

Student Number: 2400613

Student Name: Amy Perry

Contents:

- Bibliographical Exercise Part 1 – p. 2
- Bibliographical Exercise Part 2 – p. 4
- Reference List – p.6

Bibliographical Exercise: Part 1

Title of Work:

Gerson Opera, Tome 1 (INC 28)

No title page.

Colophon:

[Colophon on LIII^{XII}]

Imprinted | at [Strassburg] | by | Johannis Gerson | Published by [M. Flach] | Finished
in the year of 1494 | December.

Format:

Predominantly 8VO, however some leaves are bound in collations of 6.

Statement of Signing/ Collation:

A-B⁸, C⁶, D⁸, E⁶, F⁸, G⁶, a-b⁶, c-e⁸, f⁶, g-i⁸. K⁶, l⁸, m⁶, n⁸, o⁶, p⁸, q⁶, r⁸, s⁶, t-v⁸, f⁶, y⁸, z⁶,
aa-bb⁸, cc⁶, dd-gg⁸, A-B⁸, C⁶, D⁸, E⁶, F⁸, G⁶, H⁸, J⁶, K⁸, L⁶, M⁸, N⁶, O⁸, P⁶, Q⁸, R⁶, S⁸,
T⁶, U⁸, X⁶, Y⁸, Z⁶, aA⁸, bB⁶, cC⁸, dD⁶, eE⁸, fF⁶, gG-hH⁸, il⁶, kK-mM⁸, nN⁶

Pagination:

[Part 1] I to XXIII

[Part 2] XXIII to LIII

525 leaves

1,050 total pages

Part 2

The book I was assigned was Gerson's Opera, Tome 1¹. Written in Latin by Johannis [Jean] Gerson, it was later imprinted and published in Strasburg by M. Flach in 1494.

Gerson himself is an interesting figure. Born on the 13th December 1363 in France, he became an academic specialising in humanism.² He was one of the first thinkers to defend Joan of Arc and became known for his work on natural rights theory. In his 'Opera', at the beginning of each subsequent part, there is a detailed woodcut of Gerson himself, representing him as a pilgrim.³ Gerson studied at the collage of Navarre, in Paris, at fourteen years old. In later life he became known for becoming the leader of the Conciliar Movement, ending the animosity between the pope of Rome and Avignon.⁴ I could not find much about Gerson's other works and life, other than that he later died in 1429.

Compelled by the beautiful woodcuts at the start of the subsequent parts of the book, I decided to research the artist behind them. I was able to discover more on Albrecht Durer, the artist responsible for original designs behind the woodcuts in Gerson's Opera (allegedly the drawings were later turned into woodcuts by Johann Pruss, however the evidence supporting this is vague and fragmentary).⁵ When

¹ Johannis Gerson. and Phillips Thomas (1494) *Opera* (Strassburg: M. Flach.)

² Britannica Editors. "Jean de Gerson". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 9 Dec. 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jean-de-Gerson>. [Accessed 3 February 2026]

³ Moroccobound Handbooks, *Abebooks*, <https://www.abebooks.co.uk/Opera-Gerson-Jean-Johannes-1363-1429-Nuremberg/31863001470/bd> [Accessed 03 February 2026]

⁴ Britannica Editors. "Jean de Gerson". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 9 Dec. 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jean-de-Gerson>. [Accessed 3 February 2026]

⁵ Dürer, A., Barlow, T.D. and Brothers, A.J. (1948) *Woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer* (London: Penguin Books)

Durer first envisioned the pieces, he was still apprenticed to W.L. Strauss and could 'both carve woodblocks for woodcut prints and create cut metal plates for engravings.'⁶ However, Durer is not only known for his woodcuttings, but his paintings and is 'renowned for his inventiveness and quality.'⁷ This is partly due to Durer's mathematical prowess. Using a compass and a straightedge, he studied *The Art of Measurement* – a document on geometry and used the knowledge he gained in his art.⁸ This is evident when one observes the details in the woodcuts themselves, requiring very precise measurements to carve and then apply ink in a way that will not distort the image when it is printed.⁹ It is interesting to see how the development of the printed book also transformed the world of illustration. Although hand-illustrating books was still widespread, woodcut prints became more mainstream. As Gillespie and Wakelin indicate, '... the period between 1350 and the earliest years of printing was one in which book illustration, like other aspects of book production, gradually became a more organised and commercial activity.'¹⁰ Not only did it become a more commercial activity, but artists were also employed to produce woodcuts. This was a change from the illustration and decoration in printed

⁶ The National Gallery, *Durer the Printmaker* (2026), <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/exhibitions/past/durers-journeys-travels-of-a-renaissance-artist/durer-the-printmaker> [Accessed 03 February 2026]

⁷ J.C. Smith (2015) "Albrecht Durer: His Art in Context - Edited by Albrecht Durer and Jochen Sander," *Renaissance studies*, 29(2), p. 294. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/rest.12062>.

⁸ A. J. Simoson (2008) "Albrecht Dürer's Trochoidal Woodcuts," *PRIMUS: problems, resources, and issues in mathematics undergraduate studies*, 18(6), pp. 489–499. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511970701625068>.

⁹ J.C. Hutchison, (1982). [Review of Albrecht Dürer: Woodcuts and Woodblocks, by W. L. Strauss]. *The Art Bulletin*, 64(2), 332–336. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3050231>

¹⁰ Alexandra Gillespie and Daniel Wakelin, *The Productions of Books in England 1350-1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) p. 104

books as well as the copying of medieval manuscripts from the late fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries. They used to be, 'anonymous, driven by convention, instructions and models, and organized by commercial producers.'¹¹ Of course, despite people being concerned that the invention of printing would take people out of a job, "Other members of the confrérie could not foresee that most bookbinders, rubricators, illuminators, and calligraphers would be kept busier than ever after early printers set up shop.'¹²

Another interesting topic is the matter of paper. In the fifteenth century paper, 'was well established as a medium for handwritten books and documents and it was the natural choice for mass production, but vellum (specially dried calfskin) was the preferred option for high-quality, permanent texts.'¹³ In Gerson's *Opera*, the gothic text is printed directly onto paper, although some other editions do have vellum endpapers.¹⁴ This is not the case with the edition I was working with.

Reference List

Britannica Editors. "Jean de Gerson". *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9 Dec. 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jean-de-Gerson>. [Accessed 3 February 2026]

¹¹ Alexandra Gillespie and Daniel Wakelin, *The Productions of Books in England 1350-1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) p. 104

¹² Elizabeth L. Einstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change, Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) p. 50

¹³ David Pearson, *Books as History* (London: The British Library and Oak Knoll Press, 2008) p.88

¹⁴ Freemans, *Auctions/ Sale 3105 - Ritual and Culture/ Lot 36*, 2026, Accessed at: <https://freemansauction.com/auctions/1680-ritual-and-culture/lot/36> [Accessed on 06 February 2026]

Dürer, A., Barlow, T.D. and Brothers, A.J. (1948) *Woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer* (London: Penguin Books)

Einstein, E. L., *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change, Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979)

Freemans, *Auctions/ Sale 3105 - Ritual and Culture/ Lot 36*, 2026, Accessed at: <https://freemansauction.com/auctions/1680-ritual-and-culture/lot/36> [Accessed on 06 February 2026]

Hutchison, J. C. (1982). [Review of *Albrecht Dürer: Woodcuts and Woodblocks*, by W. L. Strauss]. *The Art Bulletin*, 64(2), 332–336. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3050231> [Accessed 03 February 2026]

Gerson Johannis and Thomas Phillips (1494) *Opera* (Strassburg: M. Flach.)

Gillespie. A., and Wakelin, D., *The Productions of Books in England 1350-1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

Moroccobound Handbooks, *Abebooks* (2026) , <https://www.abebbooks.co.uk/Opera-Gerson-Jean-Johannes-1363-1429-Nuremberg/31863001470/bd> [Accessed 03 February 2026]

Pearson, D., *Books as History* (London: The British Library and Oak Knoll Press, 2008)

Simoson, A.J. (2008) “Albrecht Dürer’s Trochoidal Woodcuts,” *PRIMUS : problems, resources, and issues in mathematics undergraduate studies*, 18(6), pp. 489–499. [Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511970701625068>.]

Smith, J.C. (2015) "Albrecht Durer: His Art in Context - Edited by Albrecht Durer and Jochen Sander," *Renaissance studies*, 29(2), p. 294 [Available at:
[https://doi.org/10.1111/rest.12062.](https://doi.org/10.1111/rest.12062)]

The National Gallery, *Durer the Printmaker* (2026),
<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/exhibitions/past/durers-journeys-travels-of-a-renaissance-artist/durer-the-printmaker> [Accessed 03 February 2026)