

Inbetween Narration and Description: Monstrous Wonders in 16th Century Print

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The 16th century had a great interest in prodigies of all kinds: human and animal miraculous births, plant deformations, unusual natural phenomena, signs in the sky. This interest was reflected in a wide range of printed publications: illustrated broadsides, pamphlets, chronicles, tracts.

Both narrative and descriptive qualities come together in the depiction of monstrous wonders: Miraculous signs can be precisely dated, they imply a sort of time line and possess eventful qualities. What is more: they are often associated with specific historical situations. At the same time, however, they are also characterised by their visual aspects, which require detailed description. Following suggestions of Monika Fludernik, the paper will focus on 16th century chronicles on prodigies and pose the following question: how narrative are these books?