
Johann Zainer and his elder brother Günther were inducted into the art of printing at Strasbourg by Johann Mentelin who must have learned it from Gutenberg himself. The Zainers moved to Augsburg around 1467, but in 1472 Johann established his own business at Ulm where, for a while at least, he flourished thanks to the municipal physician Heinrich Steinhöwel (†1478) who supplied him with projects to print and offered essential financial support. In the early 1470s, when the craft was barely twenty years old, printing techniques were very much still a matter of trial and error. In this excellent study, Clare Bolton describes Johann Zainer as ‘a clumsy printer, leaving many marks on his printed pages’ (p. 3), showing a lack of mastery of foliation when using Arabic numerals (p. 54) and considerable variation in the numbers of lines on a page suggesting ‘anarchy in the print room’ (p. 62). Precisely because his books show less technical skill than those of some other printers, they furnish telling clues as to his methods of working. To uncover these, Bolton has examined 244 copies, representing 38 editions of works printed by Zainer and dated or datable to between 1473 and 1478. Her approach combines meticulous observation of details, presented in good-quality illustrations embedded in the text at the point where they are being discussed, coupled with a fair amount of experimentation, informed by her own long experience as a practising printer, to try to recreate, however uncertainly, some of the practical realities faced by fifteenth-century printers. While the book contains discussion of many highly technical points, this is by no means a work for specialists only: the presentation is so lucid throughout that it will serve to introduce even the non-specialist to the fascinating study of incunabula. Of major importance is chapter 3 in which she emphasizes the way in which Zainer and some other early printers employed the em-measure, the square of the type-body, as a firm mathematical foundation for page design. Chapter 4 focuses on Zainer’s use of bearer type; though this is complicated and highly technical the many tables and excellent photographs clearly showing blind (un-inked) impressions make the argument perfectly clear. Equally outstanding is the discussion in chapter 5 of the mysterious impressions of pieces of fabric on many of Zainer’s pages which, after close inspection and reinforced by practical experiments, reveal themselves to derive almost certainly from the method he used to damp the paper before printing. Similarly meticulous is the discussion of the implications of the patterns of point-holes in Zainer’s paper for an understanding of his printing practice and the structure of his presses. Altogether, Bolton’s investigations enable her to propose a more precise
dating for a number of Zainer’s books. For instance, she is surely right to date the *Decameron* edition to c.1476–7 rather than to 1473 as once believed (pp. 64, 74, 229). The small number of errors (‘Karl Ruh’, p. 275, should be ‘Kurt Ruh’) and lapses in proofreading that have been noted do not detract from what is a fine and important book which will serve as a valuable model for future studies of other early printers.

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This is a thematically well-constructed volume whose various articles provide a highly informative perspective on discourse markers in a range of Romance languages. The editors provide three chapters of their own, one an initial overview of the book, a highly useful second chapter on the theoretical background to the topic which non-specialist readers will certainly find valuable, and a final chapter reconsidering the state of the field in the light of the research presented.

Despite the series title in which it appears, much of the book does not take a diachronic research perspective. Almost half (5/11) of the author contributions make no or almost no reference to historical data, so it is somewhat unclear how the volume came to find a place in a series devoted to historical linguistics. Of contributions that take a historical perspective, the majority investigate early or late modern period developments. As only two deal with discourse markers in medieval languages, for the purposes of this review the focus will be on the contribution these make to our understanding of language in that period.

The paper by Pons Borderia on the reformulation marker *o sea* (‘that is’) in the history of Spanish seeks to show that this item has developed new uses in the modern period. All the early data are from a narrow range of discourse genres, so he faces the usual problem in diachronic research into the vernacular European languages that the multiplication of genres in more recent data sources may merely give an illusion of change over time: perhaps the uses attested in certain genres, especially speech-related ones, have been there from the Middle Ages onwards, but our data do not allow us to see them. As Pons Borderia does not state the data collection procedure he used, citing only the corpus reference in a one-line footnote, it is hard to know how severe this problem might be.

Hanson builds on her earlier work to present a well-rounded account of the discourse particle *ja* in earlier French, taking into account its origin in Latin