *Sermo de clave*, we find a sermon attributed to Thomas Ebendorfer of Hasselbach (an important theologian, preacher, historian, and diplomat from Vienna, 1388–1464), which explicitly mentions the practice of “purchasing disgraceful images” (*figurae turpes*) during the celebration of church dedications.¹⁰ The text uses as its biblical theme the same episode as above (Jesus' visit to the city of Jericho), and although it does not specifically discuss the *clavis*, it reinforces the idea that the *dedicatio ecclesiae* was indeed an occasion for buying and selling unusual items:

[People] throughout the entire week are preoccupied with their business affairs, and on festival days and at hours they are occupied with many idle and harmful words and deeds, especially on dedication days, [...] for which they know various vain and useless items are prepared, and sometimes disgraceful images. As a result, friendships are often badly formed, to the peril of the body.¹¹

10 Città del Vaticano, BAV, Pal. Lat. 442 (labelled as “A” in Appendix 1), ff. 51ra–57ra. For catalogues and attribution, Lhotzky 1957, p. 75 (although he incorrectly refers to the manuscript as “Vat. Lat. 442”); Metzger 2021.

11 Thomas Ebendorfer of Hasselbach, *Sermo de dedicatione*, f. 52va: “Et hic Zacheum turba impedivit ne videret Christum; et sciendum quod non solum turba ipsum impedivit, sed et pusillanimitas et pigritia mentis et avaritia temporalium [...]. Qualiter multi manent hodie ignorantes precepta Dei, ceci ad videndum et cognoscendum Christum, [...] cum tota ebdomada *sunt [correx]i in suis negotiis occupati, et pluribus otiosis et noxiis verbis et factis implicati diebus festis et horis [...] precipue in diebus dedicationum, in quibus a suis notis exigunt sibi dedicationes emi, ad que sciunt preparatas diversa vana et inutilia, et aliquando turpes figuras. Unde sepe male contrahuntur amicitie in periculum corporis”.

3. A short history of phallic glasses

Geuss describes the phallic glass as a vessel used only for drinking, but many other sources plainly intend it as a sex toy. Is it possible, then, that our theologian is deceiving himself, and that he is misrepresenting the object to his listeners and readers? Or is it perhaps a deliberate choice? In this regard, and to assess its actual employ, it is important first of all to discard an easy comparison, whereby the object in question is linked, and even explained, through generic testimonies on dildos that we find in various medieval sources. From this perspective, the classic passage from the penitential *Corrector sive Medicus* by Burchard of Worms (d. 1025) on the *molimen aut machinamentum in modum virilis membri* (“device or implement in the shape of the male member”)¹² is not of great utility, and it can wrongly direct our historical reconstruction. Burchard's text precedes Geuss' sermon by over four hundred years, and if one wanted to look for a similar but more contemporary reference to sex toys it would be easier to take a passage from the widespread *Nota de octo turpitudinibus* (or *De octo speciebus turpitudinis quas coniugales inter se solent exercere*). This short Latin text – which went virtually unnoticed by scholars of medieval sexuality – was intended to be read by priests and confessors. Copied mainly between the 14th and 15th c., it speaks precisely of *instrumenta diabolica*, dildos made of stone or wood.¹³ Still, the comparison and identifi-

12 Migne 1853, coll. 971–972.

13 The *Nota de octo turpitudinibus* lists various types of sexual misconduct. The text, simply written and accessible, is short (about a thousand words), and divided into eight sections; each of them opens with the enunciation of the *turpitudinis*, enriched with statements attributed to the Fathers of the Church; sometimes it goes into detail and discusses the possible variants of this practice, its harmful consequences, and the parallels with other acts unanimously considered negative. The practices examined are: 1) intercourse during sacred days and nights; 2) coitus with a wife who is menstruating; 3) coitus, where the woman is positioned above the man; 4) intercourse while the wife is pregnant; 5) anal intercourse with a woman; 6) when the woman manually stimulates the penis, with the emission of sperm on her body or in the bed; 7) use of phallic-shaped instruments by the woman; here it also deals with the auto-erotic masturbation of men, as well as male homoerotic relationships; 8) violent and quarrelsome relationships between wife and husband. The text presents several passages in which the author gives instructions to the confessor, advising which penances

cation between a generic dildo and the *clavis* – done by many – is too immediate: subsuming the glassy object under the general category of dildos, thus taking its typical use for granted, is a hasty and not fully justified interpretation. For this reason, we must temporarily set aside our initial impressions and undertake a more thorough examination of the available evidence.

From the point of view of material survival, “glasses shaped like phalluses were made in at least two periods: in the Roman Empire and in Germany in the 16th century or thereabouts”.¹⁴ Regarding this second period of production, which is the one closer to Geuss, the specimens that lasted until our days allow us to have a general idea of the characteristics of the *Phallusglas*. It is a glass object, transparent or colored, smooth or not, in the shape of male genitalia; the penis is erect and, when placed on a flat surface, the artifact could lie on three points (glans and testicles) or on its base. It is hollow inside, and can contain liquids; in some of the finds, a sort of spout or funnel attached at the base survives, in which one can place the mouth, or can pour from. These glasses are considered to be a 16th–17th c. production (and even later), with some examples produced towards the end of the 15th c. Their low survival rate is on the one hand due to their fragility, and on the other to their vulgarity.¹⁵ Most of them are found in German and Austrian collections; among these specimens, the most famous is perhaps the one known as *Der Phallus*

to perform or describing the right attitude to have towards his faithful; this is why I assumed above that it was aimed at this audience. For the reference to sex toys, I quote from the ms. Klagenfurt, Universitätsbibliothek, Pap.-Hs. 83, ff. 150v–152r, here f. 151v: “Septima species est quando mulieres habent instrumenta dyabolica. [...] Et sunt ista earum instrumenta lapides <et> ligna, et cum eis extingunt quendam libidem carnalem; et quandoque mechanantur etiam cum cattulis et catts et cum consimilibus, et nullum habent appetitum de viro.” For the same passage, see mss. Schägl, Stiftbibliothek, 103 (456 A. 34), ff. 313ra–315va; Trento, Biblioteca Comunale, 14505, pp. 325–327; and Innsbruck, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Tirol, 625, ff. 146v–148v. Starting from the short list of Bloomfield 1979, n° 2312 p. 205 and Newhauser/Bejczy 2008, n° 3589, p. 216, a preliminary investigation allowed me to identify up to fifty witnesses, especially in German-speaking countries and in the Czech Republic. The *Nota* is also quoted in Kaczor 2002, p. 250.

¹⁴ Withehouse 1997, p. 202.

¹⁵ On the material dimension of *Phallusglas*, see Schmidt 1922, p. 156; Baumgartner/Krueger 1988, pp. 421–422; Koldewij 1999, p. 186; Faust et al. 2007 p. 57; Tausenfreund 2014, pp. 82–83. For a possible discovery of phallic glasses in France, Brut/Penna 2020. On a discovery of the same objects in England, Telfer 2006, pp. 194, 195, 202, 204. For discussion of



Fig. 1 from Vienna, Österreichischen Museum für Angewandte Kunst, inv. n° GL 1137 (online description).

der Äbtissin (‘the Penis of the Abbess’), produced between the 16th and the 17th c.: it is hollow, 20 cm in length and 7 cm in diameter, and it was found in the female abbey of Herford (Saxony), in the cloaca next to the abbess’ room; hence the name.¹⁶

From the two pictures, the reader can notice the variety of this production. The first – a beautiful 16th-century *Scherzglas*, preserved in excellent condition in the Austrian Museum of Applied Arts – has a more compact shape, and the drinking spout is visible at its base (**Fig. 1**).¹⁷ The second specimen, with a

a much older case, Dévai 2021, pp. 356–359. I have not been able to consult Marx 2022 nor Biernat 2019, both unpublished and not online.

¹⁶ On the items, see Wemhoff 2004, p. 81; Gedderth 2007, p. 109; Kovacsovics/Wintersteiger 2001.

¹⁷ Digital notice and figure at https://sammlung.mak.at/en/collect/puzzle-jug-joke-glass_35079 (accessed November 6, 2024).



Fig. 2 from M. Gläser, ed., *Lübecker Kolloquium zur Stadtarchäologie im Hanseraum*, bd. IV: *Die Infrastruktur* (Lübeck: Schmidt-Römhild, 2004), p. 310, fig. 8 (photo: A. Kolečki).

more elongated shape, comes from the town of Elbag in Poland, produced in the early 16th century (Fig. 2).¹⁸

In addition to their material presence,¹⁹ these objects have found some space in written documents, and they have attracted the attention of several scholars. The earliest literary evidence for the phallus-shaped, glass-made vessel is in Roman literature: one of Juvenal's *Satires* speaks of a *priapum vitreum* from which one drinks; an unidentified ancient scholiast commented: "in vitreum penem".²⁰ The verse is usually associated with a passage from Pliny the Elder, who describes the practice of *bibere per obscenitates* in the *Historia*

Naturalis (although he does not specify the material of the vessel).²¹ Another reference comes from the biography of emperor Pertinax in the *Historia Augusta*: in a corrupted and variously emended passage, some objects named *phallovitroboli* are mentioned.²²

The phallic-shaped vessel seems to have vanished from literary sources, to resurface many centuries later. These texts, spanning various genres and periods, could serve as clues to either validate or challenge the assertions put forth by Geuss. An early account, contemporary to his life, is found in a passage from the Italian humanist Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1450). In the first of his invectives against Francesco Filelfo, Poggio paints him as "a shameless liar who was more accomplished as a sexual pervert than as a writer or scholar",²³ and accuses him of having donated his wife a glassy dildo, for lack of any better:

What would your shameless face not dare? And how did you dare to devise a phallic glass (*priapus vitreus*) [to be] left to your wife, so that it might alleviate the desire of an absent friend? [...] I could not help but laugh at the phallic glass left to your silly wife, who would use it as if it were real.²⁴

But the vast majority of references to the phallic glasses come from the Modern period, belonging to the genre of erotic literature, and as such are the most known and studied by contemporary scholars. Pietro Aretino (d. 1556) in the *Ragionamento della Nanna e della Antonia* tells of a basket sent to a nunnery, full of "glass fruits" produced in Murano, Venice. These hollow objects

¹⁸ I thank Matthias Däumer for pointing out this specimen.

¹⁹ On the material presence of sexual figures and symbols in the late medieval and pre-modern period, especially in badges, see Rasmussen 2009, 2021.

²⁰ Juvenal, *Saturae*, 2, v. 95. In: Clausen 1966, p. 46: "Vitreo bibit ille priapo". See also Courtney 1980, p. 115; Morton Braund 1996, p. 149.

²¹ Plinius *Naturalis Historia*, XXXIII, 4. In: Mayhoff 1897, pp. 105–106: "In poculis libidines caelare iuvit ac per obscenitates bibere."

²² *Historia Augusta*, Pert., 8, 5. In: Hohl 1927, p. 121.

²³ De Keyser 2015, p. 13.

²⁴ Poggio Bracciolini, *Invectiva [prima] in Philelphum*. In: Bracciolini 1510, f. 42: "Quid autem tua invecunda facies non audeat, sed quomodo ausus es comminisci vitreum priapum relictum mulieri, quo leniret absentis amici desiderium. [...] Relictum priapum vitreum muliercule, que pro vero uteretur, risum tenere non potui [...]. Nam in una re cautior quam ceteri uxoris tue bone quidem femine, si per te licuisset, egestati rectius consulisti. Non enim vitreum – ut de alio fabularis – sed carneum priapum, et quidem legitimum atque a te dimensum preparasti, cum pusionem quem amabas hac in urbe inter te et uxorem in eodem loco sepius collocasti."

have the shape of male genitalia; they had to be filled with hot water (or in the absence of it, with urine, as the protagonist of the story does) and used as dildos. As proof of this, John Florio's 1598 Italian-English dictionary *A Worlde of Wordes* translates another Aretino's expression, *pastinaca muranese* ("parnis from Murano") with "dildoe of glasse". The same object is also described in a novella by Pietro Fortini (d. 1562), from his collection *Le Giornate delle Novelle e dei Vizi*: here too it is made of hollow glass, filled with warm water, and used by women as a dildo. A passage in the *Dialogo di Maddalena e Giulia* (or *La Puttana Errante*, whose classic attribution to Aretino has been questioned)²⁵ speaks of a *carotta (sic) di vetro*; another text wrongly attributed to Aretino, the *Dubbi Amorosì*, tells of a nun who uses a "dick of glass" (*cazzo di vetro*) to masturbate with too much fervor, and it breaks, to her grave detriment; while Niccolò Franco in the *Priapea*, a collection of erotic sonnets (expanded ed. 1548), talks of having "a piece of glass as a lover", of "quenching the thirst with a nice glass", and of "dicks made of glass for the nuns".²⁶

From the Italian peninsula, the phallic-shaped glass went North, becoming a real topos of European erotic literature. It is cited by Thomas Nashe, who is considered the inventor of the English term "dildo". In his erotic poem *The Choise of Valentines, or The Merie Ballad of Nash his Dildo* (composed in ca. 1593, and printed in 1899 only), he also speaks of such phallic-shaped glass object, which can be hollow and filled with hot water or milk, or made of full glass; it is used as a dildo by a female prostitute, dissatisfied with her male partner. We find it in an erotic sonnet by Charles de Sigogne (full name

Charles-Timoléon de Beauxoncles, sieur de Sigogne, d. 1611) entitled *Le Gaude Michi* – in French, "dildo" is *godemichet* – where the poet laments the fragility of the glass, which can break; his account suggests that it had thin walls. In the anonymous *L'Escole des Filles ou la Philosophie des Dames* (Paris 1665) the object is made of hollow glass and can be filled with hot milk. The novel was translated into English in 1680 as *The School of Venus, or the Ladies Delight*: on the frontispiece of this edition (Fig. 3), a woodcut depicts women at the market, selling and buying phallic objects (and the specter of this scene also haunted Geuss' account, as we shall see below).

The same object is found in many other English and French texts of the 16th and 17th c., such as in two poems of John Marston's *The scourge of Villanie: Three Books of Satyres* (1598); in Thomas Middleton's play *Nice Valour or the Passionate Madman* (1647); in Andrew Marvel's satirical poem *Last Instruction to a Painter* (1667); and in the pseudonymous Abbé du Prat's book *Vénus dans le Cloître, ou la Religieuse en Chemise* (1683, translated and printed in London the same year).²⁷

Another textual genre that dealt with such objects described as sex toys is civil and Canon law: various authors, from the 16th to the 17th c., discuss the case of a woman who uses an *instrumentum ligneum vel vitreum*, alone or with another woman. As in the case of the erotic writers, a phenomenon of textual transmission seems to be taking place here, since most of them repeat the *casus* and the corresponding punishment *verbatim* (usually death, if used in lesbian intercourse).²⁸ A relevant account, precisely because of its possible relationship with the aforementioned licentious texts, is found in Angelo Maria Verricelli's *Quaestiones Morales et Legales* (1653). In the chapter

25 Crimi 2021, pp. 288–292.

26 The "Doubts" are ironically modelled on the scholastic and legal question, with a problem and its solution. I quote the primary source, as this passage is unknown to the scholars cited in the following footnote. Anon., *Dubbi Amorosì*, dubbio 27, p. 20: "Suor Marta la lussuria avea nel sesso / e volendo la carne lacerare, / prese un cazzo di vetro d'un commesso, / e con la potta cominciò a scherzare. / Ma spinta dal furor a un colp'istesso, / volendo tutto dentro farlo entrare / si ruppe la potta, e'l cul che è peggio. / *Utrum*, se per far bene fè sac-rileggio?". Niccolò Franco, *Priapea* 1790, LX p. 97: "E se vuoi cazzi, fattene di vetro"; CXLVIII, p. 141: "Suore mie care, poichè tali e tante / son le strettezze e l'incomodate, / per manco male è che v'accomodate / d'un bel pezzo di vetro per amante [...] Che chi vuol bere, e non ha l'auro, o'l perde / spenga la sete sua con un bel vetro"; CXLIX, p. 142: "Io di carne son fatto a tutte l'ore, / e per questi orti son fatto di legno, / e di vetro son fatto per le suore".

27 On the literary dimension of phallic glasses (all references have been verified): Moulton 2000, pp. 183–184; Newman 2007, pp. 143–144; Wolk-Simon 2008, p. 53; Simons 2010, pp. 78, 81; Feliciano Attar 2010, pp. 98–99; Blake 2011, pp. 136–138 and n. 25; Guevara 2016, pp. 34–35; Burkart 2021, pp. 86–93; Peakman, 2003, pp. 148–149.

28 Zanchi 1589, p. 210: "Coitus iste est etiam punibilis inter mulieres facientes inter se actum venereum fricando et se corrumendo cum aliquo ligneo vel vitreo instrumento, et pena est mortis." A similar or identical formulation is found in Farinacci 1608, p. 205b; De Peguera 1613, f. 73va; Marta 1620, p. 136b; Floronus 1622, p. 616; De Angelis 1632, p. 16b; Novario 1639, p. 530b; Diether 1679, p. 550b; Rainaldi 1699, p. 248b; Sinistrari 1700, p. 258a.



Fig. 3 Frontispiece from *The School of Venus, or the Ladies Delight. Reduced into Rules of Practice. Being the Translation of the French L'Escole des Filles, in two Dialogues* (London: s.n., 1680).

"On the denunciation of a confessor who talks about shameful things in the confessional", of all the hypothetical cases that could be used to describe the problem of a devious confessor, its author imagines the following situation. A woman goes to confess, but with the sole intention of gossiping with the confessor; among other news, he tells her what other confessed women have told him, namely that they use a glassy object, hollow, and filled with hot water, to obtain pleasure ("quod mulieres aliquae eo devenerunt, ut vitreo instrumento et aqua calida utantur ad venerem").²⁹ The story was also reworked and included in the *Enchiridion* by Hermenegildo Villaplana, who brought it to the New World (as this text was printed in Mexico more than a century later).³⁰

Despite the geographical and temporal distance, we cannot deny the continuity between these texts: the object described by Johann Geuss in the *Sermo de Clave*, composed in Vienna in the 1430s, is the same one cited by the abovementioned authors, whether in Italy, France, England or elsewhere. Against this background, Geuss' sermon assumes greater relevance as a historical witness: for the Late-Medieval and Modern periods, it is – with Poggio's – the oldest known account of the phallic glass in Europe, taking into consideration both material and textual elements.

Nevertheless, while referring to the same object, these sources disagree on its typical use. So far, only Geuss' sermon refers to the *Phallusglas* as a container for liquids: as seen, he hypothesizes that the *artifex* or *vitrifex* may have a counterargument that justifies its sale, because "the glass key is suit-

29 Verricelli 1653, p. 434a–b: "Confessarius mulierem in confessionario genuflexam – accedentem non animo confitendi, sed visitandi et alloquendi cum confessario de rebus ad confessionem non spectantibus – interrogavit: an eius soror perseveraret adhuc in cuiusdam iuvenis amore? Deinde quibusdam interiectis verbis – quorum mulier nunc non recordatur, cum transierint sexdecim menses – dixit confessarius mulieri aliquas moniales eo devenire, ut vitreo instrumento et aqua calida utantur ad venerem; aliquas etiam mulieres suorum amicorum verenda ore apprehendere; interrogavit etiam eandem de diversis aliis foeminis, an perseverarent in amicitia suorum amantium. Seriem et contextum verborum, et qua occasione quoque fine et intentione turpia exempla vitri et oris, confessarius protulerit – inquit mulier – e memoria excidisse, nec totus discorsus bene recordari. Deinde post aliquos tempus, idem confessarius sedens in confessionario, stantem mulierem ante confessionarium expresse sollicitavit, et postea accedens ad ipsius domum osculatus est illam ac plurimos actus inhonestos fecit. Quaeritur itaque an hic sit denunciandus".

30 De Villaplana 1765, pp. 98–100.

able for drinking". On the opposite side, all the other writers are very explicit in understanding and/or presenting the object as a sex toy, used above all – but not exclusively – by women, especially in a religious context (nuns in a convent), fillable with hot liquids in imitation of human heat (and in imitation of the semen, in the case of milk's color). Coming to the present times, even the scholars who have expressed their views on the issue do not agree. Some, interested above all in the history of the production of glass, tend to classify the object as a joke vessel,³¹ and it has been hypothesized that it could be used during visits to the brothel.³² Others give greater credence to literary witnesses, validating its use for masturbation; for example, speaking of the catalogs and studies on glass, Burkart writes: "a few examples of dildoes have survived in European collections where they are labeled as hoax drinking glasses, [...] an attribution that seems unlikely".³³

It is true that authors from both 'parties' (joke vessel vs. sex toy) may have misrepresented and distorted the genuine purpose of the object, whether intentionally or unintentionally. The Viennese theologian could have omitted a fact that he considered immoral and capable of encouraging the public to engage in such acts, or he could have been unaware of its actual use (and its function as a drinking vessel would have been no more than a façade of the merchants). The same can be said of erotic writers, who may have engaged in voluntary deformation, a form of literary malice that renders narrative fiction 'spicier' (or more offensive, in the case of Poggio's invective). Alternatively, their accounts could be the result of an erroneous perception of the glass, whereby heterosexual cisgender men have over-eroticized an object that, although having a sexual value for both genders, was only used as a playful container for liquids. Something similar could have happened to the legal writers, who may have mentioned this object in their treatises without ever having seen it, and the chain of textual transmission, from one author to another, seems to confirm the hypothesis. Here, a peculiar interaction between sources

of different genres cannot be ruled out, so that the phenomenon in question spreads between fictional accounts only, to the point of being taken as true by legal writers too. From our point of view, the perspective may result distorted: given the proliferation of sources on the subject, it is immediate to imagine that they *must* refer to a historical practice that really occurred, whereas they could have been inspired by other literary accounts only.

Recognizing that at the current state of research, there are no definitive arguments to approve or reject the two interpretations, we must go back to the object itself, focusing on two material data. Firstly, the presence – in some of the surviving finds – of a mouthpiece strongly points to the use as a vessel. If the object were meant to be filled and used as a hollow dildo, we would expect some material part apt to maintain the liquid inside, such as a narrow neck to be closed with a piece of cork or similar.³⁴ Secondly, the fragility of the object itself, whose thin walls are not suitable for use as a sex toy, even less so if inserted into vulnerable cavities. Indeed, both Charles de Sigogne and the author of the *Dubbi Amoros* already spoke about this fragility, while Thomas Nashe opposed the hollow dildo to the one in solid glass ("congealed glass", not blown), which seems more likely for masturbatory use.³⁵

To substantiate this hypothesis, we can look at six references to the phallic glass vessel that have been hitherto neglected. While these texts share an explicit or implicit reference to the three Roman sources mentioned above, they nevertheless serve as evidence of the widespread use of this item as a fun vessel in Late-Medieval and Modern Europe. Unlike the accounts that described it as a dildo, these do not belong to the genre of erotic literature nor legal doctrine, for they consist of three religious sermons, two moral satires, and an erudite disquisition on banquet-related traditions – all six criticizing contemporary habits.

31 Schmidt 1922, p. 156; Baumgartner/Krueger 1988, pp. 421–22.

32 Faust et al. 2007, p. 57.

33 Burkart 2021, p. 89. For similar remarks on the 'actual' employ of the object, see Newman 2007, p. 143, and Stanley 1995, p. 210.

34 It is true that a 17th c. specimen has a narrow neck, which can be closed; but this seems to be an exception and could serve as a bottle. See Paris, Musée de Cluny / Musée National du Moyen Âge, inv. n° NNI619 (first half of 17th c., from Flanders or Italy, 26,5 cm. in length); see also Burkart 2021, p. 90.

35 Charles de Sigogne, *Le Gaude Michi*, vv. 28–30. Ed. 1620, pp. 48–50: "Ceux de verre, par un malheur, / S'ils se cassaient, en la chaleur, / Vous pourroient gaster la nature." For the passage of the *Dubbi* and of Nashe, see above.

The author of the first one is Johann Mathesius (1504–1565, he wrote an early biography of Martin Luther, whom he knew, and took part in the compilation of the “Table Talks”, a collection of conversations and maxims of the latter). From 1532, Mathesius was engaged as rector of the Latin school in Sankt Joachimsthal (now Jáchymov), a mining town in the Bohemian mountains; after his theological studies and ordination, in 1544 he became its pastor and preacher. His *Sarepta oder Bergpostill* (1562) is a collection of High German sermons related to mining, metallurgy, and minerals, which he preached to the citizens – mostly miners – of the city for nine years at Carnival time.³⁶ In one of them (titled “On the production of glass, and where this is mentioned in Scripture, and how we can remember the frailty of our bodies and the future glory of the body itself”), he criticizes the contemporary practice of making obscene-shaped vessels: “Some also give a dishonest form (*schentliche Gestalt*) to the glass, about which even the pious and respectable Pliny already complained fervently in his time”.³⁷

A second account comes from the Jesuit theologian and preacher Martin Delrio (1551–1608, best known for his *Disquisitiones Magicae*).³⁸ In a sermon delivered in 1594 in Leuven, he speaks at length about the *obscaenitas vitrea* used during banquets:

Is dignity spared when *phallovitrobuli* reign at banquets? When the glassy obscenity touches not only eyes and ears but – it is unmentionable – also the mouth? [...] Be zealous for divine honor, and repel your shame; strike only the glassy obscenity, or at least let it be removed by hands, so that it may be broken!³⁹

³⁶ Norris 2014; Dym 2015.

³⁷ Mathesius 1562, XV, f. 277v: “Etliche geben auch den glesern schentliche gestalt, dartueber auch der fromme und erbare Seyde Plinius schon zu seiner zeit sehnlich klaget. Dis muessen wir der alten nerrischen, und ferwizigen welt zurechenen, freylich hillft alter fuer thorheit nit, doch hab ich mir heut nit fuergenommen die glashuetten zu reformiren.” The passage is quoted also in Heikampf 1986, p. 26; Rückert 1992, p. 15.

³⁸ See Machielsen 2015.

³⁹ Del Rio 1597, sermo 10 [“in festo purificationis”, delivered February 2, 1594], p. 174: “Sed quid verborum impuritatem miremur, cum nec capitis quidem honestatis parcat? Captisne ho-

Another Latin sermon is contained in the collection *Heptaphonum* (1643) by Georg Reismüller (1586–1665, court preacher and adviser to the Prince-Bishop of Eichstatt). Using as *thema biblicum* Mt 20:22 (“Can you drink the cup I am about to drink?”), he acknowledges that drinkers now use glass cups of a thousand shapes, including the *pocula priapi*, about which he prefers to “remain silent”.⁴⁰ Together with Geuss' *Sermo de clave*, these three texts were actual religious sermons delivered *ad populum*, openly criticizing the phallic vessel.

The ‘obscene’ object is also echoed in two satirical texts: one is connected to “The Ship of Fools” by Sebastian Brant (*Das Narrenschiff*, 1494, whose official Latin translation was assigned to Jacob Locher, *Stultifera Navis*). Given its publishing success, a colleague of the two, the printer and scholar Josse Bade, undertook an adaptation (1505) that also contains paraphrases and marginal comments.⁴¹ In the chapter *De commessantium obscenitate*, mocking the excesses of drinking and eating and the unruliness of manners and behaviours caused by drunkenness, he speaks of the *Phallusglas*, with a reference to Juvenal's verse: “Here he burps out the load of his stomach, or he breaks cups / or vomits on the tables; he drinks from the phallic glass.” The marginal comment clarifies:

“He drinks from the phallus”, that is, the depiction of the penis (*figmentum mentulae*); “from the glass”, that is, the glass vessel having the shape of the male member (*vitreus vasus habens figuram membri virilis*).⁴²

nestati parcutur, quando in conviviis *phallovitrobuli* regnant? Quando non oculis et auribus, sed – quod vel dictu nefarium – obscaenitas vitrea incurrit ori? [...] ‘Vitreo bibit ille priapo’, ut ait Satyricus: fecerant idem prius pauci et propudiosi, quibus Iuvenalis et Plinius aeterna merito stigmata inusserunt”; pp. 175–176: “Eant, eant oris homines impurati – si quid oris reliquum – postquam per obscaenitates bibere: accedant scelesti ad puris vivificum, impuris lethiferum et tremendum altaris mysterium. [...] Labra calice Dei proludent, quae daemioniorum calice polluerunt?”; p. 177: “Zelamini divinum honorem, probum vestrum repellite; solo vitream obscaenitatem illidite, vel saltem excidere manibus finite, ut confringatur”.

⁴⁰ Reismüller 1643, *In festo sancti Iacobi*, VII, p. 522: “Poculorum inter potatores variae sunt omnis generis formae. [...] Silebo pocula priapi, male tectae Veneris, et quae pudor vetat dicere.” The omitted passage on the various shapes of the glasses is taken from Fornerus 1527, book III.9, p. 239.

⁴¹ Metzger-Rambach 2008, pp. 27–29 and 205.

⁴² Bade 1505, ch. 107, f. 103r: “Hic eructat onus stomachi, vel pocula frangit / vel sput in mensas, vitrio [sic] bibit ille priapo”; “*Bibit priapo*, id est figmento mentule; *vitrio*, id est vitreo vase habente figuram membri virilis”.

We cannot exclude the possibility that Bade, scholar of Latin texts, wanted to include the passage from Juvenal merely as an erudite joke; indeed, he edited the *Satyrae* twice.⁴³ However, given the material evidence and the fact that his own satire was intended to criticise contemporary customs, we can also imagine that he was referring to the actual use of the *priapus vitreus* as a vessel, as he speaks of smashing cups (*pocula*), likely made of hollow glass (as another material would be harder to break).

A satire-related account is also found in Curtius Jaele (pseudonym of Conrad Goddaeus, a Dutch preacher, 1612–1658), who wrote a Latin ironic text, the “Encomium of the Owl” (*Laus Ululae*, later translated into Dutch and English); here he speaks of the virtues of this animal, and devotes several pages to temperance. Sitting at the table with the owls themselves, he notices that they are drinking from owl-shaped glasses; quoting Juvenal (again), one of the guests tells him that it is certainly better to drink from a bird-shaped glass than from one shaped like a priapus. The author comments: “I have seen that even among us people drink from such improper glasses, emptying Bacchus and Venus together”.⁴⁴

The sixth and last account comes from Johann Wilhelm Stucki (1542–1607, Swiss Protestant scholar, humanist, and theologian), who published the *Antiquitates Conviviales*, a detailed study on the traditions of banqueting in the ancient world.⁴⁵ After discussing the various forms that vessels could take in the Greek and Roman times, he comments on contemporary practices, and the amount of detail suggests that he was speaking from direct experience. He also mentions phallic glasses, lamenting their use: “Alas, sorrow and shame, glasses of this form are seen even today among Christian peoples”.⁴⁶

⁴³ Lebel 1981, p. 71 n. 2.

⁴⁴ Jaele 1642, p. 151: “Ille se hoc modo excusare pergit. Tolerabilius – inquit – est argentea bibere Ulula, quam vitreo priapo. Non enim solus Juvenalis est qui dixit: ‘vitreo bibit ille priapo’: vidi qui apud nos etiam tam incestuosos poculis bibunt, ut Bacchum Veneremque simul hauriant” (punctuation modified). See also Primer 2015.

⁴⁵ Acciarino 2014.

⁴⁶ Stucki 1598, III, 12, f. 354r–v: “Nunc de poculorum forma atque figura dicamus, quae, ut olim, ita hodie varia est atque multiplex, non tamen ad usum necessarium atque honestum, quam ad luxuriam atque temulentiam comparata. [...] Huiusmodi fuerunt *phallovitrobuli*

In sum – and speaking exclusively of the typical use of the object, i.e. for which it was most commonly produced, sold, and purchased, and not of any unforeseen or more creative use – I believe that the description made by Geuss, consistent with the material data and with some of the literary accounts, is the one closest to historical reality. These objects were primarily vessels with a playful shape, to be used in relaxed and festive situations to make diners laugh, perhaps also linked to the drunkenness caused by alcoholic beverages. Accordingly, I argue that the phallic glass could have lived two different lives: a material one as a hoax drinking vessel, used by people that bought it by European merchants; ad a literary one as a dildo, a sort of ‘stage prop’ for erotic (and then legal) writers.

4. ‘Key’ metaphors

Already from its title, the reader can tell that the ‘key’ plays an important role in Geuss’ *Sermo de clave*. But why did our theologian specifically choose this term? Was his linguistic choice original or rather connected to a wider cultural frame? It is worth investigating this for two reasons: first of all, our text has all the features of a sermon *ad populum*, and therefore it had almost certainly been delivered in High German, and then translated and reworked into Latin. Geuss repeats that ‘key’ is the term commonly used by the *laici* to refer to the object. Medieval Latin assigns two meanings to *laicus*: ‘layman’, as opposed to he or she who has taken religious vows; but also ‘ignorant, not cultivated’, because for many centuries priests and monks were (almost) the only ones receiving an intellectual education (and the meaning persisted for a long time, even when the situation changed). In either case, it is unlikely that these social

apud Iulium Capitolinum, id est vasa potoria ex vitro proprie (licet et ex alia materia) oblonga et instar priapi. Unde Iuvenalis, Satyr. 2, ‘Vitreo bibit ille priapo’. Huiusmodi pocula, pro dolor atque pudor, hodie quoque inter Christianos visuntur. [...] Nunc ut ad nostra tempora veniamus, hac quoque in hac parte Christianorum sese prodit luxuria, quae antiquam illam Graecorum atque Romanorum luxuriam non modo aequasse videtur, sed etiam longe superare. [...] Sunt autem pleraeque illae formae non tam ad necessitatem aut commoditatem aliquam, quam ad luxuriam atque ebrietatem comparatae.”

categories employed a Latin term for an object sold at the local market. We have seen that Geuss does not specify the city in which the sale took place, but that it was probably Vienna or one of the surrounding villages. If all this is true, then the Latin word *clavis* which appears in the sermon, is already a translation of an originally High German term (more specifically in *Frühneuhochdeutsch*, and in Viennese dialect).

Moreover, the association between the noun 'key' (in High German *sluzzil*, close to the contemporary *Schlüssel*) and the object(s) described above is not so immediate, at least for our contemporary perception, because the analogy is neither trivial nor to be taken for granted. The key can certainly have a phallic value, both as a generic elongated object (I am referring to the classic shape, and even more if it has a ring handle),⁴⁷ and for its action of penetrating a small hole and opening.⁴⁸ After all, names for genitals and sex are some of those in which metaphorical fantasy develops the most, and every language has infinite euphemisms to refer to the penis, even rather obscure ones; an argument based on the strict physical resemblance between the penis/glass and the key is therefore not conclusive.

Still, Geuss' use of the term 'key' as metaphor from 'penis' is not original. One of the oldest known occurrences is in Hebrew, in a passage from the Song of Songs (5:4–6), in which the bride speaks erotically of keyholes, doors, and handles. Modern dictionaries do not record the sexual value of *clavis* for classical Latin, although a possible clue is given by J. Frazer, who in the non-abridged version of *The Golden Bough* reported several world-distributed accounts on the traditional practice of opening all doors, windows, and pad-

locks while birth is taking place in a house. Here he quotes a passage from the grammarian Sextus Pompeius Festus, of 2nd c. CE, author of a Latin dictionary (actually an epitome of a larger text by Verrius Flaccus) describing "the old Roman custom of presenting women with a key as a symbol of an easy delivery".⁴⁹ The anthropologist did not resort to the 'key/penis' metaphor to explain the tradition, but it is possible that this latent meaning was somehow present.

In medieval Latin, the same double entendre is found in the *Cambridge Songs* or *Carmina Cantabrigiensia*, a famous collection of goliardic songs from the 11th century, transmitted from a single ms. (Cambridge University Library, ms. Gg. 5.35). In one of them (lyric 49), a woman addresses a man, punctuating her requests with a refrain that imitates her sighs. One of the passages reads: "Si cum clave veneris [or: Veneris] / et a, et o, / mox intrare poteris / et a, et o, et a, et o", and the word *veneris* (proper noun or verb) allows a double reading: "if you'll come with the key", or "if you [come] with the key of Venus"; in both cases, the meaning is clear enough.⁵⁰ In Anglo-Saxon, the most obvious example can be found in the Exeter Book or *Codex Exoniensis* (Exeter Cathedral Library, ms. 3501), an important collection of Old English poetry, written towards the end of the 10th c. It also contains a series of riddles, and one of them (number 44) offers the reader a description that, playing on the sexual double entendre, fits both 'key' and 'penis' (but also 'dagger'):

A wondrous thing hangs alongside a man's thigh, / under the clothing of the lord: there is a hole in front. / It is strong and hard; it has a good firmness. / When that servant raises his own garment / over his knee, he desires to greet / with the head of his hanging thing that familiar hole / that he, equally long, had often filled before.⁵¹

47 In the first case, the glans of the metaphorical penis will consist of the part of the key called "map", i.e. the one that is inserted into the lock; in the second case, the 'gland' will be the ring used for turning.

48 The symbolic association is found in some classics of psychoanalysis, such as Freud and Jung, and it is the latter who brings attention to the passage from Goethe's *Faust* placed in the exergue of my contribution. See Freud 1991 [1899], p. 471; Jung 1956 [1912–1950], pp. 124–125. On Goethe, key, and phallic symbolism, see also Steer 1979, pp. 126–140; Barton 2003, 126–127. Even the "wild analyst" Goddreck 1977 [1922], p. 166, seems to go in this direction, when he interprets everyday objects (including key and lock) as having a symbolic origin in the fact of coupling.

49 Frazer 1911, pp. 296–297; Sextus Pompeius Festus, *De Verborum Significatu*. In: Lindsay 1913, p. 47: "Clavim [sic] consuetudo erat mulieribus donare ob significandam partus facilitatem".

50 Ziolkowsky (ed.), 1994, pp. 126–127.

51 "Wrætlic hongað bi weres þeo, / frean under sceate. Foran is þyrel. / Bið stīp ond heard, stede hafað godne; / þonne se esne his agen hrægl / ofer cneo hefeð, wile þæt cupe hol / mid his hangellan heafde gretan / þæt he efenlang ær oft gefylde." Smith 2000, pp. 79–98 with transl. of Riddle 44 at p. 88. Literature on Exeter Riddles is extensive; here I will only mention Tupper 1903, pp. 97–106 (to this contribution I owe the connection with the col-

In the following centuries, the metaphor seems to have persisted in multiple languages: in English, the Green's *Dictionary of Slang* shows that the use of 'key' as a phallic euphemism has a long history, beginning shortly after the mid-16th c.⁵² (and I also found its playful use in Lawrence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, 1759–67).⁵³ In modern (and contemporary) Italian, the double entendre developed more as a verb: indeed *chiavare* (lit. 'to key') is a vulgar expression to speak of sexual intercourse, retaining its meaning since the 16th c. (first attestation) until today.⁵⁴ For the French language, I will point to the many examples discussed in the collective volume *Les Clefs des Textes Médiévaux*.⁵⁵ Particularly suitable is also a short composition in the *Adevineaux amoraux* (a collection of riddles and verbal games published in the last decades of the 15th c. in France by the printer Colard Mansion): "Question: I put my foot against his foot / and his belly against his belly / and my hanging [thing] in his slit / and when it was inside, he panted. – Answer: It is a hutch you open with a key".⁵⁶

Let us now turn to the language in which the *Sermo de Clave* was delivered, namely German, and other related languages or dialects. A popular Middle High German text in which such a sexual metaphor is used is the *Tristan*, a chivalric romance by Gottfried von Strassburg, written in the early decades of

the 13th century. After Tristan and Isolde are banished from the court of King Marke, they take refuge in a "love cave" (*Minnegrotte*), in which every detail of the place takes on symbolic meanings discussed by the poet. One of these is the entrance door, which is protected by a lock and bolt mechanism described in detail in vv. 16889–17061. Even if it is not a key, the sexual connotation – along with the parallels with the virtues of true love – is very clear and already studied by critics.⁵⁷

In addition to the not-too-explicit double entendre in Goethe's *Faust* quoted in the exergue, we can find examples of this metaphor in an important 19th-century collection of old riddles in Low German (*Niederdeutsch*); here, at least three short compositions have a 'key' answer and suggest double entendre: "What slithers into the hole and leaves its paw dangling?"; "It slips and tumbles and whines into the hole"; and "It stands rigidly, glides smoothly. Wupps!, it is inside".⁵⁸ For a later period, the sexual connotation of 'key' has been recorded in three dictionaries: A. Schmeller (1877) reports a quotation from Geuss' *Sermo de clave*, citing a Munich manuscript (labelled here as 'D'), which explains why the meaning is included in a Bavarian dialect dictionary. H. Frischbier (1883) in his *Preussisches Wörterbuch* reports another example – most likely taken from oral testimonies, as he does not cite any bibliographical references – in which the expression *verdrehter Schlüssel* ('twisted key') is said to mean a man suffering from syphilis. Finally, in the so-called Grimm's Dictionary (the monumental undertaking begun by the two brothers, but completed only much later) the meaning of *Schlüssel* as 'penis' is cited, based on the two previous sources.⁵⁹ In addition to these, Geuss' sermon is

lections of Rolland and Eckart mentioned below); Gleißner 1984, pp. 354–361 (pointing to the collection of riddle by Eckart, see below); Salvador 2003, pp. 76–82 (who links it to the Song of Songs and the Cambridge Song). I thank Martino Manca for having directed me to riddle 44 in the Exeter Book first.

52 Green 2024, s.v. "key – noun".

53 Sterne 1983, vol. 4, p. 216: "Harsh and untuneful are the notes of love / Unless my Julia strikes the key / Her hand alone can touch the part / Whose dulcet movement charms the heart / And governs all the man with sympathetick sway". For a possible pun on key as a phallus also in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), see King 2000, pp. 83–84.

54 For *clavus* (also meaning 'helm') in Pre-Medieval Latin in the sexual sense, see Adams 1982, p. 25. For Italian and other Romance languages, see the summaries and bibliographical references in Fraccari 2006, p. 344; F. Latella 2016, pp. 13–14.

55 Pomel (ed.) 2006.

56 Rolland 1877, n° 144b, p. 70: "Je mis mon pied contre son pied / et son ventre contre son ventre / et mon pendu en son fendu / Et quant il fut ens il halotta. – C'est une huche qu'on ouvre d'une clef"; my transl. See also *ibid.*, n° 144a: "Ventre contre ventre, / la main tenant le robinet. – La porte qu'on ouvre avec une clef". The metaphor is discussed also in Voltaire's *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, s.v. "Adultère".

57 Marold 2004, pp. 288–289; see also Volker 1995, pp. 50–51.

58 Eckart 1894, my transl. I quote the original below, together with its contemporary German translation: n° 37 p. 3: "Wat krept ent Loch un lett de Pote bute?" [Was kriecht ins Loch und lässt die Pfote hängen?]; n° 146 p. 16: "Dat rütert un pütert un jammert nam Loch" [Das rutscht und purzelt und jammert ins Loch]; n° 222 p. 23: "Stift steit er, / Glatt gleit er, / Wupps! ös er drönn" [Steif steht er, Glatt gleitet er, wupps!, ist er drinn]. Tupper 1903 also indicates parallels with the collection of riddles by Wossidlo 1897, n° 145.a, p. 73; n° 434.i.2, p. 308.

59 Schmeller 1877, col. 537; Frischbier 1883, p. 291a; Deutsches Wörterbuch 2023, s.v. 'schlüssel', 5.c.γ.

also quoted by M. Höfler (1908), but the scholar connects *clavis* to *Nagel* (in Latin *clavus*, -i, 'nail').⁶⁰ Nowadays, the metaphor would be understandable for a German speaker but it has not been integrated into everyday colloquial language.⁶¹

Crossing the information obtained in the previous section on the literary evidence of the phallic glass with that of the present one on the double entendre, we can further deduce two aspects. First, on the logic underlying the naming of the object itself sold at the market. The name has indeed a weak connection with the phallic shape, but it is justified by a sort of popular, naive pseudo-syllogism or enthymeme: 'the key is a metaphor for penis; the glass has the shape of a penis; therefore the glass is a key.' Secondly, the peculiar intersection of sets that occurs uniquely in Geuss' sermon. On the one hand, we have witnesses of the 'key/penis' metaphor; on the other, witnesses of the literary presence of the phallic glass. The *Sermo de clave*, is, as far as I know, the only account that simultaneously belongs to both sets, as it speaks of the *Phallsuglas*, and names it *clavis/sluzzil*. The three elements 'glass-penis-key' are thus connected, putting the central one between brackets and identifying the two extremes.

5. Against the immorality of customs

We have seen above that Geuss' *Sermo de clave*, being a sermon *ad populum*, was preached in High German and then translated (and possibly reworked) into Latin. The final result is a short text (less than 1500 words in the longest version), and it is composed of a prologue, three sections, and an epilogue. Each section concerns a specific dimension of the popular practice: the first focuses on the production of the object; the second, on its sale; and the third, on the tolerance embraced up to that point by the secular authorities. Within

them, the author also touches on other topics, such as the diabolical origin of the 'key', or the lust and temptation of the flesh.

Synthesizing the argumentative core of the *Sermo*, the moral problem of this practice for Geuss is twofold: it is against modesty and public decency, which requires private parts (and their representations) not to be publicly exposed. Moreover, the manufacture, perception, and purchase of such an object can cause an increase in sexual arousal, generating lustful thoughts, and eventually sinful actions.⁶²

The first section focuses on the illicity of the production of the *clavis*. Geuss' simple argument starts with a passage from the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas (II^a II^{ae}, quest. 169, art. 2), where it is stated that, if a technique produces something that cannot be used except sinfully, then the artisans who practice this technique are sinning, since they provide others with the opportunity to do so.⁶³ The production of the *clavis* falls within the situations discussed by the Dominican, and it would have no other effect or other purpose than to provoke lust.⁶⁴

As seen, the author imagines a counterargument: the craftsman could state that the *clavis* is to be used as a container for liquids. To this Geuss – relying on the adage "everything whose purpose is evil is bad, but not everything whose purpose is good is good" (I.3)⁶⁵ – answers that it is much more decent to drink from a glass object that does not have a phallic shape; even worse were to place the mouth on it immediately after the sacrament of communion.

⁶⁰ Höfler 1908, p. 29.

⁶¹ An informal survey I conducted among native German speakers of various ages and geographical origins revealed that the association between 'Schlüssel' and 'penis' is not widespread, and that 'Schwanz' (i.e., 'tail') is usually preferred.

⁶² On this topic in general, see Bartholeyns et al. 2008.

⁶³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIa IIe, q. 169, art. 2, ad. 4. Ed. 1899, p. 359a, where he makes a vague reference to the "teachings of Plato" (*documenta Platonis*), for which see Plato, *Republica*, III, 409d–410a, and Henle 1970, p. 233. Note that this article of the *Summa* is dedicated to the question "Utrum ornatus mulierum sit sine peccato mortalis", connected with another important treatise by Geuss, namely the aforementioned *De superfluitate et pretiositate ornamentorum*.

⁶⁴ Geuss could read a rich discussion of the permissibility of the *artes mechanicae* in Henry of Langenstein (d. 1397, one of the founders of the Faculty of Theology in Vienna along with Henry of Oyta), in his wide commentary to Jerome's *Prologus Galleatus*, chap. 6: see Henricus de Langenstein, *Expositio Prologi Biblie*, in ms. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, cod. 3922, f. 52v and following.

⁶⁵ This formula is opposite to the best-known one of Boethius, *In topicis differentiis*, II.7.25. In: Nikitas 1990, p. 35: "Cuius finis est bonus, ipsum quoque bonum est".

The fact that this object could have had an actual utility does not reduce the incitement to lustful thoughts and actions: the craftsman shall “make glass objects without the shape of the key” (I.4).

Having condemned the production of the object, in the second section Geuss focuses on the public buying and selling, and he employs two sets of arguments to criticize it. The first: private parts must be covered, and the same goes for their representations; thus they must not be publicly displayed, sold or bought. To strengthen it, he relies on three biblical passages: an observation by Paul according to which the parts of the body considered most indecent are usually covered (1 Cor. 12:23); the episode of Adam and Eve, who covered themselves with fig leaves once they discovered their nakedness (Gen. 3:7);⁶⁶ and finally the episode of Noah's drunkenness (Gen. 9:20–27). The latter is told in full, perhaps because it is the one with greater vividness. After the flood and the arrival on dry land, Noah discovers the cultivation of vines, and he obtains wine from them. One day he gets drunk and falls asleep naked inside his tent; one of his three sons, Cham, enters the tent and sees the father's private parts. He calls his two brothers, Shem and Japhet, who cover Noah's *verenda* without looking at them: they put a cloak on their shoulders and walking backwards they cover him. After waking up, Noah learns of what happened, curses the son of Cham, that is Chanaan, and subjects him to the power of Shem and Japhet.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Regarding this biblical passage, an interesting reference to the *verenda* is found in Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl (d. 1433), who in his treatise on the five senses speaks of the “unchaste eyes” that curiously look at the private parts, their own and of others, and at sexual intercourse; but it does not talk about their *ymago* and *figura*, nor about phallic glasses, and the connection with Geuss' topic seems weak. See Nicholas de Dinkelsbühl, *De quinque sensibus*. Straßburg 1516, tr. VIII, ff. 153ra–163vb, at f. 155ra: “Dubitatur penes quid potest cognosci impudicus oculus [...]. Respondetur quod primo ex hoc: si a proposito delectatur vel audet respicere verenda in aliis vel etiam in se sine rationabili causa, sicut Cham qui respexit verenda patris sui irrisit, ideo maledictus est, Gen. 9. Tripliciter enim peccavit: primo, quia virilia patris curiose respexit; secundo, quia eadem non cooperuit; tertio, quia derisione patris aliis nuntiavit. Secundo dicitur ‘oculus impudicus’ qui non refugit curiose aspicere quando simul conveniunt sive coeunt quecumque animalia [...]. Tertio, impudicus est oculus qui deliberate respicit representationes actuum impudicorum, sicut Gentiles olim faciebant in theatris, et adhuc quidam ioculatores exercent cum monachorum imaginibus et coquinariis, et deterius est in ecclesiis per representationem medici et sue uxoris in die Resurrectionis dominice.”

⁶⁷ The story of Noah's drunkenness and the curse on his son in Gen. 9:20–27 has raised a great deal of doubt in Jewish and Christian exegetes of all periods, who have asked, for

Geuss adds a realistic and lively paragraph, in which he describes the playful and laughing behavior of the women at the market, who eye the various phallic glasses, touch them, and comment with their companions (II.6; see more below). According to the theologian, the Devil himself is behind the creation of this artifact: it is him and his ‘henchmen’ who have invented such a vile object, so that men purified from sin (contrite, confessed, and communicated) immediately fall back into it.⁶⁸ It is rare – Geuss insists – that the anniversary of the dedication of the church is celebrated without the participants purchasing indulgences: on this occasion, the Devil “sets his throne” and, with a sort of unequal exchange, sells an object that negatively counterbalances and indeed surpasses the redemption just acquired through indulgences (II.7).

The second argument to justify the illegality of the sale of *Phallusglas* is shorter, and drawn again from the economic sphere. For a contract to be lawful and fair, the goods purchased and the price paid must be adequate; but the ‘key’ is useless or – even worse – harmful, and it is exchanged for a value of money, useful in itself (II.8).

Having also condemned the sale of the *clavis*, in the third section Geuss focuses on the legal dimension, criticizing the fact that selling and buying are allowed by those who have secular powers, such as “princes, judges, and mayors” (the Latin term is *magistri civium*, likely a literal translation of *Bürgermeister*). By allowing it, they participate in the sins connected to this object (III.1; the idea bears a parallelism with the guilt of the artisans seen above).

example, what the actual sin committed was against his father, or whether the curse justified the slavery of black peoples (and in this sense it also affected African and Post-colonial studies). See Goldenberg 2005 and 2009; Haynes 2002.

⁶⁸ On the presence of the devil – and especially on his desire to have and spread his own “images” as God do – see Johann Geuss, *Questiones de temptationibus et motibus primis circa Epistolam canonicam Iacobi*, in ms. Vienna, Schottenstiftbibliothek, 157, ff. 1v–282v, here f. 192r: “Similiter melodie ad lasciviam provocantes et corearum gesticulationem, vestium forme turpes et earum monstruose effigies [...], quarum habitudinum et dispositionum inventor et introductor dyabolus fuit, qui contra formam humane honestatis adinvenit et cotidie invenit nove sarture et figure robas, quibus eos turpiter, inutiliter et monstruose induit qui eius suggestionibus cedunt. Vult enim etiam inter homines dyabolus ymagines suas habere, sicut Deus suas: ipse effigies turpitudinis, Deus ymagines religionis.”

The theologian starts with the general assumption that superiors should push their subjects towards virtues and virtuous actions, and that they should punish public evils (except in the case in which the latter are permitted, to avoid worst consequences). Here he also quotes a passage from the apostle Paul: the minister of God is a servant of the Lord and is armed for a legitimate reason, as he is an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer (Rom. 13:4). If these *superiores*, despite knowing that their subjects are doing evil and being able to easily prevent it, do nothing, then they sin just as much as the *inferiores* do (III.2).

Geuss invites his listeners and readers not to incite and tempt others: people have lust, the “tyrant of nature”, already within them, in their flesh and sensuality, which incessantly pushes towards carnal sins. Inducing others to sin is contrary to the principle of the love of one’s neighbor (*dilectio proximi*); and it is also wrong to tempt oneself by buying the much-criticized object, since one is not sure whether he or she will be able to overcome the temptation, or will succumb to it, therefore mortally sinning (III.4). At the conclusion of the third section, we find a paragraph (copied in only two of the five known manuscripts that transmit the text) which expands the reflection on the weakness of the flesh. According to Geuss, we should not voluntarily seek temptation, since the innate corruption in every human being, inherited from original sin, is sufficient; indeed, every human naturally tends more towards evil than towards good and does bad actions more easily than good ones (III.5). And in a rhetorical impulse he writes:

Evils and temptations are not to be sought, for we always have with us our enemy, namely our own flesh, the fiercest among all our adversaries. We feed it as long as we live, it follows us wherever we go, and it will die with us. We do not need to show the forest to the wolf: it will find it well enough on its own.

The text ends with a short epilogue that extends what has been said about the *clavis* to two other similar practices related to the depiction of intimate parts: drawn or painted images (*picturae*, without specifying the material sup-

port), and representations or symbols (*ymagines*) sewn on rich fabrics. The reader will notice that it is women (*sutrices*) who sew such images.⁶⁹

In the whole sermon, Geuss quotes four biblical passages, an article of the *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas, and in III.4 he makes a vague reference to the *doctores* who commented on Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*, Book II, Distinction 21 (on the temptations of the Devil).⁷⁰ Geuss had countless patristic *auctoritates* at his disposal which offered strong criticism of lust, and could easily have found further reflections in the scholastics, which focuses on multiple topics, including practical ones; it would therefore have been easy to find passages that supported his points and to link them together. The number of quotations in the text is relatively low and cannot be sufficiently explained by its brevity (as we have many short texts from the same period and cultural area overwhelmed by quotations). In this sparseness, we must see a voluntary choice that takes into account the (actual and desired) audience of the text, both oral and written; by limiting non-biblical quotations, Geuss probably wanted to facilitate the understanding and eventual diffusion of the *Sermo de clave*, preferring to exploit arguments based on common sense and public decency.⁷¹

6. A close(r) reading

One of the richest and most interesting paragraphs is the description of the women at the market; although short, it raises different reflections. After having told the episode of Noah’s drunkenness and his two sons’ covering up of his nakedness, model and example of decent behavior, Geuss shifts to present times:

⁶⁹ Another important discussion connected to Viennese ‘aesthetic theology’ comes from the above-mentioned Henry of Langenstein, who wrote an *Epistola de contemptu mundi* (also known as *De quadam pictura*, still unedited), of which Geuss was most likely aware. I thank M. Brinzei for this indication.

⁷⁰ Petrus Lombardus, *Sententiae*, IV, dist. 21. In: Brady 1971, pp. 433–438.

⁷¹ In the continuation of *Sermo de dedicatione*’s paragraph on the sale of the ‘key’ (see above), Geuss summarizes what was discussed at greater length in the *Sermo de Clave*, referring to the three biblical passages in favor of the covering of private parts, its being an unfair economic agreement, and Devil’s action behind this.

Behold, men did not wish to see men's private parts, but rather to cover them: [a behavior] rightly followed by men, and even more by women. But now, at the time of dedication, women go [to the stands] and not only do not turn their eyes away from that shameful figure, but they gaze intently upon it, take it in their hands, and fondle it, laughing and giggling in front of others. And this is not a sign of chastity in them, because a chaste woman would not want to see such things, and even less to fondle them publicly (II.6).

In Geuss' eyes, the biggest problem was that the phallic glass acts as a trigger of the sexual arousal of those who look at it and purchase it. However, in the passage describing the *mulieres* at the market, who do not limit themselves to voyeurism (*inspicere, oculos non avertere*), but also touch and palpate (*recipere ad manus, contrectare*), the modern reader could find a different interpretation. I am referring to a simple mechanism of transposition, in which buyers stage, in the public space and in a permitted form, what they could and should not do otherwise (in this case, a licentious and playful behavior towards the male genitalia). We can then oppose the moral interpretation of the theologian with a more anthropological one, of functionalist inspiration, in which this object serves the purpose of partially discharging sexual energy. Latent desire is subjected to repression by the moral and religious norms of society, and therefore frustrated; the displacement – in the form of a 'game' with phallic craftsmanship – allows a catharsis, a satisfaction of this desire, which is thus kept under control.

This hermeneutical attempt has limited value: to verify whether it fulfills this function, the micro-phenomenon should be placed in the broader context of the public and private life of Vienna, and in the set of mechanisms aimed at controlling, expressing, or satisfying those desires. Nonetheless, the discrepancy between the two interpretations of the effects of the phallic glass allows us to highlight a hidden point. In some passages of the *Sermo de clave*, there is an overlap between the real thing and its representation – which could explain why the theologian assigns so much power to the perception of the *clavis* itself. In almost the entire text, Geuss is careful to distinguish between *verenda*

and *ymagines (or figurae) verendorum*; however, in at least one paragraph, the two ontological categories seem to be confused. In section III he talks about men with secular power, who do nothing to prevent the sale of phallic glass:

And there is no doubt [...] that their [*scil.* men's] private parts are thus openly sold. And I believe that women, who do not have any public authority, would not have tolerated for so long that their [*scil.* women's] private parts were bought and sold publicly (III.3).

Here Geuss employs *eorum verenda*, as if he were not talking about their representation, but about the actual genitals. Clearly, the theologian is still speaking of the phallic vessel; however, its tone becomes cruder and suggestive, even more so if imagined during the oral performance of the sermon. The letter of the text is clear: their private parts are openly sold. The men seem almost torn to pieces, deprived of an essential and constitutive part of their bodies, and I believe that Geuss is attempting to urge their honor, in its most virile dimension. Then, expressing the fear that such a situation will degenerate in the sale of female genitals too, he adds:

If such selling and buying are not prohibited, there is reason to fear that, to the confusion and detriment of women, who have long purchased men's genitalia, [also] women's private parts may be openly sold (III.5).

Once again, women purchase male genitalia, and risk seeing theirs sold on market stands. Women who buy private parts, as if they were common goods: the image is strong, effective, and somehow dreamlike – or rather nightmarish. It is no coincidence that this oppressive and almost horrifying fantasy arises from the mind of a religious man who did not have a positive opinion of the female gender (and to prove this there would be countless passages in his other texts, such as in *De superfluitate et pretiositate indumentorum*, in which he attacks the lasciviousness of women and their way of dressing provocatively). A scene like this can easily remind us of the concept of *Kastration-sangst*. An anachronistic reading? To be fair, this interpretation would not only

be based on a Freudian theory, since in the Genesis episode of the drunken Noah (told by Geuss in II.5) the guilt of the curious son Cham was already interpreted as the castration of the father by Rav Abba Arikha in the 3rd century BC, as recorded in the Babylonian Talmud.⁷²

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But was it only women who bought the phallic object, or is this a partial representation? We cannot lightly assume that the theologian's account reflects reality, i.e. his description corresponds to popular practices, and that the author is not pursuing other objectives instead. In the *Sermo de clave*, Geuss generically speaks of *homines* (both genders), or of "sellers" and "buyers", even when he criticizes the faithful who, after devoutly receiving the sacrament of the Eucharist, place their mouths on the *res turpis*. Everything suggests that in the daily life experienced by the author and the people he was addressing, the *Phallusglas* was jokingly used as a vessel by both genders (thus implying the imitation of homosexual fellatio by men). Nevertheless, in some paragraphs, he strongly insists on a contrast between men and women, as opposite – and opposing – genders.

Starting again with paragraph II.6, we can notice that there are only women in front of the stand, improperly touching and playing with phallic glasses (exactly as in the 1680 frontispiece of *The School of Venus* seen above). Certainly, Geuss does not want to imply that this is the only gender who purchased the object, since if this had been the case, the arguments used to dissuade and condemn it would have been very different; yet the criticism is aimed above all at women, who now appear to be the main culprits and scapegoats of the scandalous purchase. To understand the theologian's hatred for their playful behavior, we must know that the 'light' laughter of the women – as their gaze – is anything but harmless: for Geuss it can be dangerous and aggressive, as is clear in a passage from his short collection of *Questiones de Risu*. Here, while explaining that laughter can constitute a mortal sin if it creates a scandal in society, he gives the example of female laughter, and criticizes the situa-

tions "when women scandalize, with their uncontrolled laughter, a man that they do not know" (where *alienus vir* can also mean a man married to another woman).⁷³

The contrast between the two genders is even more marked in paragraph III.3, where the real behavior of men (who allow the sale of their own genitalia) is compared with the hypothetical righter behavior of women (who instead would not allow it), which this time works as a criticism of men. According to his reasoning, if women had political power (absurd premise), they still would not want to see their genitals exposed and sold publicly; that is why men also, who are in power, should prevent the buying and selling of the 'key'. The passage seems to reinforce the above-mentioned overlapping between object and representation, which here also involves a broadening of the possession, extended from the *res* only to its *ymago* or *figura*. Men and women have the 'right' to choose regarding the representation of their own genitalia respectively; if it is so, then why does Geuss posit a difference between men, who authorize the representation, and women, who are not equally liberal? Why should women not want the same? Just above, the author highlighted the dishonorable behavior of women; how can they act now as a positive (albeit hypothetical) model for men?

There are at least two possible solutions to this question. The most immediate is that Geuss wants to put pressure on the honor of men, shaming them through a comparison with the hypothetical behavior of women. Thus, the misogynistic reasoning would sound as follows: 'if women (who are inferior to men) do this, then men should, *even more*, want to do the same'. Beyond this, it is possible to read a note of resentment, due to the unequal situation: 'women play with male genitals, but they would not want men to do the same with theirs'. In light of these passages, we can think of Geuss' sermon as a platform to simultaneously address multiple levels of the public: all those

⁷² Goldenberg 2005, pp. 261–265.

⁷³ Johann Geuss, *Questiones de Risu*, quest. 2, in ms. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Latin 10703, ff. 172v–179r, here f. 177v: "Risus in tribus casibus est peccatum mortale, quorum primus est ratione scandalii [...]. Similiter, quando mulier per inordinatum risum mortaliter scandalizat alienum virum". See also Alexander de Hales et alii, *Summa Theologica*, bk. II, pars 2, inq. 3, tract. 3, sect. 3, quest. 1. Ed. 1930, pp. 470–473.

who produce, sell, and buy the 'key', of course; the secular leaders, who turn a blind eye to this bad practice; women, criticized because they should behave chastely; and now we add men *as representatives* of the male gender, violated in the 'right of image' of a part of their body. The sermon would resonate as a bell or alarm to men who do not realize that they are selling something that should be dear to them, and who are authorizing a practice that harms them; a loud bell to shake 'sleeping' men.

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One must return once again to the strategic use of the biblical episode of Gen. 9:20–27, to bring out the game of hidden references to which it leads. Immediately after telling the all-male story of Noah's nakedness and the different reactions of his children (with the *verenda patris* spotted by Cham and covered by Shem and Japhet), the theologian explains that these and other moments were, in past times, an example for men and women; yet the latter *now* deviate from the teachings, and in this respect, they are more criticizable than men. Here he puts the description of the playful purchase (II.6), but he focuses on women, while men have – so to speak – withdrawn from the scene. I propose to read the biblical episode not only as a model and example (or better, a sermocinary *exemplum*) from which to draw a moral of the story or a general principle, but also as a set of terms of comparison for as many equivalences with the reality described by Geuss. If we do so, then it is clear that, in the Vienna of the 15th c., Noah's *verenda* are the *claves vitreae*; those who take part in the game of glances towards the 'keys' are Cham/Chanaan, guilty and cursed by the Lord; Geuss, who wants to cover (with his sermon) what should not be shown, implicitly identifies himself with the two other brothers. In this not-so-hidden series of associations between elements of the biblical episode and of the market staging, however, something central to the whole story is missing, as being left unpaired. It is Noah himself, who is drunk and asleep: what does he correspond to, in the reality criticised by Geuss? Since the 'key' serves as the patriarch's genitals, the listener/reader should conclude that Noah's role in the analogy is played by men. Those, rather than having completely withdrawn from the scene, are 'behind the scenes', sleep-

ing, drunk, and exposed to prying eyes, just like Noah. This would seem a hermeneutical stretch if it did not only connect so well to the idea, implied by the sermon, of men's feeling of being defenseless but also to the reading of the 'alarm bell' proposed above.

But that is not all: we have seen that in the third section, after the hypothetical comparison with women, Geuss adds another reason that should push men to prevent the buying and selling of the object: following the present path, female genitalia will soon be sold too, and this could cause *confusio et poena* among women – who, however, have no problem buying the *verenda* of men. The point of Geuss' argument is simple: the pain would be felt only by those whose genitals are sold. But if this is a general principle (albeit implicit) of his reasoning, and the theologian draws the coherent (and explicit) consequence that women would feel pain if the same occurred to them, then what about the pain of men, whose genitals are sold there and then, during the celebrations, and not just as a hypothesis? One might imagine that they did not feel it at all, since they are seen as 'stronger' (whatever it may mean) than women. Then the principle would be less universal than he wanted us to believe, having value only for women and their genitals, but not for men. But I believe that, throughout the violent imagery deployed, Geuss gave voice to a feeling of pain, due precisely to the overlap of object and representation already discussed. If the correct solution were the latter, the sermon would then have the aim of drawing attention to men's points of view, neglected and wounded in their pride. Read from this perspective, the image/scenography of the female buyers of male genitalia at the market *embodies* a less abstract and more individual connotation.

Following this idea of the two causes of the illicitness of the 'key' (i.e. as a crime against public decency and a trigger for lust), a third could be added: rectifying an incorrect situation, that now is to the clear disadvantage of men, who see their genitals sold. The rebalancing is not achieved by including the sale of female *verenda*, something that Geuss fears, but by interrupting the current practice, which only concerns male ones. If we were to ask what audience the theologian was targeting, and who he was addressing in his persuasive strategies, then the answers are multiple: all the citizens of Vienna, col-

lectively; the secular authorities; women who behave immodestly and offend men's pride; and also men as *virii*, who allow themselves to be treated in such a manner. But above all, on whose behalf is Geuss speaking? Until now he had presented himself as an external and superior authority not only to traders and buyers, but also to the slothful secular powers; yet he is also a man and possessor of genitalia, although sworn to celibacy, and he too has the right to speak about the *verenda virilia* of all men. After all, the passage in III.3 relied on mannish honor, except that Geuss would now be addressing his male listeners as a member of that same gender, and not from an external point of view.

Overlapping between object and its representation; violent oniric imagination; the *ad hoc* contrast between the two genders; the aggressive power of female laughter and gazing, and male vulnerability; the not-so-veiled logic of the equivalences between biblical episode and city customs; the attempt to defend and indeed speak on behalf of the 'disadvantaged' category of the *virii*; the ambiguous position of the author. These are the dimensions that emerged during the reading of some central passages. I tried to stay as close as possible to the text, while at the same time giving it little trust, trying not to believe the easy connections it provided, or on the contrary following them to the end, even against its intention. It has been taken literally, where the author wanted to exploit a simple rhetorical effect, or taken too seriously, when he just did an *en passant* comparison; amplified, if he whispered or took something for granted, and questioned about the grey areas, while he would have preferred to cast its light on something else. A text entirely dedicated to wanting to cover what has been unduly exposed must have something it prefers not to show (as each text does, without exception). Some of the proposed interpretations are then forced, but only in the sense that the text has been forced to uncover those *verenda* that it had taken care to hide under the various layers of words laid down by its author.

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In conclusion, the reader should not be surprised that so much content has emerged from such a short text, curious but apparently of little value, and

could rightly have invoked C. Wickham's words, that criticizes "the historian-as-anthropologist focusing only on the fascination of the strange, sometimes on a very small scale indeed".⁷⁴ The same happens in Goethe's passage placed in the exergue; and to Mephistopheles who offered him 'just' a key, Faust replied somewhere between doubtful and ironic: "That tiny thing!" The Devil then urges him to "seize and esteem it," to "see what it may bring." And behold, the magic key begins to grow ...

74 Wickham 2016, p. 7.

Appendix 1: Philological study

The *Sermo de clave* has until now had only manuscript circulation. I list the five known witnesses (all in paper, copied during the 15th c.) below; for the codicological description and the full content of the manuscripts, the reader will refer to the respective catalogues.

A = Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. Lat. 442, ff. 239va–240vb.⁷⁵

B = Gießen, Universitätsbibliothek, 755, ff. 119vb–120vb.⁷⁶

C = Vorau, Stiftbibliothek, 361 (olim 294), ff. 146r–148r.⁷⁷

D = München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 11751, ff. 3r–4v.⁷⁸

E = Seittenstetten, Stiftbibliothek, 221, ff. 203r–204v.⁷⁹

Ms. **A** was produced at the University of Heidelberg around the middle of the 15th century, and it contains *collationes* by its professors (dated 1438 and 1444); it also bears a connection to Vienna, as it transmits texts by Henry of Langenstein and Thomas Ebendorfer. In 1623, during the Thirty Years' War, Duke Maximilian I of Bavaria conquered the city of Munich, and then donated the books of the University Library (along with other important collections) to Pope Gregory XV, in recognition of the support provided by the latter.⁸⁰ Ms. **B** was produced around mid-15th c. (dates 1449 and 1451); the ms. belonged to St. Mark's church in Butzbach (15 km from Gießen, in Hessen, Germany), which housed, from 1468 to 1555, a community of the Brethren of the Common Life (key movement of the *devotio moderna*, founded by Gerard Groote, d. 1384). The library also contained the personal collection of the famous the-

ologian Gabriel Biel (d. 1495), who was the first prior of that community; ms. B indeed features marginal titles by the hand of Biel himself. Ms. **C** was probably produced in – or soon after acquired by – the Augustinian Abbey of Vorau (Styria, Austria), as the indication of possession (f. 1r, marg. inf.) indicates the year 1448. Ms. **D** comes from the Augustinian abbey of Polling (as indicated by the exterior shelfmark: “Poll. 451”) in Bavaria, Germany; following secularisation in the early 19th c., its collection was incorporated into the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek. Ms. **E** has no explicit notes of ownership; some parts of it were probably copied in the Vienna University *milieu*, as the content shows (ff. 3v–13v: some *collationes pro licentiandis* of that city, in 1453–1454). It probably became part of to the Benedictine abbey of Seittenstetten (Lower Austria) either through a theology student who entered the order, giving all his possessions to it, or thanks to a testamentary donation.

*

The complete collation of the five witnesses made it possible to detect a clear division into two groups (not yet families) of mss. The first, which I call α , includes the mss. AB, while the second, β , is composed of CDE. Leaving aside phonetical divergences, multiple inversions, and minor variants, a main difference concerns the Prologue and incipit, in two different versions for the two groups (see Appendix II for the edition). Moreover, the lengthy paragraph III.5 (ca. eighty words) is present in α but absent in β . The two groups also differ in some non-erroneous variants, and small additions or omissions (the number refers to the variant apparatus of the critical edition):

19. AB sambuci] *om.* CDE; 25. operibus] *om.*; 45. malam] *om.*; 49. artifex] vitrifex; 53. illud sacramentum benedictum altaris] sacramentum ewkaristie; 61. verenda et figure eorum sunt tegenda] verenda sunt tegenda et idem est de ymaginibus et figuris verendarum; 69. cooperiunt] operiunt; 92. eius] suus; 107. suis] *om.*; 121. et cachynnantes] *om.*; 139. faciant] efficiant; 176. in] propria *add.*; 188. sive talis turpis figure] *om.*

Unfortunately, the difference in these *loci* does not allow us to determine their origin: the two prologues convey the same informations; the passage in

⁷⁵ Stevenson/De Rossi 1886, pp. 138–139; Metzger 2021.

⁷⁶ Bayerer 1980, pp. 173–176.

⁷⁷ Pangerl 1867, p. 130; Fank 1936, pp. 206–207.

⁷⁸ Halm et al. 1876, pp. 36–37.

⁷⁹ Kapeller/Pampichler 1800, pp. 44–51; Glaßner 2005, pp. 110–111.

⁸⁰ Montuschi 2014.

III.5 is not substantial, and does not change the intelligibility of the point in which it is inserted/omitted; the same applies to equivalent variants. Furthermore, the members of the two identified groups *do not share strong monogenetic errors*: neither AB nor CDE share errors between themselves; this is an important point, which will be discussed shortly below.

Within the α group, we can notice that A presents some differences with B, and more generally with all the other four mss.; but it does not contain individual monogenetic errors. Ms. A bears some minor individual variants, and their contextual reading shows that they modify the meaning of the text little to nothing. For B, I point out an important omission by homeoteleuton of nine words in total (due to the repetition of the adjective “suis” at a short distance, first used for “duobus fratribus”, later for “humeris”, in II.5), and other minor errors and variants:

34. ACDE artis] artificis B; 97. foras – suis] *om. per hom.*; 125. contrectare] contractare.

To hypothesize that A and B depend on the same (non-original) model, the two should share at least one strong error, which is not the case. Similarly, it would be wrong to state that A is the (non-original) model of B since, if it was true, B would have all the errors of A plus other individual errors, a situation which does not occur. For now, it is safer to consider them as siblings.

Moving to the β group, we can start from D, for which it is enough to point out an important erroneous omission of fourteen words in total (n. 116), probably due to the skipping of one or more lines of the model. In the β group, a sub-group γ composed of CE is recognizable, characterized by small additions/omissions and equivalent variants, but also by strong errors, mostly due to misreadings (“ementes” becomes “emendentes”, “nominentur” is now “monentes”) or mishearing (e.g., “sunt viri” in “sic fieri”: having similar vowels, same starting and ending, plus common confusion between two labiodental fricatives, voiceless ‘f’ and voiced ‘v’):

17. ABD sive clavem] *om. CE*; 28. prebentes] prebendo; 36. extirpande] exstirpande E, exstrepane C; 38. apparet] appareat; 39. ad] propter; 41. propter] ad; 52. est] fuit; 59. emere] talem *add.*; 73. xii] xviii; 79. post] *om.*; 85. dicitur] habetur; 88. unde] ut; 109. viri] filii; 112. adverterent viri] viri deberent advertere; 116. dedicationum vadunt – fixe] *om. D*; 136. ementes] emendentes; 138. indulgentiarum] indulgentiis; 151. nominentur] monentes C, moventes ? E; 165. sunt viri] sic fieri; 167. verum] tamen *add.*; 172. verenda mulierum] *om.*; 174. animadvertentes] advertentes; 191. sutrices] *om.*

Within the γ subgroup, the ms. E does *not* have any individual variations or errors; it possesses all the differences of γ (shared with C), and nothing else. With one exception: n. 127, where ABCD has the correct “noviter”, while E has “novit”. An error of this kind is, however, easily correctable by any reader or copyist who knows Latin and cannot be considered monogenetic. As regards C, however, I highlight the following quite serious errors, mostly due to misreading:

36. ABDE ex(s)tirpande] exstrepane C; 43. predictum] peccatum; 75. habundantiorem] habundantiam; 76. habundantiorem] habundationem *sic*; 80. consuerunt] consueverunt; 157. minister] ministro; 161. faciunt] sciunt; 185. mortaliter] mortalia.

C’s individual errors are not incorrigible, and a very careful copyist could, through lucky *emendationes ad ingenium*, have returned to all the right lessons; this last case, however, seems unlikely. Given such a situation – CE sharing variants and errors, E without individual variants and errors, and C with many of them – it is fully legitimate to consider E as the model of C.

To summarize the data obtained so far: *i.* AB (group α) have clear affinities in terms of content (first Prologue, presence of the ‘extra’ paragraph) and variants, but do not share errors; *ii.* A has no errors, but sometimes deviates from the text common to the other witnesses; *iii.* B has errors; *iv.* CDE (group β) also have strong affinities between them (second Prologue, no ‘extra’ para-

graph, variants), but no common errors; iv. D has no individual errors; v. C and E (subgroup γ) have common errors, C has individual errors but E does not, therefore being the model for C.

Given this situation, the most important aspect to determine is whether the groups α and β are actually families or whether the strong similarities between the respective members can be explained in another way. From the point of view of a standard neo-Lachmannian analysis, to be true families, their members should share *at least* one monogenetic error originating in their sub-archetype. While for longer texts it is easier to find strong, shared errors, in a short text like ours (only ca. 1500 words), a careful copyist could produce a copy, if not identical to the original, at least free from major problems. Thus, it could be that α and β depend on the original Ω , and are both very good models; the first is copied in A and B, the second in D and E, the latter being the model for C.

However, the differences between the two groups allow us to imagine a different solution. The existence of two prologues cannot be due to a copying error, because it seems to be driven by a real redactional intent (coming either from the author, or from another figure who made changes); the same could apply to the presence/absence of the long paragraph III.5. Furthermore, many differences between α and β concern reformulations, additions, and omissions, on both sides: for β the *clavis* is made “de vitro sive de medulla”, and α adds “sambuci”; while α speaks of “artifex”, β uses the term “vitrifex”; for β the *mulieres* at the market are “ridentes”, but α adds “et cachynnantes”; α ’s “illud sacramentum benedictum altaris” is more plainly a “sacramentum ewkaristie” in β , and so on. For this reason, I believe that the mss. of the groups α and β may depend each on a different redaction of the *Sermo de clave*. It is possible that the author decided to revise the Latin text, changing certain expressions and adding (or removing) words and even an entire paragraph; in this case, we would have two real redactions of the author, each represented by an original (Ω_1 and Ω_2) containing no errors (see Fig. 4). This also explains why the members of the two groups did not share monogenetic errors respectively: their model was correct, checked by the author or someone close to him (indeed, it is not possible to prove that the editorial differences are truly due to Geuss, because the text could have been reworked by someone else).

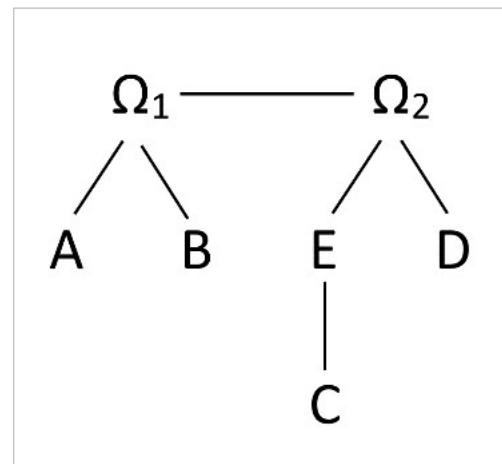


Fig. 4 *Stemma codicum*

The existence of two authorial redactions is also consistent with the practical information given by the author in the sermon. Geuss is criticising a common practice that took place on the occasion of the consecration of the church(es) and its anniversary, at least once a year if only one church was involved, or several times a year if the sale of the ‘key’ took place for different places of worship in Vienna. It is therefore possible, indeed probable, that Geuss repeated this sermon on these occasions, even modifying it. For example, the brevity and greater simplicity of the language of the text transmitted by the β group could be justified by the desire to spread an even more effective sermon, reduced to its essential features.

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Looking more generally at the content of the five mss. under examination, limited to Geuss’ texts of social interest, we can notice some other affinities between the mss. groups. For example, A and B are the only ones having the second *Sermo de ludo taxillarum* (n. 4).⁸¹ C and E instead, after the text of the

⁸¹ The first of his sermons against gambling has as its biblical theme the passage of Num. 36:4, *confundatur sortium distributio*, while the second employs Lk. 2:10, *annuntio* (Vulgate: *evangelizo*) *vobis gaudium magnum*.

Sermo de clave, copy a text in High German (n. 9),⁸² but they both lack the *De audiendo et implendo* (n. 8) and the lengthy treatise *De superfluitate indumentorum* (n. 6). This text distribution is consistent with *stemma codicum* proposed above.

	A	B	C	D	E
1. <i>De chorea</i>	x	x	-	-	x
2. <i>De septuagesima (de nuptiis et iocis et ludis tempore carnisprivalis)</i>	x	x	-	x	x
3. <i>De ludo taxillarum</i> , I	x	x	-	-	x
4. <i>De ludo taxillarum</i> , II	x	x	-	-	-
5. <i>De clave</i>	x	x	x	x	x
6. <i>De superfluitate et pretiositate indumentorum</i>	x	x	-	x	-
7. <i>De potatione vini cui intingitur lignum sanctae Crucis</i>	x	-	x	x	x
8. <i>De audiendo et implendo verbo Domini</i>	x	x	-	x	-
9. Wolfhardt OFM, against Geuss' <i>De potatione</i> (in High German)	-	-	x	-	x
10. <i>De dedicatione ecclesiae</i>	-	-	-	x	-
11. <i>De vitiis linguae</i>	-	-	-	-	x

Geuss' social treatises were often copied in clusters, and a philological investigation limited to a single text – especially if short, as the one in question – soon reveals its limits. The more precise determination of the *stemma codicum* of the *Sermo de clave* would undoubtedly benefit from a broader study of the textual transmission of the works attributed to him, and of the activity of 'composition' of the collections; but such research goes beyond the scope of the present contribution and must be postponed to the moment in which there will be more data available in this regard. As I mentioned above, the ex-

⁸² This text was composed by a Viennese Franciscan preacher, named 'Wolfhardt', in response to Geuss' *De potatione vini* (n. 7), an official determination concerning the popular practice of dipping a (supposed) fragment of Christ's cross into Eucharistic wine, to drink with the hope of curing illnesses.

ploration of Johann Geuss' texts is, in fact, just beginning, both from the point of view of content and interactions with Viennese society and from that of textual transmission.

*

As regards the attribution, title, and subdivision of the text: most of the five known witnesses provide information on the author. Ms. A writes it in the title placed immediately before the treatise: "*Sermo magistri Iohannis Geuß*" (f. 239v). Ms. B – in his red ink title, repeated in the right margin – uses a different formulation: "*Alius eiusdem de clave ...*" (f. 119vb), to be completed in "*Alius [sermo] eiusdem [auctoris]*"; the *idem auctor* is Geuss, named at the beginning of a section of the ms. (ff. 97ra–138rb) containing one of his widespread sermons, plus his socially-oriented works. The ms. opens this section with an indication of its author: "*Sermo magistri Iohannis Geus de audiendo et implendo verbum Dei*" (f. 97ra); a table of contents placed at the beginning of the ms. also attributes the section to Geuss, with a recognizable, although unusual, name: "*Sermones magistri Iohannis Gruiß [...] de vendentibus turpes figuras*" (cover page, interior). Ms. of the β group are not as informative: while in the index of ms. D (f. 1r–v) Geuss' name stands on the side of the first set of texts, as their author, ms. C does not specify any attribution of the text, and ms. E feature his name in various places (index, as well as at the beginning of other texts), but not explicitly for the *Sermo de clave*. Similar observations can be made for the title: A and B agree in calling the text *Sermo de clave que est ymago verendorum virilium*; C and D do not specify any title; and the scribe of ms. E writes in the upper margin of the f. 212r: *De venditione turpium in dedicatione ecclesiarum*.

According to the structure stated in the first lines, the edition is divided into five parts: a Prologue (with the two versions), Sections I to III, and an Epilogue; for ease of reference, each of the three sections has been subdivided into paragraphs. The explicit sources of the text are already identified in the previous pages and they will not be repeated. In the case of equivalent variants between the two groups, I follow mss. A and B.

Appendix 2: Text Edition

<Iohannes Geuss, *Sermo de clave*>

[Tit.] Sermo de clave que est ymago verendorum virilium (A1v); Sermo magistri Iohannis Geuß de clave que est ymago verendorum virilium (A239v) // Sermones magistri Iohannis Gruiß [sic]. [...] De vendentibus turpes figuras (B front cover page, interior); Alius <sermo> eiusdem <auctoris> de clave que est ymago verendorum virilium (B119vb) // *absunt C* // Primo notanda sunt aliqua contra factionem publicam tempore dedicationum cuiusdam rei turpis in locis sacris (D1r) // De venditione turpium in dedicatione ecclesiarum (E203r).

[Prol.₁]¹ \B120ra\ Tempore² dedicationum solet publice in locis sacris emi et vendi res quedam turpis, scilicet ymago verendorum virilium, quam³ ymaginem⁴ layci⁵ solito vocabulo solent nominare clavem. Et contra istam rem turpem predicando, dicam tria brevia per ordinem.

[Prol.₂]⁶ \D3r, E203r\ Secuntur ea que predicavi⁷ contra factionem et⁸ publicam in locis sacris et tempore dedicationum venditionem et emptionem⁹ cuiusdam rei turpis, videlicet ymaginis verendarum¹⁰ virilium, quam ymaginem laici¹¹ solito¹² vocabulo solent appellare clavem¹³. Et predicando contra ista, dixi in sententia^{14,15} per ordinem.

[I.1] Primum¹⁶, quod non est licitum talem ymaginem sive clavem¹⁷ facere, sive fiat de vitro sive de medulla¹⁸ sambuci¹⁹, quemadmodum mechanici²⁰ aliquot annis fecerunt²¹.

[2] Patet hoc primo, quia dicit sanctus Thomas²², Ila Ite, questione \A239vb\ 169a, articulo 2o in solutione²³ 4e rationis, quod²⁴ "si est aliqua ars ad faciendum aliqua opera quibus operibus²⁵ homines uti non possunt absque peccato, artifices talia faciendo²⁶ peccant²⁷, prebentes²⁸ directe aliis²⁹ occasionem peccandi, ut si quis fabricaret ydola vel aliqua³⁰ ad cultum ydolatrie pertinentia³¹". Et aliquibus interpositis, dicit³² quod³³ "si operibus alicuius artis³⁴ ut pluries aliqui male uterentur, quamvis de se non sunt³⁵ illicite, sunt tamen per officium \C146v\ principis a civitate extirpande³⁶, secundum documenta Platonis".

[3] Modo ars faciendi clavem est huiusmodi, quia non videtur ad quid³⁷ valeat illa clavis, nisi ad provocandum facientem et alios ad luxuriosas cogitationes, et consequenter ad luxuriam. Nec apparet³⁸ ad³⁹ quid fiat et⁴⁰ propter⁴¹ quem finem, nisi ad provocandum ad mala predicta. Ymmo⁴² timendum est quod facientes et ementes et vendentes ad predictum⁴³ malum⁴⁴ finem istam rem malam^{45,46} faciant, vendant et emant.

[4] Sed constat quod omne tale est malum cuius finis est malus, licet non omne sit bonum cuius finis est⁴⁷ bonus. Si⁴⁸ dicit artifex⁴⁹: "clavis vitrea⁵⁰ valet ad bibendum ex ea", dico sibi quod honestius est bibere ex vitro quod non est clavis⁵¹; ymmo turpe est homini honesto ore⁵² suo, quo noviter illud sacramentum benedictum altaris⁵³ recepit⁵⁴, attingere figuram tam turpem. Et cum hoc, si clavis est vitrea, non minus incitat \D3v\ ad mala predicta; faciat ergo vitra⁵⁵ sine figura clavis.

[II.1] Secundum est⁵⁶ quod non est licitum⁵⁷ publice et in locis sacris et tempore dedicationum \A240ra\ vendere et⁵⁸ emere⁵⁹ clavem sive talem turpem figuram.

[2] Patet primo ex hoc: quia⁶⁰ verenda et figure eorum sunt tegenda⁶¹, et ita non sunt publice ostendenda et vendenda⁶² ac⁶³ emenda.

[3] Quod autem verenda sunt⁶⁴ tegenda, patet primo ex communi⁶⁵ laudabili consuetudine⁶⁶ ex qua \B120rb\ viri⁶⁷ diligenter sua verenda⁶⁸ coram mulieribus tegunt, et econtra mulieres diligenter \C147r, E202v\ verenda sua coram viris cooperiunt^{69,70}. Et hoc etiam docet Apostolus⁷¹, I ad⁷² Cor. 12⁷³, dicens: "que⁷⁴ putamus ignobiliora membra esse corporis, hiis honorem habundantior⁷⁵ circumdamus; et que inhonesta sunt membra, habundantior⁷⁶ honestatem habent."

[4] Secundo patet⁷⁷ hoc exemplo nostrorum primorum parentum⁷⁸, scilicet Ade et Eve qui, cum post⁷⁹ peccatum sensissent rebellionem carnis, verenda sua texerunt et consuerunt⁸⁰ folia⁸¹ ficus, et fecerunt sibi⁸² peryzomata⁸³, ut⁸⁴ dicitur⁸⁵ Gen. 3.

[5] Tertio patet⁸⁶ hoc, quia unus homo debet verenda alterius tegere, ut patet exemplo Sem et Iaphet filiorum Noe, qui noluerunt videre verenda patris sui, sed ea operuerunt⁸⁷. Unde⁸⁸ Gen. 9 habetur⁸⁹ quod, cum Noe vir agricola plantasset vineam, et bibens vinum⁹⁰ esset inebriatus et⁹¹ iaceret nudatus in

tabernaculo suo, et Cham filius eius⁹² vidisset verenda patris sui esse nudata⁹³, nuntiavit⁹⁴ duobus fratribus suis foras. At⁹⁵ vero Sem et laphet pallium⁹⁶ imposuerunt humeris suis⁹⁷, et incedentes retrorsum⁹⁸ operuerunt⁹⁹ verenda patris sui, faciesque eorum averse¹⁰⁰ erant et virilia patris non viderunt. Et cum Noe evigillasset ex vino et didicisset ea que fecit filius suus Cham iunior¹⁰¹, \A240rb\ ait¹⁰²: maledictus Chanaan¹⁰³, servus \D4r\ servorum erit¹⁰⁴ fratribus suis. Dixitque Noe: benedictus Dominus Deus, Sem sit¹⁰⁵ Chanaan servus eius. Dilatet Dominus Deus laphet et habitet¹⁰⁶ in tabernaculis suis¹⁰⁷ Sem, sitque Chanaan servus eius. Et vocat Cham¹⁰⁸ \C147v\ Chanaan, eo quod fuit pater Chananeorum.

[6] Ecce viri¹⁰⁹ noluerunt videre verenda viri, sed magis cooperire^{110,111}; quod merito adverterent viri¹¹², et adhuc plus mulieres, que¹¹³ iam tempore dedicationum vadunt et non solum oculos ab illa turpi figura non¹¹⁴ avertunt¹¹⁵, sed fixe¹¹⁶ inspiciunt¹¹⁷, eamque ad manus recipiunt, et hinc¹¹⁸ inde contrectant¹¹⁹, ridentes et cachynnantes^{120,121} coram aliis. Et hoc non est in eis signum castitatis¹²², quia casta mulier¹²³ nollet¹²⁴ talia videre, et minus publice contrectare¹²⁵.

[7] Et quis putatis iam illo tempore sacro¹²⁶ et tempore dedicationum advenit et excogitavit illam turpem figuram, nisi dyabolus et membra eius, ut homines iam noviter¹²⁷ contritos, confessos¹²⁸ et communicatos iterum in peccata¹²⁹ precipitent? Raro est enim¹³⁰ aliqua dedicatio in qua¹³¹ homines deberent se facere indulgentiarum¹³² participes, quando¹³³ dyabolus \B120va\ apponat sedem suam \E203r\ et vendat ipse aut¹³⁴ membra eius¹³⁵ aliqua que homines ementes¹³⁶ plus peccent quam¹³⁷ se indulgentiarum¹³⁸ participes faciant¹³⁹.

[8] Secundo patet illud secundum dictum, quia contractus in vendendo¹⁴⁰ et emendo¹⁴¹ talem rem turpem et nocivam est illicitus, cum vendatur pro re bona et utili scilicet¹⁴² pecunia¹⁴³. Ad licitum autem contractum requiritur quod res vendita et pretium sint eque bona¹⁴⁴; qualiter non est hic, cum res vendita sit omnino nociva, et pretium sit¹⁴⁵ utile. \A240va\

[III.1] Tertium est¹⁴⁶ quod non licite permittunt¹⁴⁷ principes¹⁴⁸, magistrivum¹⁴⁹ et iudices aut¹⁵⁰ alii, \C148r\ qualitercumque nominentur¹⁵¹, habentes potestatem prohibendi et interdicensi ne talia fiant et publice vendantur et

emanant. Dummodo sciunt, ymmo¹⁵² fiunt participes omnium peccatorum que subditi perpetrant in hiis rebus.

[2] Patet hoc, quia¹⁵³ ad officium superiorum¹⁵⁴ pertinet quod¹⁵⁵ subditos dirigant ad virtutes et ad opera virtuosa, \D4v\ et quod puniant publica mala, saltem ista que non iuste permittuntur ad vitandum maiora. Dicitur enim ad Rom. 13¹⁵⁶ de principe quod non sine causa gladium portat: Dei enim minister¹⁵⁷ est et¹⁵⁸ vindex in iram ei qui¹⁵⁹ male agit. Et ideo, cum sciunt subditos talia mala facere et faciliter possunt ea impedire, sicut est in proposito, ipsi non licite permittunt, sed participes fiunt omnium talium malorum que¹⁶⁰ subditi faciunt¹⁶¹.

[3] Et haut¹⁶² dubium <est>, quando¹⁶³ aput¹⁶⁴ probos et honestos viros maxima sit verecundia habentibus potestatem publicam. Qui tamen sunt viri¹⁶⁵, quod eorum verenda sic publice in temporibus et locis sacris tamdiu sunt vendita; et puto quod mulieres, aput¹⁶⁶ quas non residet publica potestas, non tamdiu tollerassent quod earum verenda sic fuissent empta et vendita publice. Verum¹⁶⁷, si non prohibebitur talis venditio et emptio¹⁶⁸, timendum est quod in confusionem et penam¹⁶⁹ mulierum, que iam longo tempore virorum virilia¹⁷⁰ emerunt, adhuc vendentur¹⁷¹ publice verenda mulierum¹⁷².

[4] Desistant igitur¹⁷³ homines a talibus malis eos ad mala incitantibus, animadvertentes¹⁷⁴ quod quilibet¹⁷⁵ habet in¹⁷⁶ \A240vb\ carne et¹⁷⁷ sensualitate tyrannum nature, qui eum fortiter temptat ad peccata carnalia, et cui utinam semper sic¹⁷⁸ resisterent \C148v\ ut non sepe venialiter et mortaliter peccarent. Non faciat unus alteri id¹⁷⁹ quod¹⁸⁰ ipsum ad malum incitat, quia hoc est contra dilectionem proximi. Nec homo emat sibi¹⁸¹ ipsi¹⁸² talia que ipsum ad malum¹⁸³ temptant, quia nescit si in temptatione succumbet¹⁸⁴ \B120vb, E203v\ mortaliter¹⁸⁵ peccando, aut si eam vincet. Unde insecure est – ut dicunt doctores circa distinctionem 21am secundi <libri> *Sententiarum* – appetere temptationem carnis.

[5] Non enim sunt querenda mala et temptationes, quia habemus semper nobiscum nostrum inimicum, scilicet¹⁸⁶ propriam carnem, inter omnes hostes nostros seivissimum, quem nutrimus cum quo vivimus, qui nos sequitur quocumque imus et nobiscum morietur. Non enim est ostendenda lupo ipsa silva: per se enim bene inveniet. Sic etiam non sunt hominibus presentande vel offe-

rende occasiones peccatorum, cum ex corruptione propria ex primis parentibus nobis innata satis inclinamur ad peccata, ita quod quilibet homo plus inclinatur ad malum quam ad bonum, et pronior est ad malum quam ad bonum¹⁸⁷.

[*Epil.*] Et sicut dixi de factione et venditione et emptione clavis sive talis turpis figure¹⁸⁸, ita dicendum est¹⁸⁹ de picturis turpibus et de¹⁹⁰ ymaginibus turpibus quas sutrices¹⁹¹ suunt in pannis pretiosis et publice vendunt et emunt¹⁹², et eodem modo est dicendum de aliis consimilibus¹⁹³.

1 prologus 1 in AB tantum 2 tempore] -empore A 3 quam] p.c. A 4 ymaginem] in marg. sx. A 5 layci] laici B 6 prologus 2 in CDE tantum 7 secuntur – predi-
cavi] notanda sunt aliqua D 8 et] om. D 9 emptionem] emtionem C 10 ve-
renderum] verendorum D 11 laici] layci D 12 solito] solo C 13 solent appellare
clavem] inv. D 14 sententia] hic ponit spatium vacuum E 15 et predicando –
sententia] dicendo D 16 primum] quorum primum fuit CE, quorum primum sit D
17 sive clavem] om. CE 18 medulla] ban- add. sed del. B 19 sambuci] om. CDE
20 mechanici] sepe add. sed del. A 21 aliquot annis fecerunt] inv. A 22 thomas]
in add. CDE 23 solutione] sollutione C 24 quod] quia C 25 operibus] om. CDE
26 faciendo] facientes A 27 peccant] peccando C 28 prebentes] p.c. B, pre-
bendo CE 29 directe aliis] inv. CE 30 aliqua] aliq. B 31 pertinentia] pertinan-
tia C 32 dicit] dictis B 33 dicit quod] inv. D 34 artis] artificis B 35 sunt] sint
D 36 extirpande] exstirpande E, exstrepane C 37 quid] quem D 38 apparet]
appareat CE 39 ad] propter CE 40 et] vel A 41 propter] ad CE 42 ymmo] ymo
CDE 43 predictum] peccatum C 44 malum] om. A 45 malam] om. CDE 46 rem
malam] inv. B 47 est] sit CE 48 si] sed A 49 artifex] vitrifex CDE 50 vitrea] ista
C 51 clavis] quinto add. sed del. C 52 ore] ori B 53 illud sacramentum – altaris]
sacramentum ewkaristie CDE 54 recepit] recipit B 55 vitra] vittra E 56 est]
fuit CE 57 licitum] et add. CE 58 et] aut A 59 emere] talem add. CE 60 quia]
quod A 61 verenda et figure eorum sunt tegenda] verenda sunt tegenda et idem
est de ymaginibus et figuris verendarum CDE, cum verendarum in verendorum
D 62 et vendenda] om. B 63 ac] et CDE 64 sunt] sint A 65 communi] om.
A, et add. C 66 consuetudine] conswetudine CDE 67 viri] vir D 68 diligenter

sua verenda] inv. CE 69 cooperiunt] operiunt CDE 70 diligenter verenda sua
coram viris cooperiunt] inv. CDE 71 apostolus] appostolus C 72 ad] om. D
73 xii] xviii CE 74 que] quod D 75 habundantiorem] habundantiam C 76
habundantiorem] habundationem sic C 77 patet] ex add. C 78 nostrorum
primorum parentum] inv. CDE 79 post] om. CE 80 consuerunt] consueverunt
C 81 folia] p.c. A 82 sibi] si^e sic abbr. C 83 peryzomata] pyzomata A, periozo-
mata B, peryzomatant sic p.c. C, perizomata DE 84 ut] om. C 85 dicitur] ha-
betur CE 86 patet] ex add. C 87 operuerunt] opperuerunt ACE 88 unde] ut
CE 89 gen. ix habetur] inv. CE 90 vinum] p.c. A, et add. CE 91 et] om. C 92
eius] suos CDE 93 nudata] sic add. C 94 nuntiavit] nuntiavit ADE 95 at] ad
C 96 pallium] palium CDE 97 foras – suis] om. per hom. B 98 retrorsum] re-
t^osum abbr. C 99 operuerunt] opperuerunt C 100 averse] aversa C 101 iu-
nior] p.c. A, minor C 102 ait] ayt C 103 chanaan] cham aut C 104 erit] erat B
105 sit] sitque A 106 habitet] habitat B 107 suis] om. CDE 108 cham] om.
D 109 viri] filii CE 110 cooperire] opperire C, operire DE 111 verenda – co-
operire] inv. CDE 112 adverterent viri] viri deberent advertere CE 113 que]
quam B 114 non] in sup. l. A 115 avertunt] advertunt C 116 dedicationum
vadunt – sed fixe] om. D 117 inspiciunt] aspiciunt A 118 hinc] et add. C 119
contrectant] contractant ? B 120 cachynnantes] cachinantes B 121 et cha-
chynnantes] om. CDE 122 in eis signum castitatis] inv. CDE 123 casta mulier]
castani*** ? C 124 nollet] in eis add. sed del. A 125 contrectare] contractare
B 126 tempore sacro] inv. A 127 noviter] novit E 128 contritos confessos]
inv. A 129 iterum in peccata] inv. CDE 130 est enim] inv. BD 131 qua] quo
C 132 facere indulgentiarum] inv. A 133 quando] quin ? E 134 aut] in sup. l.
E, et add. sed del. E 135 membra eius] inv. BCE 136 ementes] emendentes
CE 137 quam] quod B, quem D 138 indulgentiarum] indulgentiis CE 139 fa-
ciant] efficiant CDE 140 vendendo] vendenda C 141 vendendo et emendo]
inv. B 142 scilicet] pro add. C 143 pecunia] peccunia A, peccuniam D 144
bona] et utili scilicet pecunia add. sed del. per expunct. B 145 sit] om. C 146
est] fuit CE 147 permittunt] permittant p.c. A 148 principes] et add. C, -gi-
stri add. sed del. D 149 magistricivium] sic mss. 150 iudices aut] om. C 151
nominentur] monentes C, moventes ? E 152 ymmo] ymo CDE 153 quia]
subditi add. sed del. A 154 superiorum] superioris ? p.c. C 155 quod] quid ?

C 156 xiii] iii D 157 minister] ministro C 158 et] *om.* CDE 159 qui] que C 160 que] quod C 161 faciunt] sciunt C 162 haut] hanc C 163 quando] quin BE 164 aput] apud B, apernt ? C 165 sunt viri] sic fieri CE 166 aput] apud BE 167 verum] tamen *add.* CE 168 emtpio] emtio C 169 et penam] *in marg. sx.* A 170 virorum virilia] *inv. B, verenda virorum* A 171 vendentur] vendantur *a.c.* A, venduntur C 172 verenda mulierum] *om.* CE 173 igitur] ergo CE 174 anima-dvertentes] advertentes CE 175 quilibet] *p.c.* A 176 in] propria *add.* CDE 177

et] sunt *add.* C 178 semper sic] *inv.* B 179 id] illud CDE 180 quod] in *add. sed del.* D 181 homo emat sibi] *inv.₁ D, inv.₂ CE* 182 ipsi] *om.* A 183 malum] *p.c.* C 184 succumbet] *p.c.* A 185 mortaliter] mortalia C 186 scilicet] nostram *add.* B 187 non enim sunt querenda – bonum] *III.5 om.* CDE 188 sive talis turpis figure] *om.* CDE 189 dicendum est] *inv.* CDE 190 de] *om.* A 191 sutrices] *om.* CE, *ponit spatium vacuum* E 192 emunt] *p.c.* E 193 et eodem – consimilibus] et sic de aliis etc. D

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