

Female Book Ownership in the Eighteenth-Century Dutch Republic

The Book Collection of Paper-Cutting Artist Joanna Koerten (1650-1715)

Rindert Jagersma

Radboud University, Nijmegen, the Netherlands

r.jagersma@let.ru.nl

Joanna Rozendaal

Radboud University, Nijmegen, the Netherlands

j.rozendaal@let.ru.nl

Abstract

This article analyses the private library book sale catalogue of paper-cutting artist (*knipkunstenaar*) Johanna Koerten (1650-1715), one of the most famous artists in the Dutch Republic. The study draws on data gathered for the ERC-funded MEDATE project (Measuring Enlightenment: Disseminating Ideas, Authors and Texts in Europe, 1665-1830). The bibliometric approach of this digital humanities project uses book sale catalogues to study the circulation of books and ideas in eighteenth-century Europe. This article analyses the catalogue of Koerten, her background and professional interests, the 'femininity' of female book collections in general, and the problems and opportunities one faces when using bibliometric data on book sale catalogues.

Keywords

book sale catalogues – female book ownership – Joanna Koerten – Dutch Republic – eighteenth century – digital humanities

Introduction¹

Private library book sale catalogues are a window into libraries of the past. They reveal lost and dismantled book collections, and thereby provide insight into book ownership, reading behaviour, and the accumulation of knowledge. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries private libraries were regularly auctioned in the Dutch Republic, usually after the death of the former owner. To encourage sales, printed catalogues were distributed by the bookseller responsible for organizing the auction. Book sale catalogues thereby documented the book ownership of these former collectors, and can thus help us further understand the spread of ideas across Europe. They may bring us closer to the influence particular books or ideas might have exerted, such as the supposedly 'enlightened' bestsellers of the eighteenth century, or the persisting importance of religious works throughout the century.² These catalogues can be used to analyse early modern book ownership on an individual level as well as on a large scale, to answer the question: which book titles did early modern collectors have on their bookshelves?

In this article we discuss the book ownership of Dutch paper-cutting artist Joanna Koerten (1650-1715) based on the auction catalogue of her library. We use this long-lost auction catalogue as a means to explore the research possibilities offered by the MEDIATE database, currently being developed as part of the ERC-funded MEDIATE project. Can the content of the Koerten catalogue be described as a typically female book collection, or might it be better to speak of a joint household library? We analyse the role religion played in her catalogue, and look for traces of evidence revealing her artistic background. Before we get to these questions, however, we will discuss the possibilities and problems of using book sale catalogues as a book historical source, and will briefly present the life and legacy of Joanna Koerten.

- 1 This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under grant agreement No. 682022. The authors would like to thank principal investigator Alicia C. Montoya for her comments.
- 2 A.C. Montoya, 'The MEDIATE Project', in: *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse Boekgeschiedenis* (2018), pp. 229-32; A.C. Montoya, 'Middlebrow, Religion, and the European Enlightenment. A New Bibliometric Project, MEDIATE (1665-1820)', in: *French History & Civilization*, 7 (2017), pp. 66-79. I.a.: C.-C. van der Woude, 'Veilingcatalogi als bron voor boekhistorisch onderzoek', in: *Documentatieblad Werkgroep Achttiende eeuw* (1991), pp. 47-57; H. van Goinga, 'Books on the Move. Public Book Auctions in the Dutch Republic 1711-1805, Mainly in Amsterdam, Groningen, The Hague and Leiden', in: *Quaerendo*, 35 (2005), pp. 65-95; M.F. Suarez, 'English Book Sale Catalogues as Bibliographical Evidence. Methodological Considerations Illustrated by a Case Study in the Provenance and Distribution of Dodsley's Collection of Poems, 1750-1795', in: *The Library*, 6.21 (1999), pp. 321-60.

Dutch Private Library Book Sale Catalogues

Book sale catalogues are a rich but tricky source for the study of early modern book ownership. There are a number of complexities involved in unearthing a person's interests through a posthumously composed sale list of his or her books. After all, catalogues were meant to showcase what was deemed interesting for sale, not to describe all the books present in the library of the former owner. Booksellers could leave out or add books. For instance, omitted titles may include books that were bequeathed to the deceased's close ones before the auction. Books that were not worth the cost and effort of listing (such as pamphlets and other cheap and ephemeral printed matter that was often sold in bulk), and books that the auctioneer expected would yield too little or even nothing at all (such as books in poor condition) were also often removed entirely from the catalogue.³ On the other hand, booksellers might also add books.⁴ So-called *winkeldochters* (literally 'shop daughters', or remaining, unsold copies) were added by cunning booksellers, hoping that those titles would provoke renewed interest at an auction. In addition, multiple smaller libraries could be merged into one (often anonymous) catalogue, book collections could be split, or books could be included that had belonged to a parent or another person in the household rather than the person mentioned on the title page. Sale catalogues thus can be incomplete and over-complete at the same time.

A further complication in using printed book auction catalogues as a historical source is that they are by no means representative of general book ownership in the Dutch Republic. Only larger collections consisting of at least a few hundred titles were worth the trouble of organising an auction. Analysis of handwritten probate inventories shows that most people owned no more than a handful to a few dozen books.⁵ Furthermore, owning a book did not necessarily mean reading that book, and vice versa. Books could have been borrowed, gifted books could linger unread on the bookshelf, and favourite books

3 I.a.: B. van Selm, *Een menighte treffelijke boecken. Nederlandse boekhandelscatalogi in het begin van de zeventiende eeuw* (Utrecht 1987), pp. 93–110; H.W. de Kooker & B. van Selm, *Boekcultuur in de Lage Landen, 1500–1800. Bibliografie van publikaties over particulier boekenbezit in Noord- en Zuid-Nederland, verschenen voor 1991* (Utrecht 1983), p. ix; M. Walsby, 'Book Lists and Their Meaning', in: N. Constantinidou & M. Walsby, *Documenting the Early Modern Book World. Inventories and Catalogues in Manuscript and Print* (Leiden 2013), pp. 11–17.

4 See for an example of inserted books the *Naamlyst Van een keurlyke Verzameling welgeconditioneerde Latynsche, Fransche en Nederduitsche Boeken, in de Historische, Militaire en andere Wetenschappen; waar agter II. Aanhangzels [...]* (Arnhem 1786).

5 J. de Kruif, *Liefhebbers en gewoontelezers. Leescultuur in Den Haag in de achttiende eeuw* (Zutphen 1999); C. Gijzen, *Boekbezit in boedelinventarissen. Mogelijkheden en onmogelijkheden van onderzoek naar zeventiende-eeuws boekbezit in notariële archieven* (Leiden 1993).

especially might be deemed unsellable due to the fact that they had been literally read to pieces. Still, with these complications in mind, general conclusions based on the dominant genres and authors listed within catalogues can indeed help us further understand the interests of library owners.⁶

BSCO and MEDIATE

Analysing book sale catalogues on a large scale can reveal a lot about book ownership. For over a century, Dutch book historians have used (private library) sale catalogues as a means to study book ownership. Dutch book historian Bert van Selm signalled the need to *systematically* analyse the corpus of eighteenth-century book sale catalogues in 1991.⁷ From the 1980s onwards, Van Selm, Hans Gruys, Henk de Kooker, Everhard Hofland, Otto Lankhorst, and others started bringing together photos of all Dutch book sale catalogues in the microfiche collection *Book Sales Catalogues of the Dutch Republic, 1599-1800* (BSC).⁸ Continued online under the name *Book Sales Catalogues Online* (BSCO), this repository contains over 3,750 digital facsimiles of early modern catalogues.⁹ In turn, this inventory work inspired Hannie van Goinga, Svend E. Veldhuijzen, and Johan Gerritsen to collect and record data concerning approximately 11,000 Dutch book auctions from the period 1711-1805: the *Repertorium van Nederlandse publieke boekenveilingen 1711-1805* (RNBV)—which is currently part of the online database *Bibliopolis, the national history of the printed book in the Netherlands*.¹⁰

By analysing and selecting the data from these repositories, 3,222 auction catalogues of private libraries from the period 1599-1800 in BSCO have been localised so far (including 686 anonymous collections).¹¹ This number may

6 About the use and the limitations of this source: H. Blom, R. Jagersma & J. Reboul, 'Printed Private Library Catalogues as a Source for the History of Reading', in: M. Hammond and J. Rose, *The Edinburgh History of Reading, a World Survey from Antiquity to the Present* (Edinburgh, forthcoming).

7 De Kooker & Van Selm, op. cit. (n. 3), pp. ix.

8 *Guide. Book Sales Catalogues of the Dutch Republic, 1599-1800*, ed. J.A. Gruys & H.W. de Kooker (Leiden 1997).

9 *Book Sales Catalogues Online—Book Auctioning in the Dutch Republic, ca.1500-ca.1800* (Leiden 2015) <http://primarysources.brillonline.com/browse/book-sales-catalogues-online>, last accessed on 20-02-2020.

10 *Bibliopolis. Geschiedenis van het gedrukte boek in Nederland* (The Hague 2002) <http://www.bibliopolis.nl>, last accessed on 02-02-2020.

11 R. Jagersma, 'Dutch Printed Private Library Sales Catalogues 1599-1800. A Bibliometric Overview' (Leiden, forthcoming).

seem high, but in fact, catalogues are ephemeral material and their chances of survival are low: printed catalogues have been preserved of only 16.3% of all book auctions held in the eighteenth century.¹² Most often, only a single copy has survived.¹³

Even with the aid of these repositories, the aggregation of the content data from even one of these catalogues is a cumbersome task. In-depth cross-catalogue comparisons—that may help historians obtain a more complete view of the spread of books and ideas—still remain out of reach. To overcome these complexities and to gain insight into the circulation of books and ideas in eighteenth-century Europe, the ERC-funded MEDIATE project ('Measuring Enlightenment: Disseminating Ideas, Authors and Texts in Europe, 1665-1830') is currently building a database recording the contents of hundreds of printed private library sale and auction catalogues from the Dutch Republic, the British Isles, France, and Italy. With the help of these catalogues it will be possible to map the European second-hand book trade as well as the intellectual tastes of different classes of readers.¹⁴ The project follows the method pioneered by the French historian Daniel Mornet, who first asked the question: 'what did the French read during the eighteenth century?'.¹⁵ Mornet's approach was followed by Sophie A. Krijn for Dutch collections (1917).¹⁶ While these researchers, working in the pre-digital era, tallied the occurrence of the 'usual suspects' or most canonical authors by hand, MEDIATE makes it possible to count them systematically, more accurately, and on a larger scale.

MEDIATE focuses on printed catalogues of smaller and medium-sized collections (up to approximately 1,000 titles). These smaller collections are

12 J.A. Gruys, 'Rijklof Michael van Goens. Het mysterie van de 24.200 verdwenen catalogi', in: T. Croiset van Uchelen and H. van Goinga, *Van pen tot laser: 31 opstellen over boek en schrift* (Amsterdam 1996), pp. 150-56; H. van Goinga, 'The Long Life of the Book: Public Book Auctions in Leiden 1725-1805 and the Second-Hand Book Trade', in: *Quaerendo*, 24 (1994), pp. 243-74; H. van Goinga, art. cit. (n. 2); O.S. Lankhorst, 'Les ventes aux enchères des livres à La Haye dans la première moitié du 18e siècle', in: *Le magasin de l'univers. The Dutch Republic as the Centre of the European Book Trade*, ed. C. Berkvens-Stevelinck (Leiden 1992), pp. 199-210.

13 For a complete bibliometric overview, see Jagersma, art. cit. (n. 11).

14 Montoya, art. cit. (n. 2: 2017); Montoya, art. cit. (n. 2: 2018); A.C. Montoya, 'Shifting Perspectives and Moving Targets: from Conceptual Vistas to Bits of Data in the First Year of the MEDIATE Project', in: *Digitizing Enlightenment*, ed. S. Burrows (Oxford forthcoming). See: MEDIATE. *Understanding the Literary System of the 18th Century* (Nijmegen 2016) <http://www.mediate18.nl>, last accessed on 03-03-2020.

15 D. Mornet, 'Les enseignements des bibliothèques privées (1750-1780)', in: *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, 17 (1910), pp. 449-96.

16 S.A. Krijn, 'Franse lektuur in Nederland in het begin van de 18e eeuw', in: *De Nieuwe Taalgids*, 11 (1917), pp. 161-78.

more likely to comprise books purchased for the purpose of private reading, whereas the larger libraries of bibliophiles may represent a taste for collecting rather than reading.¹⁷ In the first—and current—phase of the project these catalogues will be made fully searchable by a combination of OCR-generated transcriptions, manual post-correction, and data enrichment.¹⁸ Each individual item in the catalogues is linked to relevant external identifiers or authority files, including VIAF for authors and works, and the CERL Thesaurus for publishers and places.¹⁹ The second and final phase of the MEDiate project will consist of linking this data to data recorded in other digitally supported bibliometric projects.²⁰

Women's Book Collections

Although the auction catalogue of a private library is merely a snapshot of a collection, most often taken at the end of the life of its collector, it can provide valuable information on the intellectual ambitions of specific readers and their social or professional group, as well as the function of books as cultural capital. The majority of these collections belonged to church ministers, statesmen, lawyers and professors, and were hence libraries that were used professionally. The contents of their bookcases reflected the public, intellectual identity of these collectors. When the title page of an auction catalogue named the former owner of the soon-to-be auctioned collection, the name as well as the profession provided potential buyers with a better understanding of the contents of the sale. Not surprisingly, most of these former owners were men. In the Dutch Republic only 33 of the extant private library auction catalogues can be attributed to a female owner.²¹ It appears that only wealthier widows, unmarried women, or noblewomen had book collections large enough to be

17 I. Monok, 'Les bibliothèques privées et la lecture à l'époque moderne. Un aperçu des orientations de la recherche en Europe, 1958-2008', in: *50 ans d'histoire du livre*, ed. D. Varry (Lyon 2014), p. 147; Montoya, art. cit. (n. 14).

18 Montoya, art. cit. (n. 2: 2018), p. 230.

19 *Virtual International Authority File* <https://viaf.org>; *Consortium of European Research Libraries—Thesaurus* <https://data.cerl.org/thesaurus>.

20 Such as the *Mapping Print, Charting Enlightenment* (MPCE) database; *Footprints: Jewish Books through Time and Place* database; the *Short-Title Catalogue of the Netherlands* (STCN); and the *Universal Short-Title Catalogue* project (USTC). Montoya, art. cit. (n. 2: 2017), p. 70; Montoya, art. cit. (n. 2: 2018), p. 232.

21 J.C. Rozendaal, 'The library of Maria Elisabeth de Wale (1691-1753). The Representation of Female Book Collectors' (Leuven, forthcoming).

sold off independently.²² According to Alicia Montoya, these catalogues listed the same learned books as men, although the libraries of women did incorporate relatively more works of 'a literary nature'.²³

Over the last decades, the female reader has received growing attention.²⁴ In her study of books listed in handwritten probate inventories José de Kruif noted that devotional literature was the nucleus of all eighteenth-century book collections. Women's libraries were typically smaller in size, and their libraries tended to contain more religious works, while men's libraries comprised more professional literature. She consequently characterised women's book ownership as being primarily devotional in nature, as compared to the typical professional library of male collectors.²⁵ These findings interestingly contradict the claims of eighteenth-century critics, who routinely decried a supposedly female preference for novels.²⁶ Jeroen Blaak, whose work focused on

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- 22 B. Dongelmans & B. de Vries; 'Het zoeklicht op de lezeres: bronnen voor het onderzoek van de negentiende-eeuwse leescultuur', in: *De negentiende eeuw*, 25 (2001), p. 82; B. Dongelmans & S. Zwaaneveldt, 'De 'naamlijst der inteekenaren' als bron voor onderzoek naar lokale leescultuur', in: *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse boekgeschiedenis*, 5 (1995), p. 97.
- 23 A.C. Montoya, 'French and English Women Writers in Dutch Library Catalogues, 1700-1800. Some Methodological Considerations and Preliminary Results', in: *I Have Heard about You. Foreign Women's Writing Crossing the Dutch Border: From Sappho to Selma Lagerlöf*, ed. S. van Dijk (Hilversum 2004), p. 185; A.C. Montoya, 'A Woman Reader at the Turn of the Century: Maria Leti Le Clerc's 1735 Library Auction Catalogue', in: *Origines: Actes du 39e congrès annuel de la North American Society for Seventeenth-Century French Literature*, ed. R. Ganim & T.M. Carr Jr. (Tübingen 2009), pp. 129-40.
- 24 More and more projects focus on aggregating and combining the results of case studies and other historical sources regarding female book ownership, in order to provide us with a more general overview of early modern female reading habits, such as: Melanie Bigold's ongoing project *Women's Libraries and Book Ownership, 1660-1820* (London 2020); the RECIRC project (*The Reception and Circulation of Early Modern Women's Writing, 1550-1700*) (Galway 2020) <https://recirc.nuigalway.ie>; the RED-project (*Reading Experience Database*) project (London) <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED/>; M. Hall, 'Gender and Reading in the Late Eighteenth Century: the Bibliothèque Universelle des Romans', in: *Eighteenth Century Fiction*, 14 (2002), pp. 771-89; B. Jack, *The Woman Reader* (New Haven 2012); G. Dow, 'Women Readers in Europe: Readers, Writers, Salonnières 1750-1900', in: *Women's Writing*, 18 (2011), pp. 1-14; H. Brouwer, 'Rondom het boek. Historisch onderzoek naar leescultuur, in het bijzonder in de achttiende eeuw. Een overzicht van bronnen en benaderingen, resultaten en problemen', in: *Documentatieblad Werkgroep Achttiende Eeuw*, 20 (1988), pp. 68-9.
- 25 De Kruif, op. cit. (n. 5), pp. 104-5, pp. 172-82; J. de Kruif, 'Classes of readers: Owners of books in 18th-century The Hague', in: *Poetics*, 28 (2001), p. 43.
55. P.G. Hoftijzer, 'Boekenbezit van vrouwen in Leiden gedurende de Gouden Eeuw', in: *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse boekgeschiedenis*, 12 (2005), pp. 29-45.
- 26 De Kruif, op. cit. (n. 5), p. 183.

eighteenth-century ego documents, comes to more or less the same conclusion as De Kruif. He suggests that reading for the eighteenth-century woman typically meant re-reading a few choice religious works, but acknowledges that most readers, both men and women, also read or owned non-religious works.²⁷ A female partiality toward novels is therefore hard to substantiate, given the available evidence.²⁸

One of the main complications historians encounter when studying early modern women is their relative invisibility in the extant sources. While they took part in the professional life of the eighteenth century, their contribution to specific disciplines often remains hidden behind their husbands or fathers.²⁹ Book ownership could be a 'collective creation' rather than a purely individual affair and operated 'in many ways as a collective phenomenon, making women's collections difficult to disambiguate from their male relatives'.³⁰

The ephemeral character of book sale catalogues has already been discussed, and is indeed confirmed by our findings: the catalogues of at least 73 Dutch female-owned book collections have been lost over time. The sales were announced in newspaper advertisements, but we have found no physical copies of these catalogues. We had therefore not foreseen that in February 2019, we would stumble upon a hitherto unknown library auction catalogue of a woman in the Stadsarchief Amsterdam (Amsterdam City Archives) that had not been inventoried in the BSC repository. Moreover, this was not just any catalogue. It was the catalogue of one of the most famous female artists of the Dutch Republic: Joanna Koerten.

The Life of Joanna Koerten

During her lifetime Joanna Koerten (1650-1715) was known as one of the very best paper-cutting artists in Europe. From far and wide visitors came to visit the gallery where she exhibited her artworks. Her reputation transcended national borders, and huge amounts of money were offered for her works. After

27 J. Blaak, *Geletterde levens. Dagelijks lezen en schrijven in de vroegmoderne tijd in Nederland. 1624-1770* (Hilversum 2004).

28 Blaak, op. cit. (n. 27), pp. 289-91.

29 B. de Vries, 'Een speurtocht naar de 'onzichtbare' vrouw in de boekenwereld', in: *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse boekgeschiedenis*, 12 (2005), p. 8; Jack, op. cit. (n. 24), p. 188; A. Williams, *The Social Life of Books. Reading Together in the Eighteenth-Century Home* (New Haven 2017), p. 7.

30 A.C. Montoya & R. Jagersma, 'Marketing Maria Sibylla Merian, 1720-1800. Book Auctions, Gender, and Reading Culture in the Dutch Republic', in: *Book History*, 21 (2018), p. 83.



FIGURE 1 Portrait of Joanna Koerten. Pieter Schenk (I), after David van der Plas (1701) RIJKSMUSEUM (RP-P-1898-A-20636), AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS. <[HTTP://HDL.HANDLE.NET/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.44935](http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.44935)>

her death in 1715, her husband Adriaan Blok, together with his new wife, took care of her work and reputation. Even after Blok died in 1726, his wife Maria van Arckel continued to preserve Koerten's legacy. She maintained the paper-cutting gallery and received the many international and national visitors, who came to Amsterdam to admire the work of Koerten.

Joanna Koerten was born on 17 November 1650.³¹ Her parents were Ytie Cardinael (c. 1623-1691) and the cloth merchant Jan Courten [Koerten] (c. 1623-1651).³² Both were Mennonites, and her mother was born into a well-known Amsterdam family.³³ Koerten's grandfather Sybrandt Hansz. Cardinael (1578-1647), was a mathematician and the author of popular mathematical books. Joanna Koerten would however never know her grandfather, who died before she was born. She did know her famous uncle Hendrik Glazemaker (1620-1682), translator of Descartes, Spinoza, and the Qur'an, who in 1651 married the older sister of Joanna's mother.³⁴ Joanna's father died soon after her birth. She was eight years old when her mother remarried to the widower Zacharias de Rosijn

- 31 *Gedichten op de overheerlyke papiere snykunst van wyle mejuffrouwe Joanna Koerten, huisvrouw van wylen den heere Adriaan Blok* (Amsterdam 1736), p. *3r; A. Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen [...]*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam 1718-21), vol. 3, p. 293; C.L. Thijssen-Schoute, *Uit de Republiek der Letteren. Elf studiën op het gebied der ideeëngeschiedenis van de gouden eeuw* ('s-Gravenhage 1967), p. 221; R. Stolzenburg, 'Koerten, Joanna', in: *Digitaal Vrouwenlexicon van Nederland* (The Hague & Utrecht 2014) <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/vrouwenlexicon/lemmata/data/Koerten>, last accessed on 20-02-2020.
- 32 *Stadsarchief Amsterdam* (SAA), *Archief van de Burgerlijke Stand: doop-, trouw- en begraafboeken van Amsterdam* (DTB) 679, p. 133 (5.10.1647); R. Lambour, 'Doopsgezind of niet? Sybrand Hansz Cardinael, Abraham de Graaf en Gerrit Uylenburg', in: *Doopsgezinde bijdragen. Nieuwe reeks*, 27 (2001), pp. 177-94; Thijssen-Schoute, op. cit. (n. 31), p. 221; H.F. Wijnman, '[Koerten, Joanna of Johanna]', in: *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek [...]*, ed. P.C. Molhuysen & F.K.H. Kossmann, 10 vols. (Leiden 1911-37), vol. 10, pp. 478-82.
- 33 Thijssen-Schoute, op. cit. (n. 31), pp. 213-25; M.H. Sitters, 'Sybrandt Hansz. Cardinael (1578-1647). Een eigenzinnig meetkundige tussen Stevin en Huygens', in: *Gewina*, 27 (2004), pp. 14-32; Lambour, art. cit. (n. 32); R. Lambour, 'De familie en vrienden van Daniel Zwicker (1612-1678) in Amsterdam', in: *Doopsgezinde bijdragen. Nieuwe reeks*, 25 (1999), pp. 142-7; R. Lambour, 'Met Von Uffenbach in 1711 op bezoek in Amsterdam bij acht doopsgezinde verzamelaars van kunst, boeken, penningen en naturalia', in: *Doopsgezinde bijdragen. Nieuwe reeks*, 44 (2018), pp. 95-118; DTB 1062, pp. 70-1.
- 34 Joanna was the witness at the baptism of her niece Sibilla, the daughter and only child of Hendrik Glazemaker. SAA, 1120, inventory number 213, p. 103 (09.02.1687). Sibilla (?-1699) never married. After her death, in the room above the kitchen, more than a hundred books were found: '9 folianten—twee dito; 34 quartern—ses dito; 75 in octavo en duodecimo; eenige packetten; 1 testamentie en psalmboek'. The library of Glazemaker was auctioned after his death. Thijssen-Schoute, op. cit. (n. 31), p. 217, p. 221, p. 223.

in 1659, who was also a cloth merchant.³⁵ As usual within the Mennonite community, Joanna was baptised at a later age (7 December 1669, at the age of 19) in the more liberal Mennonite church 't Lam'.³⁶ On 25 October 1691, at almost 41 years of age, she and Adriaan Blok, a 38-year-old merchant from Amsterdam, registered their intent to marry.³⁷ By then, Joanna Koerten had already gained a reputation with her artworks, and the married couple would spend the rest of their lives in the service of Koerten's paper-cutting art.³⁸

The Art of Paper-Cutting

Paper-cutting, the art of cutting decorative shapes from paper or parchment with a knife or scissors, has been described as a 'strongly underexposed facet' of art history.³⁹ In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it was a popular activity among men and women from all social strata, but it was deemed especially suitable for ladies as it was considered a decorative and useful craft,

35 SAA, DTB 684, p. 155 (14.03.1659); Thijssen-Schoute, op. cit. (n. 31), p. 214, pp. 221-2.

36 SAA, 1120, 213, p. 11; H.J. Schouten, 'Onbekende bijzonderheden betreffende Johanna Koerten en de kwestie van haar geloof', in: *Oud-Holland*, 42 (1925), p. 78; Wijnman, art. cit. (n. 32), pp. 478-82.; J. Verhave & J.P. Verhave, 'Joanna Koerten en haar Schaar van bewonderaars', in: *Doopsgezinde bijdragen. Nieuwe reeks*, 42 (2016), p. 151.

37 SAA, DTB 697, p. 223; Schouten, art. cit. (n. 36), p. 78; Wijnman, art. cit. (n. 32). At the time, the average age for the first marriage was around 26-28 years old. R. van Weeren & T. de Moor, *Ja, ik wil! Verliefd, verloofd, en getrouwd in Amsterdam, 1580-1810* (Amsterdam 2019), p. 140.

38 Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 36), pp. 151-2; *Gedichten*, op. cit. (n. 31: 1736), p. *3v; Houbraken, op. cit. (n. 31), p. 293; *Het stamboek op de papiere snykunst van mejuffrouw Joanna Koerten, huisvrouw van [...] Adriaan Blok. Bestaande in Latynsche en Nederduitsche gedichten der voornaamste dichters* (s.l. [Amsterdam] 1735), p. 50; M. Plomp, 'De portretten uit het stamboek voor Joanna Koerten (1650-1715)', in: *Leids Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, 8 (1989), pp. 323-43; R.-J. te Rijdt, 'Jan Goeree, het stamboek van Joanna Koerten en de datering ervan', in: *Delineavit et sculpsit*, 17 (1997), pp. 48-56; J.D.C. van Dokkum, 'Hanna de knipster en haar concurrenten. Een studie over Oud-Hollandsche schaarkunst', in: *Het Huis Oud en Nieuw*, 13 (1915), pp. 335-58.

39 J. Verhave & J.P. Verhave, 'De Nederlands-Italiaanse knipkunstenaar Johannes van Achelom omstreeks 1700', in: *Oud Holland*, 128 (2015), p. 147, p. 159; J. Verhave & J.P. Verhave, *Geknipt! Geschiedenis van de papierknipkunst in Nederland* (Zutphen 2008), pp. 9-11. The authors of this article translated all Dutch quotes.

that could be carried out in the privacy of the home.⁴⁰ An instruction manual published in 1686 for example specifically targeted Dutch young ladies.⁴¹

Although the activity was often carried out by amateurs, a number of artists rose to great heights with this 'new' art form. Some of these artists, such as Joanna Koerten, Anna Maria van Schurman, and Elisabeth Rijberg, became very well-known; their collections were visited and praised by visitors from all over Europe, who paid great sums for the finest masterpieces.⁴² It may seem inconceivable now, but more money was paid for some of these small paper-cuttings than for paintings by Dutch masters such as Rembrandt.⁴³ Appreciation and desire stemmed from the technical sophistication, virtuosity, and curiosity of the small format, and the fact that this art form was time-consuming, hard to reproduce, and thus exclusive.⁴⁴ The commission that Koerten accepted from Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I (1640-1705) to make a piece for his wife Eleonore, yielded four thousand guilders—an enormous sum of money at a time when an average labourer earned about one guilder a day.⁴⁵ When Johann Wilhelm II, Elector Palatine (1658-1716), offered her one thousand guilders for

40 I.a. M. van Elk, *Early Modern Women's Writing: Domesticity, Privacy, and the Public Sphere in England and the Dutch Republic* (London 2017), pp. 27-80; Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 36), pp. 147-50; M.M. Peacock, 'Paper as Power. Carving a Niche for the Female Artist in the Work of Joanna Koerten', in: *Nederlands Jaarboek voor Kunstgeschiedenis*, 62 (2013), pp. 238-65; J. Hiddes, 'Kunstenaresen in de marge? Over knipkunst, calligrafie en roem', in: E. Kloek, C. Peters Sengers & E. Thobé, *Vrouwen en kunst in de Republiek* (Hilversum 1998), p. 114. Jacob Campo Weyerman (1677-1747) called it the 'konstinstrument der vrouwelijke sexe'. J.C. Weyerman, *De levens-beschryvingen der Nederlandsche konst-schilders en konst [...]*, 4 vols. ('s-Gravenhage 1729), vol.3, p. 143.

41 *Konstig en vermaakelyk tyd-verdryf, der Hollandsche jufferen, of onderricht der papiere sny-konst* (Amsterdam 1686). This book contained instructions for the use of 'paper, scissors, knives, glue, and ways to shape simple figures'. Verhave & Verhave, op. cit. (n. 39), p. 124; Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 39), p. 148.

42 Among these famous paper-cutting artists were Anna Maria van Schurman and the Rotterdam-based Elisabeth Rijberg. Hiddes, art. cit. (n. 40); Verhave & Verhave, op. cit. (n. 39: 2008), pp. 13-35.

43 Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 39: 2015), pp. 147-8; J.M. Montias, 'Estimates of the Number of Dutch Master-Painters, their Earnings, and their Output in 1650', in: *Leidschrift*, 6 (1990), pp. 59-74; M.J. Bok, 'Pricing the Unpriced: How Dutch 17th-Century Painters Determined the Selling Price of their Work', in: *Art Markets in Europe, 1400-1800*, ed. M. North & D. Ormrod (Aldershot 1998), pp. 113-30.

44 Hiddes, art. cit. (n. 40), p. 107, pp. 114-15.

45 Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 39), p. 148; Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 36), p. 163; Houbraken, op. cit. (n. 31), p. 295; F.A. Janssen, *Zetten en drukken in de achttiende eeuw: David Wardenaar's Beschrijving der boekdrukkunst (1801)* (Haarlem 1982), p. 85.

three works, Koerten refused. Rijberg turned down comparably lucrative offers as well.⁴⁶

Among art connoisseurs and contemporaries, the prevailing opinion was that nobody could match the paper-cuttings of Koerten.⁴⁷ But the status of this art form changed over time: it fell in prestige, and the care for the artworks decreased. Today, most paper-cutters are only known through reports of contemporary admirers, writers and travellers, while hardly any of their works have been preserved. Due to its fragile and ephemeral nature, much of the early modern paper-cutting art—including parts of Koerten's oeuvre—has been lost.⁴⁸ Although Koerten also made sea- and landscapes, and Biblical and mythological scenes, her portraits are the most frequently preserved examples of her paper-cutting art.⁴⁹ These portraits resembled engravings due to the thousands of small cuts of which they were made up, and were lauded as 'paintings without paint'.⁵⁰ Despite Koerten's fame during her lifetime, however, her work was later dismissed by art historians as being a typically female craft.⁵¹ Jos Hiddes has thus written that if there had been a 'general validity that works of art retained the value that was assigned to them in their time', female paper-cutting artists would still be famous women.⁵²

Like many Mennonites, Koerten adhered to a sober lifestyle and dressed modestly, without any jewellery. The simple art of paper-cutting, based on the purity of the 'humble medium' of white paper, appealed to her Mennonite way

46 Houbraken, op. cit. (n. 31), pp. 294-5; Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (36), pp. 162-3; Hiddes, art. cit. (n. 40), pp. 115-17; Z.K. von Uffenbach, *Merkwürdige Reisen durch Niedersachsen, Holland und Engelland, Dritter Theil* (Ulm 1754), pp. 266-7; M. Volbeda, 'Rijberg, Elisabeth', in: *Digitaal Vrouwenlexicon van Nederland* (Amsterdam 2014) <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/vrouwenlexicon/lemmata/data/Rijberg>, last accessed on 02-02-2020.

47 Koerten was one of the few female artists to be included in the famous *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* ('The Great Theatre of Dutch Painters and Paintresses') (1718-1721) of Arnold Houbraken (1660-1719). Houbraken, op. cit. (n. 31), pp. 293-308.

48 Wijnman, art. cit. (n. 32); Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 39), p. 147; Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 36). About the chances of survival: Verhave & Verhave, op. cit. (n. 39), pp. 9-11.

49 Houbraken, op. cit. (n. 31), p. 294; Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 36), p. 157. Koerten made portraits of the famous rulers of her time, including William III, Frederick III, Louis XIV, Czar Peter the Great, Cosimo III de' Medici. She also portrayed Dutch luminaries like Galenus Abrahamsz de Haan, Balthasar Bekker, the brothers De Witt, Petrus Francius and David van Hoogstraten. Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 36), pp. 157-63; Peacock, art. cit. (n. 40), pp. 260-2.

50 Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 36), p. 157; *Het stamboek*, op. cit. (n. 38:1735), p. *3v, pp. 24-6, p. 149, p. 228.

51 Peacock, art. cit. (n. 40).

52 Hiddes, art. cit. (n. 40), p. 107.

of life. Praised for the 'virtues of the medium' and for its 'religious overtones', paper-cutting was considered by some as a metaphor for an unspoiled life.⁵³ Perhaps that is one reason why Koerten's work became so widely acclaimed in her day: seventeenth- and eighteenth-century women were not supposed to seek attention with their accomplishments, but arts that could be practiced within the privacy of their own home—such as paper-cutting—were deemed acceptable pastimes for women. These works could be appreciated by men as long as the woman involved led a decent and honourable life. In poems praising Koerten's work, exactly these character traits were lauded: her virtue and honour were often explicitly mentioned.⁵⁴

Visitors and the *Stamboek*

Those who wanted to admire the work of Koerten could visit her and her husband at home to admire the works displayed in her paper-cutting gallery.⁵⁵ According to contemporary accounts, Koerten herself was always extremely friendly and generous, showing her guests her work and tools, and she encouraged interested visitors to pick up the scissors for themselves.⁵⁶ Among the visitors she welcomed were a number of internationally famous guests such as Czar Peter the Great, Johann Wilhelm II, Cosimo III de' Medici, and other 'Potentates, Princes and great Lords'.⁵⁷ Visitors came from all over Europe.⁵⁸ A

53 *Het stamboek*, op. cit. (n. 38: 1735), p. 20, p. 36, p. 76, p. 145, p. 227. The artform was performed remarkably often by Mennonites. Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 36), p. 151. Her art, as well as her gallery, thus fitted her identity as Mennonite. Among the Mennonites were a lot of art and collectors of natural history specimens. The community was 'extremely overrepresented in the Amsterdam cultural sector'. Lambour, art. cit. (n. 33: 2018), pp. 96-7. Peacock, art. cit. (n. 40), p. 248, pp. 260-2; M.M. Peacock, 'The Maid of Holland and her Heroic Heiresses', in: *Women and Gender in the Early Modern Low Countries 1500-1750*, ed. S.J. Moran & A.C. Pipkin (Leiden 2019), pp. 65-127. Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 36), p. 149.

54 This changed after 1750, when women did become more visible within the cultural field. I.a. L. van Deinsen, 'Visualising Female Authorship. Author Portraits and the Representation of Female Literary Authority in the Eighteenth-Century Dutch Republic', in: *Quaerendo*, 49 (2019), pp. 283-314; Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 36), p. 149.

55 Peacock, art. cit. (n. 40), p. 257.

56 *Gedichten*, op. cit. (n. 31), p. *4r.

57 Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 39), p. 148; Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 36), pp. 157-59; Houbraken, op. cit. (n. 31), p. 294; F. Nagtglas, 'Wat een Zeeuw anderhalve eeuw geleden in Amsterdam zag', in: *De Navorscher* 30 (1880), pp. 433-8; Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 36), pp. 172-4.

58 B. Raptchinsky, 'Russische reizigers te Amsterdam in de XVIII^{de} eeuw', in: *Jaarboek Amstelodamum*, 33 (1936), p. 162; Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 36), p. 167.

French visitor once wrote that if one had not paid the gallery of Koerten a visit, one had only seen half of Amsterdam.⁵⁹ The German traveller Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach visited her collection multiple times. The last time in 1718, he even brought his whole family.⁶⁰ By then, Koerten had already passed away, but her husband Adriaan Blok received the company to show them the gallery. He thereby continued being a 'great promoter of her art and reputation'.⁶¹ Those who visited the paper-cutting gallery were asked to leave a contribution in the guestbook, that took the form of an *album amicorum* or so-called *stamboek*. Many poets, artists, ministers, regents and other famous and less famous people left a poem.⁶² Some of these tributes were true pieces of art in themselves, such as literary and artistic tributes in the form of poems, drawings, and calligraphic masterpieces.⁶³

The Koerten-Blok couple was married for a little over 25 years. Joanna Koerten passed away on 28 December 1715.⁶⁴ Afterwards, Adriaan Blok did everything to keep the legacy of his wife alive.⁶⁵ After his marriage to Maria van Arckel in 1718, the gallery remained intact and the visitors kept coming, and so did the contributions to the *Stamboek*.⁶⁶ Blok wanted to ensure Koerten's fame lived on, and intended to publish the *Stamboek* in print, and commissioned several artists, including Nicolaas Verkolje, to create portraits of Koerten and some of the more famous visitors.⁶⁷ Continuing the *Stamboek* and beautifying it was his life's work.⁶⁸ After Adriaan Blok's death in 1726, Van Arckel continued

59 Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 36), p. 167.

60 Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 36), p. 167; J.R. ter Molen, *Een plezierreis in de zomer van 1718. De familie Von Uffenbach in de Nederlanden* (Zwolle 2017), p. 71, pp. 126-7, pp. 173-5.

61 Peacock, art. cit. (n. 40), p. 239.

62 Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 36), p. 167.

63 Some of these praises themselves became in turn the subject of praise. Peacock, art. cit. (n. 40), p. 239; C.J. Kaldenbach, 'Tekeningen uit het album amicorum (Stamboek) van Joanna Koerten Blok (1650-1715), een overzicht met index' (2016) <https://kalden.home.xs4all.nl/auth/KoertenBlok1.htm>, last accessed on 02-03-2020.

64 SAA, DTB 1065, pp. 20-1. She was buried in the Oudezijds Kapel in Amsterdam (1716), grave number 174, as was Adriaan Blok on 17 July 1726, and Maria van Arckel on 14 August 1737. Thijssen-Schoute, op. cit. (n. 31), p. 222; SAA 5075, (250, notaris Cornelis van Agthoven), 6437 (21.12.1719, the will of Adriaan Blok); *Amsterdamse courant* (29-11-1774); *Leydse courant* (23-01-1775).

65 Houbraken, op. cit. (n. 31), pp. 305-6.

66 Marriage intention Maria van Arckel and Adriaan Blok, 10.06.1718. SAA, DTB, 711, p. 209. She was assisted by her brother Fop van Arckel (he passed away on 22.02.1731, SAA, DTB 1058, pp. 62-3) as lived on the same street (Utrechtsestraat) as Maria. The age of Maria van Arckel is an estimate based on her marriage registration (in 1718, she stated that she was 44 years old).

67 *Gedichten*, op. cit. (n. 31), p. *4; Nagtglas, art. cit. (n. 57), p. 437; Houbraken, op. cit. (n. 31), pp. 305-6; Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 36), pp. 168-74.

68 Lambour, art. cit. (n. 33; 2018), p. 97; Houbraken, op. cit. (n. 31), pp. 305-6.

the legacy of her husband's first wife and welcomed people who wanted to visit the gallery until she too passed away, on the night of 7 August 1737 in her Amsterdam house on the Utrechtsestraat.⁶⁹ To guarantee the survival of the art collection, Van Arckel had bequeathed it to her relative Sara Outgers and her husband, the art dealer Pieter Testas the Younger.⁷⁰ The latter however decided to auction the collection as a whole, and published a catalogue to that end, probably in 1744.⁷¹ Not being able to sell the collection in its entirety, separate parts were put on the market later.⁷²

The Fate of Koerten's Library

The question that concerned us as book historians was: what happened to Joanna Koerten's library? Much attention has been paid to the libraries of male artists who are well known today such as Peter Paul Rubens and Rembrandt van Rijn, but we are left in the dark as to the book ownership of one of the best-known Dutch artists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁷³ We suspected that a catalogue of her library must have existed, since the Amsterdam bookseller's guild records mention the auction of the books of a *Juffrouw Blok-Coerten* ('Miss Blok-Coerten') on 29 and 30 October 1737.⁷⁴ At that time, it was mandatory for the auctioneer to request permission to hold an auction and to note the names of former owners, so as to prevent booksellers from deceiving their prospective buyers with non-existing collections in an attempt to get rid of their own unsold remainders.⁷⁵ The bookseller mentioned was Salomon Schouten, whose store was located in the Sint Luciensteeg. The fact that the ex-

69 Nagtglas, art. cit. (n. 57), p. 437; Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 36), p. 176. This house was located on the Utrechtsestraat, between the Herengracht and the Keizersgracht. SAA, 5075, 314, 9372, act 9195.

70 Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 36), p. 176. The value of the *Stamboek* was estimated at 2,000 guilders, art. cit. (n. 33: 2018), p. 98.

71 *Catalogus van een overheerlyk konstkabinet papiere snykonst, door wylen mejuffrouw Johanna Koerten, huisvrouw van wylen [...] Adriaan Blok* ('Catalogue of the Fine Cabinet of Paper Cutting Art, by the Late Ms. Johanna Koerten') (s.l. s.n.); Kaldenbach, op. cit. (n. 63).

72 Wijnman, art. cit. (n. 32); Kaldenbach, op. cit. (n. 63); Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 36), pp. 176-7.

73 M. de Schepper (ed.), *Een hart voor boeken. Rubens en zijn bibliotheek*, ed. M. de Schepper (Antwerpen 2004); A. Golahny, *Rembrandt's Reading: The Artist's Bookshelf of Ancient Poetry and History* (Amsterdam 2003); B. van Selm, 'Particuliere bibliotheken en boekbezit in de Republiek', in: *Inzichten en vergezichten* (Amsterdam 1992), p. 90.

74 University of Amsterdam, *Bibliotheek van de Koninklijke Vereniging van het Boekenvak*, Archief Boekverkopersgilde Amsterdam, B 112. Sale on 29-30.10.1737.

75 H. van Goinga, art. cit. (n. 2), pp. 65-95.

perienced auctioneer Schouten—possibly at the instigation of the heirs of Van Arckel—registered Joanna Koerten as the former owner, and not Van Arckel or Blok, was a sign that we were dealing mainly with Koerten's books.⁷⁶ A catalogue however, had not yet surfaced.

After Maria van Arckel's death in 1737, an inventory of her assets was drawn up by the notary Mattijs Maten de Jonge. This probate inventory contains information about Koerten's gallery, her household items such as furniture, clothing and tableware—but also about the library. It was in this dossier that we discovered the only known copy of the library auction catalogue.⁷⁷ We owe this lucky discovery to the fact that notary Maten de Jonge added the appendix containing Koerten's books to the dossier, although he unfortunately did remove the rest of the catalogue, including the title page.⁷⁸

Advertising the Book Sale

Through newspaper advertisements and guild records, we were able to find out more about the actual sale of this book collection through newspaper advertisements and guild records. It was not solely Koerten's collection that was sold at this auction: preceding the appendix with Koerten's books, the libraries of two other collectors were listed. Newspaper advertisements announced the sale of 'two excellent libraries'—the first having been left by Jan Hulsman, the second by a certain 'W.H.'—'and an appendix of religious, poetic and other distinguished books'.⁷⁹ The records of the Amsterdam Booksellers' guild identify the second and third owners: Willem Hiddink and 'juffrouw Blok-Coerten'.⁸⁰

76 Previous wills of Joanna Koerten and Adriaan Blok showed that the household items were transferred to the surviving spouse. Will of Joanna Koerten: SAA 5075, (250, Cornelis van Aghthoven), 6414, pp. 167-77; (21.02.1709); will Adriaan Blok: SAA 5075, (250, Cornelis van Aghthoven), 6437 (21.12.1719); will Fop van Arckel: SAA 5075, 293, 8095, act 399 (06.10.1727); will Maria van Arckel: SAA 5075, 307, 8819, act 130 (06.03.1731).

77 SAA, 5075, 314 (notary Mattijs Maten de Jonge), 9372 (2 September-21 October 1737), act 9195, p. 1; SAA, 5075, 307 (notary Jan Bartels de Jonge), 8819 (1 January-24 April 1731), act 130.

78 He referred to the catalogue as being, 'drawn up by the Bookseller, and printed by him' (original quote: 'ten aanzien van de gedrukte boeken, werdt alhier gerefereert tot de catalogus, daar van door den Boekverkoper op te maken, en te doen drukken')

79 *Amsterdamse Courant* (22-10-1737) <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010710905:mpg21:p002>, last accessed on 02-02-2020.

80 The part women could have played in the accumulation of a book collection was often disregarded. See: Rozendaal, art. cit. (n. 21). University of Amsterdam, *Bibliotheek van de Koninklijke Vereniging van het Boekenvak*, Archief Boekverkopersgilde Amsterdam, B 112.

It was not unusual to auction off several collections at the same time, especially if they were less extensive. If several collections were auctioned at the same time, typically a catalogue was drawn up consisting of a main catalogue, supplemented with one or more appendices that might be anonymous. The owner of the first collection was often mentioned by name on the title page of the catalogue. This first collection was regarded as the most important one, and usually the owner was better known than the other contributors. It served as an eye-catcher to attract the attention of potential buyers. Sometimes a profession was specified in order to roughly indicate the contents of the library. The chance that the names of the owners of secondary collections would be mentioned was smaller: these remaining book collections were often judged to be of lesser value, either qualitatively or quantitatively. The modest book collection of Koerten was thus auctioned off as an appendix, as the last part of a larger catalogue.

Why was the name of Koerten mentioned in the guild records, and not Blok's or Van Arckel's? Apparently, even 22 years after her death the heirs and relatives of Koerten considered it to be her collection. Usually in the case of a female-owned book collection the name of the husband would be mentioned on the catalogue title-page, even if he had passed away decades before.⁸¹ But neither the name of Blok nor the name of his widow Van Arckel, who died eleven years after him, were mentioned.⁸² The auctioneer registered the collection under the name of Koerten. Was this because she was more famous?

Mr. Willem Hiddink was buried on 13.04.1737 (SAA, DTB 5001, 1104, p. 11r), a Jan Hulsman was buried on 24.02.1737 (SAA, DTB 5001, 1201, p. 143v).

81 In the Dutch Republic, libraries were auctioned surprisingly fast. In 35.3% of the cases, a collection was auctioned in the same calendar year of the death of the collector. In 43.5% the difference was one year, and in 7.6% of the cases it took two years. Sometimes it took years before a library was auctioned. Possibly because the family still kept the library and used the more recognisable name of the former owner to sell to the collection. Based on BSCO data (Jagersma, art. cit. (n. 11)). (The calculation has been made by deducting the year of auction from the year of death. Hence, the month of auction and the month of death have not been taken into account. $n = 788$).

82 The titles and advertisements of other female book collections indicate that if there was a man's name (and a man's profession) booksellers could add, they did, and only if that was not the case the books were sold anonymously or under the name of a female owner. Rozendaal, art. cit. (n. 21). The name of Maria van Arckel is mentioned on the title page of the printed catalogue of the household inventory, announcing the sale at the former house of Maria van Arckel, widow of Adriaan Blok. This *Catalogus van een nette en zindelyke inboel, bestaande in een groot kabinet oude blaauwe en gecouleurde Japanse en Chineese porcelaynen, gemaakte en ongemaakte lywaten &c.[...]* ([Amsterdam 1737]) is also part of the dossier. SAA, 5075, 314, 9372, act 9195.

One might expect that the auctioneer could have benefitted from the fame of Joanna Koerten. After all, a well-known name might generate more interest among potential buyers and thus more money. Yet we suspect that her name was not communicated on the title page at all, since the newspaper advertisements broadcasting the auction do not mention her. Instead, her collection was reduced to a nameless appendix, indicating that the bookseller did not use Koerten's fame to generate interest in the sale. It is imaginable that her fame was already waning: she had passed away more than twenty years earlier, but apparently, she had not been forgotten yet. The introduction of the *Stamboek* (published in 1735) stated that her name was still fresh in people's minds, and in 1762 her portrait of Balthasar Bekker was sold for the hefty price of 260 guilders. Furthermore, her proficiency with scissor and paper was still lauded by eighteenth-century poets in 1738 and 1751, and she is incorporated in *Amsterdam, in zyne opkomst, aanwas, geschiedenissen* ('Amsterdam, in its rise, growth, histories').⁸³ Even though the bookseller could have benefitted from her reputation, he might have considered it imprudent to use a woman's name explicitly to push the sale of books.

The Contents of the Library

The 'appendix of many fine religious, historical, poetical, and other books in Dutch, all in good condition' starts at page 42 and comprises 13 pages.⁸⁴ A total of 302 lots were offered for sale. However, some lots contain multiple items. We were able to identify 310 different editions, plus 11 'parcels of books' that were only specified in vague terms and thus could not be further identified, such as two lots with funerary and wedding poetry: 'a bundle of rare, old Comedies and 'three volumes of tracts on the Remonstrants'.⁸⁵

Roughly one-third of the items in this catalogue are dated, a necessity for the identification of specific editions. We could not assign a specific edition to undated items as multiple editions may have existed, as was the case with

83 *Gedichten*, op. cit. (n. 31), p. *4r; Wijnman, art. cit. (n. 32); A. Hoogvliet (1687-1763), *Mengeldichten* (Delft 1738), pp. 83-6, p. 387; P. Langendyk (1683-1756), *De Gedichten* [...], 4 vols. (Haarlem 1751-6x), vol. 1, p. 422; J. Wagenaar (1709-1773), *Amsterdam, in zyne opkomst, aanwas, geschiedenissen* [...], 3 vols. (Amsterdam 1760-7), vol. 3, p. 428.

84 Original quote: 'Zeer veele Schoone Nederduytsche Godgeleerde, Historische, Poëtische, en andere boeken, alle wel geconditioneerd'.

85 Original quote: '1 Paket met Oude raare Comedien' and 'Drie Banden met Tractaaten raakende de Remonstranten'.

the popular educational book *Nieuwe spiegel der jeugd, of Franse Tiranny* ('New Mirror for the Youth, or French Tiranny'). Here, we were able to identify the work, but not the edition. Other books are described so concisely that it was not possible to identify the book at all, for example *Verhandeling van het kinder-baren, en van de Pokken* ('Treatise on giving birth, and on smallpox'). We suspect this lot comprises two different books since the subject matter is not really related. If this is indeed the case, the first book described is probably Samuel Jansonius' *Korte en bondige verhandeling, van de voortteeling en 't kinderbaren* ('Short and concise treatise of procreation and child bearing'); while the description of the latter is so vague, that it could have been written by at least three different authors.⁸⁶ When we were able to identify the books described in the lots, we were generally able to find the titles in the *Short-Title Catalogue Netherlands* (STCN).⁸⁷

Book Formats

The books are—as often in book sale catalogues—arranged according to format: in this respect, Koerten's catalogue is no exception. It starts with 20 folio editions and continues with 110 lots of books in quarto; 118 lots of books in octavo; and it ends with 54 lots of duodecimo books and 'some bundles of books'. In other catalogues printed between 1680 and 1750 we find similar ratios, although Koerten owned slightly fewer folios and slightly more quartos (Figure 2).

Publication Dates

Koerten's book sale catalogue does not represent the exact contents of the library during her life. Due to the nature of the source, we cannot be sure which books Koerten had owned but were not reported in the catalogue, especially

86 Namely Heydentryck Overcamp, Steven Blankaart, and Nicolaas Heinsius jr.

87 We weren't able to find three titles in the STCN: the two lost books '*Van het Italiaans Boekhouden*, written by a P.D.L.' (mentioned in: K. Hoogendoorn, *Bibliography of the Exact Sciences in the Low Countries from ca. 1470 to the Golden Age (1700)* (Leiden 2018), p. 555.); and '*Nieuweveen, van de Gods-dienst*' (mentioned as 'Nieuweveen (S.) onderzoek over het wezenlyk oogmerk van den Godsdienst, Amsterdam, P.J. Entrop, 8,' in *Naamregister van de bekendste en meest in gebruik zynde nederduitsche boeken 1600-1787* (Rotterdam 1788); and the '*Tijdkorting in Treurige Toe-vallen*'; possibly *De gulde tydkorting der treurige toevalen* (one copy in WorldCat: Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Münster).

	Number of books: (Total of the three collections)	Number of books: (Koerten)	Percentage: (Total of the three collections)	Percentage: (Koerten)	Sample from 45 catalogues
Folio	110	20	11%	7%	15%
Quarto	329	110	33%	36%	30%
Octavo	439	118	45%	39%	37%
Duodecimo	108	54	11%	18%	18%
	986	302	100%	100%	

FIGURE 2 Distribution of book formats in the entire catalogue, the appendix (Koerten), and in 45 other catalogues from the period 1680-1750. Unpublished data collected for A.C. Montoya & R. Jagersma, 'Livres français dans les catalogues de vente aux enchères des bibliothèques privées dans les Provinces-Unies (1670-1750)', (forthcoming). For this article, we only looked at catalogues with less than 53 pages. The average catalogue size was 970 items.

since the book collection was sold some twenty years after her demise. We do know that Koerten never laid eyes on some books in the catalogue, simply because they were published after her death in 1715.

The catalogue provides dates for 113 books in total. 23 of the dated editions were printed after her death in 1715. The oldest book in the collection is an incunable: *Bartholomeus den Engelsman 19 Boeken van de Eygenscapen der Dingen, Zirkzee 1485*, the Dutch translation of *De proprietatibus rerum* by Bartholomaeus Anglicus.⁸⁸ But most of the dated books had been published in the seventeenth century. All of the 23 books published after 1715—with the exception of two religious texts—are works of poetry or emblem books. Half of these books are publications by authors who lauded Koerten in her *Stamboek*: Hero Sibersma (12 books in total, including at least one that was published after Koerten's death), Govard Bidloo (2 books), Jan de Haes, Claas Bruin (2 books), Arnold Houbraken (3 books), Abraham Bogaert (2 books), and Casper Brandt (2 books). It seems that Blok and Van Arckel continued to actively select books for the library that fitted Koerten's reputation after her death. The only copy in this catalogue printed after Blok's death in 1726 is the laudatory *Gedichten op de overheerlyke papiere snykunst van wyle mejuffrouwe Joanna Koerten* ('Poems on the lovely paper-cutting art of the late Ms Joanna

88 Koerten also owned a second, incomplete copy.

Koerten'; 1736). Adriaan Blok had started collecting all the laudatory poems written in honour of his first wife Joanna for a compendium book, but he died before the publication was printed.⁸⁹

A Local Focus: Places of Publication

Two books in this catalogue were printed in the southern Netherlands; all other books listed in the catalogue with a place name were printed in the Dutch Republic (Figure 3).⁹⁰ Compared to the libraries of male contemporaries, this preference for locally published books stands out. These male libraries however tend to represent larger book collections. When focusing on the smaller book collections of other women, we find that Koerten's library is not out of the ordinary. Due to the small number of extant catalogues representing female book ownership we could only study a limited corpus, but four of the eight Dutch female book collections now incorporated in the MEDiate database show an equally regional focus.⁹¹ These 'regional' libraries are all, like Koerten's library, relatively small in size. In contrast, the large libraries of Catharina Cornelia Freher (1792; widow of naval captain Nicolaas van Buuren) and Lady of Ankeveen Maria Elisabeth de Wale (1755) both incorporate books from all over Europe.⁹² The books in the few smaller-sized male book collections likewise show a similar limited spread of publication places.⁹³ Size of the collection rather than gender of the owner thus seems to be the major factor regulating the geographical distribution of the place of publication of book items listed in the catalogue.

Since almost all the books in Koerten's catalogue were in the vernacular, it is not surprising that most of her books were published in the Dutch Republic. What does stand out is the high occurrence of books published in Amsterdam: two-thirds of all items stating a place of publication. Rotterdam follows at

89 *Gedichten*, op. cit. (n. 31); *Het stamboek*, op. cit. (n. 38: 1735).

90 *De Herschepping van Ovidius* ('The Metamorphoses of Ovid'), printed in Antwerp (1630) and the *Beschryving van dat Edel Graafschap Vlaanderen* ('Description of the Noble County of Flanders') (Gent 1562).

91 These catalogues are: Arckel 1737, 321 items; Dabenis 1794, 220 items; Dyk 1763, 111 items; Freher 1792; Grave 1752, 621 items; Mandere 1795, 476 items; Markon 1799, 539 items; Wale 1755.

92 De Wale's catalogue comprises 5672 items, and Freher's catalogue holds 1130 items.

93 These smaller, regionally focused male collections in MEDiate are Ouburg (1735), 437 items; Pennis (1674), 150 items; and Indischeraven (1687), 222 items. Seven other smaller male libraries do include more books published abroad.

Places of publication of books listed in Koerten's catalogue	Number of books	Percentage of total number of books
Amsterdam	65	67.7
Rotterdam	8	8.3
Den Haag	4	4.2
Haarlem	4	4.2
Delft	3	3.1
Leiden	3	3.1
Arnhem	2	2.1
Dordrecht	2	2.1
Utrecht	2	2.1
Antwerpen	1	1.0
Gent	1	1.0
Zierikzee	1	1.0
Total	96	100.0

FIGURE 3 Places of publication listed in Koerten's catalogue

a distance with eight books published there, representing 8.3% of the total. Four books were published in The Hague, and another four in Haarlem (4.2%); three books were printed in both Delft and Leiden.

Books in Dutch (and Other Languages)

As the title of the appendix indicates, Koerten's library was made up almost exclusively of books written in Dutch. The only books that were not in Dutch were illustrated books,⁹⁴ such as *Die Horatizische Sitten-lehre met kuff.* (Otto Vaenius' emblem book *Moralia Horatiana: das ist Die Horatzische Sitten-Lehre* [Amsterdam 1656] with accompanying German texts), and Philips Galle's *David, hoc est Virtutis exercitatisimæ probatum*, a book of plates with four

94 One book, of which only the Dutch title is given, is a bilingual work. With the description 'Tapijten van de koning van Vrankrijk met Plaatē', the work *Tapisseries du roy [...]* *Tapyten van den konink* is meant, a book with plates with accompanying text in Dutch and French. Besides that, a 'Dictionarium Tetraglotton & Biglotton' was present in the catalogue.

lines of Latin captions. Two books were entirely in Latin: Rochus Hofferus' *Poëtica*, and *Franci Pomëata*, i.e. the *Poëmata* published in 1682 and 1697 of Petrus Francius, a volume written for the most part in Latin, interspersed with Greek text.⁹⁵ Having a predominantly Dutch-language collection was not uncommon, especially among smaller collectors.⁹⁶

Given the nature of the descriptions, which were often as short as possible, one way to determine the language of books in Dutch catalogues is by considering the typeface used. The titles of Dutch and German books were usually printed in Gothic type, French titles were represented with italics, while books written in Latin were described using Roman typeface.⁹⁷ But in the case of this catalogue, this assumption must be nuanced.

The above-mentioned works *David*, *Poëmata*, and *Poëtica* were published in Latin and indeed their entries in Koerten's catalogue were printed in Roman type. However, the titles of Jacob Böhme's *Mysterium Magnum*, Constantijn Huygens' *Hofwijck*, and the *Emblemata* by Johannes de Brune were set in Roman type as well, while none of these books were published in Latin. *Mysterium Magnum* does have a Latin title and the expression 'emblemata' is used in Latin as well as in Dutch, so it is easily conceivable how these mistakes could have been made. One book title, *Secretaris à la mode*, was set in italics, signalling it should represent a French text. French editions of this popular work by Jean Puget de la Serre printed in the Netherlands all appeared under the title: *Le secretaire à la mode*. The Dutch translation appeared as *Fatsoenlicke zend-brief-schryver*, but the accompanying frontispiece states: *Secretaris d'a le mode*, an expression almost identical to the description in Koerten's catalogue. Did Koerten own the Dutch translation after all?

On the whole, the typefaces used for book descriptions in Koerten's catalogue turn out to be a reasonably reliable indicator of the language of the book described, but they cannot be considered conclusive evidence. The typeface mistakes in this catalogue suggest that the typesetter in the print shop did not always have accurate information on the language of the book mentioned in the manuscript list from which he supposedly worked. It seems plausible that

95 Petrus Francius was one of the persons who was portrayed by Koerten, and who glorified the work of Koerten in poems. *Het stamboek*, op. cit. (n. 38: 1735), pp. *3r-*4r.

96 A random sample of 72 Dutch catalogues from the period 1670-1750 showed that on average 28.9% of the books were Dutch. For this study, we only looked at catalogues with less than 53 pages. The average catalogue size was 1044 items. Seven of those collections contained over 90% of Dutch books, three of them were (almost) completely Dutch. The average size of these seven catalogues was 674 items. Unpublished data collected for Montoya & Jagersma, art. cit. (n. 88).

97 Sometimes German book titles appear in a Fraktur type.

he or she used a certain typeface merely based on the association of a certain language with the book title on the handwritten list.

General Description of Koerten's Library

The largest part of Koerten's library comprises literary works: songbooks, moralistic or religious emblem books, and works of occasional poetry make up almost one third of the collection. According to the catalogue, fifteen poetry books were printed on large paper, beautifully bound and in excellent condition. The second largest category is represented by religious works (Figure 4), such as John Tillotson's *Uytgeleze Mengelstoffen* (a collection of sermons), Reinier Wybma's *Catechismus*, Lutheran and Mennonite Bibles, and tracts on theological disputes. History and geography are two other important genres in the Koerten library, along with a concise collection of law books and administrative texts. A few practical medical books advise the reader on subjects including child-bearing, the education of deaf children, and manuals on how to live a frugal and healthy life. Koerten also owned two copies of *Arithmetica, ofte reken-konst* ('Arithmetics, or the Art of Calculating'), written by her grandfather Sybrandt Cardinael.

Koerten's library consisted mainly of (illustrated) literary works. Contemporary representations of eighteenth-century female readers often depict as ideal types either the pious, single woman; a good housewife who betters herself through edifying literature; or a fallen or overtly manly woman who has read too many inappropriate works such as novels or learned texts.⁹⁸ Based on the book collection of Christine Charlotte von Ostfriesland (1645-1699), Sabine Heissler suggested a similar typology of female reading: she distinguished between the often large libraries of learned women; libraries representing a preference for literature deemed typically female (i.e. female-authored works or novels); and smaller libraries with a mainly devotional or practical content.⁹⁹ It is perhaps debatable whether this typology applies exclusively to female reading, or can refer to men's or household libraries as well.¹⁰⁰ Either way,

98 Jack, art. cit. (n. 24), p. 188; Brown, *Women Readers in French Painting 1870-1890. A Space for the Imagination* (Farnham 2012), p. 2.

99 Montoya & Jagersma, art. cit. (n. 30), p. 58; S. Heissler, 'Christine Charlotte von Ostfriesland (1645-1699) und Ihre Bücher oder lesen Frauen anderes?', *Daphnis*, 27.2 (1998), pp. 335-418.

100 The findings of De Kruif seem to imply the latter. Heissler's typology is less broad than the findings of De Kruif regarding *general* book ownership in the Dutch Republic, but the first and last group of both researchers overlap: De Kruif distinguishes the three types of

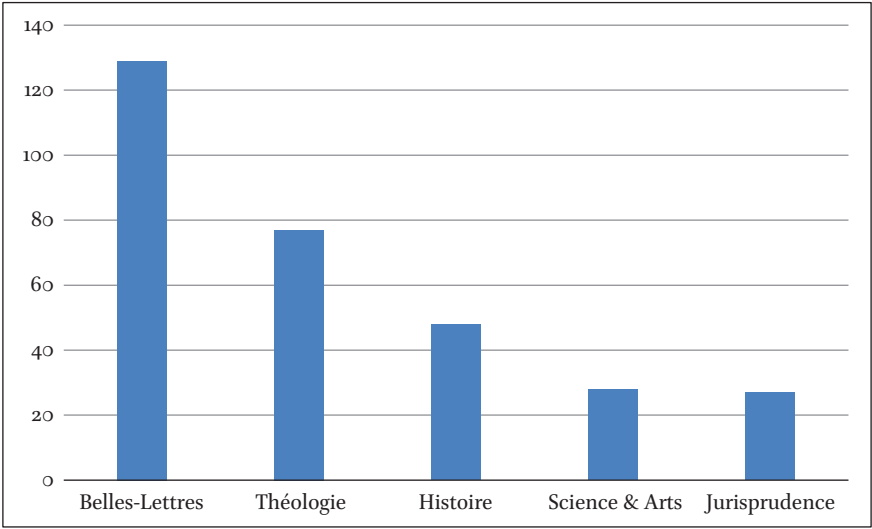


FIGURE 4 Genres in Koerten's library, using Parisian categories (n = 308)

Koerten's library does not fit easily in any of these typologies, but rather seems a combination. We will discuss the religious character of her library first.

Religious Character of the Books

Indeed, Koerten's library has a strong religious flavour. Particularly noteworthy is the explicitly Mennonite character of a substantial part of the books in this catalogue. We have been able to identify 29 books written by 17 different Mennonite authors. Mennonite leaders Menno Simons and Dirk Philips are present, as are books of the Mennonite ministers Joost Hendriksz, Adriaan Spinniker, Wybma, Jacques Outerman, and authors with a Mennonite background such as Lambert and Govard Bidloo, Dirk Rafaelsz. Camphuysen, Petrus Langedult, Reinier Rooleeuw, and Joachim Oudaen. Another important part of the library consists of books not necessarily written by Mennonite authors, but still popular within Mennonite circles. A Biestkens Bible is present, as are eight works by the former Mennonite Joost van den Vondel, and two copies of

book ownership: [smaller] exclusively devotional book collections; larger and varied but exclusively Protestant collections; and a group with varied collections. The only truly female category in Heissler's typology thus seems to be the group of women leaning toward female-authored works. De Kruif, art. cit. (n. 25), p. 445.

Jan de Regt's *Mengeldichten* ('Miscellaneous Poetry'). Quite a lot of Catholic authors were also present in the Koerten collection. Spiritual authors of other religious denominations such as Dirk Pietersz. Coornhert, Jacob Böhme, the Anglican author John Tillotson, and Remonstrant authors Eduard Poppius, Gerard Brandt, Episcopius, and Johannes Wtenbogaert are all present with two or more works.

Ruud Lambour studied the libraries of seventeenth-century Amsterdam-based Mennonites, using findings from 680 handwritten probate inventories. 26 to 28 percent of the book owners he identified owned no more than ten books, while only 9 to 10 percent of book owners had more than a hundred books on their shelves.¹⁰¹ The most popular were Bibles, followed by collections of psalms—often in luxurious bindings—and sermon books.¹⁰² Dirk Rafaelsz Camphuysen's psalm translation was especially popular among Mennonites. Koerten owned three song- and psalm books written by him. Martyrologies are the fourth most frequent book category in Lambour's list.¹⁰³ The most popular authors in the handwritten probate inventories of Amsterdam Mennonites can also be found in the library of Joanna Koerten: Desiderius Erasmus, Camphuysen, Emanuel van Meteren, Coornhert, Jacob Cats, and Johannes Tauler. Some commonly held authors and works are missing, however, such as the works of Flavius Josephus, Sebastian Franck, Pieter Jansz Twisck, and Galenus Abrahamsz. Despite these few omissions, Koerten's library on the whole contained many of the books that could be considered as typically Mennonite.

Popular Authors in Koerten's Library

We could identify the author or translator of 266 of the 310 lots in this catalogue. The remaining 44 lots either list books that were published anonymously, or the lots were described so vaguely that we could not identify the book in question. When we take a closer look at the most popular authors in this catalogue, the dominance of works by Hero Sibersma (12 publications) and Joost van den Vondel (8 publications) stands out (Figure 5). Both were

101 R. Lambour, 'Het boekenbezit van Amsterdamse doopsgezinden uit de Gouden Eeuw', in: *Doopsgezinde bijdragen. Nieuwe reeks*, 40 (2014), pp. 135–60, here p. 144. The findings by De Kruif on book ownership in eighteenth-century probate inventories from The Hague show a similar division: 8% owned more than 100 books, while 37% owned one to ten books. J. de Kruif, art. cit. (n. 25), p. 435.

102 Mennonites favoured remonstrant authors in particular.

103 Lambour, art. cit. (n. 101), p. 147.

popular authors in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic. Eduard Poppius, Jacob Böhme, David van Hoogstraten, and Arnold Houbraken follow, each with 4 publications to their name. Of this top seven, only Houbraken could be considered a truly Mennonite author; and Vondel had a Mennonite upbringing. Jacob Böhme was a mystic (Lutheran) author and Eduard Poppius a well-known Remonstrant: both religious movements the Mennonites felt some sort of connection to.¹⁰⁴ Compared to handwritten probate inventories and printed sale catalogues, the works of popular ministers like Salomon van Til, David Knibbe, Wilhelmus à Brakel, and Johannes d'Outrein are lacking. Jacob Cats, the author who was by far the most popular among the smaller book collections in handwritten probate inventories, occurs only once, in the form of the emblem book *Spiegel vanden ouden ende nieuwen tijdt* ('Mirror of Old and New Times').¹⁰⁵ The works of Sibersma, Hoogstraten and Houbraken—authors who do appear often in the catalogue—are more related to Koerten's persona as an artist rather than her religious identity.

A Collection of Professional Literature? Art Books in Koerten's Library

Arnold Houbraken (1660-1719) observed that painters were not the kind of people who typically buried their nose in books to study their texts.¹⁰⁶ This is confirmed by modern-day research into early modern Dutch artists' libraries: male artists usually did not own more than 20 to 40 books.¹⁰⁷ Koerten however did own quite a number of books, and not mainly religious books, as is often assumed in the case of early modern female book ownership.

As it turns out, a significant part of her library consists of what one might call 'professional literature', or books bearing witness to her artistic talents. Hero Sibersma for example not only wrote a laudatory poem on Koerten's talents but lamented her death in an epitaph. Both poems were incorporated in the *Stamboek*, as were poems by Abraham Bogaert, David van Hoogstraten, Claas Bruin (present in the catalogue with 3 books), Petrus Francius (1 book), Gesine

¹⁰⁴ Lambour, art. cit. (n. 101).

¹⁰⁵ De Kruif, op. cit. (n. 5), pp. 193-4.

¹⁰⁶ A. Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* [...], *Het I deel* (Amsterdam 1718. STCN: 189094699), p. 104.

¹⁰⁷ Male artists in the Dutch Republic often had a small number of books, usually around 20-40. Most of the time this included Karel van Mander's *Schilder-Boeck*, a title we do not find in the Koerten-collection. We do find Francius Junius' *Schilder-konst* and Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia, of uytbeeldingen des verstands*. Golahny, op. cit. (n. 73), pp. 207-39.

Authors	Number of book titles
Sibersma, Hero	12
Vondel, Joost van den	8
Bogaert, Abraham	4
Böhme, Jakob	4
Poppius, Eduard	4
Houbraken, Arnold	4
Hoogstraten, David van	4
Beverwijck, Johan van	3
Brandt, Gerard (the elder)	3
Bruin, Claas	3
Camphuysen, Dirck Rafaelsz	3
Coornhert, Dirck Volckertsz	3
Erasmus, Desiderius	3
Grotius, Hugo	3
Hooft, Pieter Cornelisz	3
Leeuwen, Simon van	3
Moonen, Arnold	3
Pers, Dirck Pietersz	3
Puget de La Serre, Jean	3

FIGURE 5 Authors who appear more than twice in the Koerten collection

Brit (co-author of 2 books), Caspar Brandt (2 books), and Arnold Moonen (3 books).¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, the catalogue states that 46 books were more or less richly illustrated. Koerten might well have used these books as inspiration for her mythological and historical pieces. They include Claude Paradin's *Princelücke deuiſen* (the Dutch translation of his 'Devises heroiques'), Georgius Chanler's *Nieuwe keyſers chronica ofte Gheſchicht-boeck* ('New Chronicle of Emperors'), Ludolph Smids' *Tooneel van ſtaat, der Roomsche keiſeren* ('Theater of Roman Emperors'), and *De Roomsche Monarchy* ('The Roman Empire') of Abraham Bogaert (1697), a numismatic work on the Roman emperors with engravings by Jan Luyken.¹⁰⁹ This last work provided the inspiration for one of her most acclaimed paper-cutting works: *De twaalf Roomsche Keiſeren* ('The Twelve

108 Also: Govard Bidloo (2 books); Fredericus van Leenhof (2 books); Ludolf Smids (2 books); Hieronymus Sweerts (2 books). *Het ſtamboek*, op. cit. (n. 38: 1735).

109 Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 36), p. 163.

Roman Emperors'; 1697).¹¹⁰ The professional literature that is so often absent from so many female libraries is, in Koerten's library, very present indeed.

Concluding Remarks and Discussion

For the Dutch Republic we hitherto only knew of 33 printed private library auction catalogues which refer to a woman as the owner. Based on newspaper advertisements announcing upcoming book auctions, we were able to identify a further 73 female collections that were sold at auction. This begs the question of how many female libraries remain hidden in the extant 686 anonymous book sale catalogues—and were quite possibly also mixed in with the books of a husband or family member in other catalogues attributed to a male owner.¹¹¹ 7 of the 33 catalogues representing female book ownership are partly or completely anonymous, meaning the women involved are not mentioned on the primary title page at all. There is also a number of catalogues attributed jointly to a married couple. But in only three of these are both husband and wife represented as having played an equally important role in the acquisition of the books. It seems—perhaps not surprisingly—that if there was a man's name the booksellers could list on the catalogue title page, they did, and only if that was not the case were the books sold anonymously or under the name of a female collector.

The auction catalogues of private book collections can give us an idea of the texts people actually had access to and can help us understand the book-buying practices of eighteenth-century men and women. With the MEDiate database it is in addition possible to aggregate and compare content-data from catalogues more easily and on a larger scale than was hitherto possible. The general outlines of elite book ownership patterns in the Dutch Republic, as compared to book ownership elsewhere in Europe, can then begin to become apparent. Regarding the format of the books in Koerten's library for example, we can now establish that the books in her collection shows a similar distribution to those listed in other Dutch libraries. The publication places and the languages of Koerten's books are less diverse than the libraries of her male peers, but these male libraries often represent larger book collections. When compared to the smaller libraries of both male and female book owners, the discrepancy disappears, suggesting that gender is a less decisive factor than

110 *Het stamboek*, op. cit. (n. 38: 1735), p. *3v; Verhave & Verhave, art. cit. (n. 36), p. 161, p. 164.

111 21% of the 3,222 localised Dutch auction catalogues of private libraries from the period 1599-1800 appeared anonymously.

size of the book collection. Smaller libraries generally appear to be more regional in character than their larger equivalents.

Although some specific problems arise in using a catalogue recording Koerten's books over twenty years after her death, we strongly suspect this catalogue does represent mainly her book collection. The guild records cite her name specifically as being the previous owner of the books in question, and since booksellers were obliged to state the correct previous owner of a book collection this makes it likely that the library had largely been built up during Koerten's own lifetime. Our analysis of the collections has shown that most books were published before her death. The 23 books added after 1715 include a printed edition of the *Stamboek* and are for a large part written by people who had lauded Koerten's art, and seem to have been added by her heirs to build on Koerten's legacy.

One of our questions was whether Koerten's collection could be considered a typically female collection. Even though the auctioneer registered the collection as having belonged to 'juffrouw Blok-Koerten', there seem to be some other factors at play here. First of all, the genres found in this catalogue deviate slightly from common assumptions regarding female book ownership in general. Female libraries, especially smaller ones, have been described in the past as being primarily devotional in nature, but although we do find a large number of religious books in Koerten's library, they do not make up the largest category. The religious works present were written by authors from different religious denominations. When we have been able to pinpoint the specific religion of an author or work, we find that Mennonite authors appear most frequently, and additionally we see a penchant for Catholic and Remonstrant authors. Koerten's religious book ownership thus coincides for an important part with the findings of Lambour about book ownership in the probate inventories of members of the Amsterdam Mennonite community. Even if we had no idea who this catalogue belonged to, we could have surmised that this was a Dutch Mennonite collection.

Furthermore, the largest part of this library consisted of works pertaining to Koerten's artistic skill and her professional network, and in this respect it is more comparable to the professional libraries of men than to supposedly typical female book collections, that have been assumed to be made up primarily of religious and literary works. The focus on illustrated artists' books and especially the posthumous addition of books written by authors who lauded Koerten's artistic skill seem to indicate the commemorative, monumental function of this library as well. It might have been a tribute to Koerten's art, a representation of her artistic authority rather than a privately owned and used book collection. In that sense, it is perhaps better to speak of a shared household

collection, a collective effort by Joanna Koerten, her husband Adriaan Blok, and his second wife Maria van Arckel to validate and further develop Koerten's artistic legacy. This simultaneously raises the question of the validity of terms such as 'private', individual libraries, and male or female book collections. We have to take care not to lose sight of the fact that reading—and book collecting—was often a joint activity for the whole family or household.

In short, Koerten's book collection cannot, perhaps, be classified as being particularly female in nature. The catalogue sheds light on her profession, her religious preferences and her interests, but also reflects the cultural network she operated in. The presence of illustrated collections of poetry and emblem books can be considered an equivalent of the professional literature that is so often lacking in other, female-owned libraries. The catalogue first and foremost reflected her identity as a Mennonite and an artist: one did not exclude the other. The richly illustrated emblem books, for example, were popular among members of the Mennonite community as well as among artists.

Teasing out the decisive factors influencing book ownership based on early modern Dutch printed auction catalogues of private libraries remains complicated. Gender is indeed one of the many factors that could play a role, but in a complex mix with other factors, that could sometimes outweigh the owner's gender. In the case of Koerten's book collection, her religion and strong professional identity as a recognized artist, as well as the size of the library, seem to have played at least as important a role as her gender.