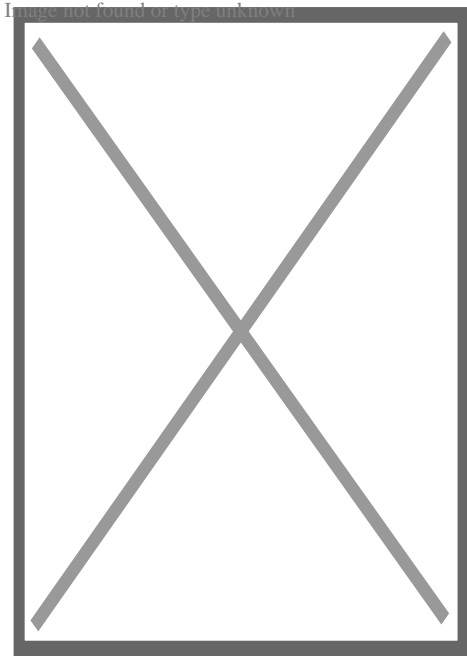


Paul Valkema Blouw. *Dutch Typography in the Sixteenth Century: The Collected Works of Paul Valkema Blouw*



Paul Valkema Blouw. [*Dutch Typography in the Sixteenth Century: The Collected Works of Paul Valkema Blouw*](#). Edited by Ton Croiset van Uchelen and Paul Dijstelberge. (Library of the Written Word 18; The Handpress World 12.) Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2013. xxii, 996p., ill. ISBN 9789004256545; ISSN 1874-834. US \$353.00 (hardback).

“Bibliographical analysis can lead to results which range well beyond its original objective: the history of the book as a printed text and as the object of the book trade. [!] It seems to me of some importance that this possibility should be more widely appreciated.” (113) With these words Paul Valkema Blouw (1916-2000), bibliographer, antiquarian book dealer and book historian, concluded a paper about a small Frisian chronicle in 1984. Working alone in the pre-digital age, using his meticulous analytical mind combined with a rare sensibility to the subtleties of sixteenth-century type design, he composed the Dutch national bibliography of books printed in the Northern Netherlands between 1540 and 1600. He managed to attribute 80% of the anonymously published books. The articles in this collection about the early printers in Delft, Haarlem, Leiden and Leeuwarden provide illustrative examples of such attributions. Moreover all the articles in *Dutch Typography in the Sixteenth Century*, the collected papers of Paul Valkema Blouw, furnish evidence of how thorough bibliographic research can offer answers on issues over which historians have racked their brains for a long time.

Particularly the clandestine book production posed a challenge. Valkema Blouw became fascinated with “problem cases,” such as undated and/or anonymous editions, fictitious printers and false imprints. Endowed with an uncommonly sharp eye for typographic peculiarities, he managed to solve many enigmas by means of a minute analysis of the typefaces, initials, vignettes and other ornaments. His capacity to combine the results thus obtained with archival information and his great knowledge of secondary literature enabled him to explain crystal clear and with scientifically sound arguments how

he managed to unmask printers who had to hide from the authorities, such as Jan Seversz, the printer of the first forbidden book in the Low Countries in 1524.

He devoted a great deal of attention to dissident Protestant literature of the sixteenth century printed in Antwerp. Two mysterious Protestant printers, Niclaes van Oldenborch and Magnus vanden Merberghe, whom nobody had been able to identify, especially because their editions were significantly predated, are recognized by Valkema Blouw as pseudonyms used by Adriaen van Berghen, Mattheus Crom, Steven Mierdmans and Frans Fraet. Once unmasked, the latter proved to be one of the main Protestant printers in Antwerp, which explains his execution.

Even on Christopher Plantin, one of the sixteenth-century printers of which is known the most, Valkema Blouw has shed a whole new light. And he does not shy away from scientific controversy. Thus he defends with verve that Plantin, despite the cooperation, was not a follower of Hendrik Niclaes, the leader of The Family of Love. He can also prove that Plantin was behind the creation of a printing press in Kampen, where his former employees Augustijn van Hasselt and Lenaert der Kinderen printed prohibited books. Valkema Blouw describes the strange relationship of cooperation and competition between Plantin and Willem Silvius, while both were striving to become printer to the Spanish king and to the States General. Moreover, the first editions of Silvius all prove to be printed by other printers including Plantin. Such well-known printers as Willem Silvius, Gilles Coppens van Diest and Gillis van den Rade also published a lot of controversial religious works. Valkema Blouw has identified the printers of the books by the leading Anabaptists Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, and by the prophet David Joris. He also discovered Herman TM Zangers, a printer to the Anabaptists, who was still unknown.

In contrast with the geographic expanse suggested by the adjective *“Dutch”* in the title of the volume, the articles treat printers not only in the Low Countries but also in the North of Germany, where persecuted printers often found refuge: Goossen Goebens settled in Emden, Nicolaes Gadde in Wesel and Homberg, Jan Canin in Wesel and Emmerich. The Cologne printer Godfried Hirtzhorn printed Dutch pamphlets for William of Orange. Albert Christiaenz printed in four countries (Vianen, Sedan, Emden and Norwich), and Nicholas Mollijns, an Antwerp printer who was established in Riga, became prototypographer of the entire Baltic area.

Paul Valkema Blouw is a pioneer in book history and bibliographic research. Despite his often-spectacular findings and the numerous sixteenth-century bibliographic mysteries he solved, he remained a modest man. Thanks to the monumental book in which the editors and Brill publishers collected all his articles in an English translation, an international audience can become acquainted with his work. By these means Paul Valkema Blouw will posthumously receive the international appreciation he has long deserved.

The images of typographical material and title sheets; the general index of names, titles, places, and even Nijhoff-Kronenberg numbers; and the references presented in one comprehensive list *“all make this book appealing and, despite of its more than thousand pages, very easy to use.”*

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