Forming the *Corpus Criticorum* (1450–1640): Bibliography, Title Pages, Dataset

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ABSTRACT

The *Corpus Criticorum (1450–1650)* (CC) is a pioneering comprehensive bibliography of early modern publications that feature the notion of critique on their title pages. It was constituted by collecting, validating, and curating information from pan-European, language-based, and national union catalogues. A complementary and interconnected "data package" was deposited on *Zenodo*, comprising: (1) a classical text-based bibliography, supplemented by (2) a CSV dataset of information contained therein, (3) the images of title pages not readily available online, and (4) a comprehensive BibTeX dataset. The CC can be reused in further internal research on the history of critique and as a model for research on the history of other concepts and ideas.

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(1) OVERVIEW

REPOSITORY LOCATION

Bibliography: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7233745

Dataset: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7231721

Images: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6984843

BibTeX: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7231197

CONTEXT

The *Corpus Criticorum (1450–1650)* is a comprehensive bibliography of early modern publications that feature the notion of critique on their title pages. It aims to answer questions about the chronology, the geography, and the discursive domains of critique's conceptual institutionalisation. An exploratory version of the CC was formed in 2018 during a PhD thesis at the EHESS in Paris (Gaber 2019). The methodology was updated, and the study was repeated and finalised during two postdoctoral fellowships in 2021, first at the Leibniz-Zentrum für Literatur- und Kultur Forschung in Berlin and then at the Oxford Centre for European History.

(2) METHOD

The *Corpus Criticorum (1450–1650)* (CC) builds upon and improves existing research methods on the history of critique. While previous surveys relied either on terminological reference works or the writings of authoritative intellectual figures, the CC was able to exploit recent advances in the digitisation of library catalogues worldwide. By manually querying available union catalogues, an unprecedently exhaustive corpus of texts was formed, one that includes 218 publications relevant to the history of critique and thus significantly expands the spectrum of its historical canon.

The early modern period was chosen for the following theoretical and methodological reasons. Firstly, as an ideal testing ground for Georges Canguilhem's insight on the process of conceptual institutionalisation, namely, that "When a word appears in the title of a book or a paper, it has been recognised as more than a mere metaphor by the competent scientific community" (Canguilhem 1988: 100). The comprehensiveness of early modern title pages, as well as their symbolic importance and commercial function in that period (Bertram, Büttner & Zittel 2021; Maclean 2012), suggest that this era is, in fact, particularly appropriate for tracing the process of critique's conceptual institutionalisation according to Canguilhem's criterium. Secondly, this period is also the site of a favourable overlap of "bibliographic offer" and "historiographic demand". On the one hand, critique's history before 1650 is particularly crepuscular, with only a handful of great intellectual figures lighting the way. On the other hand, 1650 also marks the current end-point of the most comprehensive European union catalogue to date, the Universal Short Title Catalogue (USTC, https://www.ustc.ac.uk/).

A final methodological decision must be mentioned before describing the research procedure itself, namely, that the CC comprises only the first editions of particular texts and that re-publications or translations are not included therein.

STEP 1: IDENTIFYING THE SOURCES

For reasons just stated, the USTC was identified as the primary source for the constitution of the CC and complemented by the British Library's *Incunabula Short Title Catalogue* (ISTC, https://data.cerl.org/istc/_search) for publications prior to 1500. Since the USTC is an ongoing endeavour, other union, language-based, and national library catalogues from the following countries and areas were manually queried, both as means of verifying the information in the USTC and compensating for potential omissions therein: Belgium (UniCat, https://www.unicat.be/), Croatia (Hrvatski nacionalni skupni katalog, http://skupnikatalog.nsk.hr/), Czech Republic (SKC, https://aleph.nkp.cz/F/?func=file&file_name=find-b&local_base=skc&CON_

LNG=ENG), Denmark (BibliotekDK, https://bibliotek.dk/eng), England and the British Isles (ESTC, http://estc.bl.uk/), Estonia (ESTER, https://www.ester.ee/), Finland (Melinda, https://melinda. kansalliskirjasto.fi/), France (CCFR, https://ccfr.bnf.fr/), Germany's VD 16 (https://www.gateway-bayern.de/) & VD 17 (http://www.vd17.de/en), Hungary (MOKKA, http://mokka.hu/en/), Italy (OPAC SBN, https://opac.sbn.it/), Latvia (Kopkatalogs, https://kopkatalogs.lv/), Lithuania (LIBIS, https://www.lnb.lt/en/?view=article&id=1387:lithuanian-integral-information-system-of-libraries-libis&catid=26), Netherlands (NCC, https://picarta.oclc.org/), Poland (NUKAT, https://centrum.nukat.edu.pl/en/), Portugal (PORBASE, https://porbase.bnportugal.gov.pt/), Russia (NLR Online Catalogues, https://nlr.ru/eng/RA2117/online-catalogues), Slovakia (Slovak Library union catalogue, https://www.snk.sk/en/home/28-catalogues/416-slovak-library-union-catalogue.html), Spain (REBIUN for university libraries, https://rebiun.baratz.es/rebiun/; REBECA OPAC for public libraries, http://catalogos.mecd.es/REBECA/rebecaopac; BNE, https://www.bne.es/en/catalogues), and Sweden (LIBRIS, http://libris.kb.se/).

STEP 2: SEARCH STRING

The following search strings were used to manually query the catalogues: *criti* (covering Latin, Romance languages, and English) and *kriti* (covering both German and Slavic languages, as well as Latinised transcriptions of titles composed in Ancient Greek). As European languages introduced the notion of critique in their vocabularies from Ancient Greek or Latin, the working hypothesis was that these search strings could capture the quasi-totality of relevant items.

STEP 3: DATA VALIDATION

After harvesting the catalogues, the following procedure was applied to validate the acquired information. First, impertinent items were discarded from the CC. These included conceptually irrelevant results (e.g., "Vita Theocriti", "descritione", etc.), so-called "bibliographical ghosts", blatant authorial misattributions, and evidently erroneous dating (Figure 1).

Figure 1 The USTC entry for André Dacier's (1651–1722) *Dissertation critique sur l'Art poétique d'Horace* with the publication date in 1618.

Second, bibliographic metadata was manually verified by consulting a digitised image of the relevant title page readily available online or by acquiring such an image from an institutional or private owner of the book in question (Figure 2). Third, for all the items included in the CC, information concerning an available copy was searched for when the publication could not be readily accessed online (Figure 3).

STEP 4: DATA CURATION

Different data curation procedures were applied for each item of the CC "data package", that is, (1) for the classical, text-based, bibliography, (2) the CSV dataset, (3) the images of title pages, and (4) the BibTex dataset.
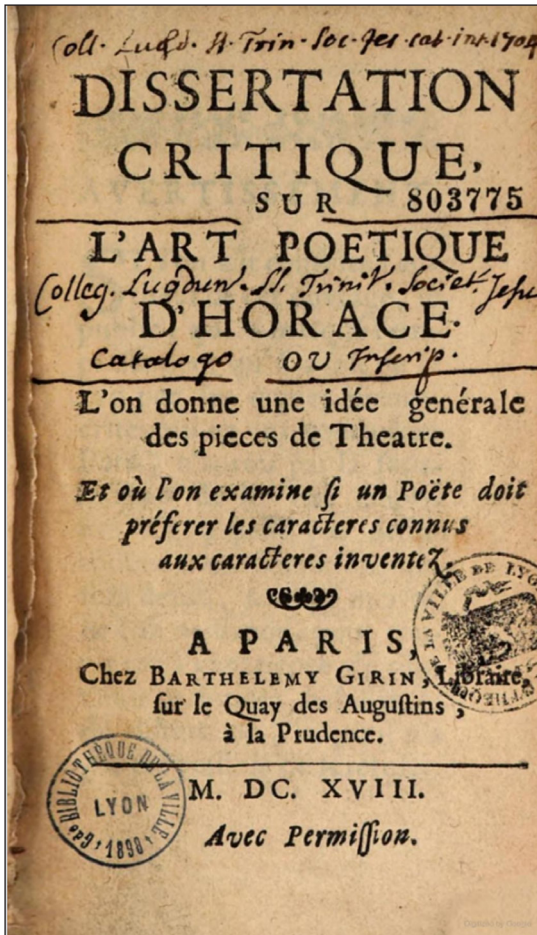
Figure 2 The erroneously dated title page of the *Dissertation critique sur l'Art poétique d'Horace* (1618).
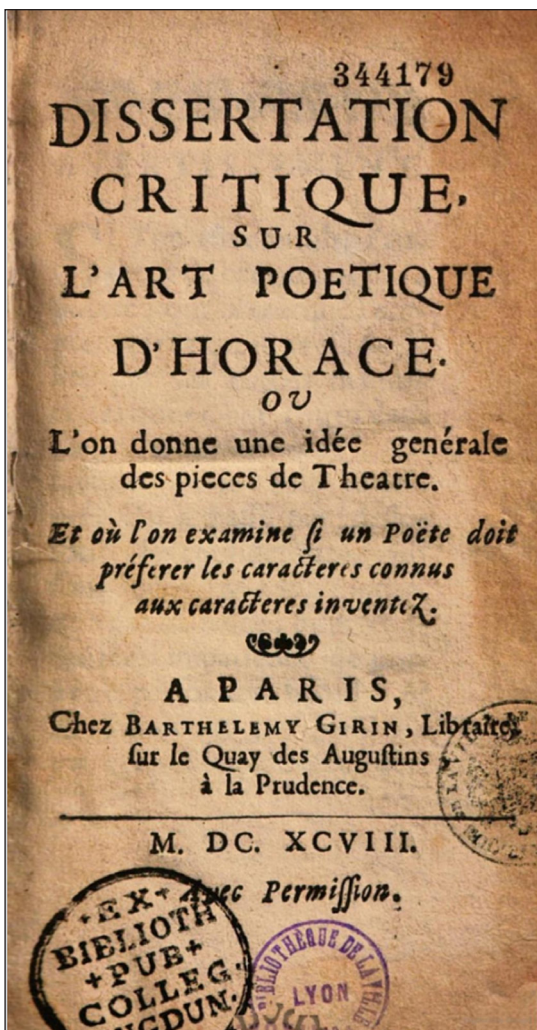

Figure 3 The correctly dated title page of the *Dissertation critique sur l'Art poétique d'Horace* (1698).

The classical bibliography was standardised according to the guidelines of the *Association of College and Research Libraries'* Rare Books and Manuscript Section (2011). This process included correctly identifying the various areas of the title page (Statement of Responsibility, Edition, Title proper) and following its guidelines on transcribing Ancient Greek, early modern Gothic, and Renaissance Latin script. Furthermore, the bibliography provides standardised names of authors, editors, and translators of the publications and indicates the modernised form of places of publication. Finally, information that could not be verified is signalled with an *.

The comprehensive CSV dataset was constructed in such a way that would most facilitate cross-referencing with the classical, text-based, bibliography. Thus, the title page transcription was kept "as-is", meaning that its text was not Romanised, and interpolations remained in square brackets. However, the names of authors, editors, translators, and publishers or publishing entities of the texts are presented separately in tabular form, as are the year and place of publication. Moreover, an internal identification number (e.g., CC_BOOK_001) was attributed to every item in the CC, and URL links were provided for its source catalogue and the online site of the title page (or the physical location of the consulted book).

The supplement presenting JPEG images of title pages not readily available online includes the CC identification number, the location of the physical copy, its shelf mark, and other standard bibliographic metadata. It also provides relevant information concerning the copyright of presented images.

The BibTeX dataset have been elaborated concomitantly with the classical, text-bibliography, and shares its data curation procedures.

STEP 5: DATA PUBLICATION

The classical bibliography was formed with Zotero and by choosing the 12th edition of Harvard's "Cite Them Right" format. The comprehensive dataset was constructed in Microsoft Excel and exported in CSV file format. The supplement presenting the images of title pages not readily available online was formed in Microsoft PowerPoint and published in PDF form. The BibTeX dataset was likewise constructed in and exported from Zotero.

QUALITY CONTROL

The author manually examined the quality of the data gathered from the abovementioned catalogues.

(3) DATASET DESCRIPTION

OBJECT NAME

Gaber, G. (2022a). Corpus Criticorum (1450–1650)—A comprehensive bibliography of early modern publications featuring the notion of critique on their title pages. *Zenodo.* https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7233745

Gaber, G. (2022b). Corpus Criticorum (1450–1650)—Supplement 1—A comprehensive dataset of early modern publications featuring the notion of critique on their title pages. *Zenodo.* https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7231721

Gaber, G. (2022c). Corpus Criticorum (1450–1650)—Supplement 2—Reproduction of title pages not accessible in the public domain. *Zenodo.* https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6984843

Gaber, G. (2022d). Corpus Criticorum (1450–1650)—Supplement 3—A BibTeX dataset of early modern publications featuring the notion of critique on their title pages. *Zenodo.* https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7231197

Format names and versions PDF, CSV, BIB

Creation dates – 2018-10-01 to 2021-12-06

Dataset creators – Goran Gaber (EHESS, LIER-FYT & MFO) was responsible for gathering, curating and publishing the data.

Language – Ancient Greek, English, French, Italian, Latin, Portuguese, Spanish

(4) REUSE POTENTIAL

The CC can be reused in further internal research on the history of critique and as a model for research in the history of other ideas or concepts.

With regards to further internal research on the history of critique, two articles exploiting the CC's potential are already in preparation. The first will delineate the chronology and the geography of critique's conceptual institutionalisation in the early modern period by exploiting information contained in the "year of publication" and the "place of publication" columns in Supplement 1. The second will build upon and enrich the existing dataset by identifying the religious affiliations of the authors, editors, and translators of the publications covered by the CC. The publication of a third, "people-focused", supplement is planned for 2023.

An additional pathway for reusing the CC is situated in the field of social network analysis. Doing so, however, would imply further historical research on the identities of publishers and publishing entities of the books in the CC. Likewise, the existing dataset would need to be enriched with unique (VIAF) identifiers for authors editors, translators and publishers.

Finally, CC's method and workflow can also be used as a model for research on the history of other ideas and concepts. Geographical and chronological limitations of the current research framework can easily be surmounted by including other relevant union catalogues.

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Maclean, I. (2012). *Scholarship, Commerce, Religion. The Learned Book in the Age of Confessions*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674065321