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## CONTEXTUALIZING ENGLAND'S FIRST PRINTED SOURCE ABOUT LIMNING: A BOOK-HISTORICAL STUDY OF *A VERY PROPER TREATISE* (1573)

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# CONTEXTUALIZING ENGLAND'S FIRST PRINTED SOURCE ABOUT LIMNING: A BOOK-HISTORICAL STUDY OF *A VERY PROPER TREATISE* (1573)

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## Résumé

Le présent article propose une étude littéraire historique qui contextualise la toute première publication anglaise entièrement consacrée à la peinture: *A Very Proper Treatise* (1573). Il s'agit de la première étude exhaustive du livre, qui prend en considération à la fois le texte et la matérialité de celui-ci. Il examine l'origine du livre, avec l'imprimeur Richard Tottel comme initiateur du processus créatif. Celui-ci collectait les sources, éditait le texte, puis l'imprimait, diffusant ainsi la connaissance technique de l'art. Par ailleurs, cette étude reconstitue le processus éditorial, retrace les sources potentielles du livre et étudie les lecteurs.

## Abstract

*This article attempts to contextualize, through the prism of book history, A Very Proper Treatise (1573), the first English publication that is entirely devoted to limning or miniature painting. This is the first comprehensive study that takes into consideration both the content and the materiality of the book. It investigates the origin of the book with the printer Richard Tottel as initiator of the process of composition. Tottel collected sources, edited the text and printed it, thus disseminating technical knowledge about art. This article reconstructs the editing process of A Very Proper Treatise, maps out potential sources of the work, and discusses the audience for which this work was intended.*

## 1. Introduction

This paper will tell the story of a book, or rather, “a” story of a book. So far no book-historical study has been published on *A Very Proper Treatise* (1573), England’s first printed source about limning. The full title of the first edition is:

“A very proper treatise, wherein is briefly sett forthe arte of Limming, which teacheth the order in drawing & tracing of letters, vinets, flowers, armes and Imagery, & the maner how to make sundry sises or grounds to laye siluer or golde uppon, and how siluer or gold shalbe layed or limned uppon the sise, & the waye to temper golde & siluer and other mettales and diuerse kyndes of colours to write or to limme withall uppon velym, parchement or paper, & howe to lay them upon the worke which thou entendest to make, & howe to vernish yt when thou hast done, with diuerse other thinges very mete & necessary to be knowne to all suche Gentlemenne, and other persones as doe delite in limming, painting or in tricking of armes in their right colors, & therefore a worke very mete to be adioined to the bookes of Armes, neuer put in printe before this time”.<sup>1</sup>

This art technological recipe book is known under its running title *The Arte of Limming*, which provides recipes for miniature painting. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines “limming”, or the more currently used “limning”, as “illuminating of manuscripts” and “painting in water - colour or distemper”; while a possible definition that I retrieved from *A Very Proper Treatise* itself is “to temper Goulde, Sylver, and Colours to lymme, or to write withall upon velym, parchement, or paper”.<sup>2</sup> This concise booklet that teaches the art of limning gives instructions on how to draw and paint on a wide range of documents and, further, it is explicitly meant for heraldic application or “tricking of armes in their right colors”.<sup>3</sup> *A Very Proper Treatise* gives the recipes for colours to perform the *tricking of armes*, a term used to indicate the delineation or tracing of armorial bearings.<sup>4</sup> It was printed for the first time in London by Richard Tottel in 1573 and reprinted in, at least, 1581, 1583, 1588, 1596, and 1605.<sup>5</sup> The 3rd and 4th editions were printed by Thomas Purfoote, who functioned as the

1 [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, London, Richard Tottel, 1573, sig. A1r.

2 *Oxford English Dictionary*, “limning”, online: <http://www.oed.com> (access October 1., 2015); [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, 1573, *op. cit.*, sig. B3v.

3 [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, 1573, *op. cit.*, sig. A1r.

4 [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, 1573, *op. cit.*, sig. A1r; *Oxford English Dictionary*, “trick”, online: <http://www.oed.com> (access October 1., 2015).

5 Note that the edition of 1605 has a slight modification in the title: *A Proper Treatise*. See [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, London, Thomas Purfoote, 1605.

“assigne” of Richard Tottel.<sup>6</sup> The last four editions were printed in the print shop of Thomas Purfoote. The last edition slightly alters the title: *A Proper Treatise*.<sup>7</sup>

In this paper I will put forward four central questions: “Who made it?”, “How was it made?”, “Who used it?” and “How was it used?”. Answering these questions, I will contextualize: 1) the making, or production, and reproduction of this book; 2) the consumption of this book. I argue that the printer Richard Tottel is the driving force for its production and mediator in its distribution.

## 2. Creation process

*A Very Proper Treatise* was published anonymously, without accrediting author or writer. In this paper I argue that *A Very Proper Treatise* is a printer’s compilation that was used by a varied public. By printer’s compilation I mean that Richard Tottel collected, edited, printed, and published the book as we know it today. My conclusion is different from that of Susan E. James who, in 2009, attributed the authorship of this book title to the Flemish miniature painter Levina Teerlinc.<sup>8</sup> This female heir of Simon Bening spent most of her lifetime being a well-paid English court artist.<sup>9</sup> This current study will draw attention away from the search for “the” author, and sees the printer as a mediator in bringing knowledge together with the eye on the market, and the spread of this knowledge as a consequence. James also argued that the volume was made for a professional public. In this paper I divide the public of this volume into: intended public, circumstantial public, and actual public. The intended public is being defined by the book itself, the circumstantial public are the

6 [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, London, Thomas Purfoote, assigne of Richard Tottel, 1583, sig. A1r; [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, London, Thomas Purfoote, assigne of Richard Tottel, 1588, sig. A1r.

7 Several eighteenth and nineteenth century overviews of art books in German, French, and English report the existence of a 1625 edition. It is possible that this information is based on the misreading of the year 1605. I argue that all works are copied from the first that introduced the 1625 edition.

Bibliography: J. G. Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste*, Leipzig, 1793; F. Von Blankenburg, *Litteratische Zusätze zu Johann George Sulzers allgemeiner Theorie der schönen Künste*, Leipzig, 1797; A. L. Millin, *Dictionnaire des Beaux - Arts*, Paris, 1806; J. Elmes, *General and Bibliographical Dictionary of the Fine Arts*, London, 1826; T. Curtis, *The London Encyclopaedia, or Universal Dictionary of Science, Art, Literature, and Practical Mechanics*, London, 1829; P. De Montabert, *Traité complet de la peinture*, Paris, 1829.

8 Susan E. James, *The Feminine Dynamic in English Art, 1485-1603. Women as Consumers, Patrons and Painters*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2009, p. 293-297.

9 Annemie Leemans, “Tra storia e leggenda. Indagini sul network artistico tra Sofonisba Anguissola, Giulio Clovio e Levina Teerlinc”, *Intrecci d’arte*, 3, 2014, p. 38.

customers of the print shop, and the actual public are the owners of the individual copies. I will compare these three categories. One will see that a professional public can be included, but these three categories of the public are much more varied. Finally, by studying 24 individual copies of the 37 remaining copies I studied the actual use of this book; interests in this book sometimes had more to do with books in general than with the art technological side of the story. In other cases is obtained exactly what the book tries to sell: for limning or miniature painting and a heraldic application of these techniques.

Throughout the work there is a strong sense of organization, coherence, and clarity, which is reflected in the structure of the book and on the level of the recipes. The title gives an overview of the treated subjects in the book, serving as a marketing tool to awaken the interest of the potential buyer. The body of the text is built out of recipes or instructions to follow. The book starts with instructions for drawing, then the preparation for size, binders, colours, varnish, and additional useful recipes. Finally there is a concluding word attached to the last recipe, which describes what has been taught and who has been taught. The book concludes with two indices. The first index contains a table of ingredients and substances that one can buy at the “Pot-icaries” or pharmacy, while the second index provides references to the individual recipes through folio numbers. This index is an interesting and user-friendly navigation instrument, which is one of Tottel’s trademarks.

However, there are several inconsistencies in the text. I argue that these internal disparities are fruit of an editorial process, and that this process was initiated by the printer Richard Tottel. Whether it was Tottel in person or one of his collaborators I will leave behind in this discussion because this book is a product of Tottel’s print shop and therefore it is his ultimate decision and responsibility. Creating a book based on pre-existing texts means that an editing process intervenes in order to obtain the desired result (an editable text). In what follows I will show you the two layers of editing. To follow my reasoning I will introduce the idea of separation where the body and index are seen separate from the title and printed information in the margins. I found textual evidence to sustain that the body and the indices are transformed into a coherent part. The title and marginal information are a piece of mind from the printer. He made these additions in a purposeful way, which is to enlarge and specify interests and public.

One of the first signs of editing that caught my attention was the coexistence of various ideas of the intended public. The title specifies two groups as audience, being “gentlemenne” and “persones as doe delite in limning,

painting or in tricking of armes in their right colors”.<sup>10</sup> The early modern concept of a gentlemen is quite fluid and could be understood in different ways. It was often subject to hierarchic thinking about family bloodline, economical welfare and social status. The second group indicated on the title page is a public that limns for leisure. The title sells this book to people of certain social standing and people with interest in limning. In the conclusion of the work, the public is defined in different terms. Here the work seems to be written for “paynters & scriveners”.<sup>11</sup> And this is where I see two layers of text: the title and the body of text.

Another aspect of this added layer concerns the heraldic nature of the book. The printer added in the margins which colours could be used for the painting of arms. In total, nine of the marginal notes have indications for heraldry painting. These marginal notes point out which colours can be used for the colouring of arms, being: azure or light blue, gold yellow, vermilion red, emerald green, pure white, sable or black, purple or violet, sanguine or murrey colour, and orange or tawny.<sup>12</sup> The information and references to arms and heraldry is reserved to the title and the marginal notes. I argue that the area of the title and the margins are exploited by the printer to communicate this extra layer, which is swiftly accessible to the consumer.

The idea of order, structure, and friendly navigation are already signs of editing, but the body of text has other concrete elements that show an editing process. My argument is that there is a difference between the body of the text and the indices, which I will illustrate with two examples. The first index provides the names of colours and ingredients that one can buy at the “Poticaries” or apothecary.<sup>13</sup> This list has the ambition to be complete and to represent exactly those ingredients used in the recipes. However, I noticed that not all ingredients of the list return in the body of text. The ingredients in excess are resin, alabaster, cow milk, ewe milk, rue juice, red nettle juice, scraped cheese, and lye (alkalized water). I argue that this inequality is a sign of an editing process. Most ingredients of the list are somehow, when possible, grouped per recipe. For instance, the recipe that prescribes to make a “thinne sise” proposes the following:

“The like sise maye you make [...] with the milke of grene figges alone, or with the milke of spourge, or of wartwede, or with the yellowe milke of grene

**10** [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, 1573, *op. cit.*, sig. A1r.

**11** [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, 1573, *op. cit.*, sig. C3v.

**12** [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, 1573, *op. cit.*, sigs. A4r, B1r, B2v, B4r.

**13** [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, 1573, *op. cit.*, sig. C4r.

salendine, or with the iuce of garlike or of onyon heades or with the water and grease of snailes.”<sup>14</sup>

A selection of these ingredients, from the milk of green figs until the onion heads, appear exactly in this sequence listed in the index. I suggest that grouped ingredients might belong to the same missing recipe. Since there are 4 groups of ingredients, it is possible that 4 recipes, or parts of recipes, were initially taken up, and subsequently removed, without adapting the index.

The second index provides the chronological order of the recipe titles.<sup>15</sup> The index provides a reference to the folio number. In most cases the titles are the same or very similar to the titles of the actual recipes. But in a few instances there are some alterations worth mentioning. The index indicates principally two different ways of making “a grounde or a syse”. The actual recipes prescribe how to make size, but the titles are more convoluted, they are longer and introduce a more varied and complex vocabulary.<sup>16</sup> I see two possibilities for these differences. 1) The recipes are the original text and the index is altered. Or 2) the other way round: the index keeps the more original recipe titles, which in the body of the text are adapted. The index contains a more simplified version, which is a reality often appertaining to all-purpose recipe books. I have seen plenty of medical recipe books giving solutions to cure the plague, followed by many recipes “for the same” and “in another way”. Also, *A Very Proper Treatise* intends to teach an art, this means that it contains an educational programme. I opt for the second possibility.

Synopsis	
Body of A Very Proper Treatise (1573) <sup>17</sup>	Index of A Very Proper Treatise (1573) <sup>18</sup>
To make a dooble syse or bottome to laye or settle silver or goulde upon called an embossed ground	To make a grounde or a syse to lay golde or silver upon
To make a thinne sise or bottome to laye or settle silver or golde upon called a single grounde	To make syses other maner of wayes

Fig. 1. Synopsis of the body of text and the second index (making a ground or a size)

Editing and publishing existing sources is a characteristic and trademark of Tottel's print shop. A lot of work has been done on the editing process of

**14** [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, 1573, *op. cit.*, sig. A2v.

**15** [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, 1573, *op. cit.*, sig. C4v.

**16** [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, 1573, *op. cit.*, sigs. A2r - v.

**17** [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, 1573, *op. cit.*, sigs. A2r - v.

**18** [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, 1573, *op. cit.*, sig. C4v.

Tottel's *Miscellany*, which originally appeared as *Songes and Sonnets* (1557). In his recent work, Paul Marquis argues that *Songes and Sonettes* was not really a miscellany, but rather an anthology.<sup>19</sup> A miscellany would be a more arbitrary mixture than an anthology. An anthology is a more arranged and sequenced collection, such as the complex pattern of organization in *Songes and Sonettes*. Tottel made several changes in his *Songes and Sonettes*; he added titles to the poems and sonnets; he changed the text, for instance he rearranged parts of Wyatt's lines to obtain more regularity and smoothness in the metrical system.<sup>20</sup> Marquis argues that this "reshaping" makes part of Tottel's editorial design, a feature that can be applicable to *A Very Proper Treatise* as well.<sup>21</sup>

Tottel used various sources in order to make this major successful publication of *Songes and Sonnets*. Unfortunately, it is unclear which exact sources he had access to. The same issue is true for *A Very Proper Treatise*. Michael Gullick says that the recipes are older than the book itself, but so far none of the sources have been mapped out.<sup>22</sup> Also, the title page of the first edition announces that it "was never put into printe before this time", a formula used to indicate that previously this work circulated in manuscript.<sup>23</sup> Several early modern editions convey the same message on their title page. A good example is *The works of Geffray Chaucer newly printed, with dyvers works whiche were never in print before* (1532), printed by Thomas Godfray. This precise book title kept the formula in a second edition printed in 1542 by Richard Grafton, Richard Tottel's future father-in-law. A title and content search on early modern printed books in *Early English Books Online* (EBO) shows more works with a similar message. Among them are recipes and sermons for instance, presumably in manuscript first and then published in print. What is important here is that the title page announces that an existing work was brought on the book market. Circulating knowledge commonly comes to a compiler in two ways: textually and orally.<sup>24</sup> I argue that the knowledge or the recipes of *A*

**19** Stephen Hamrick (éd.), *Tottel's Songes and Sonettes in Context*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2013, p. 7.

**20** Stuart Gillespie, *Shakespeare's Books. A Dictionary of Shakespeare Sources*, London/New Brunswick, The Athlone Press, 2001, p. 488.

**21** Stephen Hamrick (éd.), *Tottel's Songes and Sonettes in Context*, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

**22** Michael Gullick, "Introduction", dans Society of Scribes and Illuminators (éd.), *The Art of Limning. A Reproduction of the 1573 Edition Newly Imprinted*, London, Society of Scribes and Illuminators, 1979, p. 1.

**23** [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, 1573, *op. cit.*, sig. A1r.

**24** Practical knowledge can be transmitted in other ways, but relevant for the transmission of knowledge concerning *A Very Proper Treatise* is textual. The text contains one instance of spoken transmission, "it is said", but this instance I retain a reference to a general truth, rather than a precise instruction. This sign of oral transmission might have entered the textual circulation earlier.



*Very Proper Treatise* have a textual origin, borrowing from various sources. The handwritten blueprint of *A Very Proper Treatise* did probably not survive. But one of the sources I examined in light of *A Very Proper Treatise* is worth pointing out because of the underdeveloped attention it received in previous studies.

During the 17<sup>th</sup> century Coventry Grammar School preserved a manuscript about *The art of making the gilded and painted letters which we see in old Mss* that was made in 1525.<sup>25</sup> This source had at least a common textual root with *A Very Proper Treatise* and may have been directly or indirectly used to compile the work. *The art of making* was compiled by Robert Freelove. Freelove must have been born in or before 1501 and died after 1556.<sup>26</sup> Currently no trace of this physical manuscript is found, however, the text is not lost. The text of Freelove was copied subsequently by Humfrey Wanley, Elizabeth Elstob, and George Ballard.<sup>27</sup> Freelove's compilation survives in 4 copies made in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As far as I am aware, no thorough study has been published about Freelove, his writing, or relationship to the text of *A Very Proper Treatise*.

*The art of making* contains 46 recipes, of which the last 22 are from a work entitled *Temperantia colorum alumnata*. *A Very Proper Treatise* contains 44 recipes, of which 13 have a significant textual overlap with *The art of making*. Both works follow a different organising structure. For instance in *The art of making* recipes of glair and gummed water are given when needed for the preparation of a certain colour, meanwhile *A Very Proper Treatise* treats glair and gummed water as a basic ingredient in the beginning of the text, because it is useful to all colours.<sup>28</sup> *The art of making* puts the focus on the making of colours, recipes for other materials are subordinate to colour recipes. *A Very*

**25** Edward Bernhard, *Catalogi librorum manusccriptorum Angliae et Hiberniae*, Oxford, Oxoniae e Theatro Sheldoniano, 1697, p. 1460.

**26** These calculations are mine, as there is no *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry or other biographical information present. Robert Freelove must have been born in or before 1501 as he was at least 26 years old in 1527, the year in which he became a freeman to the Mercers of London. The admitted age to the Mercers was 26. See: Database Livery Company (access 26 October 2013). The last mention about Freelove that I was able to retrieve is from the year 1556. This goes back to a marginal note to one of his autograph manuscripts where Freelove calculated how many years ago a certain fact happened. See: London, British Library, ms. Sloane 3604, fol. 269v.

**27** Glasgow, University of Glasgow, ms. Hunter 330; London, Society of Antiquaries, ms. SAL/MS/6; Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Ballard 67; Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Douce 392.

**28** *A Very Proper Treatise* explicitly states that no oil should be used to bind the colours. In fact, the book gives instructions to make colours to be used in books. See [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, 1573, *op. cit.*, sig. B3v.

*Proper Treatise* stresses the complete art and the various steps to undertake in order to obtain the end result.

The textual correspondence is exemplary at the beginning of both texts. To compare the textual interdependency of the individual recipes, I have created an exemplary synopsis of the first recipes of both texts, visualized below (fig. 2). This method allows to study correspondences and differences in a systematic way. The most significant change is the drawing device; “plummet” is being replaced by “pencell of blacke lead”, but these might just mean the same things. The *Oxford English Dictionary* points out that “plummet” was used to refer to “a stick of lead for writing, ruling lines, etc.” or also “a lead pencil”.<sup>29</sup> Again *A Very Proper Treatise* offers descriptions and synonyms, while keeping the same sense of the recipes. Not only textually but also for matters of content, there is a coherence between both texts. What I conclude here is that both works at least have a common textual source.

Synopsis	
<i>The art of making</i> (1525)	<i>A Very Proper Treatise</i> (1573)
How thowe shalt temper colourys to gilde or to lumme with and to make thyne assyse <sup>30</sup> .	The order of drawing or tracing <sup>31</sup> .
Furste thou shalle with a Plummet  trace thie letter and also thie Vinnetts, and thyne Imagerye Iffe thou make anie Than shall thou with a small penne Drawe all that thou portred wyth thie plummet with blacke Incke, Than shalle thowe make assyse for thie golde on this manner	First thou shalte with a pencell of blacke lead, or with a cole made sharpe at the poynte trace all thy letters, and sett thy vinetts or flowers, and then thy imagery yf <i>thy</i> wilt make any And then shalt thou with a small pen drawe al thy hast portred,  then make thy sise  on this wise

Fig. 2. Synopsis of the *The art of making* (1525) and *A Very Proper Treatise* (1573) - first recipes

<sup>29</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, “plummet”, online: <http://www.oed.com> (access October 1., 2015).

<sup>30</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Ballard 67, fol. 30r.

<sup>31</sup> [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, 1573, *op. cit.*, sig. A2r.

### 3. Consumption

Richard Tottel is the driving force behind this publication; he brought art technological knowledge together in a purposeful way, and contributed to the spread and dissemination of this knowledge. He had an idealised public in mind, built on the public he knew. During his career Tottel was able to build a law book monopoly, so a significant part of his customers were lawyers and law students.<sup>32</sup> I refer to this public as the circumstantial public. These are actual potential buyers and not necessarily idealized potential buyers. The book Tottel published was meant for the actual buyers and others. An essential and exciting part of my research was tracing actual consumers of *A Very Proper Treatise* and seeing if they used this book and how. I will briefly introduce the statistics around this book title. I was able to trace 37 copies of *A Very Proper Treatise*, which is 9 copies more than *The English Short Title Catalogue* (ESTC) promised. This amount of copies comes from 6 different editions: 1573, 1581, 1583, 1588, 1596, and 1605. From the 1583 volume onwards, the second printer, Thomas Purfoote, comes in sight. In the scheme below I have visualized the amount of copies per editions, divided by their place of conservation.

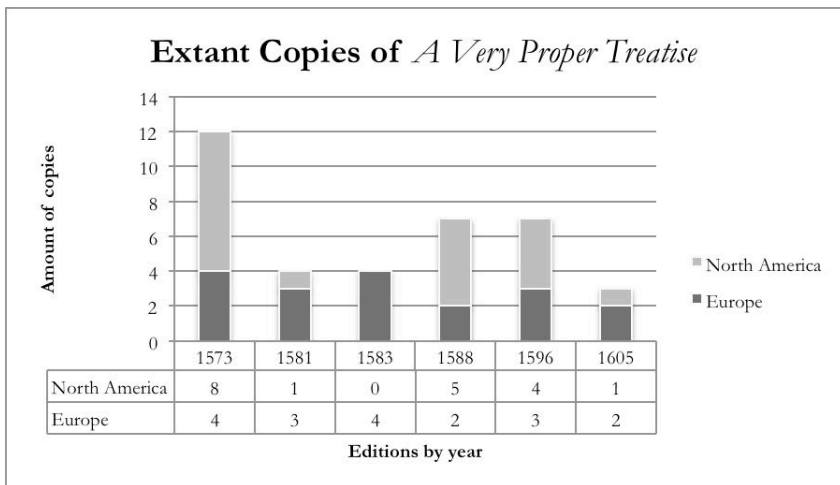


Fig. 3. Extant copies of *A Very Proper Treatise*

Of these 37 copies I was able to study 24 in person. Unfortunately, which ever early modern book I held in my hands, also passed through the hands of nineteenth and twentieth century book-dealers and librarians. What I mean

<sup>32</sup> Christopher J. Warner, *The Making and Marketing of Tottel's Miscellany, 1557. Songs and Sonnets in the Summer of the Martyrs' Fires*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2013, p. 4.

to say is that a lot of information went missing by washing, cropping, and rebinding, to name just a few horrible actions. I will point out a few notable examples from the point of view of the bindings. The 1573 copy of the Folger Library in Washington is preserved unbound, and survives in an awfully bad state.<sup>33</sup> This might very well reflect the original state of the book. Normally books were sold unbound; however, there is evidence that Tottel offered a binding service in his print shop.<sup>34</sup> Little booklets like *A Very Proper Treatise* were stab-stitched, meaning that a wire would pass through the margin in order to unite the book block. Such holes are still visible in the 1605 copy of the British Library, which is by my notion the copy with the largest and most intact margins.<sup>35</sup> Bindings are not only useful to protect books, they can also teach us about their use and utility. I have found *A Very Proper Treatise* in the following contexts, meaning bound to certain volumes:

1. To *The Accedens of Armory* (1562) and *Workes of Armorie* (1572), the “books of armes” as appear in the title.
2. To *A Profitable Booke* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1583), printed by Thomas Purfoote, that deals with dyes, stains and metals, which is “very necessarie for all men”. This combination is a winner and possibly both books were sold together.
3. To a sequence of books containing practical knowledge.<sup>36</sup>
4. To a miscellaneous sequence.<sup>37</sup>

Considering the bindings, I conclude that the practical nature of the book seemed to be a guiding line to interpret and bind the volume.

From the point of view of the public, I can say that the public is varied. I was able to name twelve different 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century consumers who acquired and/or signed a copy:

1. William Neile
2. James Ussher
3. Phebe Challoner

**33** Washington, Folger Shakespeare Library, STC 24252 1/24/41.

**34** H.J. Byrom, “Richard Tottell – His Life and Work”, *The Library*, 4e sér., 8, 1927-1928, p. 206

**35** London, British Library, C.31.c.25, [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise* (1605), *op. cit.*

**36** For instance: Oxford, Corpus Christi, Delt.22.15(4), [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, 1605, *op. cit.*, which is bound to books of medical and anatomical interest, and books of natural philosophy.

**37** For instance: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ashm. 1672 (5), [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, 1583, *op. cit.*, which is an Ashmole binding that keeps the *A Very Proper Treatise* and *A Profitable Booke* of 1583 bound to 21 other printed items and some written excerpts of miscellaneous nature.

4. William Le Neve
5. Robert(us) Thorne
6. Elias Ashmole
7. John Aubrey
8. William Goodman
9. John Dyson
10. Andrew Astley
11. Jeny Myll
12. Brian Twyne

Among these twelve consumers, five have an entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, hereafter referred to as ODNB (numbers 2, 4, 6, 7, 12). Then, two subjects have a mention in the ODNB (numbers 1, 3). Further, there are 5 without an ODNB entry (numbers 5, 8, 9, 10, 11). Of this last group one subject has a will which talks about a book collection (number 10) and two names are shared by multiple people, which results in multiple wills and documents (numbers 8, 9). This leaves the final list with two unidentified subjects (numbers 5, 11) of which one is situated in a family context (number 5). This leaves my research with one name that needs further attention in order to get grip on the historical context, that would be Jeny Myll (number 11). Jeny Myll is one of the two female subjects that tied their name to *A Very Proper Treatise*. So far, she remains completely unknown to contemporary scholarship, but the interest in her is great, as she potentially was an actual customer of Thomas Purfoote's print shop. She signed her volume proudly indicating her ownership and adds the date 1596, which is also the date of the edition she owned.<sup>38</sup>

The other female subject is Phebe Challoner (number 3), who was married to James Ussher (number 2), the archbishop of Armagh. She signed one of the books in the binding containing *A Very Proper Treatise*.<sup>39</sup> At the time she left her signature, the books were already bound together, as they were registered in Ussher's catalogue. Documentation shows that it entered Ussher's collection in 1608, and Phebe signed it with her maiden name, or when the couple was not yet joined by marriage, commonly accepted to have taken place in 1614. The interesting fact about this precise book is that it did not pass from Luke Challoner, father of Phebe Challoner, and then ended up in the collection of

**38** Birmingham, Birmingham University Library, Special collections 15.V481, [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, London, Thomas Purfoote, 1596, sig. A1r.

**39** Dublin, Trinity College Dublin, EE. K. 19, [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, London, Richard Totel, 1581.

James Ussher through marital bound to Phebe. This would be true for the largest part of the actual Special Collections of Trinity College Dublin. Here the book goes the other way, passing between two unmarried people, who were joined later in marriage.

Books are made of paper and paper provides a common writing support. Whether books were printed, handwritten, or left blank, early modern people were keen on using whatever space available to scribble poetry, recipes, references, and many more. *A Very Proper Treatise* was certainly not an exception to this unwritten rule. The 1588 copy of Yale Center for British Art contains a very nice example of the religious life of an art technological print.<sup>40</sup> The reverse of the title page contains a lengthy religious text about tears, sin, pity, and fear. The Bodleian copy of 1583 keeps a list of the ten plagues of Egypt on the blank page in between two books.<sup>41</sup> Consumption here is limited to the material aspect of the book. There is no interaction with the content.

Another way of consuming an art technological source, such as with all books of practical knowledge, is reproducing the content. Earlier I argued that *The art of making* has common roots or is a possible example for *A Very Proper Treatise*. In this case the dynamic of knowledge transmission goes from manuscript into print. But also the other way around is a reality. British Library manuscript Harley 1279 offers a nice example where recipes were literarily copied from *A Very Proper Treatise*.<sup>42</sup> But not only, this manuscript combines written art technological recipes with heraldic imagery. And here we have arrived at the purpose of the little volume: to provide an art that can be applied to heraldic purposes. Several heraldic volumes I came across contain colours added to the imagery. I think especially of the binding owned by Phebe Challoner, which contains apart from colours, also other artistic techniques to transport imagery (which do not appear among the recipes of *A Very Proper Treatise*).<sup>43</sup> Several users acted in concordance with the proposal and suggestion of the printer.

Finally I would like to conclude with a word on the actual putting to practice of the recipes of *A Very Proper Treatise*. One of the key questions concerning textual art technological knowledge is whether the knowledge was executable and whether it was executed. Owners' interactions with *A Very Proper Treatise* might bring answers to this question. One of the recipes prescribes how

**40** New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, ND3305 V4 1588, [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, 1588, *op. cit.*

**41** Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ashm. 1672 (5), [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, 1583, *op. cit.*

**42** London, British Library, ms. Harley 1279.

**43** Dublin, Trinity College Dublin, EE. K. 19, [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, 1581, *op. cit.*

to make white letters in a black field.<sup>44</sup> I found a concrete example of a white letter in a black field in ms. Sloane 3604, an autograph manuscript of Robert Frelove. An initial “I” contains the portrait of Henry VIII, including white letters which are incorporated in the black of Henry’s garment.<sup>45</sup> A material investigation brought to light that it was probably not the procedure of *A Very Proper Treatise* which was followed, but this image certainly shows the same end result. However, the materialized example of white letters in a black field is of interest. This particular recipes was “aproved by me”, or approved by the consumer of the 1588 Yale copy.<sup>46</sup> This particular recipe seemed to be successful and was most likely actually put to practice and experienced. Or as said in the words of the 1605 consumer of the British Library copy, the recipe “to make white letter in a blacke field” was a “pretty exercese”.<sup>47</sup>

In this paper I have examined the text and the materiality of the concise publication *A Very Proper Treatise*, known under the running title *The art of Limning*, which gives insights in the art and working procedures of miniature painting. This work was published for the first time in 1573 by the London-based printer Richard Tottel. I argue that *A Very Proper Treatise* is a printer’s publication produced by Tottel, who edited and printed sources that circulated in manuscript previously. The various levels of the text show signs of an editing process. I pointed out Robert Frelove’s *The art of making* as a potential source of *A Very Proper Treatise*. Finally, the study of individual copies of this published volume brought to light several consumers and consumption patterns. This paper investigated how *A Very Proper Treatise* contextualizes the making, publication, transmission, and consumption of art technological knowledge in early modern England.

**44** [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, 1573, *op. cit.*, sig. C2r.

**45** London, British Library, ms. Sloane 3604, fol. 9r.

**46** New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, ND3305 V4 1588 [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, 1588, *op. cit.*

**47** London, British Library, C.31.c.25, [Anon.], *A Very Proper Treatise*, 1605, *op. cit.*, sig. C1r. The 1605 edition follows a different signature pattern from the first edition.

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## Liste des illustrations

Figure 1: synopsis of the body of text and the second index (making a ground or a size)

Figure 2: synopsis of the *The art of making* (1525) and *A Very Proper Treatise* (1573) - first recipes

Figure 3: Extant copies of *A Very Proper Treatise*.

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