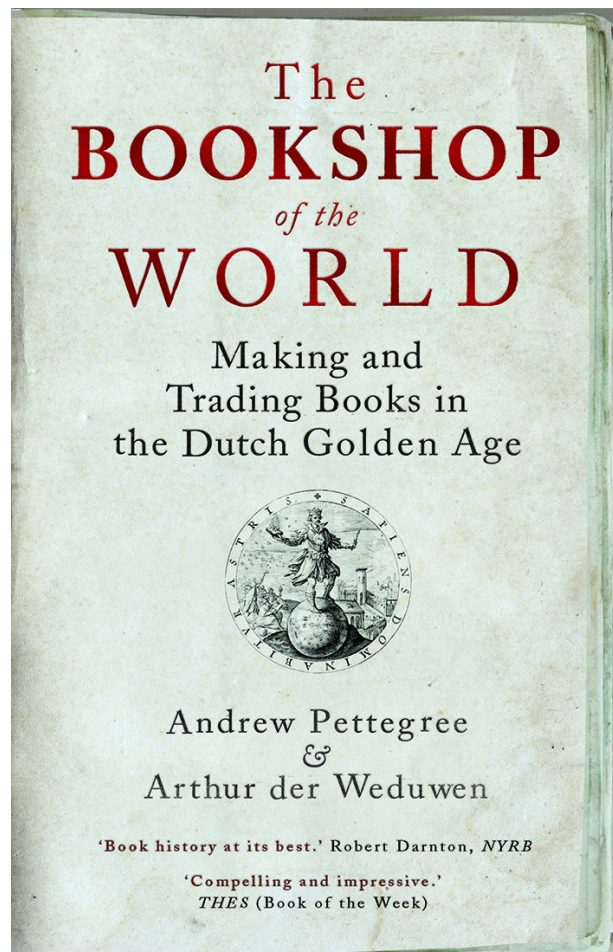


Review

**Andrew Pettegree and Arthur der Weduwen:
*The bookshop of the world: Making and trading books in
the Dutch Golden Age***

New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2019. 485 p.
ISBN 9780300230079

Reviewed by Jeroen Salman



This book offers a comprehensive, integrated study of the history of the book in the 17th century Dutch Republic. The main title, *The bookshop of the world*, underlines the international dimensions of this phenomenon. To my knowledge, this is the first book-historical synthesis about such a famous period in the history of the Dutch publishing industry. The title reminded me of another classic work, *Le magasin de l'univers* (Berkvens-Stevelinck et al. 1992), which also discusses the exceptional international role of the Dutch early modern book trade. However, that book is a collection of separate studies based on a conference and does not aim to provide one clear focus. *The bookshop of the world* on the other hand, written by two authors, tries to offer a more coherent narrative. The work is cutting edge, offering a new perspective on the field. Many topics and analyses will be familiar to book historians of the period, but the book also contains, at least for me, new insights such as concerning advertising or dissertations, while sometimes establishing unexpected inter-connections, as for example regarding the impact of the Dutch book trade on Denmark.

The authors, Andrew Pettegree and Arthur der Weduwen, both based at the University of St. Andrews, have chosen a thematic-chronological approach to structure this book. The four parts (A new republic; Pillars of the trade; True freedoms; Catastrophe and redemption) represent a consecutive phase in the development of the Dutch book industry, with each offering a different perspective. Each part is equally divided into four chapters that discuss specific fields of the production, innovative features of the book trade or ways to study book buying and collecting. Together these chapters introduce a wide array of genres and categories of print, ranging from travel journals to atlases, devotional works, schoolbooks, medical books, news, and historical works. Within this structure and framework, the authors try to cover the whole communication circuit (production, trade, and consumption), and connect this to the development of the Dutch Republic as a new state.

What I find appealing about this book and what makes it a pleasant read is that the book historical knowledge is embedded in a broader political, economic, and cultural context. It demonstrates how blossoming pamphlet production and political crises in the Republic, such as the Truce-conflicts (1618-1619) were inextricably intertwined. It also makes the reader aware of the large impact the founding of the East India Company (1602) and West India Company (1621) had on the popularity of maps, nautical handbooks, atlases, and travel journals (such as the famous journal of Willem Ysbrantsz Bontekoe, published in 1646). It explains the origin of the alleged tolerance and lack of censorship, by pointing at the origin of religious diversity as well as the decentralized political structure of the Republic. Intriguing is also the impact of the printed *Declaration*, William the Third's justification for his invasion of England, the Glorious Revolution of 1688.

One of the main questions this book tries to answer is how the publishing industry contributed to the economic and cultural success of the Dutch Republic. A related question is why the Dutch book industry was so exceptionally large and vital, especially in comparison to other European countries in that century. This integrated approach underpins the notion, which I support, that book history is an interdisciplinary crossroad and that it thrives in dialogue with other disciplines. Having made these choices, the book is useful for book historians as well as for cultural historians, social-economic historians, political historians, historians of science and other disciplines.

The authors tried to be as inclusive as possible, making no distinction between the most prestigious and more marginalized works. The reader encounters canonical works such as Galileo's (1638) *Two new sciences* or Francis Bacon's (1605) *The advancement of learning* but is also introduced to the world of newspapers, bibles, catechisms, and pamphlets. The authors praise the inventiveness of the great pioneers on the international market and also have an eye for smaller businesses on the domestic market. What I found refreshing is that the authors not only acknowledge the large successes, but also look at the sectors that were not so successful, such as the publication of the works of well-known Dutch scholars, including those of Herman Boerhaave, Christiaan Huygens and Antonie van Leeuwenhoek.

The book introduces and discusses some interesting concepts and topics, such as predatory capitalism. This refers to the new commercial strategies Dutch publishers employed to penetrate the German, but also the French and English market. Dutch traders, for instance, bought books cheaply in Germany and sold them in other European countries for a higher price. Between 1691 and 1780, 61% of all unbound books imported into England came via the Dutch Republic. Dutch entrepreneurs, such as the Janssonius family, were also successful in setting up local bookshops in foreign cities such as Copenhagen.

Much attention is paid to the favorite topic of Pettegree and der Weduwen: lost books. The concept comprises ignored categories such as everyday print of government administration or university dissertations as well as the books that are absent in public collections because they have not survived the ravages of time (broadsheets, almanacs, lottery tickets and so on). That is one of the reasons the authors dedicate many words to the rise of the newspaper industry in the 17th century. Among other functions, this medium opened up the possibility of promoting books and other goods. It was an essential form of communication between booksellers themselves and between booksellers and their intended customers. Due to its frequency and continuity, newspaper advertisements became a crucial source for reconstructing a printed world we have lost.

In chapter 16, the final one, the authors oppose the notion that the book trade was in decline in the 18th century. Thanks to the advanced and stable infrastructure and the strong domestic market that had already been created in the 17th century, the Dutch book trade did surprisingly well in the following century.

This book will certainly become a standard introduction to the history of the 17th century Dutch publishing industry. It is comprehensive and learned, but also well-composed and eloquently written. Its functionality is enhanced by a practical timeline and an essential index of topics and names. Besides its appeal to a broad audience, I would certainly recommend this as a handbook for (book) history students at an undergraduate as well as a postgraduate level. I am sure that also senior researchers in the field will profit from its wide scope, its many references, and its new insights.

Reference

Berkvens-Stevelinck, Christiane, Hans Bots, Paul G. Hoftijzer, Otto S. Lankhorst, eds. 1992. *Le magasin de l'univers: The Dutch republic as the centre of the European book trade*. Leiden: Brill.

About the reviewer

Jeroen Salman is assistant professor of comparative literature at the University of Utrecht (Netherlands). His main research interests include early modern book history, cultural history, and the history of science and popular culture. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of Leiden (Netherlands) in 1997. Among his recent publications are a coedited volume with Massimo Rospocher and Hannu Salmi, entitled *Crossing borders, crossing cultures: Popular print in Europe (1450–1900)* (De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019); a coedited volume with Daniel Bellingradt and Paul Nelles, entitled *Books in motion in early modern Europe: Beyond production, circulation, and consumption* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); and the monograph *Pedlars and the popular press: Itinerant distribution networks in England and the Netherlands 1600-1850* (Brill, 2014). From 2016 to 2018, he led an international project that facilitated and stimulated innovative research on the European dimensions of popular print culture (EDPOP). In addition to being an affiliated member of the University of Utrecht's Centre for Digital Humanities, he is a member of its Descartes Centre for the History and Philosophy of the Sciences and the Humanities, and he is a board member of the Dr. P. A. Tiele-Stichting, whose mission is to promote scholarly study of the book. He is also coeditor of the Dutch historical book series *Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis van den Nederlandschen Boekhandel* ('Contributions to the history of the Dutch book trade') (BGNB).