

Spotlight: Heroes and Heroines

Romances - Volksbücher



DR. JÖRN GÜNTHER · RARE BOOKS AG

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Many of the earliest English and German printed romances derived from French examples, which first were handed down in handwritten form. Some were prose versions of medieval German verse romances; others contained tales of foreign origin. Whatever their sources, they satisfied a need for light literature that persists until today.

Heroes and Heroines

"Volksbücher"
prose novels in late medieval society

2017



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Manuscripts and Early Printed Books

Our most recent Catalogue 13: *Heroes and Heroines* offers a very fine selection of medieval early printed Romances. These early printed books rarely come to the market. They bring us folklore that continues to be inspiring, as seen in some of today's most popular films and TV series.

Six popular illustrated stories in one book

1. *Von einer frauwen genante Melusina*, translated by Thüring of Ringoltingen. [Strasbourg: Heinrich Knoblochtzter, c. 1477] - 79 leaves, 67 woodcut illustrations
2. Francesco Petrarca, *Griseldis*. Translated by Heinrich Steinhöwel. [Strasbourg: Heinrich Knoblochtzter], 1478 - 12 leaves, 10 woodcut illustrations
3. Jacobus de Theramo, *Das buch Bellial genant*. Strasbourg: Heinrich Knoblochtzter, 10 August 1477 - 70 leaves, 55 woodcut illustrations
4. *Das buch der geschicht des grossen Allexanders*. Translated by Johann Hartlieb. Strasbourg: Martin Schott, 10 December 1488 - 108 leaves, 29 woodcut illustrations
5. Guido de Columna, *Ein hübsche histori von der künngclichenn stat troy wie si zerstörett wartt*. Translated by Hans Mair. Strasbourg: Martin Schott, 13 March 1489 - 128 leaves, 107 woodcut illustrations
6. *Johannes Von Montuilla. Ritter, Reysen und wanderschaff*. Translated by Otto von Diemeringen. Strasbourg: Johann Prüss, 1488. - 90 leaves, 155 woodcut illustrations

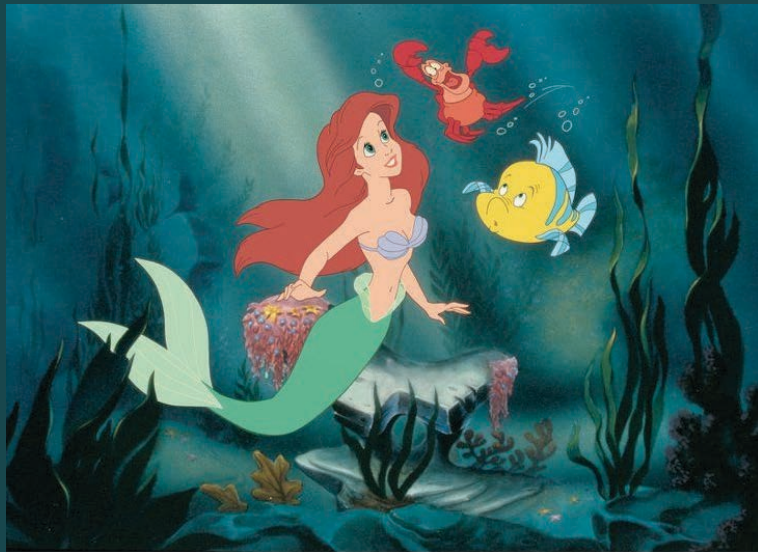




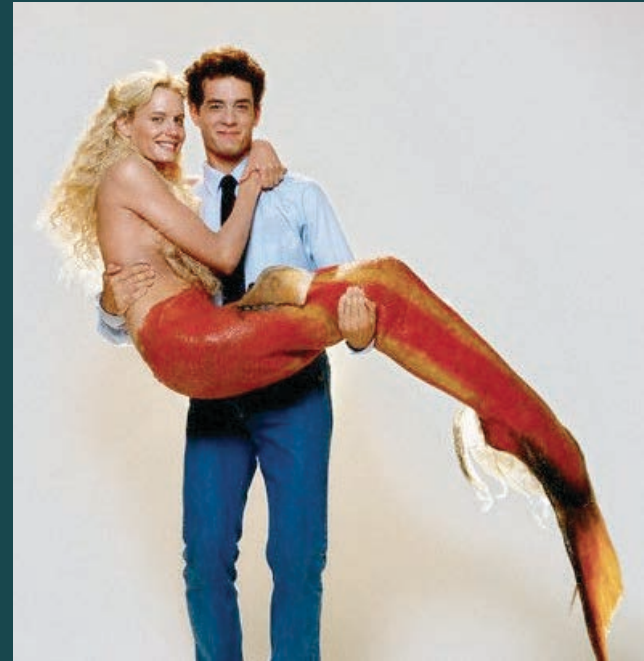
Melusine: The famous legend of the union between the fairy Melusine, who transforms into a mermaid every Saturday, and the knight Raymond has its origin in the French Poitou (c. 1200). Since Antiquity sirens and mermaids have inspired authors' and artists' fantasies in many countries and in various media.

1. *Von einer frauwen genante Melusina*. German translation by Thüring of Ringoltingen. [Strasbourg: Heinrich Knoblochzer, c. 1477] - 79 leaves, 67 woodcut illustrations





Disney's *Little Mermaid* (1989) and the movie *Splash* with Tom Hanks and Daryl Hannah (1984)



All German editions of *Melusine* follow the translation of Thüring von Ringoltingen (1465), first printed c. 1474, even earlier than the first French edition. Numerous woodcuts illustrate the adventurous tale. Based on the text and illustrations from the edition by Bernhard Richel, Knoblochtzter produced three editions of the story – the copy at hand being the first.

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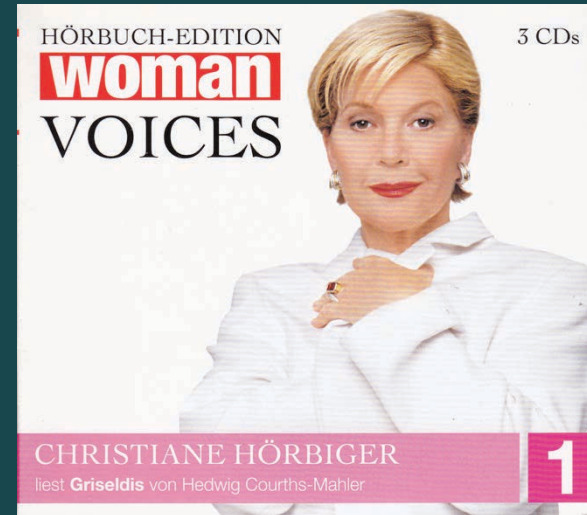
2. Francesco Petrarca, *Griseldis*, in the translation by Heinrich Steinhöwel. [Strasbourg: Heinrich Knoblochzer], 1478 – 12 leaves, 10 woodcut illustrations. Only seven copies extant.

Patient Griselda is based on the last novella of the *Decameron* by Giovanni Boccaccio, telling the story of the farmer's daughter, whose noble husband tests her obedience and patience with dramatic challenges, all of which she overcomes. Petrarch translated the Italian text into Latin and that version spread throughout Europe. The humanist Heinrich Steinhöwel (1411/12–1479) translated it into German (Augsburg, 1471). Knoblochzer next used these fine woodcuts as model for his edition. Copies of this - the most often printed novel of the Renaissance - are extremely rare today.

Griseldis is banished from her home and is forced to hand over her children to be killed, yet she still endorses her husband's behavior. The heroine's willing submission made her a role model for many ages.



Die frow mitt vnuerwandeltem angesicht (wie aber das ges
müt were weiß ich nit) nam den wolgestalten knaben/ der mit
allein der mütter süder menglichem was lieb gehabt sie segnet
vnd zeichet in mit dem heiligen crüt; als die tochter vnd sach
in ein wilin an: vnd küßt in on alle zeichen vnwillens vnd bot
in dem diener se him (sprach sie) vnd tün das du geheissen bist



In her 1961 novel, Hedwig Courts-Mahler turned the story of Griseldis into an interesting example of 'Trivillliteratur'.

After the novel's original popular reception, a 1974 film version (produced by Süddeutscher Rundfunk), an audio book version read by renowned actress Christiane Hörbiger, and various recent dramatic readings by Leipzig author Henner Kotte followed, all of which are evidence of the continuing productive power of late medieval *Griselda* on contemporary readers, listeners, and viewers.



herin

Wie palatine die Jungfrouwe irs vatters schatz hüt vf dē ho
bē berg in arzogō do selbs gar vil wûrm vñ freiflicher tier sîn

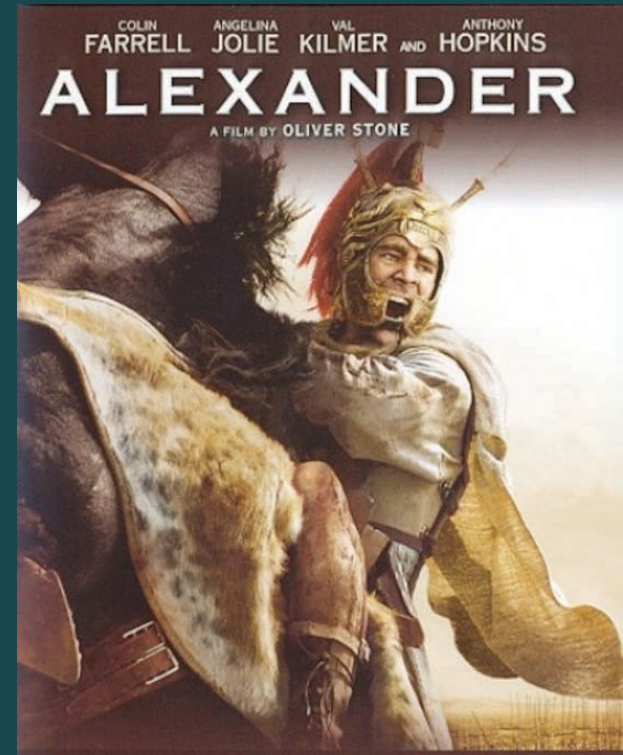


ûn wil ich fûrbas sagē von palestinen der schōnen
iungfrouwen die czû enkûmsche vff dem höchsten
berg in arzogō gelegē in beschlōssen was die selbe
palastine/als ir vor mer gehōrt habent die dar czû
von ir mütter priesen geordinet vnd gefant was do sy also be
schlossen vñ ein hûterin irs vatters schatzs dē selben schatz m
emant gewinen noch erwerben mag den allein einer von dem
stammen des vorzenantenn kûnig helmas geschlechtes were
der selbe aldon was die oventûre inhalt gewinnen vnd vber
kommen mag vnd sînst gantz niemant anders/vnd sint an dē
berge so vil grosser wurme vnd freissamer wilder tiere/ Das



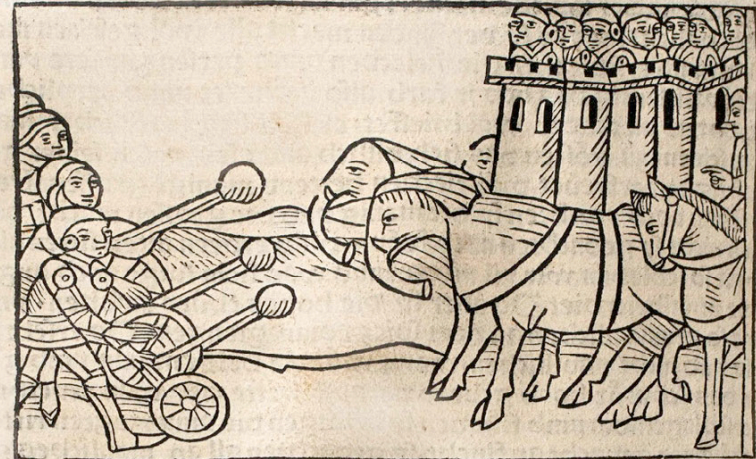
Damsels and dragons do not fail to get the public's attention, then as well as now.... (stills of Daenerys Targaryen from *Game of Thrones*).

3. Jacobus de Theramo, *Das buch Bellial* genant. Strasbourg: Heinrich Knoblochzter, 10 August 1477 - 70 leaves, 55 woodcut illustrations



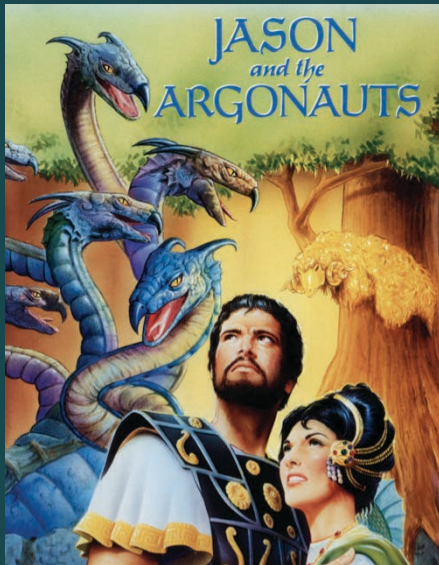
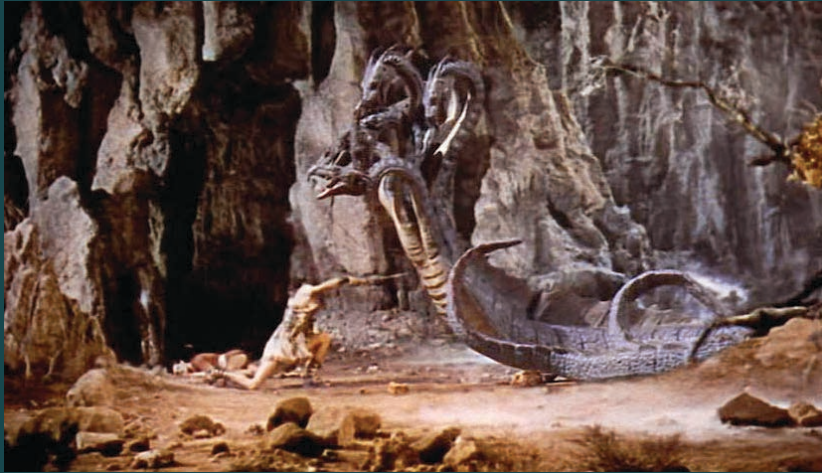
4. *Das buch der geschicht des grossen Alexanders*. Translated by Johann Hartlieb. Strasbourg: Martin Schott, 10 December 1488 - 108 leaves, 29 woodcut illustrations

Alexander the Great's history has enthralled the public since Antiquity. Oliver Stone's film of 2004 is an epic historical drama, of which four versions exist sold in millions of copies and viewed by many more.



D nun alexander het gethan in seiner kindtheit als noch
 die fürsten all thun solten. Er het wol gelesen die Cro-
 nicken von manigen landen. do het er wol gemecht wye
 in India helffant waren. vñ die alles ohz d veynd also in
 flucht bezwungen das niemant darwider gelein mocht vmb des
 willen als er erst naben begund dem land india. do hieß er gießen
 gar vil knöpff von kupffer vnd tât die wol vergulden vñ mit im
 füren. An den nöten ließ alexander machen vil kolen vnd thât die
 glüt in die knöpffe vnd stacht die an lang stangen die trib man anff
 redern voran. do nun die helffant mit iren promusteln vnd nasen der
 knöpff also heiß empfunden vnd glüent do warffen sy sich vmb vñ
 stießen die nächsten bey in mider die andern helffant sahen das sy
 lieffē auch hinder sich vñ tâtē solliche grossen schade in dē hōz poi
 das es niemant wol gelagen mag. Do nun porus sahe das alexan-
 der sein helffant jaget do was sein hercz gar sere betrübt. er het nū
 kein andern vñteil dann das die menig seines hōzes garuil grösser
 was dan das hōz alexanders. wann er het dannocht wol achzig
 mann an einem streit.

Alexander and King Porus in India, at the battle of Hydaspes (Pakistan; 326 BC) as narrated by Hartlieb.



Jason battling the dragon that guards the Golden Fleece (film 1963, Columbia Pictures; the remake: dd. 2000 was less succesful).

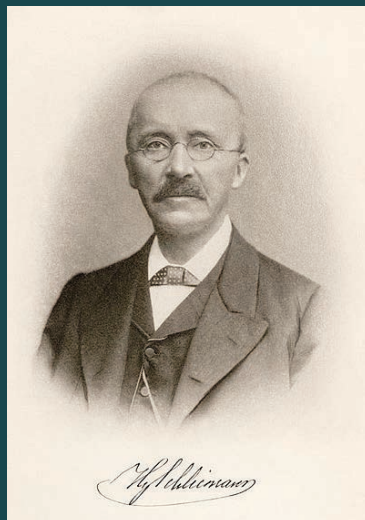
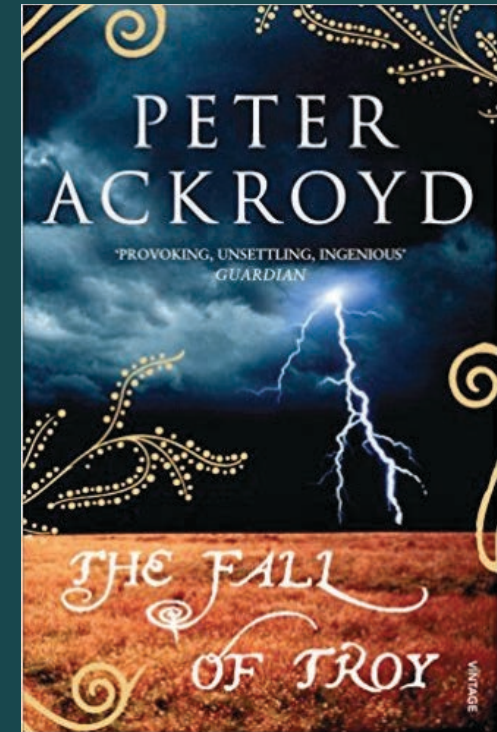
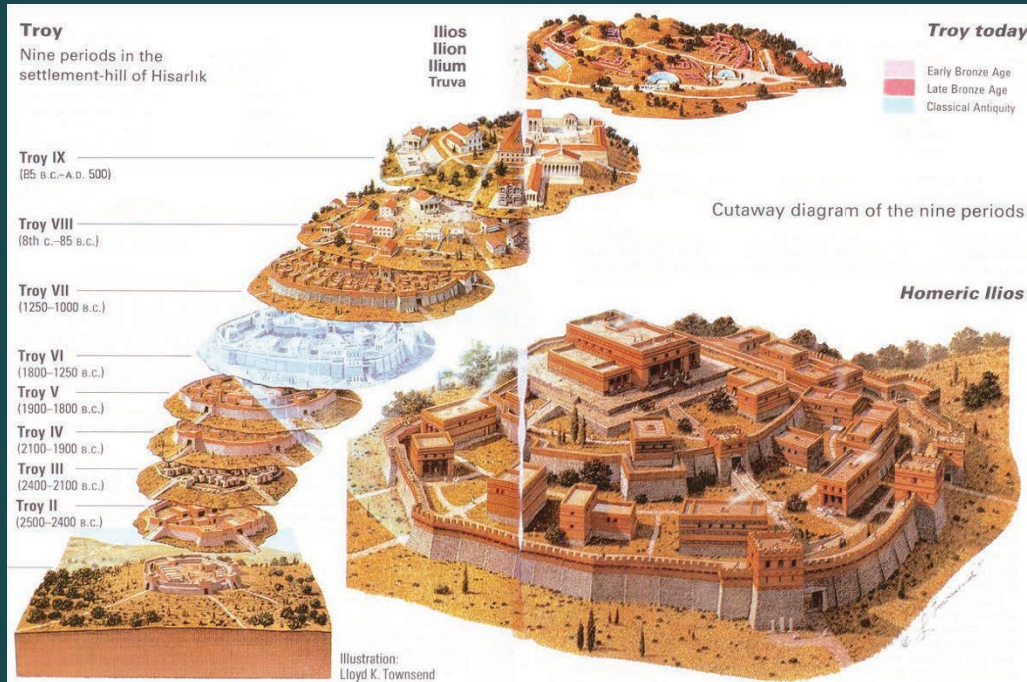
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mit seine weib. vñ mit seinen kinden. do kamē im die laidige mār wie
das im die krieche seime pater vñ als seim volch hettē erschlagen. vñ
die stat erstört. vñ vil der jūngē frauē vñ jūngfrawē. vñ auch seim
schwester Exionam wāren gefürt in dē ellend. Des erschack künig
priamus inneliche ser. vñ zoch zestund vōn der pest hīn zū troy. vñ
do die stat sāhe zerfūret. do vertryb er vil tag mit groſsem laid.



The Trojan War: Homer versus Hollywood

5. Guido de Columna, *Ein hübsche histori von der künnglichenn stat troy wie si zerstörett wartt*. Translated by Hans Mair. Printed by Martin Schott at Strasbourg, 13 March 1489 – 128 leaves, 107 woodcut illustrations



Troy inspired: modern diagram; Peter Akroyd novel; Heinrich Schlieman; Agamemnon mask.

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schwester Eriomā wāren gefürt in dē ellend. Des erschlack künig
priamus innekliche ser. vñ zoch zestund vōn der vest hīn zū troy. vñ
do die stat lābe zerfūret. do pertryb er vil tag mit grossem laib.



Homer versus Hollywood: In the 2004 film by Wolfgang Petersen, the Sack of Troy is not taken from Homer's *Iliad*, but from Virgil's *Aeneid*.

King Priam: Peter O'Toole's award winning performance.

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6. *Johannes Von Montuilla. Ritter. Reisen und wanderschaft.* Translated by Otto von Diemeringen. Strasbourg: Johann Prüss, 1488 – his 3rd edition, 90 leaves, 155 woodcuts

Mandeville's *Travels* was first quite popular in manuscript form, but after the invention of printing the book became available to a much larger public. Mandeville's (possibly apocryphal) adventures around the Arabian peninsula, Palestine, India, Tibet, China, Egypt, etc. set the stage for all published travel literature. Otto von Diemeringen's version in German was first published in Basel by Bernhard Richel (c. 1481). Prüss used that book as a model for his Strasbourg editions. The woodcuts present the whole range of the wonders described by Mandeville.

Das. XII. capitel.



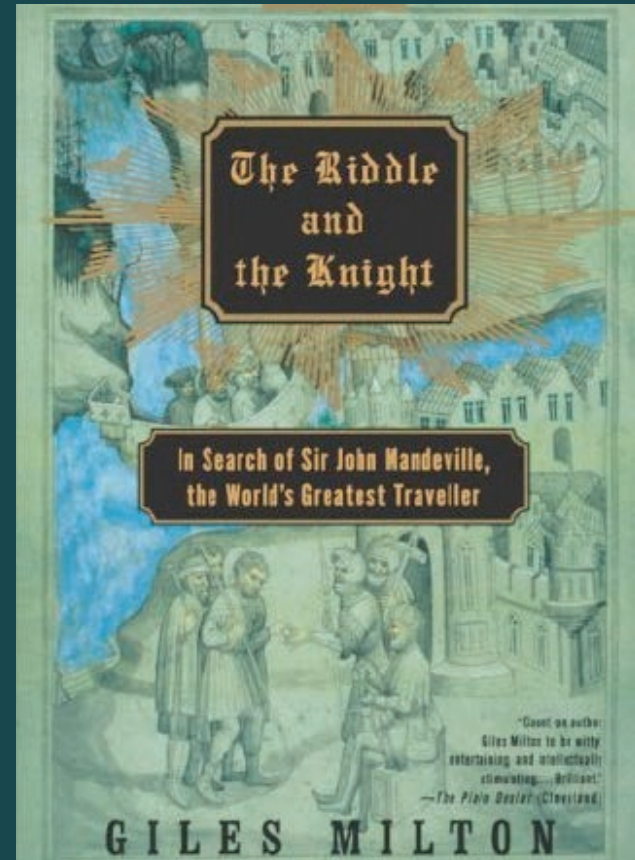
Da, wān man sieht die grūnd
Die garten in dem lande habent
alle yrt plūet, vñ ist alle iar zwūren
samer da. Vñ d' wachsser alle iar
zwūren frucht da zūm mūnsten, et
wen ine dan zwei male Vñnd ist
ouch zwūren, winter da im iare.
Vñ syn d' bescheid ē erber leūt da
gut criste nach des landes sitten.
Vñ gensit des lands ligent zwu
inseln, ein heisset krille, die ander
agritte, die selben inseln, vñ das
land das darumb lyt die sint vol
ler berge die gold vñ silber hāt
vñ d' scheiden sich das gros mōre
vñ das rot mōr da vñ einander,
Vñ sind die gold berg da zū lād
alle behütet mit grossen ameiss-
sen, die da zū land als gros syn

als die hund hie zū lande, vñ die behütent das gold so wole das kein
mensch da zū komen mag, dann mit listen die selben ameissen hant die
art wān ein mensch zū in komt den haffent sy so vast das sy zū samen lauff
en vñ toben vñ erwürgent den mensche, Aber die leūt hant dē list das
in das gold würt, sy nemen ein pferd das ein fülchē hat, vñ in dem yrt



des tares so es aller
heisset ist, so legen
sy dem pferd zwen
wyte forß vñ den
ruegken, vñ komē
mit dem pferd vñ
mit dē fülchē an das
wasser das vor den
goldbergen hinflū-
stet, vñ trybē dann
das pferd durch dē
wasser an die waid
vñ belybent dann
sy vñ das fülchē hie
gensit das wassers

Giles Milton's *The Riddle and the Knight* (1996), is a fascinating account of the legend of Sir John Mandeville, a knight who was once the most famous writer in medieval Europe. He wrote about his voyage around the world that became a source of inspiration for the great expeditions of the Renaissance. Mandeville's exploits and adventures also provided inspiration for writers such as Shakespeare, Milton, and Keats.



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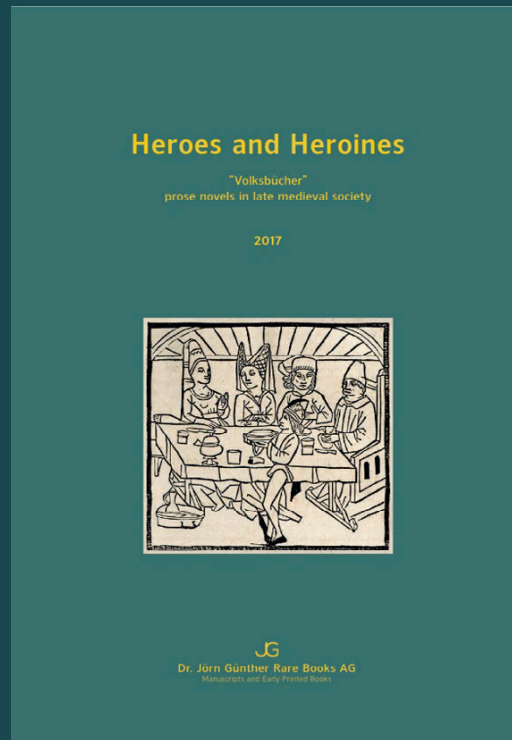
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