In terms of the history of the lyric, the 16th century was as much an age of border crossing as an age of proto-nationalism. As William J. Kennedy has shown, the poetry of Petrarch, in particular, was the basis for the development and the expression of “early national sentiment” not just in Italy, but also in such countries as France or England. This happened in particular through commented editions of Petrarch that, according to Kennedy, laid the foundations for the affirmation of identities throughout Europe. Circulating thanks to the portability of the early modern printed book and the development of commercial and diplomatic networks, Petrarchism crossed the national borders to be appropriated and reencoded in different cultural contexts, paradoxically being used to generate local identities on the outskirts of, or even sometimes quite far away from, the cultural centre that Italy was believed to be. As I hope to show, the Petrarchan poetic collection, in its very physical embodiment, was a locus where the tensions between cultures was negotiated. This is a well-known fact as far as the texts are concerned, but as I will argue, the analyses of the texts, which too often extract them from the material contexts in which they appear, need to be complemented by a focus on the forms of the book—in the case of this study, page layouts and typography—which participate in the construction of a cultural identity. More specifically, the in-betweeness of those poetic collections also appears in their very liminal spaces, in the forms that embody and determine the boundaries of book, page and poem; what the borders of and within books and national borders have in common is that they do not so much enclose pre-existing entities (text or territory) as produce them as entities in their own rights.

One of the reasons why the Elizabethan sonnet sequence is regarded as a canonical form today is probably that it seems particularly well-defined and well-established: nothing is more straightforward than the sonnet, with its fourteen lines in decasyllabic verse, generally

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1 See *The Site of Petrarchism: Early Modern Sentiment in Italy, France and England* (Baltimore, London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).
2 The paratext, peritext and page layouts of early modern sonnet sequences have been studied in Wendy Wall’s *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the Renaissance* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1993), Rémi Vuillemin’s “Naissance et vie éditoriales du recueil de sonnets anglais (1557-1599) : quelques enjeux génériques et socio-littéraires,” *Revue de la Société d’Etudes Anglo-Américaines des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, special issue 2 (2010), 181-196, and Juliet Fleming’s “Changed Opinion as to Flowers,” in Smith, Helen and Wilson, Louise (eds), *Renaissance paratexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 48-64. None of those studies has explored the transcultural value of of those features of the book, however.
in iambic pentameter, and its associated rhyme schemes; organized in a sequence, sonnets take on a narrative dimension that conveys a sense of linearity and continuity to the whole. There are grounds, however, for questioning such assumptions. The codification of the sonnet in Renaissance England was far looser than it is now. The dominant forms of printed poetic collection in 16th-century England were the miscellany and the anthology, and poems were more often isolated pieces written for specific occasions than items in printed volumes. In that sense, it could be said that the sonnet sequence was the exception rather than the rule. In the following pages, I will try to show some of the specificities of the English sonnet sequence of the 1590s as an editorial form, and how it departed not only from the Italian, but also from the English traditions of printed poetry. More specifically, I will argue that observing liminal spaces in printed poetic collection (i.e. the blanks left around and between the poems, as well as other elements bordering the poems and the page; and to a lesser extent, paratextual material) can give extremely relevant indications for an approach of the text that seeks to situate it spatially (within the book, but also with regards to geopolitical and cultural borders), socially (the encoding of the social role and stakes of poetry) and historically (the history of the book and of poetic forms in particular, cultural history in general).¹

Focusing on the actual space of the printed text makes sense if one wishes to go against the tendency to make the text an abstract entity that exists before it is actually written, a soul that needs to find an incarnation in the printed or handwritten text. This idea of an autonomy of the text was mostly put forward by New Criticism and by certain forms of literary structuralism. Such abstraction of the text from its environment is of course tantamount to a denial of history, and critical approaches to literature since the late 1970s have attempted to reinfuse a sense of history into their analyses. But to a large extent, it has also been tantamount to a denial of space: texts do not exist in a vacuum, they are always subjected to a form of mise en page (or to a context of performance that also shapes their meaning). The renewal of bibliographical studies, under the guise of Jerome McGann’s and Arthur McKenzie’s works, have helped reassess what is meant by “text,”² and revise assumptions about, among other things, textual editing. This also means that we now have the tools to understand how the space of the book, and especially the space of the page, was

¹ In that regard, the following analyses attempt to apply to the analysis of mise en page the “triple consciousness of the complex linkages between space, time, and social being” recommended by Henri Lefebvre and rephrased as “trialectics” by Soja. See Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 7 and 53-82.

² Jerome McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1983) ; D.F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
progressively codified and began to make sense in the course of history—the 15th and 16th centuries, in particular, saw a rapid evolution of the shape of printed items, the establishment of the conditions of legibility and the codification of the visual space of the book. In the wake of McGann’s work, and with the development of New Bibliography, texts are now much more frequently studied in their incarnation(s) rather than extracted from the original forms in which they were written and/or published.\footnote{For the need to take into account the editorial features of texts in literary studies, see for instance Lukas Erne, “Words in Space: The Reproduction of Texts and the Semiotics of the Page,” in David Spurr and Cornelia Tschichold, The Space of English (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 2005), 99-118. See also the recent work on early modern translation in Anne Coldiron, Printers Without Borders: Translation and Textuality in the Renaissance (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) and the project on “Translation and the making of early modern English print culture (1473-1660)” conducted by Brenda M. Hosington and Marie-Alice Belle at the University of Montreal.}

Quite logically, these new studies have blurred the boundaries between what should be seen as text (in our case, what is “literary”), and what should not (what is strictly “biographical”). In this study, I shall use John Lennard’s theory of punctuation, this last term being understood in Malcolm Parke’s definition, as “the pragmatics of the written text.”\footnote{John Lennard, “Mark, Space, Axis, Function: toward a (new) theory of punctuation on historical principles,” in Bray, Joe, Handley, Miriam and Henry, Anne C. (eds) Mat(r)king the Text – The Presentation of meaning on the literary page (Aldershot, Burlington : Ashgate, 2000), 1-11. Lennard quotes Malcolm Parke on page 2.} Lennard draws an eight-level axis of punctuation, starting from level 1 (letter forms, scriptio continua) to level 8 (the book as an object punctuating space). I will be particularly interested in levels 4 to 6. Level 4 corresponds to “words or units distinguished by fount, face, case, colour, siglum or position ; the details of the mise-en-page, decisions which in cold-metal setting come under composition;” level 5 to “the organisation of the page and opening; decisions about basic fount and face, margins; the principles of the mise-en-page, decisions which in cold-metal setting come under imposition, or precede composition,” and level 6 to “pagination or foliation; the use of the page or opening as units as, for example, volumes of poetry giving each poem a new page, or graphic novels using the full opening for a single image; and by extension, that regular turning of the page which punctuates the reading of all codices and printed books.”\footnote{See “Mark, Space, Axis, function,” 5-6.} Those levels are intermediary between “lexical codes” and “biographical codes”;\footnote{“Mark, Space, Axis, function,” 10.} as such, they are particularly relevant to an approach that dwells on liminal spaces, on the in-between literal and conceptual spaces that surround and shape the texts. I shall perhaps make it clear that this study will mostly focus on the actual physical space of the page, and only secondarily on representations of real or fictitious space. It does not mean that I will regard space as only physical. The book itself, in its very materiality,
punctuated space, and was endowed with significance that was not necessarily always related to its contents. Jeffrey Todd Knight argues for instance that books could be construed as pieces of furniture in the early modern period, while Lucy Razzall studies how books were also boxes, and were thought of as such—two conceptions of books that associate them with domestic life and/or intimacy. Also, as I have pointed out above, the physical features of the printed page can only make sense through a set of codifications that happen and solidify over time. In semiotic terms, the elements of the printed page can be indexical (the traces of processes happening outside the text) or symbolical (they have arbitrary relationships with what they mean); they can also be iconic (in figurative visual elements, be they pictures or calligrams). The page also produces something, the printed equivalent of a speech act. It is not so much the physical features of the book, therefore, that are relevant, as what they reflect, the way they are used and what is encoded in them.

A 2006 Dictionary of Publishing and Printing defines the border as “a strip, line or band around the edge of something.” Admittedly, this is a technical definition that reaches its goal by explaining in very simple terms what a border is in a book. But for my purpose, the problem is that such a definition erases the historical processes through which the very notion of the book was constituted and through which printed space was codified. More specifically, it establishes the border as something that is superadded to a pre-existing text, while one may argue that in terms of the reader’s perception, it is the very existence of bordering devices that establishes the limits as well as the visual unity of the text. This applies to ornament and other paratextual elements, of course, but also to the use of blanks on a page. Used as we are to books today, we tend to forget that the use of margins, indentation and blank space is not a given but the result of long historical processes. At a time when paper was particularly expensive and was the first cost item for printers, the amount of blank space left in certain books is remarkable. The typographical layout of a page is therefore somehow similar to the frame of a painting: it shapes the text, determines its limits, but also, to a large extent, makes it exist by foregrounding it and pointing to it. It is, to borrow McKenzie’s coinage, an expressive form. Borders and liminal spaces allow the poems to exist as separate poetic items, but also testify to and perform their status as social and cultural artefacts. My point will be precisely to try and see what editorial forms do, and how they codify both the sonnet and

1 See Jeffrey Todd Knight, “‘Furnished’ for Action: Renaissance Books as Furniture,” Book History 12 (2009), 37-73 and Lucy Razzall, “Small chests and jointed boxes: material texts and the play of resemblance in early modern print,” Book 2.0, 7 (1), April 2017, 21-32.
2 Dictionary of Publishing and Printing (London: A&C Black, 2006). This dictionary was originally authored by Peter Hodgson Collin, and published as Dictionary of Printing and Publishing in 1989.
3 See McKenzie, 9-30.
the lyric collections. The following pages will deal with the page layout of several early modern printed poetic collections to show how political, social and cultural issues are embedded in the very spatial arrangement of the book. Three examples will be analysed in details: Vellutello’s very influential 1525 commented edition of Petrarch’s vernacular poetry, a central publication in the history of European Petrarchism and an instance of how literary authority can be constructed and performed; the 1557 English poetic collection commonly known as Tottel’s Miscellany, which established the tradition of the printed lyric collection in England; and Samuel Daniel’s 1592 Delia, which to a large extent ushered in the sonnet sequence as an editorial genre in England.1

A 16th-century commented editions of Petrarch’s Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta

Petrarch’s poetic collection, diversely referred to today as the rime sparse or the Canzoniere,2 is of course the main source of most sonnet sequences. Its original title, Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta (RVF), or fragments in the vulgar tongue, is paradoxical: its very existence conveys unity to the collection while stating its fragmentation. This is exactly what the very well-known first poem of the collection (“Voi ch’ascoltate in rime sparse il suono”) does as well, foregrounding the tension between unity (here, the speaker’s consideration of his past) and fragmentation. An interesting attempt to give some unity to the fragmented nature of Petrarch’s text is the most influential 16th-century printed edition of Petrarch,3 Vellutello’s 1525 commented edition, which will be my first example. [INSERT FIG. 1 HERE] As can be seen in fig.1, each poem in the collection starts with a calligraphic initial,4 and is surrounded by the text of the commentary. The system of indentation marks the poem as a sonnet, making the beginning of each quatrain and tercet stand out. The page layout indicates the status of each text: a central status for the authorial text, a peripheral status for the commentary, printed in smaller letters. But the central status of the authorial text is also granted and performed by the very presence of the commentary, which acts as an embedded

1 Despite the influence of Sir Philip Sidney’s Astrophil and Stella (1591), it is the editorial features of Daniel’s Delia (1592) that seem to have been most often imitated in the sonnet sequences of the 1590s. For an account of the mise en page of sonnet sequences, see “Naissance et vie éditoriales du recueil de sonnets anglais (1557-1599) : quelques enjeux génériques et socio-littéraires.”
2 The phrase “rime sparse” is mostly used in criticism written in English-speaking countries. French approaches have long used the term Canzoniere, which is reminiscent of collected Troubadour poetry. I will refer to Petrarch’s collection as Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta (or RVF), its original title.
3 See William J. Kennedy, Authorizing Petrarch (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 45-52.
4 These initials are themselves worthy of attention: it seems that they were handpainted after the book had been printed.
bordering device. The sheer length of the commentary, for most of the poems in the collection, visually suggests narrative continuity. Vellutello’s real innovation compared to previous commented editions of Petrarch is his biographical perspective. As opposed to previous commentators, he rearranges the order of the poems to make them fit his reconstruction of Petrarch’s biography. Like previous commentators, Vellutello included a life of Petrarch in his editions, but also added other documents by Petrarch (such as letters) to reconstruct his life. He was the first one to provide a life of Laura as well as a map of Vaucluse in an edition of Petrarch’s texts—situating the poet in space as well as a map of Vaucluse in an edition of Petrarch’s texts—situating the poet in space and time, but also providing the means for the reader to inscribe every single poem in a temporal and spatial frame. Using two full pages for a map at the beginning of the volume identifies the physical space of the book with the geographical space of Petrarch’s love story; it provides a mental geographical background for the narrative that ensues and therefore conveys a form of unity to the poetic collection. The adjunction of the life of Petrarch and the life of Laura contributes to that effect: their very inclusion makes them a mirror to the poetic collection itself and reinforces the idea that the succession of poems is a narrative. Vellutello’s version of the collection therefore comprises an array of framing devices which mirror and produce the unity of Petrarch’s life and love story as Vellutello wants to make them appear.

While it seems clear that Vellutello’s and the printer’s works went hand in hand, there were limits to their attempt to impose unity on the collection. The visual continuity of the commentary, for one, could not be maintained all along: when Vellutello’s commentary is short, blank spaces are left on the page between paragraphs of commentary, which breaks the visual continuity of the bordering text. Interestingly, this happens with such famous poems as “S’amor non è” or “Pace non trovo,” which were among those poems by Petrarch which were most frequently imitated by English poets in the sixteenth century. The poems that Vellutello has more difficulty using to tell Petrarch’s life are quite logically those that are easiest for other poets to extract or imitate. Another type of fragmentation occurs when Vellutello has too

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1 As William Kennedy states, this is an « authorizing gesture », and it was understood as such by 16th century poets who drew their inspiration from Petrarch. Ronsard, for instance, required Muret and later Belleau to comment upon his own works, thereby making sure that his poems were identified as worth reading and commenting upon. On the question of value in the French lyric, see Cécile Alduy, “Lyric Economies: Manufacturing Value in French Lyric Collections,” Renaissance Quarterly 63 (2010): 721-753. On the importance of margins and annotations, see Richard A. McCabe, “Annotating Anonymity, or Putting a Gloss on the Shepheardes Calender,” in Joe Bray, Miriam Handley and Anne C. Henry (eds), Mat(r)king the Text: the Presentation of Meaning on the Literary Page (Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate, 2000), 35-54; William E. Slichts, Managing Readers: Printed Marginalia in English Renaissance Books (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001); Evelyn B. Tribble, Margins and Marginality: the Printed Page in Early Modern England (Charlottesville, London: University Press of Virginia, 1993).

2 See Kennedy, Authorizing Petrarch, 47.
much to elaborate on: some of the poems, especially the long *canzoni*, need to be broken into smaller fragments which are commented upon separately, and find themselves scattered, challenging the unity of the authorial text. Two contrary movements can therefore be observed: the attempt at reframing the poems as one continuous text through the reconstruction of a biographical narrative, and the visual dislocation of the text that this entails. The construction of Petrarch’s authority that is performed in Vellutello’s edition therefore relies as much on a fragmentation of the text as on an overarching, unifying narrative.

I have insisted on this example for several reasons: first, of course, because the role of borders is particularly obvious in it. Paratextual elements such as the map of Vaucluse and the life of Laura reinforce the narrativity of the collection. The commentary surrounding Petrarch’s poems encourages the reader to focus alternatively on the poems and on their commentary; mostly, it participates in canonising Petrarch and making him the equivalent of a classic. In Vellutello’s edition, the sonnet is a well-identified form which is included in a unified project. What Vellutello seeks to promote is “an abstract ideal of Italian cultural unity,” as opposed to previous editors of Petrarch who defended the interests of “Florentine republicanism, Paduan monarchism, Milanese absolutism, or Venetian oligarchy.” But his gesture is also a strongly self-promotional one. As Kennedy puts it, “Vellutello serves the aims of a purely commercial self-interest.” Vellutello spectacularly rejected the authority of Petrarch’s autograph manuscript to offer his own understanding of Petrarch’s text and life, falling out with Bembo, who was the editor of the 1501 Aldine edition of Petrarch’s poems and the main actor of Petrarch’s canonization in early 16th-century Italy. He grounded his legitimacy for reconstructing Petrarch’s life in his own travels in Vaucluse. The bordering devices in the book are translations of Vellutello’s authorizing travels; they are traces of his experience that attempt to perform unity; this very unity is appropriated by Vellutello for the promotion of national and personal interests. A particularly obvious attempt to reinforce unity by introducing framing and bordering devices, and an extremely influential commented edition, Vellutello’s volume is strikingly different from the English’s integration of the sonnet within their printing tradition.

**Tottel’s mise en page and the tradition of the miscellany**

1 This paragraph is indebted to William J. Kennedy’s *Authorizing Petrarch*. The quotes are all from p.45-52.
2 Kennedy, *Authorizing Petrarch*, 46.
3 Bembo’s 1525 *Prose della volgar lingua* established Petrarch’s poetic vernacular as a model for the development and unification of the Italian language.
The sonnet was famously introduced in England by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, and Sir Thomas Wyatt. It was first restricted to a manuscript circulation, which was only very gradually replaced by print. The most influential early instance of a printed poetic collection containing sonnets is *Songs and Sonettes*, written by the honorable Lorde Henry Haward late Earle of Surrey, and other, today known as *Tottel’s Miscellany* and first published in 1557. *Tottel’s Miscellany* was enormously popular, going through at least eleven editions between 1557 and 1593. Tottel allowed a new type of poetry to flourish and to spread more widely than just to the aristocracy, as his very well-known preface claims:

That to have wel written in verse, yea and in small parcelles, deserveth great praise, the woorkers of diverse Latines, Italians, & other, doe prove sufficiently. That our tong is able in that kind to do as praise worthelye as the rest, the honourable stile of the noble earl of Surrey, and the weightinesse of the depewitted sir Thomas Wiat the elders verse, with several graces in sondry good Enlishe writers, do show abundantly. It resteth now (gentle reder), that thou thinke it not evil do, to publishe, to the honor of the english tong, and for profit of the studious of English eloquence, those workes which the ungentle horders up of such tresure have heretofore envied the[e]. And for this point (good reder) thine own profit and pleasure […] shal answer for my defence.

This preface must be understood within the context of an affirmation of the value of the English language as a poetically worthy language. The key passage is to be found towards the middle of the text: Tottel makes the exemplary texts of Wyatt and Surrey available to “the studyous of Englishe eloquence”, laying blame on the “ungentle hoarders up of such treasure.” The choice of the adjective “ungentle” is particularly telling, since it was precisely English gentlemen who were guilty of “hoarding up” precious eloquence. Those English gentlemen and diplomats travelled abroad and brought back with them new poems translated or imitated from prestigious Italian and French models. The publisher therefore insists on what he performs by having the book printed: he offers aristocratic models of eloquence to a wider readership. That is a socially ambiguous gesture: by underlining the value of the two courtiers’ poems, he asserts the validity of the social order. But at the same time, by making

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1 See Jason Powell, “The network behind ‘Tottel’s Miscellany,” *English Literary Renaissance* 46, 2 (Spring 2016), 193-224, esp. 193. The existence of the eleventh edition has recently been signaled by J. Christopher Warner, “‘Sonnets en Anglois’: A Hitherto Unknown Edition of Tottel’s Miscellany (1559)” *Notes and Queries* 58 (2011), 204–16. The only known copy of this edition is held by the bibliothèque de l’Arsenal in Paris.
2 *Tottel’s Miscellany: Songs and Sonnets of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, Sir Thomas Wyatt and Others*, ed. Amanda Holton and Tom MacFaul (London: Penguin, 2011), 3. In this article, I rely on the second edition of *Tottel’s Miscellany*, called by Paul A. Marquis “the Elizabethan version”: it was the basis for subsequent editions and the text the Elizabethans are likely to have read. See Paul A. Marquis, *Richard Tottel’s Songs and Sonettes: the Elizabethan Version*, Renaissance English Text Society 338 (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2007).
3 In that sense, it echoes Du Bellay’s *Deffence et illustration de la langue française*, published just 8 years earlier.
those models of eloquence more accessible, he gives the possibility for less socially elevated readers to appropriate them.

Tottel’s social gesture appears in the very fabric of the book. The poems are separated not just by blanks, but also by titles, which are actually short notices on the circumstances of composition of each poem, not penned, as far as we know, by the authors. As in Vellutello’s edition of Petrarch, we are given the circumstances of composition of the poem. Unlike Vellutello, however, Tottel does not linger on the particulars: the title of the eighth poem of the Surrey section refers to “Geraldine,” but that name does not come up again in the titles of the poems of the section. Similarly, poem 118, which is part of the Wyatt section, is entitled “Of his love called Anna,” but the name Anna does not come up again in the following title. As a consequence, no sense of a storyline or plot is conveyed by the paratext. Rather, we are presented with the topic of each poem itself and why it was composed. J. Christopher Warner rightly affirms that those titles “tend to strike the modern reader as cumbersome and gratuitous.” I believe that such an impression betrays modern assumptions about poetry books: relying on the notion that printed books stabilize and reify poems, we underestimate the role of the poetic collections as providers of rhetorical models which the reader can pick at her/his convenience. The titles in Tottel’s Miscellany give a list of set situations and show which type of eloquence can be associated with them. They can therefore be seen as reading aids, or, in David Scott’s words, as “signposts” to navigate the volume, encouraging readers to look for the situation they are interested in and find the corresponding model to imitate. They are a reminder of the very strong link between poetry and rhetoric at the time, and illustrate the fact that poetry was part and parcel of the courtier’s life. They are best understood within the framework of a culture that valued commonplaces, and poetic collections are always to be read keeping in mind that poems both produced, and were the result of, interaction. Poems, in other words, were primarily modes of action rather than modes of representation. The liminal spaces between poems in Tottel do not therefore provide in any way the unifying gesture that was found in Vellutello’s Petrarch: Tottel’s Miscellany is a collection of poems, and perhaps, we could even say, a sort of handbook for poetic

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1 The idea that Tottel was the actual compiler of the poems has been questioned in recent works. See for instance Powell (2016), Marquis (2007) and J. Christopher Warner, The Making and Marketing of Tottel’s Miscellany, 1557: Songs and Sonnets in the Summer of the Martyrs’ Fires (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013). Here, I am mostly concerned by questions of *mise en page*. I will therefore keep using the name “Tottel” to refer to the authority responsible for the overall layout and editorial features of the book.

2 The Making and Marketing of Tottel’s Miscellany, 61. Warner discusses the possible model for these titles. Like him, I believe the most probable source of inspiration is a French anthology entitled *Hecatomphile. Les fleurs de Poesie Françoys* (1534), to which Warner adds the anthology *Recueil de vraye Poësie Françoyse* (1543).

3 See David Scott, “Signs in the text: the role of epigraphs, footnotes and typography in clarifying the narrator-character relationship in Stendhal’s Le Rouge et le Noir,” in Ma(r)king the Text, 26-34.
Although Wyatt and Surrey are presented as literary authorities, the miscellany favours the reuse and the imitation of texts. Its fragmented nature is needed to favour and encourage the extraction and the relocation of poetic fragments.

Another important remark must be made: Tottel, it appears, had no real interest in defining the sonnet and making its formal features stand out. In Vellutello’s edition of Petrarch, a system of indentation allowed the typographic identification of the sonnet. Not so in the 1557 editions of Tottel’s Miscellany, in which the only way of ensuring a poem is a sonnet is by counting the lines. The sonnet was a trademark form of Italian poetry, which was usually presented with sets of two poems symmetrically arranged on opposite pages.

The two pages from De le rime di diversi nobili poeti toscani (Venice, 1565, fig.2), one of the anthologies of Italian verse that had reached Britain, shows such symmetrical arrangement, which means that just a quick glimpse at the pages is enough to understand that they contain sonnets. In the same volume, in the preceding two pages (4v/5r), one of the poems is not a sonnet. As a consequence, blank space is left under it so that the symmetrical arrangement of the poems can be maintained. This shows that the sonnet stood as the standard poetic form, and as a blueprint for mise en page. It testifies to the established dimension of the sonnet in Italy, and to the way printers had exploited the features of the form to put forward the visual harmony their craft could achieve. On the contrary, there seems to have been no point in putting forward the sonnet’s features in England in 1557. Tottel did not organise the poems in sections corresponding to their forms. As a consequence, the standardisation of the page observed in Italian collections had no relevance to his miscellany. Often, the sonnets did not appear in full, as their beginning or ending was printed on the previous or on the next page.

1 On the fluidity and dynamics of early Tudor poetry, see for instance Chris Stamatakis, Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Rhetoric of Rewriting: “Turning the Word” (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
2 Arthur F. Marotti’s contention that the poems in Tottel’s Miscellany were “reco[d]ed” as primarily literary texts” seems difficult to maintain, especially because it relies on a questionable opposition between “social” poems on the one hand, literary poems on the other hand, and seems to support C.S. Lewis’s teleological (and now outdated) idea that mid-16th-century “drab” verse was replaced by “Golden” verse at the end of the century.
3 The Italian published poetic collections and anthologies of the 16th century that I have been able to consult (excluding commented editions) overwhelmingly use this page layout in their sections including sonnets.
4 Jason Lawrence expains that this anthology was used by William Fowler. See “Who the Devil Taught Thee So Much Italian?”: Italian Language and Literary Imitation in Early Modern England (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 110, note 51. In England, such anthologies were well-known by Samuel Daniel. See “Who the Devil...”, 62-117, esp.74-82.
5 See for instance fol.6 in Songes and Sonettes, written by the right honourable Lorde Henry Haward late Earle of Surrey, and other (London, 1557), STC 13861.
Tottel’s work was particularly innovative in the English context, and as Elizabeth Pomeroy wrote, his “anthology became a model for future collections.”¹ *Tottel’s Miscellany* and more generally the culture of miscellanies and anthologies had a lasting impact on English poetry and, to a large extent, initiated a movement of proud assertion of the value of the vernacular as a poetic language.² Those facts are inscribed in the way Tottel chose to manage space, favouring extractability and appropriation, extending the readership of prestigious models, stimulating social mobility by fostering eloquence. From the point of view of literary history, Tottel’s *mise en page* indicates that the sonnet as a poetic form had not achieved strong cultural significance in England at this point. This certainly explains why sonnet sequences were particularly long in coming, and did not flourish until the 1590s.

**The published Elizabethan sonnet in sequence**

It is only in the 1580s and 1590s that some of the volumes of collected poetry published in England began to take on editorial features radically different from those of *Tottel’s Miscellany.*³ The printed sonnet sequences of the 1590s veer distinctly away from the model of the English poetic anthology. In the sequence that is generally said to have triggered the “sonneteering craze”⁴ of the 1590s, Sidney’s 1591 *Astrophil and Stella,* the typographic changes since the first editions of *Tottel’s Miscellany* are obvious. The use of Roman type instead of black letter strikes us today as much more modern and must have, at the time, reminded the readers of Continental texts, or of texts in Latin. As such, it was a sign of cultural prestige. This was of course not specific to sonnet sequences: other poetic works, such as Spenser’s 1591 *Complaints*, or even earlier his 1590 *Faerie Queene*, used it. The relevance of the sonnet as a poetic form is now underlined by a system of indentation of the first line of each quatrain as well as the two lines of the couplet, which corresponds to the structure of the so-called Shakespearean sonnet (abab cdcd efef gg), a form invented by

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¹ Elizabeth Pomeroy, *The Elizabethan Miscellanies. Their Development and Conventions* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London : University of California Press, 1973), 32.

² The claiming of English as the language of eloquence was first formulated in rhetorical treatises; but Tottel’s preface to his miscellany is perhaps the first to claim the value of English in the specific field of poetry. On the question of the promotion of the vernacular, see Richard F. Jones’s classic work, *The Triumph of the English Language: a Survey of Opinions Concerning the Vernacular from the Introduction of Printing to the Restoration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1953).

³ For a more detailed account of the evolution of editorial forms in English poetic collections, see Vuillemin, “Naissance et vie éditoriales du recueil de sonnets anglais (1557-1599),”

⁴ The phrase seems to have been coined by Sidney Lee, *Elizabethan Sonnets, Newly Arranged and Indexed* (London: Archibald Constable and co. ltd, 1904), lxxxvi.

⁵ Of which two editions were published in 1591. This is from STC 22537.
Surrey which is specifically English. Such typographic definition of the formal structure of
the poem is also to be found in the sonnets from *Astrophil and Stella* with an Italian, rather
than an English, structure of two quatrains and two tercets. The first line of each quatrain is
indented, as are the first two lines of each tercet. The two 1591 editions of Sidney’s *Astrophil
and Stella* were unquestionably very influential, but from the point of view of editorial
features, it is Daniel’s 1592 *Delia* that had the most impact on the *mise en page* of the English
collected sonnet in the 1590s. [INSERT FIG. 3 HERE]

Fig. 3 shows two pages from Daniel’s *Delia*, from one of the two editions published in
1592 (STC62432). Daniel’s sequence was the first to be published with this particular
editorial shape, a fact that has been too often overlooked. Like *Astrophil and Stella*, *Delia*
includes a regular system of indentation that allows the immediate identification of sonnets as
such—in this case, as in most subsequent printed sequences in the 1590s, the English sonnet
with its three quatrains and one couplet. Daniel’s sequence, like Sidney’s, includes
numbering, but it also gives titles (sonnet I, sonnet II etc) which signal the sonnet as—
initially—a fashionable foreign form. This is even more blatant in sequences in which poems
are referred to in Italian (Spenser’s 1595 *Amoretti*) or in French (the sonnets are entitled
“Amour 1,” “Amour 2,” “Amour 3” etc in Drayton’s 1594 *Ideas Mirrour*, possibly a direct
reference to Ronsard). The most significant innovation of Daniel’s sequence is the new
symmetrical layout (one sonnet on each page) that conveys strong visual unity to the two
pages when the book lies open, with ornamental stripes. This feature was repeated in most
sonnet sequences of the 1590s and remains, as far as I have been able to trace, specifically
English. Most Italian and French collections published in the same period seem to have relied
on a symmetrical arrangement of the poems, but with two poems on each page, not just one;
what is more, none of the French or Italian poetic collections I have been able to consult
display ornament on each page. This feature was usually used to materialize a change of topic
or a new section in other books. Despite the continuity that is found in the numbering of the
sonnets, the layout of the page therefore tends to isolate each poem from the others. Even

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1 It could even be argued that such typographical layout gave the extra advantage of allowing another reading of
the sonnet as composed by two quatrains followed by a couplet, and then concluded by one more quatrain, a
structure reminiscent of the French sonnet.
2 See Arthur Marotti, *Manuscript, Print and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University
Press, 1995), p.281-290, Wendy Wall, *the Imprint of Gender* 70-89, and Mark Bland, “The Appearance of the
text in early modern England,” *Text* 11 (1998), 91-154.
3 On Ronsard’s influence on English poetry, seen Anne Lake Prescott’s seminal study, *French Poets and the
English Renaissance: Studies in Fame and Transformation* (New Haven, London : Yale University Press, 1978),
76-131.
though the context is very different from that of Tottel’s Miscellany, the separateness of the poems suggests that they were still regarded as extractable fragments, at least by the printers.

The fact that the layout is not similar to that of Italian and French collections might indicate that the point was not so much to imitate them as to appropriate foreign signs of prestige and elevate the status of the book. One further element testifies to that: the front page (fig. 4) is based on a picture from Hypnerotomachia Poliphili (in English, the Strife of Love in a Dream), a book produced by Aldus Manutius in 1499 and still considered the most beautiful book ever produced by prominent members of the publishing industry today.2

[INSERT FIG. 4 HERE] Simon Waterson published both Delia and Hypnerotomachia Poliphili in its first English translation in 1592.3 Including the woodcut from the Strife of Love in a Dream can therefore be regarded, as an “editorial statement”4 which gave strong legitimacy to the previously minor poetic form of the sonnet. Daniel’s sequence embodies changes in the literary status of the form, but also changes in the printing industry at the end of the 1580s and the beginning of the 1590s, a period when publishing bloomed for various historical and economic reasons.5 What was performed in the borders of the text was Waterson’s strong claim for cultural prestige, or at least the consolidation of it, a claim that was also an authorizing gesture for Samuel Daniel.6 The poets’ appropriation of the cultural prestige of Italy was paralleled by the printers’ realisation of the potential of the sonnet to show the value of their craft. While the sonnets were materially separated on the page, the mise en page alluded to and appropriated prestigious signs of otherness, recasting the English sonnet in the mould of European poetics—locating it, to a certain extent, in the imagined geography of Italian culture.

Conclusion

1 See William H. Sherman, “On the threshold : architecture, paratext, and early print culture », 73 in Sabrina A. Baron, Eric N. Lindquist, Eleanor F. Shevlin, Agent of change: Print Culture Studies After Elizabeth L. Eisenstein (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 67-81. I thank Hugh Gazzard for directing my attention to that fact.
2 See Roberto Calasso, the Art of the Publisher, trans. Richard Dixon (London: Penguin Books, 2015), 5-8.
3 The woodcut used in the front page of Delia can be found on fol. 24 of The Strife of Love in a Dream.
4 I owe this phrasing to Mark Bland, in a conversation that took place during the 2016 conference on “The Triumph of the sonnet” held at the university of Strasbourg.
5 Mark Bland, ‘John Windet and the transformation of the book trade, 1584-1610,’ Papers of the Biographical Society of America 107 (June 2013), 151-192
6 Another element testifies to Daniel’s dedication to the culture of emblems and hieroglyphics that The Strife of Love in a Dream displayed: Daniel translated Paolo Giovo’s treatise on imprese and published it with Waterson in 1585. The poet and the printer might have shared common interests.
The editorial features of English printed poetic collections testify to the late adoption and codification of the sonnet as a poetic form, but also to the fact that the very notion of a “sonnet sequence” remains problematic in the English context in so far as the typographical features of many of the collections now called Elizabethan sonnet sequences encourage textual fragmentation. The borders of the text perform at least two defining gestures: they identify individual poems as characteristic of the standard form that is the sonnet, and they circumscribe what could be described as an editorial genre, which has been called a sonnet sequence, but which might need another name. This does not mean that the very notion of a sonnet sequence is irrelevant, but tends to suggest that the starting point for any analysis of what has so far been called a sequence should be its fragmentation, not its presupposed unity.

This case study shows how the spatial arrangement of the page and the spatial arrangement of the book are produced by social and historical forces. Liminal spaces such as borders and the intervals between poems, in particular, enforce and problematise the unity and fragmentation of the whole book, and perhaps of the reading process. They indicate whether and sometimes how the gathering and/or extraction of separate pieces are supposed to make sense. In that regard, they are more than just traces of historical and social positions and processes. They also trigger reading practices, point to alien territories of more or less idealized poetic achievements, and perform new social positions for poet and printer alike. Ultimately, they instantiate the performance, accommodation, blurring and erasing of cultural borders within the materially defined space of the book, a space that is itself subjected to both semiotic and physical translations.