

Self-Commentary in Early Modern European Literature, 1400–1700

Edited by

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Self-Criticism, Self-Assessment, and Self-Affirmation: The Case of the (Young) Author in Early Modern Dutch Literature

Els Stronks

1 Introduction: Poetic Self-Commentary in the Dutch Republic

There are few theoretical reflections on vernacular poetry in early modern Dutch literature, and even fewer such reflections that shed light on the role of critical self-consciousness in the making and experiencing of poetry by Dutch authors and their readers. The most famous and influential theoretical work in this respect, Joost van den Vondel's *Aenleidinge ter Nederduitsche dichtkunste* (1650, *Introduction to Dutch Poetry*), regards self-criticism as the key prerequisite for quality and excellence. Vondel modelled this manual for poets on Horace's *Ars Poetica*,¹ and intended it to be a description of existing practices. Whether that is indeed the case is questionable.² Nevertheless, even if Vondel put forth a desideratum rather than portraying reality truthfully, his considerations raise crucial questions regarding the role played by self-criticism in early modern Dutch poetics.³

According to Vondel, poets should not release their works into the public domain before rereading and revising them several times, going over them with a fresh eye each time:

1 Vondel Joost van den, *Aenleidinge ter Nederduitsche dichtkunste*, ed. K. Blokland et alii (Utrecht: 1977) 12.

2 Grootes E. – Schenkeveld-van der Dussen R., "The Dutch Revolt and the Golden Age (1560–1700)", in Hermans Th. (ed.), *A Literary History of the Low Countries* (Rochester: 2009) 153–292.

3 While Vondel was an authoritative figure in the Dutch Republic, he was not as well-known and influential outside his home country. His reception was limited to the German lands, 'where language affinity facilitated accessibility and where the Netherlands at that time functioned as a role model, especially in the field of cultural politics'. See Gemert G. van, "Between Disregard and Political Mobilization – Vondel as a Playwright in Contemporary European Context: England, France and the German Lands", in Bloemendal J. – Korsten F.W. (eds.), *Joost van den Vondel (1587–1679): Dutch Playwright in the Golden Age*, Drama and Theatre in Early Modern Europe 1 (Leiden – Boston: 2011) 171–198 (197).

Maer om veiliger en vaster te gaen, geef uwe dichten niet in uwen eersten yver aen den dagh. Laetze een goede wijl onder u rusten: ga'er dan eens en anderwerf, ja zevenwerf, met versche zinnen over.

(However, if you wish to proceed more safely and securely, do not publish your poems in the first flush of enthusiasm. Sit and brood on them for a good while: then reread them with a fresh judgment, not once or twice, but seven times over.)⁴

Vondel expected poets to be the first readers and critics of their own works, who should seriously question their own capacities and literary outcomes. He even instructs poets to postpone the act of writing itself until they have carefully pondered their initial ideas about the content:

Beveel het papier niet terstont al wat u in den zin schiet, maer toetst uwe inbeeldingen, vonden en gedachten ofze der penne en den dagh waerdigh zijn.

(Do not at once commit to paper whatever comes to mind, but assess whether your fancies, inspirations and thoughts are worth writing down and publishing.)⁵

Vondel also maintains that poets should never rely solely on their own appraisal. Before publication, one should instead solicit both aesthetic and moral judgements from external readers, preferably from severe critics comparable to the iconic Aristarchus of Samothrace: 'Een Dichter heeft zijne luimen: hierom laet het gedicht van eenen Aristarchus, ja verscheide keurmeesteren keuren. Dese zullen uitmonsteren wat misstaet, zoo wel dat de Kunst, als de zeden betreft' ('A poet has his good days and his bad days: for this reason, have your poem criticised by some Aristarchus, indeed by several critics. They will sift out everything that is not fitting in terms of both art and morals').⁶

The two forms of self-critical inquiry recommended by Vondel – inquiry into one's inventions and, later, the scrutiny and potential revision of what one has written – do not necessarily leave visible traces in a poet's finished published work. As such, they do not qualify as self-commentary interpreted as

4 Vondel Joost van den, *Introduction to Dutch Poetry*, trans. L. Gilbert – Th. Hermans, *Dutch Crossing* 10 (1986) 50–63 (61).

5 Ibidem 57–58.

6 Vondel, *Aenleidinge ter Nederduitsche dichtkunste* 54; idem, *Introduction to Dutch Poetry* 61.

the author's annotations or explanations accompanying his or her own work. However, this self-conscious attitude does engender subtle self-reflective forms of self-commentary which may be paired with more extrinsic modes of self-exegesis. The aim of this contribution is to analyse such self-reflective moments in diaries with limited manuscript circulation, paratexts such as dedicatory poems and prefaces, statements on their own works and status as poets in letters and other documents. If analysed as modes of authorial self-fashioning,⁷ what do such traces of self-consciousness, self-assessment and, ultimately, self-affirmation reveal about the interrelation between the poet's aspirations and the social constraints, expectations and perceptions at play in the newly formed Dutch Republic?

The underlying assumption is that early modern self-commentary can have various manifestations. Self-exegetical apparatuses appended to primary texts have been the major centre of attention thus far and have been discussed at length by Sherry Roush in her monograph devoted to self-commentary in Italian poetry from Dante to the seventeenth century. In particular, Roush argues that Dante, with his prosimetric work *Vita Nova* (c. 1295), was the first to merge the lyric dimension with self-exegesis.⁸ Existing studies have already acknowledged the connection between self-commentary and techniques of self-fashioning. On the one hand, for example, Roush has argued that, when provided by the poet himself, commentaries – normally the responsibility of an author distinct from the author of the original text – entail an autobiographical perspective. On the other hand, in a recent study on Latin poetry in the Dutch Republic, Tom Deneire has demonstrated that for certain poets, annotations aimed at 'conferring a measure of authority on one's own poetry by presenting it as worthy of commentary (usually only the classics or canonical poets are edited with commentary)'.⁹

7 For the pioneering explorations of this notion, see Greenblatt S., *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: 1980).

8 Roush S., *Hermes' Lyre: Italian Poetic Self-Commentary from Dante to Tommaso Campanella*, Toronto Italian Studies (Toronto: 2002) 25. Barry Smith has counter-argued that the genre had already been established long before Dante attempted his theoretical account of poetic self-commentaries: the Bible contains elements of self-commentary (e.g. Neh. 8:8), as does the work of Homer. See Smith B., "Textual Deference", *American Philosophical Quarterly* 28 (1991) 1–12 (2).

9 Deneire T., "Neo-Latin and Vernacular Poetics of Self-Fashioning in Dutch Occasional Poetry (1635–1640)", in idem (ed.), *Medieval and Renaissance Authors and Texts: Dynamics of Neo-Latin and the Vernacular*, Medieval and Renaissance Authors and Texts 13 (Leiden – Boston: 2014) 33–58 (49–50). On the techniques employed by Dante to build authority, see Ascoli A.R., "Auto-commentary: Dividing Dante", in idem, *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author* (Cambridge: 2008) 175–226.

In the case of early modern Dutch vernacular authors, there is a specific reason to chart self-commentaries of any type against the backdrop of self-legitimising techniques. At the end of the sixteenth century, at the beginning of what was to be labelled the ‘Dutch Golden Age’, few texts of merit in the Dutch language could meet the standards of the international literary sphere. The ambition to equal classical models, as well as contemporary poetry in Italian and French, made this lack of tradition feel like a shortcoming that the Dutch could not overcome simply by copying foreign models. In the absence of a court culture, a crucial role in the promotion of Dutch language and literature was played by chambers of rhetoric and the ‘Nederduitsche Academy’ (‘Dutch Academy’), as well as by prominent poets such as the learned professor Daniël Heinsius (1580–1655) from Leiden, famous for his Latin poetry but also a pioneer in his attempts to write in the vernacular as testified by his *Emblemata Amatoria* (1601, *Love Emblems*) and his *Nederduytsche Poemata* (1616, *Poems in Dutch*).¹⁰ In a shared desire to raise the status of vernacular literature, Dutch authors developed an ambiguous attitude towards foreign examples: they were appropriated but at the same time ignored.¹¹ Efforts to construct a Dutch literary canon did not, as far as I can tell, result in Dutch equivalents of Dante’s *Vita Nova*. The annotations added by Heinsius’s friend Petrus Scriverius to *De Lofsanck van Iesus Christus* (‘Hymn of Jesus Christ’) and included in the second imprint of Heinsius’s *Nederduytsche Poemata*, come close to the standard set by Dante, but at the same time they make apparent that exegesis provided by the author himself was perhaps deemed inappropriate or perceived as obsolete in the context of Dutch literature.¹²

We might never possess a satisfactory answer as to why this specific form of self-exegesis is absent from early modern Dutch literature. Yet subtle critical undertones of self-reflection and self-exegesis may be detected in a number of works and genres, and they will be examined here to gain insights into ideas about the literary careers of certain writers or certain groups of writers in the

10 Schenkeveld-van der Dussen R., *Dutch Literature in the Age of Rembrandt: Themes and Ideas*, Utrecht Publications in General and Comparative Literature 28 (Amsterdam: 1991) 11–20.

11 See Prandoni M., “Vive la France, A bas la France! Contradictory Attitude Toward the Appropriation of French Cultural Elements in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century: The Forewords of ‘Modern’ Poetry Collections”, in Noak B. (ed.), *Wissenstransfer und Auctoritas in der frühneuzeitlichen niederländischsprachigen Literatur*, Berliner Mittelalter- und Frühneuzeitforschung 19 (Göttingen: 2014) 179–194.

12 Strien T. van – Stronks E., *Het hart naar boven. Religieuze poëzie uit de zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: 1999) 51.

Dutch Republic.¹³ To this end, I have selected sources that can be seen as instruments of authorial self-growth. I shall begin by exploring forms of self-reflection in egodocuments such as the diary of schoolmaster and writer David Beck (1621–1656) and the notebooks of Arnoud van Buchel (1565–1641). I shall also investigate self-fashioning strategies in the Latin autobiographic prose by the famous female author Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678) as well as in the three translations of the *Aeneid* by Joost van den Vondel (1587–1679).

Lastly, the self-criticism of young Dutch authors will be examined in detail. Roush analyses the case of the Italian poet Girolamo Benivieni (1453–1542), who appended a prose apparatus to a reissue of his *Canzoni e sonetti dell'amore* (*Poems on Earthly Love*, newly entitled *Canzoni e sonetti col commento* in 1500) that he had first published eleven years earlier and had since come to regret. His annotations tried to reform this youthful collection by interpreting it with patristic piety and imbuing it with an ethical and didactic meaning. As Roush clarifies, 'by seeking to render any ambiguity in a system of fixed (in this case, moralized) meaning, Benivieni closes down his poetry.'¹⁴ The Dutch poet Justus de Harduwijn (1582–1636) underwent a similar process. When he became a Roman Catholic priest as an adult, he distanced himself from his earlier work (which he then characterised as 'Venus ghejanckel' ['Whining of Venus']) composed at the age of twenty-one in his poetry collection *De weerlicke liefden tot Roose-mond* ('The Profane Love for Sweet Rose').¹⁵ Analogously, but for a different reason, the Dutch poet Constantijn Huygens (1596–1687) disowned his youthful work in his autobiography *De vita propria sermonum inter liberos libri II* (1677). In his memoirs, Huygens portrayed his young self as a poor poet with little to be proud of, in hindsight, because of the lack of literary quality displayed in his work:

Ikzelf verbaas mij erover, dat men zoveel waarde toekende aan die zwakke probeersels van een nog onvolgroeide muze, die niet eens in haar eigen taal schreef en ook nog de nodige ontwikkeling miste. Ik meen het echt als ik zeg dat ik op die leeftijd niets gepresteerd heb, waarmee de geleerden rekening zouden moeten houden of waarvoor de gewone mensen bewondering zouden moeten hebben. De poëzie in het Frans (en ik zou eraan toe durven voegen, die in het Nederlands) was in die tijd

13 For a definition of 'career-criticism', see Cheney P., *Introduction*, in Cheney P. – De Armas F.A. (eds.), *European Literary Careers: The Author from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Toronto: 2002) 3–24 (4).

14 Roush, *Hermes' Lyre* 113.

15 Harduwijn Justus de, *Goddelicke lof-sanghen* (Ghent, Jan vanden Kerchove: 1620).

bij ons Hollanders niet van dien aard, dat wij daar momenteel nog mee voor de dag zouden kunnen komen zonder ons belachelijk te maken. De vooruitgang die de laatste tijd op beide terreinen geboekt is, is zo groot en zo plotseling ingetreden, dat het haast een wonder lijkt.

(I myself wonder why people valued the mediocre products of my young and undeveloped Muse, who did not even express herself in her own language at that time and lacked refinement. I truly mean it when I say that I did not produce anything at that age worth the attention of scholars or the admiration of common people. All poetry written in either French [and, I might add, in Dutch] by any poet in the Dutch Republic was of very poor, ludicrous quality. The extensive and sudden progress we have all made in that area is close to miraculous.)¹⁶

Based upon both the aesthetic judgement of older poets on their own works written at a younger age and the statements made by emerging authors, I shall explore what specific prerequisites were suggested for young authors. I will also try to chart the effect on young poets of Vondel's suggested practice of re-reading one's work many times before handing it over to a critical audience. How were young authors able to enter the world of the mature adult author, and could a self-critical attitude be of any assistance in this process?

2 Private Forms of Self-Reflection

The type of authorial self-assessment that Vondel advocates is perhaps best found in the manuscript culture of the Dutch Republic. Although the number of printed texts in early modern Europe was growing, manuscripts remained a lively and important sphere of exchange between authors and their readers. The situation could certainly have been otherwise – especially in the Dutch Republic, where printers were geographically concentrated, highly networked, and institutionally embedded, and where the publishing industry

16 Written between 1629 and 1631, Huygens's memoirs were published in 1677. See Blom F.R.E., "Constantijn Huygens en de ontwikkeling van de poëzie in de landstaal", in Nellen H.J.M. – Trapman J. (eds.), *De Hollandse jaren van Hugo de Groot (1583–1621)* (Hilversum: 1996) 97–111 (100). For a Dutch translation of Huygens's memoirs, see Huygens Constantijn, *Mijn jeugd*, trans. C. Heesakkers (Amsterdam: 1987) 122 (the English translation here is mine).

was prosperous.¹⁷ In spite of this, manuscript culture flourished in the Dutch Republic – as it did in Great Britain, France, Italy and Spain.¹⁸ Nelleke Moser, for instance, points to the existence of a ‘litteraire sociabiliteit’ (‘literary sociability’, i.e. the sharing of handwritten copies of texts and the convention of including poetry quotations in letters), which remained a thriving business well into the eighteenth century, and to ‘social poetry’ (i.e. manuscripts of occasional poems, often filled with readers’ handwritten comments).¹⁹ Manuscript culture could therefore offer an informal setting for the interaction between readers and authors as described by Vondel: perhaps authors felt they could share their self-reflective comments more openly with a familiar audience.

Genres that circulated in handwritten form and were most likely to contain the author’s and his or her readers’ comments encompassed diaries, travel accounts, memoirs, letters and autobiographies. In particular, diaries were far less private than they are now and were sometimes even printed.²⁰ One of the earliest and most prolific writers whose main subject was himself and his own work was Arnoud van Buchel, or Arnoldus Buchelius. Born in 1565 as the illegitimate son of a priest but converting to Protestantism around 1591, Buchel studied in Leiden and Douai, from where he travelled to Paris, Italy and Germany throughout his life. Buchel’s most renowned work is his *Commentarius rerum quotidianarum* [...] (*Commentary on daily matters* [...]), better known as *Diarium* (*Diary*).²¹ For many years Buchel constantly edited and revised this work, as

17 Buringh E. – Zanden J.L. van, “Charting the ‘Rise of the West’: Manuscript and Printed Books in Europe, a Long-Term Perspective from the Sixth through Eighteenth Centuries”, *Journal of Economic History* 69 (2009) 409–445; Rasterhoff C., *Painting and Publishing as Cultural Industries: The Fabric of Creativity in the Dutch Republic, 1580–1800*, Amsterdam Studies in the Dutch Golden Age (Amsterdam: 2017).

18 See, for instance, Richardson B., *Manuscript Culture in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: 2009); Anderson R., “The Merit of a Manuscript Poem’: The Case for Bodleian MS Rawlinson Poet. 85”, in Marotti A. – Bristol M.D. (eds.), *Print, Manuscript and Performance: The Changing Relations of the Media in Early Modern England* (Columbus: 2000) 127–171.

19 Moser N., “‘Poezijlust en vriendenliefd’: Litteraire sociabiliteit in handschrift en druk na 1600”, *Spiegel der Letteren* 49 (2007) 247–264; Haugen K., “Imaginary Correspondence: Epistolary Correspondence and the Rhetorics of Disbelief”, in Houdt T. Van – Papy J. – Tournoy G. – Matheussen C. (eds.), *Self-Presentation and Social Identification: The Rhetoric and Pragmatics of Letter Writing in Early Modern Times*, Supplementa Humanistica Lovaniensia 18 (Leuven: 2002) 117–136 (123).

20 See Dekker R., *Family, Culture and Society in the Diary of Constantijn Huygens Jr, Secretary to Stadholder-King William of Orange*, Egodocuments and History 5 (Leiden – Boston: 2013).

21 Published only in 1905 by Gisbert Brom and Lambregt Abraham van Langeraad (Utrecht).

Judith Pollmann concluded after examining it thoroughly.²² The two main volumes Buchel produced – part autobiography, part chronicle – were written between 1593 and 1600. A few small notebooks ('rapiaria'), one of which has been preserved (Ms. 761, Utrecht University Library), served as the basis for the finished product, a fair copy that was regularly corrected and supplemented until approximately 1625. The notes begin in 1560 and continue until they come to an abrupt end in 1599. Buchel described his journey to Cologne in a separate, smaller manuscript (Ms. 762, Utrecht University Library).²³ In both *rapiaria*, we find crosses or long lines in the margins which seem to indicate sections Buchel had selected for inclusion in the *Diarium*. A brief comparison shows that he did not use all the entries from his *rapiaria*. What he did use he often rephrased, summarised, or even rewrote (for instance, his own poems). Buchel therefore made himself an editor of his own work, and it is clear that he aimed to produce a well-organised document, more orderly than the *rapiaria*. He also supplemented the *Diarium* with texts from other notebooks or sources.²⁴

The notebook he filled while travelling contains descriptions of every historical or archeological site that he visited. From the notes he jotted down, it is apparent that he often questioned the information he had received about these places and was used to incorporating such doubts into his manuscript. Here is one example:

Ick vinde in de genealogie in Duvenvoirde Gijsbertam, abdisse van Reinsburch, anno 1577 gestorven, quam hic omisam video, unde dubito.

(In the genealogy of Duivenvorde: Gisberta, abbess of Reinsburg, deceased in 1577, but because she is not listed here, I am in doubt.)²⁵

For this reason, Buchel's diary can be considered to be a form of note-taking, both for himself and his (occasional) external reader. The notes alerted his

22 Pollmann J., *Religious Choice in the Dutch Republic: The Reformation of Arnoldus Buchelius (1565–1641)*, Studies in Early Modern European History (Manchester: 1999).

23 See Keussen H., "Die drei Reisen des Utrechters Arnoldus Buchelius nach Deutschland, insbesondere sein Kölner Aufenthalt", *Annalen des Historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein insbesondere das Alte Erzbistum Köln* 85 (1908) 90–114.

24 In 1801 this was in the possession of Gerlach Theodorus van der Capellen (1734–1805), Lord of Schonauwen (see Ms. 799, fol. 174), as was Buchel's *Inscriptiones* (Ms. 1648). In 1881, the State Archives in Utrecht gave it to the University Library of Utrecht.

25 Buchel, *Inscriptiones* 61. A translation into modern Dutch is provided by the Utrecht Archive: 'Ik vind in de genealogie van Duivenvoorde: Gijsberta, abdis van Rijnsburg, in 1577 gestorven, maar omdat zij hier ontbreekt, twijfel ik' (<http://www.hetutrechtsarchief.nl/collectie/handschriften/buchelius/inscriptiones/061>).

readers to be aware of uncertainties or information that needed to be checked. Overall, these notes served not only as references to the sources, but also as a critique of these sources and an indication of his own way of using them. The critical reflections upon his own writings and his gathering of information reveal that Buchel's self-reflection is humanistic in nature. As with many of his other activities and actions – as Pollmann has noted in her biography – they were aimed at engaging in the critical examination of existing information in an attempt to contribute to the development of evidence-based knowledge.²⁶ In a mixture of Dutch and Latin, Buchel provides comments that serve as factual gloss for the learned scholar that he aspired to be.²⁷

In the diary kept by the schoolteacher David Beck from 1624 onwards, intended for his children to read, we find another form of interaction between existing texts (oral or printed), an author's own work, and an author's self-reflection. In this diary, Beck dealt with his conversations with neighbours and colleagues concerning sermons he had attended, but mostly books he had read. In an article tellingly entitled "Autobiographical Reading and Writing: The Diary of David Beck (1624)", Jeroen Blaak highlighted that what Beck wrote owed as much to what he read as it did to the author himself.²⁸ Indeed, Beck not only listened to or read new texts, but also frequently re-read certain texts, including his own poems that he had transcribed in his manuscript: 'a few [...] books received regular attention throughout the year. His own poetry was one of them.'²⁹ One could classify Beck's comments on his own work as self-commentary, though this term is not employed by Blaak. In a poem on the passing of Maurice of Orange transcribed in the diary, autobiographical insights result in an intriguing combination of self-reflection and occasional poetry:

26 Pollmann, *Religious Choice in the Dutch Republic* 97.

27 The mixture of Dutch and Latin/Greek is also found in other notebooks and diaries produced by humanists, such as the four volumes by Gisbert Cuper (1644–1716), burgomaster of Deventer. See Chen B., "Politics and Letters: Gisbert Cuper as a Servant of Two Republics", in Keblusek M. – Noldus B. (eds.), *Double Agents. Cultural and Political Brokerage in Early Modern Europe*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions 154 (Leiden – Boston: 2011) 71–94.

28 Blaak J., "Autobiographical Reading and Writing: The Diary of David Beck (1624)", in Dekker R. (ed.), *Egodocuments and History: Autobiographical Writing in Its Social Context since the Middle Ages*, Publikaties van de Faculteit der Historische en Kunstwetenschappen 38 (Hilversum: 2002) 61–89 (61). A full transcription of the diary can be found in Beck David, *Spiegel van mijn leven: Haags dagboek 1624*, ed. S. Veldhuijzen, Egodocumenten 3 (Hilversum: 1993).

29 Blaak, "Autobiographical Reading and Writing" 73.

Mauritius, die waert den Phenix onser dagen,
 Vermaert van Occident tot bij den morgen-roodt;
 Geeft mijnen rouw de schuldt, indien ik uwe doodt
 Niet in Poetscher stijl op huijden kan beklagen.

Mijn *Musa*, siende dij van *Atropos* verslagen,
 Gaf dadelijk den geest, door droefheid over-groot:
 Want dat uw sterven haer, ja totter doodt verdroot,
 Mijn levendich gesucht en' geestloos dicht gewagen.
 Gij waert haer vuer, haer stof, haer leven en' geluijt:
 Uw' leven gaf haer stem: nu is den geest daer uijt.
 En mits Uw *Cijpres*-loof verdort mijn lauwer-bladen,
 En' schoonste Blommekens, is 't vremdt (o Helden-glans!)
 Dat ik, die voormaels sank in Goden-tael uw' daden,
 Beklage dijnen doodt in menschen-tael althans?

(Maurice, the Phoenix of our lifetime, renowned from the East to where the sun sets, blame it on my sorrow if I right now prove incapable of mourning your death properly as a poet. My muse, while watching your defeat by Atropos [one of the Three Fates], has passed away because of my sorrows. Her lively voice has been silenced by your death. For you gave her inspiration, made her live, gave her a reason to write and a voice. You were her all. Now that your laurels have faded, hers also fade. O lovely flowers, is it strange for me to mourn his death in words deriving from the human language, while I used to sing about his heroic deeds in the language of the gods?)³⁰

Beck's writing is a continuous flow of self-reflection and self-assessment on his poems.³¹ In this case, the 'self' that the poet exposes is meant to exercise influence over its audience, while at the same time reflecting on the private process of writing. Beck incorporates the rhetorical technique of self-assessment into his *laudatio* and mourning for the prince to emphasise his modest position and his dependence upon the prince's virtues. Despite the fact that this rhetorical technique of amplification is largely topical, building the entire poem around this subject seems to indicate that he saw the occasion of the prince's death mostly as an opportunity to make his poetic voice heard.

30 Quoted from diary transcriptions as found in Kossmann F., "Een Haags dichter onder Maurits", *Oud-Holland* 39 (1921) 76–85 (80). See also Vooy's C.G.N. de, "Een lijfpoëet van Prins Maurits", *Oud Holland* 37 (1919) 177–188.

31 Blaak, "Autobiographical Reading and Writing" 80–82.

In both Beck's and Buchel's case, self-reflection – intended only for the author and a few readers close to him – contributed to the formation of the poet's self. On the one hand, Buchel envisioned himself as a writer who casts a critical eye on his own writing as well as his sources and the information they provided, and intended to use those sources in such a manner that he could be deemed an authority for his few readers. On the other hand, Beck focused to a much greater extent on his ability to imitate the example of authors or heroes that he found inspiring. In his case, too, his handful of readers (his own children) acted as a sounding board because the circle of listening, reading, and writing was designed to improve his work as a poet, for their benefit as well as his own.

3 Public Forms of Self-Legitimation and Self-Fashioning

In the learned culture that nurtured early modern Dutch literature, the use of Latin was one of the most powerful means of bolstering one's public image. Through examination of copies of Latin works circulating in the Dutch Republic, Tom Deneire was able to establish that marginal notes were a common means of conferring status on one's own writing. As can be expected, poets like Jacobus Zevecotius (c. 1596–1642) and Adrianus Hofferus (1589–1644) referred to classical and biblical sources in their Latin verses. More striking is the addition of Latin glosses to their vernacular poetry. Deneire discusses this particular example:

In a Dutch poem on the siege of 's-Hertogenbosch Hofferus adds a marginal reference to William of Orange's motto: "Symbola Principum Auriacorum: Saevis tranquillus in undis", where the poem reads: "Uw Vader was gerust in 't midden van de baren" ("Your Father was calm in the middle of the waves") [...]. The same is found in Hooft, who explains in one of his songs that he uses the Dutch word "pril" in the sense of *venustus*. Rather surprisingly, such Latin notes in vernacular poetry – the opposite is never found – are not that uncommon.³²

Deneire concludes that Latin annotations to one's own vernacular poetry add the extra element of claiming intellectual (and sociocultural) authority through the esteemed Latin language. This demonstrates the striving of authors such as

³² Deneire, "Neo-Latin and Vernacular Poetics of Self-Fashioning in Dutch Occasional Poetry (1635–1640)" 51.

Hofferus and Hooft to validate their vernacular poetry by linking it to practices that were common in learned humanist circles.³³

Further proof for Deneire's thesis is found, for instance, in the career of the most remarkable female Dutch author of the period, Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678). Van Schurman began writing in Latin and established a learned network of female contacts (e.g., Queen Christina of Sweden, Birgitta Thott of Denmark, Dorothy Moore of Ireland and England, Bathsua Makin of England, Marie Jars du Gournay of France, and Marie du Moulin of France and Holland), before turning to write in Dutch on religion, the issue of greatest importance to her.³⁴ As a female writer, she needed to garner recognition and admiration for her accomplishments in Latin (amongst other languages): this allowed her to achieve the authority that she sought in religious matters when writing in the vernacular.³⁵ Later in her life, in 1670, she joined Jean Labadie's community of radical Christians. To explain her decision to her followers and friends, she wrote a treatise entitled *Eukleria*, written not in the vernacular but in Latin, the 'language of authority'.³⁶ The Dutch theologian Mirjam de Baar notes:

As far as its structure is concerned, we can see parallels between the *Eukleria* and Augustine's *Confessions*. As a seventeenth-century woman, however, Anna Maria van Schurman was in a very different position from that of the authoritative Church Father, who was completely free to produce theological works by virtue of his office. The narrative perspective van Schurman chose allowed her to link the "I" of her constructed life story and the "I" of her scholarly argument, thus enabling her to make a

33 Ibidem 49–50.

34 Beek P. van, "Alpha Virginum": Anna Maria van Schurman", in Churchill L.J. – Brown P.R. – Jeffrey J.E. (eds.), *Women Writing Latin from Roman Antiquity to Early Modern Europe*, 3 vols., *Women Writers of the World* 6 (New York – London: 2002), vol. 3, 271–293. For van Schurman's Dutch poetry, see Beek P. van (ed.), *Verbastert Christendom: Nederlandse gedichten van Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678)*, Christelijk erfgoed 4 (Houten: 1992).

35 Irwin J., *Anna Maria van Schurman: Whether a Christian Woman Should Be Educated and Other Writings from Her Intellectual Circle* (Chicago: 1998).

36 Baar M. de, "Gender, Genre and Authority in Seventeenth-Century Religious Writing: Anna Maria van Schurman and Antoinette Bourignon as Contrasting Examples", in Bollmann A. (ed.), *Ein Platz für sich selbst: Schreibende Frauen und ihre Lebenswelten (1450–1700) / A Place of Their Own: Women Writers and Their Social Environments (1450–1700)*, *Medieval to Early Modern Culture / Kultureller Wandel vom Mittelalter zur Frühen Neuzeit* 13 (Frankfurt am Main: 2011) 135–163 (150).

contribution, almost as a matter of course, to the theological discourse of her day.³⁷

The appropriation of the narrative structure of Augustine's *Confessions* and the use of Latin jointly served as means to persuade her audience. The highly controversial act of joining Labadie's community obviously required Van Schurman to engage in such persuasion. The narrative structure of the autobiography in particular provided her with a means for self-expression and self-reflection, for instance when she writes about her unusual education:

Hierbij kwam dit bijzonder voordeel mijner opvoeding, dat mijn ouders, als ik zeven jaar was, mij niet langer als twee maanden in de Franse school gehouden hebben. [...] Zij hadden'er meer zin aan dat ik [bij] mijn meester de schrijf- en telkonst, ook de zingkonst zo wel door stem als op instrumenten, nevens mijn broeders leerde.³⁸

(I profited the most from my parents' decision – when I was seven years of age – to let me attend the French school for no longer than two months. They preferred me to be educated at home, together with my brothers; I was therefore educated in mathematics, writing, singing, and music.)

The autobiographical narrative thus allowed her to emphasise that she was educated as a boy, in support of her self-fashioning as a learned author. By writing in Latin (the Dutch translation quoted here dates from eleven years later), she was able to demonstrate her education.

In the example of Joost van den Vondel (1587–1679), it is obvious that not only writing but also translating Latin could boost one's career, and that publishing self-commentaries upon one's translation helped that process. The dedications of Vondel's Vergil translations to wealthy patrons (the Prince of Orange, the son of the Amsterdam burgomaster Cornelis de Graeff, and the burgomaster himself) and other paratextual additions can be perceived as forms of self-authorisation and self-fashioning aimed at acquiring patronage

37 De Baar, "Gender, Genre and Authority" 151. See also Baar M. de, "Now as for the Faint Rumours of Fame Attached to My Name [...]: The Eukleria as Autobiography", in idem et alii (eds.), *Choosing the Better Part: Anna Maria van Schurman*, Archives internationales d'histoire des idées 146 (Amsterdam: 1996) 1–22.

38 Originally published in Latin (*Eucleria, seu melioris partis electio, Tractatus brevem vitae ejus Delineationem exhibens*. Altonae ad Albim, Cornelis van der Meulen: 1673), translated into Dutch more than a decade later: *Eucleria of Uitkiezing van het Beste Deel* (Amsterdam, Jacob van Velde: 1684) 20.



FIGURE 12.1 (Detail of) the title page of *Publius Virgilius Maroos Wercken vertaalt door J. van den Vondel* (Amsterdam, Abraham de Wees: 1646).
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as a poet – necessary because the autodidact Vondel struggled to make ends meet. As Frans Blom and Sophie Reinders have argued, Vondel hoped to attract patronage so he could write his planned epic on the first Christian Roman emperor, Constantine.³⁹

In an introductory poem added to the last of his three translations (in both prose and poetry, published between 1646 and 1660), Vondel compared the creation of these translations to the quest of Aeneas. By the time his readers finished this preliminary poem, they might already have spotted the depiction of Augustus, sitting on a globe supported by Vergil, on the title page of Vondel's translation [Fig. 12.1]. The link with Augustus on the title page is further developed and connected with Vondel's career in the introductory poem, in which the poet describes how his muse travelled across the seas and landed on Vergil's 'werkstuk in Latijn' ('work written in Latin'):

Myn zangheldin belande in 't ende met verlangen
 Uit d'overrijcke zee van Maroos Herderszangen,
 En Lantgedichten, en Eneas dappren toght;
 Een werkstuk in Latijn door al zijn leën volwrocht
 En waerdigh aen August eerbiedigh op te draegen;
 Toen alle volcken Rome op haeren middagh zagen,
 Den vorst in 't hooftgezagh, en 't aerdtrijck, onder hem

39 Blom F.R.E. – Reinders S., "Men zou Virgilius zien opgaen in zijn' tolck': De functie van Vergilius in het artistiek ondernemerschap van Joost van den Vondel", *De zeventiende eeuw: Cultuur in de Nederlanden in interdisciplinair perspectief* 27 (2011) 194–213. Available at: <http://www.de-zeventiende-eeuw.nl/index.php/dze/article/view/1550/1577> (accessed 7 August 2017). The quotations that follow are taken from this article unless otherwise stated, translations are mine.

Gebogen, luistren naer d'ontzaghelijcke stem
 Van eenen eenigen, geheilight om, door wetten
 En maght gesterckt, een wijs op recht en vrê te zetten:

(In the end, my muse landed, being inspired by the lavishly rich sea of Maro's pastoral poetry and Aeneas's heroic quest, written in Latin and deeply elaborate in nature, rightfully dedicated to the honourable Augustus, who ruled Rome at the height of her power, when he alone, empowered by authority and blessings, controlled the world that obeyed him and the laws he established to bring peace and prosperity to the world.)

The muse believes to have found a patron in de Graeff, just as Vergil had in Augustus. Vondel then goes on to argue:

Nu ziet mijn zangheldin, na'et landen, wacker om
 Naer een' Mecenass, die, genoodt in 't heilighdom
 Der Zanggodinnen, zoo veel goddelijcke driften
 Kan schatten, uitgeleert in toetsen en in schiften
 Van stoffen, zin, en zwier, en aert, en maet, en klanck.
 Zy komt Mecenass GRAEFF dit Nederduitsch gezangk
 In zijne schaduw dan voorzingen, magh haer d'eere
 Gebeuren, datze uit zijn scherpluistrende oordeel leere
 Hoe verr' haer wedergalm van Maroos voorzangk dwaelt,
 En wat haer glans verschilt van 't licht, dat uit hem straelt.

(Now that my muse has landed, she is looking for a Mecenass who – invited into their sanctuary – values the holiness and achievements of the Muses and the treasures displayed in the graceful, sonorous, elegant and sensible arts they produce. She believes to have found one in de Graeff and recites her Dutch poetry for him: if only she were endowed with the honour of working in his shadow and were able to draw wisdom from his critical judgement and use this wisdom to compare herself to the light that Maro produces.)

Vondel then makes reference to the myth of Icarus: he would not dare to attempt comparison with Vergil, because he fears he would end up like Icarus, who died as a result of his ambition and had a sea named after him:

Hoewel ick schroom naer d'eer des Mantuaens te streven
 Met wasse pennen, en om laegh, beneên zijn' faem

Blijf drijven, om geen zee te noemen naer mijn' naem.
Nu zinge ick midlerwijl gezang van korter adem.⁴⁰

(I am hesitant to claim my reputation could be comparable to that of Vergil, my wings constructed from feathers and wax do not lift me up that high and no sea should be named after me, so I tone down my Muse.)

Vondel then assesses his 'past performances' as the author of tragedies on Amsterdam's heroes (*Gysbreght van Aemstel*, *Batavische Gebroeders*) and a poem on the inauguration of the new town hall, *Inwydinge van 't Stadthuis*:⁴¹

Het zy mijn zangheldin uw Kapitoel omvadem,
Of koninginnen, en veltheeren innehael,
Of ons tooneel stoffeere, of, als de nachtegael,
Van tack in tack springe, en langs uwe graft, vol ooren,
Een byschrift, grafschrift, of een liergezang laet' hooren,
Of een bekranste bruit, van 't leckre bruitsbancket,
Op Hymens tortslicht, groete, en vrolijck danss' te bedt.
De zangbeminners zijn belust op keur van wijzen,
En watertanden naer verandering van spijzen.

(Whether my muse describes the city [Amsterdam] and its rulers and warriors, or devotes herself – jumping from branch to branch like a nightingale – to epigrams or occasional poetry on funerals and weddings, or recites a hymn to a laureled bride and accompanies her to her bed with this joyful song: those who love poetry love my work and long for it, in all its variety.)

He continues with an assessment of his own poetical power and impact. The burgomaster de Graeff, as well as others from Amsterdam's regency, would be positioned next to 'de stamvaders en de helden' ('the founding fathers and heroes') as described by Anchises in book VI of the *Aeneid*, if they would commission an epic poem from him:

Indien de tijt my gunt, naer 's Mantuaners wetten,
Den krijghshelt Bato met opklinckende trompetten

40 *De werken van Vondel: Zesde deel: Vondels Vergilius-vertalingen*, ed. J.F.M. Sterck et alii (Amsterdam: 1932) 91. My translation. Available at: <http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/vond00ideweo6_01/vond00ideweo6_01_0006.php> (accessed 7 August 2017).

41 Blom – Reinders, "Men zou Virgilius zien opgaen in zijn' tolck" 209.

In top te voeren, naer den eisch van 't vrye lant,
 [...]; men zal de boschnon hooren melden,
 Voorspellen op een ry de vaders en de helden
 Der volgende eeuwen, die alom met raet en daet
 Zich queeten in gevaer, tot nootweer voor den staet, [...]
 Zoo trou in 't leveren, gelijkzke 't trou beloofden.⁴²

(If I were given the time to write a tragedy in the style of the Aeneid, I would be able to lift up the hero Bato and highlight the loyalty he embodied as the hero who freed our country with the blast of trumpets. [...] One will hear the fortune teller of the woods, as she predicts how a range of burgomasters of Amsterdam and heroes will counteract the dangers that threaten their realm [...], being as loyal as they plead to be.)

'I can make them immortal', Vondel proclaims, and he uses the public self-assessment of his capacities as a poet to make his case. His self-commentary is therefore meant to be an advertisement of his talents and to show his willingness to use them for the benefit of others. In a sense, Vondel's paratexts resemble early modern (Italian) author-ordered poetry books described by Olivia Holmes, in which narratives of authors' lives – labelled here as another form of self-commentary – governed the arrangement of their poetry. As Holmes explains, these efforts indicate that authors like Petrarch were much more concerned with their historical selves than were their immediate predecessors.⁴³ The same kind of 'career criticism' is found in Vondel's paratextual additions endowed with self-reflective undertones, through which the author was able to orchestrate both his self-representation and self-promotion.

4 Self-Criticism, Self-Promotion, and the Young Poet

How could young poets enter the early modern literary field? That step obviously required years of experience as well as self-criticism and self-promotion. Working within a paradigm that valued authors' maturity and careful polishing of talent over youthful inexperience, how did young authors perceive and assess their own works? And how could they manifest themselves as poets?

⁴² Ibidem.

⁴³ Holmes O., *Assembling the Lyric Self: Authorship from Troubadour Song to Italian Poetry Book*, *Medieval Cultures* 21 (Minneapolis: 2000) 3.

Underneath these questions lies the presumption that there was a generation gap between poets of various ages in the early modern Dutch Republic, or even in early modern Europe more widely. According to Pierre Bourdieu's famous thesis, such a gap is a necessity for the existence of a literary field characterised by the autonomous author and particular literary institutions. Having studied the cultural, economic, legal, and social constraints that determine the functioning of modern literary institutions in the Netherlands, Frank de Glas explains:

it is essential that there is a constant struggle between the existing generation of authors and an upcoming younger one. This struggle is a crucial factor in the functioning of the literary field as such. According to Bourdieu, authors do not build up artistic reputations as the consequence of a kind of inborn, inherent talent. Instead, Bourdieu understands an artistic reputation as the outcome of constant efforts to take the most favourable position in the literary field.⁴⁴

It is commonly assumed that such a literary field came into being in the Netherlands after 1880. However, whereas it is debatable whether Bourdieu's literary field existed prior to the eighteenth century,⁴⁵ and it is equally debatable whether the literary field is best characterised as a battlefield,⁴⁶ it is certain that in his *Introduction to Dutch Poetry* Vondel did make a distinction between upcoming and established poets and saw them in competition with each other – perhaps building on the classical tradition of creating opposition between generations of poets.⁴⁷ Vondel identifies the upcoming poet as 'leerling' ('pupil') and as an 'aenkomende Poet' ('poet to be'). The aspiring poet is compared to a toddler hardly able to walk unaided and to a horse that needs bridling.⁴⁸ All of Vondel's precepts are geared towards beginners: to become an accomplished poet, one should work on one's vocabulary and rhyming techniques and should consult experienced poets.

44 Glas F. de, "The Generational Factor in Twentieth-Century Trade Book Publishing: The Case of Meulenhoff", *Stilet: Tijdschrift van die Afrikaanse Letterkundevereniging* (2009) 88–102 (89). See Bourdieu P., *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. S. Emanuel (Stanford: 1996).

45 See Lane J.F., *Pierre Bourdieu: A Critical Introduction*, Modern European Thinkers (London: 2000) 188–189.

46 See, for instance, Lahire B. – Jones M., "Literature Is Not Just a Battlefield", *New Literary History* 46 (2015) 387–407.

47 For instance, the 'poetae novi' in Cicero's days, see Fredericksmeier E.A., "Catullus to Caecilius on Good Poetry", *The American Journal of Philology* 106 (1985) 213–221.

48 Vondel, *Aenleidinge ter Nederduitsche dichtkunst*, lines 17 and 122.

Limited sources hinder a close examination of young authors' private thoughts on how they might enter the literary field. Equivalents of Buchel's and Beck's diaries, for example, have not yet been discovered.⁴⁹ To glean insights into young poets' minds, we have thus far relied mostly on sources in which adult poets look back on their time as youngsters. I have mentioned in the introduction above Constantijn Huygens's negative comments regarding his own youthful accomplishments,⁵⁰ which are echoed by other authors. Child prodigy Hugo de Groot (1583–1645) apologised in 1602 – when he was only 19 – for his previous publications: he considered his early works to be 'puerilis imprudentia' ('juvenile indiscretions') and 'iuvenilis ardor' ('eagerness spurred by one's young age').⁵¹ Only seven years later, de Groot would publish his famous treatise *Mare Liberum* ('The Free Sea'), in which he formulated the new principle that the seas and oceans were international territory and that all nations were free to use them for seafaring trade. As adults, poets often criticised the technical imbalances and imperfections of the fruits of their youth. Kornelis Sweerts (1669–1749), well known for his lyric books,⁵² considered them to be 'ongeregelt' ('unruly').⁵³

If we are to take into account solely these forms of self-commentary, young poets are reduced to being followers of adult models: models that they were regretfully not able to follow properly in their youth. But, if we consider young poets as more active producers of poetry, as agents rather than followers, and examine the statements and opinions they expressed while they were still young, a different pattern arises. Traditional scholarship on the emergence of the social stratification of 'youth' after the Reformation, starting with Philippe Ariès's *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime* (1960), has emphasised

49 The main source here is Dekker R., *Uit de schaduw in 't grote licht: Kinderen in egodocumenten van de gouden eeuw tot de romantiek*, Historische reeks (Amsterdam: 1995).

50 See also Meer T. ter, "Huygens' eerste pennevruchten: schoolwerk of toch niet helemaal?", *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde* 62 (1996) 320–331.

51 Groot Hugo de, *Briefwisseling van Hugo Grotius*, ed. P. Molhuysen (Den Haag: 1928) xvii.

52 See, for instance, Zielhorst A.K.J., "Liedkunst in Amsterdam rond 1700", in Klukhuhn A., *De Eeuwvende 1700*, vol. 3: *De Kunsten*, Studium Generale Reeks 9104 (Utrecht: 1991) 129–150.

53 Sweert removed a number of texts that he found inappropriate at a later age, as he maintains in the preface to *Boertige en ernstige gezangen*: "Terwyl ik dan niet had kunnen beletten dat dit werkje voor de vyfde maal gedrukt wierd, en op mynen naam, als door my verzamelt uitgegeeven, zo had ik 'er eenige weinige, waar onder eenige wat ongeregelt waren alzo ze in myn jeugt uitgekomen zyn, uitgelaaten' ('As I was not able to prevent this from being published for the fifth time under my name as if it was written by me, I did leave out some of the irregularities, produced in my youth'). See Sweerts Kornelis, *Mengelzangen en zinnebeelden* (Amsterdam, Kornelis Sweerts, 1710), fol. 111.

early modern discourses of passivity, producing images of young people in need of parental guidance and church discipline. Recently, these findings have been disputed in studies that describe discourses on youth's agency, the ability to act on their own behalf.⁵⁴ These new studies reveal that two contrasting discourses evolved, framing 'youth' as either passive or active.⁵⁵ As argued by Kate Chedgzoy, poetry could be an agent of change for young men in early modern England. Assuming that early modern young people were not only consumers but also producers of culture, Chedgzoy analyses texts written by young poets as 'sources for both the experience and construction of childhood'.⁵⁶

The same could be said for the Dutch Republic, for between 1550 and 1700, as has been recently established, the number of young authors entering the literary field in the Dutch Republic, with its publishing houses, patrons, experienced authors and incompetent critics, increased substantially. The average age of marriage in the Dutch Republic at the time was twenty-eight, considered to be the threshold of maturity. Together with a team of scholars, I have conducted a survey of books produced by authors who are not yet twenty-eight and who are listed in the Short Title Catalogue of the Netherlands, and found a significant increase in production by young authors.⁵⁷ A more detailed analysis into genres made it apparent that an increasing number of young authors entering the literary arena produced plays (a genre Vondel reserves for the older, mature poet in his *Introduction to Dutch Poetry*) and occasional poetry and pamphlets. Young authors were thus heavily involved in social issues and made their voices heard in popular genres such as the pamphlet.⁵⁸ This

54 See, for instance, Maynes M.J., "Age as a Category of Historical Analysis: History, Agency and Narratives of Childhood", *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 1 (2008) 114–124; Ortner S., *Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject* (Durham, NC: 2008).

55 For an overview see, among others, Frijhoff W., "Historian's Discovery of Childhood", *Paedagogica Historica* 47 (2012) 11–29; Koops W., "Historical Reframing of Childhood", in Smith P.K. – Hart C. (eds.), *The Wiley-Blackwell Handbook of Childhood Social Development* (New York: 2011) 82–99.

56 Chedgzoy K., "Make Me a Poet, and I'll Quickly Be a Man: Masculinity, Pedagogy and Poetry in the English Renaissance", *Renaissance Studies* 27 (2013) 592–611. For the Dutch context: Streng T., "Die in hun jeugd gedroomd hebben [...]: Mannelijkheid en dichterschap in de negentiende eeuw", *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde* 127 (2001) 27–40; Roberts B., *Sex and Drugs before Rock 'n' Roll: Youth Culture and Masculinity during Holland's Golden Age*, Amsterdam Studies in the Dutch Golden Age (Amsterdam: 2012).

57 Boot P. – Dietz F. – Stronks E. – Zwart W., "Young Agents – Jonge auteurs op de vroegmoderne boekenmarkt", *Nederlandse Letterkunde* 21 (2016) 1–34 (12). The data discussed in this paragraph are based on this article.

58 *Ibidem* 15.

implies, I would like to argue, that young authors diverged from adult models and were perhaps not simply working diligently within the existing paradigm.

Although we lack sources comparable to Beck's diary and Buchel's manuscripts, research into the use of self-commentary by young authors is feasible by taking a strategic detour: the use of other textual sources sheds new light on their attitudes and behaviour. With its enormous printing industry and high levels of literacy, this textual culture was one of the hotspots of early modern debates on youth.⁵⁹ As previously established, over several decades discourses developed via the introduction of age- and gender-specific issues into the conceptualisation of 'youth'.⁶⁰ The relationship with older and more experienced contemporary authors, as well as attitudes towards classical role models among young authors, were elements of these complex and versatile discourses that consisted of a wide variety of opinions and statements. Hermanus van den Burg (1685–1752), for example, glorifies the spirit of the youthful poet and, in doing so, mocks the deterioration brought on by old age. In the preface to his *Mengelzangen* (*Mixed Songs*), although already thirty-five years of age, he counts himself among the admirable youth:

[...] 'k wil met de Jeugd nu raazen,
 En op een andren tyd, bezadigt zyn van Geest:
 Als my van Ouderdom de Ziele dreigt t'ontsluipen,
 En ik, zoo krom als gy, in 't hoekje van den haard,
 De druppels die den neus, half reukeloos, ontdruipen,
 En vlugten uit het hoofd, zal vangen in den baard.⁶¹

(I want to rage with the young, and be quiet and sedate at some other time, when I am old and my soul is escaping me while I am sitting by the fire with a nose leaking drops of snot into my beard.)

Discourses on this relationship can be understood not only against the paradigm of competition between generations of young and mature poets, but also within early modern professional and academic education, more specifically the relation between masters and their pupils in various educational settings

59 Salman J., "Children's Books as a Commodity: The Rise of a New Literary Subsystem in the Eighteenth-Century Dutch Republic", *Poetics* 28 (2001) 399–421.

60 Stronks E., *Invisible Ink – Uncovering Meaning from Texts with Digital Tools*. NIAS – Uhlenbeck lectures Wassenaar, 2015. Available at: <http://dspace.library.uu.nl/handle/1874/321519> (accessed 7 August 2017).

61 Burg Hermanus van den, "Nodiginge", in *Mengelzangen* (Amsterdam, Hendrik Blank: 1717) fol. xii. See also Stronks E., *Invisible Ink* 29.

such as guilds. From existing research, we know that a balance between guidance and freedom was negotiated in these settings.⁶² The humanists believed in strict discipline but were also interested in the stimulation of youth's capacities. As the Enlightenment's ideals replaced the pedagogical ideas of the humanists, discipline became progressively less important.⁶³ This development can be charted in the guild system. Until recently, it was assumed that an education in the guilds implied a slow development towards independence, and thus a gradual shift from working under the discipline and guidance of a master towards a freer and more independent role for the apprentices. But, as demonstrated by Patrick Wallis, apprentices were responsible for manufacturing processes even in the early stages of their careers and were literally trained for the job: they received their education while being productive as independent craftsmen.⁶⁴

In some ways the education of young authors is comparable to the training settings of guilds, at least in countries like early modern Germany, where 'Meistersingers' and formal procedures and institutions were in place.⁶⁵ However, in the Dutch Republic, chambers of rhetoric, while the only institutions at which creative writing was taught, were not accustomed to engaging in the formal training of their young members.⁶⁶ In general, the leadership of these institutions was not formalised: titles such as 'Meester' ('Master') or 'factor' ('superior') were not protected by the chambers' charters. Moreover, young members could aspire to and indeed fulfill these roles.⁶⁷ Such young

62 Griffiths P., *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England 1560–1640* (Oxford: 1996). For the Dutch context see Dekker J., *Het verlangen naar opvoeden: Over de groei van de pedagogische ruimte in Nederland sinds de Gouden Eeuw tot omstreeks 1900*, Monografieën over Europese cultuur 11 (Amsterdam: 2006).

63 For pedagogical developments in the Dutch Republic, see Baggerman A. – Dekker R., *Kind van de toekomst: De wonderde wereld van Otto van Eck (1780–1798)* (Amsterdam: 2005).

64 Wallis P., "Apprenticeship and Training in Premodern England", *Journal of Economic History* 68(2008) 832–861. See also "Introduction", in Epstein S.R. – Prak M.R. (eds.), *Guilds, Innovation and the European Economy, 1400–1800* (Cambridge: 2008) 1–24. Research into the Dutch context by Ruben Schalk has yet to be published.

65 Dixhoorn A. van, *Lustige geesten: Rederijkers in de Noordelijke Nederlanden (1480–1650)* (Amsterdam: 2009) 161–162. On the German guilds, see Christiansen H., "The Guilds and the Meistersinger Schools: Parallelism in Educational Patterns", *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 3 (1972) 201–218.

66 At Latin Schools, creative writing was not taught; see Frank-Westrienen A. van, *Het schoolschrift van Pieter Teding van Berkhout: Vergezicht op het gymnasiaal onderwijs in de zeventiende-eeuwse Nederlanden* (Hilversum: 2007).

67 Van Dixhoorn, *Lustige geesten* 67–69, 137, 179, 181–182.

members of the chambers of rhetoric were informally trained when asked to make handwritten copies of the texts produced by older members.⁶⁸

Outside the chambers of rhetoric, letters and correspondence offered a more informal training ground. A letter dating from 1602, written by the senior poet Hendrik Laurenszoon Spiegel (1549–1612) to the twenty-year-old Pieter Cornelisz Hooft (1581–1647), hints at the training young poets received.⁶⁹ Spiegel points out Hooft's enormous potential as a young poet: 'ghij hebt een wonder vruchtbare akker des verstands' ('you have a wonderfully rich and bright mind').⁷⁰ But he also notes his lack of experience: 'ghij en hebt op slevens wegh zo lang niet ghewandelt' ('but you have not been around long yet').⁷¹ Spiegel urges Hooft to work hard, in line with the doctrine promoted in Vondel's *Introduction to Dutch Poetry*: 'koondij den grond van lustzoekings ja lustvolginghs behindring, ghauw naspueren, ghij zult meer lust ghenieten ende zaligher leven' ('if you are not distracted by pleasure, you will have a more pleasant and rewarding life').⁷² Spiegel is encouraging and strict at the same time, and Hooft responded to his coaching. Indeed, in the margins of Spiegel's letter, Hooft made an annotation that pinpointed the exact bibliographical reference for a quotation from Montaigne's *Essais* to which Spiegel referred.⁷³ Apparently, Hooft believed that a thorough checking of Spiegel's allusions was necessary in order for him to grow as a poet and annotated this reference as a reminder. In hindsight, we can interpret this as a token of the processes of topical self-criticism he was executing at the time.

In other cases, young poets openly reflected upon their relationships with their adult models as competitive. As Harm van Dam has argued, Hugo de Groot, at the age of twenty, praised his teacher Janus Dousa (1545–1604) in a preliminary poem to his *Echo* (1603), but two years prior to this he had already made an open attempt to surpass Dousa's *Annales* in his poem *Mirabilia* about the siege of Nieuwpoort.⁷⁴ In editions of classical texts prepared by de Groot, he often countered his tutor Scaliger (1540–1609) – with respect and grace, but

68 Ibidem 168–170.

69 Letter from Spiegel to Hooft, dated 22 January 1602, letter 5 in *De briefwisseling van Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft*, ed. H. van Tricht (Culemborg: 1977). On the literary production of the young Hooft, see Marion O. van, *Heldinnenbrieven: Ovidius' Heroides in Nederland* (Nijmegen: 2005).

70 Letter from Spiegel to Hooft, *De briefwisseling van Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft*, lines 57–58.

71 Ibidem, lines 82–83.

72 Ibidem, lines 92–94.

73 Ibidem, line 104; see the editor's note with regard to Hooft's marginalia.

74 Dam H.J. van, "Filoloog en dichter in Leiden", in Nellen H. (ed.), *De Hollandse jaren van Hugo de Groot (1583–1621)* (Hilversum: 1996) 67–86 (74).

nonetheless in full awareness of his own qualities and potency.⁷⁵ The young Constantijn Huygens was equally critical of his tutors Janus Doussa and Daniel Heinsius (1580–1655). In one of his letters, he wrote that Heinsius produced ‘onzinnige onzin en zulke flauwe flauwiteiten [...] wanneer hij zich bedienende van zijn moedertaal, om van andere volkstalen maar te zwijgen’ (‘utter nonsense while writing in Dutch, as in any other language he used’).⁷⁶ At the same time, he honoured Heinsius in his poem *D’uytlandige herder*, in which he begged Heinsius to lead him in mastering a genre he could never conquer on his own.⁷⁷ This poem appears to present Huygens’s self-reflections. They are, however, compromised by Huygens’s letter and its harsh judgement of Heinsius’s authorship. Together, the poem and the letter reveal that Huygens did not pour out his innermost thoughts in his open display of critical attitude and was developing an autonomous mindset even at a young age.

One could argue that for young authors like Huygens and de Groot – learned and financially well-off – such an independent attitude came naturally. It is not surprising that their self-commentaries show traces of self-awareness and self-confidence. But what happened when a young author was from a different position and was much more dependent on his or her tutors? Two cases will be examined here: Reyer Anslo (1626–1669) and the female author Juliana Cornelia de Lannoy (1738–1782).

At the age of twenty-one, Anslo published his meditative poem *Martelkroon* (1646), in which he describes the life and death of Saint Stephen. In the preface addressed to his tutor Adriaan Iunius (?–1670), headmaster at a Latin school in Amsterdam, Anslo calls him ‘Hooghgeleerde Heere’ (‘erudite gentleman’)⁷⁸ and offers him the *Martelkroon* in exchange for all the powerful and effective training that Iunius had provided him.⁷⁹ Yet God, as well as Iunius has inspired and educated him; his tongue, ‘door Goddelijke drift, beroert is geweest’ (‘touched by God’s grace and power’), enabled him to produce a ‘hemelsch geluyt’ (‘heavenly sound’).⁸⁰ Using a complex set of ideas, Anslo establishes a connection between Saint Stephen (known for his ability to free his soul from

75 Van Dam, “Filoloog en dichter in Leiden” 83.

76 Huygens, *Mijn jeugd* 122.

77 Heide M. van der, “Huygens in Engeland: de teleurstelling van D’Uytlandighe Herder”, *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 3 (1987) 38–42, 39–40.

78 “Aan den Hooghgeleerde Heere Adriaan Iunius”, in Anslo R., *Martelkroon van Steven, de eerste martelaar* (Amsterdam, Abraham de Wees: 1646), fol. A2r.

79 He refers to “geleerde lessen” (‘learned classes’) that have sharpened his mind. See “Aan den Hooghgeleerde Heere Adriaan Iunius”, lines 33–39.

80 *Ibidem*, lines 10–12.

his bodily needs), Socrates, and his own authorship when he writes in the opening of *Martelkroon*:

De wijze Socrates zeydt, dat een ziel dan eerst gelukkig uyt haar lichaam verhuyst; wenze te vooren, door het bevljigten der wijsheydt, de wetenschap van wel te sterven betracht: en door versmading des werelts, en liefde en bespiegeling van 't eeuwige haar gewendt buyten haar lichaam te verkeeren.

(The wise Socrates says that the soul cannot leave one's body behind in peace if she is not educated and well trained in the art of dying; if she is not used to the contempt of all that is earthly, and to the contemplation and love of the eternal while stepping outside one's body.)⁸¹

Likewise, a young author like himself should leave behind his tutor Iunius and turn to God for real inspiration, guidance, and honour. The very subject of his poem allows Anslo to do this. Through the frequent use of the *pluralis modestiae* ('zoo wy met opmerk beschouwen, moeten wy bekennen', 'as this is our wit, we should confess'),⁸² he avoids the claim that this rule applies only to him: martyrs choose the path to 'eeuwige zaligheyt' ('eternal grace'), but Anslo leaves unsaid whether such a road is one that he himself feels obliged to take.⁸³ Nevertheless, Anslo proclaims his position as a young poet in this form of self-commentary that allows him to boastfully display his skills, integrity, and praiseworthiness.

A similar struggle between independence and dependency is found in the case of de Lannoy. Even though her case does not fall within the remit of this book (1400–1700), it is referred to at the end of this contribution because it may well fit the framework Vondel set up in his *Introduction to Dutch Poetry*. It has been argued that for female writers especially, this framework was still in place a century after Vondel's *ars poetica* was published.⁸⁴ When de Lannoy was twenty-five, she wrote a poem entitled 'Aan Aristus' (*To Aristus*).⁸⁵ It is

81 This is based on a fragment in Plato's *Phaedo*. See Plato, *Phaidoon* (Amsterdam: 2010) esp. from 80.e to 81.a.

82 "Aan den Hooghgeleerde Heere Adriaan Iunius", in Anslo, *Martelkroon van Steven* line 10.

83 Ibidem, lines 15–16.

84 See for instance Schenkeveld-van der Dussen M.A., "Women's Writing from the Low Countries 1575–1875", in Gemert L. Van et alii (eds.), *Women's Writing from the Low Countries 1200–1875: A Bilingual Anthology* (Amsterdam: 2010) 39–63 (46).

85 Lannoy de Juliana Cornelia, *Zoet der eenzaamheid. Gedichten van Juliana Cornelia de Lannoy*, ed. W.R.D. Oostrum, *De amazone-reeks 2* (Amsterdam: 2001) 38–43.

dedicated to her tutor Adamus Christianus Schonck (1731–1775), headmaster of the Latin school in Breda, who taught her the basics of grammar and literature. The subtitle of de Lannoy's poem – 'Ambitieuſ, vrijmoedig en gevat' ('ambitious, free-willed and witty') has been interpreted by Pim van Oostrum as a provocation and a plea for independence,⁸⁶ based on lines such as: 'Aristus, 't is gedaan, wat ook 't vooroordeel zegg, / Ik doe der dichtkunst hulde' ('Aristus, whatever prejudice one could have [against female writers], my work honours poetry').⁸⁷ From the self-assessment made in this poem, it becomes obvious that de Lannoy acknowledges the role of Aristus in her achievement of the position as a praiseworthy poetess. He lifted her spirit, spurred her to work hard: in the old days, she used to sleep in, but now, because she is driven by ambition, it is no longer necessary to wake her.⁸⁸ In the old days she was wandering – but now: 'streef ik rustig voort' ('I am well on my way').⁸⁹ For all of this, she is thankful: 'gij [Aristus] zelf ontvonckt mijn moed' ('you, Aristus, give me courage').⁹⁰ No longer indulging herself in female activities such as fashion, music, and embroidery,⁹¹ she has left behind her female inconstancy: 'nu streef ik rustig voort' ('now I steadily move forward').⁹²

Although she has transcended some of her weaknesses, de Lannoy is still well aware of them: 'Maar ik, die op Parnas nog aan de leiband ga / ik spoed maar zachtjes voort met wankelende schreden' ('While I am still in need of guidance on my way to Parnassus, I tremble and hesitate as I go along').⁹³ This insight results in her explicit request that Aristus provide continuous support and guidance: 'Met welk een zorg ik ook de vaart beschouw van 't strand, / bestier gij slechts mijn hulk, en 'k steek gerust van land. / Wijs mij de klippen aan, nog voor mijn oog verborgen, / mijn zangster rust op u, wil voor haar glorie zorgen' ('No matter how carefully I manoeuvre my vessel, my muse needs your help to avoid shipwreck and to shine as brightly as possible').⁹⁴ She also realises that she needs his assistance to move beyond what has previously been

86 W.R.D. Van Oostrum, *Juliana Cornelia de Lannoy, Ambitieuſ, vrijmoedig en gevat* (Hilversum: 1999) esp. 17, 27–28, 179.

87 *Zoet der eenzaamheid. Gedichten van Juliana Cornelia de Lannoy*, ed. W.R.D. Van Oostrum, "Aan Aristus", lines 1, 2.

88 *Ibidem*, line 47. See also lines 52–53: 'Ik dan, die gans niet vroeg placht bij de hand te wezen, / 't beurt nu dat ik de slaap voor neeg'nen reeds verban' ('I, who used to sleep in, am now well awake before 9 o'clock').

89 *Ibidem*, lines 4, 6.

90 *Ibidem*, line 18.

91 *Ibidem*, lines 31–33.

92 *Ibidem*, lines 4, 6.

93 *Ibidem*, lines 74–75.

94 *Ibidem*, lines 93–96.

written by Dutch authors. While praising their work ('Hoe lieflijk is het lot dier dicht'ren niet geweest, / die in ons Nederland in vorige eeuwen bloeiden!') ('How blessed were poets that shined in the Netherlands in previous ages'), she detects a loss of quality in the work of current times: metrical problems and strict rules dominate contemporary poetry, and she is in need of Aristus's help to overcome these obstacles.⁹⁵

In 'Aan Aristus', de Lannoy's highly meta-textual passages demonstrate that independence is paired with dependency with a tutor like Schonck. In an almost paradoxical balance between eagerness and calmness, she aims to make progress under his wing. All this is documented in self-reflections that lead the reader in and give her audience a peek into both her dependence on her male model and her ambitions as a young poetess.

5 Conclusion

As we can conclude, self-reflection and self-promotion were both parts of the construction and representation of the Dutch poet's self in cases such as the diary of the schoolmaster David Beck, the notebooks of humanist Arnoud van Buchel, the translations of Joost van den Vondel, and Anna Maria van Schurman's autobiography. These forms of self-assessment and self-criticism were directed towards the poet's self-improvement or towards affirming to the world the best aspect of the poet's self. The self-critical attitude advocated by Vondel in his *Introduction to Dutch Poetry* appears to have been the cornerstone of Dutch early modern poetics. Further research into early modern literature written in other European languages is necessary to reveal if Dutch authors displayed a sense of self that was of greater intensity than average – modesty, of course, being a key element of early modern poetics – and if they were more apt to possess a consciousness of the shortcomings, *desiderata* and flaws in their own writing.

Operating within a paradigm that valued the author's self-reflections as a means to demonstrate consciousness of their writing, young authors commented on their own work in public letters and prefaces so as to profile themselves, perhaps with the purpose of establishing their young authorship. Talking about themselves through their writing, young authors seem to have developed independent authorial paradigms that allowed them to either move out of the shadow of their tutors, or enabled them to grow under their supportive wings. The number of cases examined here is far too limited to draw

⁹⁵ Ibidem, lines 78–86.

more definite conclusions, but against the backdrop of an adult world that valued self-reflection as an instrument of self-fashioning, the young author's self-commentaries appear to have constituted an important vehicle for the growth of self-esteem.

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