



**Comic Print and Theatre in Early Modern
Amsterdam: Gender, Childhood and the City
(Studies in Performance and Early Modern
Drama)**

Angela Vanhaelen

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Late-17th-century Amsterdam saw the emergence of a range of printed pictures marketed specifically for children. Like the farcical plays from the city's theatre tradition, these prints-picturing scenes of violence, lust, trickery, and madness in the city's homes, markets, streets and waterways-turn Amsterdam's most cherished social and symbolic spaces upside-down. The material seems completely antagonistic to contemporary convictions that the upbringing of children was crucial to securing the future of the household, the city, and the Dutch Republic. Angela Vanhaelen here poses the question of why such sex-tinged, slapstick images were directed at Protestant children. Working from this paradox, this interdisciplinary study examines the complicated relations between print and technology, the practices of theatre, and the process of urban identity formation. Traditional comic forms were appropriated by both producers and consumers who had much at stake in religious and political battles over the control of Amsterdam and its populations. Analyzing the role of farcical theatre within these power struggles, Vanhaelen demonstrates how concerns about the city's future were deflected onto children. In the first chapter, Vanhaelen examines anxieties about the educational uses of comic material in the schoolroom, the theatre and the home. In the next two chapters, she considers the ways that this material both defined and disrupted the gendered process of initiating children into Amsterdam's most vital public and private spaces: the market and the home. The book concludes with a broader analysis of how the bodies of women and children were connected to shifting definitions of the city.

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