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Citation

Dlabacova, A. (2023). Drawn corrections and pictorial instability in devotional books from the workshop of Gerard Leeu. In G. Della Rocca de Candal, A. Grafton, & P. Sachet (Eds.), *Printing and misprinting*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/oso/9780198863045.003.0023

Version: Publisher's Version

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Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3638741>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

PART VI

WIDESPREAD AND
EPHEMERAL
CIRCULATION

CHAPTER 22

DRAWN CORRECTIONS AND PICTORIAL INSTABILITY IN DEVOTIONAL BOOKS FROM THE WORKSHOP OF GERARD LEEU

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INTRODUCTION

IMAGES in early printed books are generally seen as holding a somewhat flexible relationship to the texts they accompany; therefore, possible practices of correcting images have hitherto received little to no attention.* To have woodcuts made was a substantial investment: once a printer was in the possession of a series of woodblocks, he would exploit them in a variety of texts, so that the same woodblocks would end up serving multiple purposes in numerous editions and even sometimes in several printing shops. There were, however, instances in which text and image were so closely connected that the printer felt he needed to preserve this association. One such case comes from the workshop of Gerard Leeu (d. 1492). On 16 February 1488 he published the edition of a Middle Dutch text under the title *Van die gheestlike kintschejt Ihesu ghemoraliseert* (On Jesus's Spiritual Childhood Moralised),¹ which serves as a case study for the present chapter. The edition shows that drawn corrections made to secure a correct text–image relation occurred in devotional works too, and not only — as one might expect — in scientific or technical manuals. Moreover, the case

* This chapter was written as part of the project 'Leaving a Lasting Impression. The Impact of Incunabula on Spirituality in the Low Countries' (Veni, 2018–2022, grant number 275-30-036) funded by NWO (Dutch Research Council).

¹ *Van die gheestlike Kintschejt ihesu ghemoraliseert*, Antwerp, Gerard Leeu, 16 Feb. 1488, 8° (ISTC ik00022000).

study points to an important phenomenon that should be taken into account when studying woodcuts in incunabula editions: pictorial instability.

GERARD LEEU

Gerard Leeu was one of the most productive and prolific printers of the fifteenth-century Low Countries, and yet he is neither widely known nor considered a national figure.² He started his business in 1477 in the town of Gouda with the publication of a Dutch translation of the *Epistolae et Evangelia* as well as religious texts in the Dutch vernacular; Leeu's mother tongue, in fact, would remain an important part of his publisher's list throughout his career.³ In 1484, Leeu decided to move his business to Antwerp, where he became the first printer to join the artist's guild of St Luke.⁴ In 1489 we find him visiting his hometown of Gouda and meeting Erasmus, who joined him for a walk from the monastery of Steyn — just outside the city — to the IJssel river. Erasmus reported this encounter to Jacob Canter, a young humanist who had just returned from Italy and who worked for Leeu as an editor. Erasmus believed that Canter and he were kindred spirits and was particularly interested in establishing contact with the young humanist. Erasmus uses flattering words to address Canter, such as 'excellent scholar' or 'most learned sir'. Then he writes:

it was in the first place a printer named Gerard Leeuw, a very clever fellow, who told me your whole story. For as he was departing from us [the convent of Steyn where Erasmus was still a regular canon at this time] I escorted him to the bank of the IJssel which he had to cross, and it was then that he told me a great deal about you, while I listened eagerly.⁵

In December 1492, Leeu's life ended prematurely. One of his workmen, Henric van Symmen, a punchcutter ('lettersteker') from Holland, threatened to walk out and to set up his own independent shop in order 'to make more money' ('om meerder winningen te doen'). Leeu was not amused and tried to stop Henric, first with words, but the argument would quickly escalate into a physical fight during which Henric gave Gerard 'a slight stab' ('een cleyn

² On Gerard Leeu, see: K. Goudriaan, 'Een drukker en zijn markt. Gheraert Leeu (Gouda 1477—Antwerpen 1492/1493)', *Madoc. Tijdschrift over de Middeleeuwen*, 6, 1992, pp. 194–205; L. Hellinga-Querido, 'De betekenis van Gheraert Leeu', in K. Goudriaan et al. (eds), *Een drukker zoekt publiek. Gheraert Leeu te Gouda*, Delft, 1993, pp. 12–30; L. Hellinga, 'Gheraert Leeu, Claes Leeu, Jacob Bellaert, Peter van Os van Breda', in *De vijfhonderdste verjaring van de boekdrukkunst in de Nederlanden*, Brussels, 1973, pp. 283–308; J.-W. Klein, 'The Leeu[w] van Gouda: new facts, new possibilities', *Quaerendo*, 33, 2003, pp. 175–90.

³ *Epistolae et Evangelia* [Dutch], [Gouda, Gerard Leeu], 24 May 1477, f° (ISTC ie00064700).

⁴ See J. van der Stock, 'De Antwerpse Sint-Lucasgilde en de drukkers-uitgevers: "middeleeuws" achterhoedegevecht of paradigma van cultureel-politieke machtsverschuivingen?', in J. M. M. Hermans and K. van der Hoek (eds), *Boeken in de late middeleeuwen. Verslag van de Groningse Codicologendagen 1992*, Groningen, 1994, pp. 155–65.

⁵ Desiderius Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus: Letters 1 to 141, 1484 to 1500*, transl. R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson and annotated by W. K. Ferguson, Toronto and Buffalo (NY), 1974, letter 32, p. 61, ll. 36–9. Cf. Hellinga, 'Gheraert Leeu' (n. 2 above), p. 288.

steecxken') in the head. The stab turned out to be a lethal wound: Leeu passed away two or three days later.⁶

During his life, Leeu did not produce only texts: from 1480 onward, the printer started to enrich his books by adding images to his publications through the use of woodcuts. According to Ina Kok, his more than 220 editions contain impressions of no less than 936 original woodcuts, making him by far the top producer of woodcuts in the Low Countries.⁷ With this vast amount of pictorial material inserted into his books, it does not come as a surprise that sometimes things did not go entirely as planned and corrections became necessary.

ON JESUS'S SPIRITUAL CHILDHOOD MORALISED (ANTWERP, 1488)

The printing of this book was finished on 16 February 1488 in Leeu's Antwerp printing office, situated next to Our Lady's Pand, the city's art market. The book was printed in octavo; plus, a series of thirty-eight woodcuts were made specifically for this text.⁸ As with most Netherlandish woodcuts, these 'rather small woodcuts' were religious in nature, designed and cut by the so-called 'Haarlem woodcutter', with whom Leeu had already worked on several occasions. The style was identical to the larger cuts made for the *Hoofkijn van devotie* (Garden of Devotion), which Leeu had published only a few months earlier, in November 1487.⁹

In order to understand and fully appreciate the close relationship between text and image in this edition of *Jesus's Spiritual Childhood*, we need to briefly scrutinise the structure, design, and content of the book, which consists of three sections preceded by an elaborated table of contents presenting the sections briefly ('summatim').¹⁰ In the first section the reader, imagined as the devout, loving Soul, is encouraged to nurture and bring up the Christ Child by way of twenty ladies or virgins acting in pairs. These personifications of virtues wash and dry the Christ Child's swaddling clothes, in addition to guarding, bathing, entertaining, feeding, and putting him to sleep. Every chapter closes with a prayer to the Child. The woodcuts in this first section, placed before the start of each chapter, portray the interactions — to be emulated by the reader — between the Christ Child and successively Contritio and Confessio, Puritas and Caritas, Tranquillitas and Cumulatio, and so forth. Each prayer is also preceded by an image of a lady (the Soul) praying to the Child, who

⁶ Hellinga, 'Gheraert Leeu' (n. 2 above), p. 308, no. 139.

⁷ I. Kok, *Woodcuts in Incunabula Printed in the Low Countries*, I, Houten, [2013], pp. xxi–xxii.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 247–51, nos 89.1–37. As we will see below, one woodcut is missing in Kok's inventory, making the total number of woodcuts in the series thirty-eight.

⁹ Petrus de Alliaco, *Le Jardin amoureux* [Dutch] *Thoofkijn van devotien*, Antwerp, Gerard Leeu, 28 Nov. 1487, 4° (ISTC ia00478250). Kok, *Woodcuts* (n. 7 above), pp. 244–5, nos 87.1–12. W. M. Conway, *The Woodcutters of the Netherlands in the Fifteenth Century: In Three Parts*, I, Cambridge, 1884, pp. 77–9.

¹⁰ The most elaborate study of this edition to date is F. van Buuren, 'Van die gheestelike kintsheyt Jhesu ghemoraliseeret. Een verkenning', in K. Goudriaan et al. (eds), *Een drukker zoekt publiek. Gheraert Leeu te Gouda 1477–1484*, Delft, 1993, pp. 111–32.

appears to her in a crown of thorns. Once the Christ Child has grown up, and after a short conversation with the Soul, he flees from the Soul to his heavens.

The central section, in which the Soul pursues Christ, consists of a love dialogue set in verse between the Soul and the Christ Child, who eventually guides the Soul towards mystical union.¹¹ The Soul is again portrayed as a lady, often with her senses and faculties represented as hounds; the Christ Child is depicted on top of a stag or deer. In this section the woodcuts function as vignettes: while showing part of the action — as happens for example when one of the Soul's hounds hunts Jesus down and the Soul finally pierces her dear Christ — they mainly signal the shift of voice in the dialogue. This explains their frequent repetition as well as the fact that up to four nearly identical woodblocks were made to ensure there would be enough material to repeat an image in a single gathering.¹² Such endeavour points towards a careful planning of the gatherings and placement of the woodcuts: printer and woodcutter must have worked closely together to ensure that the right number of woodblocks with the correct image would be available for the compositors.

In the last section, the Soul wants to ensure that her chase will not be in vain and, with the help of seven maidens, she nails Christ to the Tree of Life. A relatively rare tradition of images of the 'virtue crucifixion' — an allegory of Christ's sacrifice — started around the middle of the thirteenth century in the Rhineland.¹³ Yet, although the woodcut designer did draw inspiration from this tradition, these woodcut images deviate from earlier examples in many aspects; most notably, they form a narrative series in which the action of each virtue is shown separately. Here again, the needs of the book had a profound impact on the production of images.

Due to their accurate design and placement, the images played an important role in the reader's experience. It seems that the woodcut designer, who had the text at his disposal, was asked to follow it closely in his compositions: in this sense, he truly seems to 'penetrate into the spirit of the book', as Conway wrote about the *Hoofkijn* woodcuts.¹⁴ With regard to the design and layout of the book, it is also interesting to note that while the second, dialogic section is the only part of the text that was transmitted in manuscript, the manuscripts were not illustrated.¹⁵ Thus, the edition transformed the text not only through compilation, but also through the addition of a pictorial programme that was invented and designed by both the printer and the woodcutter working for him.¹⁶ Leeu ensured this transformation would be flawless by taking measures to maintain the close rapport between text and image whenever it was at risk.

¹¹ For the text in this section see G. Roth and V. Honemann, 'Die "Geistliche Minnejagd". Ein niederdeutsche geistliche Minneallegorie', in V. Bok et al. (eds), *Magister et amicus. Festschrift für Kurt Gebtner zum 65. Geburtstag*, Vienna, 2003, pp. 175–239 (188–9).

¹² Four nearly identical woodcuts were made of the Soul blowing a horn with a hound on a leash: Kok, *Woodcuts* (n. 7 above), p. 249 (nos 89.19–22).

¹³ H. Kraft, *Die Bildallegorie der Kreuzigung Christi durch die Tugenden*, Frankfurt, 1976. See also P. Parshall, 'The Art of Memory and the Passion', *The Art Bulletin*, 81, 1999, pp. 456–72 (462–3), and B. Newman, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages*, Philadelphia, 2003, pp. 159–65.

¹⁴ Conway, *The Woodcutters*, I (n. 9 above), p. 78.

¹⁵ In one manuscript, the dialogue starts with a historiated initial: MS Darmstadt, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek (ULB), Hs 2667, fol. 217r.

¹⁶ On Leeu's transformation of the design of the *Dialogus creaturarum*, see Hellinga, 'De betekenis' (n. 2 above), p. 23.

A NEW FIFTEENTH-CENTURY NETHERLANDISH WOODCUT

According to the sixth chapter of the final section of *Jesus' Spiritual Childhood Moralised*, Love (Amor), dressed in red, thrusts a lance into the Christ Child's side. In 1884 Conway catalogued a woodcut of 'Amor, clothed in red, piercing the Child's Side' on the basis of the copy held at the Royal Library in The Hague (Fig. 22.1).¹⁷ In her 2013 comprehensive inventory of woodcuts in incunabula printed in the Low Countries, Kok indicated that this entry ought 'to be deleted'.¹⁸ This is due to the fact that the image of Amor in the The Hague copy is in fact an impression of the woodcut of 'The Soul kneeling before the Christ Child nailed to the Tree of the Cross'.¹⁹ This woodcut was not meant to accompany the chapter on Amor; rather, the image was designed to precede a prayer at the end of the third section, after the crucifixion of the Christ Child by way of the virtues was completed (Fig. 22.2). Thus, the same woodblock was used twice — once on sig. n1v and a second time on sig. o1v. This would not be significant at all, had it not been for the lance and banderol that were drawn onto the first of these impressions: these details are in fact manuscript corrections, in this case not attempting to emend a text, but an image.

In the chapter about Amor, the woodcut of 'The Soul kneeling before the Christ Child crucified in the Tree' was transformed into an image of 'Amor piercing the Child's side': a lance, drawn with brown ink, was placed in the hands of the Soul, pointing ominously at the Child's right side, and a banderol with the word 'Amor' was drawn to the right of her face in the style of the other woodcuts in the series. While in the The Hague copy the lower part of the lance is almost entirely concealed by the red colour added to the dress, in other copies, such as the one held at the British Library, we can still see that the lance had a much longer haft and was elegantly positioned in the Soul's — now Amor's — hands (Fig. 22.3). As the colouring in the copy held at The Hague was applied on top of the ink drawing (which is also the case of other copies where colouring was added to the woodcuts), the correction of the image must have taken place at an earlier stage. In some copies the colouring even enhances the details added by hand. This happens, for instance, in exemplars where blood is dripping from the lance, indicating that Amor has already wounded the Saviour.²⁰ Even though the various copies show some conventional similarities (e.g. Amor's dress is red), the colouring of the woodcuts is different for each copy and was therefore likely added at the discretion of individual buyers.²¹

The hand-drawn emendations, however, were supplemented before the books left Leeu's workshop. The meaning of the image was altered in the same way in all extant copies that

¹⁷ Conway, *The Woodcutters*, II (n. 9 above), p. 252, no. 12.6:35. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek (KB), 150 F 10, sig. n1v.

¹⁸ Kok, *Woodcuts* (n. 7 above), p. 250, no. 227.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 248, no. 89:37.

²⁰ Haarlem, Stadsbibliotheek (SB), 56 D 10, sig. n1v, and Utrecht, Museum Catharijne Convent (MCC), I 14.304, sig. n1v.

²¹ It is unclear whether Leeu had woodcuts coloured in his workshop. Cf. Van der Stock, 'De Antwerpse Sint-Lucasgilde' (n. 4 above), who suggests that Leeu joined the guild because he used painters' materials in his workshop.



FIG. 22.1. Woodcut of 'The Soul kneeling before the Christ Child nailed to the Tree of the Cross' converted into 'Amor piercing the Child's Side' through details added by hand in this copy of *Van die gheestlike Kintschejt ihesu ghemoraliseert*, Antwerp, Gerard Leeu, 16 Feb. 1488, 8° (ISTC ik00022000), sig. n1v. The drawn emendations are partly concealed by the red paint. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 150 F 10.

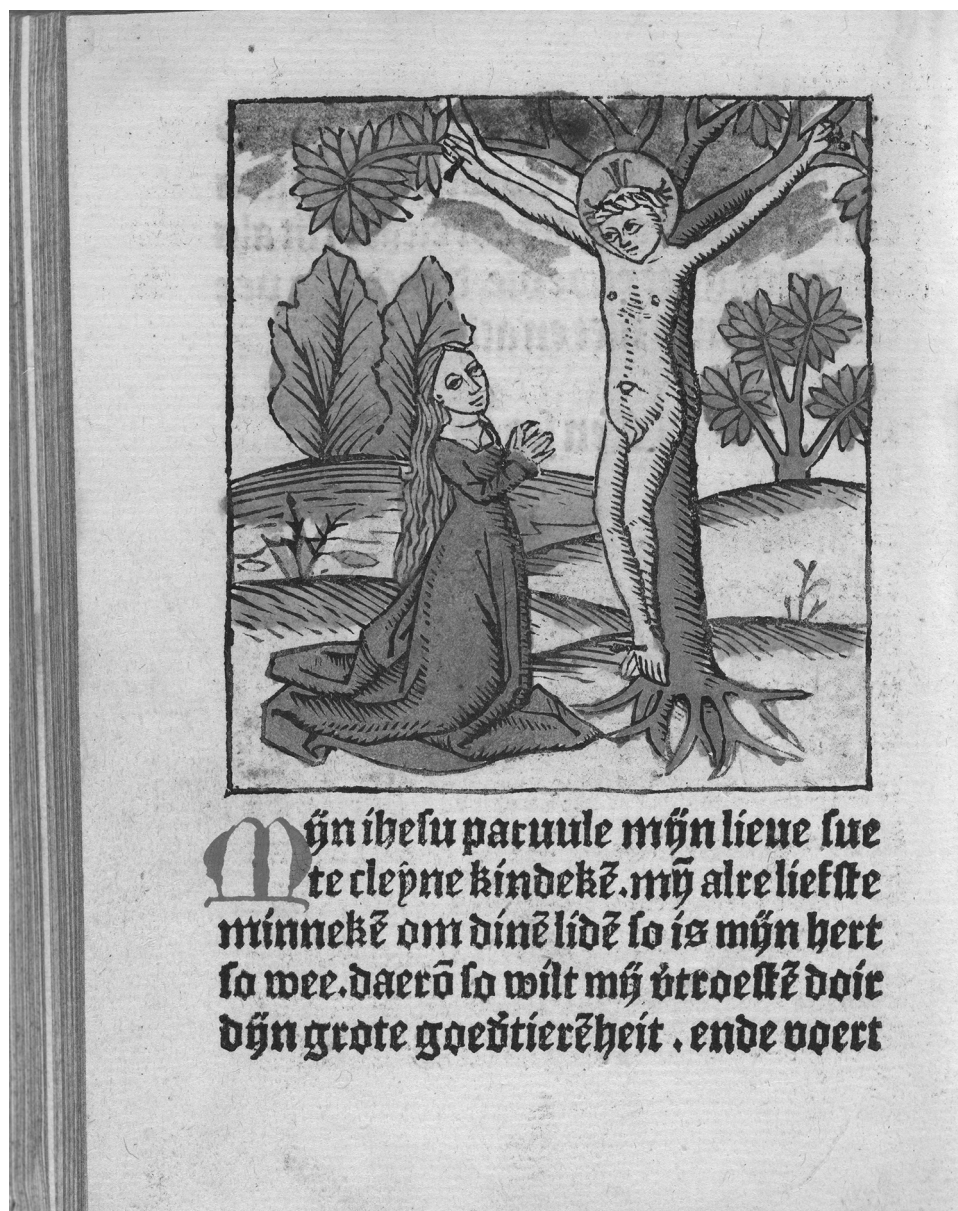


FIG. 22.2. Woodcut of 'The Soul kneeling before the Christ Child nailed to the Tree of the Cross' at the start of the final prayer of the Soul to the Child in *Van die gheestlike Kintschejt ihesu ghemoraliseert* (see Fig. 22.1), sig. 01v. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 150 F 10.

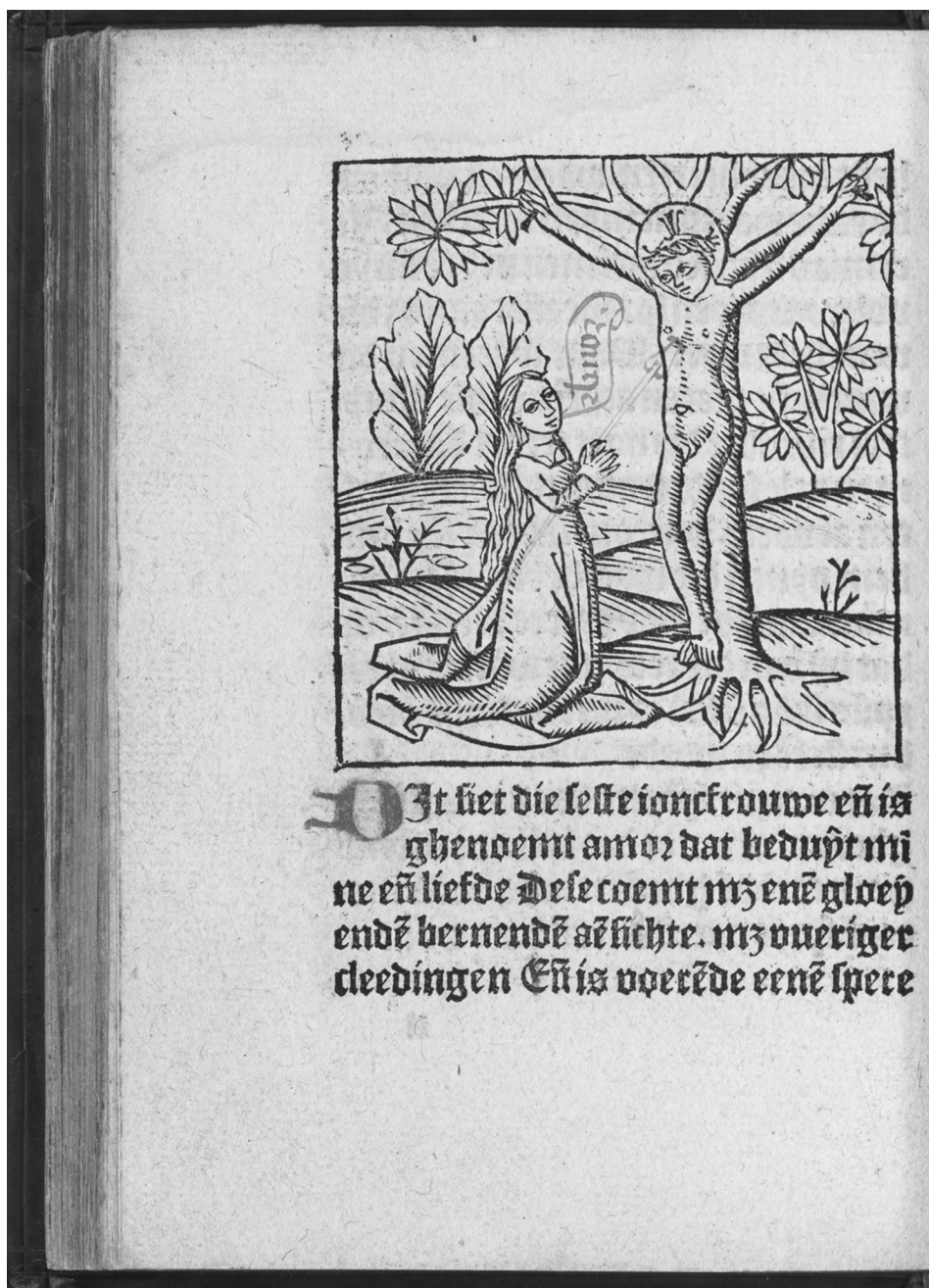


FIG. 22.3. Woodcut of 'The Soul kneeling before the Christ Child nailed to the Tree of the Cross' converted into 'Amor piercing the Child's Side' in a copy of *Van die gheestlike Kintschejt ihesu ghemoraliseert* (see Fig. 22.1), sig. n1v. The details added by hand are fully visible. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Incun. 1488 .V3.

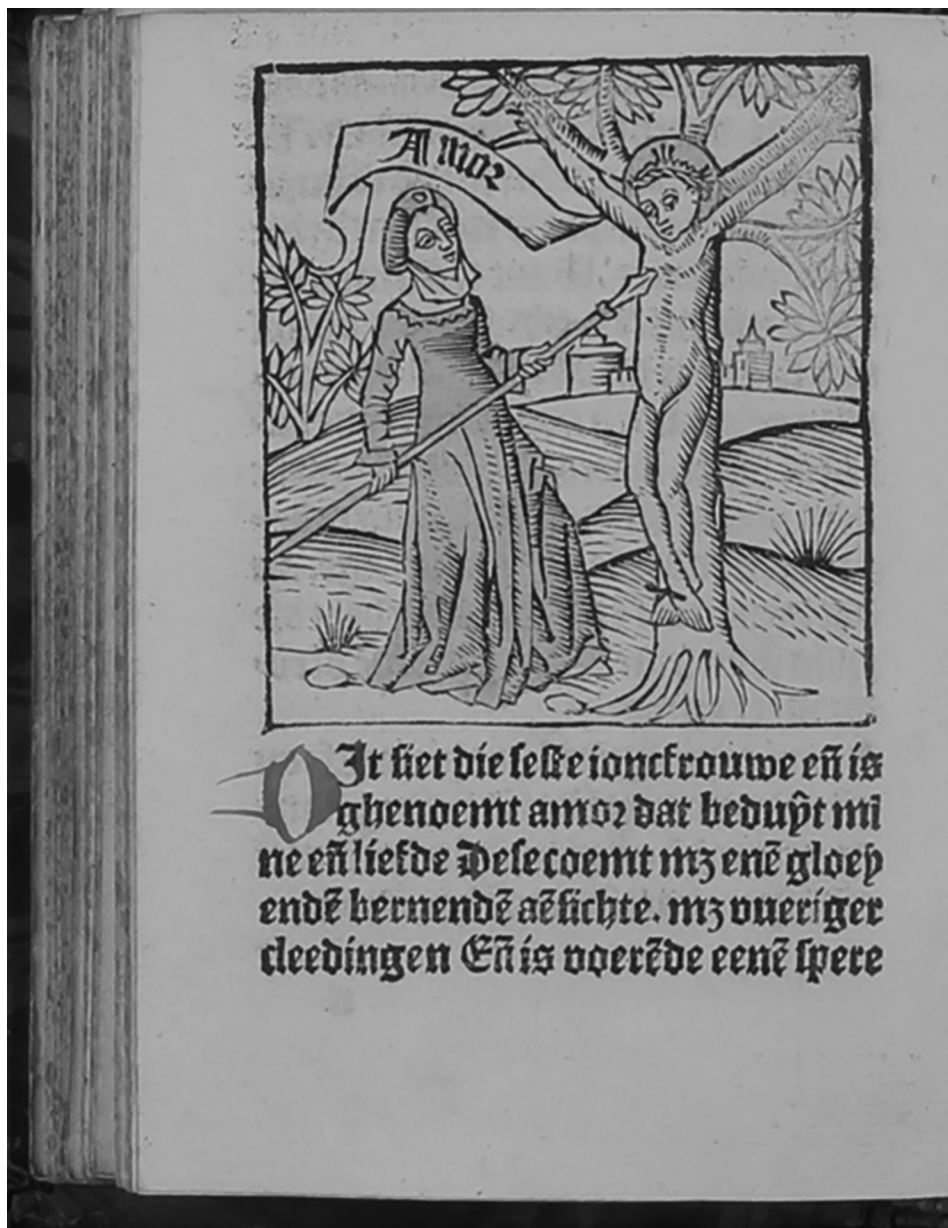


FIG. 22.4. Woodcut of 'Amor piercing the Christ Child's side' in a copy of *Van die gheestlike Kintscheýt ihesu ghemoralseert* (see Fig. 22.1), sig. n1v. Gouda, Streekarchief Midden-Holland, 2306 G 5.

still retain the relevant leaf — with the exception of one copy to which I will return shortly — in order to safeguard the close connection between text and image.²² The drawings added

²² According to ISTC, a total of fifteen copies survive. The manuscript corrections can be found in the following eleven copies: London, British Library (BL), IA 49776; Cambridge, University Library,

to the impressions can be classified as corrections because they are meant to suggest that the reader is looking at another woodcut, the *correct* one. While the vast majority of extant copies, ten in total, contain the emendated image, the correct woodcut can be found in a single copy only (Fig. 22.3).²³ The copy once belonged to the Gouda city library and is currently still kept in Leeu's birthplace. It contains the only extant impression of the woodblock of 'Amor piercing the Christ Child's side' that was originally designed and cut as part of the series for the edition of *On Jesus' Spiritual Childhood Moralised*. The woodcut described in Conway's 1884 inventory can therefore be reinstated, even though the image was slightly different from the amended woodcut Conway had seen and described: Amor stands (rather than kneels) next to the tree and, with her hands at a distance, grips the lance, preparing to pierce the Christ Child's torso (Fig. 22.4).²⁴ Her position resembles the one adopted by Amor in a thirteenth-century manuscript painting.²⁵

POSSIBLE SCENARIOS

If Leeu did possess a woodblock to place at the start of the chapter about Amor's wounding of Christ, why is there only one extant copy containing an impression of the correct woodblock? What happened in Leeu's printing office, and what — if anything — can this incident tell us about the printing of richly illustrated books in the fifteenth century, and about research methods with regards to woodcuts in incunabula? Although it is impossible to point to a conclusive explanation, three scenarios should be considered.

A possible explanation for the exclusive appearance of the Amor woodcut in one copy is that the woodblock broke or was heavily damaged early on during the printing process.²⁶ This seems unlikely, however, since it was brand new and the one available impression does not show any signs of premature damage or breakage (Fig. 22.4). Moreover, the rest of the forme, including text, remained intact, which would not be the case if, for example, something heavy had fallen onto it and damaged the woodblock beyond repair. The correct

Inc.7.F.6.2[3368]; Brussels, Royal Library of Belgium, INC A 1.415; Antwerp, Museum Plantin-Moretus, R 48.2; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), D-35928 and D-26417 [2]; Haarlem, SB, 56 D 10 and 56 D 6 (3); The Hague, KB, 150 F 10; Utrecht, MCC, I 14.304; Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Rosenwald 544. Gent, University Library, BHSL.RES.1432, and New Haven (CT), Yale University, Beinecke Library, call no. 1972 269, both lack sig. n1v. In the copy Antwerp, Erfgoedbibliotheek Hendrik Conscience, B 35754 [C2-536 f], the image has been cut out.

²³ Gouda, Streekarchief Midden-Holland (SAMH), 2306 G 5, sig. n1v. In an earlier article I wrote about this edition and the hand-drawn additions to the woodcut, I was not aware of the existence of the *Amor* woodcut. I am indebted to Eleanor Goerss (Department of History of Art and Architecture, Harvard University) for both pointing me to the copy held in Gouda and for the stimulating discussion about the edition. The article in question is A. Dlabačová, 'De houtsnede die niet bestond. Een gecorrigeerde afbeelding in het werk van Gerard Leeu', *Madoc. Tijdschrift over de Middeleeuwen*, 30, 2016, pp. 28–40.

²⁴ Since the woodcut is placed between the *Veritas* and *Pax* — nos 89.34–5 in Kok's *Woodcuts* (n. 7 above), p. 248 — I suggest adding a new woodcut to Kok's inventory as no. 89.34bis 'The Christ Child, nailed to the Tree of the Cross, pierced in his side with a lance by Lady Amor'.

²⁵ Newman, *God and the Goddesses* (n. 13 above), p. 161, fig. 4.1.

²⁶ Kok also suggested that '[The woodcut] may have existed originally, and have been destroyed somehow': Kok, *Woodcuts* (n. 7 above), p. 250.

Amor woodcut is placed in exactly the same position as the woodcut of 'The Soul kneeling before the crucified Child' in all other extant copies. No changes or shifts appear in types and woodblocks set in this forme (the inner forme of gathering n comprising sigs n1v–n2r, n4r, n5v–n6r, n7v–n8r): all types remain in the exact same position and no other (textual) correction was made, even though typos do occur.²⁷

A second possibility is that the Amor woodcut was not available when the compositor worked on the inner forme of gathering n. This might have had several explanations: the woodblock, for some reason, was not shipped to Leeu's office together with the other woodblocks of the series; perhaps it was simply forgotten or it was not yet ready because the woodcarver had failed to produce one of the designs. It may also be possible that the woodcut was delivered, but got lost in Leeu's workshop. And since the compositor could not find the correct block, he settled for 'the next best thing', i.e. the woodcut of 'The Soul kneeling before the Christ Child crucified in the Tree'. When the block was found, or when it was finally delivered, it was carefully replaced by temporarily suspending printing operations. In both the first and second scenario the 'misprint' would have been intentional, as an alternative woodblock had to be found, possibly in consultation with Leeu; likewise, the drawn emendations would have been planned.

A last possibility is that the compositor made a mistake: he mixed up the two woodblocks and mislaid them. Since the small blocks have exactly the same size, a similar composition, and were both supposed to go on the verso of the first folio of subsequent gatherings (n and o), it is not unlikely that one block was mistaken for the other. When a corrector noticed the mistake, or when the compositor setting the inner forme for gathering o found the Amor woodcut amongst the materials, the press was halted, and the woodblock replaced. By then, most copies had already been printed, and Leeu had the copies with the wrong image corrected.²⁸

Such corrections were likely made by one of his employees, someone with a steady hand who drew the lance and the banderol in all copies with the misplaced image; yet we cannot rule out the possibility that Leeu himself performed these corrections. Remarkably, it was not an option to distribute copies with an incorrect image. The care that was taken in executing the corrections suggests that the severity of the error was comparable to a serious misprint in a number of copies of the first 1487 edition of the *Boeck vanden leven Jhesu Christi*, a dialogic text based on Ludolf of Saxony's *Vita Christi*.²⁹ Here we find another rare

²⁷ I have compared the text in the Gouda copy (SAMH, 2306 G 5) to the one held in The Hague (RL, 150 F 10). On sig. n7v, for example, 'saechtmoedigen' is incorrectly spelled as 'saethmoedigen' in both copies.

²⁸ This hypothesis could be corroborated by the sixteenth-century case of a misplaced woodcut that was brought to my attention by Andrea van Leerdam (Utrecht University), whom I thank for sharing the information with me. During the printing of the 1514 *Den groten herbarius* the compositors mixed up the woodcuts for chapters 10 and 11. By the time they noticed the mistake, all leaves with the start of chapter 10 were already printed. The error was solved by adding an erratum to the text below the image at the start of chapter 11, pointing the reader to the correct image at the start of chapter 10. In the next 1526 edition, the woodcuts appear in the correct order. See Johannes von Cuba, *Den groten herbarius met al sijn figueren, die Ortus sanitatis ghenaeamt is*, Antwerp, Nicolaes Grapheus, 1514, f° (USTC 400329), sig. b2r and Johannes von Cuba, *Den groten herbarius met al sijn figueren die Ortus sanitatis ghenaeamt is*, Antwerp, Nicolaes Grapheus, 1526, f° (USTC 437309).

²⁹ Ludolphus de Saxonia, *Vita Christi* [Dutch] *Tboeck vanden leven Jhesu Christi*, Antwerp, Gerard Leeu, 3 Nov. 1487, f° (ISTC il00353000). The misprint can be found at sig. kkr in at least three

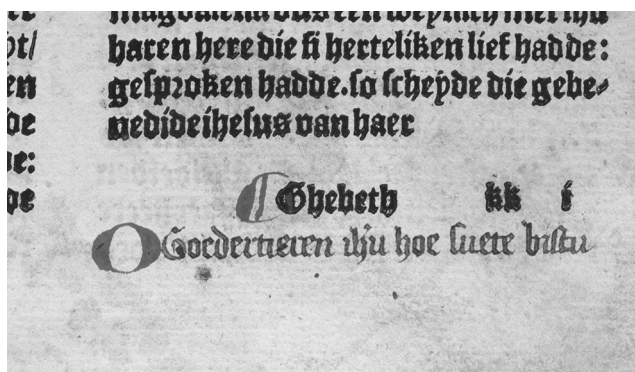


FIG. 22.5. In-house correction in a copy of the *Boeck vanden leven Jhesu Christi*, Antwerp, Gerard Leeu, 3 Nov. 1487, f^o (ISTC il00353000), sig. kk1r. Maastricht, Stadsbibliotheek, 6000 E 6.

instance of an in-house correction made in Leeu's workshop to an edition of a vernacular, religious work. As with the drawn correction in the woodcut, the textual correction appears to have been carefully considered and executed. The space at the end of the page, left blank after the omission of three text lines with the beginning of a prayer, was filled with five handwritten words (Fig. 22.5).³⁰ The words were added in all copies by the same steady and neat hand. In one of them, the ruling made with a hardpoint to ensure the corrector would write in a straight line is still clearly visible.³¹

PICTORIAL INSTABILITY

A final point based on the present case study can be made with regard to the study of woodcuts in incunabula and early printed books in general. Scholars working on woodcuts in Netherlandish incunabula can now take advantage of Kok's *Woodcuts in Incunabula printed in the Low Countries*, published in four substantial volumes in 2013. Kok based her inventory of woodcuts on editions rather than copies, and understandably so.³² A consequence of this approach, however, is that changes that were made to the images in a book during the printing process will pass unnoticed.

On Jesus' Spiritual Childhood Moralised is not the only edition from Leeu's workshop with individual copies showing what we might call pictorial instability, i.e. variation in woodcuts in the copies of a single edition. In June 1491, Leeu published a Middle Dutch translation

copies: Maastricht, Stadsbibliotheek (SB), 6000 E 6; New York, The Morgan Library and Museum, PML 651/ChL1702; Paris, BnF, D-672.

³⁰ The correct text ('O aldergoedertierenste heere, o alder suetste meester, hoe goet bestu den genen die oprecht sijn van herten, hoe suete') appearing, for instance, in The Hague, KB, 171 E 39, sig. kk1r, was truncated into '[O] Goedertieren ihesu hoe suete bistu' in copies with a misprint (see n. 29 above).

³¹ Paris, BnF, D-672, sig. kk1r.

³² Kok, *Woodcuts* (n. 7 above), pp. xvii–xviii. Kok often consulted several copies of an edition when copies were incomplete.

of the *Life and Passion of Christ and his Mother*. The text, originally published in Latin, was extracted and compiled from St Bridget's *Revelations* and the Gospels. The editor was the humanist Jacob Canter, to whom the young Erasmus would write a letter as a way to come into contact with the former's intellectual circles.³³ In the edition, the text is preceded by a prologue, printed as a gathering of eight leaves together with the title-page showing the only fifteenth-century Netherlandish woodcut image of St Bridget, which was originally made for the 1489 Latin edition of Canter's work.³⁴ Canter's prologue, however, ends at the top of sig. [a]8r, leaving most of the page and the entire verso side blank. To avoid this much blank space, and because sig. [a]8v faces the start of the first chapter dealing with Adam's transgression against God's commandments, a decision was made during the printing process to insert a woodcut of the Fall from Eden, with Eve taking the forbidden fruit from the serpent. The woodblock had previously belonged to the Haarlem printer Jacob Bellaert.³⁵ The change during the printing process resulted in copies with and without this woodcut.³⁶ Such differences also seem to hint at the ad hoc addition of images to some devotional books. In contrast to the edition of *On Jesus' Spiritual Childhood Moralised*, which had a finely thought-out set of images, the Dutch translation of Canter's compilation appears to have been supplied with images gradually, as setting continued, with compositors using already available images from various woodcut series.³⁷

FINAL REMARKS

Bibliographers, editors, and virtually all scholars dealing with the printed word are well aware of the considerable amount of textual variations found in different copies of a book, but have overlooked the alterations that can also be found in images throughout an edition. Pictorial instability must have occurred more frequently than in just *On Jesus' Spiritual Childhood Moralised* and the *Life and Passion of Christ and his Mother*. It is not unlikely that 'new' fifteenth-century Netherlandish woodcuts, not yet inventoried by Kok, will be found as research and online availability of individual copies increases. To reach a truly comprehensive census of (the use of) woodcuts, ideally all copies of every edition should be consulted. The question is, of course, whether to do this manually would be worth the time and the effort. Thanks to the increasing digitisation of early printed books, such a comprehensive approach might start to come within the bounds of possibility.

Beside pictorial instability — variation in woodcuts in the copies of a single edition — a practice of correcting images must have existed in the fifteenth century. As happens

³³ Saint Birgitta, *Opusculum vitae et passionis Christi eiusque genitricis Mariae ex Revelationibus* [Dutch] *Leven en passie van Christus en zijn moeder, getrokken uit de Revelacien van S. Birgitten*. Add: Bonifacius IX: *Bulle der canonizacien van S. Birgitten*; Petrus Olavi: *Leven Katarinen*, Antwerp, Gerard Leeu, 4 June and 21 June 1491, 8° (ISTC ib00676700).

³⁴ Kok, *Woodcuts* (n. 7 above), p. 256, no. 94.

³⁵ Kok, *Woodcuts* (n. 7 above), pp. 392–3; 197–8; 246, no. 170.1. It is the only occurrence of this woodcut in Netherlandish incunabula.

³⁶ Paris, BnF, D-27253 has no woodcut on sig. [a]8v while, for example, Stockholm, RL, Ink 224, does have an impression of the woodcut. These differences were not observed by Kok.

³⁷ The Latin edition contains the woodcut of St Bridget only: see n. 33 above.

with pictorial instability, this practice was much more limited than the culture of correction regarding texts. In devotional texts such as *On Jesus' Spiritual Childhood Moralised*, where text and image were equally important both in conveying meaning and in serving as tools for prayer and meditation based on the book, the need to preserve a close connection between text and image led to drawn emendations. These interventions, in turn, confirm the importance allocated to the images in the readers' devotional practice. From an aesthetical point of view, it seems that buyers and readers apparently accepted drawn emendations as perfectly adequate. After all, printed books were still relatively close to the manuscript world and their own aesthetics had not yet fully developed.³⁸ Copy-specific investigations of the whole print run of early modern illustrated editions can shed new light on this and many other aspects connected to correction by means of drawing, not only in devotional literature, but certainly in all genres where images played an important role in the transmission of knowledge.

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³⁸ See, e.g., D. McKitterick, *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order, 1450–1830*, Cambridge, 2003.

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