

Alexandre Vanautgaerden. *Érasme typographe: Humanisme et imprimerie au début du XVIe siècle.*

Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance 503. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2012. xiii + 632 pp. \$96. ISBN: 978-2-600-01566-0.

This splendid book is a model of resourcefulness in studying how Erasmus worked with his printers and exercised increasing clout in the many decisions surrounding the publication of some 221 items between age twenty-eight in 1495 and his death in 1536. At first Erasmus used publication as a way to find patronage. When faced with financial difficulties, he would produce short works as New Year's gifts or dedicate the separate items in one volume each to a different potential patron (206–07, 82). Once Erasmus became recognized as the prince of humanists (Vanautgaerden identifies his first publication of his own letters in 1515 as an important turning point), publishers competed and paid for the opportunity to publish his manuscripts. The constant solicitation of printers incited Erasmus to publish prolifically and to exert as much control as he could on the presentation and circulation of his works.

Vanautgaerden traces Erasmus's career through his most significant printers, starting with Thierry Martens of Louvain (1503–04 and again after 1514). To print Valla's *Annotations* in 1505 Erasmus needed a printer competent in Greek, and he selected Josse Bade, to whom he turned for most of his Paris imprints. In 1507 Erasmus famously approached Aldus with great respect and spent months working in the Venice printshop composing and proofreading the *Adages* of 1508. Erasmus published with Matthias Schürer of Strasbourg and Richard Pynson of London (and a few others) during his wandering years. Then Johannes Froben came to his attention for his unauthorized but carefully executed imitation of the Aldine *Adages* in 1513. Within two years of Erasmus's move to Basel in 1514 his works accounted for over three-quarters of Froben's annual output, which also tripled as a result (278). Erasmus continued to supply Froben with a steady flow of manuscripts in exchange for demanding that Froben stay out of the lucrative market for Lutheran works of which he disapproved. At the height of religious tensions Erasmus moved to Catholic Freiburg im Breisgau (1529–35) and used a printer there for his polemical works while relying on Froben for his learned works.

Vanautgaerden is especially interested in Erasmus's preferred habits of layout, which he identifies by comparing Erasmus's imprints with works by other authors produced by the same printer (Erasmus induced Froben to shift from Gothic to roman type, for example), and thanks to three unique manuscripts: an autograph presentation copy of 1503 (51ff.), an autograph used in printing the *Life of Jerome* in 1516 (369ff.), and another printer's manuscript from Froben's shop (379ff.). Vanautgaerden shows how Erasmus paid attention to aesthetic layout, marginal summaries, indexes, and paragraphing (often indicated in manuscript and print by extra white space on the same line rather than a line break). Erasmus was an expert writer of paratexts, including addresses to the reader printed in the name of Froben, as Vanautgaerden shows in a typology discussing seven different kinds of "printer's letters" (337ff.).

The book is itself written with careful attention to its usability. Its multiple subdivisions (ten parts totaling fifty-nine chapters) feature abundant illustrations, as well as transcriptions, with translations, from relevant primary sources (including an index to the fifty-three printer's letters appended to various chapters). The appendixes include a multilingual glossary of typographical terms (composed with Jean-François Gilmont and Françoise Deraedt), an index with elaborate subdivisions and manicules (pointing fingers) as guides through the alphabet, and a full bibliography. In listing the first editions (*éditions princeps*) of Erasmus's works, Vanautgaerden reports with great clarity which editions were authorized or not, explicitly acknowledged or not, acknowledged belatedly, or whose status on these points is unclear.

This work is exciting because it shows how much new insight we can gain, even about a figure as well studied as Erasmus, by reading systematically the lesser-known works and parts of works produced by the printers who worked with Erasmus (including what they printed by other authors). Vanautgaerden gleans crucial detail about book production and trade and the dynamics of the republic of letters by studying colophons, title pages and layout, liminary and funerary odes, and printer's letters, in conjunction with the texts they accompanied and with Erasmus's correspondence. My one regret is that there are several other printers with whom Erasmus worked, whom Vanautgaerden does not discuss in any detail. But Vanautgaerden could hardly be asked to do more. He combines an unparalleled mastery of Erasmus's imprints (while writing this book he was director of the Maison Érasme at Anderlecht; he now directs the Bibliothèque de Genève) with an engagingly inventive range of analyses. Only he could document, for example, the growth of the *Adages* from their actual weight: 250 grams in 1500, 2 kilograms in 1508, and 3.9 kilograms in 1536 (151).

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