

International conference

Vernacular Books and Reading Experiences in the Early Age of Print



Leiden University, The Netherlands / online 25-27 August 2021

Convenors: Dr Anna Dlabáčová (Leiden University, a.dlabacova@hum.leidenuniv.nl),
Andrea van Leerdam MA (Utrecht University, a.e.vanleerdam@uu.nl)

In the first 150 years of European printed book production, between c. 1450 and 1600, the new medium of print evolved from its indebtedness to manuscript culture into a full-grown means of communication and articulation. The development of print culture added new impulses to the dynamic relations between Latin and the vernaculars. While initially the majority of titles were printed in Latin, the vernaculars gained ground as languages of arts and sciences, commerce, religion, and literary expression.

This conference explores how reading experiences were shaped both by producers and users of vernacular books. We approach reading as an embodied, material practice that is affected both by texts and their presentation, with a particular interest in the interplay between language, form and content, and between intended and actual readers. By adopting an international and interdisciplinary perspective (combining book history, literary history, art history, religious studies, and history of knowledge) during the conference and within the foreseen volume, we aim to contribute to the next step towards a comparative study of printing strategies and users' practices in the first 150 years of printing vernacular books in Europe. Placing studies of (reader's responses to) books in various languages and with a variety of texts (scientific, literary, religious) next to each other, we hope to reach a transregional view and an interdisciplinary interpretive framework of the early printed vernacular book.

Attendance is free, but registration is required.

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Wednesday 25 August

Please note: time zone is Central European Summer Time (CEST, Leiden time)

14.00-14.30 Introduction

Anna Dlabáčová (Leiden University) and Andrea van Leerdam (Utrecht University)

14.30-15.30 Session 1 – Learning to read

Chair: John Thompson

- 14.30-14.45 Sabrina Corbellini (University of Groningen),
Educating the Vernacular Reader
- 14.50-15.05 Martha Driver (Pace University, New York),
The Schoolroom in Early English Illustration
- 15.05-15.30 Discussion

15.30-16.00 Break

16.00-17.00 Session 2 – Transnational reading

Chair: Andrea van Leerdam

- 16.00-16.15 Ágnes Máté (University of Szeged),
Translators as Trendsetters of Vernacularisation? The Dynamics of the Early Printed Vernacular Reception of Eneas Silvius Piccolomini's Historia de duobus amantibus (1478-1600)
- 16.20-16.35 Ann-Marie Hansen (Radboud University Nijmegen),
Out of Context: Huybert van Buchell's French Reading Practices
- 16.35-17.00 Discussion

17.00-17.10 Break

17.10-18.10 Session 3 – Pictorial reading

Chair: Sabrina Corbellini

- 17.10-17.25 Alexa Sand (Utah State University),
Moving Pictures: the Woodcut Vocabulary of Wynkyn de Worde
- 17.30-17.45 Ilaria Andreoli (French National Centre for Scientific Research),
Vernacular Books and Illustration: The Case of Italian Books in Lyons (15th-16th c.)
- 17.45-18.10 Discussion

Thursday 26 August

14.30-15.30 Session 1 – Presenting and annotating

Chair: Katell Lavéant

- 14.30-14.45 Karolina Mroziewicz (University of Warsaw),
Noblemen's Responses to the first Polish-Language Chronicle by Marcin Bielski: Case Study on the Vernacular Histories in East-Central Europe
- 14.50-15.05 Tillmann Taape,
Medicine and Craftsmanship in Early Print: the Works of Hieronymus Brunschwig across European Vernaculars
- 15.05-15.30 Discussion

15.30-16.00 Break

16.00-17.00 Session 2 – Guiding readers of religious texts

Chair: John Thompson

- 16.00-16.15 Suzan Folkerts (Deventer Library),
Reading the Religious Books of Richard Pafraet and Jacob of Breda
- 16.20-16.35 Stefan Matter (Université Fribourg),
Guiding the Reader: Printed Marginalia in the Hortulus Animae
- 16.35-17.00 Discussion

17.00-17.10 Break

17.10-18.10 Session 3 – Reading beyond the book

Chair: Anna Dlabacova

- 17.10-17.25 Katell Lavéant (Utrecht University),
Moveable types of merry monsters: joyful literature on paper and on the walls
- 17.30-17.45 Heather Bamford (George Washington University),
Talisman, Amulet and Intention in Early Modern Iberia
- 17.45-18.10 Discussion

Friday 27 August

14.30-16.00 Session 1 – Transmission and variation

Chair: Bart Besamusca

- 14.30-14.45 Sandy Wilkinson (University College Dublin),
Decorating and Illustrating Print in Sixteenth-Century Europe
- 14.50-15.05 Elisabeth de Bruijn (Antwerp University),
Catering to Different Tastes. Variation in a 16th-century Canon of Romances
- 15.05-15.20 Lydia Zeldenrust (University of York),
Reading European Bestselling Romances in England in the Early Period of Printing
- 15.20-16.00 Discussion

16.00-16.30 Break

16.30-17.30 Session 2 – Manuscript and print

Chair: Alexa Sand

- 16.30-16.45 Margriet Hoogvliet (University of Groningen),
The Illustrations of Pierre Michault's Danse aux Aveugles in Manuscript and Print
- 16.50-17.05 Walter Melion (Emory University),
Meditating the Unbearable in a Customized Fifteenth-Century Prayerbook
- 17.05-17.30 Discussion

17.30-18.00 Closing remarks

By Geert Warnar (Leiden University), Bart Besamusca (Utrecht University) and John Thompson (Queen's University Belfast)

Abstracts

Wednesday 25 August

Sabrina Corbellini (University of Groningen),

Educating the Vernacular Reader

The paper will discuss the process of "education" of new groups of vernacular readers in the long fifteenth century. Starting point in this reflection will be the idea that the process of translation into the vernacular and the production of vernacular texts dealing with topics traditionally linked to Latin and Latinate elites is more than a mere linguistic transaction. It also requires the training of specific reading techniques and the awareness of the seminal relevance of strategies allowing to make the right connection between the reader, the object and the text.

This is particularly true in the process of distribution and dissemination of religious texts, which require the creation and the training of specific bodily and mental reading attitudes and leading the reader to perform the act of reading according to specific rules and conventions. The paper will strive to reconstruct the agents in this educational process and the channels of dissemination of this (new) vernacular reading techniques from a broad European perspective.

Martha Driver (Pace University, New York),

The Schoolroom in Early English Illustration

The earliest English woodcuts of the schoolmaster with his pupils likely derive from an illustration produced for Gerard Leeu's Dionysius Cato, *Disticha de moribus*, in 1486, which Leeu then further used to illustrate nine further editions of schoolbooks. The English woodcuts of the master with his pupils date from the 1490s into the early sixteenth century, employed by Wynkyn de Worde, Richard Pynson, and other printers to advertise and identify the contents of schoolbooks. These woodcuts survive in many slightly differentiated versions and are used mainly on the title pages of the Latin grammars of Robert Whittinton, Donatus, and the like, though they also appear in works like John Lydgate's *Chorl and Byrde* and the Fables of Aesop, works which were also apparently read and studied by schoolchildren. While the majority of these very similar woodcuts were re-used over a number of years, two sixteenth-century examples were cut specifically for the printed book, the first printed by Charles Kyrfroth to introduce an educational verse manual used at Oxford in 1519, and the only book of his to survive, and another by William Faques in a single copy of John Stanbridge's *Accedence* printed before 1504. The iconography of these woodcuts is fairly static—the master sits in a large chair before his students, usually holding a switch in his hand—and will be more fully analyzed in order to recover details of the history of the early schoolroom.

Ágnes Máté (University of Szeged),

Translators as Trendsetters of Vernacularisation? The Dynamics of the Early Printed Vernacular Reception of Eneas Silvius Piccolomini's Historia de duobus amantibus (1478-1600)

The Tale of Two Lovers by the future pope Pius II was a bestseller of the Neo-Latin Quattrocento. Given the popularity of the Latin original, it is no surprise that many vernacular translations were produced. Between 1478-1596 there were no fewer than sixteen translations into eight European languages, and out of four only one Italian version did not make it to the printing press. Based on my examination of the textual tradition of the *Historia* (Hungarian monograph published in 2018, English translation in final stages of preparation) I would like to offer a bird-eye perspective on the fortune of the *Historia's* translations in relation to the dynamics of forming of the vernacular print cultures across Europe. The cc. 15 French editions of six different translations of *Historia* reveal the constant hunger of the readers for the vernacular versions of the love story. Four Hungarian editions in this period might look modest in comparison, but their impact on vernacular literature was fertilizing. Poland produced just one edition, possibly due to mediocre talent of the translator and the prejudice of the public to Piccolomini as a historiographer who slandered Poles. My analysis will identify the factors that contributed to the success of *Historia* in particular vernaculars and describe the regional differences in production, circulation and impact of the popular vernacular texts.

Ann-Marie Hansen (Radboud University Nijmegen),

Out of Context: Huybert van Buchell's French Reading Practices

The Huybert van Buchell collection, held in the Utrecht University library, is a time capsule. The library of an educated 16th-century theologian has remained relatively untouched since the collector's death in 1599, and consequently provides an opportunity to study the material evidence of this individual's book use. While the greater part of the collection is made up of Latin print, German, French and Dutch-language prints are all well represented. Moreover, the annotations left by Van Buchell appear in all of these languages as well, and not always in the same language as the text which elicited commentary. Given this body of evidence, it becomes possible to ask what the relationship of these languages was to one another in Van Buchell's reading? Does the choice of reading in one vernacular language or another reflect a particular thematic interest on the collector's part? Were works in different languages segregated from one another or combined into multilingual composite volumes? I propose to study Van Buchell's French-language imprints in order to explore what position this vernacular language – which was neither the local vernacular, nor the scholar's mother-tongue – held in his reading practice.

Alexa Sand (Utah State University),

Moving Pictures: the Woodcut Vocabulary of Wynkyn de Worde

The German-born printer Wynkyn de Worde was one of the most prolific of the early Fleet Street printers and book-merchants. As the putative heir to William Caxton, he was no slavish imitator of his former employer's methods, but instead introduced many innovations, most imported from the Continent, including the use of title pages and a much-expanded approach to the illustration of printed texts. In this paper, I examine how his flexible and imaginative

deployment of the considerable collection of woodcut illustration blocks that he either purchased second-hand or had created (often copied from French editions) argues for de Worde as a new breed of visual thinker, in conversation with the conventions of manuscript illumination and continental printing, but entirely his own in terms of his approach to word-and-image relationships. The playful and often trenchant use of a repertoire of woodcuts in relation to a whole variety of different texts allowed de Worde to create intertextual tensions and games of allusion that would have enriched the experience of his readers, many of whom bought multiple books from his production. Beyond merely illustrating individual texts, de Worde engaged in the deep play of literacy, both verbal and visual, that helped shape a community of cosmopolitan readers in early modern London.

Ilaria Andreoli (French National Centre for Scientific Research),
Vernacular Books and Illustration: The Case of Italian Books in Lyons (15th-16th c.)

It is a well-known fact that during the first century of printing Lyons was the main center of production of Italian books outside of Italy. It is much less well-known that a large part of this production was illustrated by woodcuts that reproduced those of Venetian editions. Other Italian texts were first printed in Lyons and received original sets of illustrations there. This was the case of Alciato's book of emblems, one of the best-sellers of 16th c. Europe. In Lyons the historian of vernacular printing must thus combine the study of literary Italianism with that of iconographic Italianism. They are both sides of the same medal. In this paper I will focus on the iconographic side.

On one end I will address the ways in which the graphic aspect of Italian texts printed in Lyons accommodated the tastes of the intended reading public, particularly women. On the other I will present a road map of the routes that Italian iconographic models followed to and from Lyons, traveling inside books in Italian or vernacular books translated from the Italian. I will finally follow the Italian iconographic routes beyond the book world proper, showing how models taken from vernacular printed books passed on to other material artifacts such as embroidery, cabinetmaking, tapestry and mostly in tin-glazed pottery known as majolica, opening up another set of new and more entangled routes.

Thursday 26 August

Karolina Mroziewicz (University of Warsaw),
Noblemen's Responses to the first Polish-Language Chronicle by Marcin Bielski: Case Study on the Vernacular Histories in East-Central Europe

Latin historiography had a long and respected tradition in the Polish Kingdom and vernacular chronicles only slowly made their way into the mid-sixteenth century book market. The earliest, Marcin Bielski's *Kronika Wszystkiego Świata* [The chronicle of the whole world] written for Polish noblemen by one of them, was published first in Cracow in 1551 with a set of illustrations of inconsistent quality. Its popularity is exemplified by the subsequent publication of two further

editions in 1554 and 1564, each with an expanded textual and illustrative content. In 1597 the new redaction of the chronicle by Joachim Bielski proposed a substantially changed, re-Catholicized text and an entirely new visual programme that had a broad and lively reception among Polish nobility. The objective of this paper is hence twofold: 1) to demonstrate how the visual and literary content of the first vernacular chronicles was designed and changed from edition to edition to attract the widest possible readership, 2) to trace readers' responses to these illustrated books and to determine in what ways the altered visual and literary content reshaped readers' reception of the books. This will lead to a broader discussion on the peculiarities of the production and reception of the earliest vernacular chronicles in the Polish Kingdom, in comparison to the contemporary Latin-, German- and Czech-language illustrated chronicles of the time, and their reception in 16th-century East-Central Europe.

Tillmann Taape,

Medicine and Craftsmanship in Early Print: the Works of Hieronymus Brunschwig across European Vernaculars

The works of Hieronymus Brunschwig, a surgeon and apothecary from Strasbourg, were the first printed books on surgery and pharmaceutical distillation, published around 1500. Written in the vernacular and heavily illustrated, they were explicitly aimed at a wide audience including artisans, householders, and the "common man." This paper shows how the combined experience of Brunschwig, an experienced medical artisan, and his publisher, Johann Grüninger, deployed printed text and image in an unprecedented bid to codify practical knowledge. I trace their translation into other vernaculars (Dutch and English), and explore how different presentations of the text were used by readers, through a study of annotations in extant copies.

Suzan Folkerts (Deventer Library),

Reading the Religious Books of Richard Pafraet and Jacob of Breda

Richard Pafraet from Cologne was the first person to commence a printing press in the flourishing Hanseatic town of Deventer. He was followed soon by Jacob of Breda. Together they produced more books than were printed anywhere else in the Low Countries. They met an eager public of readers: clergymen, religious people (such as brothers and sisters of the common life), schoolmasters and schoolboys, and educated laypeople. Richard Pafraet's oeuvre consists mainly of schoolbooks, but the first and most impressive books he produced are theological and devotional books. Jacob van Breda had a slightly more diverse oeuvre, but, again, schoolbooks dominate. Therefore, their oeuvres have mainly been studied in relation to the Latin School of Deventer. Their religious works have not been studied as such, nor have their vernacular books. In my contribution, I will not only shed light on the production of these religious books, but also consider them in a wider perspective of urban reading. Pafraet and Van Breda lived and worked among their readers, and I will bring their interactions into the centre of my study.

I will focus on a vernacular religious bestseller: the Middle Dutch *Epistles and Gospels* (with accompanying sermons), which were printed around forty times in several towns in the Low Countries between 1477 and 1540. In Deventer, the *Epistles and Gospels* were printed by Jacob van Breda in 1493 and 1496. According to the title, he promised to bring in a second, improved, edition. I will investigate, first, which changes and improvements he made, by comparing his

editions with earlier ones. Secondly, I will investigate the use of woodcuts and other paratextual elements that made interaction with the reader possible.

Stefan Matter (Université Fribourg),

Guiding the Reader: Printed Marginalia in the Hortulus Animae

The *Hortulus animae*, published from 1500, is by no means one of the earliest printed prayer books, but it is by far the most successful prayer book in German-speaking countries. It is in the tradition of German-language prayer books, which, in contrast to the book of hours, is characterized by a very variable text composition. For this reason, the first editions, despite the common book title, have quite different contents.

The lecture traces the early text history of the text compilation and places special emphasis on the partially sophisticated strategies of directing the reader in the earliest editions. Special emphasis is given to a German-language edition, which enriches the main text with two-color printed marginalia, which not only make the Latin templates behind the prayers recognizable, but also offer translation options.

Katell Lavéant (Utrecht University),

Moveable types of merry monsters: joyful literature on paper and on the walls

I will study the case of a joyful text in French, featuring two monsters who devour good husbands and wives (thus cheekily encouraging conflictual gender relations), that widely circulated in the 16th century in books, broadsheets, and murals. This case-study allows studying performative reading situations for popular, vernacular texts, and proposing hypotheses on the potential audiences for such imprints. It will include a comparative aspect, as the original French text was also translated and published in a German broadsheet.

Heather Bamford (George Washington University),

Talisman, Amulet and Intention in Early Modern Iberia

Reading is difficult to define for phenomena that defy hermeneutics. In describing the palimpsests of naming, the namer and the named of the Beautiful Names of God, the philosopher, jurist and mystic of Sunni Islam Al-Ghazali (c.1056–1111) writes that naming, the namer and the named are not similar or different phenomena but “different realities” that participate in the creation of meaning. Giorgio Agamben similarly describes the word of faith as one that does not coincide with any denotative proposition, or with the performative value of a speech act, but rather “exists as an absolute nearness of the word” (136). This presentation will examine the meaning of reading in the context of magic in early modern Iberia using the criterion of intention. I will draw on a range of materials that have been classified in the modern period, often without explanation, with the terms amulet or talisman. These materials include magic texts depicted in medieval Spanish literature, magic compilations confiscated during the Spanish Inquisition that contained magic and could themselves be used as amulets, and recipes that the Moriscos employed to cure various ailments and to solve problems. On the one hand, some Iberian magic texts are considered magic or magical based on a belief that the objects

themselves have intentions; on the other hand, magic texts are sometimes thought to possess a magic effect as a result of the intentions that a human user attributes to them. I argue that studying intention and two related motifs, the acquisition and uses of knowledge and metonymy and interpretation, force us to confront not only what we mean by reading in the early modern period, but also what we mean by meaning.

Friday 27 August

Sandy Wilkinson (University College Dublin),

Decorating and Illustrating Print in Sixteenth-Century Europe

Over the past decade, there has been an immense growth in the number of early-printed books being digitized globally by research institutions and commercial partners. Although normally used by scholars for convenience when access to the material object is inconvenient or impossible, this volume of digitisations can also be seen and explored as a corpus and in a range of innovative ways. Based at University College Dublin, a new project called *Ornamento* is attempting to look at this body of digitized books for what it can tell us of how print was decorated and illustrated in the early-modern world. Making use of deep learning and image matching technologies, it is our contention that *Ornamento* has the potential to open opportunities for the comparative investigation of artistic and cultural representation. Moreover, ornamental features can provide scholars with one of their most useful tools in identifying and dating anonymous works, and in uncovering false imprints. This paper will discuss the objectives of the project, and its evolving technical infrastructure. We will also present some preliminary findings of our analysis of books printed in sixteenth-century Spain, Portugal, the British Isles, France, the Low Countries and in the Holy Roman Empire.

Elisabeth de Bruijn (Antwerp University),

Catering to Different Tastes. Variation in a 16th-century Canon of Romances

In the period up to 1600, romances such as *Melusine*, *Bueve de Hantone* and *Paris and Vienna* were printed in at least three Western European languages: French, English, Dutch and (Low and High) German. Within this 'canon' of romances, it was mostly the publication of the French romance that gave rise to translations in other European vernaculars. The differences between printed romances with a text-genetic relation tend to be relatively modest. Nevertheless, printers did put their own accents to meet the expectations of audiences in different vernaculars, both as to content and material presentation. In the first part of my contribution, one or two case studies will serve to illustrate these (modest) modifications in European canonized romances with a text-genetic relation. There are also cases in which the various language areas seem to have preferred different versions of the same romance story (e.g. a 'medieval' version as known from the manuscript tradition versus a modern or 'humanist' adaption). In the second part of my presentation, I will discuss one or two of these romances without text-genetic relation, in order to demonstrate printers' strategies in targeting local audiences.

Lydia Zeldenrust (University of York),

Reading European Bestselling Romances in England in the Early Period of Printing

This paper presents a case-study from my project on a group of European bestselling romances that arrive in England in the late medieval period and fuel new translation and printing activities. Though often transmitted through French, these so-called 'popular' romances have a truly international character, having already appeared in several other European vernaculars before being adapted for an English audience. The paper will examine to what extent the reading of such texts was experienced as the reading of an 'international' text, and whether the producers and readers of these romances were actively seeking to be part of a larger, European tradition.

I will analyse to what extent those involved in the production of these romances for an English audience looked to continental models, and examine how the romances' owners/readers engaged with their status as vernacular bestsellers (did they own versions in more than one language?, why were these texts translated?, what does this tell us about questions of status – the idea of owning such fashionable texts and participating in the latest literary trends?). The case-study focuses mainly on the English versions, but I will put these in dialogue with versions in other vernacular languages, offering a comparative perspective on if and how these texts signal their international nature to the reader.

Margriet Hoogvliet (University of Groningen),

The Illustrations of Pierre Michault's Danse aux Aveugles in Manuscript and Print

Pierre Michault wrote his moralising and religious text *la Danse aux aveugles* originally in French in 1463, most likely in the Low Countries when he was one of the secretaries of the future duke of Burgundy, Charles the Bold. The afterlife of this work was quite stunning: it survives in at least twenty manuscripts, some of them very lavishly illustrated, it was translated into Middle Dutch, and it was printed from 1479 until at least 1543, from Gouda in the Netherlands to Lyon in southern France, and Bréhan-Loudéac in French Brittany.

Michault's text in verse alternating with prose recounts an allegorical dream of the narrator in which the personification of his rational understanding guides him through three fenced spaces with terrifying spectacles: the dance of Venus, the dance of Fortune, and the dance of Death. The fourth part of the text, for Michault probably the most important, is a verse dialogue between the narrator and his understanding in which the latter gives instructions how one can escape the horrors of the three dances, some of them reflecting medieval Stoicism.

The descriptions of the three dances, the allegorical figures, and their objects are very detailed and come close to ekphrastic portrayals. Michault's original text does not survive and we do not know if he intended his work to be illustrated or not. Some manuscripts are not illustrated and these show that the text was still functional without images. However, most surviving manuscripts and all printed editions include illustrations. Since the elaborate descriptions of the

three dances are most easily visualised, these parts of the work are most notably accompanied by images, thus resulting in a potential change of emphasis in the message of Michault's text.

In my presentation I will discuss the different choices made by copyists and printers for the illustrations of *la Danse aux aveugles* and the possible consequences for the overall meaning of Michault's work. Based on the material aspects of the surviving copies and the artistic quality of the illustrations, I will also attempt to deduce some conclusions about the social composition of the intended readership of *la Danse aux aveugles*.

Walter Melion (Emory University),

Meditating the Unbearable in a Customized Fifteenth-Century Prayerbook

Assembled in late fifteenth-century Brabant, Metropolitan Museum Album 2003.476, is a customized prayerbook focusing on the Passion: it consists of extensive handwritten texts adapted from Dutch incunabula such as *Dat liden ende die passie Ons Heren (Life and Passion of Our Lord)* and *Tboeck vanden leven Jhesu Christi (Book on the Life of Jesus Christ)*, that coalesce into an intensely affective indeed distressingly vivid account of the physical and spiritual suffering of Christ; introduced by early printed images of the *Ecce Homo* and *St. Jerome in Penitence*, it correlates these texts to a sequence of eleven poignant engravings of the Passion, taken from Israhel van Meckenem's celebrated *Passion* cycle of ca. 1490. Whereas the texts minutely focus on the bloody wounds of Christ, dissolving or, better, anatomizing his body into its torn and shredded particulars, the printed images are incarnational in form and function: they re-anchor the Passion in the whole of the *verum corpus* and, implicitly, in the mind, heart, and spirit of Christ that inhere in this incarnate body. One might argue that the narrative coherence of these semi-liturgical meditative exercises derives from Van Meckenem's images, which depict the Passion as a series of related scriptural events, unlike the Dutch texts that instead attend closely to the violently repetitive and barely human action of giving and receiving wounds. The Latin excerpts from Ludolphus of Saxony's *Vita Christi* inscribed on many of the prints underscore their status as modally distinct from the aggregative Dutch texts. My talk examines the manner and meaning of this complex construction, asking how, why, and for whom it served jointly to exacerbate and moderate the horrors of the Passion.