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Performative Literary Culture

*Literary Associations and the World of Learning,
1200–1700*

Edited by

Arjan van Dixhoorn
Susie Speakman Sutch



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*Dedicated to the memory and scholarship of
Hilde de Ridder-Symoens (1943–2023)*

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Preface

This book is the result of a series of meetings organized by a network of scholars from Europe and North America. These meetings built on the work of an earlier network assembled in the early 2000s which resulted in the publication in 2008 of *The Reach of the Republic of Letters: Literary and Learned Societies in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, likewise edited by Arjan van Dixhoorn and Susie Speakman Sutch. Initially titled 'Communication by Performance: Literary Societies and the World of Learning' the key term of our meetings soon developed into 'Performative Literary Culture'. From there the title of the present book was devised: *Performative Literary Culture. Literary Associations and the World of Learning, 1200–1700*. The notion of 'Performative Literary Culture' was developed as a technical term for what had been identified as the common denominator in the various literary cultures of late medieval and early modern Europe that were discussed in *The Reach of the Republic of Letters*. The aim of the follow-up book project was to describe the features of performative literary culture with more precision. The ideas were prepared in a series of meetings starting in 2008.

The network behind *The Reach of the Republic of Letters* was set up in Rome in 2003 on the initiative of Hilde de Ridder-Symoens, Catrien Santing and Arjan van Dixhoorn with the aim to study the history and dynamics of (in particular, vernacular) institutionalized literary cultures in late medieval and early modern Europe. The idea of performative literary culture was introduced at our second meeting in 2006. The series of meetings in preparation of our second book were again organized by members of the network behind *The Reach of the Republic of Letters*, and later also by new members of the evolving network of authors who have contributed to the present book. The first meeting, titled *Ways of Communication: Literary and Learned Societies in Early Modern Europe*, was organized at the Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel in June 2008 by Gabriele Ball and Andreas Herz. The meeting was funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. The attendants discussed the outlines for our next book project. While *The Reach of the Republic of Letters* was organized into a series of chapters focused on regional clusters, the aim for the new book was to analyse more thematically the world of performative literary culture that we had uncovered.

Performative literary culture as we defined it refers to the plays, songs, and poetry performed for *live* audiences in (semi-) public spaces *and* the organizations championing performative literature through performative meetings and events. These organizations included chambers of rhetoric, confraternities of

the Puy, joyous companies, guilds of Meistersingers, the Consistory of Joyful Knowledge, academies, companies of the Basoche and Inns of Court, and the institutions or people organizing the Spanish *justas*. The aim was to better understand performative literary culture, which we contended was at the heart of the production and distribution of knowledge or learning in the later Middle Ages and the early modern world, both in Latin and in vernacular cultures. The question to be answered: how did performative literary culture shape the exchange of public learning, knowledge, and ideas between the oral, theatrical, and literary spheres? At the meeting in Wolfenbüttel we decided to focus on agents and the media for exchange: authors and networks, and texts and practices.

Hence, at the second meeting organized by Arjan van Dixhoorn and Katell Lavéant at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study (NIAS) in Wassenaar, The Netherlands, 1–5 July 2009 (and funded by the NIAS), we focused on the role of performative culture in shaping literary and learned careers in late medieval and early modern Europe. At the NIAS meeting we discussed what was meant to become the second part of the book, *Careers*, which would focus on individual careers of writers and/or performers. The discussions were guided by Ignacio García Aguilar, Francisco J. Álvarez, and Inmaculada Osuna. The attendants at this meeting agreed upon a first table of contents and the topic of the next meeting, focused on ideas (rather than individual texts) and practices.¹ Most of the papers dedicated to careers of writers/performers presented at this meeting have been collected in part 2 of this book.²

The third meeting was organized by Inmaculada Osuna, Francisco J. Álvarez, and Ignacio García Aguilar at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Facultad de Filología, 21–22 July 2011. The meeting was funded by the Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación, Gobierno de España, with the collaboration of FWO (Research Foundation – Flanders); Université de Versailles, Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines; Institute of Culture and History, University of Amsterdam, Faculty of Humanities; Grupo P.A.S.O (*Poesía Andaluza del Siglo de Oro*). Most

1 The presentations at this meeting were prepared based on a questionnaire.

2 The French-speaking regions were represented by Jean Bodel (ca. 1165–ca. 1210), Adam de la Halle (ca. 1245–ca. 1306), Eustache Deschamps (ca. 1340–1406/7), Jean Molinet (1435–1507), Pierre Gringore (ca. 1475–1538), and Jacques Sireulde (early–mid-16th c.); the Dutch-speaking regions by Jan Smeken (ca. 1450–1517), Louris Jansz (ca. 1515–1589), and Johan Fruytiers (ca. 1520–ca. 1579); the Spanish regions by Luis de Milán (ca. 1509–ca. 1561) and Lope de Vega (1562–1635); the German-speaking regions by Anna Sophia of Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt (1584–1652); the Latin world of learning by Konrad Celtis (1459–1508) and Erycius Puteanus (1574–1646). The Bulgarian *taxidiotis* Ёсиф Брадати (Joseph Bradati) was active in the middle of the eighteenth century (discussed by Iva Manova). Due to career shifts and changing priorities, Bodel, De la Halle and Bradati could not be included in the present book.

attendants at this meeting would contribute to one of the chapters of part 1 of this book. Other papers presented at the meeting by attendants who have not contributed to this book have been instrumental in the shaping of ideas in various chapters of part 2.³

The Performative Literary Culture (PLC) network also organized a meeting on 'Institutions of Knowledge and Civility in Europe (1300–1700)' with the Italian Academies Project (funded by the Art and Humanities Research Council at the British Library, Royal Holloway University of London, and the University of Reading). The meeting was hosted by the Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse Taal en Letteren (Royal Academy for Dutch Language and Literature) in Ghent in 2012. The aim was to investigate the position of the Italian academies in the world of performative literary culture. The meeting was funded by the Italian Academies Project, Group for Early Modern Studies (GEMS, at Ghent University) and FWO (Research Foundation – Flanders). Finally, the PLC network organized three series of panels at the annual meetings of the Renaissance Society of America (Venice, 2010; San Diego, 2013; New York, 2014).

In the year following the meeting in Madrid the final team of authors of the present book was put together. It was also decided in the course of writing the chapters that the book would have two parts: the first a thematic part with a focus on trends and patterns of the ideas, forms and practices that characterized late medieval and early modern performative literary culture, and a second part dedicated to the careers of individual practitioners. The editors of this book wish to thank all the funding agencies, host institutions, co-organizers of events, participants in our meetings and panels and our (teams of) authors who were instrumental in shaping the ideas behind this book and its final content.

The editors thank the anonymous reviewers for their critical comments and helpful suggestions, and Caroline Diepenveen for making the index. They are grateful to the series editor, Prof. Han van Ruler, for including our second book in 'Brill's Studies in Intellectual History'.

In Memoriam Hilde de Ridder-Symoens

A few weeks after the redacted manuscript was submitted to Brill for publication, our great friend, and academic mentor, Hilde de Ridder-Symoens passed away on March 5, 2023, at the age of almost 80 years. She was still full of travel

3 Michael Baldzuhn's paper on 'Monuments of Performative Literary Culture', and the paper on 'Parodic Practices' by Marie Bouhaïk-Gironès and Katell Lavéant.

plans and publication projects. Her colleagues, friends, and family mourn the loss of a great scholar, passionate about research, teaching and mentoring, erudite and with an inquisitive mind. She was also a warm and hospitable person, tolerant and accepting of differences in opinion or life choices. Hilde will be remembered as an example of academic and civic cosmopolitanism; she embodied the qualities of a world-oriented academic life that she passionately believed in.

Hilde de Ridder-Symoens was born in Molenbeek (Belgium) in 1943 in a family of teachers and pedagogues. In 1947, the family moved to Congo, where, in 1949, her father became the director of Royal Athenaeum in Leopoldstad (today's Kinshasa). While her father stayed in Congo until he retired in 1975, in 1958 his family returned to Belgium. As a result of her family's colonial background, Hilde grew up with a deep love and respect for Africa, and a lasting sense of the need to counter Eurocentrism. In 1960 she enrolled in the history program of Ghent University, and in 1962 she became involved in the history of universities, working as a graduate student, then as a PhD-candidate in a Flemish-Dutch project on the law faculty of the university of Orleans in the late Middle Ages. Her Dutch co-researcher Corrie Ridderikhoff would become a lifelong friend and colleague.⁴ Just before her passing, Hilde received a copy of *Les registres-matricules de la nation germanique de l'ancienne Université d'Orléans, 1602–1689*, volume 59 in the Brill book series 'Education and Society in the Middle Ages and Renaissance'. This was the last of a series of books which they co-authored.

By the time she received her doctorate in 1969 under the supervision of Raoul Van Caeneghem (Ghent) and Robert Feenstra (Leiden), Hilde de Ridder-Symoens became an expert in the history of law and the history of institutions, and a world-leading authority in the history of universities and pedagogical cultures. In 1986 she was appointed professor of medieval history at VU Amsterdam. From 2001 until her retirement in 2008, she was professor of early modern history at Ghent University. Among her many memberships of national and international scholarly organizations, Hilde was an active member of the Royal Flemish Academy of the Sciences and the Arts of Belgium. With Dominique Willems, she was the co-initiator of the Young Academy of Belgium, founded in 2013.⁵

4 On Hilde de Ridder-Symoens' life and career see: Dirk Heirbaut and B.C.M. Jacobs, 'De historica van de juristen en de rechtenfaculteiten. Rechtshistorici uit de Lage Landen (15): interview met Hilde Symoens', *Pro Memoria. Bijdragen tot de rechtsgeschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 21 (2019) 1, 3–26.

5 See <https://www.jongeademie.be/en/node/26>.

This book and the network that produced it would not have existed without Hilde's support and erudite and inspiring contributions during our meetings across Europe. She not only had a profound knowledge of the history of the universities, but she was also an expert in the history of humanism, and the history of academies. Apart from her expertise in the history of the Latin world of learning, Hilde also developed a strong interest in the world of vernacular learning that is at the heart of this book. Together with the late Marijke Spies, she was the leader of a Flemish-Dutch project on the history of the late medieval and early modern chambers of rhetoric (the project started in 1998 in Ghent and Amsterdam). Our current book project is one of the many follow-up results of that project, which at the time aimed to re-assess the Dutch-speaking chambers of rhetoric from their European context. With Catrien Santing, Hilde was again among the initiators of this project, which then quickly developed into a study of (vernacular) literary institutions as a (western) European phenomenon. The first stage of this project began in Rome in 2003, and was followed by the publication in 2008 of *The Reach of the Republic of Letters*. This book on *Performative Literary Culture* is the result of the second stage, widening the initial network with additional experts. Both books are the products of Hilde's intellectual inspiration and legacy, and her unparalleled networking and conversational skills. We honour Hilde's role by dedicating this book to her in fond memory of her scholarship and friendship.

Arjan van Dixhoorn and Susie Speakman Sutch

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Notes on Contributors

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received his PhD in Hispanic Studies (2014) from the University of Cordova; he has taught Spanish Language and Literature both in the United States and in Spain. He has been a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of the *Revista de Erudición y Crítica* and is co-author of *Córdoba en tiempos de Cervantes* (2005) and *La Córdoba de Góngora* (2008). His main field of research is Spanish Golden Age poetry.

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Gabriele Ball

studied German and English Language and Literature at the Philipps University of Marburg and at the University of Kent at Canterbury. Her PhD, that dealt with the literary mediator and journalist Johann Christoph Gottsched, is entitled *Moralische Küsse* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2000). After her PhD, she became senior researcher in the editing project *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* at the Sächsische Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig in cooperation with the Herzog August Bibliothek (2000–2018). Working with the letters of the members of the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft*, she developed an interest in the communication models of early modern societies. She has worked at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen since 2019 again on different media and institutional contexts in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe: letters, journals and libraries concerning male and female society members.

Anita Boele

defended her PhD thesis in 2013 at the University of Groningen, entitled *Leden van één lichaam. Denkbeelden over armen, armenzorg en liefdadigheid in de Noordelijke Nederlanden, 1300–1650* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2013). From 2014 until 2017 she worked as a postdoc at Utrecht University focusing on long-term developments in elderly care provisions. Currently, Boele works as a project manager of the Dutch National Research Agenda route ‘Towards Resilient Societies’.

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Susanna de Beer

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Hilde de Ridder-Symoens

was Professor (Emerita) in Medieval History at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and in Early Modern History at Ghent University. Her fields of research were

the History of European Universities and mainly the mobility of students and teachers (thirteenth through eighteenth centuries), and intellectual and cultural life during the Renaissance (fifteenth through eighteenth centuries) in its educational and social context. She was the former secretary-general, president and vice-president of the International Commission of the History of Universities.

Ignacio García Aguilar

is Associate Professor at the University of Cordova. He has been a Teaching Assistant at Wheaton College (Massachusetts) and “Juan de la Cierva” at the University of Huelva. He has published five monographs, twelve critical editions and more than eighty articles, book chapters and reviews on Spanish Golden Age literature. His research has been published in journals such as *Edad de Oro*, *Bulletin Hispanique*, *Criticón*, *Versants*, *Iberoromania*, *Studi Ispanici*, *eHumanista* and *Romance Notes*, among others.

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Samuel Mareel

is a Curator at the Museum Hof van Busleyden. He is also a Visiting Professor in the Department of Literature at Ghent University. He specializes in the art and culture of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Low Countries. His articles have appeared in *Renaissance Quarterly*, *The Sixteenth-Century Journal* and *The Modern Language Review*. He was a researcher at the Universities of Ghent, Berkeley, Groningen and London, Queen Mary. As a curator Samuel Mareel mounted the exhibitions *Call for Justice. Art and Law in the Burgundian Low Countries (1450–1650)* (Museum Hof van Busleyden, in collaboration with the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp, 23.03.2018–24.06.2018) and *Renaissance Children* (Museum Hof van Busleyden, 26.03.2021–4.07.2021).

Inmaculada Osuna

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Bart Ramakers

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Catrien Santing

is a cultural historian focusing on intellectual history, as well as the history of medicine and the body in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Currently she holds the chair of Medieval History at the University of Groningen and is involved in projects such as the Histories of Healthy Ageing and Lifestyle Regimes in the Premodern Period. Recent publications are 'Dancing with death. A historical perspective on coping with covid-19' with Rina Knoeff, Lotte Jensen, and Beatrice de Graaf (2021) and 'Gezond, goed en gelukkig: De actualiteit van het middeleeuwse welzijnsmodel' (2021).

Susie Speakman Sutch

spent many rewarding years as a postdoctoral researcher in the History Department of Ghent University. Her research encompasses the contribution of chambers of rhetoric, devotional brotherhoods, book production, and translation to urban culture in the Dutch-speaking Low Countries during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. She recently published on the Brussels Seven Sorrows Confraternity and on politics and printing in the region.

Arjan van Dixhoorn

has taught at various universities in the Netherlands and Belgium and was the recipient of several research grants. From 2005 to 2014 he worked as a research fellow at the Universities of Antwerp and Ghent (funded by FWO-Research Foundation – Flanders). Since his special appointment as Hurgronje Professor for the History of Zeeland in the World at Utrecht University in 2013, he has taught history at its international honours college, University College Roosevelt, in Middelburg. His main research interests are the history of the public sphere and public opinion, the history of voluntary associations, and the history of (early) modern culture of knowledge and learning.