Book history is – obviously – about books. But in practice this statement is less self-evident than it should be. First of all, manuscripts often tend not to be seen as grown up books. Secondly, we are all too used to studying handwritten books as individual books and printed books, as a rule, not as books but as editions. The watershed between medievalists studying manuscripts on the basis of copies and early modernists studying printed books on the basis of editions means that it is difficult to discern the continuities and discontinuities.

This article presents a case study in order to underline the statement that books are books, whether they are written by hand or printed by movable type. All too often book history of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries starts with the premise that there was a profound change, a revolution introduced by the printing press. There is much to be gained by not separating manuscripts and printed books, especially when focussing on the years from 1450 to 1550. Denying the differences between handwritten and printed books might be easily ridiculed, but new insights can be gained by emphasising continuity, rather than rupture.

Just as the history of carriages should be integrated in the history of cars and we cannot understand the history of steam ships without studying sailing ships, we should see the history of manuscripts and of printed books as a continuum. That does not deny changes, but these changes cannot be properly analysed if we think in terms of a rupture between two different worlds. Thinking of history in terms of

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