Roeland Harms, Joad Raymond, Jeroen Salman, *Not Dead Things: The Dissemination for Popular Print in England and Wales, Italy and the Low Countries, 1500-1820* (Leiden: Brill, 2013, 328 pp., ISBN 978 90 04 25305 6).

Early modern popular print culture has long attracted scholarly attention. At first it was considered an outlet for poor production and poor consumers; then came studies that identified sophisticated reading and visual practices, complicating the distinction between high and low culture. More recently scholars have found much evidence for innovative patterns of consumption as well as for shifting cultural constructions of religious, gender and other cultural identities. Much emphasis therefore has always been directed to issues of reception and consumption. This collection of essays is an exception in giving full attention to the production and distribution networks of popular print and, in particular, how these have been instrumental in creating a general audience engaged in public debate. There are good reasons for the contributors to this volume to take stock in this way. From a material culture perspective printed matter of less than book size has recently been reappraised. Traders of popular print (the pedlars) were visualised in their own time and that iconography is given pride of place in part two in this volume. Not least, book historical research into cheap print and wider historical research into news and information as a category of culture have recently successfully merged into a booming field of early modern media studies. This book is at the intersection of these recent trends.

In some ways the sources that are studied are familiar – archival references to permits (or persecutions) of pedlars and printers and abundant popular iconography. Compared to the historiographical progress that was made in the 1980s and 1990s (M. Spufford, R. Chartier, L. Fontaine) with respect to the study of itinerant traders (colporteurs) the editors in their useful and excellently annotated introduction plead for a transnational and transactional approach to colportage. By this they mean that print contributed to political processes on a massive scale. Whereas the earlier generation of colportage scholars demonstrated how poor people obtained access to print, this generation takes the issue a huge step further and aims to show that poor pedlars were instrumental in the making of public opinion. Although the editors are (rightly) careful to avoid musings about an emerging public sphere, the implication seems to indicate that

direction. Popular print distribution is seen as the material underpinning of informed citizenship.

Therefore it is no coincidence that the Republic and England (together with Wales) are chosen as case studies. Both countries, also in their close seventeenth century connections, are traditionally alleged to have stimulated free public debate and the formation of public opinion. Part three of the volume deals with this. Quaker pamphlets are analysed as being produced not for a small community, but for international distribution, including the Americas (Kate Peters). English newspapers are witnesses to the demand for international news among readers and testify to transcultural aspects of popular culture (Joad Redmond). News digests helped to promote a collective memory and create a public opinion (Joop W. Koopmans). The onset of the English civil war in 1642 seemed to have speeded up the evolution of pamphlets, stimulating political discussions earlier than in the Dutch Republic (Roeland Harms). Some Dutch popular prints from around 1800 mark a shift to new distribution patterns of books for schoolchildren (J.G.L. Thijssen).

There is some inconsistency in the collection between the emphasis on Anglo-Dutch prominence in creating an attractive format of news and the focus on the dissemination of popular print as a transregional activity. Right from the start of the age of printing in the 1480s pedlars were part and parcel of the retail strategies of Italian print firms (Rosa Salzburg). The tensions with state and church authorities waxed and waned, but a certain illegality that always came with pedlars also enhanced commercial acuity. This was true for all three countries under consideration, but within different time frames. Italian peddling dynasties encompassed Europe throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Alberto Milano). Italian street-sellers stimulated curiosity and travel and added significantly to new ethnographic ideas (Melissa Calaresu). The English and the Dutch only caught up in the middle of the seventeenth century, creating networks of pedlars, but even then these remained more local (Jeroen Salman, Jason Pacey). Thus the thesis of this collection of essays that the possibilities of print distribution changed the content of political (and other) news is only partially tested. The middle of the seventeenth century is a period of transformation, but how that connects to the long term trends in European-wide popular print distribution is not made very clear.

At the intersection of print, oral and visual culture pedlars performed key roles in media awareness and it is a major success of this book that it integrates these three forms of culture. The genre of the 'Cries' of a certain city voices the multimedia approach quite literally. These 'Cries' depict itinerant traders and the oral presentation of their wares (Sean Shesgreen, Karen Bowen). Attention is also given to public performances of printed matter, whether the recitation of war poems or the well-known public singing when the singer/ seller points with a stick to the narrative sequence of scenes he has put on a canvas held up on a makeshift stage in a public square. This is an important argument for the centrality of pedlars and others operating in many transregional ways across early modern Europe. It endorses the still applicable views of Peter Burke and

Natalie Zemon Davis that popular culture was crossing borders. How this intercultural activity was connected to the emergence of news as active political and cultural involvement of people is a theme that this book introduces. It is a fine demonstration that book history has become cultural history in the larger sense.

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