

# Bart Besamusca, Elisabeth de Bruijn, Frank Willaert

## Introduction

The essays in this volume are concerned with early printed narrative texts in Western Europe. The aim of this book is to consider to what extent the shift from hand-written to printed books left its mark on narrative literature in a number of vernacular languages. Did the advent of printing bring about changes in the corpus of narrative texts when compared with the corpus extant in manuscript copies? Did narrative texts that already existed in manuscript form undergo significant modifications when they began to be printed? How did this crucial media development affect the nature of these narratives? Where and by whom were they published? Which strategies did early printers develop to make their texts commercially attractive? Which social classes were the target audiences for their editions?

Even though narrative texts represent just a small portion of early book production, these questions have received ample scholarly attention in the various research traditions, resulting in recent and important book-length publications, such as *Eulenspiegel trifft Melusine* (2010) in German studies or *Le Roman français dans les premiers imprimés* (2016) in French studies.<sup>1</sup> However, research that transcends the boundaries of linguistic disciplines tends to be limited to case-studies devoted to adaptations of source texts in another language. The essays in this volume shed light on the development of early printed narratives in various Western European areas. We hope that this book will provide an impetus for cross-linguistic research of early printed narratives in a number of regions.

In 2013, a research project, co-funded by the Research Foundation-Flanders (FWO) and the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), was launched under the title ‘The Changing Face of Medieval Dutch Narrative

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<sup>1</sup> Catherine Drittenbass and André Schnyder (eds), *Eulenspiegel trifft Melusine. Der frühneuhochdeutsche Prosaroman im Licht neuer Forschungen und Methoden*. Akten der Lausanner Tagung von 2. bis 4. Oktober 2008. Amsterdam 2010 (Chloe 42); Anne Schoysman and Maria Colombo Timelli (eds), *Le Roman français dans les premiers imprimés*. Paris 2016 (Rencontres 147).

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Literature in the Early Period of Print (1477–c. 1540).<sup>2</sup> This collaboration between the universities of Antwerp (Frank Willaert and Elisabeth de Bruijn) and Utrecht (Bart Besamusca and Rita Schlusemann) aimed at taking two important steps forward: the researchers intended (1) to study the corpus of early printed Dutch narratives as a whole and (2) to include the wider European context in their investigations.<sup>3</sup> The first objective was motivated by the fact that our understanding of the whole corpus of these texts was fundamentally flawed, in spite of Luc. Debaene's overview of the Dutch printed prose romances, published in 1951.<sup>4</sup> Although his study provided a solid basis for future investigations into the corpus of early printed Dutch narratives, scholars have generally restricted themselves to a limited number of individual printed narratives, such as the *Borchgravinne van Vergi*, the *Hystorie van Reynaert die vos* and *Margariete van Limborch*, or to a single publisher's list, such as Jan van Doesborch's.<sup>5</sup>

Our second objective has prompted this volume of essays. The early printing of narrative literature truly was an international phenomenon. It involved parallel developments in various language areas, similar interests in subject matter and comparable publishers' strategies to attract audiences. At the same time, the development of narrative literature differed from one language and cultural context to another. In order to better understand the relationships between the early printed Dutch narratives and printed narratives in other Western European languages, the research team organized two expert meetings (September 16–17, 2014; June 9–10, 2016), which brought together around twenty specialists in early printed literature. Departing from Dutch

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2 [www.changingface.eu](http://www.changingface.eu).

3 For overviews of the corpus, see 'Dutch Corpus' on the website (see note 2) and Rita Schlusemann, "'Mit poetrien". Bucheingänge, Fiktion und Wahrheit gedruckter niederländischer Historien im europäischen Kontext'. In: *ZfdA* 147 (2018), p. 70–99, here p. 97–99.

4 Cf. W. van Anrooij, 'Ridderromans uit de late Middeleeuwen en Vroegmoderne Tijd. Een internationaal onderzoeksthema in opkomst'. In: *Queeste* 11 (2004), p. 163–83; Luc. Debaene, *De Nederlandse volksboeken. Ontstaan en geschiedenis van de Nederlandse prozaromans, gedrukt tussen 1475 en 1540*. Hulst 1977 [1951].

5 See R.J. Resoort, *Een schoone historie vander borchgravinne van Vergi. Onderzoek naar de intentie en gebruikssfeer van een zestiende-eeuwse prozaroman*. Hilversum 1988; Rita Schlusemann, *Die hystorie van reynaert die vos und The history of reynard the fox. Die spätmittelalterlichen Prosabearbeitungen des Reynaert-Stoffes*. Frankfurt a. M. 1991; Rita Schlusemann, *Schöne Historien. Niederländische Romane im deutschen Spätmittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit*. Berlin, Boston 2016 (Frühe Neuzeit, 203); P.J.A. Franssen, *Tussen tekst en publiek. Jan van Doesborch, drukker-uitgever en literator te Antwerpen en Utrecht in de eerste helft van de zestiende eeuw*. Amsterdam 1990.

studies only, we strove to cover at least the neighbouring – and historically interconnected – language areas of English, French and German, but we also welcomed excursions into Scandinavian and Spanish studies. Many of these experts also participated in the project’s final conference (November 24–25, 2016), entitled ‘European Narrative Literature in the Early Period of Print’. The present volume consists of the selected proceedings of that conference.<sup>6</sup> Around half of the contributions focus on developments in the history of early printed narrative texts, others discuss publication strategies. We have adopted these two categories in the ordering of the essays in this volume.

## 1 Initiating a Dialogue

The discussions at the two expert meetings showed that research into fifteenth- and sixteenth-century narrative literature is still mainly carried out within the confines of the different language areas. Differences that are rooted in the various national research traditions make it hard to transcend these boundaries. As a working group we were able to identify three of these obstacles. They are indicated here, as they have left their mark on the design and contents of this volume.

A major source of misunderstanding concerns the different ways in which the corpora of early printed narrative texts in the various linguistic areas are indicated and defined. The French research tradition may distinguish between ‘épopées’ (epic poetry) and ‘romans de chevalerie / chevaleresques’ (chivalric romances), but – probably due to Georges Doutrepoint’s highly influential 1939 study *Les mises en prose des épopées et des romans chevaleresques du XIV<sup>e</sup> au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*<sup>7</sup> – these texts are often grouped together under the heading ‘mises en prose’ and are studied as such. This tradition continues up to the present day, as is demonstrated by the *Nouveau Répertoire de mises en prose (XIV<sup>e</sup>-XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, published in 2014.<sup>8</sup> This makes sense in the French research tradition because many narrative French texts actually are ‘mises en prose’: prosifications of medieval subject matter that already existed in verse form.

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<sup>6</sup> With the exception of the essay by Christa Bertelsmeier-Kierst, which we commissioned in order to complement the discussions of the Dutch, English and French corpora with an overview of the German tradition.

<sup>7</sup> Georges Doutrepoint, *Les Mises en prose des épopées et des romans chevaleresques du XIV<sup>e</sup> au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Bruxelles 1939 (Académie royale de Belgique. Classe des lettres et des sciences morales et politiques. Mémoires, 40).

<sup>8</sup> Maria Colombo Timelli et al. (eds.), *Nouveau Répertoire de mises en prose (XIV<sup>e</sup>-XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle)*. Paris 2014 (Textes littéraires du moyen âge 30).

Whereas the term ‘Volksbuch’ is commonly found in German research literature before 1970 to denote narrative literature in print, German scholars have generally adopted the term ‘Prosaroman’ in the last decades.<sup>9</sup> It is a denotation that refers to the somewhat longer (non-anecdotic) narrative texts and points to the transition from verse to prose that started around 1400 to become the dominant form after the advent of printing.<sup>10</sup> A typical feature of the German prose romances is that many of these texts have a long manuscript tradition and were also copied in codices after the introduction of printing.<sup>11</sup>

In the English research literature, both verse and prose narratives are unproblematically referred to as romances. The term ‘prose romance’ is mainly used to distinguish the group of prose narratives from the much larger corpus of verse texts.<sup>12</sup> Lastly, Dutch scholars use the term narrative text as a synonym for romance, even though narrative literature may also include anecdotes, fables, short stories and hagiographical texts.

In view of these diverging scholarly opinions on the text corpora involved, we have decided not to impose a unified terminology on the essays in this volume. Authors apply a range of terms, all of them indicating medieval prose and verse texts which feature an extradiegetic narrator who recounts a series of adventures of a predominantly secular nature.

The second issue that may hinder the exchange of ideas between experts in early printed narrative texts concerns the chronological demarcation of the various corpora within the respective research traditions. Scholars are united in their distinction between incunabula, produced in the period before 1501, and books which were printed later. But how much later? In various research areas,

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**9** Jan-Dirk Müller, ‘Volksbuch/Prosaroman im 15./16. Jahrhundert – Perspektiven der Forschung’. In: *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der Literatur* 1 (1985), p. 1–128.

**10** See Christa Bertelsmeier-Kierst, ‘Erzählen in Prosa. Zur Entwicklung des deutschen Prosaromans bis 1500’. In: 143 (2014), p. 141–165. For the distinction between ‘Schwankroman’, often in verse, and ‘Prosaroman’, see Johannes Klaus Kipf, ‘Schwankroman – Prosaroman – Versroman. Über den Beitrag einer nicht nur prosaischen Gattung zur Entstehung des frühneuzeitlichen Prosaromans’. In: *Eulenspiegel trifft Melusine* (see note 1), p. 145–162.

**11** See Bertelsmeier-Kierst in this volume.

**12** See for instance: Jordi Sánchez-Martí, ‘The Printed History of the Middle English Verse Romances’. In: *Modern Philology* 107 (2009), p. 1–31, and Helen Cooper, ‘Prose Romances’. In: *A Companion to Middle English Prose*. Ed. by A. S. G. Edwards. Cambridge 2004, p. 215–230. Cf. also J. Burke Severs (ed.), *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050–1500, fascicule 1: Romances*. New Haven, Connecticut, 1967.

the whole sixteenth century is regarded as a period of early printing, as shown by recent publications on narrative literature in French, German and English.<sup>13</sup> Within that time-frame, research often focuses on specific topics, such as certain centres of printing (i.e. German publishers<sup>14</sup>) or the early and later years of a printer's career (early and later years of Wynkyn de Worde<sup>15</sup>). For scholars of Scandinavian literature, however, using the sixteenth century as a cut-off point does not make sense, as the first editions of medieval romances were published as late as the sixteenth (in Denmark) and seventeenth century (in Sweden). Many of these romances were reprinted up to the first decades of the nineteenth century, often without major changes to lay-out and contents.<sup>16</sup> Dutch scholars, on the other hand, frequently restrict their research to the period up to 1540, due to the fact that their most important bibliographical resources end around that year.<sup>17</sup> This date is quite arbitrary, however. It results from the decision in around 1840 of J.W. Holtrop, then librarian of the Royal Library at The Hague, to group together the so-called post-incunabula, i.e. books printed between 1500 and 1540.<sup>18</sup> In this volume, no strict demarcation in time was imposed on the contributions.

The third issue that hinders the dialogue between specialists in early printed narratives is related to the fact that research communication is firmly rooted in national traditions. It is no exaggeration to state that our research is still compartmentalized. As Karla Mallette has stated recently, literary

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**13** Colombo Timelli et al., *Nouveau Répertoire* (see note 8); André Schnyder, 'Der deutsche Prosaroman des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts. Ein Problemfeld, eine Tagung und der Versuch einer Bilanz'. In: *Eulenspiegel trifft Melusine* (see note 1), p. 11–39; Jennifer Fellows, 'Printed Romance in the Sixteenth Century'. In: *A Companion to Medieval Popular Romance*. Ed. by Raluca L. Radulescu and Cory James Rushton. Cambridge 2009 (Studies in Medieval Romance 10), p. 67–78.

**14** Ursula Rautenberg, 'Typographie und Leseweisen. Überlegungen zu den Melusine-Ausgaben der Frankfurter Offizinen Gülfferich und Weigand Han / Han Erben'. In: *Eulenspiegel trifft Melusine* (see note 1), p. 341–363.

**15** N. F. Blake, 'Wynkyn de Worde: the Early Years'. In: *Gutenberg Jahrbuch* (1971), p. 62–69; N. F. Blake, 'Wynkyn de Worde: the Later Years'. In: *Gutenberg Jahrbuch* (1972), p. 128–138.

**16** See Jürg Glauser (ed.), *Skandinavische Literaturgeschichte*. 2nd ed. Stuttgart, Weimar 2016, p. 59–60; Henrik Horstbøll, *Menigmands medie. Det folkelige bogtryk i Danmark 1500–1840*. Copenhagen 1999 (Danish Humanist Texts and Studies 19); Anna Katharina Richter, *Transmissionsgeschichten. Untersuchungen zur dänischen und schwedischen Erzählprosa in der frühen Neuzeit*. Tübingen, Basel 2009 (Beiträge zur Nordischen Philologie 41).

**17** NK. See also Debaene, *De Nederlandse volksboeken* (see note 4).

**18** See J.A. Gruys, 'Post-Incunabula: a Dutch Contribution to Bibliographical Vocabulary'. In: *Across the Narrow Seas. Studies in the History and Bibliography of Britain and the Low Countries Presented to Anna E.C. Simoni*. Ed. by Susan Roach. London 1991, p. 17–22.

historians ‘are generally trained to think within the boundaries of disciplines defined by the national languages of modern Europe’, in spite of the highly cross-linguistic character of their material.<sup>19</sup> In order to facilitate the exchange of ideas, we have accepted contributions in three major European languages reflecting the literatures that take centre stage in this volume. By publishing these contributions side-by-side, we wish to promote a more outward-looking attitude among experts in early printed narratives. We have, additionally, indicated discussions of related interest by cross-references in footnotes.

Due to the three issues indicated here, the ambitions this volume has are modest. This collection of essays is essentially meant to stimulate the cross-linguistic exchange of knowledge and ideas between specialists in early printed narrative literature in Western Europe. The dialogue between these experts will eventually result, so we believe, in a deeper understanding of similarities and differences in the development of narrative texts in the respective language areas after the advent of printing.

## 2 The Organization of the Volume: Convergences and Divergences

As mentioned above, the contributions in this volume fall into two categories. Roughly half of the essays, grouped under the heading ‘The History of Early Printing of Narrative Texts’, discuss larger text corpora. These articles focus on the selection of texts that made it into print or on the various stages in their printed history. The selection of these corpora is based on language (Bertelsmeier-Kierst for German, Besamusca and Willaert for Dutch), on publisher (Delsaux and Van Hemelryck for French, Boffey for English), on source texts (de Bruijn for Dutch, based on French texts), on period (Sánchez-Martí for English) and on genre (Montorsi for French Arthurian romances). The second category of contributions, assembled under the heading ‘Publication strategies’, focuses on a single text or a small group of texts, examining the motives behind textual transformations and the various ways in which the accessibility and attractiveness of the editions of narrative texts were enhanced. The essays discuss the influence of woodcuts on text transmission (Frick) and on the reception of a text (Potysch), textual adaptations (Richter) and changing title pages of a group of texts (Syrový) or a single text (Schaeps). Together, the articles in

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<sup>19</sup> Karla Mallette, *The Kingdom of Sicily, 1100–1250. A Literary History*. Philadelphia 2005, p. 6.

this volume bring out convergences and divergences in the production of early printed, vernacular narrative texts in Western Europe. The most important convergences and divergences will be identified below.

Even though printing took the whole of Western Europe by storm in the second half of the fifteenth century, the impact of the new technology on narrative literature varied significantly in the different language areas. These divergent effects were caused by the different social and cultural contexts in which narrative texts functioned. The patrons and readers of French literature, for instance, belonged predominantly to aristocratic circles who favoured narratives in prose over verse texts as early as the thirteenth century.<sup>20</sup> In the second half of the fifteenth century, manuscript copies of these texts were mainly produced for the Burgundian elite, which may have hampered early printers like Colard Mansion in Bruges.<sup>21</sup> Elsewhere in the francophone world, the first printed narratives emerged on the periphery, in cities such as Geneva and Lyon. Printers originating from Germany, like Adam Steinschaber (Geneva) and Nicolaus Philippi and Marcus Reinhart (Lyon), tried to reach new audiences with their printed narratives, initially focusing on Trojan material, Charlemagne epics (*Fierabras*, *Renaut de Montauban*) and hagiographical / historical texts (*Destruction de Jérusalem*). They had a keen eye for printed texts that had met with success in Germany such as *Melusine*. It was only near the end of the 1480s that Paris emerged as the centre for printed narrative texts. Antoine Vérard was the market leader, producing high-quality editions, meant for people of standing (Montorsi). A few decades later, he was succeeded by Galliot du Pré, who tried to sell his narrative texts to the same types of buyers, including aristocrats and lawyers (Delsaux and Van Hemelryck).

As in France, the production of Dutch early printed narratives in the Low Countries started on the periphery (northern Netherlands), failed to attract the attention of the Burgundian elite and focused on historically and/or religiously oriented narratives (Besamusca and Willaert). Printers relied on Dutch and Latin texts that were popular in the manuscript tradition, such as the oeuvre of the immensely influential thirteenth-century author Jacob van Maerlant. Noteworthy is the initial absence of the southern Netherlands in the production of printed narrative texts, probably due to the nobility's preference for French

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<sup>20</sup> See Francis Gingras, *Le Bâtard conquérant. Essor et expansion du genre romanesque au Moyen Âge*. Paris 2011 (Nouvelle bibliothèque du moyen âge, 106), p. 353–377.

<sup>21</sup> For these manuscripts, see Tania Van Hemelryck, 'Le livre mis en prose à la cour de Bourgogne. Réflexions pour une approche codicologique d'un phénomène littéraire'. In: *Mettre en prose aux XIV<sup>e</sup>-XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles*. Ed. by Maria Colombo Timelli et al. Turnhout 2010 (Texte, Codex et Contexte, 11), p. 245–254.

literature and maybe also because of the chambers of rhetoric, whose members favoured lyrical texts and plays in Dutch. When Antwerp had become the centre of book production around 1490, printers reproduced indigenous narrative texts that had already proven their attractiveness, such as *Karel ende Elegast* and *Margariete van Limborch*, and selected French, English and German sources for their Dutch editions in order to attract larger groups of readers. In this context, it is interesting that the adapters of these non-Dutch sources tried to get rid of passages aimed at aristocratic readers, shortening their texts on the one hand and adding rhetorical verse passages on the other (De Bruijn).

From about 1400 onwards, the German tradition of narrative literature was dominated by the prose form. Up to around 1500, manuscripts and printed books existed side by side, albeit hand-written copies far outnumbered printed editions (Bertelsmeier-Kierst). The printers did not opt for a radical departure from the existing corpus of narratives, but produced editions of texts that were circulating in codices as well, such as Johannes Hartlieb's *Alexander* and *Melusine* by Thüring von Ringoltingen. While printed books with narrative texts made in Ulm, Basel and Strasbourg were often luxury products targeted at upper-class readers, the quarto-sized editions of, in particular, Augsburg tended to be cheaper and show efforts to trivialize both text and presentation.

Initially, English readership, in particular the nobility, was interested in translations of French texts which were the favourites of Burgundian circles, starting with William Caxton's *Recuyell of the histories of Troy* (1473–1474) and a number of his other printed narratives (Sánchez-Martí). However, from 1495 onwards, Caxton's successor Wynkyn de Worde and his contemporaries preferred to attract larger audiences and chose to print editions of indigenous verse romances, whose manuscript copies were still accessible. Notwithstanding, early English printers continued to select and adapt prose narrative texts with proven print circulation on the Continent.

The printing of narrative literature reached the Scandinavian area somewhat later than elsewhere in Western Europe (Richter). Although the first printing press in Denmark dates from 1482 and the first one in Sweden from 1483, the earliest Danish printed narrative text that has come down to us, *Flores oc Blantzeflor*, was published in 1504 and the earliest Swedish narrative, *Josephs historie*, in 1601.<sup>22</sup> Many of the narrative texts in Danish and Swedish

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<sup>22</sup> For the earliest printed editions in Denmark and Sweden, which were printed first in Latin and subsequently in the vernacular languages (mostly liturgical books and chronicles), see for example Glauser, *Skandinavische Literaturgeschichte* (note 16), p. 55–62. We may assume that narrative texts were well-known in sixteenth-century Sweden. They were read both in Danish and in German, as is evident from Swedish aristocratic book collections such as Hogenskild Bielke's

manuscripts can be traced back, through medieval Norwegian and Icelandic intermediary stages, to French sources. The production of narrative texts in print was essentially a continuation of this manuscript tradition. Other narratives which became very popular in Scandinavia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were mostly translated and adapted from High and Low German printed sources, such as *Griseldis*, *Eulenspiegel* and *Melusine*.

Convergences and divergences in the production of early printed, vernacular narrative texts in Western Europe also come to the fore in the subject matter. In all parts of Western Europe, the first printers tested the market by publishing texts that dealt with Antiquity. In various language areas, vernacular renditions of Guido de Columnis' *Historia destructionis Troiae* were the first to roll off the press. German printers, for example, published an adaptation of the *Elsässische Trojabuch* and Hans Mair's *Buch von Troja* in a well-known South German edition (Bertelsmeier-Kierst). In France, England and the Low Countries, translations of Raoul Lefèvre's *Histoire de Jason* and the *Recueil des histoires de Troyes* were printed. Whereas Lefèvre's version of the story remained popular in England, printers in the Low Countries, such as Jan van Doesborch, published modernized adaptations of this narrative (De Bruijn).

The story of Alexander the Great was likewise appreciated by early printers. As far as we know, the first printed narrative published in the Low Countries was Gheraert Leeu's *Historie van Alexander*, printed in Gouda in 1477. The text was reprinted three times before 1500 (Besamusca and Willaert). In Germany, Johannes Hartlieb's *Alexander* was not only copied by scribes at least twenty times before 1500, his text has also come down to us in nine incunabular editions (Bertelsmeier-Kierst).

In many language areas of Western Europe, early printers selected texts that had proven their popularity in the manuscript transmission. They must have thought that these domestic texts ensured good sales figures. In France, for example, the Charlemagne epics *Fierabras* (1478) and *Renaut de Montauban*

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private library in Uppsala or from literary examples such as Per Brahe's *Oeconomia* (1585), a manual for young noblemen. See for example Richter, *Transmissionsgeschichte* (see note 19), p. 7–22; Stina Hansson, "Afsatt på Swensko". *1600-talets tryckta översättningslitteratur*. Göteborg 1982 (Skrifter utgivna av Litteraturvetenskapliga institutionen vid Göteborgs universitet 11); *Hogenskild Bielke's Library. A Catalogue of the Famous 16th Century Swedish Private Collection*. Reconstructed and compiled by Wolfgang Undorf. Uppsala 1995. For the Medieval transmission of narrative texts, see for example Karl G. Johansson and Else Mundal (eds), *Riddarasögur. The Translation of European Court Culture in Medieval Scandinavia*. Oslo 2014.

(1482) were among the first printed narrative texts.<sup>23</sup> In German literature, local traditions encouraged early printed prose versions of Johann von Würzburg's *Wilhelm von Österreich* (1481) and Eilhart von Oberg's *Tristrant* (1484) (Bertelsmeier-Kierst). By publishing indigenous verse narratives, like *Karel ende Elegast* (1484–88) and *Seghelijn van Jherusalem* (1483–86) (Schaeps), the first printers of the Low Countries capitalized on the literary preference of their customers. In striking contrast to this publishing strategy for German and Dutch texts, William Caxton neglected the English narrative tradition, with the notable exception of Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur* (1485). He seems to have found the traditional verse romances old-fashioned.<sup>24</sup>

Later English printers thought more favourably of the commercial appeal of domestic narrative texts (Boffey, Sánchez-Martí). It is noteworthy, however, that Arthurian romances such as *Arthur and Merlin* (1499?) and the *Jeste of Sir Gawaine* (1528?) were only rarely printed.<sup>25</sup> The same lack of interest in Arthuriana is shown by printers of German texts. Initiated by Bishop Rupprecht von Simmern, the Strasbourg printer Johann Mentelin tried in vain to introduce *Parzival* and the *Jüngerer Tituel* to readers of printed texts in 1477.<sup>26</sup> The only texts they appreciated were *Tristrant und Isalde* and *Herr Wigoleis vom Rade* (Bertelsmeier-Kierst).<sup>27</sup> In the Low Countries, just a single Arthurian narrative, the *Historie van Merlijn* (c. 1540), made it into print.<sup>28</sup> In contrast, French readers were more interested in printed Arthurian romances. This is demonstrated by the eleven printed editions of these texts, all in prose, and their many reprints (Montorsi).

<sup>23</sup> Giovanni Matteo Roccati, 'Le roman dans les incunables. L'impact des stratégies éditoriales dans le choix des titres imprimés'. In: *Le Roman français dans les premiers imprimés* (see note 1), p. 95–126, here p. 108.

<sup>24</sup> See Jordi Sánchez-Martí, 'The Printed Transmission of Medieval Romance from William Caxton to Wynkyn de Worde, 1473–1535'. In: *The Transmission of Medieval Romance: Metres, Manuscripts and Early Prints*. Ed. by Ad Putter, Judith A. Jefferson. Cambridge 2018, p. 170–190.

<sup>25</sup> See Sánchez-Martí, 'The Printed History' (note 12), p. 6–7. The *Morte Darthur*, however, was reprinted twice, in 1498 and 1529, by Wynkyn de Worde, see Sánchez-Martí, 'The Printed Transmission' (note 24), p. 186–187.

<sup>26</sup> See Volker Mertens, *Der deutsche Artusroman*. Stuttgart 1998, p. 341.

<sup>27</sup> For the 1484 and 1498 editions of *Tristrant*, see Dorothee Ader, 'Die Abkehr von der Tradition. Zur Rezeption des Tristrant in den Drucken des 15. Jahrhunderts'. In: *Eulenspiegel trifft Melusine* (see note 1), p. 437–458.

<sup>28</sup> See Elisabeth de Bruijn, 'To Content the Continent. The Dutch Narratives *Merlijn* and *Jacke* Compared to Their English Counterparts'. In: *TNTL* 133 (2017), p. 83–108.

A last aspect of the subject matter that should be mentioned here is concerned with the dominant position of French narrative literature in Western Europe. Printers in England, Germany and the Low Countries were united in their efforts to search out French texts that they could translate and adapt for their own markets (Bertelsmeier-Kierst, Besamusca and Willaert).<sup>29</sup> Examples of this phenomenon are *Ponthus et la belle Sidoine*, the *Livre du chevalier de la Tour Landry*, *Paris et Vienne*, *Pierre et Maguelonne* and *Robert le Diable*.

Another characteristic of the production of early printed, vernacular narrative texts in Western Europe is its dependence on a relatively limited number of major printers and centres of printing. For France, we may single out the Parisian printers Antoine Vérard, Michel Le Noir, Denis Janot and Galliot du Pré. The printing of English narrative texts took place in London and, after Caxton's demise, was monopolized, first, by Wynkyn de Worde and, later in the sixteenth century, by William Copland (Boffey, Sánchez-Martí). The German production of narrative texts was divided between Augsburg and Nuremberg on the one hand and Strasbourg, Ulm and Basel on the other (Bertelsmeier-Kierst), focusing on different audiences. The editions which were published in Strasbourg, Ulm and Basel were oriented towards the French-Burgundian manuscript culture (printers such as Heinrich Knoblochzer, Johann Zainer and Bernhard Richel). In the Low Countries, narrative texts were published especially by Gheraert Leeu in Gouda and, later on, by Jan van Doesborch and Willem Vorsterman in Antwerp.

It should be noted that these printers often had a prolific business, as shown by their extensive publisher's lists, including grammar books, school-books and Latin (spiritual) works, of which narratives made up only a small part. Wynkyn de Worde, for example, printed forty to fifty narrative texts out of a total of around 850 books (including multiple editions) (Boffey). In the period between 1477 and 1540, just around 11 percent of the total production of Dutch texts in the Low Countries consisted of texts which were meant for entertainment, including narrative texts.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, convergences and divergences in the production of early printed, vernacular narrative texts in Western Europe also stand out in the interference of printers, adaptors and translators in existing editions and texts. Some of them tried to arouse the customers' interest in their products by publishing folio-

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<sup>29</sup> For English literature, see Sánchez-Martí, 'The Printed Transmission' (note 24) and Sánchez-Martí, 'The Printed History' (note 12).

<sup>30</sup> See Peter M.H. Cuijpers, *Teksten als koopwaar: vroege drukkers verkennen de markt. Een kwantitatieve analyse van de productie van Nederlandstalige boeken (tot circa 1550) en de 'lezers-hulp' in de seculiere prozateksten*. Nieuwkoop 1998, p. 99.

sized editions, such as the books that Wynkyn de Worde printed early in his career (Boffey). Others intended to attract buyers by printing in quarto format, in particular after 1500. The paratextual material that was used to catch the eye of readers included curiosity-arousing title pages (Syrový), which could be designed rather archaically to meet the audience's expectations (Schaeps). Illustration programmes were used to guide the readers through the stories (Potysch, Frick). Texts were geared towards the presumed taste of the customers by compiling texts from different sources (De Bruijn), by shortening source texts (Richter), by adding moralizing passages (Besamusca and Willaert, Richter), by opting for verse or prose texts (De Bruijn, Sánchez-Martí, Boffey) and by modernizing the language of the texts (Van Hemelryck and Delsaux, Boffey).

It is our hope that the essays in this volume will provide food for thought for scholars working in adjacent research areas. Jordi Sánchez-Martí, for example, makes us realize that political circumstances were by no means a negligible factor in the production of narrative literature. In his essay on English narratives in the period between the deaths of Wynkyn de Worde, in 1535, and William Copland, in 1569, he argues that the printing of English romances flourished under the influence of Catholicism during the reign of Queen Mary I (1553–1558). In her contribution on Thomas Murner's German translation of the *Aeneid* (1515), Julia Frick reveals how translations in the age of print may be related to 'new' features such as woodcuts. She argues that Murner's understanding of the *Aeneid* was influenced by the *Aeneid* woodcuts in Sebastian Brant's Latin edition of Virgil's works. Studying the output of the French printer Galliot du Pré (1512–1560), Tania Van Hemelryck and Olivier Delsaux remind us of the importance of archival sources, such as inventories, in shedding light on the publication strategies of early printers. A cross-linguistic approach may reveal to what extent these tendencies are only found on a local level or testify to international trends. We therefore hope that this book will invite scholars from various disciplines to get involved in this conversation.

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