



## Printed Popular Narratives until 1600. Authorship and Adaptation in the Dutch and English *Griseldis*<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** Among the seven popular narratives with a widespread European printed tradition until 1600 (*Septem sapientum*, *Quatre fils Aymon*, *Melusine*, *Floire et Blanchefleur*, *Apollonius* and *Paris et Vienne*), *Griseldis* is the one which was printed mostly. The story of the patient and constant *Griseldis* was first told by Giovanni Boccaccio as the last of his one hundred stories in *Il Decamerone* (1349–53) and translated into vernaculars all over Europe. The paper presents a detailed survey of the printed *Griseldis* tradition in four languages and shows that in the Dutch and English language areas from the beginning of printing until 1600, in Dutch the editions of *Griseldis* were published anonymously by the printer publishers who regarded themselves as transmitters of a famous and fixed story. The English tradition, however, is characterized by numerous versions written by different (famous) authors who obviously felt the need and saw the chances to adapt the story to different genres and to rewrite it according to their own desires and purposes.

**Keywords.** *Griseldis*; Boccaccio; translation; popular narratives; early modern

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<sup>1</sup> The article is based on results of my papers presented at two international conferences: 'European Narrative Literature in the Early Period of Print', held at Utrecht University on 24 November 2016 (see [www.changingface.eu](http://www.changingface.eu)), and 'Literatures without Frontiers? Perspectives for a Transnational Literary History of the Low Countries', at Ghent University on 10 February 2018 (<http://www.literatureswithoutfrontiers.ugent.be>). A parallel article will deal with popular printed narratives until about 1900 in at least six European languages: R. Schlusemann, 'A Canon of Popular Narratives in Six European Languages between 1470 and 1900. The *Griseldis* Tradition in German and Dutch', in *Crossing Borders, Crossing Cultures. Popular Print in Europe (1450–1900)*, ed. by M. Rospocher, J. Salman and H. Salmi (accepted, in print). All translations are mine, unless indicated otherwise.

From the Middle Ages until today, one of the most famous literary heroines in European literature is constant and patient Griselda. Her story was first told by Giovanni Boccaccio as the last of his one hundred stories in *Il Decamerone* (1349–53). Via its translation into Latin by Petrarch in about 1374, Boccaccio's *Griselda* formed the basis for the popularity of the story in different European vernaculars. In order to place its extraordinary status in a tradition of early printed narratives in Europe, first some basic figures of the production of these narratives in French, German, Dutch and English will be presented.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, the paper will concentrate on a comparison of the printed *Griseldis* tradition in Dutch and English, intended as a case study to highlight the question if there might be a connection between the anonymous or non-anonymous publication of a text and the degree of change in the adaptation.

In the early modern period, narratives<sup>3</sup> like the anonymous Dutch *Karel ende Elegast* or Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* were printed in one language only. Some works, on the other hand, became widespread in different Western European languages, as they were translated and printed again and again. *Quatre fils Aymon*, for example, tells about the rebellion of the four sons of earl Aymon of Dordogne against Charles the Great, *Melusine* about the fate of the house of Lusignan with the core story of a marriage between a mortal man and a supernatural female being, and *Griseldis* emphasises extraordinary fidelity, constancy and patience from a woman who, as a poor girl, becomes a landlady and is tested by her husband in a cruel way. These titles belong to the most popular narratives in the Western European languages Dutch, English, French and German from the beginning of printing until 1600.<sup>4</sup>

All in all, there are seven narratives with a widespread European printed tradition until 1600, which are shown in the following table. Between about 1470, the year when the first narratives were printed, and 1600, these were published in more than 400 editions.

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<sup>2</sup> These languages were chosen because they were used in cultural areas with extensive exchange in the late medieval and early modern period. If a narrative has not been printed in all four languages, it has not been taken into consideration. The Dutch tradition often functioned as an intermediary between the French and German and/or the French and English tradition. For example, in the case of *Four Sons of Aymon*, the French edition was printed first. This edition was followed by the Dutch edition (publisher not known), then came the English version printed by William Caxton and finally the German version printed by Johann Koelhoff.

<sup>3</sup> The term 'narrative' is used in the following way: 'a text, in prose and/or in verse, which features an extradiegetic narrator who recounts a series of adventures of a predominantly secular nature'. This is a slightly revised definition of the term 'romance' used in the project 'Changing Face'. According to this definition, *Esopus* and collections of stories such as *Gesta romanorum* are excluded.

<sup>4</sup> This implies that there could be narratives which were published more often than the narratives presented in this paper, but they were not published in all these four languages. For example, the narrative *Maguelone*, also called *Pierre de Provence*, was published very often in French, German and Dutch, but has not been printed in English, and therefore it has not been taken into consideration in this paper. See Schlusemann, 'A Canon of Popular Narratives' (in print). Together with the following colleagues I continued to work on the survey until about 1900: Helwi Blom (Nijmegen), Marie-Dominique Leclerc (Troyes), Ursula Rautenberg (Erlangen-Nürnberg), Anna Katharina Richter (Zürich), Jordi Sánchez Martí (Alicante), Krystyna Wierzbicka-Trwoga (Warsaw). We included other languages, too (Italian, Polish, Spanish and Scandinavian languages).

**Table I: Printed Popular Narratives in Dutch, German, French and English until 1600:**<sup>5</sup>

	Dutch	German	French	English	Total
<i>Griseldis</i>	13	57	44	18	132
<i>Septem sapientum</i> <sup>6</sup>	6	54	22	6	88
<i>Melusine</i> <sup>7</sup>	3	29	24	1	57
<i>Quatre fils Aymon</i> <sup>8</sup>	2	4	34	6	46
<i>Floire et Blanchefleur</i> <sup>9</sup>	2	5	19	4	30
<i>Apollonius</i>	5	14	3	4	26
<i>Paris et Vienne</i>	5	1	12	4	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>401</b>

<sup>5</sup> The numbers of the editions, which must not be seen as absolute because of uncertain materiality and dating, are based on my own research in various library catalogues and on: C. Borchling and B. Claussen, *Niederdeutsche Bibliographie. Gesamtverzeichnis der niederdeutschen Drucke bis zum Jahre 1800* (Neumünster: Wachholtz, 1931–36); G. Doutrepont, *Les mises en proses des épopées et des romans chevaleresques du XIV<sup>e</sup> au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Bruxelles: Palais des académies, 1939 [reprint Genève, 1969]); B. Gotzkowsky, 'Volksbücher': *Prosaromane, Renaissancenovellen, Versdichtungen und Schwankbücher. Bibliographie der deutschen Drucke. Teil I: Drucke des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts* (Baden-Baden: Koerner, 1991); W. Nijhoff and M.E. Kronenberg, *Nederlandsche bibliographie van 1500 tot 1540* ('s Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1923–71); A. Pettegree and M. Walsby, *Netherlandish Books. Books Published in the Low Countries and Dutch Books Printed Abroad before 1601*. 2 vols. (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2011); U. Rautenberg, H.-J. Künast, M. Habermann and H. Stein-Kecks (eds), *Zeichensprachen des literarischen Buchs in der Frühen Neuzeit. Die 'Melusine' des Thüring von Ringoltingen* (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2012); *Die Haymonskinder. Johann II. von Simmern*, ed. and with a bibliography by W. Wunderlich (Hildesheim: Olms, 1989); B. Weifenbach, *Die Haimonskinder in der Fassung der Aarauer Handschrift von 1531 und des Simmerner Drucks von 1535. Ein Beitrag zur Überlieferung französischer Erzählstoffe in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit* (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 1999); P. Cuijpers, *Van Reynaert de Vos tot Tjil Uilenspiegel. Op zoek naar een canon van volksboeken, 1600–1900* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2014). Bibliographies like the ESTC (*English Short Title Catalogue*; www.estc.bl.uk), GW (*Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke*; www.gesamtkatalogderwiegendrucke.de), the ISTC (*Incunabula Short Title Catalogue*; http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/istc/), MRFH (*Marburger Repertorium zur Übersetzungsliteratur im deutschen Frühhumanismus*; www.mrfh.de/); STC (A.W. Pollard, G.R. Redgrave, *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland and Ireland, and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475–1640*, 3 vols. (London: Bibliographical Society, 1976–91); STCV (*Bibliografie van het handgedrukte boek in Vlaanderen*); VD16 (the bibliography of German editions in the sixteenth century; (www.gateway-bayern.de/index\_vd16.html) and the USTC (*Universal Short Title Catalogue*, www.ustc.ac.uk) were also used. Two texts are left out because, after 1600 at least, they were mainly regarded as historical texts: Flavius Josephus, *De bello judaico*, and Guido de Columna's *Historia destructionis Troiae*.

<sup>6</sup> U. Gerdes, 'Sieben weise Meister (Zyklische Rahmenerzählung orientalischer Herkunft)', in *Verfasserlexikon*<sup>28</sup> (1992), cols. 1174–89; D. Roth, *Historia septem sapientum. Überlieferung und textgeschichtliche Edition* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> R. Schlusemann, 'Melusina – niederdeutsch', in *westfeles unde sassesch. Festgabe für Robert Peters zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. by Ulrich Weber and Norbert Nagel (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2004), pp. 293–310; For a survey of the German tradition of *Melusine*, see the volume by Rautenberg et al., *Zeichensprachen*; L. Zeldenrust, 'The Lady with the Serpent's Tail: Hybridity and the Dutch *Meluzine*', in *Melusine's Footprint. Tracing the Legacy of a Medieval Myth*, ed. by M. Urban, D. Kemmis and M. Ridley Elmes (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2017), pp. 132–45.

<sup>8</sup> See especially Wunderlich, Haymonskinder, and Weifenbach, *Haimonskinder*.

<sup>9</sup> See R. Schlusemann, 'Een cleyn schoone amoruese historie'. Die niederländische *Floris ende Blancefloer*-Tradition von der Handschrift zum Druck', in *Tijdschrift voor Skandinavistiek* 36 (2018), pp. 54–78, for the Dutch tradition.

With regard to the distribution in the different languages, there is a predominance of German and French editions, each with about 160 editions in these 130 years. Only a relatively small number of the narratives are printed in English. This might be due to the status of English, spoken mainly on an island, but also to the vast amount of printed editions of works by English authors such as Geoffrey Chaucer, Thomas Malory and John Lydgate on the English market. Besides, England was a more peripheral book market at that time, and imports, especially of Latin and scholarly books, limited the ambitions of the local printing industry.<sup>10</sup> The small number of Dutch editions is due to the fact that it was and still is a very small language area, and because the Dutch, as well as the English, market also had to compete with printing in French and Latin. For narrative literature, French was especially relevant, as French versions circulated in these regions and were read there, too.

The number of 132 editions of the novella<sup>11</sup> *Griseldis* exceeds the number of editions of the other narratives by far. The *Griseldis* translations into the different vernaculars are mostly based on Petrarch's Latin version of Boccaccio's text. Although there is a substantial number of French and German editions, but we have to bear in mind that it was published not only as an individual text, but also as the last of the one hundred novellas in the translations of Boccaccio's *Il Decamerone*. It is the only narrative which was published in Dutch as well as in English more than ten times.

## ***Griseldis* in Dutch, German, French and English**

In nearly all the European stories, whether it was told as a novella, a poem, a ballad, a drama or an opera, Griselda, the daughter of a poor inhabitant of a small village, is married to the marquis of Saluce. Because of a contract between her and her husband in which she promises to always obey him, she patiently endures cruel tests by her husband and suffers for a long time, as her children are seemingly killed and she is repudiated. In the end, she is reunited with them and with her husband. These core elements of the story, about a human being who remains faithful even if tested to the utmost, may explain its popularity. Absolute *obedientia* and *constantia* as most important character traits are reminiscent of Job (1, 21); the sacrifice of the children reminds us of Maria and Abraham. *Griseldis* therefore can be called a *figura Mariae*, a *figura Abraham* and a *figura Job*. *Griseldis' fortitudo animi*, the strength of a soul as an anthropological character trait, has made the story so attractive, and even timelessly so, throughout the centuries.

Accordingly, from the beginning of the printed editions *Griselda's* origin as a poor girl, her utmost constancy and her patience are mentioned as her main character traits. In the centuries between its first publication and now, the story has been retold in more than twenty languages. In French, German, Dutch and English there was a strong tradition between the Middle Ages and 1600, especially in German with 16 manuscripts and 57 editions, in French nine manuscripts and

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<sup>10</sup> See A. Pettegree, 'Centre and Periphery in the European Book World', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 18 (2008), pp. 101–28.

<sup>11</sup> Defined as a written, fictional, narrative prose normally longer than a short story but shorter than a novel. Boccaccio in his *Il Decamerone* presented the following terms: 'intendo di raccontare cento novelle, o favole o parabole o istorie' ('I intend to tell novellas, fables, parables or (hi)stories'); see V. Branca (ed.), *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, vol. IV (Milano: Mondadori, 1976).

44 editions,<sup>12</sup> in Dutch six manuscripts and 13 editions, and in English 18 editions.<sup>13</sup> It was, among other languages, also published in Danish, Swedish, Finnish, Russian, Romanian, Hungarian, and Spanish.<sup>14</sup>

## *Griseldis* in Dutch: Stable Contents and Changing Medial Forms

The first Dutch author who wrote a *Griseldis* story in Dutch was the famous poet Dirk Potter who incorporated the story in his didactic love poem *Der minnen loep* (*The Course of Love*; c. 1411).<sup>15</sup> In three manuscripts, which were written shortly after Potter's version, *Griseldis* is placed in a spiritual context. In the north-east of the Dutch language area the story was translated from Latin into Dutch prose by a Dominican called Dirk in a 'Sammelhandschrift'. In this manuscript *Griseldis* was bound together with the life of St Elisabeth of Thüringen (1207–1231), who was known for her commitment to the poor.<sup>16</sup> *Griseldis* is compared with a Christian who chooses Christ as a bridegroom.<sup>17</sup> In another manuscript which formerly belonged to a cloister in Rosmalen and later to a cloister in Grave, the story was written down between 1450 and 1500 and placed between six religious texts, among which, again, the life of St Elisabeth of Thüringen.<sup>18</sup> In around 1470 the story was written down in a Low Saxonian dialect with the title 'The History of *Griseldis* with a Spiritual Meaning',<sup>19</sup> thus explicitly stating the religious-spiritual significance of the narrative. The poet and song writer Anthonius Ghyselers wrote the last known manuscript version of *Griseldis* in verse (c. 1515–18).<sup>20</sup>

<sup>12</sup> For the French tradition see M.-D. Leclerc, 'La patience de Grisélidis', in *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 91 (1991), pp. 147–76; M.-D. Leclerc, 'L'histoire de Grisélidis en France. Les éditions anciennes', in *Griselda. Metamorfosi di un mito nella società europea*, ed. by R. Comba and M. Piccat (Cuneo: Società per gli Studi Storici, Archeologici ed Artistici della Provincia di Cuneo 2011), pp. 211–40.

<sup>13</sup> In French there are 28 editions of *Griseldis* as a part of the *Decamerone*, in German 11, and in Dutch two. Editions of the text as part of the *Decamerone* and as part of the *Canterbury Tales* are not included in the discussion because we do not know in what way the novella was regarded as a text in its own right when read as part of these collections of stories.

<sup>14</sup> See R. Morabito, 'La diffusione della storia di Griselda dal XIV al XX secolo', in *Studi sul Boccaccio* 17 (1988), pp. 237–85.

<sup>15</sup> The narrative about Orphaen and Lympiose tells the same story, see *Der minnen loep*, ed. by P. Leendertz. 2 vols. (Leiden: D. du Mortier en zoon, 1845–46), vol. 2 (book IV, vv. 1095–1266).

<sup>16</sup> The Hague, Museum Meermanno, 10 F 30 [olim 42 Oct.], fol. 107r-126r; J. Verdam, 'De *Griseldis*-novelle in het Nederlandsch', in *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse taal- en letterkunde* 17 (1898), pp. 1–30.

<sup>17</sup> 'Bi deser historien machen merken ene forme gheestliker echtschap tusschen God ende der getrouwe sielen, die alle eertsche dinge versmadende Cristum verkiest tot enen brudegom' (quoted in Verdam, '*Griseldis*-novelle', 7).

<sup>18</sup> Nijmegen, Jezuïtenbibliotheek Berchmanianum, 5000 PB 53, fol. 70r-86v. Other texts in the manuscript are, among others: the life and miracles of Katharina, the daughter of St. Brigitte, and the life of the holy virgin St. Godelieve. See J. Daniels, 'Een nieuwe tekst van de *Griseldis*-legende', in *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse taal- en letterkunde* 19 (1901), pp. 111–27.

<sup>19</sup> '*Griseldis* histori met eyne geestlike bedudenisse' (Leiden, UB, Ltk. 1030, fol. 121r-131v); see J.H. Gallée, 'Een Nedersaksische novelle van *Griseldis*', in *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse taal- en letterkunde* 4 (1884), pp. 1–45. There are, among other texts, four texts in the manuscripts with didactic advice for a religious life (*Spiegel der susteren* [*Mirror of the Sisters*]; *Der suster abteike*; two letters; *Twaalf deugden van de siel* [*Twelve Virtues of the Soul*] and *Wat is God* [*What is God?*]).

<sup>20</sup> See F.P. Serrure, '*Griselde* berijmd door Antonius Ghyselers', in *Vaderlandsch Museum voor Nederduitsche Letterkunde, oudheid en geschiedenis* 4 (1861), pp. 225–42. There might have been another manuscript version, used for a play performed in Petegem (south of Ghent in Flanders) in 1498: 'On Monday, Pentecost 1498, the companions of the rhetoricians of Petegem played a nice play of *Griselle*.' ('Item 's maendachs in de Synxen daeghe 1498 speelden de

None of these versions, however, became popular in print. In printed form the story about Griseldis was first published in a didactic text *Vanden kaetspele*. Secondly, it was published as a stand-alone text, and thirdly, as part of a trilogy entitled *Vrouwenpeerle*. The source for all these printed versions was Jan van den Berghe's version in his didactic work *Vanden kaetspele*, which he wrote in 1431.<sup>21</sup> Jan van den Berghe (c. 1360–1439) was a councillor at the Flemish court. In his allegorical text, he explains the original Frisian handball game 'kaatsen', which was very popular in the middle ages until the nineteenth century, and is still played today. He uses the game to illustrate justice as well as judges' good and bad behaviour. In the twenty-first chapter he incorporates the novella *Griseldis* as an example for judges.<sup>22</sup> The narrator emphasises that, like players in the 'kaatsen' game, who sometimes go out and then go in, judges have to deal with matters foreign to them. *Griseldis* is told as proof that those who have been dismissed can be approved again. Jan van den Berghe's *Vanden kaetspele* was printed for the first time in 1477 by

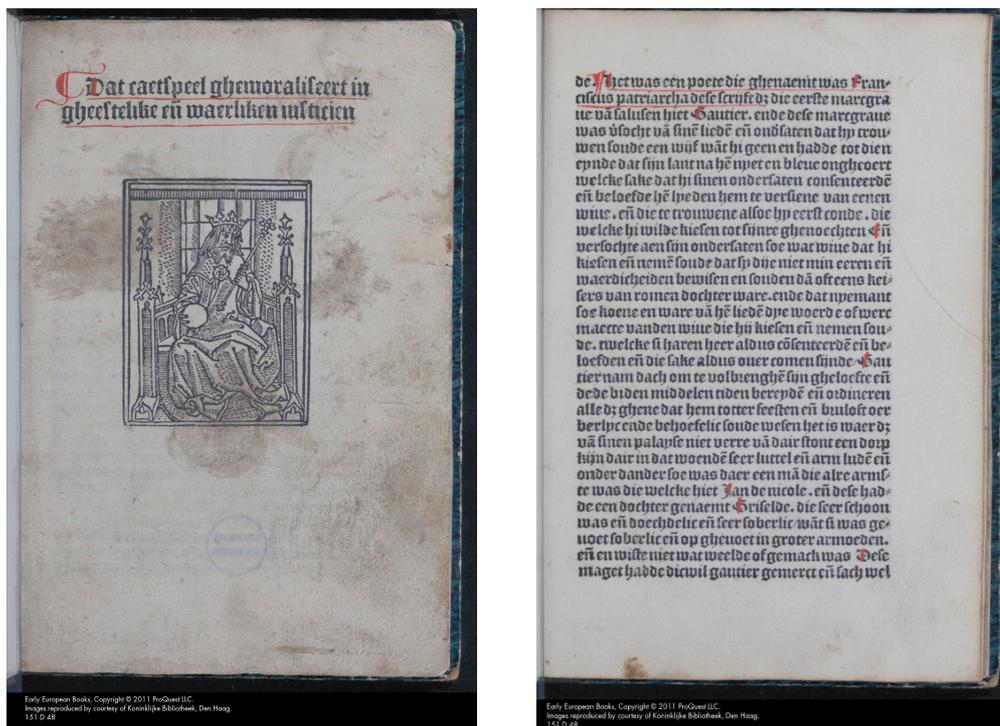


Figure 1 (left) and figure 2 (right): Jan van den Berghe, *Dat caetspeel ghemoraliseert in geestelike ende waerliken iusticien*, Delft: Hendrick Eckert van Homberch, 1498, copy: The Hague, KB, 151 D 48, title page (left), beginning of twenty-first chapter (right)

Johann van Paderborn in Leuven (GW M15941) and in 1498 by Hendrick Eckert van Homberch in Delft with the title *Dat caetspeel ghemoraliseert* (GW M15943), followed by three other editions by 1551.<sup>23</sup> Jan van den Berghe's version served as a source for the editions of the Dutch

ghesellen van der retorycke van Peteghem een soon spel van Gryselle.' (source: General Archive Brussels [Rijksarchief Brussel], Rekenkamers nr. 33956, stadsrekeningen Deinze 1498–1500, fol. 20r).

<sup>21</sup> J.A.R. Frederikse (ed.), *Jan van den Berghe, 'Dat kaetspel ghemoraliseert'* (Leiden: Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde, 1915). See F. van Veerdeghe, 'Een "toemaatje" tot de Griseldis-novelle in het Nederlandsch', in *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse taal- en letterkunde* 18 (1899), pp. 46–7.

<sup>22</sup> Frederikse [ed.], *Kaetspel*, p. 53.

<sup>23</sup> 1. Leuven: Johann van Paderborn (also sometimes called Johann van Westphalen/Westfalen), 1477 (GW M15941; copies: Manchester, JRL, 16121; Paris, BN, RES M-V-34); 2. Delft: Henrick Eckert van Homberch, 1498 (GW M15943);

novella *Griseldis* as a stand-alone text. It was copied word for word. The first edition, attributed to the famous printer-publisher Gheraert Leeu, was printed in Antwerp around 1487: ‘Die historie van der goeder vrouwen griseldis die een spiegel is geweest van paciencie’ (figure 3).<sup>24</sup> Jacobus van Breda reprinted it with exactly the same title in Deventer (not before 1492).<sup>25</sup> The edition of *Griseldis* as a stand-alone text is not ‘based’ on the manuscript version (see the differences in the manuscript version marked in bold) but on the printed edition of the *Vanden kaetspele*:

<b>Jan van den Berghe, <i>Dat kaetspel ghemoraliseert</i> (Frederikse [ed.], <i>Kaetspel</i>)</b>	<b>Jan van den Berghe, <i>Vanden kaetspele</i>, Leuven: Johann van Paderborn, 1477<sup>26</sup></b>	<b><i>Historie van Griseldis</i>, Deventer: Jacobus van Breda, [not before 1492]<sup>27</sup></b>
ende beval sinen <b>voorseiden</b> dienare / dat <b>hyt</b> soude voeren zoeteliken <b>te sinen ghemake</b> te Buenen <sup>28</sup> / te synre sustere / Ende dat hy haer bade dat zoet <b>weegherliken</b> uphilde / Ende dat zoet wilde wysen ende leeren / in goeden zeden ende leerynghen / Ende boven al / dat zoet niemant te kennen en ghave / wiens kint het ware	ende beual siinen voergenoemden dienare dat hii dat kiint soude voeren soetelic te Buenen aen de gravinne van Buenen siinder suster ende dat hii haer bade dat sii dat soeteliic op hielde ende dat siit wilde wisen ende leeren in goeden seden ende leeringhen Ende bouen al dat siit niemant en gaue te kinnene wiens kiint het ware.	hi beualt sijnen voergenoemden dienaer dat hy dat kint soude soetelic voeren te buenen aen die gravinne van buenen sijnder susteren. ende dat hy hoer bade dat si dat kint soetelic op hielde. ende dat sijt wilde wysen ende leeren in goeden seden ende leeringhen Ende bouen al dat sijt niemant en gaue te kennen wiens kint dattet ware.

Jacobus’ title page exactly repeats Leeu’s words, emphasising *Griseldis*’ good character as a mirror for patience (figure 4).<sup>29</sup> The promotion of the story in the prologue, stressing the virtue of patience and endurance as the way to be rewarded in the end, is repeated in the epilogue and sets the tone for all later Dutch editions:<sup>30</sup>

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copies: The Hague, KB, 151 D 48; London, BL, IA.47231); 3. \*Antwerp: Jacob van Liesveldt, [1529] (NK 0712); 4. \*Antwerp: Adriaen van Berghen, s.a. (NK 0713); 5. *Een Tractaet Van Den Caetspele, Hoe Twee Ridders Tseghen Malcanderen Int Recht Caetsen. Wtghelyt Van Punct Tot Punct Van Den Caetspele, Accorderende Op Trecht, Profijtelijc Voor Alle Rechters Ende Justiciers, Hoe Dat Sij Haer Ondersaten Behooren Recht Te Doen En Vonnissen Te Gheuen, Ghelijc Si Begheren Van God Ghevonist Te Worden. Geprint tot Louen ... bi Anthonius Maria Bergaigne*. Leuven: Anthonius Maria Bergaigne, 1551 (copies: The Hague, KB, 1704 E 28; Gent, UB, 8011).

<sup>24</sup> Only this small strip of the title page has been preserved.

<sup>25</sup> This is used to fill in the lacunae for Leeu’s incomplete edition of *Griseldis*.

<sup>26</sup> Copy: Paris, BN, RES M-V-34.

<sup>27</sup> Copies: Cambridge, UL, Inc.5.E.4.4 [3049]; Haarlem, Bibliotheek Zuidkennemerland, 56 D 16. As the edition by Jacobus van Breda is the oldest one known that has been preserved, this edition will be quoted in the rest of this paper.

<sup>28</sup> ‘Buenen’ is the medieval Dutch word for the French town ‘Boulogne’. See on the use of place names in the different versions Verdram, ‘*Griseldis*’-novelle’, p. 11.

<sup>29</sup> Copy: Cambridge, UL, Inc.5. E.4.4 [3049] (GW M31600). A copy of the third edition of the incunabula period [Delft: s.n., 1495] has not come down to us.

<sup>30</sup> As Jacobus van Breda copied Leeu’s title, we may assume – although there is no direct proof of this – that he also took over the text of the incipit and the narrative.

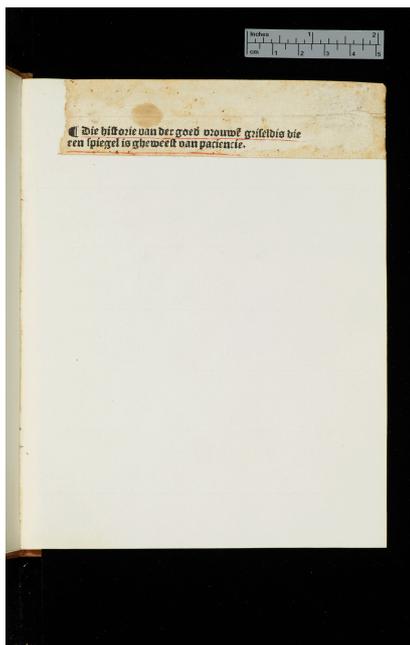


Figure 3: *Die historie van der goeder vrouwen griseldis die een spiegel is gheweest van paciencie*, [Antwerp: Gheraert Leeu, c. 1487], copy: Cambridge, UL, Inc.5.F.6.2 [3384], fragment of title page.

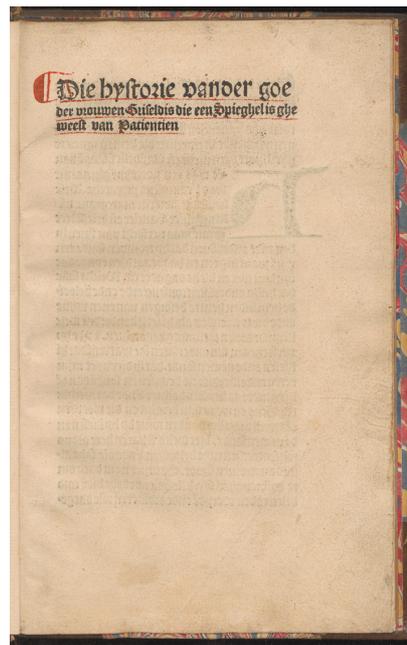


Figure 4: *Die hystorie vander goeder vrouwen Griseldis die een Spieghel is gheweest van Patientien*, Deventer: Jacobus van Breda, [not before 1492], copy: Haarlem, Bibliotheek Zuidkennemerland, 56 D 16, title page.

Here begins the history of the good lady Griseldis, which is short but very pleasant and sweet to hear. And it tells about patience, what a human being can gain and achieve if he endures his misfortune patiently and gently.<sup>31</sup>

In the edition by Jacobus van Breda the name of the earl is changed to ‘Aluzen’. In the incunabula period, letters were frequently added later by hand, but copies also remained unfinished. It is clear that in the edition which served as a model for Jacobus van Breda, the space before ‘Aluzen’ was left open in order to add the ‘S’ later on. The typesetter did not know that the name ‘Aluzen’ was a misspelling for ‘Saluzen’. From then on, all Dutch editions with *Griseldis* as a stand-alone text used the form ‘Aluzen’, which shows they all copied an edition with the wrong name.

The edition by Jacobus van Breda was the first (preserved) edition to structure the story with chapter titles. All in all, there are five chapter headings, which tell the reader or listener in a quite detailed way what is going to happen in the following chapter. The third chapter, for example, is introduced as follows: ‘How Gautier had his young daughter taken away from Griseldis who sat in her chamber and how he pretended he would kill her (his daughter, R.S.)’.<sup>32</sup> By this means, the suspense in the story is changed from a suspense whether something is going to happen ‘**if at all**’ to a suspense as to ‘**how**’ the action continues.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> ‘Hier bghint [sic] die historie vander goeder vrouwen genoemt Griseldis die welcke cort is nochtan is sy seer suuerlijc ende soet om horen: ende roert van paciencien wat een mensche al verdienen mach ende verweruen die hem in sijnen teghen spoet patientelic ende verduldelic verdragen kan’; Deventer: Jacobus van Breda, [not before 1492], fol. a1v.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Hoe Gautier sijn ionge dochter liet halen van Griselden daer si sadt in haer camer ende maecte die maniere oft hise doden wilde’, fol. A4v.

<sup>33</sup> C. Lugowski, *Die Form der Individualität im Roman* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1994), p. 42.

In 1552 Jan Wijnrijcx published the next edition of *Griseldis* in Antwerp,<sup>34</sup> without changing the contents of the narrative.<sup>35</sup> It is the oldest edition with an illustrated title page (figure 5). Wijnrijcx copied the already cited announcement of the story word for word, except that he changed the type of reception from 'hear' to 'read', in line with the change of the predominant form of literary communication from the fifteenth until the sixteenth century. The woodcut under the title, which depicts the wedding ceremony between Gautier and Griseldis, with the bishop and witnesses, underlines the solemnity of the ceremony. Wijnrijcx's edition ends with a colophon and a second woodcut representing a couple with a child (figure 6).

This is the same woodcut Gheraert Leeu had already used 65 years before for his Antwerp edition of *Paris ende Vienna* in 1487 (figure 7), except that, in the later edition, the outer frame was cut off. Jan Wijnrijcx used Leeu's former illustration material and seems to have been influenced by the famous printer's production of narratives.

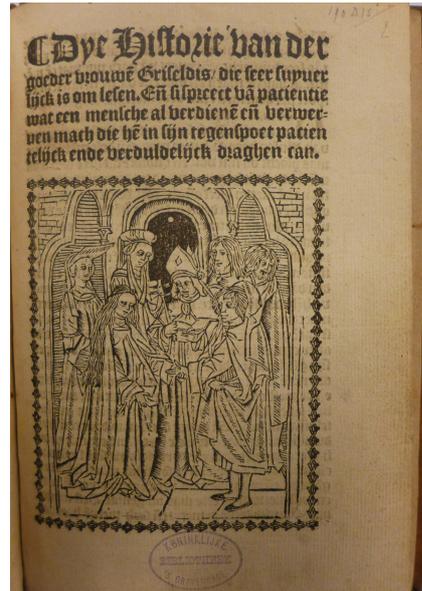


Figure 5: *Dye Historie van der goeder vrouwen Griseldis die seer suyerlijck is om lesen*, Antwerp: Jan Wijnrijcx, 1552, copy: The Hague, KB, 1703 B 8, title page.



Figure 6: *Dye Historie van der goeder vrouwen Griseldis die seer suyerlijck is om lesen*, Antwerp: Jan Wijnrijcx, 1552, copy: The Hague, KB, 1703 B 8, fol. B4r



Figure 7: *Die historie vanden vromen ridder parys ende van die schone vienna des dolphijns dochtere*; Antwerp: Gheraert Leeu, 1487, copy: Paris, BN, Y 2-698, title page

<sup>34</sup> Copy: The Hague, KB, 1703 B 8.

<sup>35</sup> He sometimes changed words: instead of 'ongheerft', for example, he preferred 'ongheoort', both meaning 'no heirs'. It would be worthwhile to analyse these changes from a linguistic point of view: were they intended to modernise the text or did they reflect geographical or social change?

There was another hitherto almost unknown Dutch edition of *Griseldis* by Jan van Ghelen in Antwerp (c. 1570).<sup>36</sup> Its title page is lost. On fol. A2r the text starts with the same announcement as the previously mentioned editions, it contains the same text and is structured in chapters – the same chapters as in Wijnrijcx's editions. There is a major difference with regard to the previous editions because it is richly illustrated with 14 woodcuts on 18 pages.<sup>37</sup> They depict core scenes of the narrative, like the wedding ceremony, or the earl's decision to give the children away, but also show *Griseldis* and *Gautier* in dialogue with each other, *Griseldis* in a monologue and an illustration of her return to her father's house. This illustration does not fit the contents, as it shows a young man kneeling before an old man. The conclusion must be that the printer did not care that much about a suitable woodcut for some scenes. It was more important to place a woodcut than to place a fitting woodcut. This is also underlined by the quality of the woodcuts, which, because the frames are often no longer intact, seem to have been used before for editions of other texts.

There might have been another edition of *Griseldis* in Dutch in the sixteenth century, in a trilogy called *Vrouwenpeerle*. On 21 May 1577 the *Synode of Yperen* published a list of books young people were allowed to read: no. 13 is called 'Der vrouwen-peerle'.<sup>38</sup> In volumes with this title three short narratives were bound together: *History of Patient Helena*, *History of Gentle Griseldis* and *History of Faithful Florentina*. This multi-text volume – the oldest edition preserved was published in Antwerp by Hendrick Aertssen between 1621 and 1658 (figure 8)<sup>39</sup> – was very popular with more than 35 Dutch editions before the nineteenth century.<sup>40</sup>

On the title page of Aertssen's edition specific characteristics are attributed to the three female heroes: patience, gentleness and faithfulness. All three, the title page further tells us, have demonstrated many virtues but especially patience, which they have shown in times of misfortune, annoyance and visitation. The title page also emphasises that the narratives are based on old stories, and that they were rewritten, compiled and improved for the benefit of young people.



Figure 8: *Der Vrouwen-Peerle. Dryvoudighe Historie van Helena de Verduldighe, Griseldis de Saechtmoedighe, Florentine de ghetrouwe*, Antwerp: Hendrick Aertssen, [c. 1621–58], copy: E 55386, Collectie Stad Antwerpen, EHC, title page C1r.

<sup>36</sup> First mentioned by L. Debaene, *De Nederlandse volksboeken. Ontstaan en geschiedenis van de Nederlandse prozaromans, gedrukt tussen 1475 en 1540* (Hulst: Antiquariaat Merlijn, 1977), p. 66. There are two printers with the name Jan van Ghelen, the printer of *Griseldis* was probably Jan van Ghelen (II) who was active between 1544 and 1583. I am very grateful to A. Borms for his detailed information on this edition. Unfortunately, there is no evidence of its current owner or location.

<sup>37</sup> A3v, A4v, B1r, B1v, B2r, B2v, B3r, B3v, C1r, C1v, C2r, C2v, C3r, C3v.

<sup>38</sup> M. de Baecker, 'Livres permis et défendus au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle', in *Bulletin du Comité flamand* (1857), 69–70. The list was first presented in a Comité meeting by M. de Baecker on 17 July 1856.

<sup>39</sup> Copy: Antwerp, EHC, E 55386 [C2-539 e], fol. C1r-C6r.

<sup>40</sup> On the tradition of the Dutch *Vrouwenpeerle* in the following centuries see Schlusemann, 'Canon' (in print).

In this volume the title of *Griseldis* has changed: ‘The second part of the women’s pearl. Gentle Griseldis, wife to Earl Gautier and severely tested by her own husband’. The focus has shifted to the earl’s behaviour, and the reader is prepared for cruel scenes to follow.<sup>41</sup> The story remains the same in this edition, but one scene is changed. When Griseldis is told by her husband to leave the court she reacts in the following way:

<p><i>Griseldis</i>, Deventer: J. van Breda, [not before 1492]</p> <p>‘naked I will go back in there. <b>But I hope that you will have pity that this naked body, in which I bore your children, will be seen naked by the people. I beg you by mercy for this and for nothing else, for the dignity of my virginity which I brought hither and which I cannot carry away; that you will give me this small shirt that that body of she who was your wife recently, will be covered.</b>’</p> <p>Gautyer took such pity on her that he cried, but he turned around so that she could not see it. When he was able to speak, he said: ‘<b>Keep your shirt.</b>’ She thanked him for this. <b>And there she took her clothes off and was naked, except for the shirt.</b><sup>42</sup></p>	<p><i>Griseldis</i>, Antwerp: H. Aertssen, [1621-58]</p> <p>‘Naked I will go back in there.’</p> <p>Griseldis leaves the palace. Gautyer took such pity on her that he cried, but he turned around so that she could not see it. When he was able to speak, he said: ‘<b>Keep and take these clothes</b>’, and she thanked him for this.<sup>43</sup></p>
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In the sentences of the earlier text *Griseldis* emphasises how important she is to the court of the count as she gave birth to his children and has now lost her virginity. She begs the count to give her a shirt to cover her naked body. Aertssen’s version leaves out *Griseldis* begging for mercy and the shirt. The earl’s cruelty is even reduced as he acts more compassionately. She does not need to ask for the clothes, instead he allows her to keep all her clothes, in this way showing more empathy for his wife because externally she is able to keep her dignity.

All in all, the *Vrouwenpeerle* portrays idealised faithful and strong wives as the female heroes of the three stories. They resist tests of their jealous husbands or rejected lovers, behave patiently and are presented as examples for the readers.<sup>44</sup> At the end of the entire volume the narrator addresses women as hearers or readers of the story: ‘You women, remember it, when you hear or

<sup>41</sup> The name of the earl remains ‘Salusen’ throughout the whole story. The printer clearly did not use one of the known editions with the wrong name but had a different source.

<sup>42</sup> ‘naect sal ick daer weder in keeren. **mer ic hope dattet v here ontfermen sal dat dit naecte lichaem daer ick v kinderen in heb gedragen naect gesien sal worden vanden volke. daer om bid ick v bi graciën ende anders niet om die weerdicheit mijns maechdoms die ick hyer broeche ende nyet en mach wech dragen. dat v ghelieuet mi te gheuen dit hemdekijn dat ghedect mach wesen dat lichaem vander gheenre: die onlanx v wijf plach te sijn**’. / Gautyer iammerde hoers soe seer dat hy wort screyende. mer hi keerde hem omme dat sijt niet merken en soude: ende ten iersten dat hy spreken mochte soe seide hi. ‘**houdt v hemdekijn**’. des si hem dancte Ende al daer **ontcleede sy hoer seluen al naect totten hemde toe** (fol. b1v).

<sup>43</sup> ‘naeckt sal ick daer weder in keren.’ / *Griseldis* vertreckt uyt het Palleys. / Gautier die jammerde haers so seere dat hy wert schreyende / maer hy keerde hem om dat zy’t niet merken en soude / ende ten ersten dat hy doen spreken mochte / seyde hy: ‘**Houdt / ende neemt dese kleerkens**’ / dies sy hem bedanckte (fol. c4v).

<sup>44</sup> Especially in the eighteenth century the good and bad aspects of a marriage were often described in almanacs and fictional literature in the southern Netherlands. As a matter of fact, the ‘Women’s Pearl’ fits neatly into to this kind of literature. See M. Mortier, ‘Het wereldbeeld van de Gentse almanakken 17de-18de eeuw’, in *Tijdschrift voor sociale geschiedenis* 10 (1984), pp. 267–90; and J. Salman, ‘Populaire leesstof in de 17de-eeuwse almanakken. *Van sodanige almanacken, die gevult zijn met ergerlijke bijvoegselen en oncuyse en onstigtelijke grillen*’, in *Literatuur* 10 (1993), pp. 74–80.

read this story, be virtuous to your husbands, thus filling you with dignity. FINIS'.<sup>45</sup> In addition, in Aertssen's edition the following endorsement by Maximilian van Eynatten, who worked as a school inspector in Antwerp (1609–31), was added: 'This story of patient Helena, gentle Griseldis and faithful Florentine ... is very agreeable, useful and pleasant for use in schools and among young people as well as in the community. Actum Antverpiae. .8. Mey.1621.'<sup>46</sup> Together with the evidence of the advice at the *Synode of Yperen*, the conclusion must be that in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries these stories were regarded as very suitable for young people, especially for young women.

Throughout the Dutch tradition *Griseldis* was presented as an ideal of the virtues of patience and endurance. By changing parts of the text of the title page, by introducing chapter titles, the story was equipped with information about the future action. The reader already knew what was going to happen and could concentrate on 'how' the action would develop. Although the story was published in different settings – as part of *Vanden kaetspele*, as a stand-alone text or as part of a trilogy – all the editions present the same text, nearly letter for letter. It is only in Aertssen's edition that we find a slight change in the behaviour of *Griseldis*' husband on the title page and in the departing scene when he behaves with more empathy for the whole situation and especially for his wife.

*Griseldis* is not the only narrative which was published anonymously in Dutch. In the Dutch printing tradition of fictional narratives, the author is not mentioned, they were all published anonymously, and the printer-publisher had a strong influence on the Dutch tradition. As he was not a writer, but nevertheless sought to publish the famous text, he chose to retain the text and only changed the illustrations according to the material he had in stock and which he deemed suitable.

## *Griseldis* in English: New Versions by Known Authors

The English tradition of the novella started with Chaucer's *The Clerk's Tale* as part of the *Canterbury Tales* (c. 1387), first printed by William Caxton in Westminster (c. 1476), which was followed by many other editions of Chaucer's work.<sup>47</sup> In the prologue the morality of the story is emphasised, which is completely different from the morality expressed in the Dutch tradition: 'This storie is seyde, nat for that wyves sholde / Folwen Grisilde as in humilte, / For it were inportable (impossible, R.S.), though they wolde'. The clerk also warns the male reader or listener not to act like the marquis because he will fail ('for in certain he shal faile', l. 1180). Both the female and the male hero are presented as unattainable examples.

The English printed tradition of *Griseldis* is very different from the Dutch because of its transmission in different genres especially in the second half of the sixteenth century (as a

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<sup>45</sup> 'Ghy vroukens hout dit in u memorie / Die hoort oft lest dese historie / En wilt uwen mannen deught bewijsen / So sal alle eere in u rijzen. FINIS' (fol. D4v).

<sup>46</sup> 'Dese Historie van de Verduldighe Helena, de Sachtmoedighe Griseldis, ende de ghetrouwe Florentine, ... is seer bequam profitelijk ende ghenuechelijck om in die Scholen onder die Ionckheyt, als oock onder die ghemeynte te gebruycken. Actum Antverpiae. .8. Mey.1621.' (fol. D4v).

<sup>47</sup> See the table in the appendix.

narrative, as a ballad and as a drama),<sup>48</sup> the adaptation by authors whose names are known and the tendency to change the contents to fit personal goals and intentions, as will be shown.

A political poem written by William Forrest, a Catholic priest and chaplain to Mary Tudor (1516–58),<sup>49</sup> with the title *The History of Gysilde the Second* (1558) ends with the following words:

Here endeth the Historye of Gysilde the second, dylie meanyng Queene Catharine mother to our most dread soveraigne Lady queene Mary, fynysched the xxv day of June, the yeare of owre Lorde 1558. By the symple and unlearned Syr Wylliam Forrest preeiste, propria manu.

In his dedication to Mary Forrest compared the history of Catherine of Aragon and that of Gysilde as both husbands asked permission for divorce in Rome.<sup>50</sup> In his book *De ratio studii puerilis Epistolae duae* (1537), which was also addressed to Catherine of Aragon, Juan Luis Vives advised to read ‘de Griselide’,<sup>51</sup> however, we do not know ‘which’ *Griseldis* version he alluded to.

The story was also published in English as a ballad between 1565 and 1566, called ‘a ballad intituled the sonnge of pacyente Gressell vnto hyr make’.<sup>52</sup> Unfortunately, no edition of this ballad has been preserved.<sup>53</sup>

In the late 1560s, new English versions of *Griseldis* were written with new morals. John Phillip, who also wrote ballads, tracts and elegies, named his play *The Commoditye of patient and meeke Grissill* (1565–66, figure 9) and divided it into twenty scenes. The play, a combination of dialogues in verse and songs, was printed twice by Thomas Colwell in London in the late 1560s.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>48</sup> See also A. Baldwin, ‘From the Clerk’s Tale to the Winter’s Tale’, in *Chaucer Traditions. Studies in Honour of Derek Brewer*, ed. by R. Morse and B. Windeatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 199–212. In fact, this happened in the Dutch tradition, too, but much later.

<sup>49</sup> See on the political implications of the drama U. Potter, ‘Tales of Patient Griseldia and Henry VIII’, *Early Theatre* 5 (2002), pp. 11–28. The poem was finished a few months before her death on 17 November 1558.

<sup>50</sup> It was presented to Mary I as a manuscript. See V. Schutte, *Mary I and the Art of Book Dedications* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 90–2.

<sup>51</sup> J.L. Vives, *De ratione studii puerilis Epistolae duae* (Basileae, 1537), p. 30. Vives came from Spain, fled to Bruges (1512), lived in England (1523–8) and again in Bruges (1528–40).

<sup>52</sup> Between 22 July 1565 and 22 July 1566 Owen Rogers obtained the licence to print *The sonnge of pacyente Gressell* (*A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London*, ed. by E. Arber, vol. I. Text [London: privately printed, 1875], fol. 132v) and William Greffeth was allowed to print two ballads to the tune of *Pacyente Gressell* (*Stationers’ Register*, fol. 135a).

<sup>53</sup> A play about *Griseldis* by Robert Radcliff is known (c. 1538–1557), probably written in Latin, because it is mentioned as *De patientia Grisilidis* in John Bale’s account of Radcliff in his *Scriptorium Illustrium Maioris Brytanniae*, Basel 1557–59, I, 700. See C. Hoy, *Introductions, Notes, and Commentaries to texts in The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 132.

<sup>54</sup> Between 22 July 1565 and 22 July 1566, and again between 22 July 1568 and 22 July 1569, Thomas Colwell was licensed to print Phillip’s play (*Stationers’ Register*, fol. 139a and 177a), see J. Phillip, *The Play of Patient Grissell*, ed. by R.B. McKerrow and W.W. Greg (London: Malone Society, 1909); J.J. McGavin, ‘Plays on the Move’, in *Drama and Pedagogy in Medieval and Early Modern England*, ed. by E. Dutton and J. McBain (Tübingen: Narr, 2015), pp. 111–29. See, for an edition of three English *Griseldis* texts: *A Gathering of Griseldas: Three Sixteenth-Century Texts, with Introduction, Glosses and Annotations*, ed. by F. Gildenhuis (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 1996).

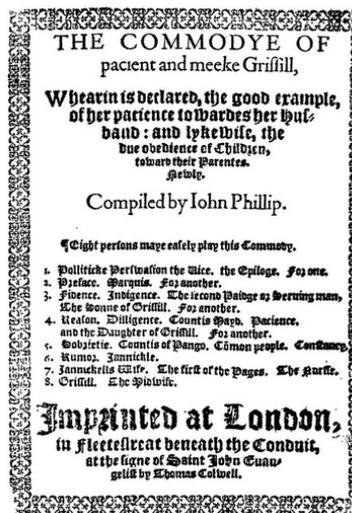


Figure 9: John Phillip, *The commodity of patient and meeke Grissill*, [c. 1568–69]; London: Thomas Colwell, [c. 1569] (ESTC S94716), copy: New Haven, CT, The Elizabethan Club of Yale University, Eliz 156 (reproduction used: *The Play of Patient Grissell by John Phillip*, ed. by Malone Society Reprints [London: Chiswick Press, 1909]), title page.

By using the word ‘commodity’ on the title page the happy ending is underlined from the beginning.<sup>55</sup> The subtitle and prologue stress a threefold moral: patience towards husbands and secondly, obedience of children towards their parents; the third advice has a religious dimension, to be always content ‘And learne with hir in weale and woe, the Lord our God to praise’ (l. 20). A new character called ‘Political Persuasion’, who acts as a mischievous vice, and from the beginning characterises marriage as the end of happiness, tries to provoke anti-feminism at the court and leaves the stage when Grissill is banished.

In about 1586, Thomas Deloney (c. 1543–1600) wrote *A most excellent and virtuous Ballad of the Patient Grissell. To the tune of The Brides good morrow*,<sup>56</sup> an adaptation in verse, printed as a broadside ballad. Deloney condensed the story by leaving out Grissell’s father and introduced the birth of twins. Because of Grissell’s poor origin some people envy her and disgrace her. This is why the marquis tests her by pretending to murder the twins. Before they are taken away, she regrets her poor origin (‘Had I been borne of Royall race / You might have beene in happy case’). When at first, he is influenced by the lower nobility and the common people, the marquis’ cruelty is expressed more explicitly, as he states that he will have no joy until she is banished, and that she is not worth being a lady. The marquis then drives her out without her clothes, and she returns to her father’s cottage where she lives for sixteen years. The end is similar to the other versions, except that her husband speaks the last words. He blames those who criticised and envied her, and admonishes them to praise virtue. In this way, Deloney presents the marquis as a voice condemning the impact of lower-class morals on the nobility.<sup>57</sup> The marquis also accentuates Grissell’s lasting fame in the last lines of the ballad: ‘The Chronicles of lasting fame / Shall evermore extoll the name / Of Patient Grissell / my most constant Wife’. The fascination of the story during the Renaissance was clearly also due to the fact that a lord marries a virtuous poor girl. According to the marquis, external poverty is not important, and instead he praises the value of inner richness: ‘Nay, Grissell, thou art rich, he said, / A vertuous, faire, and comely Maid’. As if Deloney had predicted it – in the marquis’ words – his ballad became very popular: it was

<sup>55</sup> See *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. comedy.

<sup>56</sup> The oldest preserved edition, printed in about 1600, is in London, at the British Library, Huth 50.(17). I used the edition printed in London for John Wright, [c. 1602–1658] (<https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/30210>).

<sup>57</sup> G. Greer, ‘The Middle-Class Myth of Love and Marriage’, in *Feminisms and Womanisms. A Women’s Studies Reader*, ed. by A. Prince and S. Silva-Wayne (Toronto: Women’s Press, 2004), pp. 75–88.

printed, sometimes with smaller changes, at least eighteen times before 1800.<sup>58</sup> Virtue surpasses material richness, is the message stated by Deloney.

On 19 December 1599 another *Griseldis* was mentioned: Thomas Dekker, in collaboration with Henry Chettle and William Haughton, wrote a dramatic version of *Griseldis* with the title *The Pleasant Comedie of Patient Grissill. As it hath been sundrie times lately plaid by the right honorable the Earle of Nottingham (Lord High Admiral) his seruants*. It was published in 1603 (figure 10).<sup>59</sup> The authors added the question of sovereignty in marriage and addressed prejudice in particular. The play points out that prejudice remains prejudice, even if it is concealed behind good manners, showing in this way its potential for discussing behaviour in general.



Figure 10: Thomas Dekker, in collaboration with Henry Chettle and William Haughton, *The pleasant Comædie of Patient Grissill. As it hath beene sundrie times lately plaid by the right honorable the Earle of Nottingham (Lord High Admiral) his seruants*, London: E. Alde, imprinted for Henry Rocket, 1603 (ESTC S105257), copy: San Marino, CA, Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, 40392, title page

Some tendencies can be clearly seen although they remain tentative until all (or most of the) printed editions of early modern popular narratives in the four languages will have been looked at. At the beginning of printing narratives, in the 1470s, the German-language area was the forerunner. The choices of German printer-publishers obviously influenced the Dutch and French printers in the following decades; bestseller editions increased between 1488 and 1495, followed by a clear decline until 1505 and a new rise until 1510. In French there was renewed growth in the second decade of the sixteenth century, but after 1531 the time of printing narratives was over. This happened two decades earlier in Dutch: from 1511 onwards hardly any

<sup>58</sup> See the editions mentioned in the ESTC s.v. Grissell, e.g. London, s.n., [c. 1624], in C. Blackhouse, *Fashion and Popular Print in Early Modern England. Depicting Dress in Black-Letter Ballads* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017), fig. 2.1; London: printed for H. Gosson, [c. 1625] (<https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/20160>); London: printed for I. Clarke, W. Thackeray and T. Passinger [1684–86] (<https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/20247>); Newcastle upon Tyne: s.n., [c. 1725–69] (<https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/32471>). See also H.G. Wright, *Boccaccio in England. From Chaucer to Tennyson* (London et al.: Bloomsbury, 2013 [1957]), pp. 171–2.

<sup>59</sup> See, for more information, R.W. Duffin, *Some Other Note. The Lost Songs of English Renaissance Comedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2018), pp. 317–21. There is an English chapbook tradition in prose, but it would lead too far to discuss it in detail here. The first of these was printed in 1619: *The Ancient, True and Admirable History of Patient Grisel, A Poore Mans Daughter in France*. See the edition by J. Payne Collier in: *Early English Poetry, Ballads and Popular Literature of the Middle Ages. Edited from Original Manuscripts and Scarce Publications*. Vol. III (London: T. Richards, 1842), pp. i–xi, 1–42; see also *The Pleasant and Sweet History of Patient Grissell. Translated out of Italian* (London: E.P., [c. 1630]), in *ibid.*, pp. 43–63, and *The Pleasant and Sweet History of Patient Grissell (c. 1630)*, ed. by F.O. Mann (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912).

bestseller narratives were printed in Dutch, instead the printers concentrated on new narratives and especially narratives with a Dutch origin. In German, after a decline probably due to the Reformation, we see a new explosion of editions between 1531 and 1580. In the course of the sixteenth century, there is a distinct shift to more independence with an individual profile in the different language areas, whereas in the beginning the printers seem to have influenced each other much more.

The story of *Griseldis* is by far the most popular printed narrative in French, German, English and Dutch until 1600. The Dutch and the English printed traditions of *Griseldis* are very different. In Dutch, *Griseldis* was almost exclusively published as a narrative. It was useful as an example in an allegorical text, and it was published both as a stand-alone narrative and as part of a trilogy. The printer-publishers nearly always stuck to the same text with the same moral throughout the whole period in question. They nearly ‘only’ changed the illustrations. In the Dutch literary tradition, it is very common to keep a certain text and to change it throughout a printed tradition. This is not only the case with *Griseldis*, but also with other narratives such as *Vier heemskinderen*, *Historie van Margarieta van Limborch* and *Historie van Floris ende Blanceflour*, to name only a few. Once the contents of a certain narrative had been established, there was obviously no need to change it. The anonymous publishing of narratives is a common tradition in Dutch literary history, too. To my mind, the two aspects are closely related. Because there was no author who rewrote the story, the printer-publisher at that time regarded himself as a ‘transmitter’ of a famous and fixed story for his contemporary public.

Compared to the other six popular Western European narratives, *Griseldis* is the most popular in English. The English *Griseldis* tradition is very lively and varied, especially around the 1560s. In addition, the production of *Griseldis* texts was not limited to narratives. Ballads and plays play a dominant role in the *Griseldis* tradition, especially in the 1560s when the story about *Griseldis* was particularly popular. Ballads and comedies of the story were published and also staged according to the authors’ intentions. After a number of editions of Chaucer’s verse novella were published as part of the *Canterbury Tales*,<sup>60</sup> quite a few adaptations appeared in different genres, as a narrative, a ballad or a drama, each with their own special characteristics. By using genre words such as ‘commodity’ authors like John Phillip informed the audience from the beginning that the narrative would end happily. Throughout the centuries, from the fourteenth until the end of the sixteenth century, famous authors like Chaucer, Philipp, Deloney and Dekker felt the need to rewrite the story according to their own intentions. The English tradition proves that the material could be moulded to the author’s desires and purposes. *Griseldis* belongs to the most famous English women, even if she was only a fictional character and the narrative’s origin was Italian.

On the whole, we can therefore generally speak about a Dutch – mostly one-dimensional – tradition of transmitting (*Griseldis*) narratives, carried out by printer-publishers and opposed to an English multidimensional tradition of writing new versions of a narrative, as done by mostly known authors. Obviously, the tradition of dealing with medieval stories in a certain language area and the choice of known authors in their treatment of the stories, in this case especially the *Griseldis* novella, play an important role. In the future it would be worthwhile examining comparatively the relationship between authorship and adaptation for other translated texts and traditions in different language areas, too, in order to establish the developments and

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<sup>60</sup> Incidentally, Chaucer probably met Petrarch at Padua (in 1373) and might have heard about the story by then. See *Geoffrey Chaucer. The Canterbury Tales*, The New Translation by G.J. Davis (Bridgeport: Insignia Publishing, 2016), pp. 443–44.

characteristics in a certain language area in the wider context of the European narrative tradition – transnationally –, also with regard to the question how different people and cultures chose and still choose to remember these popular narratives.

## Abbreviations

- BL: British Library  
 BN: Bibliothèque nationale  
 EHC: Erfgoedbibliotheek Hendrik Conscience  
 ESTC: English Short Title Catalogue ([www.estc.bl.uk](http://www.estc.bl.uk))  
 GW: Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke ([www.gesamtkatalogderwiegendrucke.de/](http://www.gesamtkatalogderwiegendrucke.de/))  
 ISTC: Incunabula Short Title Catalogue ([www.bl.uk/catalogues/istc/](http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/istc/))  
 KB: Koninklijke Bibliotheek  
 MRFH: Marburger Repertorium zur Übersetzungsliteratur im deutschen Frühhumanismus (<https://www.mrfh.de/>)  
 STC: A.W. Pollard, G.R. Redgrave, *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland and Ireland, and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475–1640*, 3 vols. (London: Bibliographical Society, 1976–91)  
 STCN: Short Title Catalogue Netherlands ([www.picarta.nl](http://www.picarta.nl))  
 STCV: Bibliografie van het handgedrukte boek in Vlaanderen ([www.stcv.be](http://www.stcv.be))  
 VD16: bibliography of German editions in the sixteenth century ([www.gateway-bayern.de/index\\_vd16.html](http://www.gateway-bayern.de/index_vd16.html))  
 UL: University Library  
 USTC: Universal Short Title Catalogue ([www.ustc.ac.uk](http://www.ustc.ac.uk))

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## Figures

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Figure 5: *Dye Historie van der goeder vrouwen Griseldis die seer suyuerlijck is om lesen*, Antwerp: Jan Wijnrijcx, 1552, copy: The Hague, KB, 1703 B 8, title page.

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Figure 7: *Die historie vanden vromen ridder parijs ende van die schone vienna des dolphijs dochtere*; Antwerp: Gheraert Leeu, 1487, copy: Paris, BN, Y 2-698, title page.

Figure 8: *Der Vrouwen-Peerle. Dryvoudighe Historie van Helena de Verduldighe, Griseldis de Saechtmoedighe, Florentine de ghetrouwe*, Antwerp: Hendrick Aertssen, [c. 1621–58], copy: E 55386, Collectie Stad Antwerpen, EHC, title page C1r.

Figure 9: John Phillip, *The commodye of patient and meeke Grissill*, [c. 1568–69]; London: Thomas Colwell, [c. 1569] (ESTC S94716), copy: New Haven, CT, The Elizabethan Club of Yale University, Eliz 156 (reproduction used: *The Play of Patient Grissell by John Phillip*, ed. by Malone Society Reprints [London: Chiswick Press, 1909]), title page.

Figure 10: Thomas Dekker, in collaboration with Henry Chettle and William Haughton, *The pleasant Comœdie of Patient Grissill. As it hath been sundrie times lately plaid by the right honorable the Earle of Nottingham (Lord High Admiral) his seruants*, London: E. Alde, imprinted for Henry Rocket, 1603 (ESTC S105257), copy: San Marino, CA, Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, 40392, title page.

## About the author

Rita Schlusemann completed her PhD on Dutch and English printed animal epic at the University of Münster and holds her habilitation at the Free University of Berlin. Her research focusses on late medieval and early modern printed literature from an interdisciplinary perspective, Dutch-German literary translations until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, book history and history of science. In 2009 she was awarded the prestigious “Heisenberg-price” by the German Science Foundation, to continue her research for five years. She has published numerous books and articles, including the following monographs: *Bibliographie der deutschen Übersetzungen niederländischer Literatur (bis 1550)* (Berlin / Boston: De Gruyter 2011); *Schöne Historien. Niederländische Romane im deutschen Spätmittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin / Boston: De Gruyter 2016) and *Briefwechsel der Brüder Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm mit niederländischen und belgischen Gelehrten* (Hildesheim: Olms 2016), and the volume *De glans van Vondels Lucifer* (The splendour of Vondel’s *Lucifer*), together with Marijke Meijer Drees and Marco Prandoni (Amsterdam: AUP 2018).

## Appendix: Survey of *Griseldis* Editions until 1600

<b>Dutch</b>	<p>Leuven: J. van Westfalen, 1477          [Antwerpen]: [G. Leeu], [1487]          Deventer: J. van Breda, [n.b. 1492]          [Delft]: s.n., [1495]          Delft: H. E. van Homberch, 1498          [Antwerpen]: [J. van Liesveldt], [1529] (NK 0712)          Antwerpen: A. van Berghen, [s.a.] (NK 0713)          Leuven: A. M. Bergaigne, 1551          Antwerpen: J. Wijnrijcx, 1552          Antwerpen: H. Verdussen, [1552–1687]          D.V. Coornhert, <i>Vijftich lustighe historien</i>, Haarlem: J. van Zuren, 1564 (<i>Decamerone</i>)          Antwerpen: J. van Ghelen, [c. 1570]          Amsterdam: Muller, 1598 (<i>Decamerone</i>)</p>	13
<b>English</b>	<p>[Westminster: ] [W. Caxton], [c. 1478] (STC 5082)<sup>61</sup>          [Westminster: ] [W. Caxton], [c. 1484] (STC 5083)          [London: ] R. Pynson, [c. 1492] (STC 5084)          Westminster: W. de Worde, 1498 (STC 5085)          London: R. Pynson, 1526 (STC 5086)          London: W. Thynne, 1532 (STC 5068)          London: W. Thynne, 1542 (STC 5069)          London: W. Thynne, 1545 (STC 5071)          William Forrest, <i>Grisilidis</i>, 1558  <i>The sonnge of pacyente Gressell</i>, [London: ] [Owen Rogers], [1565–66]  <i>Pacyente Gressell</i>, [London: ] [W. Greffeth], [1565–66]          John Phillip, <i>The Commoditye of pacient and meeke Grissill</i>, [London: ] [Th. Colwell], [22 July 1565 – 22 July 1566]<sup>62</sup>          John Phillip, <i>The Commoditye of pacient and meeke Grissill</i>, [London: ] [Th. Colwell], [22 July 1568 – 22 July 1569]<sup>63</sup>          Thomas Deloney, <i>An excellent ballad of the noble marquis and patient Grissel</i>, [London: ] s.n. [c. 1586]          London: Th. Spoght, 1598 (STC 5077)          London: A. Islip, 1598 (STC 5078)          London: A. Islip, 1598 (STC 5079)          Th. Dekker, H. Chettle, W. Haughton, <i>The pleasant Comedie of Patient Grissill</i> [1599]<sup>64</sup></p>	18
<b>French</b>	<p>Genève: L. Cruse, [c. 1482]          [Vienne]: [P. Schenk], [1483]          Bréhant-Loudéac: R. Fouquet and J. Crès, 1484–85          Paris: [J. du Pré], 1485 (<i>Decamerone</i>)          Troyes: G. le Rouge, 1491          [Lyon/Poitiers]: [Ortuin/Bouyer], [c. 1491]</p>	44

<sup>61</sup> STC-numbers are all editions of the *Canterbury Tales*.

<sup>62</sup> *Stationers' Register*, fol. 139; STC 19865; see also F. Gildenhuis, *Griseldas*; J.J. McGavin, 'Plays on the Move', in *Drama and Pedagogy in Medieval and Early Modern England*, ed. by E. Dutton and J. McBain (Tübingen: Narr, 2015), pp. 111–29.

<sup>63</sup> ESTC S94716.

<sup>64</sup> *Stationers' Register*, fol. 177; see also R.W. Duffin, *Some Other Note. The Lost Songs of English Renaissance Comedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2018), pp. 317–21.

	<p>[Lyon]: s.n., s.a.  Lyon: J. Tréperel, [c. 1499–1500]  s.l.: J. Tréperel, s.a.  Paris: A. Verard, [after 1500] (<i>Decamerone</i>)  Paris: [A. Lotrian], [1510]  Paris: Ph. Lenoir, 1522 (Leclerc 2011)  Lyon: C. Nourry, 1525 (Leclerc 2011)  Lyon: P. de Sainte-Lucie, s.a. [1534–55] (Leclerc 2011)  Paris: O. Petit, 1541 (<i>Decamerone</i>)  Paris: P. Roffet, 1543 (<i>Decamerone</i>)  Paris: for Etienne Roffet, 1545 (<i>Decamerone</i>)  Lyon: B. Chaussard, 1546 (Leclerc 2011)  Paris: P. Sergent, 1547 (Leclerc 2011)  Paris: for Etienne Roffet, 1548 (<i>Decamerone</i>)  Paris: E. Groulleau, 1551 (<i>Decamerone</i>)  Lyon: G. Rouillé, 1551 (<i>Decamerone</i>)  Lyon: G. Rouillé, 1552 (<i>Decamerone</i>)  Paris: widow Maurice de La Porte and Guillaume Thibout, 1553 (<i>Decamerone</i>)  Paris: G. Thibout, 1554 (<i>Decamerone</i>)  Lyon: s.n., 1556 (<i>Decamerone</i>)  [Paris]: G. Thibout, 1556 (<i>Decamerone</i>)  Lyon: G. Rouillé, 1558 (<i>Decamerone</i>)  Paris: M. le Jeune, 1559 (<i>Decamerone</i>)  Lyon: G. Rouillet, 1560 (<i>Decamerone</i>)  Paris: O. de Harsy, 1569 (<i>Decamerone</i>)  Paris: Micard, 1572 (<i>Decamerone</i>)  Paris: O. de Harsy, 1572 (<i>Decamerone</i>)  Paris: s.n., 1573 (<i>Decamerone</i>)  Paris: N. le Coq [c. 1575]  Lyon: B. Rigaud, 1577  Lyon: B. Honorat, 1578 (<i>Decamerone</i>)  Paris: for C. Gaultier, 1578 (<i>Decamerone</i>)  Lyon: B. Honorat, 1579 (<i>Decamerone</i>)  Lyon: G. Rouillé, 1580 (<i>Decamerone</i>)  Rotterdam: J. van Waesberghe, 1597 (<i>Decamerone</i>)  Amsterdam: C. Claesz., 1597 (<i>Decamerone</i>)  Lyon: for J. Veirat, 1597 (<i>Decamerone</i>)  Genève: J. le Fèvre, 1597 (<i>Decamerone</i>)<sup>65</sup></p>	
<b>German</b>	<p>Augsburg: G. Zainer, [c. 1471]  Augsburg: G. Zainer, 1471  Augsburg: J. Bämler, 1472  Ulm: [J. Zainer], [c. 1473]  [Ulm]: [J. Zainer], [c. 1473] (<i>Decamerone</i>)  Ulm: [J. Zainer], [before 28.3.1474]  Ulm: [J. Zainer], [not before 1474]  Augsburg: [A. Sorg], s.a.  [Lübeck: L. Brandis], [c. 1478]  Augsburg: [A. Sorg], s.a.  Straßburg: [H. Knoblochtzter], 1478</p>	57

<sup>65</sup> 28 editions of these are editions of the *Decamerone* in French.

Augsburg: J. Bämmler, 1482  
 Straßburg: [H. Knobloch], 1482  
 Augsburg: A. Sorg, 1483  
 Augsburg: A. Sorg, 1490 (*Decamerone*)  
 Augsburg: J. Schaur, 1497  
 Augsburg: [J. Schaur], [1497]  
 Hamburg: [Printer of Iegher], 1502  
 Augsburg: H. Froschauer, 1507  
 Straßburg: J. Grüninger, 1509 (*Decamerone*)  
 Straßburg: J. Grüninger, 1519 (*Decamerone*)  
 Straßburg: M. Schürer, 1520  
 Nürnberg: J. Gutknecht, 1522  
 Nürnberg: G. Walter, [c. 1530]  
 Nürnberg: s.n., 1536  
 Straßburg: J. Frölich, 1538  
 Augsburg: Ph. Uhart, [1540]  
 Straßburg: J. Knobloch, 1540 (*Decamerone*)  
 Straßburg: J. Frölich, 1540  
 Zürich: A. Friess, [1546]  
 Hans Sachs, *Griselda*, Nürnberg: s.n., 1546  
 Straßburg: J. Knobloch, 1547 (*Decamerone*)  
 Augsburg: Ph. Uhart, 1549  
 Frankfurt: Chr. Egenolff, 1550  
 Straßburg: J. Frölich, [1550]  
 Straßburg: J. Frölich, 1554  
 Nürnberg: s.n., 1556  
 Straßburg: J. Knobloch (*Decamerone*), 1557  
 Nürnberg: C. Heußler, 1558  
 Straßburg: P. Messerschmidt, 1561 (*Decamerone*)  
 Frankfurt: Chr. Egenolff, 1563  
 Frankfurt: G. Rab, 1563  
 Frankfurt: G. Rab, 1565  
 Frankfurt: G. Rab, 1573  
 Danzig: J. Rhodus, 1575  
 Frankfurt: N. Basse, 1575 (*Decamerone*)  
 Hans Sachs, *Griselda*, Köln: F. Röschlin, [1575]  
 Danzig: J. Rhodus, 1578  
 Frankfurt: N. Basse, 1580 (*Decamerone*)  
 Frankfurt: J. Spieß, 1581  
 Leipzig: A. Laberg, 1582  
 Frankfurt: J. Spieß, 1589  
 Berlin: N. Völz, 1590  
 Köln: H. Nettessem, [1590]  
 Lübeck: A. Kröger, 1592  
 Frankfurt: N. Basse, 1593 (*Decamerone*)  
 Magdeburg: J. Francke [1600]<sup>66</sup>

<sup>66</sup> 11 of these are editions of the *Decamerone* in German, mostly called *Cente novella Johannis Boccaci. Hundert Neuer Historien*.