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Writing the history of women's writing

Toward an international approach

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Cover:
Jakobus de Wit (1695-1754) / Serafijnen, 1748 / waterverf, papier / Coll. Amsterdams Historisch Museum

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Foreword[1]

If it were possible for Eve to speak to us again,
Would she not justly chastise this poet.[2]

writes the Dutch poet Meynarda Verboom in 1664 in her *Pleyt voor onse eerste moeder Eva* (Plea for our ancestral mother Eve).[3] In her defence of Eve she takes issue here with the most famous Dutch poet and playwright of her time, Joost van den Vondel himself. In his tragedy *Adam in ballingschap* (Adam in exile), which had been published shortly beforehand, Vondel – according to Verboom – glosses over 'Adam's sin', and 'shifts the blame altogether on to Eve'. In view of Vondel's reputation it is not without some hesitation that she calls him to account, but she feels it to be her duty:

I am ashamed I must write back to this poet
Yet ere I grant him the honour of the matter
So contrary to our interests, so shall I by my pen
Demonstrate that I am a woman and daughter of Eve
Who speaks in defence of her grandmother.[4]

The verse essay in which Verboom expresses her point of view in opposition to Vondel's probably caused some controversy in 1664, although no evidence for this has been found so far. But for us, at present, it comes as a great surprise, for the text itself had been totally forgotten.[5] Are we not concerned here with someone whom we might, with some justification, call a Dutch Mary Wollstonecraft, expressing her views already in the 17th century? Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen states that there is no-one in the Netherlands who is comparable to her.[6] Yet there are some

[1] I thank Corry Hogetoorn for comments on an earlier version of this foreword.
[2] Verboom 1664, quoted in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997 (article by Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen), p.310: 'Zo't Eva mooglijk waar' met mensen weer te spreken,/ Hoe zou zij haar met recht aan dezen dichter wreken'.
[3] For the complete text, and a short introduction, see *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.304-312; see also Van Gemert 1996, p.6-11 and Schenkeveld-van der Dussen 1997.
[4] Verboom 1664, quoted in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.311: 'Ik schaam mij dat ik moet tegen dees dichter schrijven,/ Doch eer ik in dit deel hem aan de eer liet blijven,/ Tot nadeel van ons recht, zo zal ik met mijn pen/ Tonen dat ik een vrouw en Eva's dochter ben,/ Die voor haar grootmoer pleit'.
[5] So far nothing is known concerning this author's dates of birth and death.
[6] See her contribution to part I of this volume (p.3).

similarities between the writings of Verboom and Wollstonecraft. Thus in *A vindication of the rights of women* (1792), Wollstonecraft also wrote in defence of 'mother Eve', attacking the great Milton for the image that he presented in his *Paradise lost* (1667) of 'our first frail mother', and, at the same time, of all her daughters: 'when he tells us that women are formed for softness and sweet attractive grace, I cannot comprehend his meaning, unless [...] he meant to deprive us of souls [...]'.[7]

It is due to the recent completion of an extensive research project that we are now aware of the existence of this Dutch defender of Eve. In 1997 the impressive result of this project was presented in an anthology entitled *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*: 'with and without laurels'. Thanks to this book, readers in the Netherlands and Flanders became acquainted with the work of some 160 women authors active during the period 1550-1850. Although some of them were offered a laurel-crown by their contemporaries, the great majority of these writers had remained virtually unknown until 1997. And for most of these hitherto little-known authors, the publication of their writings in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* did not result in canonization. The importance of this anthology is that although it is aimed at a broad readership, it offers an excellent starting point for further research, not only into these authors and their work, but also into the place occupied by Dutch and Flemish women writers in a broader European context.

The publication of this anthology gave rise to a colloquium held in 1998, under the auspices of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, during which the first steps were taken to assess the place of early modern Dutch and Flemish women writers in this broader geographical context. Among the other issues that were discussed at this colloquium, one of the most important was the general problem of the historiography of women's writing: whether we should be concerned primarily with awarding laurel crowns or with understanding the special position of women writers within the larger literary field. The colloquium was attended by scholars specializing in women's writing in different European countries, including large language regions like England, Germany, and France, as well as smaller ones: the Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries and Hungary. This book is the result of the colloquium: twenty essays on female authorship from the 16th to the 19th century (from the end of the Middle Ages until approximately the time of the first wave of feminism) in various European countries, and – especially – on the question of how we should write the history of this women's literature.

This volume of essays is thus intended to stimulate discussion on an international level of a number of problems that are by no means specific to Dutch literature alone. This discussion already began during the colloquium, among participants from different research traditions and from countries in which research on this material is at different stages of development. Differences in the level of research sometimes correspond to differences in women's literary production, either in terms of the number of women writers or of their preference for certain genres. In spite of these differences, it is apparent that research into issues concerning female authorship can benefit from comparative studies: there are similarities between women's writings from

[7] Wollstonecraft 1975, p.100.

different countries, and, moreover, the authors of these writings were in contact with one another. To some extent, both correspondences and contacts were based on the fact that these authors all felt themselves to be granddaughters of Eve, and, furthermore, that wherever they lived they were compared to Sappho,[8] and came up against Pygmalions, from whom they were not always able to escape.[9]

The creation of Eve, the fall and the expulsion from Paradise (fragment).

Met en zonder lauwerkrans continued: one example

Thanks to this new anthology, we know now about Meynarda Verboom, the above-mentioned defender of Eve. In *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*, she is presented as an almost isolated case: 'Suddenly, as if from nowhere, Meynarda Verboom appears on

[8] For comparisons between Sappho and other female authors, see DeJean 1989; for Sappho and Dutch women, see the contribution of Marianne Peereboom to the forthcoming volume mentioned in note 28.
[9] See, for example, the contributions of Anna Fábri and Maria-Theresia Leuker to this volume.

the scene'.[10] Yet she might have been compared, in her way of reacting to a celebrated male contemporary, to one of her countrywomen. Charlotte de Huybert (?1622/3–?1646/55), who, before the publication of Verboom's essay in verse in 1646, had reacted cynically to the praise given by Johan van Beverwyck to women.[11] In her own *Lofdicht* (praise poem), addressed to him, she wonders

> [...]
> What can praise given to a woman bring her,
> Except the beauty of wilted flowers?
> We remain what we are: our virtues are ours alone
> And do not anyhow benefit society.[12]

This woman, too, who points here to a need shared by all women – to play a role outside their own family[13] – is isolated from the rest of women's literary production in the presentation of *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*: 'suddenly she makes her presence known'; 'and then, once again, there is silence'.[14] How should we evaluate such statements? Was my comparison between Verboom and Wollstonecraft in any way useful? Granted, the English author goes further in her conclusions; her remarks appear, after all, in a text which, in view of its title, has polemical pretensions extending much further than an attack on one established author. But Wollstonecraft had the advantage of living at the end of the 18th century, for by that time some development had already taken place in women's criticism of the representation of women: in reaction to Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), Eliza Haywood had written her own *Anti-Pamela* (1741). In France the female novelists Jeanne Leprince de Beaumont (1748)[15] and Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni (1782) had reprimanded, respectively, the Abbé Coyer and Laclos, the author of *Les liaisons dangereuses*, by refusing to accept their vision of women and the female characters they created. The work of Meynarda Verboom and Charlotte de Huybert appears to fit into this tradition of women's criticism.

There is no point in wondering whether the work of these two Dutch women writers had any influence outside the Netherlands. But they were contemporaries of Anna Maria van Schurman, who wrote in several languages including Latin and French, and whose fame spread far beyond the borders of the Netherlands. In 1636 she had complained about the exclusion of women from the newly established university of Utrecht.[16] Thus the writings of Van Schurman, De Huybert and Verboom, which can

[10] *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.304.
[11] In the introduction to *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* they are actually mentioned together in one paragraph, but without reference to any connection between their points of view (p.72).
[12] *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997 (contribution Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen), p.267: '[...] Wat heeft een vrouw van 't lof, waarmee zij haar hoort roemen,/ Dan hoogverheven roem van neergebleven bloemen?/ Wij blijven die we zijn: ons deugd is d'ons alleen:/ En daarvan komt toch niets ten dienste van 't gemeen'.
[13] Van Beverwyck received her praise poem and reacted to it in the second edition of his *Van de wtnementheyt des vrouwelicken geslachts* by saying about her: '[she] is very good-natured in her poetry, as is evident from that which she has sent me in praise of this work'. He reproduces her text without commenting on its content (*Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.265).
[14] *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.265.
[15] Cf. Stewart 1993, p.28-35.
[16] *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997 (contribution Pieta van Beek), p.208.

all be classified as belonging to the genre of occasional poetry, spontaneous *ad hoc* reactions to recent texts and events, can also be read as representing a critical tradition that was already present in the Netherlands.

A leading figure at the beginning of this critical tradition is Christine de Pizan, who is duly named in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*,[17] but without further mention of any influence she may have exerted in the Netherlands. In her *Livre de la cité des dames* (1404) she, too, criticizes firmly established representations of women, such as those given by Ovid, and adds her own – female – commentary. Her work was indeed known in the Netherlands: in 1475 a translation of it was especially commissioned.[18] But it was above all in England that her work was well received. According to the *Norton anthology of literature by women*, although it was out of print from the 16th century on, '*The city of ladies* summarized a vision of female power that would also be recorded in various ways by [...among others...] Aemilia Lanyer'.[19] Lanyer (1569-1645) was the author of a poem entitled *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. This poem includes a part called 'Eve's apology', in which, as in Verboom's text, Adam himself is held responsible, if not for the Fall of mankind, then at least for taking the bite from the apple:

> But surely Adam cannot be excused;
> Her fault though great, yet he was most to blame.
> What weakness offered, strength might have refused;
> Being Lord of all, the greater was his shame;[20]

Shortly afterwards Verboom penned the following lines, in the first part of her 'Plea', that may have been written before she had read Vondel's tragedy:[21]

> He who received the law, sinned against God
> Of his own free will and fell from grace
> Before the omniscient eye which, through the fig leaves,
> Saw where the crime lay hidden.[22]

Both Lanyer and Verboom find mitigating circumstances for Eve:

> No subtle serpent's falsehood did betray him;
> If he would eat it, who had power to stay him?
> Not Eve, whose fault was only too much love,
> Which made her give this present to her dear,
> That what he tasted he likewise might prove,
> Whereby his knowledge might become more clear.[23]

[17] Id. (contribution Els Stronks about Johanna Hoobius), p.227.
[18] An article concerning this translation, by Corry Hogetoorn and Orlanda Lie, will be published in the collection of essays announced in note 28.
[19] Gilbert/Gubar 1996, p.13.
[20] Id., p.43.
[21] *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.305.
[22] Id., p.308: 'Hij die de wet ontving, zondigde tegen God/ Uit eigen vrije voorkeur en viel in ongenaden/ Van 't albeschouwend oog dat door de vijgebladen/ Zag waar de misdaad school'.
[23] Gilbert/Gubar 1996, p.43.

It is not surprising that Eve could not resist
The temptation of the devilish serpent
With the delicious fruit; nor is it surprising
That she eventually gave in,
Being unaware of any deceit.
Perhaps she had the craving of pregnancy.[24]

We are not concerned here with ascertaining whether or not Verboom was indeed influenced by Lanyer's work, or whether Christine de Pizan played any significant role in this connection.[25] But by placing these texts alongside each other, it becomes possible to envision an international 'movement' of 'proto-feminist' writings taking root in the Netherlands as well as elsewhere.[26] A limited literary corpus such as that produced by women writing in Dutch can therefore gain in significance by being placed in an international perspective. The importance of this is also emphasized in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*.[27]

It is obvious that following the publication of the Dutch-language anthology, our next step is to place Dutch and Flemish women's literary history in its international context. Meynarda Verboom will not only appear then as someone who opposed her male contemporary Vondel 'using his own weapon', but may be studied as a representative of the critical tradition extending from Christine de Pizan via Lanyer to Mary Wollstonecraft. Were the arguments she used inspired by a fellow woman writer in another country? Or were they of her own making: a more or less natural feature of a woman setting out to have her voice heard?

In this volume we take the first steps towards placing Dutch and Flemish women writers in their larger European context, and we discuss, on the basis of some specific examples, a number of the problems that arise for all historiographers of women's writing.[28] This collection of essays takes *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* as its point of departure. Accordingly, we have taken over its layered structure: thus, we present (fragments of) primary texts as well as historical studies of (other) primary texts, and lead up to a broader reflection on the aims and starting-points of historical research into women's literature. These three layers can also be found in the bibliography following each essay.

[24] *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.307: 'Wat wonder is het dan dat Eva wierd verleid/ Door 't duivelse serpent dat haar zo vaak bekoorde/ Met dat uitmuntend ooft; dat zij ten laatsten hoorde/ Naar dat bedrog; hoewel van geen bedrog bewust./ Och! Of zij ook misschien bezwangerd en belust/ Haar heeft vergaapt [...]'.

[25] In the *Livre de la cité des dames*, Christine still spoke of Eve's 'misdeed', her point was a different one: 'if anyone would say that man was banished because of Lady Eve, I tell you that he gained more through Mary than he lost through Eve' (Christine 1983, p.24). For a detailed overview of visions on Eve, see Norris 1998.

[26] In De Jeu 2000 some attention is devoted to other writers who are representative of this 'movement'.

[27] See also the contribution by Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen to part III of this volume.

[28] The sequel to this will be a collection of articles to be published under the (provisional) title *'I have heard about you'. Female writing crossing borders*, edited by Petra Broomans, Suzan van Dijk, Janet van der Meulen and Pim van Oostrum.

Women's writing

The first layer is that of 'Women's writing' itself: the object of our research. We have provided several examples of this writing, scattered throughout the book, mainly in order to introduce the work of Dutch and Flemish women writers to a non-Dutch readership and to those unfamiliar with Dutch literature; for this purpose, we have selected six authors whose work has long been known, recognized and even canonized in the Dutch-speaking world. In the reproductions of these women's portraits the bonnets they wear sometimes look suspiciously like laurel wreaths. These short texts and fragments provide a good example of the influence of religion and neo-classicism on the work of several eminent women writers (Anna Bijns and Lucretia Wilhelmina van Merken), and of the importance of the novel for female authorship (Margareta Geertruid van der Werken, Betje Wolff and Aagje Deken, Geertruida Bosboom-Toussaint); Flemish lyric, too, is represented (Johanna Desideria Berchmans).[29]

The texts are accompanied by a translation (in English, French or German) for the most part contemporary to the text. Contemporaries of these Dutch and Flemish authors were of the opinion that their writings deserved recognition beyond the borders of the Dutch language region. The 16th-century writer **Anna Bijns** was indeed included in an inventory (made in 1804) of famous French women[30]; her international fame is mainly due to translations into Latin. Thanks to its French translation, the novel *De kleine Grandisson* (1782), by **Margareta Geertruid van der Werken,** acquired great international fame, the French version being reprinted well into the second half of the 19th century; even if Arnaud Berquin, who translated and modified the text in 1787, is often regarded as its author. Translations were not however always made abroad. The anonymous French version of the epic *Germanicus* (1779), by **Lucretia Wilhelmina van Merken,** was published in the Netherlands, probably by a Dutchman; it appears to be the only one of her works that was translated. The works of **Betje Wolff and Aagje Deken** made more headway in other countries: their *Historie van mejuffrouw Sara Burgerhart* (1782), which emphatically placed itself in an international discussion of the novel genre, was translated into French, for example, by Henri Rieu in 1787, and into German by two different translators, in 1789 and 1796.[31] Especially worthy of note is the translation of **Johanna Desideria Berchmans'** poem by Ida von Düringsfeld, a German poet who in her own poems expressly sought alliances with other women writers, including those in other countries. The work of the great 19th-century Dutch female novelist, **Geertruida Bosboom-Toussaint,** was translated by a former Walloon preacher, Albert Réville, who published it in France. His translation, which is a slightly abridged version, served as the basis for versions in English and in Swedish.

[29] For more information, see *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, passim.
[30] Briquet 1804; see about this *Dictionnaire* my contribution to part II of this volume.
[31] See Buijnsters 1979, p.83-85.

Subsequently we give some examples of the kind of history that has been written and is still being written of female authors and their works. Part I includes six examples of women's literary history in action, and presents women writers from a number of different periods. Attention is focused on their work, on the context in which they wrote and their relationship with the literary field in the period concerned. The women writers presented here are from the Netherlands, Belgian Flanders, France, England and Hungary.

To begin with, opportunity is provided for further acquaintance with the results of the *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* project. **Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen** starts by giving an overview of the literary production of Dutch and Flemish women writers. In this overview, based on her introduction to *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*, she focuses on a number of problems that are also raised by other essays in this collection: the influence of prevailing images of womanhood and the upbringing of girls associated with them, the role that men played either in encouraging women to write or in helping them publish their writings, and the question of a specifically female preference for certain genres. **Piet Couttenier** takes a closer look at 19th-century Flanders. He discusses one of the writers unearthed by this large-scale research project: Jeanette Delcroix, an almost unknown prose writer, who on account of a lack of response to her work produced a small oeuvre, but whose text turns out to be of surprising quality and innovative in terms of its content. Discoveries like this necessitate a rethinking of literary history in general.

Four other contributions to the first part also provide a partial historiography of female authorship, with special attention paid to the social position of the women concerned and to the way in which this finds expression in their work. **Marijke Spies** focuses on the 'natural' verse of 17th-century women writers in the Netherlands, verse that was inevitably plain and simple because the authors lacked a formal education. **Anna Fábri** describes developments in Hungary around 1800, with special attention on the relationship between male and female authors. It appears that men set themselves up as veritable Pygmalions, with respect both to female characters in their own novels and to real women who were or wanted to be writers. It is clear that these women writers, who were the first to be active in Hungary, had much to thank these men for. **Nicole Boursier** deals with six French authors whose works were published roughly between 1550 and 1750. She illustrates the development towards a certain independence and towards professionalization of women's authorship – a development that did not automatically imply recognition by the critical establishment and inclusion in the literary canon. **Moira Ferguson** discusses the way in which the political situation is present in the work of several 18th-century British women writers: women writing in English appear to comment extensively on imperial practices, whether they are English or Scottish, colonizers or colonized people. Some of them succeed in expressing their critical views and in making their voices heard.

The various points raised in these essays bear comparison with one another. Such comparison is useful, for it can provide points of departure for new research. One of the questions that immediately arises with regard to the Netherlands, and possibly

also to Hungary, is whether searching specifically for more female authors could eventually provide evidence for an earlier professionalization of female authorship. This seems unlikely, however. What is perhaps more important is to establish a connection, on the basis of such comparisons, between the study of women's literary works and research into nationalism and nation-forming.

Writing women's literary history

Part II focuses on the way in which women authors have been treated in literary history. Attention is paid to the approach followed by the earliest literary historians (18th and 19th century), whereas the impact of more recent, and more 'feminist' undertakings is discussed with regard to the extent to which this pioneering work can serve as an example and as a point of departure for further studies. Here, discussion focuses on the literary history of German, French, Dutch and Scandinavian authors.

The influence of what happened in earliest historiography of women's literature has been considerable, but probably different for each country – at least in the case of France and the Netherlands, as is evident from the contribution by **Suzan van Dijk**. It is important to analyse this influence, so that we may distance ourselves from the fictionalization process that also took place in the 19th century with respect to a number of Dutch women writers. **Maria-Theresia Leuker** shows that it was not only contemporaries but also writers several centuries later who took great liberties with the images of women writers: they interpreted their lives and their motives for writing in different ways, according to whatever it was that they wanted to prove. **Maaike Meijer** also focuses attention on the motives of male biographers and historiographers of women writers: thus, she argues that the mere act of praising women's writing does not necessarily imply a serious attempt to reassess its literary worth.

Part II also discusses more recent examples of the historiography of women writers. **Cornelia Niekus Moore** gives a summary of what has been achieved in Germany during the past few decades. Much material has been made available, generally without attempting to make value judgements with regard to aesthetic quality – as was the case with *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*, too. The prestigious project documenting Scandinavian women's literary history is discussed by **Petra Broomans**, who pays particular attention to the selection criteria of the editors of *Nordisk Kvinnolitteraturhistoria*. It appears to be difficult, even for progressive historians of women's writing, to break away from previously existing patterns. Speaking with the authority of someone who is involved in a project of her own, **Christine Planté** describes the problems involved in establishing criteria for the compilation of an anthology. In her recent anthology of texts by 19th-century French women poets she goes one step further than the editors of *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*: the poems have been emphatically selected and treated on the basis of their textual qualities. Consequently her anthology constitutes a reaction against existing hierarchies.

The question arises as to what can be learned from all this for the future of research into women's literary history. There appears to have been a move away from male involvement with women's writing to a situation of exclusively female

scholarly activity in this field. This development has occurred in tandem with a growing, serious interest in the texts concerned, but the risk of misinterpretation remains a real problem. While Meynarda Verboom *may* have been inspired by female predecessors such Christine de Pizan or Aemilia Lanyer, Anna Maria van Schurman or Charlotte de Huybert, it was, in any case, *certainly* a man, Joost van den Vondel, whom she intended, in her poem, 'to greet in turn with this gift'.

Broader approaches in literary historiography

Part III demonstrates, on the basis of examples from the Netherlands, France, England and what is now the Czech Republic, that the writing of women's literary history calls for a broad framework. According to **Louise Schleiner**, this framework can be provided by studying institutional *discourse domains* which underline the interrelation of textual linguistics, feminist and psychoanalytic theory, and the study of ideology, politics, and genres. In this way attention can be given to the functioning of the texts and to their specifically 'female' elements. Furthermore, the concept of gender, used as a starting-point, can enable us to view the corpus of women's writings from a different angle. **Mary Trouille** also discusses the literary scene as an ongoing dialogue, in which the problem of gender plays an important role: thus Louise d'Epinay, in her posthumously published autobiographical novel, offered a response to Rousseau's representation of women;[32] the full meaning of the novel is only apparent in the context of this dialogue. **Kate Flint** also links women's writing to women's reading: Mary Russell Mitford transformed the masculinist narrative of the *Mutiny on the Bounty*, and in doing so she not only offered a woman-centred romance, but also found a powerful role for women's violence.

In this part the discussion is about the conditions under which women are able or unable to publish their writings, with special reference to the role of the publisher. The presence of women in the book trade has been closely studied, for France and England, by **Geraldine Sheridan**, and for the Netherlands by **Paul Hoftijzer**. Their inventories of women involved in the publishing business provide useful information, which enables us to ask the question whether the literary production of women may actually have been promoted by female publishers. In France and England women were more involved in book production than had been expected, although women were active mainly in the retail business rather than in the printworks; in the Dutch Republic they probably occupied positions enabling them to have a slightly greater influence on the published works. Further research in this area is desirable.

This applies, moreover, to the entire field of the history of women's activity in literature, that has now been put on the map for the Netherlands and for Flanders by *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*. The question of where to go from here in terms of research is raised and provisionally answered by **Lia van Gemert**. It appears that this first step has been effective in stimulating discussion. Van Gemert enters into this discussion, insisting on the one hand on the need to integrate the results of research

[32] To which Mary Wollstonecraft also reacted; see Trouille 1997.

into our existing knowledge of literary activities, and on the other hand on the importance of networks. Such networks are not necessarily restricted to the region where Dutch is spoken. As we have argued above, it is important to consider also the female side of Dutch-language culture in its European context.[33] **Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen** expands on this topic, already touched on in her introduction to *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*, and compares the Dutch literary production by women to that in other countries. She discerns similarities in the position and strategies of the authors, but also differences having to do with different political situations, notably the absence of a Dutch-speaking court (one of the discernible 'discourse domains'). Thus in the Netherlands, more than elsewhere, the voice of the middle-class woman is to be heard. The question as to who actually listened to this voice is discussed, finally, by **Joep Leerssen**. He states that literary history is a blend of the history of writing and the history of reading, and suggests that for women's literary history it may be important to give more consideration to the readers of the texts and to the way in which these authors were perceived.

Continuing the story...

It may be possible, eventually, to attain an all-encompassing women's literary history, with more importance being attached to the *reception* of the texts – by female *and* by male readers – than to their origin. In this connection the discipline of book history could provide a useful framework. In a certain sense the problem of aesthetic quality as a criterion would then be solved, or at least set aside, and replaced by the criterion of the role apparently played by female authors.

The opportunity to apply such an approach systematically will be offered in due course by a database currently in preparation within the NWO (Dutch Organization for Scientific Research) project 'Women writers and their audiences, 1700-1880', that equally furnished the framework for this conference. This database records data concerning the reception of women's writings. Their accumulation enables us to approach women's literature explicitly on the basis of contemporary reactions. Indeed the disappearance of female authors from literary histories often started after a considerable lapse of time, and did not affect only the voices of the 16th and 17th-century women writers who, as pointed out by Margaret Ezell, 'were silenced by later editors and commentators rather than by their contemporaries'.[34] In studying the reactions of the immediate audience, at home as well as abroad, it will be possible to gain a better overview of the functioning of the work of women writers – apart from the value that the texts themselves could still have for us now. This last question might be considered at a later stage: it may then still be possible to conclude that a number of these writers deserve crowns of laurel.

[33] It might seem a somewhat neglected area in the important research project 'Dutch culture in European context', funded by NWO.
[34] Ezell 1993, p.163.

The colloquium 'Met of zonder lauwerkrans? Writing the history of women's writing' was held in Amsterdam, 9-11 September 1998. Taking place within the above mentioned NWO. project, it was organized and funded by the KNAW (Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences), and prepared by Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, Lia van Gemert and Suzan van Dijk, with the help of Annelies de Jeu, Simone Veld and Lotte Jensen. For the preparation of this volume, the assistance of Alicia Montoya, Corry Hogetoorn, Lotte Jensen and Annelies de Jeu has been much appreciated. Before, during and after the colloquium we also had the invaluable help of Manita Giribaldie of the KNAW, who by the excellent care she took of the administrative side of the colloquium contributed very much to the well-being of the organizers, and to the success of the colloquium.

During the course of putting together this volume, we were shocked to learn of the passing away of one of the conference participants, Louise Schleiner, in February 2000. Throughout the course of the colloquium, she was a remarked and critical presence, stimulating reflexion and discussion, and contributing to the coherence of the meeting.

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Note on the text:

We have decided to leave quotations from French and German works untranslated, as well as titles of primary and secondary sources in these languages. We have translated textual fragments and titles from the Scandinavian languages, from Hungarian and from Dutch; when translating quotations, the original text has sometimes but not always been included in a note, depending on the importance that the author of the essay attached to the original form of the texts.

The names of Dutch authors are mostly given in accordance with *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*, in which women writers' maiden names are used consistently. In a few cases we have chosen the more widely accepted name (Betje Wolff instead of Elisabeth Bekker).

I. The history of women's writing

Met en zonder lauwerkrans: crowned and uncrowned women writers in the Netherlands during the early modern period (1550-1850)

The study of women writers of the past has only in recent years gathered momentum in Belgium and the Netherlands. By way of introduction I should like to make a few tentative suggestions as to why this is so. In the first place, there is the essentially Dutch concept of consensus which in its political and economic manifestation has become known worldwide as the Dutch *polder model*. The effect of this model is that movements here are less stormy and differences are rarely pushed to extremes. So emancipation movements have equally been more moderate here. Accordingly, women's writings in the past were seldom fiercely oppositional to the patriarchal *status quo,* and therefore provided no stimulating basis for modern feminists. There were no Mary Wollstonecrafts here. On the contrary, Elisabeth Bekker (better known as Betje Wolff, 1738-1804), though firmly rooted in the Enlightenment, did not seem to tire of sympathizing with men married to women who preferred to spend their time studying Rousseau rather than taking care of their husbands and children. And the influential Geertruida Bosboom-Toussaint (1812-1886), a well-known and successful 19th-century author, had nothing good to say about the concept of emancipation and everything that went with it.

A more restricted explanation has to do with the specific problems of a small country, with a language not widely spoken and a limited number of academics. The number of specialists in the field of literary history is small, and the proportion accounted for by women was, at least in the past, minimal. The amount of work to be done is in principle no smaller than in the case of a larger body of literature, but the number of people engaged in it is tiny compared with the numbers involved in France, Germany and England, let alone the United States.

A third explanation is incidental but probably not unimportant. If one of the few women scholars of literature of the past, and by no means the least influential, deals yet another blow to women's writings for ideological reasons, then the result is particularly negative. In 1936 Annie Romein-Verschoor wrote a stirring study of modern 'women's novels', *Vrouwenspiegel* (Women's mirror) from a Marxist perspective, condemning them in the most absolute terms as being entirely concerned with rich, middle-class women with no conception of life's real problems. It was a well written book that attracted much attention, but its impact on women's studies might well have been disastrous. The introductory chapter, where Romein rapidly presents an account of women's writings from Anna Bijns (1493-1575) to Bosboom-Tous-

saint, is full of astute observations, or rather, intuitions, which corresponded to the results of recent research, but places in an unforgiving light almost all the writers mentioned: they had failed from an ideological perspective. Such a negative book hardly bears comparison with Virginia Woolf's stimulating *A room of one's own* (1928), written less than ten years earlier.

This is not to say that nothing has been done at all. In the 1970s and 1980s some pioneers offered surveys, such as the anthology *Vergeten vrouwen uit de Nederlandsche literatuur tot 1900* (Forgotten women in Netherlands literature before 1900), a special issue of the feminist magazine *Chrysallis* (1980). Of course, the rise of women's studies in the universities was a great help – especially, however, in the modern field. Moreover, already in the polyhistoric 19th century a lot of material concerning women authors had been assembled in large biographical dictionaries. In our own time, canonized women have received due critical and biographical attention. To give but one example: the *dix-huitiémiste* P.J. Buijnsters has written no less than five books on the life and work of Betje Wolff and Aagje Deken (1741-1804), who usuallly published their writings jointly, including an edition of their wonderful correspondence.

Aims and methods of *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*

But whatever the causes of this state of affairs, much pioneering work had to be done for *Met en zonder lauwerkrans. Schrijvende vrouwen uit de vroegmoderne tijd 1550-1850: van Anna Bijns tot Elise van Calcar* (Wreath of laurels. Crowned and uncrowned women writers of the early modern period 1550-1850: from Anna Bijns to Elise van Calcar). Models and initial studies were to be found abroad rather than in Holland and Belgium. To a certain extent, the structure and method employed in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* were decided by the material we found, but the most important choices had already been made at the beginning of the enterprise. This is of course primarily true of the decision to take the women writers as a separate group. The discussion on this point can be as lengthy or as short as one wishes. Why should women be shut up in a sort of ghetto, indicating that the only real literature is that written by men? For us, primarily working as literary historians, the decision was not, in fact, a difficult one. It is evident that the women from this period regarded themselves as 'other', as outsiders who knew themselves to be tolerated, or had to fight their way into a man's world, and this became one of the leitmotifs of our book. Anyone who wished to succeed had to conform to the existing male standards. That meant, for example, that women, too, had to strew their texts with mythological and classical references. They had to be able to practise the same genres as men did, and *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* shows clearly how they began close to home with moralistic and religious lyric poetry, but then moved on to political pamphlets, and then to plays and even epics. The real innovation came only with a genre which came into being in the Netherlands at the end of the 18th century, that of the domestic novel. Here, instead of running desperately to catch up, women led the field. The process of fighting one's way in and achieving success on the part of a group universally considered as outsiders can thus be clearly delineated in the early modern period.

A second decision was that the book had to be a combination of reference work, anthology and a general introduction to the phenomenon of women writers in the period. The first thing to be done was simply to collect the material. Virtually no-one knew how many writers were actually involved, where the emphases lay in their work, or which genres we would encounter. For this reason, the third decision was taken quickly, that of aiming for completeness. We were forced to compromise on this last point. As we got into the 19th century, the number of women writers became so large that completeness became unattainable. From the 16th to the 18th century we stayed close to our aim, but reviews and other contributions made it clear that we were not entirely successful. We can only hope that more writers will surface. Linked to this principle is a fourth criterion, that also has its own, independent significance, and that is that quality should not be a yardstick. In principle, everything written by women in the field of the humanities fell within our purview as long as the authors had a reading public in mind. The bulk of the book contains what has been considered to be literature since the 19th century at least, but we made room also for biographies and autobiographies, as well as pamphlets, travel writings and philosophical treatises.

As a result of these choices, the approach adopted for the book became one based on both literary and social history. This is reflected in the introduction, where the emphasis lies not on presenting fine and interesting texts that have hitherto been overlooked, but on women's place within the literary enterprise, the conditions which enabled them to work, the problems they encountered, the help they received from male insiders, and so on. It seemed the best method in a situation in which a practically new area of study had to be presented. As researchers, we did not want to be solely led by our own ideas on quality and relevance. All the piety of the period discussed, for example, can so easily be dismissed as sanctimonious whining, but anyone who sees it in this light misses an essential part of the culture of the time. In this context the title – 'Met en zonder lauwerkrans' meaning 'With laurels and without' – finds its explanation. Some of the women in the book aimed to measure themselves against other writers and to achieve recognition in the form of a symbolic laurel wreath. Indeed, there are a number of portraits of women writers wearing such a wreath. Others, however, probably the majority, were different. They did not strive for literary fame, but wanted to edify and educate those around them.

Met en zonder lauwerkrans is in principle limited to writing in the Dutch language. This restriction is not really important since women in the Netherlands seldom wrote in any other language. Johanna Othonia (1560-1617?) and the famous woman scholar Anna Maria van Schurman (1607-1678) wrote in Latin, but they were exceptions to the general rule. A famous Dutch woman who only wrote in French was Belle van Zuylen, otherwise known as Isabelle de Charrière (1740-1805). Because she principally lived in France and Switzerland during her writing career, the influence she had on her contemporaries in Dutch literature was negligible.

The result is a big book with perhaps an almost comical effect in an international context. A thousand pages on three centuries of Dutch women's literature, while the *Norton anthology of literature by women* (1996[2]) manages with its 800 pages to cover the same period for the whole of the literature in the English language, including American literature. The explanation is that the *Norton anthology* can build on a




Petronella Moens, Johanna Hoobius, Anna van Schrieck, Juliana Cornelia de Lannoy.

whole series of previous studies and that there are also English-language anthologies covering separately the 17th century, the 18th and the Romantics.

We have very little of this in the Netherlands, and the hope is therefore that this new book will inspire further study. The authors of *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* cannot complain about the tone of the many reviews we have received, but really annoying was a remark by one reviewer that he could not really see what was left to be done now. The lack of monographs on important authors, studies of genre, explanations for the ideological swings that have taken place through the years, studies of readers' responses, the lines along which the canon was formed, the international context – he could think of none of this.

A few names

When we look at the official literary canon, we can see that only a few women writers from the period concerned are known to the educated Dutch. Here are some of the important names. Anna Bijns was a school intendant in the cultural metropolis of Antwerp. She has left us a diverse oeuvre of polemical, light, amorous and religious verse, usually in the form of ballades, which places her within the tradition of the literature of the rhetoricians that flourished at that time. Due to the stimulating influence of Franciscan brothers of her acquaintance, from a nearby monastery, three collections of her work were published. Nowadays, her name is mostly associated with the Anna Bijns prize for women who have made worthy contributions to the field of literature.

Subsequently, non-religious literature in the southern Netherlands went quickly into decline. The course of events during the Dutch revolt against Spain, the start of the Eighty Years' War (1568-1648), resulted in the Southern Netherlands, present-day Belgium, once again becoming a Catholic country, whereas in the Northern Netherlands or the Republic of the United Provinces, later to become the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Protestantism was the dominant religion. In the South, everything pivoted around the Counter-Reformation. Beguines and convent nuns created a rich literature; a familiar name from this period is that of Maria Petyt (1623-1677). She lived in accordance with the rules of the third Carmelite order and, following in the footsteps of St Teresa of Avila, she wrote a penetrating, mystically tinged autobiography.

In the Republic, a secular literature could still thrive. The most significant names from the first decades of the 17th century are those of the two sisters Anna and Maria Tesselschade, daughters of the well known Amsterdam poet Roemer Visscher (1583-1651 and 1594-1649 respectively). Roemer Visscher was the central figure in a literary and cultural circle which gathered at his house. He also gave his daughters a good education, although they were not allowed to learn Latin, the language of the scholarly. Anna and Maria Tesselschade were both writers and their work was appreciated by important contemporary authors such as Heinsius, Hooft, Vondel, Bredero and Huygens. The work of the sisters mainly consisted of lyrical verse: occasional verse, as well as religious and moralistic poetry. In addition to this, Anna wrote emblematic

verse while Maria Tesselschade spent a long time translating Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, of which, unfortunately, only a very short fragment has survived. Their work was only occasionally published in collections of verse made by male authors of their acquaintance or in anthologies. Their reputation was in fact established in the 19th century, when they were considered to be models for the ideal Dutch woman and they were appreciated as witty and humane members of the Dutch literary elite. The work of Anna was only published at the end of the 19th century, and Maria Tesselschade's work found its way to the reading public at the beginning of the 20th century in a remarkable book in which she is portrayed less as a writer than as a 'female friend of letters', as it contains 'letters and verse written by and for Maria Tesselschade'. It is only very recently that her verse has seen the light of day in a richly annotated edition. After the Visscher sisters, for more than a century, there were no literary works written by women writers, if we are to believe traditional literary history: hitherto, only women writers from the second half of the 18th century have been deemed worthy of attention. Lucretia Wilhelmina van Merken (1721-1789) is named because of her biblical epic *David* (1767) and her widely read didactic poem, *Het nut der tegenspoeden* (The usefulness of adversity, 1762). Juliana Cornelia de Lannoy (1738-1782) is also mentioned: a self-assured and witty writer of tragedies, didactic poems and lyrical verse, who considered her pen to be as worthy a weapon for her fatherland as the sabre of her brother, himself an officer. But neither of these writers now belong to collective Dutch memory. Recently rediscovered and republished, Elisabeth Maria Post (1755-1812) wrote sensitive and pious poems and novels. Her *Reinhart, of natuur en godsdienst* (Trueheart, or nature and religion) is about the life of a Surinam planter and has now a certain curiosity value.

Today, the best known women writers in Dutch literary history are the previously mentioned bosom friends Betje Wolff and Agatha Deken. The novel which they wrote in close collaboration, *Historie van mejuffrouw Sara Burgerhart* (History of miss Sara Burgherheart, 1782) from 1782, is the first novel in a domestic setting to be published in the Dutch language. It is still read at school and is still reprinted at regular intervals. It certainly deserves its special status: for the very first time, the everyday life of the normal citizen is considered worth writing about, and Wolff and Deken do this with great insight into human behaviour, with wittiness and the desire to educate. In the letters which make up the novel – a form they borrowed from Richardson – numerous men and women from all walks of life come to life and speak to the reader; each does so in his or her own idiosyncratic and inimitable way. In this respect, Wolff and Deken easily surpassed Richardson. With this book they gained admission to the literary canon. The same cannot however be said of their many imitators who, in the 19th century, explored the potential of the 'roman intime'. They have remained obscure, often undeservedly so.

However, Geertruida Bosboom-Toussaint, who also wrote novels, is still read today. During her own lifetime, she was generally admired for her detailed and psychologically perceptive historical novels; nowadays, it is her *Majoor Frans* (Major Frans, 1874; a fragment is shown in this volume) for which she is well known: the story of an independently minded woman who in the end lets herself be won over by her lover. One contemporary called the story a 'novel of female emancipation', prob-

ably because Major Frans, the female protagonist, is sympathetically portrayed in the novel. However, emancipation is certainly not the issue here as Bosboom-Toussaint had little sympathy for the emancipation of women, which she considered to be a superfluous cause in the Netherlands of her day. Remarkably, at a time when grammar schools were still closed to girls in the Netherlands, she was of the opinion that there were no unassailable barriers for women.

In the South, there was a resurgence of non-religious women's literature after many years of silence. Today, the names of the sisters Rosalie and Virginie Loveling (1834-1875 and 1836-1923 respectively), who were writers of lyrical verse, novellas and novels, are still quite well-known. In 1997, an essay on their life and work was published by Ludo Stynen.

The names of the twelve women writers mentioned above are still evocative, if not for the public at large, then at least for specialists in the field of literature. Whether such specialists really know the work of these writers is an entirely different matter. The image that has has been created of some of these writers is hardly realistic: for example, Anna Roemers has been seen, over the past 150 years, as a moralistic epigone of the then widely read poet Jacob Cats, who used almost all of his vast oeuvre for the sole purpose of spreading views on marriage which were prevalent in his time. Nothing can be found in the literary histories about the ironic, critical quality of Anna Roemers' work as a poet. Neither does one find anything on what principally motivated De Lannoy's writings: her struggle to gain a position as a woman author, and her introspection regarding this issue.

The 'wreath of laurels'

But these twelve names are only the tip of the iceberg. Some 160 woman writers have been included in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans,* and this illustrates how many women wrote during the period concerned. Some of them, who are now completely forgotten, were in their time more successful than their male contemporaries, who are well-known today. There were more reprints of the pious songbook of the Baptist songwriter Soetken Gerijts (?-1572) in her day than of the lyrical verse of the Netherlands' most famous lyrical poet Pieter Cornelisz. Hooft, who was almost her contemporary. This can be easily explained: Hooft wrote his fine, perceptive, and, for that time, groundbreaking, lyrical poetry for a literary elite, whereas Soetken Gerijts wrote her simple songs for both the educated and uneducated members of her religious community. An aesthetically-oriented writing of literary history includes one writer but ignores the other – a woman, moreover, who is blind and illiterate! A history of literature, that gives serious thought to the place of literature in society, however, cannot fail to discuss Soetken Gerijts. It is therefore appropriate that in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans,* the works of the women included are presented not from a modern-aesthetic perspective but according to norms determined by literary and cultural history. A biographical introduction to each writer is given and her most important work is discussed; this is followed by a selection of texts which are characteristic of her work. In a general introduction, an outline of the findings is presented.

The chosen period (1550-1850) has been demarcated according to specific criteria. It starts with the great Antwerp poetess Anna Bijns. As far as we know, she was the first woman living outside a religious community whose voice could be heard in public debate. She was a fervent Catholic, and maybe this is why she had little influence in the North and was quickly forgotten there. In the South, however, she was well known and was even read at schools. The period ended with the first wave of feminism which manifested itself in the last decades of the 19th century in the Netherlands. Elise van Calcar (1822-1904), who had an international reputation, did not really participate but she did often write on the question of women's education. The voice of emancipation can also be heard in Rosalie Loveling's work. The Netherlands and Belgium were quite late in joining the international debate on emancipation.

Political and religious context

The Dutch-speaking territories had two systems of government until the end of the 18th century. First, the Republic with the Reformed (Protestant) religion as the dominant religion (roughly the present-day Netherlands). This republic was born out of the revolt against the Spanish king, which was instigated, among other things, on religious grounds; this revolt constituted the beginning of the Eighty Years' War which came to an end with the Peace of Munster in 1648. In the Republic, the princes of Orange played an important role as stadtholders. They were not rulers in the true sense of the word as they were, from time to time, sidetracked for shorter or longer periods, but they had a dynasty of a kind. Furthermore, the Dutch-speaking territories in the South remained under Spanish rule: cities such as Antwerp which initially had been centres of Calvinist and Lutheran reformation were quickly and efficiently made Catholic once more. This territory now, more or less, corresponds to the Flemish provinces in present-day Belgium. These southern 'provinces' belonged, until 1715, to the Spanish Empire; later they were annexed by Austria and were ruled by governors. After the French Revolution, the Batavian Republic was created in the North, which was followed by a short-lived monarchy under the aegis of one of Napoleon's brothers, Louis Napoleon, and its annexation by the French empire from 1810 to 1813. Subsequently, the kingdom of the Netherlands was founded, which, based on international agreements, also included Belgium until 1830. However, the Belgian rebellion of 1830 brought about two separate states, present-day Belgium and the present-day Netherlands. These political developments have had significant religious and cultural consequences for literature in general and women's literature in particular. In the Republic, the Reformed church may not have been a state religion, but it played a dominant role in society. The Catholics had freedom of religion but were not allowed to practise it openly. So they had to say mass in so-called conventicles, and convents were severely restricted in their activities, although sister orders such as the beguine order flourished here and there as communities. As a result of this, there was hardly any Catholic literature. There was, however, religious literature written by Calvinist and Mennonite women, which, in the 18th century, was pietistic

in tone. In addition to this religious literature, a secular, bourgeois literature started to flourish in the Republic. Women contributed to this literature, albeit much later than men, and they wrote about domestic, moral and even political matters, practising genres such as comedy, epic, tragedy, the didactic poem and, from the 18th century on, the novel.

The Republic hardly had any court culture. During his reign from 1625 to 1647, Frederik Hendrik was the first stadholder who had sufficient means to initiate anything worthy of note in the field of culture; however, he was interested not so much in literature as in the visual arts and architecture. After the death of his son William II in 1650, a lengthy period of rule without stadtholders commenced, and when William III came to power in 1672, the defence of the vulnerable Republic was much more his concern than the state of art and culture. Things did not improve when he later became king of England and had to devote all his energy to running that nation. Besides, the language used at court was principally French and the court undertook no initiatives to further the cause of literature in Dutch and women's literature in particular. This was even more the case in the 18th century. There was a court in Brussels, namely that of the governor who ruled on behalf of the monarch, but its literary tastes, too, were influenced by French culture and not by Netherlands culture.

Moreover, in the South, the Counter-Reformation had transformed culture and society. The influence of Protestantism had more or less been eliminated. There were numerous convents, and beguine communities were to be found everywhere. Women's literature was for many years almost exclusively a religious affair. The practice of a wide variety of genres that we see in the Northern Netherlands is lacking. It was, however, in the South that this secular literature had begun. The Counter-Reformation put an end to this, although one would have to mention significant exceptions such as the playwright Barbara Ogier (1648-1720). Flemish women's literature would only start to flourish again in the 19th century. Women then started to write novels and novellas. A striking aspect of this development is that women joined the struggle for the use of Flemish (i.e. Dutch) against the ever stronger influence of French in upper social circles. The irony of the situation is perfectly illustrated when Jeanette Delcroix (1826-1897), who clearly sympathized with the Flemish cause, wittily ridiculed the ambivalent attitude of many Flemish radicals: in public, they profess their support of Flemish but in private they choose to use French.

Women's writing as a sign of civilization

The rise of non-religious women's literature is closely linked to the growing influence of the Renaissance in the Netherlands. The collection *Den hof en boomgaard der poesien* (The garden and orchard of poetry, 1565) by the Southern Netherlands poet Lucas de Heere, in which, for the first time, new forms of Renaissance poetic forms such as sonnets and odes were demonstrated, is also the book in which, for the first time, a woman, the author's wife Eleonora Carboniers (?- after 1584), is presented, with two poems both concerned with wifehood: a laudatory epigram to her husband and the translation of a French sonnet of his. From other texts it is clear that

the male-dominated culture did indeed see the rise of women writers as the sign of a new culture. Thus the Zealand poetess Johanna Coomans (?-1659) was celebrated as the symbol of renewal because women poets were shown to be writing in the Netherlands, just as they had done in classical Antiquity and its new model, Italy. Coomans is presented to the reading public as a new Corinna or Vittoria Colonna. An even greater star in the firmament, Anna Roemersdr. Visscher, was, as it were, discovered by the Leiden professor-poet Daniel Heinsius. Some time later she was seen by the Leiden student Johan van Heemskerck to be proof of the theory that the arts had spread, in turn, throughout the countries of the civilized world – the course of these developments was generally conceived to move from East to West – and her appearance in the literature of the day demonstrated that it was now the turn of the Netherlands. She was considered to have even surpassed Sappho.

There should, however, be no misunderstanding about these acclamations. The eulogies these and other women received are ambivalent. Anna Roemers was praised by all the reputed poets of her time, but in such a way that she was quite clearly seen as an exceptional case: this was not a normal woman. Even at birth, her mother had to take a 'back seat': Heinsius wrote that she was not brought forth out of her mother's womb but out of her father's head. And a few years later, Vondel is the bearer of the news: she is neither a virgin nor of the female sex. She is *like* a man and that is precisely the only door open to her in practising poetry: 'the poet' is conceived as a man: the *poeta doctus*. Whoever wants to be a poet must assume a male persona: 'virgins' may be able to do this but surely not married women.

The married woman Johanna Coomans stresses her motherhood but, in doing so, establishes a hierarchy at the same time. Her poetical oeuvre was, as she herself wrote, produced beside the cradle and that explains its inferior quality. It is therefore quite appropriate that, although she admires Anna Roemers, she also addresses her in a poem as not having fulfilled her highest vocation, that of the married woman.

As a matter of fact, the situation for writing women was a complicated one: they had a double identity, the one almost excluding the other. Women did indeed see themselves as 'the others' and the viewpoint of their male peers did not differ in this respect: they were sometimes adulated and treated in a friendly but condescending way, but they were, in fact, to all purposes ignored.

A poet's requirements

Classical Antiquity had already formulated what was required of a poet: talent is, of course, a main requirement, but much more than that cannot be said about it. Women quite often observe that they feel an inner compulsion to write poetry. But usually they express this in modest terms because they realize they are not in a position to develop their poetic potential to the full: not only talent but also *education* and *leisure time* are needed, as well as the *opportunity to publish*.

With regard to *education*, the vast majority of women lacked the classical education that was indispensable for the learned profession of poetry. During the three centuries covered in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*, the complaint was often heard that they

lacked the knowledge needed for writing. Entry to grammar school, let alone university, was closed to women. They therefore did not have access to knowledge of classical mythology and history which provided most of the poetical imagery of their day. Likewise, the education of girls from the bourgeois classes usually left a lot to be desired. At the so-called French school they did learn to speak and write French, but a decent education in French literature and culture was out of the question. Perhaps even worse was the fact that women were not expected to have any discipline: they did not need to spell correctly or use punctuation properly. Nor was a thorough knowledge of syntax required of them. In this respect, it is noteworthy how often men were asked to correct their work or assumed a paternalistic attitude towards it. That too encouraged women to feel less committed and to consider their work as a pastime. Women were thus not seen to be serious rivals.

If the opportunities for pursuing studies were scarce, then finding *leisure time* was an even greater problem for women. In the Republic, where the modern, bourgeois family came into being, – Jacob Cats was mentioned earlier in this respect – men of repute were convinced that a woman's task was to be with the family at home, and there was a complete lack of models for any other roles. In the three centuries covered by *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* hardly any developments in this respect can be discerned. Women themselves often wrote that caring for a husband and children is their main goal in life. Betje Wolff professed the ideals of the Enlightenment and demonstrated in her own life that the practice of literature was a full-time affair. Still, she constantly warns that women should not neglect their real duties for the sake of writing. Until late into the 19th century, one can still find women being praised in literary reviews because they have completed their work in their own leisure time. In fact, they did not in general have a lot of time for themselves. The housewife of the Low Countries saw it as her duty, even when she was wealthy enough, to run the house herself, to order the servants and, especially, to take care of the children herself. Now, one of the peculiarities of housework and childcare is that it just never seems to stop and is, in any case, difficult to manage. Children become sick at the most awkward moments. It is therefore quite difficult to systematically keep time free for writing. The image of Jane Austen writing at the kitchen table is also a familiar one in the Netherlands. The poetess Aurelia Zwartte (1682-?) – whose quality as a writer is in no way comparable to Jane Austen's – writes in a poem to a male admirer that she is constantly burdened with chores at home and therefore reads while she cleans fish and writes while she sews – especially the latter combination seems a veritable *tour de force*.

Many women realized all too well that by marrying they were shutting themselves away and denying themselves the freedom to practise the arts. There are enough texts which show that women, time and time again, chose the freedom of unmarried life. This meant in effect that many women writers stayed unmarried or stopped writing after marriage. It was only when the novel made it possible to make a living out of writing that women decided to become professional writers. As a matter of fact, they sometimes wrote to sustain their families whenever the husband was in some way unable to do this.

It is also worth noting that despite these problems many women managed to have a 'room of their own'. In quite a few texts, a cubbyhole or summer-house, or at times even a study, are praised as a place of refuge for their work.

There were therefore many obstacles for women in pursuing a writing career, but still many women, more or less successfully, managed to overcome these obstacles. So, female literary production of a kind existed. Women's position in literary culture remained marginal, however, and this is reflected in the difficulty they often had in finding *opportunities to publish.*

Almost no printed text remains of the work of Maria Tesselschade Roemers, the younger sister of Anna and now the most well-known of the 17th-century Netherlands women poets. Her translation of Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* being lost, we know only a few lines of it because these are quoted in one of her letters. Her children showed little care in handling her manuscripts. For example, one of her poems can still be read today, but only because her contemporary, the poet P.C. Hooft, who assumed the role of her mentor and guide, used the other side of the manuscript sheet to write down his histories of the Netherlands – and Hooft's manuscripts *were* carefully kept.

If their contemporaries and children took little care in handling their literary production, neither, for that matter, did the writers themselves: neither Anna nor Maria Tesselschade took steps to have their poems published. Nevertheless, Anna Roemers did value her own work. A part of it has been retained for posterity in a calligraphed booklet, the so-called *Letter-juweel* (Letter-jewel), and there is evidence that another handwritten booklet existed. It may have been due to feminine modesty that these booklets were not published, although we should not forget that male authors, too, were reluctant to publish lyrical verse, which was small in scale and considered not very significant. The Netherlands' greatest 17th-century poet, Joost van den Vondel, published his very first book of lyrical poetry at the age of 57. However, in the case of the male author, a friend would often take charge of collecting and publishing poems whenever the author, for whatever reason, was too modest about his work. In spite of the great praise Anna Roemers received from her male peers, no-one ever did her this favour. And even when a woman's work is published, it usually appears in the book of a male author: as an introductory ode, as a poem to which a man had responded, to fill up blank pages, and also to supplement a book of the husband.

The earliest known publication of a collection of a woman's writings was a posthumous homage to the female author. The book, *Het lof der vrouwen* (In praise of women), by Johanna Hoobius (1614-1642) was published in 1643. The central part of the collection was a long laudatory piece on women, one of the many contributions to the discussion on the dignity of women, such as had been begun by Boccaccio and continued by writers like Christine de Pizan. The publication of Hoobius' book will have had a certain curiosity value: it presented the first Netherlands woman to fully participate in the debate – her poem is an adaptation of Jean de Marconville's *De la bonté et mauvaiseté des femmes.*

In 1654, this was followed by *Den Cleefschen Pegasus* (The Pegasus of Cleves) by Maria Margareta van Akerlaecken (1605-±1670), but this was also an exceptional case. Van Akerlaecken had followed in her father's footsteps and was appointed as a kind of court poet to the court of Cleves, which had its seat outside the Republic, and which had family ties with the House of Orange. There she wrote all kinds of odes in honour of the princely members of court, which were published

not so much to immortalize the poetess but rather as a token of respect towards the patrons.

Much more interesting, from the perspective of the women who really wanted to publish for themselves, is what took place in 1665. It was then that Catharina Questiers (1630-1669) and Cornelia van der Veer (1639-after 1702) published a joint collection in which they made their own poetical practice the central theme. The book, *Lauwer-stryt* (The battle of the laurels) consists mainly of poems in which the two women praise each other, and in doing this they put themselves on the map. Odes written by them to others and, above all, many odes written by others, including men, complete the book. It was to take another twenty years or so before a woman would publish another collection of poetry. That was in 1686 when Titia Brongersma (±1650-after 1687) had her book *De bron-swaan* (The Swan of the fountain) published, which is not only historically an interesting collection. From then on, it became less unusual for women to publish their own work, although women writers were still often published posthumously; moreover, even when their work was published within their lifetime, this was often not on their own initiative but on that of their family, in particular proud fathers and husbands playing a significant role.

Subjects

The search for the singularity of women's literature, the female eye and voice, has produced variable results. Indeed, it is the traditional character of women's writing, especially in the first half of the period under discussion, which is most striking. This does not really surprise. Women as outsiders had to compete within an established literary milieu, with fixed conventions and genres. They still had to catch up with some of the major literary developments; it would be asking too much to expect them to completely ignore existing models and to produce a new literature which would reflect their own interests, and take their own knowledge and skills as a starting point. So, we rarely see this in their work. For instance, at the beginning of the period under discussion, women diligently, and more often than not amateurishly, incorporated elements of classical mythology in moralistic poems and occasional verse. In the three centuries between 1550 and 1850, we can in fact see women gaining more and more ground in the existing literary world. They certainly did not try to create a new domain for themselves, nor did they aim at changing the established literary milieu. As time went by, women no longer restricted themselves to lyrical verse, for they started to write tragedies and epics; however, such genres seem to have not really been practised from a female perspective.

On the other hand, it is, of course, not mere coincidence that Anna van der Horst (1735-1785) chose female protagonists for her two biblical epics: Ruth and Deborah. Research still has to be done in this field. It is only when women from the Netherlands start to write novels at the end of the 18th century – and within the European context this is a late development – that they focus on the specific territory which they have been allocated in life: the home and private life. This is not to say, however, that one cannot find anything specific to women in women's literature. There

are subjects and themes which during the entire period are raised by women writers. First of all there is the theme of their own artistic practice, or almost taking precedence in this respect, that of the many obstacles which stand in their way in pursuing an artistic profession. This is clearly illustrated by everything which has been mentioned above on the dominant role of housekeeping, the lack of a proper education, the lack of leisure time, and the blessings of having a 'room of one's own'.

The female voice can be heard – although this, unfortunately, is quite rare – in a form of irony. The 17th-century poetess Anna Roemers is able to wittily and subtly question the dominant poetics, which attached so much significance to elevation of the spirit and scholarship. More than a century later, this irony would become a gratefully used weapon in the hands of women like Juliana Cornelia de Lannoy and Betje Wolff.

But the most significant development was the use of the female voice in love poetry. In the 17th century, love poetry in the Petrarchistic tradition was a dominant genre in the Netherlands, practised by almost all the male poets. They happily played the game of the humble admirer who worships the woman placed on a pedestal. This had very little to do with reality. In anthropological terms, these were exploratory, liminal texts in which the situation in normal society is reversed and potential conflicts are expressed. From this perspective, Petrarchism can be seen as a prolonged 'carnival' which constantly tests and investigates a powerful worldview, in which women are 'naturally' allocated a subordinate role. Games of this kind offer little attraction to women. When placing their beloved on a pedestal and worshipping him, they would be describing in literary terms the very situation that their world in its harsh reality expected of them: obedience in marriage, a servitude in which man's every wish is catered for. The Petrarchistic idiom was therefore not of any use to them, and we see accordingly no poetry of this kind written by women for men. The only love poetry dedicated to men that we can find – albeit rarely – consists of the poems written by women for their husbands: these are not in a distant, worshipful idiom but expressed with warmth and comradeship.

On the other hand, it is interesting to note that the Petrarchistic idiom was practised in poems written to female friends. The situation was in this respect completely different. In principle, everyone is equal, and it can then be fascinating to play the game of worshipping from afar and in subordination. In *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*, numerous erotically tinted poems written by women for women are to be found. For instance, Titia Brongersma, mentioned above, had gathered, at the end of the 17th century, a large circle of female friends for whom she wrote poems, and the most beloved of these was the much praised Eliseen. The reader of these poems could quite easily establish that the friend in question was a certain Elisabeth Joly; no attempt was made to keep her identity secret. At about the same time, we can find comparable texts written by Cornelia van der Veer and Katharina Lescailje (1649-1711): the entire range of emotions from love to desire and jealousy are expressed, and the names of the women addressed in these poems are printed in full. The discussion as to how this should be interpreted is still in progress. Lia van Gemert in her article 'Hiding behind words? Lesbianism in 17th-century Dutch poetry?' uses the term 'lesbianism'. Not everyone is in agreement as to this use of the term, as homo-

sexual practice and behaviour was at the time considered a serious criminal offence and there is no evidence of any criticism of these writers. Furthermore, when, in the 18th century, Wolff and Deken live together and write texts for each other, but also for other beloved female friends, they are not attacked for this despite the fact that Wolff was a controversial figure on the literary scene. There is however agreement on one question: many of the women who wrote found their bosom friends and 'soulmates' in other women, and these erotically tinted friendships were often with other women writers. Apparently, women's emotional and spiritual world developed most easily and flourished in a culture shaped by women. In this respect, the many networks established by women will have to be researched in depth.

When, in the 18th century, the Petrarchistic idiom finally loses its influence, a new paradigm for the language of sensitivity and the emotions comes to the foreground. Within the framework of 'love, virtue and religion', women could now apparently express their amorous feelings for men, although this caused some astonishment in the world at large. Bourgeois society believed that a woman should not express her feelings of love so openly.

The domestic and historical novel

The genre in which the specific qualities of women were most clearly illustrated, and in which they did not suffer from a lack of knowledge in classical literature, was the domestic novel, which, to use the terminology of Sainte-Beuve, is also known as the 'roman intime'. To write a good novel, one needs keen observational powers, a good ear for dialogue and, above all, knowledge of the human heart. Women had these in abundance, and after Wolff and Deken had written their *Sara Burgerhart* in 1782, more women followed their example. Critics were quick to categorize this genre as a feminine one, and consequently as a genre aimed at a female reading public. This immediately resulted in a loss in prestige: the 'roman intime' has since then been undervalued in the history of Netherlands literature. Little attention has been paid to the psychologically innovative novels of Betsy Hasebroek (1811-1887) which were regularly reprinted in the 19th century, but of which there are no modern editions. In Flanders, we have a similar situation. There have been no reprints of Jeanette Delcroix's work, and studies of her work are rare. This neglect was to be the beginning of a literary trend: until recently, women's novels on domestic life have been treated condescendingly. No wonder then that women who wanted to avoid this kind of categorization applied themselves to the historical novel. Because of its studious nature, this genre had much more prestige. As a writer of lengthy historical novels based on detailed research, Bosboom-Toussaint gained true acceptance and recognition in the literary world.

Religious literature

As already observed above, a secular literature in the Southern Netherlands was, after a very promising beginning, interrupted for many years. There was, however, an

extensive literature written by convent nuns and beguines. Within the communities, they wrote for each other and to propagate their beliefs. The sisters were often asked by their confessors to write about their own lives. Such autobiographies are often fascinating documents, which bear witness to unique, mystical experiences and express intensely their experience of sickness and pain, penance and contrition. The personal tone one finds in these works can hardly be found in secular literature. The many small songbooks also give a picture of the spiritual life of beguines and other sister orders. Although these devotional poems and hymns to the saints would not appear to have any great attraction for a modern reader, some of them are a revelation, such as the story of sister Johanna de Gavre (around 1700), who longed to be a missionary and die as a martyr in Japan. She expresses this desire in a dream, and concludes at the end, in the traditional manner, that all earthly matters are as a dream. One's only duty is to fulfil one's task properly – one just has to be satisfied with that. Apart from the texts about their own lives and their communities, the nuns also wrote songs: those for school children who were entrusted to their care, as well as working songs for girls.

It should be pointed out that religious literature also flourished in the Northern Netherlands, mainly written by women in the pietistic movement within the Protestant church. The sheer quantity of this literature suggests that it was widely read. In those days, one saw the link between women and religion as a natural one. The female virtues, humility, obedience and charity, are also religious virtues par excellence. Nevertheless, the tone often used in this respect was an apologetic one. The apostle Paul's warning that women had to be silent in the religious community had to be got round in one way or another; this is why women were often said to be 'weak vessels'. That God would want to use such simple souls to declare the message of salvation actually demonstrated that everything depended on Him. Apart from devotional poems, pious Protestant women also wrote their instructive autobiographies, in which they illustrated how they had been saved from the evil world by the grace of God.

Getting religious literature published was, apparently, much less difficult than the publication of secular literature. Already by the 16th century, songbooks written by pious women in the North and South were put into print; sometimes these were posthumous, but they were also printed in their own lifetime at the author's initiative, such as in the case of Katharina Boudewijns (about 1587) from Brussels. During the three centuries covered by *Met en zonder lauwerkrans,* devotional literature written by and for women is an important genre.

Men's helping hand in women's work

Women writers in the early modern period often did not have enough knowledge of grammar and punctuation, of poetic techniques or of classical literature. From that perspective, it is understandable that they enlisted the aid of their more educated peers. There are numerous examples of women writers who first submitted their work to male friends for improvement. There is nothing wrong with that. But

it is a different story when men, as was quite often the case, changed texts without having been requested to do so by their female colleagues. Sometimes this is quite innocuous, for instance when it is limited to bringing texts in line with the conventional spelling; this is often mentioned in an introduction. But some editors are so zealous that they change the composition of a poem and even 'improve' a poem's content. Occasionally, when the original manuscripts have been kept, this can be checked. In general, this raises the question whether we are actually reading what the author has written – and this is particularly the case with posthumous texts – or in fact reading a text through the eyes of a self-appointed editor. What could happen is clearly shown by the following example of a letter from the noted 19th century critic E.J. Potgieter to his friend J.P. Hasebroek, brother and enthusiastic advocate of the novels of his sister Betsy Hasebroek. Unconcernedly, Potgieter suggests that he amend the text during the correction of the proofs: he does not like the male characters and brother Hasebroek will have to do something about it. The latter is, fortunately, more sensible, but the case is characteristic of male attitudes at the time.

The role of men in women's literature is, both in a positive and negative sense, important in another way too. Men have designated women's literature as a phenomenon which has a special position in literature. Through their interest – even though this was fed by a certain penchant for the exotic which 'women writers' held for them – men have at least ensured that, in the 19th century, many names of female authors have been kept in literary lexicons. There were plans for the publication of an anthology of texts by women, such as that of the romantic reserve officer Eduard de Witte, who was married to the writer Maria van Zuylekom (1759-1831). This only came to fruition in 1856 when A.J. van der Aa – who had previously included many women writers in his lexicon of Dutch poets, *Nieuw biographisch, anthologisch en critisch woordenboek van Nederlandsche dichters* (1844-1846) – published the anthology *Parelen uit de lettervruchten van Nederlandsche dichteressen* (Pearls from the literary fruits of Dutch poetesses), a book with a preface written from a peculiarly male perspective, in which he argues that women use their literary work to please 'us', just as they always want to 'impart their womanhood for our pleasure'. In Belgium, Ange Angillis was a great promotor of women's literature. Another Belgian, Maurits Basse, was the first to write a separate study of the phenomenon: *Het aandeel der vrouw in de Nederlandsche letterkunde* (Women's contribution to Netherlands literature, 1920-1921), a book which took stock of the situation at the time, and which was written according to the then prevalent norms. In the major literary histories of the 19th and 20th centuries, women's literature is given short shrift. Even when historians, like the positivist Jan te Winkel, mention names, there is hardly a serious, historical study of their work. We have come full circle. We can end this article as we have begun, by declaring that 'the study of women writers of the past has only in recent years gathered momentum in Belgium and the Netherlands'.

This article is largely based on the introduction of:

Met en zonder lauwerkrans. Schrijvende vrouwen uit de vroegmoderne tijd 1550-1850: van Anna Bijns tot Elise van Calcar. Chief editor: Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen; editors: Karel Porteman, Piet Couttenier, Lia van Gemert. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1997. For full references of cited works, see the bibliography, p.97-103.

Piet Couttenier

Women writing in 19th-century Flanders

The contribution and importance of women's literature in the southern part of the Low Countries has strongly depended, in the past, upon the circles in which women writers were working. Women played a major role in religious literature, which reached an apogee in the 17th century. Around that time women were leading the way as active participants in the large-scale projects of the Counter Reformation, and as writers of polemical texts, devotional and mystical literature. In the 18th and 19th century this literature gradually came to lose its significance, while profane literature, conversely, became increasingly more important. Even though women's literature written in the Dutch language originated in the Southern middle classes, its share there remained rather modest. It was only in the 19th century that women writers of non-religious literature came to the fore again.

This development was very strongly influenced by cultural and political factors. From the 17th century onwards the importance of the Dutch vernacular dwindled in intellectual and cultural contexts. In the Austrian Netherlands of the 18th century, the political and cultural elite spoke French. Due to the annexation to France between 1795 and 1814 public life became even more francophone, and consequently the progressive cultural elite became denationalized in that period. People who promoted modern liberal ideas did not believe that a national culture could be a sound basis for constructing a modern society. As a result, literature in Dutch remained in the hands of traditional writers, amateurs and rhetoricians who met and competed with each other in literary contests. Literature in Dutch received a new impetus in the culturally favourable climate during the existence of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands between 1815 and 1830. But the Belgian Revolution of 1830 restored the prominent role of French as the official language and as the cultural language of the upper classes. Nevertheless literature in Dutch was soon stimulated by a wave of enthusiastic patriotism, and it came to be important to the national Belgian cultural movement which expressed and defined a new national awareness.

A number of Dutch-speaking writers in the new Belgium believed that they could play a prominent role again. They were convinced that they, rather than the Walloons, were the real heirs of the legendary Belgians of ancient times. These Dutch-writing authors were loyal to the Belgian State and gained prestige and authority by means of their cultural activities in their struggle for the recognition of the language and literature of the Netherlands in a country dominated by French. Initially, their national, linguistic, literary-historical and literary activities had an entirely Belgian

character. But from 1840 onwards their cultural production became completely subordinate to the defence of a Flemish subnation within the Belgian State.

For this reason the development of 19th-century literature in Flanders was closely related to the creation of a distinct profile for the Flemish population, who at first defended the own language and culture, and who obtained some guarantees for legal equality and economic autonomy only towards the end of the century.[1] In the whole of the 19th century Flemish literature was closely linked up with extra-literary goals. As 'art engagé' it placed itself in the service of the national emancipation of a people, articulating ideals of civilization. Its objectives were very specific and well defined, oriented towards a new Flemish middle-class reading public. Only towards the end of the 19th century – the first traces of renewal date from around 1880 – did this literature develop into a relatively autonomous system. It was only then that Flemish literature became a modern and professionalized literature. This change occurred here later than in France or the northern part of the Netherlands, but the specific situation makes Flemish literature a special object of study from one perspective: it reveals the complete revision of a literary system in less than 60 years.

The poetess-mother

Women's contribution to Flemish literature of the 19th century and the way in which female writers experienced their authorship cannot be disconnected from these external factors.[2] Until the end of the century male mentors and critics called upon women writers to participate in the great civilization project of national literature. The role that women played in 19th-century Flemish society was strongly culturally conditioned. In spite of the progressiveness of the civil society of the time, where all civilians were in principle equal, women had no political voice. On the basis of intellectual and biological arguments they were supposedly predestined to play a maternal role in the middle-class family. The presupposition in the mostly favourable reviews of works by the relatively small group of women writers was that the main task of women is the care of their families and relatives. Literary activity was seen as a matter of scarce spare time, a free Sunday, a late evening under *'De avondlamp'* (The evening lamp), as an album by Maria Doolaeghe (1803-1884) was entitled symbolically in 1850.[3] Admittedly, women writers were allowed the right to participate in the civilization project – on the strict condition that their main task was never neglected. They, too, appeared to be able to produce literature expressing great ideas, it those concerning the right to use one's own language, the existence of a distinctive national character, the defence of freedom, independence and legal authority, the belief in the progress and affluence of the Flemish nation. Women who managed to combine both tasks were even showered with praise. Accordingly, this very same Maria Doolaeghe was flatteringly referred to as the 'Belgian Sappho'. Praise was also bestowed upon

[1] See Coopman/Scharpé 1910 and Couttenier 1998.
[2] For the first studies in this field, see Basse 1920-1921 and De Weerdt 1980. Bibliographical information is to be found in Sury 1898. For recent research see *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997.
[3] See also *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.835-846 (contribution Piet Couttenier).

those women writers who succeeded in combining male, rationally formulated objectives and elements like power and boldness of imagination with features which were – quite 'naturally' – considered to be typically feminine: a propensity for emotiveness and spirituality, and contact with the material and practical world of the family. Feeling for kind-heartedness, geniality and sensitivity was seen as a natural talent and inborn gift of women writers. This was the model of the poetess-mother as it was designed by Prudens van Duyse for the Flemish 19th-century poetess *par excellence* Maria Doolaeghe. This model would continue to dominate for part of the 20th century. Almost without exception, female writers adapted themselves to this model and rarely if ever offered resistance to this cultural imposition. Rather, they enthusiastically participated in the support of the national literature and even derived from this action a feeling of legitimacy and a rationale of their existence as women writers.

Shifts and innovations

In this strictly regulated literary system there were some Flemish women who resisted the pressure to conform to the culturally prescribed norms and who managed to deviate from what was expected from writers in the 19th century. They are rather scarce, but nevertheless conspicuous within the landscape of the 19th-century Dutch literature in Flanders. Once Maria Doolaeghe was considered by leading critics to be the exemplary poetess who promoted patriotic literature in the Flemish part of Belgium in the best way possible, after 1850, she mainly used the known topoi and genres of patriotic literature. She produced an impressive amount of lyrical and epic verse, as well as topical poetry that praises domestic happiness or national agriculture, art and industry. Whenever she reflects on her own authorship, she confirms mainstream expectations, i.e. a woman writing literature provides support for the great patriotic cause, but her role remains subordinate to her main tasks within the family, her familiar habitat, separated from public life.

But it is striking that Doolaeghe reached her highest expressiveness before the time of her canonization as poetess-mother. Her debut album from 1840, *Madelieven* (Daisies), contains some remarkable poems about motherhood which are characterized by an exceptional over-emphasis of feeling, a sentimental excess that we find, for example, in the pathetic dramatization of a mother giving birth who is sacrificed like a martyr, and in the pitifulness of the woman whose life balances between happiness and despair. Every happy scene hides a possible catastrophe, especially projected in anxious thoughts about the loss of a child. Here Doolaeghe clearly pays no heed to the strict standards set by the Flemish patriotic and civilizing literature which emerges around 1840.

Although these standards were generally accepted, some women writers obviously did manage either to get away from the conventional mainstream or to play a progressive role in the literary development. For example, Johanna Berchmans (1811-1890),[4] better known under her husband's name as Mrs. Courtmans, introduced an

[4] See on her *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.860-870 (contribution Piet Couttenier).

important element of social criticism in her realistic-didactic sketches and stories, which was until then – though less prominently – present in Hendrik Conscience's idealistic and romantic novels. In 1864 she wrote a novel, *De hut van tante Klara* (Aunt Clara's cabin), that was evidently inspired by Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's cabin,* on the exploitation of children in Flanders by schools that combined education with forced and lucrative lace-making. In other novels of the 1860s and 1870s she openly criticized the intolerance among ideological factions that surfaced in a political fight between Liberals and Catholics over the organization of education, which had disastrous effects for Belgium.

Jeanette Delcroix

Thanks to a systematic study of women's literature in 19th-century Flanders we could bring to the fore an interesting woman writer, Jeanette Delcroix (1826-1897),[5] who until now has been completely overshadowed by her more famous brother Désiré, a playwright who had a successful career as the first Flemish official for culture. Jeanette Delcroix published only one short story and one novel, but in this

[5] See *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.913-922 (contribution Piet Couttenier).

limited production she combines seriousness and humour in a surprising way – especially in comparison with other Flemish writers. She expresses sympathy for and commitment to the Flemish cause while sharply criticizing the self-conceited linguistic imperialism of French culture, but at the same time she portrays the fiercest defenders of that very same collective movement with biting irony. In her short novel *Fernandina en Frederika* (Fernandina and Frederika) of 1860, she describes the ups and downs in the lives of two very kind middle-class women and their plump cat. The quiet lives of these women are disturbed by the arrival of an other-worldly, conceited and naïve man who believes he has been called as a writer to lead the Flemish people to a better future. Delcroix shows the other side of a heroic Flemish faint-heart and do-gooder who gradually loses all sense of reality, from the perspective of these two down-to-earth wise women. She does this in a sophisticated way, and in doing so, she criticizes mercilessly the typical Flemish militant who defends the most radical Flemish-nationalistic ideals in public, but who is opportunistic enough to speak the hated and dominant language, i.e. French, in order to climb the social ladder. What is most striking about Delcroix's writing is her commonsensical style which ridicules the bombastic Flemish militant discourse. This ironical style is supported by narratorial comments which put her own story into perspective, by a dialogue acted out with the reader, and by the extensive use of indirect speech. Using these techniques, she is more than a decade ahead of the other Flemish novelists. Jeanette Delcroix's novel bears witness to the rise of realism in Flanders. Consequently we must reconsider the role in this context of Anton (Tony) Bergmann (1835-1874) and Domien Sleeckx (1818-1901), authors of the essay, generally seen as pioneering, *Over het realismus in de letterkunde* (On realism in literature): they only published it in 1862.

The innovatory role and literary-historical importance of the famous writers' duo, the sisters Rosalie (1834-1875) and Virginie Loveling (1836-1923),[6] is well established. These two writers played a crucial part in the renewal and professionalization of Dutch literature in Flanders. Their realistic and plain style enhanced the transformation of traditional and idealistic writings into a modern literature that can be characterized as an intellectually edifying and refined exploration of authentic individuality and social consciousness. They pay special attention to the place of women in their families and in society. In doing so, they do not try to avoid problems. On the contrary, both authors are rather inclined towards melancholy seriousness and pessimism. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that after the untimely death of Rosalie Loveling, Virginie alternately produced realistic novels and naturalistic experimental work, containing merciless analyses of bourgeois hypocrisy, social injustice, and women's difficult search for independence, intellectual training and social responsibility. Especially daring for her time and her milieu are a number of novels from the 1870s. One of these novels was published in 1877 under a male pseudonym and deals with political issues – then taboo for women –, namely, the ideological intolerance that reigned supreme in the Belgian educational policy: W.G.E. Walter, *In onze Vlaamse gewesten* (In our Flemish regions). Loveling's broad themes and the psychologically sound analyses of her characters presage the modern Dutch novel of the 20th century.

[6] See *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.937-952 (contribution Piet Couttenier).

Concluding remarks

Finally, we would like to present some general conclusions that emerge from our study of women writers in the Dutch literature produced in Flanders in the 19th century. Firstly, in general their poetry is, technically speaking, not of high quality. As poetesses, they are mostly unable to meet the high formal standards of poetry. In the 19th century women in Flanders write well only if they write prose. There is no sound explanation for this, apart from the lack of education and poetical scholarship. It is possible that prose is more suitable for reflection and critical distance, attitudes that are characteristic of women writers in view of the context we have described.[7] Throughout the 19th century, Flemish women writers are a rather exceptional group, a marginal phenomenon with respect to the mainstream literary establishment. In this position they can escape more easily from the standards and conventions of the system. Literary prose gives them more opportunities to question the obviousness of the conventional with critical acumen and, in the case of Jeanette Delcroix, with supreme irony.

Secondly, the 19th-century Flemish literary system was generally rather strongly connected with extra-literary factors and anchored in the ideological-political debate between traditionalists and progressives, between Catholics and Liberals. Hence it is obvious that as soon as a woman writer gained some importance on the literary scene, she, too, had to take this into account. It is striking that a woman writer whose debut was said to be promising, was welcomed with praise, if necessary labelled and incorporated into the ideological groups that determined the cultural debate. The case of Delcroix illustrates the reverse. When she made her debut in 1860, she was praised, because of her talent for observation. But – because of the sharpness of her pen? – the critics pointed out a number of important weaknesses in the composition of her novel: she dit not meet the requirements of veracity and unity of action. She got the advice to pay more attention to action rather than to reflexion in her way of characterization. As she felt not really encouraged, she did not continue her writing, and after her marriage she did not write anything of significance. Arguably, Jeanette Delcroix symbolizes the woman writer who is castigated for her progressiveness and her audacity, and who is consequently discouraged from pursuing a promising literary career.

[7] Nevertheless, the situation can be compared to French literature. See Planté 1989, p.227-253.

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Anna Bijns
(1493-1575)

Is zonde deugd, de Lutheranen zijn santen

Door d'abuiselijk wonder 't herte mespaaid staat.
Als ik overzie de heel wereld in 't ronde,
Zo dunkt mij, dat alle ding verdraaid gaat,
En 't volk ook met allen winden waait (ja 't),
Recht of men geen God of geen helle en vonde.
Luttel iemand es recht gelovig van gronde,
Maar meest elk es tot twijfelingen genegen.
't Kwaad heet nu goed en men acht 't voor zonde,
Dat goede werken te heten plegen.
Men laakt 't nu al, dat den vleze gaat tegen:
Dat den vleze mee gaat, wordt voor deugd geprezen.
Dit doet ook den monken haar kappen verwegen.
Och, waar is kerstenrijk toe bedegen
Door Luthers doctrijne, vol erreurs gerezen?
d'Evangelie Christi wordt nu gelezen
Van bankboeven, dronkaards, roekeloze calanten,
Om naar 't vlees te trekken, het blijkt uit dezen.
Is zonde deugd, de Lutheranen zijn santen.

Waar 't dat de mensen dit wel gade slaan wouwen,
Elk zou hier met mij zijnen zegel aansteken.
Is achterklap deugd, wilt dit vermaan knouwen,
Zo zijn 't al santen, die met Luther aanhouwen,
Want van niemand en kunnen zij wel gespreken.
Is 't zonde, dat wij biechten ons gebreken?
Is 't deugd, dat zij hem derren vermeten,
Hoe zondig zij zijn, vol vleselijker treken,
Dat met enen zuchte al wordt gekweten?
Is 't deugd, dat zij 's vrijdags vlees willen eten,
En is 't zonde, dat ander Christenen derven,
Zo houd ik ze ook voor heilige profeten.
Is 't deugd, dat zij alle weldoen vergeten,
Met niet te doene den hemel willen erven,
Zo mag men haren dag wel vieren, als zij sterven.
Is 't deugd onkruid in Gods akker planten,
Zo denke ik en zeg 't ook menigwerven:
Is zonde deugd, de Lutheranen zijn santen.

Is 't deugd in Bachus' kerke grote teugen drinken?
Is 't deugd hoveren, brassen, slampampen
En door onzuiverheid meer dan zeugen stinken?
Is 't deugd, dat zij menige stoute leugen dinken,
Paus, kardinalen, bisschoppen beschampen,
Tegen papen en monken roepen en stampen,
Den rechten weg laten en gaan den krommen?
Is 't deugd voor 't sacrament storten de lampen
En achter straten met toortsen lopen mommen,

If sin be virtue, then Luterans are saints!

Through wondrous folly my heart is disturbed
As I survey the whole world round:
There is not a thing that's not upside down,
And winds blow mindless folk about, yea,
As though there were no God, no hell.
Nary a one's a believer through and through
But all, it seems, incline to doubts.
Evil is named good, and what's now called sin,
Ere this had claim to title: good works.
Faulted is all that fights 'gainst flesh,
While pleasing the flesh is held great virtue;
Hence monks think the cowl too heavy a burden.
Alas, and has the Christian realm progressed
Through Luther's doctrine, sheer bursting with error?
The Gospel of Christ is now so construed
By foolish chumps, drunkards, hobbledehoys,
As fav'ring the flesh, one can learn well from this.
If sin be virtue, then Lutherans are saints!

Would folk accord careful attention to this
Their seal of approval they'd stamp on my words.
If slander be virtue – here's a word to the wise –
All they would be saints, who to Luther do hold,
For speaking well of their neighbor, that they can't do.
Confessing our failings, is that now our sin?
And is it their virtue, to loudly proclaim
The extent of their sins, their fleshly wiles
That are all acquitted with one single sigh?
To eat meat on Friday, is that virtue now,
And do Christians sin, should they choose to abstain?
Then I will concur: they are prophets holy.
And if it be virtue, good deeds to neglect,
Thinking that faineancy earns heaven's reward.
Then surely is holy the day that they die.
If it be virtue, sowing tares in God's field,
So think I to myself, and proclaim many a time:
If sin be virtue, then Lutherans are saints!

In Bacchus's temple to drink great draughts,
A virtue? to carouse, pig out and loaf about
And through impurity to outstink sows?
Is it virtue to invent brazen lies,
Deride cardinals, bishops, popes,
Holler and rage against priests and monks
Leave the straight for the crooked way?
Upsetting lamps at the altar: virtue that be,
And in back alleys mumming with torches

In geestelijke habijten met fluiten, met bommen,
Van brooddronkenschap wetende wat beginnen,
't Geld verdobbelen met vollen kommen
En kloosters beroven, kerken en dommen?
Mag men hiermede de hemel winnen,
Zij varen in den koor der serafinnen.
Is 't deugd dat men straft d'oprechte predikanten,
Gods moeder veracht, santen en santinnen?
Is zonde deugd, de Lutheranen zijn santen.

Is 't deugd Gods woord naar 's vlees' beroeren trekken?
Is 't deugd d'evangelie te lezen kwansuis,
Opdat elk daarmee mag zijn valse kuren dekken?
Is 't deugd met der heiliger figuren gekken,
De beelden te verwerpen, ja en 't heilig kruis,
Venus, Cupido en zulken gespuis,
Naakt in kameren te hangen zeer putertier?
Is dit al deugd, dit maakt mij confuis,
Zo behoefde men wel enen nieuwen brevier.
Daar wordt er vast vele gedood daar en hier.
Zal men die al voor martelaars eren,
Zo mag men wel scheuren den ouden kalengier,
Want daar en staan geen santen in dit papier,
Die 't gelove bevechten en de waarheid verkeren,
Met den evangelie alle deugd verleren,
Gelijk nu doen dees Lutherse plavanten.
Maar ik derf wel zeggen voor vrouwen en heren:
Is zonde deugd, de Lutheranen zijn santen.

Is 't dat de Lutheranen hovaardig blijven
In haar opinie, zo zij gewoon zijn,
Gulzig, onkuis, brooddronken, aalwaardig blijven
In dees deugden tot der dood volhaardig blijven,
Het eeuwig leven zal haren loon zijn.
In den hemel, daar Lucifer zal patroon zijn,
Daar zullen zij snap zonder vaagvuur varen,
In den hoogsten troon: zal 't daar niet schoon zijn?
Met Arrio, Helvidio, dat ketters waren,
Bij Hus en Wiclef zal men ze paren,
Daar hen sulfer en pek niet en zal missen,
Daar zullen zij met der duivelser scharen
Eeuwelijk moeten braaien en kissen,
Totdat de ratten de helle uitpissen,
Die 't vaagvuur uitpisten; hoort Lutherse kwanten,
Ik zegge nog eens al met der gissen:
Is zonde deugd, de Lutheranen zijn santen.

Anna Bijns: 'Is zonde deugd, de Lutheranen zijn santen'.
From: Herman Pleij (ed.), *'t Is al vrouwenwerk. Refreinen van Anna Bijns.*
Amsterdam: Querido, 1987, p.49-52.

Running 'round cowled, with flutes and with drums,
While madness of excess has gained sole possession?
They gamble their money hand over fist
And rob monasteries, churches, cathedrals:
If one could gain life eternal through this,
They'll soon rise to join seraphic choirs.
Is it a virtue, to insult upright preachers,
Despise saints and saintesses, the Mother of God?
If sin be virtue, then Lutherans are saints!
Perverting God's word to approve fleshly lusts,
A virtue? to 'interpret Scripture,' as it's called
In order to justify any false whim?
A virtue to make mockery of statues holy,
To spurn icons, yea, even the Holy Cross;
While Venus, Cupid and similar scum
Hang naked in chambers most lecherously?
If this be virtue, I'm totally confused,
The breviary I'm used to must be written new.
No doubt here and there many are killed for this faith;
If honor were due them, as Martyrs for God
The old Church almanac might as well be torn up,
For in that old paper there are no Saints
Who do battle with faith and pervert the truth,
Use Scripture to erase all virtuous habit,
As these Lutheran skunks are now wont to do.
But I dare say loudly, to women, to men,
If sin be virtue, then Lutherans are saints!

Prince:
If indeed the Lutherans do remain proud
In their opinions, as they tend to do,
Remain piggish, impure, impertinent, stupid,
Remain dogg'dly in these virtues up to death's door,
Surely life eternal will be their reward,
In heaven, where Lucifer is the patron saint,
No purgatory for them, they'll zip up in a trice
To the highest throne; what a marvelous place!
With Arius, Helvidius, they'll be trusty chums,
With Huss and with Wyclif, those heretic louts.
There they'll have plenty of sulpher, of pitch,
There, together with all of the devilish hosts,
Ever and ever they'll sizzle and fry,
Till rats' piss douses the fires of hell,
As purgatory was pissed out; hear well, Lutheran chaps,
I'll say just once more, I'll make a wild guess:
If sin be virtue, then Lutherans are saints!

Anna Bijns: 'If sin be virtue, then Lutherans are saints'.
Translation by Hermina Joldersma.
From: Kristiaan P. Aercke, *Women writing in Dutch.* New York/London: Garland, 1994, p.120-123.

Marijke Spies

Art or nature? Womanly ways to literature

When the issue of the relation between women and literature is raised, most attention is generally given to the female side, to the position of women writers in the different periods of history, how they were regarded, what subjects they wrote about, and how their works were received, etcetera. But there are always two sides to any relationship, and so when we consider the relation between women and literature, we have to look into both the changing position of women as well as the changing position of literature itself.

My thesis is that the ways in which women could and would participate in literary life depended to a huge degree on what 'literature' was supposed to be: on the objectives it was supposed to serve, the means it had to employ in order to realize those objectives, and, consequently, the ways by which one could become a writer. Therefore, this time I will use literature as my point of departure, and from that vantage point try to analyze how women came to write the way they did, and how changes in the realm of literature affected their position and production.

In doing so I will limit myself to 17th-century Holland, my area of specialization as a literary historian. But I hope that, in a more general way, my reflections may help to shed some light on the processes of interference between the social and the cultural situation in which women were – and not infrequently, still are – caught.

Anna Roemers

Around 1600, when Dutch literature came under the influence of the new Italian-French poetical mode, which we generally refer to as the 'Renaissance', vernacular poetry was thoroughly permeated by classical learning for the first time. The most important poet in this regard was Daniel Heinsius, who was appointed to Leiden University as lecturer in 1602 at the age of 22, and made 'professor extraordinarius' of poetry in 1603. His inaugural lesson, *De poetis et eorum interpretatoribus* (On poets and their interpreters), heralded the beginning of a new poetic era in Holland, marked by the influence of Latin and Greek lyric poetry and Neo-Platonic literary philosophy.

Heinsius not only discussed this, but in the same years realized his ideas in Neo-Latin and, what is more important to the subject at hand, in Dutch vernacular poetry, amplifying Petrarchist and Pléiadist influences with those of classical poets as

Catullus, Propertius and, above all, Theocritus. His poems were charming, playful and direct, but at the same time extremely erudite.[1]

It is certainly significant that Anna Roemersdr. Visscher (1583-1651), the very first Dutch woman we know of to have practised poetry on a more than incidental basis, started her literary activity in close contact with the very same Daniel Heinsius. At any rate, the oldest surviving poetry in her hand are poems adressed to him and to his cousin Jacob van Zevecote, in response to verses in which they had praised her as, in the words of Heinsius, the

> Goddess who once was born by Amstel's riverside,
> Whom Phoebus loves and Pallas takes as her pride
> [...]
> Minerva of our realm and tenth one of the nine,
> Whom Pegasus besprinkles with all his sweetest rain.
> [...][2]

Compliments she, of course, politely rejected.

The matrimonial role-model

In my view this literary correspondence attests to two different, but closely connected, social and cultural developments. On the one hand, the new lyrical poetry also embodied a new poetic function, that of a social binder. These poems were not so much intended to be morally instructive, but rather to be first and foremost socially affirmative. They were supposed to fulfil the function of polite 'conversation', a function that had been current for over a century in the Neo-Latin culture of the intellectual upper classes and had now become fashionable also in vernacular literature.

On the other hand there was a marked and growing tendency in Dutch upper middle-class society to embrace what I would call a 'matrimonial' ideology. Girls were supposed to be educated as spouses, housewives and mothers, and were not permitted to participate in outdoor social and economic life. This conception, already put forward by Erasmus in his declamation *De laude matrimonii,* was fairly new to 17th-century Holland. Up to that time, women normally participated in public life, sometimes to a high degree. To quote a well-known and often repeated statement by

[1] Becker-Cantarino 1978, p.23-63; Meter 1984, p.23-34 and 38-58.

[2] Heinsius 1983, p.33:
> Godin die by den stroom des Amstels sijt geboren,
> Van Phoebus seer bemint, van Pallas uytverkoren,
> [...]
> Minerva van ons landt, en tiende van de negen
> Die Pegasus bestort met zijnen soeten regen,
> [...]

All translations are mine (MS). Cf. also Visscher 1881, vol.II, p.1-6 and 17-20; on her: *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.150-151 (contribution Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen and Hans Luijten); poems translated in English in: Meijer 1998, p.50-56.

Lodovico Guicciardini, in his *Descritione di tutti i Paesi Bassi* (1567, translated into Dutch in 1612):

> The women in this country [...] not only go to and fro in town to manage their affairs, but they travel from town to town through the country, without any company to speak of, and without anybody commenting upon it. [...] they occupy themselves also in buying and selling, and are industrious [...] in affairs that properly belong to men, and that with such an eagerness and skilfulness that in many places, as in Holland and Zeeland, men leave it to women to handle everything.[3]

But since that time a veritable 'civilization offensive' forced girls and women to stay within the confines of the home, beginning with the upper middle-classes. The Visscher family belonged to this social group, as did Heinsius, who was one of the very first in Holland to express this ideology. In the verse introduction to his *Spiegel van de doorluchtige, eerlicke, cloucke, deuchtsame en de verstandege vrouwen* (Mirror of illustrious, honest, brave, virtuous, and intelligent women) of 1606 he wrote:

> It is an old debate, originating from long ago,
> And yet not clearly solved today,
> Who, on the point of virtue and intelligence,
> Is to be given the prize and victory: women or men.
> The men have with brave hands
> Conquered cities and countries,
> And have brought in their power and command
> The whole globe of the world.
> On the contrary the virtues and talents
> Of women are hidden and buried,
> And woman's faithful nature, her chaste behaviour
> Have the threshold of the house as their boundary.[4]

[3] Guicciardini 1612, p.29:
'De Vrouwen van desen lande [...] gaen niet alleenlijck over ende weder, in de stadt, om haer saecken te beschicken: maer reysen oock over landt, van den eenen ten anderen met luttel geselschaps, sonder eenighe berispinghe. Zy zijn seer sober, besich ende altijdt wat doende, beschickende niet alleenlijck huyswerck ende huyshoudinghe, daer de mans hen luttel met becommeren: [...] Maer onderwinden haer oock met coopmanschap, in't coopen ende vercoopen: ende zijn neerstich in de weere [...] in hante-ringhen die den mans eyghentlijck aengaen, met alsulcke behendicheyt ende vlyticheydt, dat te veel plaetsen, als in Hollandt ende Zeelandt, de mans den vrouwen alle dinghen laten beschicken'.

[4] Theocritus a Ganda 1606, p. (2) recto:
Het is een out gheschil, van langhen tijdt gheresen,
En noch op desen dach niet duydelick ghewesen,
Wie datmen geven moet van deuchden en verstandt
De Vrouwen oft de Mans den prys en d'overhandt.
De Mannen hebben eerst met cloeckicheyt van handen
Ghenomen in haer macht de Steden ende Landen,
En onder haer ghebiedt, en onder haer ghewelt
Des aertrijcx ronde Cloot ghetrocken en ghestelt.
Daer teghen is de deucht, daer teghen zijn de ghaven
Vant vrouwelick gheslacht besloten en begraven.
En haer ghetrou ghemoet, end' haeren handel kuys,
Heeft tot zijn leste pael den Dorpel van het huys.

In the course of the first half of the century these ideas would slowly spread throughout Dutch middle-class society, thanks to the propaganda of Jacob Cats, the uncontested best-selling author in Dutch literature on translations of works by Cats in german and the scandinavian languages.[5]

The matrimonial role-model was not devoid of all intellectual content. As a spouse, her husband's partner, and as a mother, the educator of her children, a woman needed at least some cultural baggage. Erasmus had already emphasized this point, and Heinsius and Cats agreed. But 'culture' in the upper middle-class milieu where these ideas were first embraced meant for the most part classicist – and therefore intellectual – culture. Women's share in it could only be second-hand. There was no 'Latin school' or university training available to them. They were dependent on what they could learn from their fathers, brothers or husbands, or were able to pick up from casual reading.[6]

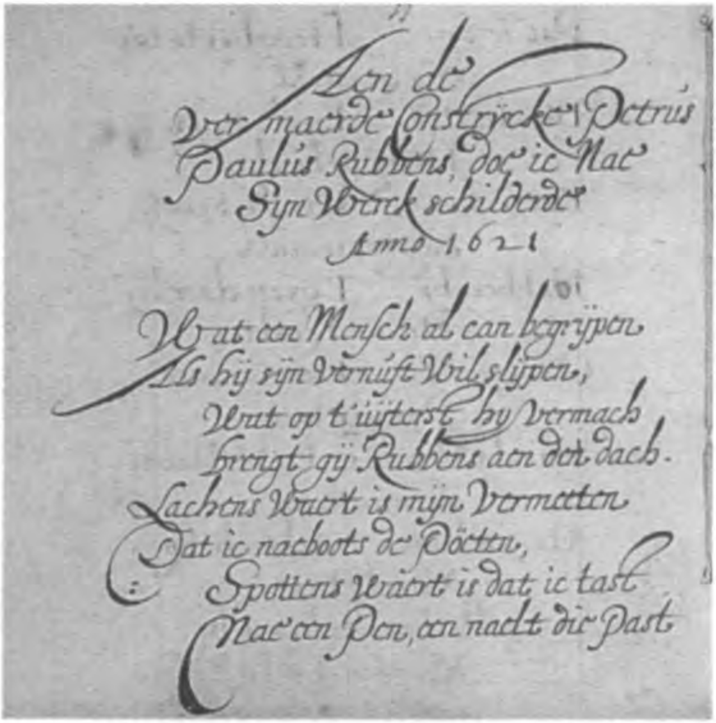
Literature as social conversation

Returning to Anna Roemersdr. Visscher – shortly called Anna Roemers –, we can now define her literary position more precisely. Nearly all the work we know of by her is written in relation to the poetry of men. A few years after her poetical correspondance with Heinsius and Zevecote, there followed a similar exchange with Constantijn Huygens and Pieter Cornelisz. Hooft, the two leading Dutch poets of the new generation, and with some friends in Zeeland on the occasion of a visit there, particularly Jacob Cats and Johanna Coomans.[7] Aside from that, we have a few laudatory poems, also addressed to men. Her only surviving independent literary works are a translation of a collection of religious emblems by the French Huguenot poetess Georgette de Montenay – this translation was published only in the 19th century[8] –, and the brief poems she added to the reprint of her father's emblem book. That's all – and please note: she was the most famous Dutch poetess of the 17th century.

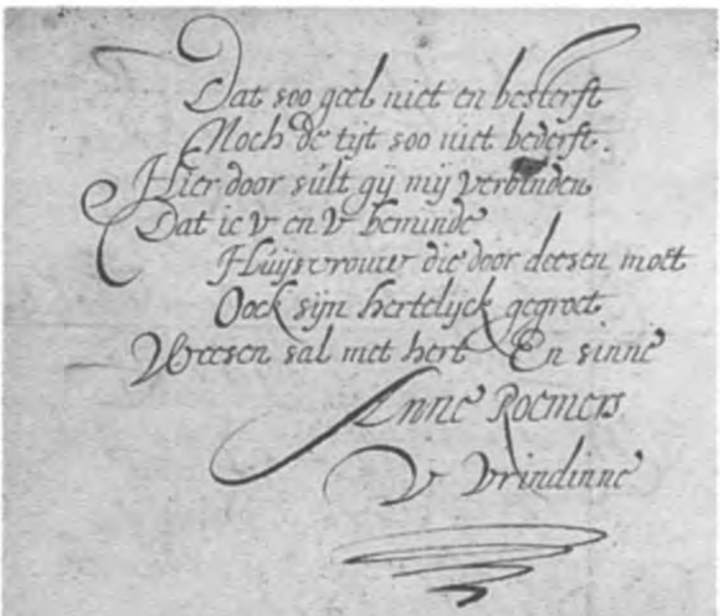
This does not mean, of course, that she did not write more. But it is telling that only the poetry she wrote in connection with men was saved from the ravages of time. Why? Because it was printed in their publications. The rest remained in manuscript form, and was preserved only by accident, if at all. Such were the consequences of the new social function of lyrical poetry.

The consequences for the nature of her verses are no less significant. Riet Schenkeveld has argued that Anna Roemers marked her own literary position by reacting with critical irony towards the high poetic pretentions of her male friends. We may even say that in doing so she formulated, to a certain extent, a female poetics. But if this is true – and I think it is –, the awareness thereof remained within the boundaries of her private correspondence.

[5] See Spies/Frijhoff 1999, p. 586–589.
[6] See also Spies 1995b, p.9-11.
[7] See on her *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.156-159 (contribution Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen).
[8] For this translation, see Margolin 1989; for a useful discussion of Montenay's work: Matthews Grieco 1994.


Aen de
Ver-maerde Constrijcker Petrus
Paulus Rubbens, doe ic nae
Syn werck schilderde
Anno 1621

Wat een Mensch al can begrijpen
Als hij syn vernúft wil slijpen,
Wat op t'uijterst hy vermach
brengt gij Rubbens aen den dach.
Lachens waert is mijn vermeeten
Dat ic naeboots de Poëten,
Spottens waert is dat ic tast
Nae een Pen, een naelt die past


Dat soo geel niet en besterft
Noch de tijt soo niet bederft.
Hier door sult gij mij verbinden
Dat ic v en v beminde
Huijsvrouwe die door deesen moet
Oock sijn hertelijck gegroet.
Wesen sal met hert en sinne
Anne Roemers
v Vriendinne

Anna Roemersdr. Visscher's hand-writing: first and last pages of a poem adressed to Rubens (1621).

Besides, men could find the time to write other, more serious kinds of poetry than love lyrics and conversational verses. There is no indication that Anna ever tried her hand at some greater work – a tragedy, an epic, or a long descriptive poem. With a household on her hands, first after her mother's death, and then when she was married, she simply was not able to do so: for a woman housekeeping always came before any other activity.[9]

The literary fate of Anna Roemers can stand for that of most female writers of the Dutch 17th century. Out of the oeuvre of her younger (perhaps even more gifted) sister, Maria Tesselschade,[10] some twenty-odd poems survive because she communicated them to male friends. Of her translation of Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, which she worked on for about twenty years, we know only the stanza she quoted in a letter to Hooft.[11]

To my knowledge, there exists only one publication of an original major work by a woman in the 17th century: *Het lof der vrouwen* (In praise of women, 1643), a long didactic poem written by Johanna Hoobius, daughter of a burgomaster in Zeeland.[12] It testifies to rather wide reading and a skilful rhyming ability, but nothing more than that. Apart from translations, on the whole women confined themselves to religious and social lyrical poetry.

I will come to the religious poetry later on. The secular poetry written by women nearly always performed the function of social 'conversation', even entertainment. The latter phenomenon is illustrated by the popularity of a poetic device: the repetition of the same rhyming words from poem to poem, that was introduced by Huygens in his correspondence with Anna Roemers in 1619. In 1621 it was repeated in a whole series of sonnets by Hooft, Huygens, Anna and Maria Tesselschade Roemers, and other friends; in 1623 it was used again by Hooft and Huygens in an exchange of poems between them. It was revived in 1648 – not without a nod towards the past – by the Frisian poetess Sibylle van Griethuysen, who was quite famous at the time, in a poetical exchange with Huygens.[13] The culmination of the game was reached when in 1654 a group of no fewer than twelve poets, three of whom were women, played it around a rather daring erotic theme.[14]

Middle class women writers

By that time, however, the literary situation itself had changed. What in the first quarter-century had been the custom of a small elite had now spread throughout the broad, middle-class layer of the population. Writing poetry had become a kind of national sport. At the same time the number of women engaged in it had also

[9] *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.229-239 (contribution Annelies de Jeu).
[10] See the contribution of Maria-Theresia Leuker for a discussion of her 19th-century reputation.
[11] Roemers 1994, passim; Spies 1995b, p.21; on her: Smits-Veldt 1994; *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.171-172 (contribution Ton van Strien); poems translated in English in: Meijer 1998, p.56-59.
[12] *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.226-235 (contribution Els Stronks).
[13] *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.256-258; on her: idem, p.252-253 (contribution Dorthe Schipperheijn).
[14] Minderaa 1964, p.118-145.

increased considerably. As far as I know, until about 1640 Anna and Maria Tesselschade Roemers, together with Johanna Coomans from Zeeland, were the only women in the Dutch Republic who had published any secular poetry. But twenty years later the situation was completely different. In the ten or so anthologies and songbooks that appeared between 1650 and 1660, a host of new poetesses came forward: Sibylle van Griethuysen, Sibylle van Jongstal, Catharina Questiers, Katarina Verwers, Katharina Lescailje, Alida Bruno, Goudina van Weert. And there were quite a lot more of them – *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* bears abundantly testimony to that.

Both developments – an increase in the popularity of poetry writing and in the number of female poets – were the result of the growth of a rather well-to-do and relatively well-educated middle class. But something else may have been at work, which would explain the kind of poetry that was written.

By far the greatest part of the lyrical poetry written after 1650 consists of what is known as occasional poetry. The sheer quantity of birth, marriage, anniversary and funeral verses written from that time on is almost unimaginable. At the same time the poetical subtleties that had been characteristic of the poems of the Visscher sisters and their friends, as well as the intimacy and friendship that had pervaded their verses, seemed to make room for a more formal diction and a more polite tone. The most important reason for all this, I think, was the programme of the 'Latin school'.

In 1625 the government of Holland established a regulation for all 'Latin schools' which prescribed the composition of occasional poetry in the sixth and final class. Not many pupils would have mastered Latin well enough to continue this activity for the rest of their lives, at least in Latin. But it can hardly be accidental that from the moment the generation of 1625 left school, this type of poetry, for which classicist poetics had developed fixed rules, became so extremely popular also among poets writing in Dutch.

For women this development resulted in a paradoxical position. The social situation in which this poetry functioned was closer to their way of life than ever before, but at the same time women lacked the formal education to write it in a proper, scholarly, way. Male authors were trained for years in the forms and content of classical poetry, and the best, such as Heinsius, Hooft and Huygens, were able to play with it and come up with innovations that defined the superiority of their verses. Women, however gifted they may have been, simply missed the opportunity to surpass the level of mediocrity. The many textbooks and self-help manuals which supported schoolboys in their efforts, and from which examples and devices could easily be transferred to vernacular poetry, were no help to them because they were written in Latin.[15] The more poetry became subject to formal rules, the more women inevitably fell short of them.

To give some examples: Sibylle van Griethuysen was, as mentioned previously, quite famous in her time. And she was as eager to adapt the Horatian ode to her needs as Vondel, the greatest Dutch poet of her age. The fatal difference, not only between her work and Vondel's unsurpassable poetry, but between her work and that

[15] Spies 1995a, p.100-105.

of every educated man at the time, was a lack of sense of style and decorum. It is difficult to give an impression of this in translation, but allow me to try a few verses. They are directed to Adrianus Hasius, a Protestant clergyman who had written a pious book. The literal meaning of 'Hasius', by the way, is 'hare':

> Here's Adrian, an alert Hare,
> [...] whose watchful eyes never do slumber,
> Nor can be frightened by Babel's thunder,
> But who is concerned with zealous care
> To push with his ordained hare's feet
> The gruesome, self-conceited sinners
> Off their doomed, erroneous street;
> [...].[16]

The same violation of good taste characterizes the 'battle of laurels' in which two other poetesses, Catharina Questiers and Cornelia van der Veer, engaged themselves. Catharina, this time not imitating Horace but Pindar, wrote:

> No, priest of Phoebus, I do not deserve laurels,
> My verses are weak, they have neither power nor muscles
> To climb to the top of famous Helicon; [...]

And Cornelia replied in the same manner:

> I am unworthy for the service of him who kisses laurels
> Instead of Daphne's mouth; your verses have muscles
> And veins loaded with marrow, to climb Helicon
> With pleasure; [...].[17]

Appalling verses indeed – in Dutch as well. They are the result, I think, of a poetics that was not internalized in any way. The life-long adaptation to classical modes that

[16] In: *Klioos kraam 1656*, vol.I, 1656, p.14-15:
Hier's Adriaen, een wacker Haes,
[...] wiens oog'-wit nimmer slommert,
Noch schrickt voor Babels hol geraes;
Maer die in d'ijver sich bekommert,
Om 't eygen-heylig grouwel-pack,
Met sijn gewijde Hase-poten,
Van 't pestig dool-padt af te stoten;
[...].

[17] Questiers/Van der Veer 1665, p.4:
Neen, Febus Priesterin, my passen gheen Laurieren;
Mijn vaarzen zijn te swack, zy hebben kracht noch spieren,
Om op den top van 't wijd-beroemde Helicon
Te klauteren; [...]
and p.7:
Ik ben onwaardt den dienst van hem die Lauwerieren
In plaats van Dafne kust; uw vaarzen hebben spieren,
En aaders vol van merch, waar door gy Helikon
Beklauterdt met vermaak; [...]
On the two of them: *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.316-317 (contribution Theanne Boer and Lia van Gemert) and p.354-356 (contribution Lia van Gemert); some poems by Questiers translated in English in: Meijer 1998, p.58-61.

men were trained for in school could not be caught up with by simply copying superficial appearances.

Female literary consciousness

But that is only part of the story. At the same time, the increasing activity of female writers brought about a distinct perception of their own special position. One preliminary sign is the awareness of a female canon, to which many women adressed themselves. I have already mentioned Anna Roemersdr. Visscher in this context. In most cases, however, this awareness did not extend further than simply mentioning the names of female predecessors. Johanna Hoobius already had spoken of the 'worthy Coomans child', who

> Was loved by everyone for her spirituality
> And served the juveniles with pretty poetry

and of Anna Roemers, who wrote such 'sweet verses'.[18]

In 1652 a lady from Leeuwarden, Eelkje van Bouricius, took up the theme, writing in a poem adressed to Huygens:

> I am no Roemers child, no Coomans, no Griethuysen,
> Who from Hippocrene with wide opened sluices
> Are watered through and through with Helicon's sweet rains,
> Whereof I never had one drop in my young veins.[19]

But like Anna Roemers some decades earlier, one poetess, Maria Margareta van Akerlaecken, testified to her awareness of the poetical implications of her special position. Maria Margareta van Akerlaecken was connected with the court of the great elector Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg and his wife Louise Henriëtte of Nassau at Cleves, and was one of the very first women to publish her own secular poetry. In the opening poem of her bundle *Den Cleefschen Pegasus* (The Pegasus of Cleves, 1654) she too declares herself a lesser poet than Anna and Tesselschade Roemers, Johanna Coomans, and, of course, Anna Maria van Schurman, the most learned woman of the Dutch Republic, who is often named in this context. But, in contrast to her colleagues, Maria Margareta turns her shortcoming into an advantage:

[18] Hoobius 1643, p.8:
Het is ons noch bekent hoe Comans weerde kint
Wert om haer geestigheydt van yder een bemint.
Sy gaet een aerdigh Dicht de jonge jeught vereeren.
[...]
En Iuffrou *Anna* oock, een Maeght vol geestigheden,
Gingh die niet menichmael haer jonge tyd besteden,
In soete Poësy [...]

[19] Ick ben geen Romers kint, geen Comans, geen Griethuysen,
Die uyt het Hingste bron, als met geheele sluysen,
Ten volsten sijn gedrinckt met Heliconis nat,
Daer ick den minsten drop noch noeit en heb gehadt.
From: Huygens 1869, p.488. On her: *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997 p.248 (contribution Dorthe Schipperheijn), and p.59 (Introduction).

[...] I do not say I have studied a lot,
But I write simply, plainly, just as Nature taught,
And am thinking on my own: the poets at the start
Of time, they also did not know of any 'Art'.
Therefore I am quite happy in my mind
That for this reason I am of the first poet's kind.[20]

The 'first poets' being the greatest and most inspired of all according to classicist poetics.

The lack of formal education

Maria Margareta van Akerlaecken was quite right, I think, although contrary to Anna Roemers she did not demonstrate it in her clumsily written verses. Women's poetry was at its best when it remained plain and simple, rather than trying to imitate the learned artfulness of men. Not because women are essentially closer to 'nature' – whatever that may be – but because they were forced to be, by the lack of formal education. *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* bears ample testimony to the fact that when women forgot about poetics delightful verses tended to appear.

Here we come to a point where religious poetry should enter the picture. One would suppose that, when writing pious verses, women would be most genuine and least impressed by any learning whatsoever. I must say that as far as the Northern Netherlands are concerned, *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* does not support this idea. Judith Lubbers, a Mennonite woman who was converted to Roman Catholicism, published some beautiful religious poetry in her album *Der lijden vreucht* (The pleasure of suffering, 1649).[21] But for the most part the religious poetry published in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* does not excel in simplicity. What is more, the whole criterion does not really apply to this area, because religious poetry as such was often direct and simple, also when it was written by men. However, looking at the verses written by the many religious women in the Southern Netherlands, I think there may be something in my hypothesis.

At any event, I would suggest that the lack of formal education formed the greatest if not the only impediment to women's creativity in the classicist period, whether in religious or secular poetry. Once naturalness and originality became the most prized virtues of literature, women such as Betje Wolff, Aagje Deken and Geertruida Bosboom-Toussaint proved to be as good if not better writers than many of their male colleagues. And that seems to me sufficient support for my assertion.

[20] Van Akerlaecken 1654, p. A 1 verso:
[...] ick en segghe niet, ick hebbe gestudeert,
Maer schrijve simpel slecht, soo de Natuer my leert,
End' dencke in myn selfs, de alder eerst Poëten,
Die hebben in haer tijdt meed' van geen Cunst geweten,
Waerom ick seer wel ben, in mijnen Geest te vree,
Dat ick hier door gelijck ben d'eerst Poëten mee.
On her: *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.200 (contribution Ton van Strien).

[21] On her: *Met en zonder lauwerkrans 1997*, p.190-193 (contribution Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen).

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Authoress or romantic heroine: the problem of plurality in the Hungarian literary world around 1800

For women's political and cultural rights in Hungary – as in many other countries – men were the first to speak up.[1] In comparison with contemporary French and Prussian examples of a similar nature, their tone was not over-demanding, and indeed, sometimes even gave evidence of inner ambivalence; nevertheless, they achieved immediate success to a certain extent.[2] But the real significance of these remarks lay with their precedential character, and their influence was felt only in the long run. In these early examples of 'pre-feminist' writing, the motivation behind the claims for extending women's rights was neither the intention to emancipate women, nor philosophical or even ethical considerations;[3] rather, it was a kind of political pragmatism.

In the eyes of the politicians, both those championing the ideas of the European Enlightenment, and those insisting on a traditionalistic national revival (and along with this, sometimes urging for national independence), women were key figures in so far as they were responsible for educating the next generation.[4] It is not surprising

[1] In 1790, three pamphlets dealt with this question. The first was composed in Vienna by the secretary of one of the most influential Hungarian magnates, Ferenc Széchényi. The secretary made a 'humble request' so that ladies of noble birth could take part – as members of the audience – in the national assembly, that is, gather information personally about the affairs of the country: *A magyar anyáknak az ország-gyülésre egybe-gyült ország nagyai s magyar atyák elejébe terjesztett alázatos kérések* (also published in German: *Der Ungarischen Mütter an die zum Reichstag versammelte Magnaten und Ungarischen Väter gestellte demüthige Bitte. Aus der Ungarischen Sprache buchstäblich übersetzt, und den Deutschen Damen gewidmet. Gedruckt in Römischen Reich).*
Ádám Pálóczi Horváth, the eccentric – and more or less traditionalist – man of letters, contributed two pamphlets to the matter, these two pamphlets being somewhat contradictory: *A magyar asszonyok prókátora a Budán öszve-gyült rendekhez* (The advocate of Hungarian women to the Estates assembled in Buda), and *A férjfiak felelete az asszonyokhoz, arra a javallásra: hogy jó vólna az asszonyokat-is a közönséges gyülekezetekbe bé-botsátani (*The men's reply to the women, on the suggestion, whether it would be sensible to allow women to enter the General Assemblies). In his pamphlets, Pálóczi stated the most important argument for the extension of women's cultural and political rights: '[...] it is easier to make a great man through education out of the son of a sharp and smart-witted woman [...]'.

[2] From 1791 on, women could attend – in the audience – the meetings of the Diet.

[3] Except for the first booklet written, 1785, in Hungarian in the defence of women (which was published under a female pseudonym, but was actually written by a renowned poet of the era, Pál Ányos): Anna Carberi, *Megmutatás, hogy az asszonyi személyek is emberek* (A demonstration to show that women are also people). This work did not claim the extension of women's rights, rather, it dealt with the confutation of the statements of a misogynous pamphlet published anonymously two years before.

[4] At the Hungarian Diet of 1790-1791, the father of the kindergarten-founder Teréz [Therese] Brunszvik, Count Antal Brunszvik, urged the establishment of young ladies' colleges at public expense, for the improvement of the country. From that time on, the question of women's education, both in the nar-

therefore, that those engaged in controlling cultural affairs had a similar pragmatical interest in women. However, members of the latter group (all of them men, as a matter of course) tackled the 'question of women' in a more effective and subtle way, which can be explained by two factors: the essential difference between the political and cultural spheres, and the complete revival of the contemporary literary world as well as almost all forms of literary activity.

In Hungary, the end of the 18th century witnessed a paradigm shift of great importance in almost all intellectual fields related to written literature. The institutionalization of the literary and scientific world and the expansion of the press began around this time, and – along with literary amateurism and dilettantism – the aspiration to professionalism emerged. The Hungarian language gradually replaced Latin, and German fell outside the scope of national culture.[5] Linguistic diversity did not disappear, however, but underwent considerable alterations. The new Hungarian literature shook off the presence of foreign languages relatively easily, and it consisted more and more of works written only in Hungarian. Nevertheless, it had to fight a new and permanent battle against sociolects, regional dialects and idiolects, to shape and assert the standard language of literature. The ongoing disputes – concerned with the struggles of the neologistic movement as well as with cultural orientation, with the considerations of canonization, with writers' associations and with literary criticism – took place within the confines of the literary and scientific world, but they also dealt more broadly with almost all the important issues of contemporary politics and the public sphere.

In retrospect, the literary world at the turn of the 18th-19th century in Hungary appears a battlefield where two sharply divided groups, the conservatives and the modernists, fought for victory. In reality, neither of the opposing sides – the reformers who could neither wait nor hope for the unobstructed but slow process of organic development, and the guardians of traditional values in culture and mentality – stood for coherent, consistently separate value systems.[6] In all probability, this serves as an explanation for the success of the paradigm shift, as this is the reason why the two opposing sides could agree on some of the basic issues. For instance, interpreting and handling the question of Hungarian literature and science in a new light, as national interests, were goals common to both groups of opponents. They also reached an agreement concerning the necessity of cultural changes, but their views differed sharply as to the manner, pace and direction of these changes. The great development in Hungarian literature and the literary world at the end of the 18th century was based

rower and broader sense, proved to be of great political importance, and the source of debates and battles.

[5] In Hungary (not including Transylvania) in the 18th century, Latin was the language of the church (only the Roman Catholic church, as a matter of course), of science and to some extent of poetry, also functioning as a natural link with the culture of antiquity and with the international world of science. In the multinational country where many languages were spoken, Latin was also the intermediary language: that of the law and politics.

[6] Describing the various and essentially opposed cultural motivations and creative tendencies of the era in his book first published in 1926, János Horváth regarded them as dependent on each other and succeeding together (see Horváth 1978, vol.I, p.17, p.26, etc.).

on the mutual agreement that can be traced to the idea of the unity of national interests. This development later also interlinked closely with the penetration of literature into the spheres of social and private life to an extent never experienced before – a phenomenon that also took place in other countries at the same time.

At the end of the 18th century, however, not only the language, but also the mentality, topics, and forms of literary works, and moreover, the literary world itself were characterized by a plurality never known before. All the more so, as the circle of both authors and readers widened considerably. Moreover, the new roles were not acquired exclusively by men – women also appeared on the scene.

Modernists and conservatives both agreed that the new Hungarian literature needed the contribution of women. But their opinions varied as to what sort of roles women should play in literature. In fact, there had been antecedents: a small number of women (four) had already been mentioned among the 528 Hungarian writers and scientists listed by Péter Bod as early as 1767, in his encyclopedic work *Magyar Athenas* (Hungarian Athenas).[7] This book reflects the picture of Hungarian literature still in the state of literary multilingualism and cultural plurality typical of the earlier paradigm. Nevertheless, the group of 'learned women' mentioned on its pages was almost perfectly homogeneous: all of them were of aristocratic lineage, and lived in Transylvania;[8] they were all Hungarian by birth and identity, wrote in Hungarian, and were devout Protestants. Their works are imbued with an intense piety, which was also the driving force behind their significant activities as the supporters of education and patrons of art, pursued for the benefit of their denomination.[9] They were motivated by public-spiritedness, the desire to serve their community, and their poetry is characterized by both this and a strong element of intimacy. (Indeed, some of them even gave a poetic account of the unhappiness of their private lives.)

Péter Bod – court chaplain to the most outstanding woman writer of the age, the Transylvanian Countess Kata Bethlen (1700-1759) – was the first to incorporate the works and oeuvres of women writers in the history of Hungarian literature from the beginnings until his own times. With this, as he remarked, his aim was to encourage

[7] Full title of the volume in translation: Hungarian Athenas or, the history of learned people who lived in Transylvania and Hungary, and who became famous through publishing some of their writings, leaving their memory to posterity, assiduously collected during the years and published for our contemporaries and for the succeeding generations as a testimony and exhortation to do good, by the Rev. Péter Bod, serving Christ in the Congregation of Magyarigen.

[8] Until the mid-16th century, Transylvania had formed part of the Hungarian Kingdom, and became a separate principality in 1571, after the Turkish occupation, when the country broke up into three parts. Although people of several nationalities inhabited Transylvania, it was the stronghold of Hungarian language and culture (and also of Protestantism) in the 16th and 17th centuries. When the Turks were driven out of Hungary, Transylvania lost its separate status and became a part of the Habsburg Empire as Hungarian crown land. Its cultural role decreased temporarily, but from the end of the 18th century, it took part in the literary, scientific and political revival. Still, it was temporarily united with the mother-country only in 1848, and reunited in 1867. (Transylvania has been a part of Romania since the end of the First World War.)

[9] Péter Bod, the Transylvanian Protestant clergyman could only record Transylvanian (and Protestant) women poets and learned women, due to a lack of printed works. Therefore, his list is far from complete; for instance, the names and works of Catholic women poets from Upper Hungary are not mentioned. See Sárdi 1997.

'members of the gentle sex' to follow their examples, since 'in the civilized foreign countries' there were far more 'learned women' than in Hungary.

In the following two centuries, referring to foreign examples became a favourite phrase with most of those who raised their voice to support women's contribution to the literary and scientific world. This was all the more necessary since a good number of *literati,* who considered themselves 'Europeans' and representatives of modern views, and acted accordingly in other issues, objected to the activity of women writers on principle, consistently, and sometimes almost obsessively. On the other hand, this constant reference to foreign examples created and perpetuated a false picture in Hungarian and foreign public opinion: that of the Hungarian woman suffering from discrimination of varied sorts. However, this image can be justified neither by evidence drawn from civil law – especially from the provisions of property law –, nor by the historically evolved social status of Hungarian noblewomen, and even less by the standards of social life.[10]

Although Hungarian literary history acknowledges a number of women poets from around the end of the 18th century, the period of the great paradigm shift, literary critics do not attach great importance to these women poets, who did not play any significant role in the development of Hungarian literature. Naturally, the dilettante women poets of the time, who appeared on the literary scene almost as one group, reflected on their own female identity and on their special problems in life as women; nevertheless, their literary aspirations were not characterized by separatism. On the contrary, their intention was to join a more or less open community: the newly forming community of Hungarian-language writers.

It is obviously an important issue that, while this community taken as a whole can be described as relatively heterogeneous, the group of women intending to join them was, on the contrary, conspicuous by its homogeneity. In spite of their differences in talent and education, all these women were alike in their lack of proper schooling, and therefore in being autodidacts, in the character of their literary aspirations and activities, in their preference for certain literary forms, as well as in the orientation of their cultural values. This homogeneity also applies to their social origins: as opposed to earlier women writers, their forerunners (mentioned by Bod), they mostly came from the lower ranks of nobility, and although they were also Protestants (Calvinists),[11] issues related to faith and the religious life were not their main concern. The secularization of Hungarian literature written by women was intensified by this group. Previously, Hungarian women writers had been chiefly involved with translating pious literature and composing religious meditations, but now these women turned to secular subjects, to the issues of everyday life. Their literary aspirations were motivated first and foremost by their ambition to find a place for themselves in the Hungarian literary world.

[10] Although the division of labour based on the roles of the sexes was prevalent in the Hungarian public and private spheres, too, this did not imply the absolute control of the husband over the wife, moreover, a married woman was regarded as an independent legal entity even in old Hungarian law. See Mádai 1913.

[11] Until the end of the 19th century, the number of Protestant women writers is conspicuously high among Hungarian women authors. The proliferation of didactic works by women (edifying and didactic novels, plays, polemical and educating treatises, guides to manners and conduct, etc.) can probably be ascribed to this phenomenon.

Even the humblest form of fame, the mere possibility of seeing their works in print, was enough to make most of them content. The only exception was the best woman poet of the period, Mrs Jànos Màté née Krisztinq Ujfalvy (1761-1818) who descended from distinguished noble family: she did not publish any of her poems. For the others – such as Borbàla Molnàr (1760-1825), a lady companion in a count's house, Klara Valyi, a midwife (who published a volume in 1807) or Julianna Fabian (1765-1810), a bootmaker's wife – playing a part in the literary world was an opportunity for rising socially and for escaping from unwanted situations. Though the Hungarian criticus wrote about this compensatory nature of the literary activity of women only in the mid-19th century the dilettant women writers themselves of the 18th century were outspoken about it. The succesful woman poet Borbàla Molnàr (who was seen by her contemporaries as a Hungarian Minerva) said straight out that her unhappy marriage was provoking her to write.[12] Their attitude can be explained, among other reasons, by the fact that most of the contemporary writers and poets, and especially the leading figures of the literary revival, wanted to see women exclusively in the roles of readers and patrons. This is demonstrated not only by the contemporary dedications in books and magazines, but also by the model heroines of contemporary plays. They are all learned women in the ideal sense: educated by and promoting (that is, consuming) books, or literature, and as such, they are loyal supporters of the national cause.[13]

The creative tendency that is so typical of the end of the 18th century, which saw its aim in producing its work and readership at the same time, was enriched with a number of special features in the works of József Kármán (1769-1795), a young writer brought up on the ideas of the Enlightenment and on German culture. Kármán was the first to express the realization that, to the same extent that education has to take female roles into consideration, narrative fiction – aiming to influence mentalities –, would also have to adapt itself to the specific needs and tastes of women. He also broke new ground himself by taking the first, decisive, step with his short novel, *Fanni hagyományai* (Fanny's legacy, 1794), where 'the simple story of a woman' is related, imitating a female author writing in the first person singular.[14]

However, Hungarian writers of the time did not only invent heroines for the stage and as characters for novels (sometimes even fictitious women writers). They also made real women poets to be their colleagues in their literary activities. Almost every woman poet of the period took her – however humble – place in Hungarian literature with the help of men, and in some cases, literally speaking, in the company of men. It has to be admitted, though, that the initiative was usually taken by the women, who were looking for a protector, a partner, a companion to help them step into the literary world: a respected and famous literary gentleman, with whom they could open a poetic correspondence in public.

[12] See for more details: Fábri 1996, p. 7-36, 81-109.

[13] See György Bessenyei, *A philosophus* (The philosopher), comedy in five acts, 1777. Also: Mihály Csokonai Vitéz, *A méla Tempefői* (The pensive Tempefői), play in five acts, 1793 and *Cultura* (Culture), comedy in three acts, 1795.

[14] This work had long been considered an authentic piece of female writing; the second edition published in the mid-19th century was illustrated with the portrait of the imaginary authoress, Fanny.

The few literary figures who took it upon themselves to legitimate the entry of women into the literary world were not among the reformers. As patrons, their attitude was not characterized by the new, sentimental, intimacy, but by a kind of vigorous, traditional social disposition, unmistakably belonging to the order of nobility (and at the same time, having a national character), the very same frame of mind which determined their notion of literature.[15]

József Gvadányi.

[15] In the first decades of the 19th century, Ádám Pálóczi Horváth (see note 1), rallied round himself a veritable bevy of women poets, which he named 'Göcseji Helikon' (the Helicon of Göcsej; the Göcsej was a backward region of Hungary at the time, so the name sounded as if someone was talking about 'the Helicon of Little Peddlington'.)

The most eminent of these patrons was a nobleman of Italian origin, a retired cavalry general in Queen Maria Theresia's army, and at the same time the most popular poet of his day: Count József Gvadányi (1725-1801). With an obliging civility, he entered into friendship with women with literary aspirations, and acknowledged his connections with them in public – he even published his poetic correspondence with them, edited by himself, with his own notes and at his own expense. Gvadányi placed his personal literary prestige at his female correspondents' service in a very chivalrous manner, which can be explained above all by the fact that he was completely alien to the new role taking shape at the time: that of the professional writer.

It can be pointed out, therefore, that Hungarian prose fiction is indebted for its first delicately depicted female character (and the first woman narrator in the first person singular), Fanny, to József Kármán, one of the most radical theoretical modernists of the literary world at the end of the 18th century. On the other hand, it was Gvadányi, the undisputed representative of literary traditionalism and popularism, who patronized the first group of women poets in Hungary. It was not the last, but in all likelihood the first occasion when the literary activities of women were regarded with more patience and impartiality by the pragmatical conservatives than by the reformers, the creators and introducers of the new literary canons. Without a doubt, the reason for this can be found in the conservatives' and the reformers' different interpretation of the aims of literature. The conservative popularists had their own conception of literature, in which the dialectics of the freedom and constraints of the author manifests itself through the free choice of traditions instead of being regulated by literary criticism. In their opinion, the literary community was united by an amateur attitude, rather than by professionalism. In this wide circle, the differences between author and reader were indistinct; culture was regarded as an important part of the representation of the nobility, and therefore it had a national character.

Péter Bod had earlier referred to foreign contries as models giving authority to the public recognition of women's achievements. When Gvadányi encouraged women writers, what he also had in mind was fostering a favourable opinion of Hungarians in foreign countries. He was aiming at improving the image of Hungarians, as he himself remarked, when he helped to publish works by a number of women poets – that is, in order to have something worthy of publication, he carried on his poetic correspondence with them. In one of these letters, his pragmatic avowal of patriotic interests is almost tantamount to the declaration of women's equality: 'But as it is, if the sons of our nation are capable of everything, her daughters will also be the same without a doubt, if only they wish to do so'.[16]

It is clearly evident from the poetic letters exchanged between Gvadányi and women poets of his acquaintance that while he concentrated on national interests, he did not ascribe exclusiveness to either personal literary prestige, or to differences in rank or even gender.[17] In his view, although literature originates in communal

[16] Gvadányi 1798, p.III.

[17] Ibid., p.96:
Midön az Úr Isten Ádámot alkodta
Grófnak vagy Bárónak lenni nem mondotta

interests and is based on tradition, it is far from being of a strictly noble character. As opposed to the feudal and conservative-minded value system prevailing in the evaluation of literary works and authors, his judgement is based on a kind of naive natural law, and the same applies to his handling of the issue of women and literature. The result was a very interesting situation: while writers and critics sympathizing with the ideas of social equality took great pains to reorganize literature and the literary world in a hierarchical way, this was by no means the ambition of Gvadányi, the successful poet of traditional Hungary.

Gvadányi once got rather carried away in his role as Pygmalion and, following a premeditated plan, he made a woman poet out of a provincial tradesman's wife, Julianna Fábián. He later published their poetic correspondence, in a volume in which he also disclosed to his readers the process of educating women poets.[18] It is only natural that the main role in the process is played by the master's notion of literature; it is this that sets the standard. He pays little attention to poetic form itself, deeming it enough to follow the popular poetic tradition. The real importance is assigned to the topic, the subject-matter of the poetic representation. It has to be realistic, drawn from life, and if possible, it has to be of interest to many. Therefore, the poetic task he set for his pupil was not the elaboration of a specifically female, personal subject, but an event of great public interest: a poetic description of the disaster that devastated the woman's home town – the great earthquake of 1763 in Komárom, which Gvadányi somewhat exaggerating compared to the disaster of Lisbon.

When, in accordance with Gvadányi's instructions, the work was finished, he expressed his contentment as a patron: with great delight, he announced the birth of a small group of women poets, ready to proceed towards Parnassus. And although this statement was doubtless exaggerated, it is a fact that the women poets concerned contacted each other, and later they even published their literary correspondence independently, without the support of a man. Naturally, in their written conversations, the peculiar features of women's lives and the specifically female angle also became apparent. For instance, two Transylvanian women poets, Borbàla Molnàr and Mrs. Jànos Màté, exchanged polemical letters about the merits and failings of women and men. The bolder of the two complained about the defencelessness of women in marriage, and advocated the possibility of an independent way of life for women.[19]

[...]
Mibül áll a Grófság, te megítélheted,
Nem egyébb, ha nem tsak ragyogvány
S fényes Máz
Mellyet a szerentse ember nyakára ráz.

In an approximate translation:

When the Lord God created Adam
He did not call his name Count or Baron
[...]
What is there to Countship, you can judge for yourself,
Nothing else but splendour
And brilliant varnish.
Chucked in a man's neck by fortune.

[18] See Gvadányi 1798.

[19] Cf. the title of the volume, published in 1804: *Barátsági vetélkedés vagy Molnár Borbálának Máté Jánosné asszonnyal két nem hibái és érdemei felöl folytatott levelezései* (Friendly rivalry or, the letters exchanged between Borbàla Molnàr and Mrs. Jànos Màté on the failings and merits of the two sexes).

Women could conform to the forms of popular poetry without giving up their female identity: they could express new problems through old, traditional forms.

Studying the issue of women in literature in Hungary provides us with a very good example of how the cultural plurality of a certain age is narrowed down and reduced to a few basic tendencies by the normative literary criticism of following periods. The first Hungarian novel written by a woman, although a fictitious one – *Fanny's legacy* – bears many of the characteristic features of European sentimentalism, and is now considered to be one of the fundamental works of Hungarian national literature. This novel has been so influential that Fanny's suffering figure has almost completely concealed the real women poets appearing among the representatives of conservative popularist literature, and ultimately she even obscures the fact that the Hungarian literary world did not hold a unanimous opinion on the question of women during this period. Thus, it has also remained a secret for a long time that precisely these women poets at the end of the 18th century paved the way for the self-confident arguments of Éva Takáts, the protagonist of the first Hungarian 'woman debate'.[20]

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[20] This debate started in 1822, when a hitherto unknown woman, Éva Takáts (1779-1845), published a review of the mediocre comedies of an amateur playwright in the only Hungarian-language scientific journal of the time, the *Tudományos Gyüjtemény* (Scientific collection). The debate lasted for more than six years from that moment, revolving around the question whether a woman ought to appear in the role of the critic and publicist. Éva Takáts published her views on six occasions during these years, and (supported by the contribution of many others who published their opinion) she argued convincingly for the recognition of women's cultural (and private) rights. The role of the here discussed female precursors had remained a secret for a long time.

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Nicole Boursier

The feminine voice in the early French novel

Who was Marie de France? Was she of noble descent? A writer 'à gages'? A wife? A mother? We shall probably never know. All we can say about her is that she resided for a while at the court of England in the second half of the 12th century, having come from France, probably from Normandy, and, of course, that she made History: *literary* history, by composing short love stories related to the 'cycle breton', and *women's* history by being the first known French woman novelist. This was a feat, and yet, in a way, it was not all that surprising. For around 1150, in a society which becomes more and more refined, the 'romans de chevalerie', concerned with warfare and therefore male-oriented, tend to be challenged on the literary scene by the 'romans courtois', in which there is more room for love, and a part to play for women. Also, a new 'destinataire' seems to have appeared at that time: the Reader. Solitary reading very slowly comes to coexist with the oral tradition, which implies the existence of more books that fix texts, and thus protect them from being lost forever. One other point has to be underlined: there *was* a system of education, even in early medieval France; limited, one must admit, and more often than not reserved for the nobility, but able to produce extremely erudite men *and* women, like Sainte Bertilla, like Heloïse. We have documents proving that, at least in the 13th century, schools open to all, 'les petites écoles', existed in Paris.[1] Unfortunately, if these conditions made it possible for Marie de France to write, to gain recognition and to have her works transmitted to us, she is the exception, and, until the period we are concerned with here, the feminine voice will be heard only sporadically, with Christine de Pizan or Helisenne de Crenne. From 1550 to 1750, does the situation change? To answer this question, I have selected six French writers of fiction[2] and have tried to work with their similarities as well as their idiosyncrasies, in order to create a general picture without erasing their originality.

The writers concerned are Marguerite de Navarre (author of the *Heptaméron*, 1559) and Madame de Lafayette (famous for her *Princesse de Clèves*, 1678); Marie de Gournay (well known chiefly on account of her connection with Montaigne) and Madeleine de Scudéry (author of novels in the tradition of 'préciosité'); Madame de Villedieu (whose works were read avidly during the 18th century) and Madame de

[1] Cf. Carton 1886, p.28-9.

[2] It is impossible to mention here many other women who wrote successfully and are yet too often neglected, but one may find detailed complementary information in Berriot-Salvadore 1990, and in Timmermans 1993.

Graffigny (who enjoyed a large success with the publication of her *Lettres d'une Péruvienne*, 1747). I shall compare these women writers in pairs, the members of each pair having come from similar social backgrounds, in order to demonstrate the evolution of women's writing that took place between the 16th and the 18th century.

Marguerite de Navarre and Madame de Lafayette

Marguerite de Navarre (1492-1549) and Madame de Lafayette (1634-1693) both belong to the high nobility, one as François the First's sister, the other as a 'dame d'honneur' of the queen (Anne d'Autriche), and later as a very close friend and confidante of Henriette Maria, queen of England. Although they are separated by almost a century and a half, they both lived at a refined court where the arts were appreciated and encouraged. Both of them, intelligent and apparently studious children, had received an excellent education: as a matter of fact, a boy's education. Marguerite shared her brother's teachers, and it appears that she took advantage of this opportunity: she learned Latin and Greek, as well as German, Italian and Spanish, and developed a sophisticated appreciation for literature. Would she have had the same access to knowledge had she not had a brother? One may doubt it. At least, that is what Michel François suggests when he states that she grew up in this brother's 'shadow'.[3]

Marie-Madeleine Pioche de La Vergne, the future Madame de Lafayette, was the daughter of an erudite who recognized in her the signs of intellectual curiosity; indeed, she seems to have played the role of the son he did not have. He certainly favoured her over her sisters.[4] He gave her, at home, the best teachers, like Gilles Ménage, and she studied Italian and also Latin – which, surprisingly, had become rarer in an aristocratic girl's education at that time. Like Marguerite de Navarre at the house of her uncle, Jean d'Angoulême, she had books at hand, in her father's library. As the family lived in Paris, where M. Pioche de La Vergne was acquainted with the best of society and with many scholars, the ambitious young woman soon became a 'précieuse accomplie', having acquired both remarkable erudition and perfect social graces.

It would appear that in the settings where these two 'grandes dames' grew up and were to live and write fiction, in the best of conditions a good knowledge of the humanities was accessible, even desirable. The way to use this knowledge, however, had changed. In the 16th century, few women were learned. Nevertheless, if they did manage to become erudite, they seem to have been allowed to express themselves and show their knowledge: they signed their works, took pride and delight in writing, and were admired for it. They could live and support a family with money earned from their writing, like the earlier writer Christine de Pizan, who, even if she found

[3] Cf. François 1960, p.iii.

[4] An attitude which is found more than once: the most striking example is probably the case of two well known sisters, Madame de Montespan, Louis XIV's mistress, whose spelling was deplorable, and her young sister, Gabrielle de Rochechouart, abbess of Fontevrault, an exceptional woman who took the opportunity of studying with Prince Philippe d'Orléans and later at the Abbaye-aux-Bois, and mastered Italian, Spanish, Latin, Greek and Hebrew.

in her situation some oddity that she expresses in *La Mutacion de Fortune*,[5] was exhilarated by it, and not ashamed of it. In a word, around 1550 'prodige' women enjoyed a kind of freedom, and – as Evelyne Berriot-Salvadore shows – at least in a certain class, they 'ne croient pas «malséant» de s'adonner aux études érudites'.[6] A happy situation which was not to last long. Although Madame de Lafayette was highly respected among intellectuals and was admitted into the royal circle, even esteemed by the Sun King, there was no way for her to publish under her own name a novel like *La Princesse de Clèves*, in spite of its enormous success: it was simply *not* done. Literary production had become a 'malséant' activity for a lady.

Marie de Gournay and Madeleine de Scudéry

Let us now consider a second pair of French writers: Marie le Jars de Gournay (1565-1645) and Madeleine de Scudéry (1607-1701). Both were born into families of the lesser nobility, both were eager to learn, and neither of them ever married. They both occasionally expressed feminist views. They are generally regarded as 'bas-bleus'. For Marie de Gournay, when she lost her father at the age of twelve, the oldest in a family of six children, living in the castle of a small village in Picardy, with a mother who had no sympathy whatsoever for scholarly curiosity, the future seemed bleak. There were no eminent teachers for her; there was no encouragement for her to study. Marie, though, resisted the traditional female education and secretly studied Latin alone, with a determination one can only admire.[7] When, at the age of 26, she found herself in charge of her two youngest siblings, she went to Paris, ready to make a living from her writing.

As far as Madeleine de Scudéry is concerned, after losing her father at the age of seven, she grew up in Rouen, in the household of her uncle, who made sure she received a good education. She did not show the same hostility as Marie de Gournay towards female activities, but she had a broader intellectual curiosity and was given a chance to learn. In his *Mémoires*, Conrart, secretary of the Académie française, gives us an idea of the wide scope of her knowledge:

> L'écriture, l'orthographe, la danse, à dessiner, à peindre, à travailler à l'aiguille, elle apprit tout, et elle devinait d'elle-même ce qu'on ne lui enseignait pas. Comme elle avait une imagination prodigieuse, une excellente mémoire, un jugement exquis, une humeur vive et naturellement portée à savoir tout ce qu'elle voyait faire de curieux et tout ce qu'elle entendait dire de louable, elle apprit d'elle-même les choses qui dépendent de l'agriculture, du jardinage, du ménage, de la campagne, de la cuisine, les causes et les effets

[5] 'Dont [je] m'ébahis, mais j'éprouvai/ Que [un] vrai homme [je] fus devenu' (Pizan 1959-1964, v.1360-1361).
[6] Berriot-Salvadore 1990, p.390.
[7] Cf. Elyane Dezon-Jones: 'Peut-être est-ce à cause des difficultés qu'elle rencontra en tant que jeune fille que Marie de Gournay insista de façon si persistante, dans tous ses textes, sur la nécessité de l'éducation des enfants en général et des filles en particulier. Le thème est récurrent à travers toute son oeuvre et inspira 'la Question Célèbre': 'S'il est nécessaire ou non que les filles soient sçavantes, agitée de part et d'autre par Mademoiselle Anna de Schurman, Hollandaise, et le Sr André Rivet, Poitevin', en 1646' (Gournay 1988, p.18).

des maladies, la composition d'une infinité de remèdes, de parfums [...]. Elle eut envie de savoir jouer du luth, et elle en prit quelques leçons avec assez de succès. Mais le luth lui demandait trop de temps, et, sans y renoncer, elle aima mieux se tourner particulièrement du côté des occupations de l'esprit. Elle apprit en perfection l'italien, l'espagnol, et son principal plaisir était dans la lecture et dans les conversations choisies dont elle n'était pas dépourvue dans son voisinage.[8]

This list deserves a few comments. First, one notes the absence of Latin. Second, the first series of topics represents a complete ('elle apprit *tout*') but exclusively feminine education. At the same time, the child had permission to learn, although in a disorganized manner, whatever appealed to her: there was no plan of study, and no guidance, but no restraint. Finally, living in Rouen, a city rich in intellectual activities, and among cultivated people, she acquired social polish or 'politesse' which may have been denied to Marie de Gournay.

What did they do with their education? They both became writers and devoted some of their writings to feminist declarations: Marie de Gournay with *L'égalité des hommes et des femmes* (1622) and *Le grief des dames* (1626), Madeleine de Scudéry, in a more diffuse manner, especially in *Les femmes illustres* (1642), and more specifically in her 'Harangue de Sapho à Erinne'. They both wrote fiction too: as a matter of fact, *Clélie* (1654-1660), by Madeleine de Scudéry, one of the most popular books of the whole century. But they were also financially and socially more vulnerable, for they needed money to live on, and they were spinsters. Marie stood up for herself, signed her books, courageously faced aggressive and derogatory comments. Madeleine also had to suffer a few cruel remarks. She hid her talents behind her brother's name. Differences in temperaments do not explain totally the divergences in behaviour. Once again, times had changed and altered the freedom and working conditions for the writing woman.

Madame de Villedieu and Madame de Graffigny

Madame de Villedieu (1640?-1683) and Madame de Graffigny (1694-1758) form the final pair. Madame de Villedieu was a contemporary of Lafayette and Scudéry. By birth, both Villedieu and Graffigny belonged to the same class, the lesser gentry, like Gournay and Scudéry. But fate gave them a very different approach to knowledge. Although we do not know much about their respective childhoods, it is safe to say that their education was very neglected indeed. They must have somehow learned the rudiments, but nothing more; Madame de Villedieu tells us: 'Il y a longtemps que j'ai protesté qu'un peu de génie me tenait lieu d'étude et que l'usage du monde poli est ma plus grande science'.[9] If they did not care to give her a good education, her parents did give her contacts in high society. An alert and active child, as attested by the poet Vincent Voiture, a neighbour of the family, she was more attracted by

[8] Desplantes/Pouthier 1970, p.53-4.
[9] *Portrait des faiblesses humaines*, in: Villedieu 1721, vol.I, p.302.

movement and social activities than by solitary studies and abstract speculations. At the age of sixteen, she lived on her own, which was quite unusual. Bright and curious, she observed, listened and learned. But more than anything else, she was independent and daring – even seen as scandalous in her love life – and always ready for new experiments.

Madame de Graffigny does not comment herself on her education. But one only has to read the first note of hers that has been preserved, written before 1718 (but after her marriage), to realize that she was not well educated in her youth. Later on, though, she lived in Lunéville, close to the ducal family of Lorraine, and in the familiarity of the local intelligentsia. Through her contacts with these scholars and artists Madame de Graffigny acquired a late but broad education, and a good training in discussing and judging. She became the cultivated and witty woman who was appreciated by Voltaire, and shortly afterwards by many scholars, writers and artists in Paris.

These two self-taught women share another experience: Madame de Villedieu was abandoned by the man who had given her a 'promesse de mariage', and Madame de Graffigny was a battered wife, as a result of which she applied for separation. In the course of time, finding money to survive became a real problem for each of them, as we see them so often waiting for a pension, promised and due but always late. So they both wrote, to the delight of their editors, for the many novels of Madame de Villedieu as well as the unique one of Madame de Graffigny, *Les lettres d'une Péruvienne*, were received with enthusiasm, reprinted many times and translated into foreign languages. They did not feel humiliated to receive payment for their work, and at the same time they enjoyed the thrill of writing easily and naturally, as was the case for Madame de Villedieu, or of polishing a piece of art to perfection, as did Madame de Graffigny: her correspondence shows, day after day, the anguish and the joys of the artist. Asked what he thought was the chief motive for her to write *Les lettres d'une Péruvienne*, Alan Dainard, the chief editor of the correspondance of Madame de Graffigny did not hesitate a second: 'After correcting, judging and helping so many others, she had to show she was able to write something good on her own'?[10]

Overview

In the light of these case studies, let us try to assess the situation of the French female novelist between 1550 and 1750. At a time when the position of the European man (and woman) in the world had been strongly shaken by a series of significant events – I am thinking of the changes brought about by the discoveries of Gutenberg, Columbus, and Copernicus –, roles had to be redistributed, and a new order, in which political, religious and social elements were involved, had to be created. Going back to Aristotle, the question of feminine inferiority, physical, mental and moral, based on biblical and biological considerations, had been periodically debated through the Middle Ages. This old topic picked up new strength in the middle of the 16th

[10] Alan Dainard, personal communication.

century.[11] It did not affect Marguerite de Navarre: she still belonged to the former era, when erudition, limited to convents and courts, was not assigned to a specific sex. Those people who were erudite were usually in positions of power, anyway, and poems or works of fiction, composed by men or, occasionally, by women were very limited in their distribution because they were produced only in the form of manuscripts.

Once printing started to develop, though, it did not take long for the educated elite to realize the power of words:

> Et si quelqu'une parvient en tel degré, que de pouvoir mettre ses conceptions par écrit, le faire soigneusement et non dédaigner la gloire, et s'en parer plutôt que de chaînes, anneaux et somptueux habits, lesquels ne pouvons vraiment estimer nôtres que par usage. Mais l'honneur que la science nous procurera sera entièrement nôtre, et ne nous pourra être ôté, ni par finesse de larron, ni force d'ennemis, ni longueur de temps,

writes Louise Labé in 1555. Writing was a marvellous tool that gave one power and authority, glory, independence and eternity. In the course of time, more and more 'bourgeois' and 'bourgeoises' gained access to learning, and I would be tempted to say that it is at this point that a break happened between the amateurs, less jealous of their knowledge, and the professional erudites, the hard-core 'doctes'. With this hardening of positions, it is hardly surprising that there were people who wished to put a stop to these developments. One of the best ways to keep part of the competition away from the new source of power is, of course, to firmly remind women what their function is in life: procreation. We are now at the turn of the century, and we see how and why Marie de Gournay – whose intellectual acuity was recognized by Montaigne, by Justus Lipsius, by Anna Maria van Schurman – and later Madeleine de Scudéry, were to suffer the meanest and lowest verbal attacks, even long after they were dead.[12] They had never married, never had children: they were not real women, and therefore they became a threat to the 'doctes'. Marie de Gournay, still a Renaissance woman, who had an impatient and fiery nature and simply could not understand the reasons behind the new attitudes, never relented. In her *Grief des dames* she denounces the injustice of such treatment:

> Bienheureux es-tu, lecteur, si tu n'es point de ce sexe, qu'on interdit de tous les biens, l'interdisant de la liberté: oui, qu'on interdit encore à peu pres, de toutes les vertus, lui

[11] Cf.: 'Le débat médiéval sur l'infériorité de la femme se poursuit et s'amplifie au XVIe siècle. Il prend un tour aigu dans les années 1540 [...]' (Joukovsky 1995, p.7).

[12] Cf. Hermann 1983. Among gratuitous and unacceptable comments written long after Marie de Gournay's death, one can read in Sainte-Beuve's *Nouveaux lundis* (vol.IX) a few laudatory remarks: '[...] cette demoiselle de Gournay qui se voua à lui [i.e. Montaigne], fut sa digne héritière littéraire, son éditeur éclairé, mais qui elle-même, d'une trop verte allure, finit par prendre du poil au menton en vieillissant et par devenir comme le gendarme rébarbatif et suranné de la vieille école et de toute la vieille littérature, – un grotesque, une antique' (quoted in Gournay 1988, p.42), or, even more recently, in Maurice Rat's introduction to Montaigne's *Essais* (1962): 'La première réaction contre Montaigne date de la fin du règne de Louis XIII. Mlle de Gournay, qui eut le tort de vivre trop longtemps, n'y contribua pas peu, en dépit qu'elle en eût, par son attitude agressive et grognon de vieille pédante [...]' (ibid., p.12 note 8). For Scudéry, cf. Boursier 1989.

soustrayant le pouvoir, en la moderation duquel la plupart d'elles se forment; afin de lui constituer pour seule felicité, pour vertus souveraines et seules, ignorer, faire le sot et servir.[13]

Madeleine de Scudéry, on the other hand, like Madame de Lafayette and Madame de Villedieu, was marked by 'préciosité'. She certainly felt the same passionate need as Marie de Gournay or Louise Labé to be heard and to write her name herself in history:

> Croyez-moi, Erinne, il vaut mieux donner l'immortalité aux autres, que de la recevoir d'autrui: & trouver sa propre gloire chez soi, que de l'attendre d'ailleurs. [...] si de votre propre main, vous laissez quelques marques de ce que vous êtes, vous vivrez toujours avec honneur, en la mémoire de tous les hommes.[14]

But by the time she started to write, the mixed effects of Richelieu's politics and of the 'précieux' society of the salons had modified the relation of authors, and particularly of women novelists, to their art and to the world. Regulations and institutionalization in the arts as well as in society were slowly taking control of the free intelligence. And while 'préciosité' may very well have given women an important role in the closed world of the 'ruelles', it also imposed all the constraints of 'bienséance', which were an unsuspected but terrible trap. Ironically, Madeleine de Scudéry could hardly find her glory directly in her works even if everybody knew they were hers, as they were always signed by her brother: it would have been shameful for her to officially recognize that she, a noblewoman, took her work so seriously! It would have cast a shadow on her reputation, and of course she could not face this idea. Madame de Lafayette, under comparable influences, reacted in a similar manner. She always insisted on playing the modest woman's game, she borrowed a man's name to publish her novels, and never wrote any public declaration of feminism. One may admit, though, even if some male critics still do not, that she showed out a subversive touch of independence when she suggested, at the end of her *Princesse de Clèves*, that it is always possible to resist.

But it is with Madame de Villedieu that the situation takes a new turn. For one thing, Madame de Villedieu had much less to lose by rejecting the 'bienséances': she did not belong to the establishment, and part of her reputation had been acquired by her non-conformity. Unorthodox but honest, she did not fear public judgement, which gave her a certain freedom. But she was a very modern woman, a woman of small financial means, who was not in a position to play the social game as a writer. Rather, she arrived in an increasingly bourgeois and entrepreneurial world at the right moment to approach publishing as a commercial enterprise. She had a very salable merchandise to offer, and her publisher Barbin, a businessman, wanted it badly. Thus, with Madame de Villedieu, even though she was a contemporary of Madame de Lafayette, there appears a new breed of French woman novelist that already

[13] Gournay 1993.
[14] Scudéry 1642, p.40, Sappho's harangue to Erinne.

announces the 18th century. Her break with the past appears also in her way of writing: while Madame de Lafayette, in spite of the unexpected resistance of her heroine, brought Madame de Clèves' story to her life's end, or even while Guilleragues with *Les lettres portugaises* wrote an epistolary novel and yet managed to respect the classical canon and to close Mariane's adventure by a denouement which, in my opinion, is final, Madame de Villedieu inaugurates the 'extravagant narratives', as Elizabeth MacArthur calls them,[15] by leaving the story open to other possible adventures. Madame de Graffigny was to do just the same: Sylvie in 1671, and Zilia in 1747, reject a marriage which could give them a pleasant existence, and choose to start a new, open and independent life. Of course all the strict rules of classicism would have denied them this right. Madame de Villedieu, like Madame de Graffigny, knows that it is generally easier, if one writes well, to deal directly with a publisher rather than to wait submissively for the approbation of the authorities and to hope for a pension which might never come.

One might think that the battle was over, and that in the commercial era a woman novelist would just have to produce good fiction to gain glory once and forever... Not so. As soon as the restraints of 'préciosité' relaxed, and the male-dominated world that wrote literary history lost a convenient way to control the female voice through the severe rules of 'réputation' and 'bienséances', new arms had to be found. Modern feminist critics[16] have recently noticed that they were found, not only through the old trick of derision, but by simply ignoring women authors: if one just kept a few token women novelists to be mentioned in school textbooks or general works, the others could be discarded. Curiously enough, Marguerite de Navarre, who as a novelist never had to face male control or hostility, or Madeleine de Scudéry and Madame de Lafayette, who more or less felt obliged to submit to this control although they were aware of its unfairness, are always named and often quoted. Yet other women writers have been forgotten or hidden for almost two centuries: not only Gournay, Villedieu and Graffigny, who insisted they had a mind and a point of view of their own, but also a multitude of others whose *works* and sometimes even whose *names* are just being rediscovered. What else did they deserve, if they had not been able to accomplish what women do best: bear children and keep house, and for the rest, leave the field of writing to those to whom it belongs...

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Moira Ferguson

Women and the British Empire in the 18th century

> Empire entered public political consciousness as a British right...
> British imperial ascendancy was a benefit to the world.[1]

A heterogeneous discourse about imperial matters threads through 18th-century women's writing in poetry and prose. During this increasingly complex era of overseas involvement and acquisition, the concerns of women writers in English ranged from commentary on avaricious merchants and cultural difference to questions about English militarism, Scottish nationalism, racial bigotry, and the shifting status of both colonizers and colonized people.[2]

In the earliest decades, two English aristocrats, Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea, and Frances Thynne, Countess of Hertford, wrote poems about mercantilism and human exploitation, while Lady Mary Wortley Montagu wrote letters, describing her voyages abroad in 1717, that were not published until 1763. In the 1770s came Englishwoman Anne Penny, three Scotswomen, Janet Schaw, the travel writer and two poets, Jane Elliott and Alison Cockburn, who lamented Scottish national defeats in battle. They were followed by Bristol-born Anna Maria Falconbridge and Susana Smith, of African descent, who both wrote in 1791.

The first poem, 'A song on the South Sea' by the Countess of Winchilsea, written in 1720 and published in 1724, decries the high number of credulous women who invested in the South Sea Company in the summer and autumn of 1720.[3] I open with this poem because it stresses the immersion of women in the first era of stock-jobbing when a national fervour for speculation engrossed Britain. G.M. Trevelyan hints at deliberate plans to exploit the widow and the orphan.[4] The poem suggests Finch's close knowledge of both national politics and the culture of wealthy unmarried females.

The narrator describes these women abandoning gaming tables, 'the court, the park, the foreign song / And harlequin's grimace' and pawning every jewel they own.[5] Unprecedentedly, 'tender virgins' are mixing fearlessly with elderly men, both Gentile and Jewish. Avarice, the narrator contends, has supplanted love and ruined

[1] Wilson 1995, p.201.
[2] Anderson 1966; Colley 1992; Newman 1987; Bhabha 1980; Said 1993; Boehmer 1995.
[3] Lonsdale 1990, p.17, note 18.
[4] Trevelyan 1926, p.47.
[5] Lonsdale 1990, p.26.
[6] Colley 1992, p.60.

the lives of affluent young women by magnetizing them into a male world of financial speculation and risk. Such disenabling, the very issue of gender and power, troubles the speaker. So do issues of class. This was the time of George I's accession and coronation when trade, commerce, and the British Empire were becoming inextricably linked. Nonetheless, in Linda Colley's words, 'in terms of wealth, status and power, men of trade in this society came a long way behind men of land'.[6] The speaker, sounding much like the Countess herself, deplored the necessity and near-vulgarity of trade and its effect on women.

In the next decade, in 1726, the Countess of Hertford, great-niece of Anne Finch, wrote a poem entitled 'The story of Inkle and Yarico'. In two parts, it concerns a shipwrecked merchant, Inkle, who betrays his intimate relationship with a free black woman named Yarico. They have fallen in love. But after Yarico espies a 'European' vessel, the formerly enamoured Inkle reassesses the situation in his economic self-interest: 'By sordid int'rest sway'd/He Resolv'd to sell his faithful Maid...'.[7] Not even the pregnant Yarico's desperate last-ditch appeal that he stab her to death moves the now-intractable Inkle.

In the second part, Yarico appears as an exemplary female Christ-figure, selflessly solicitous about Inkle's soul, despite his responsibility for their 'wretched infant's death.' Ultimately, Inkle seems as irredeemable as the South Sea Company directors in 'Song on the South Sea' who expropriate young women's savings while remaining invisible. Again, the poem's concerns are related to gender and mercantilist risk, with slavery an added issue. As aristocrats, both authors deplore the upstart recklessness of Whiggish mercantilism. Legitimate trade and fair dealing they both agree with, but not fraud and self-indulgent greed. The South Sea Directors and Inkle participate in a negative mercantilist mentality that verges on the unpatriotic. Inkle lets Britain down, so to speak, because he calculatingly sells a hospitable pregnant woman for profit.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu recontextualizes British overseas involvement in her *Turkish Letters*.[8] As wife of the ambassador to Turkey from 1717 to 1718, she directly assisted in the imperial operation, attending public functions and conversing with indigenous people about issues that concerned both Britain and the host country. While doing so, she ostensibly challenges previous male travel writers on the subject of Turkey and extends the boundaries of acceptable discourse for women. Moreover, regarding Turkish women during her visit to the baths, she remains, perhaps prefers to be an object of curiosity rather than a stark naked woman like the rest of the company. Maybe she feels constrained, or so it seems, from joining their leisure pursuits.

Most particularly, Lady Mary admires the ability of Turkish women, regardless of class, to go out veiled anywhere, to visit anyone, male or female, and all the time to remain unknown. She concludes that this cultural custom aids 'illicit' amorous

[7] Hertford 1738; both parts of this poem are reproduced in Prince 1937. Versions of *Inkle and Yarico* continued up to the 19th century. Anna Maria Porter presents a poem on that subject (see Porter 1811). Prince discusses many versions of *Inkle and Yarico*, French and German as well as English.
[8] Schaw 1921, p.127.

practice. Put another way, her western imaginings induce her to reconfigure Turkish cultural practices. While appearing to place Turkish women on an equal footing with herself, through adulation and her own status, perhaps consciously, perhaps not, she represents herself as the all-seeing eye that weighs and evaluates, the all-knowing consumer of 'knowledge'.

In Meyda Yegenoglu's words, Lady Mary's narrative derives its power from constructing 'the very object it speaks about, [producing] a regime of truth about the other and thereby establish[ing] the identity and the power of the subject that speaks about it'.[9] It is a peripheral concern, Yegenoglu goes on, 'whether the images deployed to this end are positive or negative'. Lady Mary seems tolerant, curious, and affirming of Turkish cultural practices, that is, while remaining a staunch member and agent of colonialism's retinue.

Curiously enough, she lives in Turkey not long after the accession of George I (1714) who was roundly scorned for his religion and illegitimate claim to the throne. A nationalist critique that had wide currency linked him to 'Turks and infidels, barbarity and tyranny, subterfuge and subversion'.[10] In one sense, Lady Mary is confronting these aspersions and configuring Turkish people as gracious and sophisticated. Is George I a diamond in the rough, her discourse circuitously asks.

By the 1770s, when Lady Mary's *Turkish Letters* were finally published, women writers were beginning to address military matters. In 1771, for example, Anne Penny commemorates, in two odes, the founding of the patriotic Marine Society in 1756. The first ode applauds Britain's social virtue – the nation's avowed respect and love for humanity. This quality aids orphaned boys and unemployed men who become 'bulwarks of our wealth and trade' and 'quell each foe' when they join the navy.[11] British imperial ventures, both commercial and military, are thus bound to succeed. Social love, that is, bonds patriot-Britons together and engenders imperial victory. In some sense, social love is a concept related to Lady Mary's sense of bonding with Turkish women, the Countess of Hertford's sympathy for Yarico, and Anne Finch's compassion for naive rich women.

The Maritime Society, moreover, marks a new phase in British expansionism.[12] It centre-stages the firm mercantilist imperial perspective that dominated the nation after the English victory over the Scottish during the 1745 rising and the imperial triumph in 1763 of the Seven Years War. The increase in discussions of rights, the English phobia about France, the recruiting of young, impoverished, and potential 'troublemakers' as seamen, were interconnected and included Scottophobia, or hatred of Scotland, to boot. By 1771, when Penny wrote her odes, Parliament had already passed legislation to erase the cultural difference of the Highlands, summed up in the banning of tartan-wearing. Simultaneously, Parliament tried to attract Highlanders into imperial projects and succeeded surpassingly in India and colonial America. Scottish economy expanded; so did emigration from Scotland, especially to the less

[9] Yegenoglu 1998, p.89-90.
[10] Wilson 1995, p.111.
[11] Lonsdale 1990, p.295.
[12] Wilson 1995, p.78, 191, 196.

fashionable regiments of Britain's army. In Colley's words again: 'Imperialism served as Scotland's opportunity'.[13] Scotland's national identity consolidated.

Anne Penny's eulogy to the Marine Society applauding British naval power parallels, inversely, poems published at roughly the same time, in 1765 and 1769, by two Scottish female poets. They lament England's military victory at the Battle of Flodden in 1513 in poems similarly entitled 'The Flowers of the Forest.'

Jane Elliott, who wrote the later poem 'The Flowers of the Forest', was the daughter of the Lord Justice Clerk of Scotland.[14] At 19, during the 1745 rebellion, led by Bonnie Prince Charley, she facilitated the escape of her Hanoverian father from a group of Jacobites. According to the poem, Flodden has changed the mood of Scotland: women singing at milking time, men working in the fields, people at church or out and about – the nation as a whole, that is, is no longer blithe but moaning. The poet regrets that so many young men of all classes – 'the prime of our land' – were vanquished by the English Army. In the famous words of Elliott's song:

> Dool and wae for the order, sent our lads to the border!...
> Women and bairns are heartless and wae:
> Sighing and moaning, on ilka green loaning
> The flowers of the forest are a' wede away.[15]

A committed Whig, prominent in Edinburgh literary circles, Alison Cockburn espouses sentiments that anticipated Elliott's: Scotland is no longer fortunate.[16] Were the 1760s' lamentations by women about Flodden part of the construction of a burgeoning national identity? As Scotland was shaking off the defeat of Culloden – and even in its offrhyme, Flodden evokes Culloden – these poets revivified an older defeat to English imperialism, as part of the national mourning. Scottish nationalist sentiment and the forging by Scots of a British imperial identity were not conceptually as self-contradictory as they seemed. Internal British discord becomes subsumed by the colonial process.

A travel narrative written in 1774 by the middle-class Scotswoman at leisure, Janet Schaw, contextualizes the poems very well. Schaw deplores the plight of Scottish emigrants as she accompanies one of her brothers to Antigua in the Eastern Caribbean, and then to the American colonies where they visit a second brother. Both brothers – even the tourist sister – are an integral part of the expatriate colonial retinue.[17]

Although Janet Schaw calls the Scottish emigrants on board 'a Company of most respectable sufferers', she accepts the emigrants' meagre diet and appalling conditions, cramped all together in steerage. Her bigoted attitudes toward African slaves are also unabashed. To her own amusement in Antigua, she confuses black children with monkeys and praises a friend who keeps a five-year-old black child as a pet.

She excuses the evidence of inhumane punishment on the bodies of slaves by saying that the Creoles or owners have come to realize that these practices cannot be

[13] Colley 1992, p.130.
[14] Lonsdale 1990, p.264. For the Battle of Flodden, see also Maclean 1993, p.74-75.
[15] Lonsdale 1990, p.265.
[16] Id., p.262-263.
[17] For Scottish emigration and Highland clearances, see Grant 1997, p.223-233, 271; and Ferguson 1990, vol.IV, p.276-277, 322.

avoided because of the nature of slaves: 'It is the suffering of the human mind', Schaw goes on, 'that constitutes the greatest misery of punishment, but with them [Africans] it is merely corporeal'.[18]

A Tory to the core and presumably a defender of the Scottish rebellion of 1745, she also supports the British Loyalists in North Carolina. American Revolutionaries, in her view, are uncouth, ill-advised barbarians. As a wealthy middle-class Scotswoman, Janet Schaw combines a concern for settling Caribbean colonies and opposing revolutionaries with praise for mercantilism. The Schaw family enterprise encapsulates the new national slogan: 'Trade, Liberty – and Empire – would constitute the heart of the new patriotic imperative'.[19] The brother she accompanies to Antigua is a customs inspector, who will protect British interests in matters of immigration and trade, and further his own career. Or so he perhaps imagined. In fact, in the 1730s, merchants had become gradually irate about the increase in excise men who they thought would disrupt trade. Once again, Empire benefits Scottish entrepreneurs. Schaw's Scottish nationalist, British loyalist, racist, and pro-mercantile perspective derives inevitably from her class and ethnicity and substantially differs from the perspectives of the Countess of Winchilsea and the Countess of Hertford. Anne Finch mocks commercial speculation, and the Countess of Hertford opposes mercantilism as a grasping bourgeois venture while attacking the slave trade and its entrepreneurs. Resembling Lady Mary, Janet Schaw supports the government, deplores its traits, and mixes agreeably with her host communities. She seems to understand that colonies like Antigua and colonial America were essential to the imperial project.

The last two women writers I have chosen to discuss are Anna Maria Falconbridge and Susana Smith, the former English, the latter African and respectively a colonialist and colonized person.

Like the travel-based texts of her predecessors, Falconbridge's letters describing her voyages to Sierra Leone, London, and Jamaica offer another dimension on European expansionist ideology.[20] This time, the text is written by someone intending to take up residence in the newly founded colony of Sierra Leone in West Africa where she travelled with her abolitionist husband, Alexander Falconbridge, who was taking up an administrative post there in the name of trade and commerce as well as territorial acquisition. But unlike Lady Mary and Janet Schaw, Falconbridge condemns the metropolitan colonial administration and makes her contentious letters public. Her role as a widowed colonial wife demands just recompense. On the other hand, the colony that she and others set out to build that will substitute trade in goods for trade in human beings, is one that she turns her back on.

For example, the charity that Falconbridge extends to black Sierra Leone settler representatives who are petitioning in London for their civil rights somewhat obscures her own transformation: from an abolitionist who risked social ostracism by marrying a well-known, antislavery activist to someone who upholds the necessity of slavery and dedicates her text to the inhabitants of Bristol, a major pro-slavery port

[18] Schaw 1921, p.127.
[19] Wilson 1995, p.136.
[20] Falconbridge 1794.

and her hometown. In the end, that is, she surrenders an oppositional stance for a niche in the *status quo*. Total abolition being slow in coming, she reconstitutes her façade.

Susana Smith's text, on the other hand, throws a very different kind of light on English and Scottish women's writings on colonialism.[21] To start with, very little is known about this strong-spirited black woman. She probably travelled to Nova Scotia as recompense for aiding the British in the War of Independence; then with other members of the Nova Scotian community, known as the Black Loyalists, she travelled to West Africa. Literate and insistent on her rights, she is the only woman known to have written within the stalwart Nova Scotian community who adventured to Sierra Leone.

Smith's brief petition suggests to what deep degree the needs of colonized women differ from those of colonial wives and sisters. Written in Sierra Leone the same year as Anna Maria Falconbridge was composing her travel chronicle, Susana Smith's petition to the Governor of Sierra Leone, dated May 12, 1791, reads as follows:

> Sir I your hum bel Servent begs the faver of your Excelence to See if you will
> Pleas to Let me hav Som Sope for I am in great want of Some I have not had aney
> Since I hav bin to this plais I hav bin Sick and I want to git Som Sope verry much
> to wash my family Clos for we ar not fit to be Sean for dirt
> your humbel Servet Susana Smith

Susana Smith's prose is that of an individual who has laboured valiantly, in adverse circumstances, to be literate. It seems to display humility while chiding her correspondent silently and subtly for colonial neglect. Smith speaks for harmonious family values, thinking of others and their comfort, trying to adjust in a sociable manner to a new place. Washing her family's clothes as soon as she has recovered from an illness like malaria is her first order of business. Where earlier writers stressed Britain's social love as a matter of concern for the downtrodden – how the nation will help such people and be proud to do so – Susana Smith speaks as one of the very downtrodden themselves who loves her community and insists on basic social services on its behalf. Constructed as a pawn in the imperial project, she declines that role on her own terms.

Collectively, the nine writers patch together a quilt of diverse national identities. In this era of British colonial advance, these voices sound themselves into the void, offering a variety of hegemonic stances on colonialism, nationalism, and gender. They expose the corruption and hollowness of the so-called civilizing mission. The earliest writers attack commercial speculation and corrupt trading practices. Four of them – Lady Mary, Anne Penny, Janet Schaw, and Anna Maria Falconbridge – support the colonial project overseas and endorse colonial implantation and force. At the same time, the Scottish poets deplore English military advance, with Janet Schaw adding a particular edge to Scottish nationalist sentiment by critiquing coerced emigration, the origin of which dates back to England's imperial victory at Flodden and earlier. British identity is becoming much more fluid.

[21] Fyfe 1991, p.24.

Lastly, the settlers themselves. Echoing Janet Schaw, Anna Maria Falconbridge betrays a traditional perspective on indigenous people living as a part-time tourist, part-time social commentator, and full-time wife of a British imperial agent and facilitator of trade with West Africa. The fact that she turns against abolition is a matter of a colonizer's class interest and gender empowerment. She is a woman who speaks her mind, but so does Susana Smith, who quietly destabilizes the status quo from a colonized person's standpoint.

These preliminary findings about women and the British Empire in the 18th century suggest an interlocking and ongoing commentary among occasional poems and prose in English that diversely tackles trade, gender, and empire. Englishwomen comment extensively on imperial practices at home and abroad: Scottish women do the same while inflecting their texts with a conspicuously variant nationalist sentiment. The displaced woman of colour worries, by contrast, about hygiene and basic necessities, unrelated to any contemporary possibility of hegemonic power, but still subtly stressing her sense of human dignity and connectiveness.

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Lucretia Wilhelmina van Merken (1721-1789)

Germanicus

Het afscheid van Germanicus en Agrippina:

De Prins heeft naauw de komst van Silius vernomen,
Met Flavius terug van 's Meinstrooms boord gekomen,
Of spoedt zich tot den togt; hoewel zijn moedig hart
Een teedre deernis voedt met Agrippinaas smart,
Die, overwonnen door de zorgen, die haar prangen,
Hem in hare armen klemt, en aan den hals blijft hangen.
Ach! zegt ze, in Rome dreigt u Cezars dwinglandij;
In Duitschland waagt ge u aan des vijands razernij.
Hier kan de woede, daar de haat u doodlijk wezen.
Moet uw bedrukte gâ dan onophoudlijk vreezen!
'k Weet wat uw glorie eischt en wat noodzaaklijk is;
Doch zorg, om mijn behoud, voor uw behoudenis.
Denk aan uw gade en kroost, nog in zijn kindsche jaren.
't Is uit met ons, ten zij de Goôn u 't leven sparen.
Herstel u, zegt de prins, 't is ligt vergeefsch getreurd,
'k Heb nimmer zwakheid in uw groot gemoed bespeurd.
Het gunstig Godendom zal mij om u doen leven;
't Zal op Arminius ons de overwinning geven,
Hij droogt, meêdoogend, haar de tranen van 't gezigt;
Kust kleenen Cajus, en het jongstgeboren wicht,
Die naauw hun vader in zijn wapenrusting kennen,
Doch aan den glans daarvan welhaast hun oog gewennen.
Daar zich het teeder jongske aan kindsche vreugd gehecht,
In 's vaders schild, als waar 't een rustbed, nederlegt;
En 't zoogend wicht, bekoord door 't prachtig hoofdsieraadje,
Den helmtop aanlacht op 't bewegen der pluimaadje.
De veldheer toont zijn gâ de blijdschap van hun kroost.
Dan ach! de kindermin, hoe sterk, geeft weinig troost
Als zich de huwelijkstrouw door angsten voelt verscheuren.
De brave vrouw, die zich vergeefs tracht op te beuren,
Beveelt al weenend hem aan zijnen eedlen stoet,
En ziet hem zuchtend na met een beklemd gemoed.

Lucretia Wilhelmina van Merken, *Germanicus. In zestien boeken.* Amsterdam: Pieter Meijer, 1779, book 10, p.259-261.

Germanicus

Germanicus quitte Agrippine:

Dès que Germanicus eut appris le retour de Silius
et de Flavius, arrivant des bords du Mein,
il ordonne les apprêts du départ. Son âme magnanime
éprouve la plus tendre pitié des chagrins de la sensible Agrippine,
qui, vaincue par les soucis qui l'accablent,
le serre entre ses bras et le presse sur son coeur.
'Ah! lui dit-elle avec une douleur touchante, la tyrannie de Tibère te menace à Rome;
et dans la Germanie tes jours sont en bute à la rage des ennemis;
ici, la fureur, là, la haine peuvent t'être fatales.
Hélas! ta triste Epouse est-elle donc condamnée à nourrir d'éternelles craintes?
Je sais ce que ta gloire exige, ce que la nécessité commande;
mais au moins, si tu veux que je vive, daigne songer à ta conservation;
que l'image de ton épouse et de tes enfants, encore si jeunes, te soit toujours présente:
c'en est fait de ta famille, Germanicus, si les Dieux ne veillent sur toi'.

'Calme tes agitations, réplique le Prince attendri, peut-être tu t'attristes en vain;
ne laisse point abattre ton âme par une faiblesse peu digne d'elle;
les Dieux favorables me feront vivre pour toi,
et triompher d'Arminius'.
En achevant ces mots le Héros essuie d'une main bienfaisante les larmes de son Epouse;
il embrasse tendrement le jeune Cajus, et prend dans ses bras le dernier fruit de son hymen, encore au berceau:
ces enfants reconnaissent à peine leur père sous son armure brillante;
bientôt ils se familiarisent avec cet éclat:
l'un se couche, en jouant, dans le bouclier de son Père;
l'autre sourit d'un air enfantin à chaque mouvement du panache,
qui surmonte le casque brillant du Héros.
Germanicus montre à son Epouse la joie de leurs enfants;
mais dans ces tristes instants, où la tendresse conjugale est dévorée par mille inquiétudes,
l'amour maternel, quelque fort qu'il puisse être, ne donne que de faibles consolations.
La tendre Agrippine, qui tâche en vain de cacher son émotion,
recommande mille fois son Epoux à la Noblesse qui l'accompagne,
et le suit longtemps des yeux, accablée de craintes et de sollicitude.

Anonymous translation: *Germanicus. Poème en seize chants.* Amsterdam: P.J. Uylenbroek, 1787, book 10, p.247-248.

II Writing the history of women's writing

Suzan van Dijk

Early historiography of Dutch and French women's literature

Authors – be they male or female – do not belong to a national context only. The Dutch Anna Roemersdr. Visscher (1583-1651) demonstrates this by choosing to translate the *Emblèmes ou devises chrétiennes* published by Georgette de Montenay in 1571. Anna Roemers' address to her contemporary shows an obvious familiarity apparently based on common religion and shared femaleness. Although she did not publish her translations, she thus participated in a large international network surrounding this French Protestant.[1] Such links between women writers, and the influences they mutually exercised, have scarcely been studied for the earlier periods.[2] *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* does not aim to explore these links, but mentions some of them – Anna van der Horst translating Marie de Gournay, Katharina Lescailje translating Antoinette Deshoulières[3] – and invites to further study of these and similar cases.

These individual links cannot be investigated here either.[4] This paper will discuss some preliminaries. Clearly, the study of international contacts between women authors requires knowledge of the positions permitted to women as authors in the countries concerned. In this connection, limiting myself to the Netherlands and France, I want to focus here on a broad comparison of female literary production in the two countries during the 18th century.

Comparing French and Dutch writers compels me into a discussion of sources to be used as French parallels to *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*. This discussion involves due consideration of the different traditions of literary historiography on women in the two countries.

[1] Her poem addressed to Montenay has been reproduced in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.151 (contribution Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen and Hans Luijten), and (with a translation in English) in Meijer 1998, p.54-5. See about Montenay: Matthews Grieco 1994, who states (p.794) that the *Emblèmes ou devises chrétiennes* were published 'in all of the major European languages': Latin, German, Italian, Spanish, English and Flemish – this does not refer to Visscher's translation, which was published only in the 19th century; see also the contribution of Marijke Spies to this volume.

[2] A notable exception is of course Moers 1963, who discusses the influence of Germaine de Staël, Stéphanie de Genlis, and George Sand on English women writers.

[3] See *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.608 (contribution Annelies de Jeu) and 68 (Introduction).

[4] It will be done in a volume actually in preparation under the direction of Suzan van Dijk, Petra Broomans, Pim van Oostrum and Janet van der Meulen.

Presence and absence of catalogues in France and the Netherlands

The situations are totally different: in France,[5] since the 18th century, a considerable number of catalogues of women writers have been published, but at the moment there is no French work available for the purpose of comparing authors mentioned in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* to French contemporaries.[6] This is of course partly due to the number of French female authors being too large to permit a thorough presentation such as that given here to the Dutch women authors.[7]

In the Netherlands, before *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*, no catalogue of women writers had been published, that is to say: no compilation of women writers *exclusively*. More general catalogues of learned women[8] have been compiled in the past; they are disregarded here, as they contain also non-writing women (authors of correspondences which, though learned, were not meant to be published); they do *not* mention authors of non-'learned' texts.[9] I will not deny[10] the importance of these enterprises undertaken, and partly even realized, during the 17th and 18th centuries: Van Beverwyck's *Van de wtnementheyt des vrouwelicken geslachts* (On the excellence of the female sex),[11] Van Almeloveen's catalogue project at the end of the century[12] and Pieter de la Ruë's *Nederlands geleerd vrouwentimmer* (Dutch female learnedness).[13] But these catalogues were meant to be used as arguments in the discussion about female education; sometimes they simply give an exhibition of female learnedness as a mere curiosity.[14] Consequently, there is no recognition of women's actual role in literary communication. More significant would have been the

[5] As in Germany; see the contribution of Cornelia Niekus Moore to this volume.

[6] In contrast to Germany; see, again, Moore in this volume. This is not to say that nothing is happening in France in this field. I now only refer to overviews which include all literary genres, and are concerned with the earlier period as well. For my comparison, for example, the recent Makward/Cottenet-Hage 1996 is of little use, nor is the earlier Sullerot 1974. In the first book a quite rigorous selection for the earlier period has been made, while the criteria used are not clear; in the second book the restriction of theme does not suit the present objective.

[7] There was a CNRS project, which – for the time being? – has been stopped. Its aim was to give an overview of 'la production littéraire des femmes du Moyen Age à 1940'. Béatrice Slama described the problems this raised: for the 16th century 73 women writers had been found, but in the 19th century their number was at least 2000 (see Slama 1992, p.87). The large number seems to have been a smaller hindrance for the English female authors to be classified and studied.

[8] Itself in fact a sub-genre of the genre of the catalogue of famous women; Brita Rang considers the emergence of this sub-genre as a 'realistic development' (see Rang 1988, p.40 and 45).

[9] As Saskia Stegeman observes, 'in many catalogues and treatises on learned women [..] the practice of poetry is seen as proof of the learning of a woman'; this however does not apply to practising the genre of the novel, and certainly not in the 18th century (Stegeman 1997, p.451).

[10] Nor the usefulness of projects concerning men *and* (some) women (whether or not these have been realized) as that of Lambert Bidloo (the *Panpoëticon Batavum*, 1720) and Diederich Ulrich Heinemeyer at the end of the century (cf. Hochstenbach/Singeling 1988); these, however, are not so much predecessors of as sources for *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*.

[11] Van Beverwyck 1639. See on this point Van Gemert 1994.

[12] See Stegeman 1997. Both (Van Beverwyck and Van Almeloveen) did not restrict themselves to *Dutch* women.

[13] Never published; see the Introduction to *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.92.

[14] Perhaps this particularly applies to Van Almeloveen; Stegeman remarks on his project: 'Van Almeloveen's method of collecting data shows that he did not start this project with the aim to prove or refute the ability of women to be professional in these fields. In his particular case, he could have compiled a collection of an arbitrarily chosen "article"' (Stegeman 1997, p.450).

anthology, to be entitled *De geest der Nederlandsche dichteressen* (The spirit of Dutch poetesses), planned – but not realized – at the end of the 18th century by Jacob Eduard de Witte.[15] It was not until 1856, with the publication of Van der Aa's *Parelen uit de lettervruchten van Nederlandsche dichteressen* (Pearls from the literary fruits of Dutch poetesses), that we had a collection which went further than the manuscript stage – but this work is rather limited in size and scope. The first serious inventory is one published in Flanders in 1920, by Maurits Basse.[16] A point worth mentioning is the absence, during this whole period, of female compilers, although it should be said in this connection that Dutch (novice) women writers often themselves referred to female predecessors: this sometimes resulted in the making of 'short lists'.[17]

When compared to France, where from the 18th century onwards[18] catalogues of women writers were published,[19] by both male and female compilers, this is obviously very limited. There are, in fact, many women writers included in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* who did not appear in the collections made by Van Beverwijck, De la Ruë and Van der Aa, and for whom the Dutch researchers have had to go back to contemporaneous documents, after having found their names in biographical manuals concerning other categories of people (pietists, Zealanders, theatre artists etc.).

There is a considerable advantage here: in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* relatively few traces are to be found of the deformation and mythicizing that can so clearly be seen in the successive French inventories, and from which even more recent research sometimes hardly distances itself. Mythicizing of this order begins already with the very first inventories dating from the end of the 1760s.[20] In those years two different initiatives were taken to produce catalogues containing exclusively women writers. The most influential[21] was by the abbé Joseph de La Porte, a journalist and professional compiler. In his five-part *Histoire littéraire des femmes françaises* (1769) he names about 300 women writers – of whom 200 had no more than one page, or even

[15] He was Maria van Zuylekom's husband; for De Witte and his project see the entry on this author in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.715 (contribution Lia van Gemert).

[16] Although the *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* introduction states that he does little more than give a list (p.94), his intention was to 'make a book which, while being scientifically accurate, was at the same time accessible to a wide public' (Basse 1920, preface). Basse was the son of the Flemish poet Eliza Mather (*Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.935 (contribution Piet Couttenier)).

[17] As, for example, Betje Wolff does in the preface to one of her first publications, Wolff 1765, p. XI-XII; and also Johanna Hoobius in her *Het lof der vrouwen* (Praise of women); see *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.227-234 (contribution Els Stronks).

[18] Rang also mentions Louis Jacob, *Dictionnaire biographique des femmes écrivains, depuis l'antiquité jusqu'au XIXe siècle*, a manuscript from 1646 that should be in the B.N. (f.fr. 22865), and which has been cited by English and German catalogue authors. Strangely enough, it does not figure in the list given in DeJean 1991, p.219-221; nor in the one of Geffriaud Rosso 1984, p.189-211.

[19] Once again based on numerous catalogues of famous and learned women – an essential part of what DeJean calls 'the worldly anthology tradition' (DeJean 1991, p.185).

[20] During this period a new form of literary history was being created: in 1740 the abbé Goujet had begun, in his *Histoire de la littérature française* (18 vols.) to transform the hitherto prevailing 'worldly anthology' into 'the arm by which critics could police the reading habits of the «honnête homme» and thereby shape both his taste and his national prejudices' (DeJean 1991, p.187-8).

[21] In 1768 Pons-Augustin Alletz had already published *L'esprit des femmes célèbres* where he only presents 26 writers. In the same year as La Porte Jean François de La Croix published a *Dictionnaire portatif des femmes célèbres, contenant l'histoire des femmes savantes, des actrices [etc.]*.

Fortunée Briquet

less, dedicated to their work. La Porte presents his chapters as letters to 'Madame', and he seems, in doing so, to be addressing a female audience, but it is worth noting that he shows a certain lack of respect for the texts he is presenting. This can be seen in the 'Avertissement', in which he declares that he will do some rigorous editing, convinced that it can only improve the texts.[22] Nevertheless, the mere presence of these names in La Porte's work had important consequences. His book has been much used, and subsequently, many of the women – and along with them, many of

[22] La Porte 1769, vol.I, p.vii-viii.

La Porte's formulas – reappear in later catalogues (of women writers[23] as well as those of 'famous' women[24]) and in more general overviews concerning French literary history[25] – most of which were written by male authors.[26]

But around 1800 some women, themselves writers, also intervened in the debate. Their position is interesting. Without being able to significantly change established, and establishing, traditions, each of these women assumes a rather polemical attitude. In 1788, Louise de Kéralio has the intention 'd'élever un monument à la gloire des femmes françaises distinguées dans la littérature'; she starts an anthology which was to include 36 volumes, but – because of what was happening on another level – did not get further than twelve. Kéralio's viewpoint on the matter is traditional: study makes women 'plus agréables dans la société intime et générale', where they should avoid exhibiting their learnedness, showing only 'cette aimable modestie, cette espèce de pudeur qui prête autant de charmes à l'esprit qu'à la vertu'.[27]

Nearly 20 years later,[28] Fortunée Briquet, considering that more should be known about the 'agréments que la culture de l'esprit des femmes procurerait à la société, *et surtout à elles-mêmes'*, makes it clear that she is opposed to La Porte's prejudices.[29] She clearly did use his *Histoire* for her own *Dictionnaire historique, littéraire et bibliographique*, but at the same time she distanced herself from certain characterizations. Briquet is much more rigorous than La Porte: writers of whom no titles survive are not included; and she is more objective than Stéphanie de Genlis,[30] who in her *De l'influence des femmes sur la littérature française* (1811) lets her personal preferences prevail: someone who can be called an 'épouse fidèle et bonne mère'[31] must be a good writer. So, Briquet's dictionary mentions many more women writers than Genlis' work does, namely 526. But her example of rigour and objectivity was not

[23] For example: Louis-Edmé Billardon de Sauvigny, *Le Parnasse des Dames* (1773), who presents Greek, Roman, French, English, Danish and German women writers; P. Jacquinet, *Les femmes de France poètes et prosateurs* (1886); and Larnac 1929.

[24] La Croix, *Dictionnaire portatif* (see note 21); and L. Prudhomme, *Répertoire universel, historique, biographique des femmes célèbres, mortes ou vivantes* (1826, reprinted in 1830).

[25] Sabatier de Castres, *Les trois siècles de notre littérature, ou Tableau de l'esprit de nos écrivains depuis François I jusqu'en 1772* (1772); N.L.M. Desessarts, *Les siècles littéraires de la France* (1800).

[26] They like to present themselves as 'panégyristes du beau sexe'. In a reaction to the *Parnasse des Dames*, the reviewer of the *Année littéraire* assumes that 'les femmes elles-mêmes applaudiront sans doute à une entreprise où leur gloire est particulièrement intéressée; car toutes les recherches de l'auteur [..] semblent n'avoir pour objet que de flatter leur amour-propre, qui souvent est si bien fondé' (*Année littéraire* 1773, vol.II, p.186).

[27] Kéralio 1786-1788, vol.I, p.IX and XII-XIII. See on her work DeJean 1991, p.186: 'The volumes Kéralio did complete are astonishingly well researched and put together and could easily be used today as the basis for a curriculum in French women's writing'. The last volume is about Madame de Sévigné (17th century).

[28] In the meantime, things had changed: Sylvain Maréchal had even had the opportunity, in 1801, to publish his *Projet d'une loi portant défense d'apprendre à lire aux femmes;* see about this brochure Fraisse 1989, p.13-46.

[29] Briquet 1804, p.ix (Avant-propos). See on Briquet: Pellegrin 1998.

[30] Genlis seems to dispute Briquet's assumptions: 'On a donné au public plusieurs ouvrages volumineux, contenant l'histoire des femmes auteurs; mais la plus grande partie de ces auteurs sont très médiocres, ou même tout à fait dénués de talent, et les trois quarts de ces femmes célèbres portent les noms les plus obscurs et les plus oubliés' (Genlis 1811, vol.I, Avertissement). She comes to a figure of about 30 women writers who would have really been influential.

[31] As Madame Deshoulières (Genlis 1811, vol.I, p.203).

followed. Precisely because she 'corrected' 'male' traditions, without succeeding in undermining them, and thus had very little influence, Briquet, paradoxically enough, is of interest to us.[32] She expressly presents her 526 authors as such, but does not attempt to canonize them, although some are given much more attention than others. In my view, her work – and this certainly applies to her treatment of 18th-century authors[33] – can be seen as a *registration* of the success enjoyed by the work of these women writers with contemporary male and female readers. Naturally, she did not decanonize either, which was in fact what La Porte did, as well as his compiling imitators.

These imitators of La Porte often adopted his own words and value judgements[34] – but added slightly more emphasis. The judgements were not really negative, but confirmed the special status of the authors discussed: they are exceptional figures, but they are women. Their femininity and feminine beauty are, for example, considered relevant: a less appreciated writer can have her beauty emphasized by means of compensation, and a celebrated romancière can be called ugly.[35] The possibilities offered here are fully developed and applied by Sainte-Beuve in the mid-19th century:[36] in his *Portraits de femmes*, he seems to transform real authors (their novels sometimes still on sale in recent editions) into fictional characters, reassuring the public: 'I will not be talking about her work!'[37] His influence is visible in Jean Larnac's *Histoire de la littérature féminine*.[38] In his preface, this author mentions as one of his main points of reference, and as a shining example, his illustrious predecessor, Joseph de La Porte. And indeed – since that is what it was all about – we can find a great number[39] of 'La Porte's women' in Larnac's book.

We have to take note, therefore, that this ambivalent 18th-century recognition of the status of women as participants in a literary circuit resulted in the survival of their names up to the 20th century. The problem is that La Porte, and his imitators, seem to keep a certain distance or even to show disdain towards this specific circuit itself, in which Fortunée Briquet was a participant later on. Some of the formulas used by the La Porte followers might be said to show the removal of women writers from historical reality.

[32] Germaine de Staël does participate in the discussion concerning the position of female authors, but she mentions no names; see her chapter 'Des femmes qui cultivent les lettres' in Staël 1800, p.332-342.
[33] Probably less to her presentation of earlier authors.
[34] Which he actually borrowed from the magazines and other sources where he found his information. In relation to La Porte's influence, see Van Dijk 1997.
[35] These are, for example, judgements from which Briquet distanced herself.
[36] See on his slightly denigratory attitude: Diaz 1992; the then influential critic, 'portraitiste attitré des femmes' turns out to have a preference for 'celles qui furent écrivains sans y penser, sans y prétendre, en dispersant au hasard leur conversation ou leur émotion sur des feuilles volantes' (Diaz 1992, p.80, 78).
[37] This is how he begins his portrait of Françoise de Graffigny, insisting on the presentation of this 18th-century novelist as a 'personnage': '[s]a vie était un roman plus touchant sans doute que ceux qu'elle a écrits' (Sainte-Beuve 1858, vol.II, p.209). He prefers women to be authors of private documents, 'ces lettres bavardes' where 'la curiosité féminine et l'indiscrétion l'emportent' (id., p.210).
[38] He is paraphrasing Sainte-Beuve, describing Graffigny as 'un peu bavarde et vulgaire, un peu *caillette*, comme on disait alors' (Larnac 1929, p.145). See Marks 1993 about his way of 'recondui[re] les clichés les plus dommageables sur l'inévitable infériorité des femmes, en tant que femmes et en tant qu'écrivains' (p.832).
[39] I.e. 106; Larnac clearly did not use Briquet: writers she omitted from her listing are to be found here again.

A comparable process of more or less conscious decanonization of female writers cannot really be traced in the Netherlands. The transformation of a woman writer into a 'personnage' can at best only be said to apply to Tesselschade Roemers and (perhaps through public response in other countries) to Anna Maria van Schurman.[40] With the exception of three or four canonized women[41] and of local celebrities,[42] most of the Dutch writers simply disappeared into oblivion, even those who had been cited as role models. As far as most of them are concerned, there is hardly a *history* of *reception,* which might have been taken up by *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* or which could be in need of rectification. The editors of the book had to make a 'jump backwards',[43] and in doing so found themselves relatively *close* to these writers: in a position which is, in a certain way, similar to that of Briquet in relation to the French writers of the 18th century.

A comparison between the Netherlands and France

This recognition of the merits of *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* (and of the usefulness of the recent reprint of Briquet's work) is meant to justify my comparison, which will be based on these two overviews: one rather old, one brand-new. Although neither of them can be said to be complete,[44] both give information about the respective positions and productions of women writers. My comparison is based upon figures reproduced on the next page, showing the French and Dutch female literary productions for the 17th and 18th centuries.

I want, at first, to raise a general question on the problems of 'genre and gender'. A large difference is discernible between the numbers of 18th-century authors of prose narrative. In France they are relatively numerous:[45] 108 women[46] produced

[40] See De Baar/Rang 1992 and Maria-Theresia Leuker's contribution to this volume.

[41] Anna Bijns, Betje Wolff, Aagje Deken, Geertruida Bosboom-Toussaint (see fragments of works on pages 29-33, 155-9, 223-5).

[42] Such as Juliana de Lannoy (see on her *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.632-638 (contr. Pim van Oostrum); texts with translations in Meijer 1998, p.62-71) from Breda and the Fries Clara Feyoena van Sytzama (*Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.592-601 (contribution Arie Jan Gelderblom)). Some others, for example Elisabeth Maria Post and Margareta Geertruid van der Werken (id., p.696-706 and 602-607 (contribution Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen)), have been as it were 'retrieved' – thanks to the, novelistic, genre they practised (see further).

[43] To paraphrase the title given by Annelies van Gijsen to her lecture on the possibility of presenting an anthology of Dutch female writers before 1550 (lecture held for the 'Werkverband Vrouwenstudies-Neerlandistiek-Literatuurgeschiedschrijving' (Working group Women's studies-Literary History) in March 1998).

[44] The *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*-introduction states that it proved impossible, particularly for the 18th and 19th centuries, to present every woman who wrote. Briquet probably will have tried to be as complete as possible, according to her own criteria. In fact she is not: her book gives a very concise picture for each author, which does not present the whole oeuvre. For example, although we saw earlier the polemic position taken up by a woman such as Louise de Kéralio, an item 'polemics' does not appear. For practical reasons, I did not go back to the texts themselves.

[45] That is, compared to the Netherlands. The French female novel-production is probably 15-20% of the total production. This evaluation (made in Van Dijk 1988, p.227) was based on Martin/Mylne/Frautschi 1977. In England the number of women novelists seems to have been more considerable: Spender lists 116 women who published novels in the 18th century (Spender 1986). Turner comes to a figure of 174 authors publishing in the period 1696-1796; for many of the women she added, she only mentions one novel (Turner 1992, p.152-211).

[46] For a number of them Briquet mentions only one novel.

different types of fictional narrative. The figure is still more considerable if we include autobiographical narrative (letters and so-called 'histoires' and 'réflexions'), knowing that in France, as in England, the boundary between the two categories is not very sharp. In this connection, it would seem that in France the novel has been used by women to raise their own issues and problems. That in fact a significant number of them did this is clear from the preference for certain combinations of characters and for narrative solutions, to which contemporary (male) critics took exception.[47]

Tabel 1.

	Netherlands (*Lauwerkrans*)		France (Briquet)	
Period	**17th century**	**18th century**	**17th century**	**18th century**
Total number of writers	**42**	**55**	**135**	**308**
Occasional and secular verse	27 (64%)	45 (82%)	63 (47%)	90 (29%)
Religious writing/verse (protestant)	15 (35%)	25 (45%)	---	---
Theatre	4 (10%)	14 (25%)	11 (8%)	44 (14%)
Translations	9 (21%)	13 (24%)	13 (10%)	50 (16%)
Writing for childeren	1 (2%)	11 (20%)	---	15 (5%)
Political themes	8 (19%)	9 (16%)	---	2 (<1%)
Fictional narrative	---	8 (15%)	17 (13%)	108 (35%)
Female issues	7 (17%)	7 (13%)	15 (11%)	31 (10%)
(Auto)biography	4 (10%)	7 (13%)	22 (16%)	55 (18%)
Didactic poem/essay	3 (7%)	6 (11%)	---	29 (9%)
Polemics	2 (5%)	6 (11%)	---	---
Epics	---	6 (11%)	---	1 (<1%)
Journalism	---	5 (9%)	---	14 (5%)
'Country house poem'	1 (2%)	4 (7%)	---	---
Heroids	---	4 (7%)	---	---
Emblematics	3 (7%)	---	---	---
Religious writing/verse (catholic)	8 (19%)	---	28 (20%)	7 (2%)

In the Netherlands, the situation appears to be completely different. Before Betje Wolff and Aagje Deken in the 1780s, Dutch women writers did not feel the same needs or follow those examples, and only at a relatively late stage did they enter the domain of the novel.[48] *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* includes only eight 18th-century

[47] See on this question: Van Dijk 1998a.

[48] Germany might seem, with Sophie von La Roche, to have started equally late, but in the 17th century there already were practising women novel-writers. Meise presents 18 female novelists publishing between 1771 and 1798 (Meise 1992); but Ute Brandes discusses some women who follow the example of the French 'roman héroïque', one of whom, Sibylle Ursula von Braunschweig-Lüneburg, corresponded with Madeleine de Scudéry (Brandes 1988, p.244).

novel writers, who were active in the last quarter of the century, and does not really discuss the problem as to why this difference exists. Indeed, it is actually the point of correspondence that is emphasized:[49] the fact that in the Netherlands, just like elsewehere, women are often novel-writers (and novel-writers women); little attention is paid to the actual difference concerning the moments of starting. Seen from the perspective of the present state of research on the French novel, the difference seems more conspicuous.

How should this difference be explained? Is it enough[50] to refer to the late beginnings, in Holland, of the novel as a genre – be it female or male? We have to admit that only in the 1780s did the number of prose fiction works published in the Dutch language start to have any significance,[51] and that even then these works include translations (about 50 %)[52] and adaptations of older texts. The reason for me to think this is not wholly conclusive for understanding the choices made by Dutch female writers is the – just mentioned – lack of a sharp distinction between fictional and autobiographical narrative. It has already proved possible to find more female autobiographies than those presented in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*. These texts need further investigation, particularly in comparison with contemporary fictional texts.

Viewed – again – from the present French perspective, something else is striking. It is true that few novelists figure in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*, but the proportion of *poets* is very large indeed: 45 of the 55, while among the 25 authors of religious writing there were also some poets. I shall illustrate the degree of surprise this may provoke by referring to the recent (concise) *Dictionnaire littéraire des femmes de langue française* by Makward and Cottenet-Hage. It mentions 45 18th-century women writers (selected according to rather arbitrary criteria), of whom 21 are novel-writers and 4 poets. This is incomplete, but fits the perceptions which are operative *today* in France regarding female literary activity during this period.

What do these proportions signify if we consider the Briquet-figures – representing, as I suggested, the importance attached by contemporaries to the 18th-century writers? Her work provides us with an important insight, because in addition to the 108 female novel writers (and the 55 authors of autobiographical texts, certainly read for a large part as if they were novels, showing a woman as the protagonist), she names 90 women poets, plus seven women writing religious verse. They were active mainly in social frameworks in the French 'province'. Smaller towns were indeed of significance here, particularly Toulouse (with its 'Académie des Jeux Floraux'), but also many of these women published their poems in the (Parisian) periodical press.[53]

[49] *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.77/8; see also the contribution to the first part of this volume by Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen.

[50] Or, Dutch women would not have been familiar with the problems treated by French women in their novels? In fact, French travellers are often surprised by the 'coldness' of Dutch people and by the absence of any 'vie mondaine'; cf. Van Strien-Chardonneau 1994, p.257-264.

[51] More than about 10 a year (Mateboer 1996).

[52] Following Nieuwenboer 1982.

[53] In the *Mercure de France*, the *Journal des Dames* (that in 1778 would be incorporated in the *Mercure)*, and in the yearly *Almanach des Muses* (which for a long period was associated with the *Journal des Dames)*.

In short, novel-writing may well have been less dominant among French women than has often been suggested.

If we are about to attack this so-called dominance, it may be useful to make a distinction between the role women played in the development of the novel as a genre, and, on the other hand, their choice to practise one genre or another. Concerning the significance of women for the genre of the novel, we can say that it has often been recognized, even in the 19th century, during which period in France female writers and 18th-century novels were held in equally low esteem. In 1840 Villemain mentions, in his *Tableau de la littérature française*, only four novel-writers, but they are two men and two women.[54] When in 1922 Servais Etienne publishes his large survey of the novelistic genre, he still feels naturally obliged to discuss many women.[55] The intense preoccupation with the novel we saw during the last decades finally provided us, in my opinion, with a larger number of 're-discovered' male than female novelists. It was not so much thanks to literary historical as to bookhistorical research – initiated well before Etienne by Daniel Mornet[56] – that the 18th-century impact of female novel-writing has been clearly established.

As for the seemingly exclusive choice made by women for the writing of novels, Briquet's data may be enough to prove that this is a misrepresentation. But what factors are here at play? We have to realize that those poets of the French 18th century who faded into oblivion were not only female: until recently the 'Siècle des Lumières' was considered to have produced no significant lyrical poetry. This is now changing. New research on the question will have to include the work of women. This will further demonstrate how much the study of French female authors has been conditioned by the considerably greater interest for the novel, and by the implicit idea that because women played a role in the development of the novel, the novel must have been their favourite genre. Besides, the novel had 'brought forth' so many women authors that the need for further investigation into women's writing in other genres has for a long period been insignificant.

It is clear from this comparison between *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* and Briquet's *Dictionnaire* that my initial question about the differences of numbers of novelists was partly based on a false assumption, and that there is (at least) one obvious point of correspondence to be noticed: both in the Netherlands and in France (even before the 19th century)[57] women wrote poetry! The Dutch poets have been catalogued: we can now discuss the need to integrate their work in a literary canon of some kind. The French women poets of this period have as yet hardly been studied; it is to be hoped that we shall soon know more about their work and the roles they played, their specific – 'feminine' (?) – role in cities such as Toulouse, their use of the genre of the

[54] Le Sage, Prévost, Madame de Tencin, Mademoiselle Delaunay (Villemain 1840).

[55] Without much esteem for the literary qualities of male and female novelists: 'J'ai accordé une grande attention aux oeuvres de second et de dernier ordre: il n'y a guère que cela dans le roman de l'époque' (Etienne 1922, p.6).

[56] His famous article, which mentions as the most frequently read (or at least possessed) novelists Duclos, Mademoiselle de Lussan and Madame Riccoboni, has been much criticized, but its conclusions have been *grosso modo* confirmed.

[57] See the contribution of Christine Planté.

periodical press in order to obtain a wider audience, and perhaps about the question to what extent this 'social poetry-writing' can be linked to what happened in the *salons*. As to the novelists: in France they are so numerous and sometimes so prolific that in many cases their work has hardly been studied and their originality is difficult to recognize. As far as the Netherlands novelists are concerned – or rather: the authors of fictional or autobiographical prose narrative –, I must say I think it possible (because of sources not having been used up to now)[58] that more of them will be found. The number is not interesting in itself, but will permit a better understanding of their advancement to professionalism.

The need for and the possibility of making comparisons

An international comparison of this kind provides us with the opportunity to be quite precise in putting some broad questions concerning female literary activities. It is useful to point out that these comparisons are also a direct result of the material we are studying: these writers crossed boundaries themselves, forming those individual links I started with. Not only Anne-Marie du Boccage went to the Netherlands, Betje Wolff and Aagje Deken to France and Mary Wollstonecraft to Sweden, but their works travelled also, and thus they met other women, the texts being either imported in the original version or made available in translation. Numerous novels by French women are to be found, for example, in Swedish circulating libraries and in Dutch book-sale catalogues,[59] and the number of women providing translations was considerable. Often, they did not only produce translations: they were also women who created their own oeuvre, or were later to do so. This fact does not only apply to writers translating into Dutch or French. Some of these female translators seem to have had a special interest in the works of other women. The best known example in the Netherlands is Betje Wolff who translated Stéphanie de Genlis, Louise d'Epinay, Lady Montague and Sophie von La Roche.[60] In Germany, Luise Gottsched, for example, translated Marie-Anne Barbier and Françoise de Graffigny. Graffigny's work was translated into English by Clara Reeve; and Isabelle de Montolieu translated into French (among many others) Charlotte Smith, Elizabeth Helme and Jane Austen. These activities and international contacts could not be reconciled with a view of the writers as 'personnages', nor with their being lost from collective memory. On the basis of broad comparisons – now more and more possible – these contacts between women writers need to be further investigated.

[58] In particular the periodical press; possibly in combination with the notes taken by Heinemeyer for his intended dictionary concerning the Dutch Republic of Letters (mentioned above, see note 10). In their presentation, Hochstenbach and Singeling state that much of the information contained in these notes is not new, because they are largely based on the contemporary press; for women authors this might be different, periodicals not having been used systematically to study their cases. See Hochstenbach/Singeling 1988 and Van Dijk 1998b.

[59] Sources currently used in bookhistory, and too little for the moment in women's literary historiography. Margareta Björkman's study of seven circulating libraries shows the importance of the success, in Sweden, of Madame Riccoboni. Alicia Montoya analyzes Dutch private libraries on this point; her research will be published in the volume announced in note 4.

[60] And, without naming her, Jeanne Leprince de Beaumont; see Van Dijk/Van Raamsdonk 1998.

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'Beautiful Souls' and 'Bluestockings': the reception of 17th- and 18th-century Women writers in Dutch literature of the 19th century

Quite a number of Dutch novels, novellas, plays and poems of the 19th century deal with the lives and works of Dutch women writers of the 17th and 18th centuries. These texts draw upon several different discourses. First of all, they reflect the contemporary discourse on gender. As far as women and writing were concerned, this discourse offered a simple formula: generally, women were neither able nor allowed to produce literature. A woman poet always ran the risk of being considered a 'bluestocking', which was supposed to be the opposite of a virtuous woman.[1] Another important context for these texts is the 19th-century discourse on nation building and national identity. Presenting the lives and works of these female authors meant bringing the glorious past of the Dutch nation and its cultural achievements back to the collective memory.[2] At the same time, women writers served as role models from whom national as well as female virtues could be learned. A third context to be mentioned here is the discourse on literary history and the canon of national literature. The texts investigated here reflect the mechanisms and criteria of integration into and exclusion from the literary canon.[3]

Among the 17th- and 18th-century Dutch women poets, who was considered a virtuous woman, a national role model worthy of a place in the pantheon of Dutch literature? Fictional texts from the 19th century more or less limit themselves to one heroine: Maria Tesselschade Roemers. I have analyzed all the texts I could find – twenty novels, novellas, plays and poems, two of which were written by women – in which she is the protagonist or one of the protagonists.[4] No other Dutch woman writer has gained comparable literary fame, not even Maria Tesselschade's older sister Anna. The latter is never conceded more than a modest supporting role beside her sparkling younger sister. The texts keep repeating the stereotype of the 'wise Anna'

[1] Streng 1997, p.5-17, 48-55.
[2] The 'Golden Age' of the Netherlands became a popular subject in 19th-century Dutch literature. The protagonists are often artists, poets as well as painters. See Van Sas 1992 and Kloek 1992.
[3] In a case study about the 17th-century poet Gerbrand Adriaenszoon Bredero I have tried to demonstrate these mechanisms; cf. Leuker 2000b. See for the discourse on literary history in the 19th-century Netherlands in general: Wiskerke 1995.
[4] See the bibliography of primary sources.

and the 'beautiful Tesselschade'.[5] The only advantage that Anna had over her sister, though, was that her collected works had been published by the end of the 19th century.[6] Tesselschade had to wait for that honour until the 400th anniversary of her birth in 1994.[7]

Anna and Maria Tesselschade Roemersdr. Visscher as presented on a painting by Petrus Kremer, 1827 (fragment).

With regard to their literary reception, all the other women writers do not get much further than having their names mentioned in poems of praise dedicated to all women, such as the poem 'De vrouwen' (The women) written by H.A. Spandaw in 1807 and published in an extended version in 1819, or the song of praise 'Aan de vaderlandse vrouwen' (To the women of our fatherland) that Petronella Moens dedicated to her fellow female citizens in 1819.[8]

[5] The first printed evidence for the attribution of these epithets to the sisters is a poem by Constantijn Huygens written in 1620, on the occasion of the death of Roemer Visscher, the father of Anna and Tesselschade Roemers. See Huygens 1892, vol.I, p.195. Huygens' characterization was revived by Scheltema 1808. This book became the most important source for 19th-century authors of Tesselschade-literature.

[6] Visscher 1881. A recent attempt to relieve Anna Roemers from the clichés imposed on her and her oeuvre by the historiography of literature: Schenkeveld-van der Dussen 1997.

[7] Roemers 1994. This edition contains 32 poems, all her works that have been preserved. Her poetry is written in mannerist style and inspired by her contemporaries and literary friends Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft and Constantijn Huygens. Only ten of her poems were printed during her lifetime. Precedent of the 1994 edition is the anthology Worp 1918, in which J.A. Worp compiled letters and poems written by and addressed to Tesselschade Roemers. The 1994 edition is the first separate edition dedicated to her oeuvre. It contains texts that were not yet known in 1918, and in contrast to the Worp edition the poems are edited without the 'corrections' applied by contemporaries.

[8] Moens 1819 mentions Betje Wolff, Aagje Deken, Lucretia Wilhelmina van Merken, Katharina Schweickhardt, Fenna Mastenbroek and Francijntje de Boer. Her poem of praise is reprinted in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*, 1997, p.751-753. According to the commentary by the contributor, Lia van

Readers who are not acquainted with Dutch literary history might ask 'who was Maria Tesselschade Roemersdr. Visscher?' An answer is given in Mieke Smits-Veldt's biography that came out in 1994, on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of Tesselschade's birth.[9] Maria Tesselschade was born in 1594 and died in 1649. She grew up in Amsterdam in an atmosphere open to humanist thought and artistic expression. As a girl and a young woman, she was given the opportunity to develop her intellectual potential and her manifold talents. Her father, a wealthy merchant and a poet himself, was acquainted with the leading poets of the time. Already in the 17th century, Tesselschade Roemers was surrounded by admirers who praised her in poems and letters.

These texts, and with them the woman poet, supposedly a charming beauty, were rediscovered in the 19th century, when Maria Tesselschade became, as Mieke Smits puts it in her biography, 'the idol of the whole nation'.[10] Tesselschade Roemers was seen as the embodiment of a unique mixture of female qualities, talents and virtues. The 19th-century ideal of femininity was projected upon the historical person of the 17th century. The records concerning Tesselschade Roemers were selected and presented according to current needs. Biographical facts, the few poems and letters by her that had survived, letters written and poems dedicated to her by contemporaries, were interpreted in a way that allowed for the creation of the perfect example of a Dutch woman, a role model for all girls and women. The idol was not created by literature alone, however; painting and the historiography of literature also played important roles.[11] In this article, I have to limit myself to the literary image of Tesselschade Roemers, whereas in my forthcoming book I have also taken paintings and historiographical texts into consideration.[12]

Tesselschade Roemers's literary achievements were not decisive for her fame, neither in the 17th century, nor in the 19th century; of much greater importance were her talent for singing and playing the lute, her skilfulness in all sorts of needlework, and, last but not least, her beauty and charm, with which she captivated many a male contemporary. As a character in 19th-century literature, Tesselschade Roemers personifies the harmony of artistic talent and female virtue. In the 19th century, these characteristics were generally considered incompatible. Artistic expression implies

Gemert, Moens followed the examples of M. Westerman: 'De invloed der vrouwen op de vier tijdperken des levens' (1816) and of H.A. Spandaw: 'De vrouwen' (for the latter, see the bibliography of primary sources). In the first edition of his poem published in 1807, he mentions 23 women authors, among them Petronella Moens and most of the poets included in her poem. After Jacobus Scheltema had found fault with the omission of Anna and Maria Tesselschade Roemers, Spandaw published an extended version of his text in which he dedicated 100 verses to the sisters. See the exposition catalogue *Maria Tesselschade*, no.98.

[9] Smits-Veldt 1994; see also Nichols 1990, Schenkeveld 1991, or Stouten 1999. One poem by Tesselschade, and several by Anna Roemers have been reproduced, along with a translation in English, in Meijer 1998, p.50-58.

[10] Smits-Veldt 1994, p.7.

[11] Cf. Scheltema 1808. About historical paintings of Tesselschade Roemers and her literary friends in the legendary 'Muiderkring', see: Smits-Veldt 1998.

[12] Leuker 2000a.

creativity, a characteristic which was regarded as exclusively male.[13] Nonetheless, Tesselschade Roemers manages to reconcile the opposites, according to many fictional texts. These texts are to a great extent based on biographical facts, for Roemers led her life according to the demands of ideal femininity as formulated in the 17th as well as the 19th century. When she married, she set aside all the artistic pretensions to which she had dedicated her life until then. She became an honourable, true and devoted wife and a caring mother. After the death of her husband, she lived as a chaste widow in the spirit of the much-read, influential moralist Jacob Cats.[14] She never remarried. However, during the last fifteen years of her life, she found time to take up writing again. Thus, her life history can be divided into three phases: first she follows her artistic leanings, then she fulfils her female duties, and finally she lives under conditions that allow her to combine both. Her life history can be regarded as a reconciliation of artistic creativity with female duties. This pattern is taken up by the fiction concerning Tesselschade Roemers. In particular, Andriessen's novel *De Muiderkring* (The circle of [the castle of] Muiden, 1868), a book for young people, as well as the biographical sketch 'Maria Tesselschade Roemers' (1853) and the essay 'De liefdesgeschiedenissen van twee Nederlandse dichters' (The love stories of two Dutch poets, 1871) by Alberdingk Thijm present her *curriculum vitae* as exemplary. For the authors of these and all the other texts it is a matter of concern to emphasize that Tesselschade Roemers is an artist and at the same time a woman in the true 19th-century sense of the word.[15]

Another recurring feature is Tesselschade Roemers' integration into a network of social relations. As an artist and a woman, she is defined by her personal ties. She is shown as a daughter, a sister, a wife, and most frequently, as a friend. Her most prominent friends were the great Dutch poets of her time: Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft, Constantijn Huygens and Joost van den Vondel. The records that have come down to us, in particular the correspondence, confirm a lifelong friendship between Hooft and Tesselschade Roemers. Like other friends of the Hooft family, she frequently visited him and his wife in Muiden castle, their summer residence near Amsterdam.[16] But literature goes far beyond historical evidence: 19th-century fiction tries to create a Dutch *Hôtel de Rambouillet* by inventing the 'circle of Muiden'. Hooft and his friends, poets and intellectuals, were said to have met regularly in Muiden castle and to have combined their efforts to improve Dutch language and literature.[17] The texts place Tesselschade Roemers in the centre of this circle: she is 'de ziel van het gezelschap' (the soul of the party) or 'de spil waarom onze kring draait' (the axis

[13] Streng 1997, p.10-17. Streng's argumentation is mainly based on Karin Hausen's research on the polarization of gender in the 19th century (Hausen 1976).
[14] Smits-Veldt 1994, p.109.
[15] In the second chapter of Andriessen 1868, Roemers is introduced as a versatile artist: poet, painter and sculptor, moreover knowing Latin, Greek *and* needlework (p.29). In chapter eleven, the readers get the opportunity to visit the home of Allard Crombalch and his wife Maria Tesselschade. Here the narrator emphasizes Roemers' housewifely qualities (p.184).
[16] Smits-Veldt 1994, p.49-66.
[17] See Spies 1984; Leuker 1995, and recently Smits-Veldt 1998.

around which our circle rotates).[18] As a fictional character, Tesselschade deliberately devotes all her artistic skills to the service of the circle of her friends: she weaves garlands to decorate the great hall of Muiden castle, she sings to entertain the friends gathered there, she engraves the glasses out of which they drink wine. The authors of historical literature drew all these details from the correspondence of Tesselschade Roemers' friends and used them to illustrate her unique combination of artistic and female qualities. In particular, in the plays *Maria Tesselschade Visscher op het slot te Muiden* (Visscher at Muiden castle, 1819) by Adrianus Beeloo and *Een Amsterdamsche winteravond* (An Amsterdam winter evening, 1832) by Jacob van Lennep, as well as in Andriessen's novel *De Muiderkring*, Tesselschade Roemers is presented as a 'virtuosa of sociability'. This is a title conferred on women of polite society by the German philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher, indicating the appropriate field for women to develop their artistic abilities.[19]

The creation of a harmonious atmosphere appears to be the most important task of the 'virtuosa of sociability'. If contrasting tempers or conflicting opinions clash, Tesselschade Roemers manages to reconcile them. In this respect, the fictional 'circle of Muiden' shows a gendered division of labour. The men release centrifugal energy: they argue, they display their genius and individuality, they compete with each other. In contrast, Tesselschade acts as the centripetal force of the circle. She employs her artistic talents and her female virtues to harmonize the discord in selfless service to her male friends. The novel *Het leven van Hillegonda Buisman* (The life of H. Buisman, 1814) by Adriaan Loosjes, and Beeloo's play *Maria Tesselschade Visscher op het slot te Muiden* allude to the well-known tensions between Hooft and Vondel that arose after Vondel's conversion to the Catholic faith, which, in the novel and in the drama, give Maria Tesselschade the opportunity to mediate between the two poets in order to restore the unanimity within the circle of literary friends.

Tesselschade Roemers' image as a fictional character has had far-reaching consequences. In the 19th century, she was admitted to the literary canon, but above all as a friend of poets and not in the first place as a poet herself. Publications concerning her life and work always surround her with her contemporaries outshining her in poetic fame. 'Maria Tesselschade and her literary friends' is a recurrent title, from the 19th century up to the present, and a look at the historiography of Dutch literature during the past 150 years confirms this impression. Roemers is not presented as an individual character, but as a character in relation to others in 17th-century literary life.[20]

[18] Scheltema's characterization of Roemers as 'de ziel van het gezelschap' is quoted by i.a. Andriessen. See Scheltema 1808, p.53 and Andriessen 1868, p.71. The admiring description of Tesselschade Roemers as 'de spil, waarom onze kring draait' is put into the mouth of P.C. Hooft by Jacques Perk (Perk 1902, p.224).

[19] Schleiermacher's remark 'Zufolge des Geschlechtscharakters sind die Frauen die Virtuosinnen in dem Kunstgebiet der freien Geselligkeit' is quoted by Frevert 1995, p.152.

[20] One of the first anthologies which made texts by Tesselschade available for 19th-century readers is entitled *Tesselschade Roemers en hare vrienden in 1632-1649* (Van Vloten 1852). Likewise, Worp 1918 presents her as inseparable from the circle of her literary friends. And even the exhibition on the occa-

So far, I have sketched what could be called the 'standard version' of the Tesselschade myth of the 19th century. But there was another version of that myth which entered into competition with the standard version. The 'father' of that alternative myth was the Catholic writer Joseph Albert Alberdingk Thijm. In contrast to the common Protestant myth of the circle of Muiden, a group of famous people which had in its centre Tesselschade Roemers as a devoted friend, Alberdingk Thijm did his best to establish Joost van den Vondel, the most famous Dutch poet, and Tesselschade Roemers as a couple of mythical heroes united in spiritual friendship and jointly devoted to literature and to the Catholic faith. Thijm's efforts to establish Vondel and Roemers as a mythical couple must be seen in the context of the demand of Dutch Catholics to be integrated into the Dutch nation that until then had been exclusively and intimately linked with Protestantism. Thijm was a very important cultural spokesman for the Catholics. Writing historical novellas was only one of his various activities.[21]

It was Thijm who added the most and the most substantial contributions to the list of texts that constitute the Tesselschade myth.[22] Also in his version, Tesselschade Roemers is a character in relation to someone else. Since his study of the sources had convinced Thijm that she had been a Catholic all her life, he lets Tesselschade lend Vondel her support during the difficult time of his conversion to the Catholic faith.[23] As an artist, she depends on Vondel. Under his guidance, she translates Torquato Tasso's epic *Gerusalemme liberata* from Italian into Dutch.[24] Thijm's point of view reflects the then current opinion concerning women's poetical competence: like his contemporaries, he does not believe that women are capable of autonomous creativity. And with respect to Tesselschade Roemers, he would not even find that capability desirable, because this would mean that she could be regarded as a learned woman, a 'bluestocking'. In his essay 'De liefdesgeschiedenissen van twee Nederlandsche dichters', Thijm rejects the contemporary cliché of the learned Tesselschade Roemers. She was not at all 'a woman forever with ink-spots on her cold and clammy fingertips', he argues: her kindness alone would already have made this impossible.[25] In a very agreeable way, she stands out against her contemporary Anna Maria van Schurman, who was praised as a wonder of erudition during the 17th century.[26] Thijm's contrasting valuation of the two women reflects the 19th-century ideology concerning female gender. Learned women are disapproved of because their

sion of the 400th anniversary of her birth in 1994 was entitled *Maria Tesselschade en haar literaire vrienden*, whereas Smits-Veldt's biography published in the same year also uses the motif of friendship: *Maria Tesselschade. Leven met talent en vriendschap* (Smits-Veldt 1994). The current handbooks of Dutch literary history refer to Tesselschade Roemers primarily as a friend and only secondarily as a poet.

[21] See, for example, Van der Plas 1995.

[22] See the bibliography of primary sources.

[23] Alberdingk Thijm 1876, p.80-86, 94-98.

[24] Alberdingk Thijm 1853, p.263 and 282; 1871, p.262-263; 1876, p.19 and 38-42; 1879, p.324-334.

[25] Alberdingk Thijm 1871, p.257.

[26] See about the life, the works and the reception of Anna Maria van Schurman: De Baar et al. 1992.

intellectuality contradicts female qualities such as passiveness, modesty and emotionality. Since the second half of the 18th century, women (in the Netherlands and in other Western-European countries) are supposed to be 'schöne Seelen', 'beautiful souls', who above all distinguish themselves by their moral integrity, and not by their cultural productivity.[27] The 'bluestocking' is the unfeminine counterpart of the 'beautiful soul'. This can be read about for example in the anonymous brochure *De blaauwkous of hoe geleerder hoe verkeerder* (The bluestocking, or, the more learned, the more errant) that came out in 1854. And the 19th-century writer Jacob van Lennep takes the same line when he jokes that he knows nothing more unbearable than a learned woman, except for *two* learned women.[28] This attitude is adopted not only towards women poets from the past, but also towards women writers from the 19th century. Much evidence can be found in the book reviews and the other source material analyzed by Toos Streng as well as by Lia van Gemert, Ans Veltman-van den Bos and Arie Jan Gelderblom.[29]

Thijm is not the only author who feels obliged to defend Tesselschade Roemers against the suspicion of being a 'bluestocking'. In the novel *De Muiderkring*, Andriessen stresses that she was a domestic rather than a learned woman.[30] Obviously, they both based their argumentation on the treatise *Anna en Maria Tesselschade, de dochters van Roemer Visscher*, the first academic study on the Visscher-sisters published by Jacobus Scheltema in 1808. Scheltema used his source material to illustrate his subjective and sometimes speculative ideas about the Visscher sisters. The Tesselschade myth originated in his book. Scheltema comes to the conclusion that Tesselschade and her sister Anna 'both used their outstanding intellectual gifts for the best purposes and ornamented them with moral purity based on godfearing principles and modesty' and that 'they remained women and never transgressed the boundaries of their nature like the so-called Savantes; they both followed the high vocation and became wives and mothers'.[31] Eighty years later, Jonckbloet, the author of the first academic encyclopedia on the history of Dutch literature, uses nearly the same words. After he has enumerated the various talents of Anna and Maria Tesselschade, he adds: 'Nevertheless, they were no pedantic bluestockings'. He quotes Van Lennep, who characterized them as kind and endearing girls skilfully entertaining their guests with sometimes merry, sometimes edifying, conversation.[32] For the rest, Jonckbloet is not very enthusiastic about the quality of literature by women writers. He mainly contents himself with mentioning some names and with the statement: 'Our country has never lacked female rhymesters, but most of the ladies do not at all better their brothers in art, so we shall not dwell on them'.[33]

[27] Bovenschen 1979, p.158-164, 194, 200f.; Streng 1997, p.14, 48-53, 72.
[28] Streng 1997, p.51.
[29] Streng 1997; Gelderblom 1997 and Van Gemert/Veltman-van den Bos 1997.
[30] See above, note 15.
[31] Scheltema 1808, p.63-64.
[32] Jonckbloet 1889-92, vol.III p.317.
[33] Id., vol.IV., p.173.

Except for the Visscher sisters, only Betje Wolff, the author of famous epistolary novels which she wrote together with her friend Aagje Deken at the end of the 18th century, seems worthy of a chapter of her own. However, she is also characterized in the usual stereotypical way: 'Don't think that she was a pedantic bluestocking. Far from it! She never neglected her female duties and did not consider it beneath her dignity to do the laundry'(!)[34]

Like Jonckbloet, Thijm accepted no female poet except for Maria Tesselschade Roemers, to whom he was devoted in true admiration. In one of his novellas, three women writers appear, who are characterized as opposites to Tesselschade Roemers, the virtuous woman artist. The novella is called 'Eenige Hollandsche vrouwen der XVIIIe eeuw' (Some Dutch women from the 18th century) and features Agatha Maria Sena, Lucretia Wilhelmina van Merken and Sara Maria van der Wilp.[35] In a dedicatory poem belonging to the text, Thijm calls them 'the 18th-century guild, bluestockinged to the teeth, walking along arid paths'.[36] His aversion to the 'unnaturalness' of these women poets, as well as to the affected mannerism of their writings, is so strong that he doubts whether the story he is going to tell about them will be attractive enough for his readers. He is afraid that his novella will not equal Molière's comedies about the 'Précieuses ridicules' and the 'Femmes savantes'.[37] Sara Maria van der Wilp is presented as a precocious moralist in love with a good-for-nothing fellow who is constantly running after actresses and domestic servants, but never considers marrying her. The narrator seems to be torn between sympathy and contempt for her as a woman who wasted her best years on a lost cause, whereas he does not seem to worry very much about the man's behaviour.[38] In her later years, Van der Wilp becomes the laughing stock of the whole world of literature because she has her collected poems printed with a portrait depicting her in a very low-cut dress and with an extravagant hairstyle at the age of 55.[39] Thijm is convinced that, had she found someone to marry her, she would have been saved from such foolishness.[40] Lucretia Wilhelmina van Merken did find a husband: at the age of 47 she married the merchant and poet Nicolaas Simon van Winter. In Thijm's novella, she appears as a close friend of Van Winter and his first wife Johanna Muhl. When Lucretia comes to visit them in the evening, she and Van Winter retire to his office, 'where the atmosphere is full of alexandrines and tobacco smoke', for the next few hours. Meanwhile, Van Winter's wife is spending the evening in the 'normal' female manner: having

[34] Jonckbloet quotes from Wolff's *Winter-Buitenleven* (1774) (Jonckbloet 1889-91, vol.IV, p.243).
[35] See bibliography of primary sources. Bio-bibliographical information about the three women can be found in: *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.499-502 (Agatha Maria Sena, 1692-1772?, contribution Els Stronks), 561-564 (Sara Maria van der Wilp, 1716-1803, contribution Ton van Strien), 572-579 (Lucretia Wilhelmina van Merken, 1721-1789, contribution Marijke Meijer Drees).
[36] Thijm dedicates his novella to Louise Stratenus (1852-1908), a writer of poetry and novels, who was a friend of him and his daughter Catharina (Alberdingk Thijm, 1883, p.60).
[37] Id., p.62.
[38] Id., p.76-81.
[39] Id., p.94-98. Reprints of the portraits are to be found in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.562.
[40] Id., p.93-94.

tea in the living room together with her girl-friends, reading some pages from fashionable novels and knitting another pair of stockings.[41] The opposition between the office as 'male sphere' and the living room as 'female sphere' which is constructed here implies a disapproval of Lucretia van Merken's behaviour as 'unnatural' for a woman. The narrative strategy of contrasting female characters is not only applied in the passage quoted above, but is characteristic of the whole text. The 'bluestockings' Sara Maria van der Wilp and Lucretia Wilhelmina van Merken are confronted with the 'beautiful souls' Wilhelmina van der Wilp, Sara's sister, and Johanna Muhl, Van Winter's first wife. Of course, the text explicitly takes the part of the women represented as 'beautiful souls'.

When the narrator introduces the Van der Wilp sisters, he stresses how different they are. While Sara is characterized by her intellectual capacities and the artificiality of her behaviour, Wilhelmina's physical beauty and naturalness are emphasized. Sara's unfeminine 'presumptuous wisdom', the self-assurance with which she is constantly moralizing and giving advice, especially to her younger sister, will, according to the narrator, make it difficult for her to find a husband. In contrast to her, her sister Wilhelmina, 'young, merry and natural', 'an enchanting brunette' showing her shining teeth and her radiant eyes whenever she smiles, is depicted as every man's dream.[42]

Wilhelmina van der Wilp and Johanna Muhl personify the type of woman that every man, and especially a poet, needs as his counterpart: practical, content with the enjoyments of everyday life, tolerant of artistic excentricity and a patient audience for poetry, even if it sometimes turns out badly.[43] And it is especially literature written by women that, according to the narrator, tends to have an unintentionally comic effect.

On the occasion of Johanna Muhl's death, Wilhelmina van der Wilp and Lucretia van Merken give examples of a more and a less 'natural' way of mourning. After Johanna has breathed her last, the 'beautiful soul' Wilhelmina remains lying in front of the deathbed in deep sorrow with her forehead on one hand of the deceased. Lucretia van Merken arrives too late. After having found her friend Johanna to be dead, the 'bluestocking' does not waste any time shedding tears, but rushes into the office of Nicolaas van Winter and presents to him a copy of her book *Het nut der tegenspoeden* (The benefit of misfortune), a gift which is meant as a consolation.[44]

In a concluding statement, Thijm regrets that the charm and the character of some of the women he sketched suffered so much from the talent for writing with which they believed themselves to be gifted. If only they had not believed in a vocation as poets, but had followed their true female vocation! He apologizes to his characters for tearing down the distinguished veil with which the 18th century had invested them, and commends them to the lenient judgment of his readers.[45]

[41] Id., p.91.
[42] Id., p.68.
[43] Id., p.85-86.
[44] Id., p.92.
[45] Id., p.99.

If we compare the way in which women poets are depicted in this novella with the fictional characterization of Tesselschade Roemers by Thijm and other authors, we can discern a fundamental difference. The female characters in 'Eenige Hollandsche vrouwen der XVIIIe eeuw' embody binary oppositions: a woman with the qualities of a 'beautiful soul' is not creative, and a creative woman lacks the 'beauty of the soul' and becomes a 'bluestocking'. The fictional character Tesselschade, however, reconciles the oppositional qualities: she is an artist and at the same time a 'beautiful soul'. She stands out in artistic talent and skill, as well as in female virtue and beauty. The narrator of the novella 'Eenige Hollandsche vrouwen der XVIIIe eeuw' blames his female protagonists for their mediocrity with regard to these qualities. The label 'bluestocking' indicates a devastating appraisal of women who fail to live up to male standards of (female) perfection in varied respects.

I wonder how 19th-century women writers may have reacted to Thijm's manner of depicting their forerunners. Or did they not regard them as their forerunners at all? Except for Cornelia Nozeman's poem and for Betsy Perk's sketch of Tesselschade Roemers, in which she exhibits a rather conventional view of women and writing – either poetry, or marriage and family[46] – I have found no literary text about a Dutch woman writer *by* a Dutch woman writer. The question of whether women writers of the 19th century drew their role models from the history of their national literature needs further investigation. For the most famous and most productive female novelist of the 19th century, Geertruida Bosboom-Toussaint, this question can be answered in the negative. As Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen has recently pointed out, Bosboom-Toussaint strongly resented the female tradition of domestic novels that she had been brought up with. Instead, she chose 'male' subjects – war, politics, adventure – and was at her best when shaping a male character. She was an author writing for readers, not a woman writing for women.[47] I agree with Riet Schenkeveld's interpretation of Bosboom-Toussaint's oeuvre as an example of 'écriture masculine'. In the terms that I have used in this lecture, Bosboom-Toussaint certainly does not create for herself the image of a 'beautiful soul', but exposes herself to the danger of being regarded as a 'bluestocking'. Perhaps this is why Jonckbloet hardly ever mentions her in his history of Dutch literature. He refuses to accept her image of herself as a writer of historical novels among male colleagues, and only mentions her name together with that of the less famous Adèle S.C. von Antal-Opzoomer, who published under the pseudonym A.S.C. Wallis. 'Between these two', he proceeds, 'the names of various gifted female novelists could be inserted, but I would rather withhold them than risk missing one of them out.'[48] And this is all he has to say about the subject! In spite of Jonckbloet's more or less subtle attempt to exclude her from the history of Dutch literature, Bosboom-Toussaint made her way into the literary canon. Her

[46] Perk [1873], p.27.
[47] Schenkeveld-van der Dussen 1996.
[48] Jonckbloet 1889-92, vol.VI, p.247. Jonckbloet dedicates several chapters to Oltmans, Drost and Van Lennep, male authors of historical fiction, but only this one sentence to Geertruida Bosboom-Toussaint.

strategy was not to reconcile artistic talent and female virtue, but to write 'male' literature as a female writer. Perhaps this paradoxical strategy is the secret of her canonization.

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Maaike Meijer

Genders effects of male literary discourse: the case of Hélène Swarth[1]

The way in which male writers, critics and historiographers discuss the work of women writers has been a topic of research since the very beginnings of feminist literary criticism.[2] Rightly so: for a long time male discourse has been the sole source of information on women's work, and a highly biased one. The unravelling of this gender bias is a form of necessary source-criticism. Women writers have been adulated and trivialized, they have been collectively dismissed,[3] and underrated.[4] Some of these trials have, to a lesser degree, befallen male writers as well, and their fate might sometimes also be explained by the power of gender. Gender does not only regulate the relations between women and men: it also regulates the relations between men.

In this essay I shall analyze aspects of male critical discourse on women poets. How does this discourse lead to the construction of gender on both sides: for the subject and the object of the discourse? How can certain male projections on women poets be explained? How can we make sense of the striking transgenerational imitation which sometimes characterizes the discourse on women poets? To address these questions I shall focus on the critical discourse on one specific woman poet, the Flemish/Dutch Hélène Swarth. By exploring this case I shall argue that male discourse on women poets does not only construct feminine positions. It also constructs masculine positions. The paradoxical function of male discourse on literary women is that it silently, indirectly, but very effectively, reinforces normative *masculinity*. *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* offers many examples of this type of discourse: consider Willem Bilderdijk, who writes in the introduction to a book he composed together with his wife, Katharina Wilhelmina Schweikhardt:

> The reader will see from the pieces themselves which texts have been contributed by my wife. One recognizes the soft, sensitive heart in them, characteristic of a woman, who is only created to be a source of happiness to her husband and who would not even consider asking for more.[5]

[1] I would like to thank my assistant Drs. Agnes Andeweg, who collected the sources for this essay. I am also grateful to the research institute NIAS for hosting me during the academic year 1998/1999 and to the NIAS-editor Kathy van Vliet-Leigh, who made useful corrections.

[2] Important pioneering works: Ellmann 1979[2]; Showalter 1972; Russ 1984.

[3] Cf. Tompkins 1985 and Van Boven 1992.

[4] Cf. Meijer 1988.

[5] 'Wat mijne eegade tot dezen bondel heeft bijgedragen blijkt uit de tekening der stukken zelve. Men zal daar het zachte, aandoenlijke hart in herkennen, de vrouw kentekenende, alleen gevormd om het

Elsewhere he describes himself as a big firm tree, while she is depicted as a lovely little branch sprouting from his side, again 'gans aanspraakloos' (not asking for anything). In the discourse of many critics and fellow poets – as *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* amply documents – woman is the weaker vessel, the lesser poet and so on: my point is that this discourse functions as one long male self-congratulation. It involves a culturally sanctioned projection on women, which constructs *masculinity* all the time. In my view feminist critics often focus too exclusively on the way it constructs femininity. This projection-mechanism of man onto woman is also interesting from a psychoanalytical perspective, which I intend to touch upon later on.

Willem Kloos on Hélène Swarth

I would like to draw attention to the way in which Hélène Swarth is discussed by her male colleagues. Swarth (1859-1941) falls just outside of the scope of *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*. She was born in Amsterdam but raised in Belgium, and she published her first book of verse in French. She acquired a dazzling popularity in Belgium and the Netherlands alike until about 1910. Swarth could easily be added to the enormous list of women writers which Van Boven has compiled: writers who were adored in their own time, who attracted many readers, and who were completely forgotten later on.[6] It is as if success is the best guarantee for later oblivion – and this may be more true for female than for male writers. When Swarth was twenty-five and already quite well-known in Belgium, the Dutch poet Willem Kloos met her in Brussels, and briefly fell in love with her. Dutch scholars do not agree whether it was love or admiration and friendship. It is clear, however, that Kloos felt that he had found a great sister-poet. He sent Swarth four sonnets, especially devoted to her, and Swarth answered him in sonnets as well, building on Kloos' themes.[7] The erotic attraction, if there was any, was not mutual, but they became friends. Through Kloos Hélène started to publish poems in *De nieuwe gids* (The new guide). From then on she was regarded by the 'Tachtigers' (the movement of romantic individualistic poets from the 1880s) as one of them. The words in which the leaders of the movement characterize their new fellow-poet are interesting. Lodewijk van Deyssel, in his review of Swarth's first volume in Dutch, *Eenzame bloemen* (Lonesome flowers, 1884) is delighted that Swarth has introduced a new, frank and explicit love-lyric into Dutch literature:

> and the fact that a woman does this in Holland, and gives herself in all sincerity to the people, is very special.[8]

Willem Kloos writes, in a similar but more elevated tone:

geluk van haren gemaal te zijn, en die op niets anders aanspraak maakt' (from the chapter on Schweikhardt, *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*, 1997, p.777 (contribution Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen)).

[6] Cf. Van Boven 1992.

[7] Cf. Van Eeten 1961 and Kralt 1968.

[8] '[...] en dat in Nederland een vrouw dat doet en zich zoo in oprechtheid geeft aan de menschen, dat is iets heel bizonders [...]' (quoted in Reitsma 1985-86, p.60).

> [Swarth] is the singing Heart in our literature, which gives itself to the world, naked in its glorious beauty and goodness, beautiful in its breathing, bleeding humanity, sacrificing itself on the altar of the Muse.[9]

The metaphor of 'the singing Heart' is significant. To 'sing' is a gender-neutral topos for the composition of lyrical verse, but 'Heart' has distinct feminine connotations. It invokes the deeply-entrenched gendered division of the human faculties: he's the head, she's the heart.[10] Also the 'giving herself' – as Van Deyssel and Kloos both define Swarth's poetic activities, seems to me a distinctly gendered metaphor. To give oneself away to the people, or to the world, can be read as offering complete autobiographical disclosure. Women poets were indeed generally supposed to speak more directly of their own personal lives. But 'to give oneself' also implies a sacrifice and a loss of self which in the cultural imagination was and is more easily associated with femininity than with masculinity. Masculinity evokes opposite associations, that of self-possession, of self-containment, of borders between the self and the other. The only man who gives himself completely – to the people, to the world – is Jesus Christ. In the rest of Kloos's statement the association with Christ is definitely invoked: 'which gives itself to the world, naked in its glorious beauty and goodness, beautiful in its breathing, bleeding humanity'. Christ is also often represented as naked, glorious, good, human. In fact, the statement is an interplay of the image of Christ who sacrifices himself – poetry as a religious sacrament – and the image of a beautiful seductive woman, offering herself in all her naked beauty – in which the sacred poetry is definitely feminized.

What Kloos does here, completely unintentionally – it is the dominant discourse which makes him do this – is to construct Swarth not only as a poet, but also, through his choice of words, distinctively as a *female* poet. Could Kloos have said of a *male* poet that he was 'the singing Heart in our literature, that gives itself to the world, naked in its glorious beauty and goodness, beautiful in its breathing, bleeding humanity'? That would have been quite impossible, because it would be seriously in conflict with the dominant discourse on masculinity and by implication on that of the male poet.

In two of his essays Kloos compares Swarth to a Pythia-like prophetess, watched by masses of people:

> This is no longer a human voice, but the noble complaint of a seer, who loud and calmly, with regal movements reveals the great visions of her god-entrusted soul to the stunned masses.[11]

[9] '[Hélène Swarth] is het zingende Hart in onze letterkunde, dat zich geeft aan de wereld, naakt in zijn glorievolle schoonheid en goedheid, schoon in zijn ademende, bloedende menschelijkheid, offerhande van zichzelve op het altaar der Moisa' (Kloos 1898; this article had been published originally in 1889).

[10] Around the same time – in 1889 – the influential gynecologist Mendes de Leon deployed his vision on the modern Dutch hospital: the male medical superintendent had to be the *head* of the hospital, whereas the woman-doctor, director of the nurses, could be the *heart* of it (Bosch 1994, p.173). Literary discourse is always intertwined with extra-literary, social discourses.

[11] 'Dat is geen menschelijke stem meer die spreekt, dat is het hooge klagen eener zieneres, die kalm en luid, met koninklijke gebaren de groote visioenen harer godverpande ziel voor de verbaasde menigte onthult' (Kloos 1887, p.464).

And elsewhere:

> She must stay away [from the confinement of the Netherlands] and sing on, and keep on singing, so that the people in these narrow regions learn to see her high stature emerge before their eyes, as a strange Being from afar, benignly sending over their crowded heads her streams of sorrow, her rhythmic rejoicing, as she dreams and creates images, seated as a godhead in her heavens on the horizon. I know that I am fantasizing. Miss Swarth is but a human girl, and a very unhappy one, living in a small Belgian town – but what matter? I have always loved to embellish my life with my imagination.[12]

Kloos first makes Swarth into a goddess – comparable to the way in which the beloved is seen as a goddess in Bizet's famous opera *Les pêcheurs de perles*, with the people in the crowd falling devoutly and dramatically to their knees while the two male rivals sing: 'Oui c'est elle, c'est la déesse/ plus charmante et plus belle [...] et la foule est à genoux',[13] an image which is also comparable to Jacques Perk's vision of the goddess/ Muse in the poem 'Sanctissima Virgo'. But then Kloos cuts her down to size (she is just a human, unhappy girl). This mode of aggrandizing and subsequent belittling seems contradictory and strange: 'ni ce mépris, ni cet excès d'honneur' as the French would say. Yet it can be understood if we look at the beginning of Kloos' essay: he started out by stating that the lyrical poet always sees everything through the lens of his own powerful imagination. This is exactly what Kloos demonstrates in the passage quoted: he shows how he can elevate Swarth, in his own poetic imagination, to a goddess, the Muse in her classical appearance. But this implies that the passage is no longer about *Swarth* as a poet. It becomes proof of *Kloos'* lyrical capacities, of *his* ability to see everyday life through the lens of poetic fantasy. Thus the female fellow-poet is used as the raw material, out of which the visionary (male) poet creates his Muse. The essay turns out to be not about Swarth at all, but about Willem Kloos himself. It would be hard to find a more cynical example of a procedure through which female creativity is erased and replaced by masculine creativity as the source of art. Kloos' text is a very ambivalent tribute to Swarth. It is a monument of egocentrism.

Swarth was also frequently called 'The Netherlandish Nightingale'. The epithet 'Nightingale' seems to have been reserved for women poets only. For example Giza Ritschl, a Hungarian-born Dutch poetess who also published around 1900, was called

[12] 'Zij moet daaruit blijven, en blijven voortzingen, altijd maar voortzingen, opdat de menschen in die benauwde streken langzaam leren zien hare hooge figuur opdoemen voor hunne oogen, als een ver, vreemd Wezen, zendend goedgunstig over hunne wemelende hoofden hare stroomen van weeklacht, haar rhythmen van gejuich, droomend en beeldend, zetelend als een godheid in haar hemel aan de kim. Ik weet wel dat ik fantasieën maak, dat Mejuffrouw Swarth maar een menschelijk meisje is, dat in een Belgisch stadje woont, en veel verdriet heeft – maar wat doet dat ertoe? Ik heb er altijd van gehouden mijn leven te vermooien met verbeeldingen voor mijzelven' (Kloos 1898, vol.II, p. 111).

[13] This intertext might well be the one which literally echoed in Kloos's mind. Bizet's opera dates from 1863, but became a huge success in 1886, shortly after which Kloos wrote his essay. The image of the Divine Muse is a widespread stereotype, cherished at the *fin de siècle* and popular among the 'Tachtigers'.

'The Hungarian Nightingale'. The image of the nightingale invokes a charming wild bird that sings beautifully, and the metaphor is also definitely gendered. After all, Willem Kloos was not called the Amsterdam Nightingale. There are too many connotations with smallness, with loveliness, with the function of an ornament, maybe even with the cage in which a bird can be caught for the image to be appropriate for a male poet. Through these discursive strategies gender is imported time and again into the literary field – creating the symbolic separation of male writers from female writers – creating men and women. I think these discursive formations should be studied much more as producers of gendered values within the literary field. This also applies for the muscular language with which new groups of young male poets present themselves in manifestoes and for polemical purposes in general.[14]

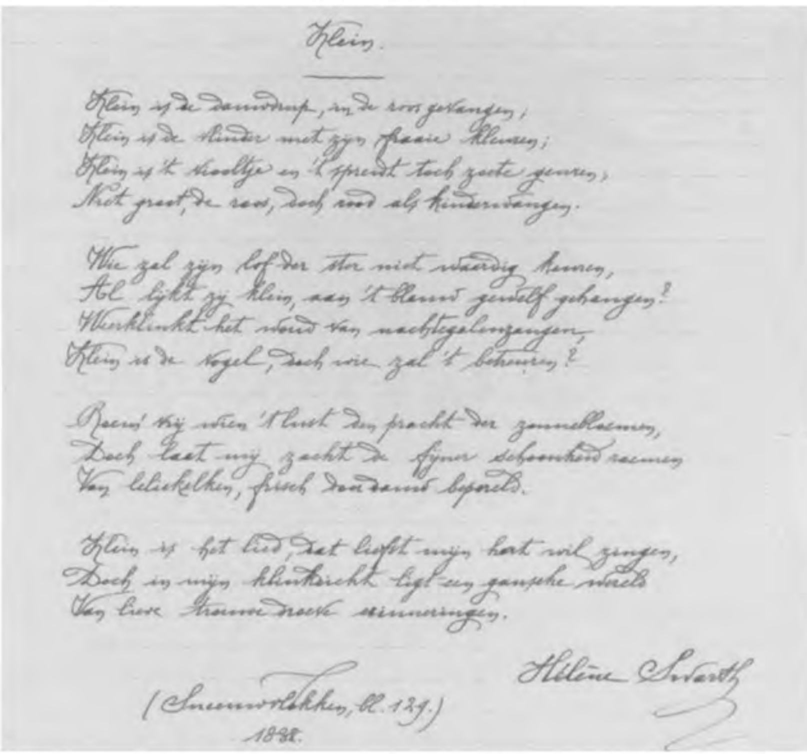
Kloos' emphatic and ambivalent praise of Swarth was repeated many times, also by a series of 're-discoverers' of Swarth's work: the poet J.C. Bloem tried to rehabilitate Swarth, with an anthology called 'The singing heart': *Het zingend hart* in 1952. Bloem's introduction shows an interesting mixture of admiration and disapproval. A more wholehearted attempt at rehabilitation is an anthology by Hans Roest, *Een mist van tranen* (A mist of tears, 1969). A third, again half-hearted, attempt at re-canonization of Swarth was recently undertaken by Jeroen Brouwers. I find these repetitions of the same ambivalent appreciation interesting: they are all effectively tributes to Kloos – an intergenerational literary exchange between men – rather than informative appreciations of Swarth. In order to demonstrate this I would like to focus more in depth on Jeroen Brouwers' discourse on Hélène Swarth.

Jeroen Brouwers on Hélène Swarth

Brouwers wrote two books on Hélène Swarth. The first of these, a biography, was published in 1985: *Hélène Swarth. Haar huwelijk met Frits Lapidoth 1894-1910* (Hélène Swarth. Her marriage to Frits Lapidoth 1894-1910). The second, a small book published in 1987, pretends to analyze Swarth's fame and fall into oblivion: *De schemerlamp van Helene Swarth* (The shaded lamp of Hélène Swarth). Both of these books are highly ambivalent. As regards the biography it is strange that Brouwers chose her marriage to Frits Lapidoth as the focus of his book. This marriage only lasted for fifteen years, whereas Swarth was 81 when she died. Lapidoth was by no means as important a literary figure as Swarth was. He was certainly important for Swarth's life and work, but that does not elevate him to the same stature, nor does it justify a double-biography. In fact Brouwers actually writes about Swarth's life also before and after her marriage to Lapidoth, so his title does not even cover the content of his book. Brouwers defends his decision by saying that he does not want to duplicate a biography on Swarth's early life, Herman Liebaers' *Hélène Swarths Zuid-Nederlandse jaren* (Hélène Swarth's years in the Southern Netherlands). That is understandable, but Swarth's life in the Northern Netherlands still lasted for more than 50

[14] Cf. Showalter 1987.

Hélène Swarth ca. 1893.



Handwriting Hélène Swarth: sonnet LIX from *Sneeuwvlokken* (Snowflakes)

years – so there is no need to attach Swarth so much to this husband of hers. I am afraid Brouwers had an undoubtedly unconscious but quite trivial reason for presenting his subject in this way: he felt Swarth could not function independently. A woman needs a husband. This is part of the gender conventions of literary and biographical discourse: highlight the men in the case of great women writers, and show how indispensable they were. Joanna Russ provides many examples of 19th- and 20th-century critical discourse in which husbands, male teachers or brothers have been unduly manoeuvred into the foreground of the lives of women writers.[15]

Brouwers states as his aim that he wants to save Swarth from the total oblivion into which she has sunk at present. He reminds us of her enormous productivity: many massive volumes of published poems appeared before she was 60, while manuscripts of her five last poetry collections are still in the archives of the 'Letterkundig Museum' (Museum for Dutch literary history) in The Hague. No one wanted to publish these lengthy manuscripts after 1921, when the public became les interested in her work. Swarth died in 1941, so she wrote on for twenty more years. This huge productivity means, also according to Brouwers, that parts of Swarth's work are repetitive and of lesser quality. Brouwers, however, considers a substantial part of her oeuvre to be very good. In his opinion Swarth should be elevated to the Pantheon of the canonized 'Tachtigers', such as Kloos, Perk, Verwey, and Van Eeden.

I would support this view, which is why I was very interested in Brouwers' attempt at re-canonization of this woman author. In our times it is usually a feminist scholar who undertakes such attempts. When a male writer does this it might point to a weakening of gender prejudice. Unfortunately Brouwers is not a good helpmate to the feminist scholar. In the first place he never illustrates his claim to a recanonization of Swarth with a serious study of her poems. He quotes a poem now and then, but does not care to give even a rough analysis of its qualities. This makes his claim to reappraisal a very thin one. Much more serious is his discourse on Swarth as a person: he ridicules her, belittles her, makes her even the object of condescending jokes. In political affairs she was, according to Brouwers, 'as naive as a toddler'; politics and the War were something like the Big Bad Wolf to her.[16] In his view, she was very vain, and her whole world revolved around the question who did or did not write a favourable review of her latest book. She naively believed in spirits and was addicted to superstitious seances. She limited herself to only one subject matter: lost love. The shortest love-affair was aggrandized by her to mythical proportions. She devoted her poems time and again to the fact that she was left, abandoned and deceived. About Swarth's husband Frits Lapidoth – who later divorced her – Brouwers writes:

> That Mr Lapidoth really must have been an admirable man. His fate was that he was married to the greatest Dutch poetess of his epoch – an impossible character, a sourpuss, a pathetic whining woman, who made herself lonely, who was always getting in the way

[15] Cf. Russ 1984.

[16] 'Hélène Swarth bleef tot aan haar dood, op eenentachtigjarige leeftijd, zo naïef en wereldvreemd als een kleuter. Politiek? Oorlog? De vooral in bezettingstijd geldende begrippen «Goed» en «Fout»? Het bestond voor haar allemaal wel, maar vaag, op afstand en als het ware onrealistisch, – zoiets als «de boze wolf» in de belevingswereld van een kind' (Brouwers 1987, p.6).

of herself, some one who was afraid of life.
'How very little have I seen of the world. And I would have enjoyed it so much', Swarth wrote at the end of her life to her friend Jeanne Kloos.
How could she possibly enjoy herself, being as *melancholy* as she was? [Brouwers writes 'Swarth-gallig', punning on Swarth's name.][17]

Swarth's husband Lapidoth is consistently depicted by Brouwers as a very interesting, generous and happy man, whereas Swarth is pictured as a nagging old bore, wallowing in self-pity. Especially Swarth's melancholy and depressive disposition are ironized time and again.

Such is the tone of Jeroen Brouwers. His biography is mainly a showcase for his own stylistic qualities – look how funny and ironic and cynical I can be – not a showcase for Swarth's stylistic qualities, which would have been more apt. As I have demonstrated, Kloos played a similar trick – by focusing on himself as a poet instead of on her as a poet. There is a lot of *petite histoire*, of gossip and small talk in Brouwers' book, and no analysis or contextualization of Hélène Swarth's life and work whatsoever. The fact that Swarth was politically rather naive may be true, but this has everything to do with a lack of proper education, a dearth that all girls seriously suffered from at that time. Swarth was no exception, and she deeply regretted her superficial schooling.[18]

Feminists started to campaign against this lack of schooling in the last decennia of the 19th century, but Swarth could hardly profit from that campaign: she had been raised in Flanders, where her family had settled when she was six years old. Feminists were less succesfull there in promoting proper education for girls. Swarth later moved back to Amsterdam and returned to Flanders again when she was eleven, which interrupted her already superficial education even more. The fact that she limited herself to topics such as nature, religion and particularly unhappy love has to do with the fact that women poets were severely constrained by the literary conventions of that time, which more or less prescribed the appropriate topics. With these conventions in mind Swarth in fact *tested* and *challenged* some of these limits, by being unusually explicit about passionate feelings. But Brouwers treats Hélène Swarth as a completely isolated individual. He does not historicize or contextualize her attitudes, he does not read her life and work against the background of historical gender relations. He cuts Swarth loose from the constraints which were of course not created by her, and ridicules her because of these constraints, which seems extremely unfair. It also seems intellectually and politically naive: thus the political naivety that Brouwers perceives in Swarth he demonstrates himself to a considerable degree. The same applies for Brouwers' decision to present Hélène Swarth in the narrow context of her

[17] 'Die Lapidoth moet wérkelijk een bewonderenswaardige man zijn geweest. Zijn ongeluk bestond eruit dat hij was getrouwd met de grootste Nederlandstalige dichteres van zijn epoque, een onmogelijk, totaal verzeurd persoon, een meelijwekkende, zichzelf vereenzamende en voortdurend in de weg lopende vrouw die bang was van het leven.
«Hoe bitter weinig heb ik van de wereld gezien! En ik zou er zoo van hebben genoten!» (Aan het einde van haar leven aan Jeanne Kloos, ongedateerd.)
Zij en genieten, zo Swarthgallig als zij was?' (Brouwers 1985, p.97).
[18] Cf. Reitsma 1985-86, p.60 and Liebaers 1964, passim.

marriage to Lapidoth. While he attacks her for her continuous mourning over this lost love – why could this woman not free herself from the constraints of marriage, he goes on to ask – he himself locks her into the framework of her marriage more closely than seems reasonable.

One might question his behaviour – and here is where some psychoanalysis comes in. Jeroen Brouwers is himself a very melancholy man who suffers from depression, as he testifies time and again in his own literary and autobiographical writings. Why does he have so little compassion with Swarth's fundamental lack of joy in life? He ridicules her melancholy savagely, which I cannot but interpret as a distancing strategy. Brouwers may have been attracted to Swarth because she is so much like him: depressive, unable to create a happy life. But this aspect of similarity is completely disavowed, in my view, by removing Swarth as far as possible from the position of an equal, a soulmate, someone to be understood from the inside.

Brouwers does not touch upon Swarth's work. His two books do not even list her many published volumes. He keeps her at a distance, not writing from a sense of equality, or likeness, but presenting Swarth as an *oddity*, with cool detachment and without any empathy. I would even suggest that Brouwers projects onto Swarth his own inability to live, trying to unburden himself from it, because she can play Woman, the Other, who is too depressed to go on living.[19] This would explain Brouwers' ambivalence towards Swarth: she is like him (which is why he wants to canonize her) yet she has to be unlike him (which is why he obstructs this canonization, rendering it an almost impossible task).

I mentioned before that I was struck by the repetitiveness in the critical discourse on Swarth, in the discourse on many women poets in fact. The essay by Anton van Duinkerken on Swarth's depression has the same condescending tone; Brouwers seems to admire this essay greatly, and repeats it, in a way: his loyalty towards Van Duinkerken is much stronger than his bond with Swarth. In this sense Swarth becomes an object of exchange between two men, who can restore their masculinity thanks to her. There is a lot of male bonding going on in the discourse on women poets, and this aspect of literary discourse deserves much more attention and research.[20]

[19] I was inspired by Silverman's psycho-analytical analysis of projections of male fear onto women in Hollywood films (Silverman 1988, especially chapter 1).

[20] Another example can be found in Meijer 1998: in the introduction I have tried to interpret the repetitive praise for the 17th-century sister-poets Anna and Maria Tesselschade Roemers. They seem to partly owe their place in literary history to a self-perpetuating tradition of rather excessive male praise. First these poets were extolled by contemporaries, later by a series of historiographers who often devoted more words to literally repeating what contemporaries had said *about* these women writers, than to discussing their work. I think this invoking of male authority has to justify the woman's presence in the canon. When Vondel, Bredero, Huygens and Cats said she was wonderful, then transhistorical inter-male solidarity prevents her from being ignored. Men's praise for their fellow *men* is not repeated as emphatically by later generations of scholars; the presence of men in the canon does not require such justification. See also the contributions of Maria-Theresia Leuker and Marijke Spies.

Gender effects of literary discourse

Literary discourse has far-reaching gender effects. I see gender as an effect of human acts, of the material organization of the world and of discourse – or of discourse in the broad Foucauldian sense. We become men and women because we adopt the spaces, the clothes, the ways of behaviour, the ways of speaking, addressing and desiring which are available as cultural repertoires. Femininity and masculinity are not only acquired in a relatively short period of socialization in our early lives. Gender is acquired in a complex process of never-ending discursive massage, which continues until we breathe out our last breath. This same process of never-ending massage ensures that gender is constituted not only at an individual level, but also at a collective level. Literary discourse is one of the machines, so to speak, which keeps gender in place: individually, socially, institutionally and symbolically.[21] What I have tried to argue in this essay is that the discourse of literary criticism does not only have a profound effect on women writers. It also creates the men, the masculine symbolic power, and the often invisibly gendered literary values which relegate woman to 'her place'. Literary men seem quite dependent on this discourse to maintain their masculinity. Masculinity turns out to be an uncertain, vulnerable and slippery thing. It needs constant maintenance.

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[21] See also Meijer 1997.

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Margareta Geertruid van der Werken (1734-1780)

Willem [die enige tijd doorbrengt bij de familie Grandisson in Engeland] aan zijne Moeder.

Den 24 juli

[...]
Een van de dienstmeiden hier in huis is zeer ziek. Zie nu, lieve Mama, hoe goed Emilia is. Zij was des morgens al vroeg op om zelf aan die meid een kommetje kalfsnat te brengen; en zij was niet tevreden, voordat zij het haar had zien uitdrinken; er werd terstond op haar bevel een doctor gehaald, en zij laat de zieke oppassen als of het hare zuster ware. Hoe beminnelijk is het in een jongejuffer zo menslievend te wezen. Eduard verweet het haar: 'Het staat u mooi,' zeide hij 'uwe meid te dienen'. 'En waarom niet, broeder?' antwoordde zij. 'Gij speelt wel met een knecht op het kegelspel; en ik draag zorg voor ene meid uit medelij. Ene dienstmeid is een mens gelijk wij: ik bedenk hoe blij ik zou zijn, als ik in hare plaats ware, dat men mij liefde bewees'. Eduard werd wat beschaamd en sloop uit de kamer. Mijne moeder doet ook gelijk Emilia, dacht ik hier op. Het heugt mij nog, dat onze Hanna de koorts had, en dat gij toen ook zorg voor haar droeg. Maar dit geheugen brengt mij iets te binnen, dat mij bedroefd maakt: hoe ongelukkig zijt gij! hier zijn zoo vele dienstboden, en gij, arme Mama! hebt maar een enkel meisje: gij moet zelf zo vele bezigheden waarnemen, die zo weinig passen aan de weduwe van een kolonel. [...]

Margareta Geertruid van der Werken, *De kleine Grandisson, of de gehoorzame zoon. In eene reeks van Brieven en saamspraaken (1782).* The Hague: J.C. Leeuwestijn, 1793, p.26.

Guillaume D*** [garcon néerlandais passant quelque temps en Angleterre chez la familie Grandisson] à sa mère.

Le 24 juillet.

[...]
Une des servantes de la maison est très-malade. Vous allez voir, maman, s'il est possible d'avoir un coeur plus sensible et plus compatissant que la bonne Emilie. Elle s'est levée ce matin à la pointe du jour pour porter elle-même une potion à la pauvre malade. Elle n'a pas eu de repos qu'elle ne la lui ait vu prendre tout entière, parce que c'étoit absolument de l'ordonnance du médecin. On diroit, à la voir, que c'est une soeur chérie à qui elle donne ses soins. Que c'est une chose aimable dans une jeune demoiselle d'avoir tant d'humanité! Edouard a voulu lui en faire des reproches.
Il te sied bien, lui a-t-il dit, de servir toi-même ta servante! Et pourquoi non, mon frère, a-t-elle répondu? Tu joues bien aux quilles avec les domestiques. S'il est de leur devoir de nous servir lorsqu'ils se portent bien, c'est à nous de les soigner lorsqu'ils sont malades. D'ailleurs la pauvre Peggy ne m'a-t-elle pas veillée plus d'une fois dans les maladies de mon enfance? C'est bien le moins que je fasse pour elle ce qu'elle a fait pour moi. Je pense combien j'aurois de plaisir à sa place de voir que l'on me témoigne de l'attachement.
Edouard s'est trouvé si honteux qu'il est sorti brusquement de la chambre. Ah! me suis je dit à moi-même, Emilie ne fait que ce que j'ai vu faire à ma chère maman. Lorsque notre pauvre Nannette avoit la fièvre, c'était maman qui lui donnoit ses soins. Mais ce souvenir me fait venir une pensée qui m'attriste. Il y a tant de domestiques dans cette maison! Et vous, ma chère maman, vous n'avez qu'une servante pour vous servir. Combien vous devez vous trouver malheureuse! Il faut que vous fassiez vous-même une infinité de choses qui conviennent si peu à la veuve d'un colonel. [...]

Publication in French under his own name by Arnaud Berquin: *Le petit Grandisson, imité du Hollandais* (1787). Paris: Ant. Aug. Renouard, 1803, p.59-61.

Petra Broomans

In the name of God and the Father: Scandinavian women's literary history from a meta-literary historical point of view

The historiography of women's writing had an earlier inception in Scandinavia than, for example, in the Netherlands. At different times initiatives were taken that anticipated what was to happen in due course elsewhere. In this connection the extensive five-volume *Nordisk kvinnolitteraturhistoria* (Scandinavian women's literary history) can be regarded as having an exemplary function. It seems expedient, therefore, to make a critical assessment of these various initiatives, in particular of the compilation of the *Nordisk kvinnolitteraturhistoria*, which appeared in print between 1993 and 1999.

Historical overview

At the end of the 19th century, there was already an awareness in Scandinavia of the necessity to draw women authors into the spotlight. This awareness was shown in Sigrid Leijonhufvud's historical overview of Swedish women's literature, published in 1893. Leijonhufvud considers the earliest traces of Swedish women's writing to be those written on the rune stones from the Viking period. The inscriptions often end with a few lines of poetry which describe the heroic deeds of the fallen loved ones:

> Perhaps the rune verses, carved by a woman for her dead husband, 'the best of the farmers', or by a mother for her son, are an indication that in ancient times the language of poetry was not foreign to Swedish women.[1]

Leijonhufvud subsequently discusses women's literature from St Birgitta's texts (1302/3-1373) down to the writers of her own era. She deals with all kinds of genres: not only with fiction written by women, but also with periodical writings and scientific literature. The bibliography,[2] composed by Leijonhufvud and Sigrid Brithelli, mentions 561 names of women writers from 1300 to the end of the 19th century.

This first bibliography, being essentially a long list of names, is reminiscent of the so-called 'gynaecea' from the Renaissance. These inventories of celebrated women

[1] Leijonhufvud/Brithelli 1893, p.1.
[2] The bibliography was originally begun by Karin Adlersparre and Elvira Huss in 1873 for the World Fair in Vienna in 1873.

existed also in Scandinavia, and were mostly written by men. An exception to this rule is *Hæltinners pryd* (The heroines' jewel) by the Danish princess Leonora Christina Ulfeldt (1621-1698). This was written somewhere between 1671 and 1684, and only a fragment of the manuscript has been preserved. This fragment was published for the first time as late as 1977, so it would not have had any influence on 19th-century scholars like Leijonhufvud and Brithelli.[3]

Their own bibliography itself had no influence on literary historiography until 1982. In this year a sequel was published: *Kvinnliga författare 1893-1899. Biobibliografi över svensk och finlandssvensk skönlitteratur* (Women writers 1893-1899. A bio-bibliography on Swedish literature from Sweden and Finland), which was one of the results of the 'Kvinnolitteraturprojektet' (Women's literature project) at the University of Uppsala.[4]

Many women writers mentioned in both bibliographies have never been included in any traditional Swedish literary history. They were dealt with for the first time in the national histories of female literature published during the 1980s (see below) and in one of the first two volumes of *Nordisk kvinnolitteraturhistoria*.[5] This work, richly illustrated and written by a team of feminist literary scholars, is not an anthology like *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* but a more 'traditional' literary history, with biographical data and analyses of literary texts. Text-fragments only serve as illustrations.

The editors and contributors of *Nordisk kvinnolitteraturhistoria* could largely build on feminist literary criticism undertaken in the 1970s and 1980s. They found their material not only in results from the project started in 1983, but also in publications on forgotten and 'rediscovered' female authors. Besides, they could make use of the national women's literary histories, already mentioned – on Danish writers: *Danske kvindelige författare* (Danish women authors, 1982), on Swedish women: *Kvinnornas litteraturhistoria* (Women's literary history, 1981-1983), on Finnish women: *Finlandssvenska kvinnor skriver* (Finnish women authors, 1984), and for Norway the *Norsk kvinnelitteraturhistorie* (Norwegian women's literary history, 1988-1989-1990).[6]

These national histories are to some extent experimental in nature, and show a particular interest for the networks existing between women. In the Swedish history, for example, women authors write about their 'colleagues' of the earlier generations. In the Finnish history, women authors wrote about themselves and their authorship. The Danish and Norwegian literary histories, however, are written by literary historians, and so is *Nordisk kvinnolitteraturhistoria,* which covers the whole of Scandinavia, and may be regarded not only as the culmination of two decades of feminist literary research, but also as a development from a national literary history towards a comparative one.

As for the subjects and periods discussed, feminist literary research during the 1970s and 1980s usually focused on the period of what is called the 'Modern break-

[3] See the chapter on gynaecea in Møller Jensen 1993-99, vol.I: *I Guds namn,* p.217-232, written by Marianne Alenius.

[4] Westman Berg 1982. The 'Women's literature project' resulted in various studies in the field of feminist literary history and criticism.

[5] Møller Jensen 1993-99, which consists of the following volumes: *I Guds namn. 1000-1800; Fadershuset. 1800-1900; Vida världen. 1900-1960; På jorden. 1960-1990; Liv och verk.*

[6] Dalager/Mai 1982; Ramnefalk/Westberg 1981; Holmqvist/Witt-Brattström 1983; Sundgren 1984; Engelstad 1988-90.

through' (around 1870-1890) and the women writers active during this period.[7] But as a result of the compilation of literary histories, later on, the literature of the Middle Ages and the early modern times soon received full attention. Initially, research had the character of an inventory, and the editors and contributors thought that the work would soon be completed. As it turned out, many more women than foreseen had been writing during these periods[8] – a similar experience to the one described for women writing in Dutch in the introduction to *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*.

The editors of *Nordisk kvinnolitteraturhistoria* applied several selection criteria for the inclusion of particular authors. One important criterion for them was that of innovation: 'How and when does something substantially different happen in Scandinavian women's literature?'[9] The editors and contributors even constructed a meta-literary-historical longing for the 'different' and the 'new'.

Furthermore emphasis was laid on the evenemential, a tendency that has much common ground with the method used by Denis Hollier for *A new history of French literature* (1989).[10] The editors of *Nordisk kvinnolitteraturhistoria* wanted to show 'how and in what ways, where, and from which relationships and institutions women's writing was able to develop'.[11] This pragmatic approach has its problems: for example, the editors do not really specify what they consider 'new' enough to be included in their book. But the work also offers new lines of approach because of the emphasis on international comparison, albeit on a relatively small scale.

Whereas some of the authors discussed appeared to be isolated in the national literary histories, in *Nordisk kvinnolitteraturhistoria* they often turned out not to be working in isolation at all, and it was possible to see thematic links between the works of different authors in different Scandinavian countries. On a somewhat larger geographical scale, looking beyond Scandinavia, the educated women, 'feminae illustres', were not lonely stars, but parts of a European constellation. Thus Anna Maria van Schurman (1607-1678) was a model for educated women in Denmark and the Danish Birgitte Thott (1610-1662) was praised in turn by Van Schurman.[12] They and many others played a role in the 17th-century debate on female education in Europe.

God and the Father

So where and when did something 'new' happen in women's literature in the period 1000-1900, as it has been described by Møller Jensen and her colleagues in the Scandinavian women's literary history? I shall give here some examples.

[7] In 1983, one hundred years after Georg Brandes' book on the men of the 'Modern Breakthrough' Brandes 1883), Pil Dahlerup showed, in her thesis about the women of the 'Modern Breakthrough', that there were plenty of them, all 'forgotten' by Brandes (Dahlerup 1983).
[8] Staffan Bergsten, for example, stated as late as 1990 that, despite the women's literary histories, the representation of women authors before 1700 would be very small (Bergsten 1990, p.31).
[9] As is formulated in Møller Jensen 1993-99, vol.I, p.13.
[10] Hollier 1989 served as a model for Schenkeveld-Van der Dussen 1993.
[11] Møller Jensen 1993-99, vol.I, p.15.
[12] Id., p.233.

The first volume, *I Guds namn,* begins, very traditionally in fact, with an extensive chapter about sagas by the Icelandic researcher Helga Kress. The chronological line is not broken and, to put it in Hollier's words, for that matter 'the traditional orderliness of most histories of literature' is not changed.[13] But Kress looks at the old sagas from a new perspective. She states that they originated in an oral tradition of female narrative. Mothers talking to their sons, who wrote down the words, occasioned these texts to be written in Icelandic instead of Latin.[14] The female voice was written out, but, as Kress shows, the man's 'mál' (speech) has overruled the women's 'spá' (vision):[15] the women narrating the sagas were presented as fictional, whereas the men who actually produced the texts were real. The only thing remaining of the women who have been left out of literary history are their names – as titles of the various manuscripts: Edda, Njála, Hulda.

Immediately after this period Scandinavian women were (real, and acknowledged as such) authors of religious texts. The Swedish St Birgitta is a well-known example. The introductory chapter on religious literature by Eva Haettner Aurelius[16] poses the question of whether the church permitted women to write under their own names, that is, to use an authentic 'I' in their texts. Women like St Birgitta, after all, often used everyday language. The first person used in these texts, however, is shaped to a great extent by the dictates of the church. Women were allowed to write under this condition: in the name of God. But *I Guds namn* demonstrates that ecclesiastical control went further. The fascinating analyses, by Lisbet Holst, of the transcripts of witches' trials[17] reveal that the church controlled also the devilish language of women considered to be witches. These witches' confessions are labelled 'confession literature'. This earliest Danish confession literature by women can be seen as a product of the interaction between the one who confesses and the one who is listening/writing. Holts reads in these texts a strong voice of the person who at last is allowed to speak. The term 'confession literature' is though – an anachronistic term, illustrating the preoccupation of the modern scholar with the female 'I' in the Middle Ages, as well as the omnipresence of 20th-century critical ideas.

Currently, it is assumed by many literary critics that women authors seldom formulated their own poetics. This assumption is not supported by the Scandinavian women's literary history. Scandinavian women authors did discuss poetical questions with other authors, be it in private letters, or in forewords and afterwords. A good example is the Danish Anna Margrethe Lasson (1659-1738) who is even assigned her own explicit poetics in *I Guds namn.* It was she who, in 1723, wrote the very first prose novel published in Scandinavia. It was inspired by female French models: Madeleine de Scudéry's novels, in particular *Artamène ou Le grand Cyrus* (1648-53).[18] The introduction and the afterword to her novel, *Den beklædte sandhed* (The

[13] Cf. Hollier 1989, p.XIX.
[14] Møller Jensen 1993-99, vol.I, p.25.
[15] Id., p.43.
[16] Id., p.84-99.
[17] Id., p.135-151.
[18] Problably Lasson was acquainted with the German translations of the French literature, as Anne-Marie Mai states in the chapter on her in Møller Jensen 1993-99, vol.I, p.341-347.

concealed truth), show her as a zealous advocate of the Danish language. Pretending to publish the novel out of love for her mother tongue, she states that many Danes are eager to learn foreign languages, thereby neglecting their own language. Another objective of her novel-writing was her intention to show that women also knew how to write novels.[19] In her afterword Lasson remarks that many of the authors of highly praised 'old' literature were women; she mentions among others Sappho. In literary history her novel, the only one she wrote, is characterized as a 'curiosity', being one of the few Scandinavian pastorals written in prose and because of the fact that it was actually published. Moreover, according to the 19th-century literary historian Rasmus Nyerup, it was an unreadable curiosity even to women.[20] Anne-Marie Mai, author of the chapter, defends Lasson arguing that her novel is worthwhile reading, and that after its publication this mistress of the Danish language soon acquired followers, and inspired other defenders of Scandinavian mother tongues.[21]

For the period of the 'Modern breakthrough', discussed in *Fadershuset,* second of the five volumes, writers like Anne Charlotte Leffler (1849-1892) and Victoria Benedictsson (1850-1888) are shown to have often emphasized the difficulties in dealing with the choice between writing (or the arts in general) and marriage. These authors discuss the consequences of the choice their protagonists make, and the sacrifices they have to endure when choosing for authorship and the arts.[22] In the third volume, *Vida världen,* the awareness of the literary war between the sexes is dealt with in the discussion of the work of, amongst others, Stina Aronson (1892-1956) and Moa Martinson (1890-1964). Stina Aronson is represented as a writer who struggled alone against the dominant male modernist voice. The chapter on Martinson lays a strong emphasis on her own perception of her works and her position in the field of Swedish literature.[23]

Broadly speaking, the emphasis on innovation in the discussion of texts written by women resulted in the editors and contributors of *I Guds namn* registering a number of genres in which mainly women participated, without eschewing the question how to define what is 'literary'. In addition to the witches' confessions already mentioned, there are genealogies, the oral narrative tradition (with a separate chapter on erotic stories by women in the 19th century, the folktales which two male contemporaries, Peter Christen Asbjørnson (1812-1885) and Jørgen Moe (1813-1882), preferred not to publish, as well as the epistolary and autobiographical genres. Salon culture also receives a great deal of attention.

I Guds namn places women authors in a wider context, and shows how, during the 18th century, women started to write and participate in cultural life 'in their own names', instead of God's. This female writing took place, however, in a male context – the father's house, that was given various meanings: the physical space, the house of the father, husband, brother or son, where women wrote, and the more abstract

[19] During this period, there was a great interest in language and grammar, and Scandinavian poetics was often related to language politics; see Møller Jensen 1993-99, vol.I, p.345.
[20] Id., p.341-342.
[21] Id., p.347.
[22] See Broomans 1986 and Broomans 1987a.
[23] See Broomans 1999, especially p.65-68 and p.107-110.

space in patriarchal society. This patriarchal context is given an extra dimension in *Fadershuset*.

What about the fatherland?

During the period covered by this second volume, the building up of a national identity complicates the position of the woman author; naturally, this affects women's literary historiography.

The 'house of the father' referred to in *Fadershuset* might well have served as a symbol of the fatherland, the nation, but it appears to be necessary to differentiate here between the political nation and ordinary society. Whereas the state watches over communal interests, creative forces are developed in ordinary society. Seen from this perspective, identities, according to Stefan Jonsson, are not formed 'by collective stories that describe the fate of the classes and the nation, but by the little stories about the family, the house, the environment and the place of work'.[24] These ideas originate in Hegel's sense of the family as the primeval cell of society. This is where women come in: although every family is represented by its male head, families are linked together both socially and economically. Such interests needed to be watched over, in literature too: 'the little stories' and perhaps the domestic novel in the 19th century were received on that level. In the days of the Swedish author Fredrika Bremer (1801-1865), 'it made sense to see the identity of a person rooted in the house, in genealogy, in the fatherland and in mother earth'.[25] Authors such as Bremer and the Norwegian/Danish Magdalene Thoresen (1819-1903)[26] are good examples of how the ideology of the (Swedish and Norwegian/Danish) national identity determined evaluation of their work. Bremer and Thoresen were not permitted to 'burn down the house of the father and the patriarchate'[27] or to criticize society. This is demonstrated not only by contemporary criticism, but also by the literary historical evaluation of these authors' works.

In my research into the determining ideology in the literary historical texts about Bremer and Thoresen I have used Hayden White's approach to historiography as formulated in his *Metahistory* (1973).[28] White differentiates between various 'modes', explanation strategies, that are necessary for the construction of the story in historiography. The three main modes are: 'emplotment', 'formal argument' and 'ideological implication'. Each of these modes is divided into four 'sub-modes'. For the mode

[24] Jonsson 1995, p.44.
[25] Id., p.62
[26] Both translated into Dutch and other languages in the 19th century.
[27] Møller Jensen 1993-99, vol.II, p.254.
[28] See White 1973. One of the conclusions in my thesis on Stina Aronson is that the literary historical image of an author is constructed by the mode of emplotment chosen by literary historians. As White shows, not all historians use the same mode. In *Nordisk kvinnolitteraturhistoria* the romantic mode dominates or a combination of the romantic and tragic mode is used. Thus Stina Aronson is represented as a lonely genius and her contacts with other women writers are left out. See also the analyses referred to in note 23.

of emplotment there is a romantic, a tragic, a comic and a satirical sub-mode. The mode of argument, in which a historian may try to explain events and to find causalities, can be: formalist, mechanistic, organicist or contextualist. The mode of ideological implication, in which, according to White, the ideology of the historians themselves is reflected, is to be divided into: anarchist, radical, conservative and liberal.[29]

Both authors, Bremer as well as Thoresen, wrote a number of morally acceptable domestic novels and travelogues that praised the (national) landscape; they were and are still highly valued. Bremer, however, wanted to change society from within, from the home: she published her feminist novel *Hertha* (1856), and her oeuvre became more committed to women's issues. Subsequently, the official literary criticsm lost interest in this part of her oeuvre especially.[30] Thoresen described the eroticism of the female subject: this was considered to be unacceptable. Her interest in female eroticism was regarded as damaging not only for the family as an institution, but also for the nation, and it was smothered in literary history. Literary historians in the 19th century had generally used a romantic mode of emplotment – depicting the author as a successful hero – when writing on Bremer, but this romantic plot had to be transformed into a tragical one as soon as she 'left the house of the father' in starting to produce radical (feminist) writings. Bremer and Thoresen broke with the so-called 'conciliatory aesthetics', the belief that for the spiritual well-being of the nation it was important that literature reassure the citizens and reconcile them with reality and the legal powers.[31]

These women wanted to create a female national identity that could not be realized. In traditional literary histories there is no room for the female nation as a subject; it only exists as an object of the male imagination, as 'the mother's lap' and the 'rescued daughter'. On a literary historiographical level, too, we have to notice the failure of the attempts made by female literary theorists like Sigrid Leijonhufvud, around the turn of the century, to legitimate the significance of women authors such as Fredrika Bremer for the development of a national identity. Their research into the female national identity was 'forgotten' by later literary historians.[32]

This has also had an effect on the modern practice of women's literary historiography. In *Fadershuset* an anarchistic mode of emplotment (the belief in structural changes) is used in the chapter on Fredrika Bremer, by Birgitta Holm. To 'burn down the house of the father and the patriarchate'[33] creates an opportunity for a structural change in literary history, too. By burning down the old image of Fredrika Bremer it should become possible to create, to reconstruct, a new, different image. In the chapter on Magdalene Thoresen, however, there appears to be a certain ambivalence. On the one hand the passive image of Thoresen could be broken down: Thoresen is

[29] White 1973, p.29.
[30] In the women's movement, however, Bremer and her novel *Hertha* became symbolically important. In 1884, the 'Fredrika Bremer förbund' (a union for women's emancipation) was founded, publishing a female magazine which, in 1913, changed title: this journal, *Hertha*, still in existence, is now the oldest women's journal (Broomans 1987b, p.238).
[31] Beyer 1992, vol.II, p.220.
[32] See Haettner-Olafsson 1981.
[33] See note 27.

Fredrika Bremer

shown – by Lise Busk-Jensen[34] – formulating her own poetics and choosing to depict the national landscape of the wild North in preference to the more popular landscape of Italy in her travelogues. Here Thoresen is the real romantic heroine. On the other hand the romantic mode of emplotment is replaced by a tragical mode: Thoresen had to submit to the patriarchate, she 'accepted', she 'resigned' as a failed playwright.[35] While writing on Thoresen, Busk-Jensen does not use an anarchistic mode, but a radical one: to create a different image of Thoresen in literary history, the old one had to be changed, but not eradicated.

In *Nordisk kvinnolitteraturhistoria* there appears to be a tension between the new literary historical exposition with a gender identity and the traditional literary historical exposition with a national identity. Where did the editors and contributors of *Nordisk kvinnolitteraturhistoria* place their own representation: inside or outside the writing of literary history as dominated by male tradition? This question has to be asked, and it is an important one in the field of (meta)literary history. The longing for

[34] Møller Jensen 1993-99, vol.II, p.283-297.
[35] While her son-in-law Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) conquered the stage...

'something new' in women's literature indicates that, in Scandinavian women's literary history, the developmental mind-set has not yet been abandoned. We can even see a 'romantic genius' mind-set in Scandinavian women's literary history. The woman author as an 'innovator' has romantic overtones; these feminist literary historians often use 'romance' as 'mode of emplotment'.

We have to conclude that Scandinavian women's literary history is a combination of a 19th-century romantic literary historiography and an aesthetics *à la* Harold Bloom.[36] In other words, a 'romantic genius' mind-set combined with an originality mind-set. But in whose name is this done? In the name of God, the father, the fatherland, or in the name of the female 'I'? And within what framework and for whom does a feminist literary historian write a women's literary history? Though the editors and contributors of this huge project have to be praised, Nordisk Kvinnolitteraturhistoria is not embedded in a thourough metareflection on the act of writing literary history. A metareflection is necessary to confront statements about women's literary histories like the one David Perkins made in *Is literary history possible?*

> The antiquarian historian looks back 'with loyalty and love' to the position of the past from which he derives. But in doing so he distorts the past, for he is interested only in what lies within his own tradition and greets even its mediocre achievements with enthusiasm.[37]

In Scandinavian women's literary history I certainly detect an ambivalence, a to-ing and fro-ing between Scylla and Charybdis. On the one hand there is the struggle to break free from traditional literary history, and on the other the struggle to make women authors heroines, worthy of the fatherland.

Translated by Julia Harvey.

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[36] Cf. Bloom 1994.
[37] Perkins 1992, p.181-182.

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Cornelia Niekus Moore

'Ein schönes Ungeheuer': German women authors from 1550-1850

Ein Weib das dicht und schreibt, heist sie (bedenk es nur!)
Ein schönes Ungeheur und Blendwerk der Natur.[1]

A woman who writes verse and prose is called (imagine that!)
a pretty monster and delusion of nature.

These lines are taken from a poem by Sidonie Zäunemann (1714-1740), a German poet who in her life and works went against many of the conventions of her time. However, many of her less courageous literary sisters wrote and published their works as well. In the following pages, I will relate the consistent efforts of the last thirty years to show that women *were* engaged in literature throughout the centuries, that they *did* participate in a variety of genres, and that they did so throughout the German speaking countries. In other words, modern research has sided with Sidonie Zäunemann against the traditional opinion that a woman author was a 'pretty monster' or an 'illusion of nature'. I will give a chronological overview of the research regarding women authors, highlight various features that have characterized the disclosure and evaluation of women's writings from 1550 until 1850, and then comment on the accessibility of works by German authors of a bygone era.[2] As Gerda Lerner has pointed out, women made history, but what they did was left 'unrecorded, neglected, and ignored in interpretation'.[3] Literary scholarship is now attempting to fill in the blanks in the as yet incomplete picture of history. Some of the features of research on German women authors are similar to those in other European countries. Thus my account will feature some of the same aspects as are discussed in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*, a very ambitious and impressive Dutch edition which provides biographies and bibliographical resources of more than 150 Dutch women and makes, often for the first time, a selection of their works available to the modern reader.

Overview

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the work of women found its way into print most often when sympathetic male friends or family members arranged for its

[1] Zäunemannin 1738, p.242.
[2] Among the many overviews regarding individual authors, genres and time periods, two comprehensive *Forschungsberichte* stand out: Boetcher Joeres 1986 and Sagarra 1993.
[3] Lerner 1986, Introduction.

publication.[4] I have to modify this statement somewhat by saying that throughout the period under discussion, some women arranged for the publication of their own works. This is true not only for noble women but also for women who were commoners. Christiana Mariana von Ziegler, in the foreword to her *Versuch in gebundener Schreib-Art* (1728), proudly proclaims that her publication was neither prompted nor improved upon by a 'helpful' (male) editor. From dedications and forewords it is also clear that some women found patronesses. An early example is Magdalena Heymair, the 16th-century teacher who was the author of a number of religious school-books.[5] But, in general, the way to the printer was facilitated by males. In addition, throughout the centuries there were lexica by mostly male authors, who attempted to show the prevalence of writing women, while at the same time emphasizing this as a peculiar phenomenon.[6] (Zäunemann was right to complain.) Such lexica were in format somewhat akin to the Dutch collection *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* in that they provided biographies and bibliographies. They were far less comprehensive in printing actual work.

Women's literary endeavours were also deemed worthy of preservation if there was a connection with famous men, for instance the letters some of them received from or wrote to Goethe, Herder and Klopstock, or the memoirs and letters of women at various courts. Women who played a role in the Reformation, who were queens, regents or *Landesmütter,* or who otherwise struck the fancy of archive hunters and library patrons, could count on an occasional, usually laudatory, article or book. Especially in the latter half of the 19th century, during a heightened interest in women's emancipation, there appeared a number of works discussing women authors in previous centuries.[7] We should be glad to have these accounts. Although they tended to repeat each other, they also often relied on written sources in privately held archives, which in subsequent wars have been destroyed, decimated or scattered.[8] Especially some of the hand-written literature, described by earlier generations of scholars, may no longer be extant.

The 1970s brought a renewed interest in topics involving women. *Germanist(inn)en* like myself, who had previously done research on male authors, discovered the joy of expanding our knowledge of previous centuries by exploring the lives and works of women. Most of the earliest research in this field was carried out by scholars working at American universities, connected with or influenced by (if often loosely) the emerging Women's Studies Programs there. This was followed by a generation of German, European, and American scholars. The aims of their research can be described as follows:

[4] E.g., Susanna Elisabeth Zeidler's *Der jungferliche Zeitvertreiber* (1686) was edited and published by her brother Johann Gottfried Zeidler as a wedding present. Magdalene Sibylle Rieger's *Versuch einiger geistlichen und moralischen Gedichte* (1743) and *Geistlich- und moralischer Gedichte neue Sammlung* (1746) were both edited and published by her physician and friend Daniel Wilhelm Triller.

[5] Moore 1988, p.173-184, 485-487, 524-525.

[6] Woods/Fürstenwald 1984; the introduction (p.xii-xxiv) provides a systematic chronological description of four centuries of lexica.

[7] Hanstein 1899; Klemm 1859.

[8] One particularly informative publication deserves special mention, namely Lotte Traeger's dissertation 'Das Frauenschrifttum in Deutschland' (Prague 1943), which provided biographical and biblio-

a. to show that women did engage in a variety of literary activities throughout the ages, throughout the German-speaking countries, and across the genres;
b. to make accessible what women authors wrote through reprints, new editions, and translations;
c. to reinterpret the canon of literary works to include a gender focus that was not primarily male.

The first two of these aims could be defined as a search for *Frauenliteratur*, literature by women; the third as a reinterpretation of *Frauenbilder*, the portrayal of women.[9] In this presentation, I will concentrate on the first two research objectives, namely the commentary on and the publication of women's works, or as Inge Stephan and Sigrid Weigel have called it 'the reconstruction and «rescue» of the female tradition and the search for the beginning of 'women's literature'.[10]

The early 1980s saw several pioneering works which provided the necessary handbooks for this new field of literary history: Jean Woods' and Maria Fürstenwald's *Schriftstellerinnen, Künstlerinnen und gelehrte Frauen des deutschen Barock* (1984) and Elisabeth Friedrichs' *Die deutschsprachigen Schriftstellerinnen des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts* (1981) provided lexica with names, biographical and bibliographical data.[11] Barbara Becker-Cantarino wrote *Der lange Weg zur Mündigkeit*, a comprehensive overview, a kind of literary history of women.[12]

From the beginning women's studies has lent itself to collaboration. Collections have appeared – and continue to appear – in which a number of scholars publish their findings about a variety of women authors.[13] In many cases, these collections were – and continue to be – published proceedings of conferences, which have brought those pursuing German women's studies together in the United States and in Europe.[14] Although these anthologies provide an insight into the variety of literary activities in which women participated, the hope that in their totality they would add up to a comprehensive view has not always been realized. More recently, however, collaboration has led to broader efforts to produce monographs on groups of women who participated in certain genres. The discussions by Magdalena Heuser and Helga Gallas of the novels by women authors around 1800 show that we can move beyond the rediscovery of individual authors – and the unique position they occupy within their time – towards placing women authors within the literary tradition.[15] Works like Susanne Kord's comprehensive study of women dramatists in the 18th and 19th centuries are

graphical information on many women authors from 1550-1650. See also: Hans Sviestrup and Agnes von Zahn-Harnack, *Die Frauenfrage in Deutschland, Strömungen und Gegenströmungen 1790-1930* (Tübingen, 1934).

[9] Stephan/Weigel 1983, p.83-138.

[10] 'Die Rekonstruktion und «Rettung» der verdrängten weiblichen Tradition und die Suche nach den Anfängen von Frauenliteratur'. See: Stephan/Weigel 1984, p.9.

[11] Woods/Fürstenwald 1984; Friedrichs 1981. See also Schindel 1823-25.

[12] Becker-Cantarino 1987.

[13] Brinker-Gabler 1988.

[14] For instance, there were a series of trailblazing conferences in 1983 (Hamburg) and 1984 (Bielefeld). See Stephan/Weigel 1984 and Berger 1985.

[15] Gallas/Heuser 1990. See Susan L. Cocalis' review essay (1993), which provides a comprehensive overview of the scholarship regarding 18th-century women writers.

another example of a growing interest in genres which were traditionally considered the exclusive territory of male authors.[16] It is not accidental, that the generations of women writers around 1800 are being singled out, for they in particular first attracted the attention of literary scholars.[17] Other genres in other centuries remain to be investigated. In the literature before 1800 for instance, more research could be done regarding women's contributions to occasional poetry *(Gelegenheitspoesie)*. I think it would be helpful to realize that much of the poetry written by women before 1800 was prompted by certain occasions, and that it adhered to – or in some cases went counter to – the conventions of a male-dominated genre.

Increasingly, there has also been a geographical diversification, with publications concentrating on women authors in certain regions. An excellent example is Miroslawa Czarnecka's *Die 'verse-schwangere' Elysie*, which discusses the participation of women in the literary culture of Silesia in the 17th and early 18th centuries.[18] At the same time, series have started to appear. Metzler's series *Ergebnisse der Frauenforschung* includes several works that give a comprehensive view of either chronological periods or genres, of women as authors and women as literary figures.[19]

Especially in the last decade we have witnessed a proliferation of bibliographical material. One example is the *Bibliographie der deutschsprachigen Frauenliteratur. Belletristik, Sachbuch, Gender Studies*, which covers the writing of women including those in modern times.[20] The most recent one is the Internet site Ariadne, maintained by the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.[21] Publications like the *Women in German yearbook* containing series of articles, book reviews and bibliographies keep the reader up to date with the newest developments in the field.

Criteria

In the field of research on women's literature in previous centuries, we can distinguish several features. The first is one of selection. *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* describes the editorial attempts to find Dutch women authors of previous centuries and their works as an exploration into a *terra incognita*. This has been true for German-speaking countries as well. Being uncertain of the outcome and not always prepared for what would be found, we have combed archives and libraries, unearthing the literary endeavours of an ever-increasing number of women authors. The comment in the introduction to *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* that the number of women that had to be included was larger than originally anticipated mirrors the findings in German literature. It also mirrors our own initial misconceptions. We were as guilty

[16] Kord 1992.
[17] See Stephan/Weigel 1984.
[18] Czarnecka 1997a. Another example: Ryter 1994, which dovetails with Stump/Widmer 1994.
[19] In this series appeared: Becker-Cantarino 1987; Hilmes 1990; Runge/Steinbrügge 1991; Lehmann 1991; Kord 1992.
[20] Kroll 1995 and 1996.
[21] Ariadne-site, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek: http://www.onb.ac.at/ariadne/03fffg24.htm.

as the rest of the scholarly world in underestimating the number of women writers in the past, treating the phenomenon of a woman author as something unique, which is only a euphemism for Zäunemann's 'pretty monster'. In our defence it must be said that women authors, especially in early modern Germany, thought of themselves as unique. Even while professing their faith in the ability of women to write and to write well, and welcoming the women in their acquaintance who could do so, they often felt that they were the only ones in their world. They laboured under the same lack of knowledge as the 20th-century explorers who set out to find them in a *terra incognita*. How could they have known that they belonged to an honourable tradition when that tradition had been systematically excluded from the history books in their time and ours?[22]

Initially, therefore, the research focus was largely determined by the material that was accessible and by the preferences – not to say the fancy – of the researcher. There was also the tendency to investigate the lives and writings of the same small group of women authors, again largely dictated by the accessibility of the material. For the 17th century the canon of women authors consisted of Sibylle Schwarz, Anna Hoyers and Catharina Regina von Greiffenberg; for the 18th, preferential attention was given to Sophie von La Roche, Johanna Schopenhauer and a few others. Even within the œuvre of these authors, certain works remained favourites whereas others were largely neglected, again mostly because of inaccessibility. As hitherto little known works of women authors are being disclosed, especially in libraries and archives in the former East Germany, there are new rediscoveries, the canon of women authors is being expanded, and comprehensive investigations into chronological periods and genres can now proceed.

From the beginning in the 1970s, German women's studies has been marked by a collaboration across disciplines, across literary periods, and across nationalities. As literary historians, *Germanist(inn)en* are indebted to historians of other disciplines. Their redefinition of the place of women in German history has helped us to contextualize women authors of previous centuries in their place and time.[23] On the other hand, there is a tendency for all disciplines to use the same literary sources, preferring those whose biographical elements are perceived as providing most clearly the woman's perspective on her own situation. Thus historians of disciplines other than literary have used for their own reinterpretation of bygone centuries the very works that literary historians have rediscovered and presented.[24] One should be cautious, however, and not attempt to fill in the missing gender link in history by reconstructing the past on the basis of the (auto)biographical writings of only a few individuals.

Unlike women's literature of the 20th century, the debate among literary historians concerning women authors of previous centuries has been relatively free of postmodern analysis, although, of course, gender studies themselves have been part of a modern trend in literary analysis and in their own way have systematically

[22] Cf. Lerner 1986, Introduction.
[23] See also: Boetcher Joeres/Kuhn 1985.
[24] See Juliane Jacobi-Dietrich and Elke Kleinau in the foreword to Brehmer et al. 1983. See also Becher 1988, p.217-233.

deconstructed traditional literary history.[25] Modern political events have also cast their shadows across the past. For instance, German reunification has led to a deeper awareness of the diversity among the German-speaking peoples, and a renewed sense that German history was more diversified than it has been traditionally presented. This bodes well for women's studies, as it moves from an emphasis on the uniqueness of women's literary endeavours to a more comparative approach within gender studies.[26] A special feature of German women's studies is that it spans the literature of several European countries and also includes active groups of scholars in non-German-speaking countries like Great Britain and the United States. Prime examples of English-language contributions are the *Women in German yearbook*, subtitled *Feminist studies in German literature and culture*, the *Feminist encyclopedia of German literature*,[27] and most recently *Women writers in German-speaking countries*, which provides biographies as well as bibliographical material.[28]

Another feature of German literary history which it shares with its Dutch counterpart has been a broadening of the definition of literature to include far more genres than have been previously defined as 'belles lettres'. For instance, those genres defined as trivial literature have gained wider acceptance as objects of literary research. In this context, the *Frauenromane* of the late 18th and early 19th centuries have received renewed attention.[29] An increased interest in a literature that was prompted and sanctioned by biographical occurrences like letters, diaries and poetry written for social occasions has also furthered interest in women's writing since much of what women wrote contained biographical elements.[30] Especially in the first phase of German women's studies, all efforts were directed towards finding these biographical features, rather than providing stylistic interpretations; judging the phenomenon of the woman behind the work to be more important than the work itself.

Literary merit

This leads us to the question of literary merit. The tendency to measure all literary quality by male standards has been referred to as *Goethe-Dämmerung*.[31] We find this phenomenon in all three centuries under discussion. Even in their laudatory forewords, the sympathetic editors of the 17th and 18th centuries invariably distanced themselves from the poetic quality of a woman's publication even as they were helping it to appear in print. Whereas the female authors kept emphasizing that their

[25] See Lemaire 1987.
[26] Grossmann 1993. One example is the interdisciplinary colloquium 'Formatting gender. Transitions, breaks, and discontinuities in German-speaking Europe, 1750-1830,' in Bad Homburg, September 24-26, 1998.
[27] Eigler/Kord 1996.
[28] Frederiksen/Ametsbichler 1998.
[29] See Gallas/Heuser 1990.
[30] Eda Sagarra gives a comprehensive overview of the publication history of such autobiographical writings, including letters, and provides an extensive bibliography of original publications from 1700 until 1918. See Sagarra 1986; Heuser et al. 1994; Becker-Cantarino 1985; Holdenried 1995.
[31] Cocalis 1993.

inborn talents were as good as those of males, the editors proclaimed that the poetry of women had to be judged by different standards, taking the intentions and morality of the female author into account rather than the literary quality of the final product. Editors are also known to have 'improved' on the works that they deigned to publish. Modern scholarship continues to emphasize the woman behind the work, rather than the literary quality of the work itself. *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* adheres to this trend; its introduction assures us that inclusion in this impressive work was not based on any value judgment. In general, modern German scholarship has likewise refrained from judging the aesthetic and literary quality of women's writings, lauding the attempt to write against all odds without passing judgment on the published product. But are we really doing these works and their authors a service by allowing ourselves to be so non-judgmental? As we move from highlighting the manifold contributions of women, towards integrating these texts into the general literary movements of the time, we shall have to come to some conclusion about the aesthetic standards by which such contributions should be judged.

But first of all we have to bring these works into the view of a modern public. The republication of long-forgotten works by women was begun in our time with the publication, in 1978, of Gisela Brinker-Gabler's *Deutsche Dichterinnen vom 16. Jahrhundert: Gedichte und Lebensläufe*, which resembles in a far more modest way the organization of *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*. Miroslawa Czarnecka has recently published an anthology of Silesian women's writings of the 17th century.[32] Translations have appeared in *Bitter healing. German women authors from Pietism to Romanticism.*[33] As you can see, we have nothing as fancy or as comprehensive as *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*. On the contrary, many of the reprints and new editions have been issued in print-runs of no more than 500 copies, and these have sometimes been hard or impossible to read because of the inferior quality of the reproduction. This dearth of reprints of women's works of the past centuries in German as well as in translation is especially detrimental to the inclusion of women authors in university literature courses and hinders the introduction of women's works as valid representatives of the literature of a given time.

Conclusion

German literary history regarding women authors can proudly point to the pioneering work done by its researchers and the fascinating literary works that they have been able to present to a modern audience. Our increased awareness of the tradition of women writers and their works has permeated literary studies in general and has helped to present a better picture not only of women authors but also of the tradition of writing and reading in times past. It is regrettable that no such publication as *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* exists for German women authors, which would provide a better overall picture of the efforts of German women authors in previous centuries, and provide more republications of their works. Much has been accomplished and much remains to be done.

[32] Czarnecka 1997b.
[33] Blackwell/Zantop 1990.

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Christine Planté

An anthology of 19th-century French women poets

The publication of an anthology of female poetry may, in France, seem a bit of a gamble, even a challenge. In the first place, because of French poetical production itself: although the 19th century is probably the most fruitful and inventive period for poetry in French literary history, in general only a few names of women poets are noted (at most, those of Marceline Desbordes-Valmore and Anna de Noailles). Secondly, because of the French literary critical tradition: as one may know, feminist criticism is less well developed in France than in other western countries, and it is primarily interested in genres other than poetry. Although an entire tradition of commentaries and publications on women poets has been in existence since the 19th century, these texts are characteristically written in a flowery and depreciatory register. This is shown, for example, by the title of the anthology published in 1948 by Yves-Gérard Le Dantec, *La guirlande des Muses françaises de Marceline Valmore à Marie Noël*. Even if the need for a book such as the one we have just published seems beyond dispute, in so far as it is difficult, or even impossible, to read in a current edition most of the women poets cited and studied,[1] its composition and publication faced a strong, double prejudice. Objections can be made on aesthetic grounds – it is not good poetry –, and on ideological grounds – they are not feminist texts, nor even always critical of the social order which tries to keep women in their place. A certain obstinacy and a clearly defined point of view were therefore needed to bring the production and publication of this anthology to a satisfactory conclusion.

The academic and scientific context

Femmes poètes du XIXe siècle. Une anthologie has, under my supervision, been collectively realized by a research group within the 'Littérature and idéologies au XIXe siècle' team of the UMR LIRE CNRS-Lyon 2. For this 'équipe mixte',[2] the study of the position of women in the literary institution and of the representations of sexual difference has constituted, for several years, an axis of study but not the principal

[1] Only selections of poems by Desbordes-Valmore are currently available (Desbordes-Valmore 1983 and Noailles 1991). The complete poetical works of Desbordes-Valmore (Desbordes-Valmore 1978) are no longer in stock neither, those of Renée Vivien (Vivien 1986), as well as the following anthologies (Séché 1909, Moulin 1963, Moulin 1966, Moulin 1975).

[2] Unité mixte de recherches Université-CNRS (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique).

common goal. In accordance with my own research, the study of women poets can be seen within the framework of an investigation into the literary genres, in so far as they are affected by the difference between the sexes. This has led me to consider, at the two extremities of the hierarchy of genres, on the one hand, the production of (real or fictional) epistolary writing, traditionally considered as a *feminine* genre, and of which the literary status is problematic; and, on the other hand, poetry, which is, on the contrary, placed at the summit of the hierarchy of genres. The composition of poetry is the creative act par excellence (according to the root *poiein)*, and reputed to be difficult and even impossible for women.

Adélaïde Dufrénoy, Louise Michel, Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, Gérard d'Houville

For the team which carried out the project, the habit of considering, firstly, the relation between literature and ideology, and, secondly, literary production that is generally deemed marginal or not legitimate (at the same time, we also collaborated in producing a book on French popular poetry in the 19th century), constituted a framework favouring an approach free from *a priori* and value judgements traditionally applied to what is called 'poésie féminine'. The publication of our anthology was intended to accompany a colloquium entitled *Masculin/féminin dans la poésie et les poétiques du XIXe siècle*,[3] which allowed us to discuss the women poets not as a separate entity but as situated in a common historical, poetical and symbolical context, showing how the poetry of women *and* men was marked by sexual difference. The collaboration of the research team (which was almost completely female) could have been problematical, as the members of the team had very different previous experience in connection with the study of women's writing. But this finally turned out to

[3] Colloquium held in Lyons in June 1998. Proceedings to be published in 2000.

be an advantage, in that no presupposition could *a priori* be held to be valid, so that we were obliged to define a very precise working protocol. I shall briefly emphasize here some of the methodological problems that we encountered. What criteria should one adopt in selecting both women poets and texts? How should one compose the anthology? How should one approach the question of a possible specificity of women's poetry?

Selection criteria

In spite of what is commonly thought, any serious research on the French 19th century can easily find women poets, even when the survey is limited to published poetry. In producing the anthology of 19th-century French women poets our principal aim was not that of making an exhaustive study or displaying a scholarly precision, but to produce a sizeable work at a reasonable price which would be easily accessible to a readership of men and women students, teachers and researchers. This objective imposed a severe limitation on the selection, for which we have had to try and define the criteria.

The selection of women poets

At the end of our book, a repertory is given of women poets whose work has *not* been studied, so that one can measure the importance and scope of the selection made and, possibly, of analyses and research which can be pursued. Our complete list contains 70 names; 19 women have an article dedicated to them, that is a little more than a fifth of the women poets mentioned in total. We have retained those women who seemed important to us because of their work, but also the ones through whom a quite complete and meaningful *encompassing vision* could be suggested. We have decided to favour the lesser known women poets, in particular from the beginning of the 19th century. In doing so, we have paid less attention to women writing at the end of the century, who had already been studied a little more frequently than earlier writers. The *length* of the different chapters is therefore not proportional to the production of each period: we have been more selective for the chapters dedicated to Romanticism and, especially, to the end of the 19th century (the richness of the production in the 1900s would require a complete book to give an exact idea of the poetic activity of women at that moment).

We have strictly adhered to the *generic definition* of poetry, in contrast to numerous anthologies of women poets in which the criterion of femininity seems to largely prevail at the expense of that of poetry, as if in the world of women artistic and formal questions were in fact secondary: if a woman is known and has written, that justifies her being mentioned. Authors of compilations apparently find it difficult to leave out famous names like those of Germaine de Staël, George Sand or Colette, at the risk of citing very minor texts, even cutting 'poems' out of their prose texts for the purpose of inclusion in the anthology. We have only retained authors of poetical

works which are explicitly stated to be – that is to say in most cases, but not in all – works in verse; some prose poems (those of Marguerite Burnat-Provins) show that, for women too, but certainly to a lesser degree, the definition of poetry has been progressively dissociated from the use of verse in the course of the century.

Despite the limited number of women poets presented, we have tried to suggest the *diversity* of positions and poetical practices, against the idea of a presupposed unity of women's writing. The major, but not exclusive, criteria have been *poetical interest* and *originality*. One could object that this refers to the disputable category of *value*, but it seems to me that indeed this question cannot be avoided. Certainly, one may readily criticize the belief in an atemporal and universal Beauty, and show that in every culture the idea of Beauty is culturally conditioned in accordance with the interests of a particular dominant category at a given moment (and from which women have usually been excluded). And it must be observed that when critical studies of poetry omit any discussion on value in order to devote more attention to historical and formal questions, they tend to mention women poets more often. Thus, Martinon's book[4] on stanza forms mentions little known names such as Malvina Blanchecotte or Hermance Lesguillon;[5] and a recent study by Jean-Michel Gouvard on the evolution of the French alexandrine[6] mentions Louisa Siefert. Several women poets figure in the *corpus* studied by Lieven D'Hulst in *L'évolution de la poésie en France (1780-1830)*,[7] and in that of Graham Robb for *La poésie de Baudelaire et la poésie française (1838-1852)*.[8]

This does not, however, allow us to reject any idea of poetical or aesthetical value, which would imply that all texts are of equal worth, or that texts by women are worthy of interest because they are by women. To retain poems for this sole reason would be to treat them as documents, and in doing so, inflict yet again on women poets a denial of individuality and true creativity, reproducing under the guise of a historical and sociological curiosity a traditional misogynous disdain. Taking seriously their project to produce a poetical oeuvre, we therefore agreed that certain poems by women writers are more beautiful, more moving, more innovative than others, and that these are not necessarily the most outspokenly feminist poems. Our choice does not therefore systematically ignore established values, and makes enough room for well-known poems by Marceline Desbordes-Valmore or Renée Vivien, but it also goes against traditional hierarchies by, for example, dedicating an article to Louise Colet, who is often ignored by anthologies or solely discussed as the mistress of Flaubert, or to Malvina Blanchecotte, a practically unknown 'popular poet'.

The reputation of women who have made a mark on their era has also been taken into account, either because they incarnated a feminine ideal at a given moment, or because of their links with the literary world. Thus, one can read certain texts by

[4] Martinon 1912.
[5] Hermance Lesguillon (1812-1882) has published in every genre. Her poems principally belong to the Romantic era: *Rêveuse* (1833), *Rosées* (1836), *Rayons d'Amour* (1840).
[6] Gouvard 1993.
[7] D'Hulst 1987; the bibliography comprises Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, Adélaïde Dufrénoy, Amable Tastu.
[8] Robb 1993; it comprises Claudia Bachi, Louise Bertin, Louise Colet, Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, Delphine Gay-de Girardin, Hermance Lesguillon, Elisa Mercoeur, Anaïs Ségalas, Mélanie Waldor.

Anais Ségalas, who during the Romantic era embodied a kind of edifying ideal of 'women's poetry', allowing the reader to appreciate more, by way of contrast, the originality and subversive force of certain of her contemporaries. But celebrity has not constituted a systematic criterion, and we have not retained women poets who have been principally known on account of their relations with great men, such as Mélanie Waldor[9] or Louise Bertin.[10]

The selection of poems

Wanting a sufficiently wide choice of poems to suggest the diversity of the works, we deliberately reduced the length of introductory articles to make more space for texts. Their selection has been guided by the same poetical principles as applied for the poets, and by thematic considerations. In particular, we have tried to reproduce texts which deal with the position of women and/or which developed a discourse on poetry, and we have tried to show the role of poetical affiliations as well as that of innovations. But the practice of selection varies in each particular case. The application of thematic criteria to Marceline Desbordes-Valmore would, for example, have meant leaving out the most deservedly well-known poems; such criteria have therefore been used only marginally. Certain contributors wanted to demonstrate the coherence of a body of work (as is the case for the philosophical poetry of Louise Ackermann), others, on the contrary, have wanted to suggest the thematic or prosodic diversity in one and the same woman poet (for example, in Louisa Siefert's work). Generally speaking, the application of collectively defined criteria has left a lot of space for special interests, one's own sensibility and the judgement of each woman participating in the project. For this reason, the names are given of the individuals who composed the articles and the selections. If the plurality of assessments which they represent is inevitably seen as problematical, or even as a source of contradictions, it has, in any case, allowed us to avoid the temptation of the edifying choice, of systematic rehabilitation, and the dogmatism of any poetical or political correctness.

A particular problem was posed by long poems and the way to present them, especially in the work of women poets from the beginning of the century. There was the problem of their place within the whole, but also of their readability for our era, which on the whole tends to valorize short forms. In order not to have to completely reject texts which constitute an important part of the poetical production of the period, we have had to make some cuts, a challengeable practice, but one which is preferable to complete silence. As a general rule, and when access to that state of the text was possible, the given version is the last one published during the life of the author. We only mention in exceptional cases variants, and the spelling has been modernized.

[9] Mélanie Waldor (1796-1871), Alexandre Dumas' mistress, and authoress of *Poésies du coeur* (1833).
[10] Louise Bertin (1805-1877), daughter of the director of the *Journal des Débats;* a musician friend of Victor Hugo, she wrote for him the libretto for *Esmeralda,* and also wrote poetry: *Glanes* (1842), *Nouvelles glanes* (1876).

The composition of the book and its periodization

The book encompasses a 'long' 19th century (1789-1914) in order to grasp also the period of transition from the 18th to the 19th century, preceding the birth of French Romanticism, and that of the 19th to the 20th century, with the prolific production, which, since Maurras, has often been labelled 'Romantisme féminin'. To allow women poets to be placed within a common history, they are presented *chronologically* and not alphabetically. In four large chapters, *Entre deux siècles*, *Romantismes*, *Modernités*, and *Saphos fin de siècle*, women poets are presented in an order which is not dictated by their *date of birth* but by that of their *first publication*, literally and historically more meaningful than the simple observance of registration which prevails elsewhere.

The chronological plan shows the necessarily arbitrary nature of periodizations and categories in usage. The American historian Joan Kelly once asked whether women had had a Renaissance.[11] One might just as well ask oneself whether the French Revolution ever signified progress or liberation[12] for them. We know that from the French Revolution on, women's right of access to the political forum was challenged, and that the Napoleonic Code would then consecrate the regression of women's status in society by making them *minors*, always under the authority of the father or the husband, while throughout the 19th century, with the development of a system of public education, the compulsory education of girls would lag behind that of boys.

Now, what is true of political and social history is also true of literary history, where sometimes one certainly finds coincidences between feminine and masculine temporalities – the golden age of Romantic poetry is also, relatively speaking, that of women poets – but also important discrepancies. This is demonstrated by the chronology given at the end of the volume in the form of a table, showing in two columns what was essential in the production of women and men. Thus, at the beginning, in the first two decades, a rather obscure moment for French poetry between Chénier and Lamartine, women poets played a role which was not negligible, especially in the domains of the elegy and the idyll, where one can surmise the first signs of the Romantic renewal of lyric poetry.

But although they prefigured Romanticism, women did not then occupy a central position after its triumph. Those women who had conceived their hour of glory in the last years of the 18th century and under the First Empire always resisted the idea of a literary revolution, and the rise of Romanticism quickly accelerated their going out of fashion. But even in the following generations, and although Romanticism can appear as a relatively favourable moment in time for women authors, the work of women writers still hardly made any impression. Without going so far as to consider along with Yves Bonnefoy that French Romanticism is 'the greatest example of profoundly masculine poetry',[13] one must underline that in spite of, or because of, the

[11] Kelly-Gadol 1977.
[12] Cf. Fraisse/Perrot 1991, p.23: 'The rupture which took effect at the turn of the century is also the act which brought about the exclusion of women from life in the city, an exclusion which, in a different way, was more radical than that of feudalism'.
[13] In Desbordes-Valmore 1983, p.31 (text also included in Bonnefoy 1988).

exaltation of women and of love which is often considered to be one of its major characteristics, Romanticism does not encourage in France the recognition of a *poetical language enounced by women.*

It is in the following period, and in the context of a hostile reaction, that Romanticism was to be declared *feminine*. The *l'art pour l'art* movement and the poetics which exalt formal perfection view the poet's work through metaphors of the sculptor's work and the struggle to master the material, which implies culturally masculine models such as Michelangelo, and supposedly virile values. Quite soon, and especially under the Second Empire, the tears and sighs through which nascent Romanticism is then summed up seem only good enough to make an Emma Bovary weep in her provincial convent – and the men whom they have also secretly made dreamers, will henceforth, like Baudelaire, take care to display a certain distance, through violence or derision, from these symptoms of effeminacy. This context, to which one must add the proliferation of literary evocations of seductive and castrating women, proves to be not very favourable for the flowering of new work by women poets, and at first sight, the period of poetical modernity, from Baudelaire to Mallarmé, manifests itself as a world uninhabited by women. Their absence at this significant moment in the history of French poetry certainly offers a partial explanation for the assumption that in France there are no women poets worthy of interest. Those whose poems are included in the third chapter of our anthology can only strike one by the heterogeneity of their poetical production, and by the discrepancy that they show when compared to the masculine production of the period – their references are largely drawn from a former period, Lamartine and Hugo (without the most innovative aspects of Hugo's verse). If one could ask oneself whether there was such a thing as a feminine Romanticism, one can definitely not find anything of a feminine poetical modernity at that period, whatever the interest, courage or audacity of the works Louise Michel and Louise Ackermann offered to the reading public. Only Marie Krysinska, who claims the invention of free verse against Gustave Kahn, can be placed in the category of *modernity*.

In contrast, the turn of the century sees a flowering of poetical works by women which create vivid interest. These poems should be read against a background of ideological preoccupations of this period, relating to the evolution of the female condition and the upheaval of relations between the sexes. Meeting the aspiration of a section of the critics and the public towards a more immediately intelligible and 'popular' poetry than Symbolist poetry, the movement which Charles Maurras would soon label as 'feminine Romanticism' and which other critics prefer to call 'fin-de-siècle Sappho', appears as a true literary movement, the development of which is facilitated by the reputation in society and in the literary world of some of its members (Anna de Noailles, Madame Gérard d'Houville, Lucie Delarue-Mardrus). For the first time in French literary history, women's poetry, far from constituting just an anecdotal oddity or marginal footnote to artistic life, turns out to be one of the important meeting points where something is happening in poetry. The phenomenon is seductive but also irritating: perceived by some as a sign of decadence and of disorder, it would not outlive the First World War.

The unity of women's poetry?

Is there some kind of unity to this poetical production, which justifies collecting the texts under the category of the feminine – at the risk of depreciating the best known and strongest of them (one could say that Marceline Desbordes-Valmore has little to gain from such an enterprise although she would certainly not have rejected it), – and authorizing the idea of a specificity of women's poetry? The simple and rapid chronological itinerary we have just made enables us to say *no:* there is no connection, from the point of view of poetical writing, between Constance de Salm, Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, Louise Michel and Anna de Noailles... And one should be prepared to admit that a book of this kind represents a makeshift solution, I would say a necessary step: it is better that these poems can be read in the context of an anthology than that they cannot be read at all. It is a step towards a better knowledge at one and the same time of the poetical tradition and the place of women within that tradition, and a way of taking the debate on women poets away from the realm of pure prejudice which will remain for as long as one cannot read what they have written. But there is a theoretical risk which one has to make explicit and deal with, one through which women poets, who have managed to overcome the numerous barriers, the taboos and omissions of literary history, see themselves relegated to the obligatory question of femininity, as a unifying glaze covering the diversity of voices, poetics and works. Nevertheless, if there is no unity of feminine poetical *production,* there is certainly evidence of uniformity in the *reception* given to women's poetry, where defiance, irony, gallantry and derision intersect. Now, this common treatment calls forth common reactions, analogous discourses and strategies of self-justification from women poets, who may have conferred on their poems certain features, which readers have taken note of and have wanted to take as proof of an eternal femininity. The continuity of the anthology can help to grasp the effect of context and reception, and thus help towards the intelligibility of the poems, while at the same time deconstructing the illusion of an atemporal *femininity.*

The book has been principally conceived as a working tool, open to critical suggestions, to additions and dialogue. A first teaching experience at one of my lectures, which brought the men and women students to use it within the framework of a facultative programme of the third year on 'Women in the French poetical tradition', shows that it prompts both a desire to know more about the traditional invisibility of women in poetry, and very fruitful questions on the categories and hierarchies through which literary history is written – which was certainly one of its objectives.

Translation Roy Bicknell.

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Betje Wolff (1738-1804)
Aagje Deken (1741-1804)

Historie van Mejuffrouw Sara Burgerhart (1782)
letter XXX, fragment

[...] Waarlyk, Broêr lief, er is voor een gevoelig man, niets zo treffent, dan het zagt gesprek eener deugdzame Vrouw, die ongelukkig is. Ik verzogt om de eer te hebben van haar een paar oogenblikken te spreken. [...] Stel u myne verlegenheid voor! Hoe moest ik over geld met een kiesche Vrouw spreken...? ik moest echter. 'Mevrouw, zeide ik, alle menschen zyn niet billyk; zeker Vrek valt u lastig om een beuzeling, dat spyt my; wy kooplieden horen niet dan van geld. Ik ken dien man. Maak my zo gelukkig van deeze honderd ducaten, die ik niet beter weet uit te zetteen, van myn aantenemen; en ontsla u van zo eenen knaap. Ik heb thans geen tyd om het contract te schryven; myn naam is Edeling'. Ik lag het geld in haren schoot. Zy was zo aangedaan, dat zy weinig zeggen kon, maar hare schone oogen spraken de eenvoudige taal der erkentenisse. [...]
Zo als zy my in de Eetkamer leidde, zag ik eene Juffer, die my, op dat zelfde oogenblik, geheel en al, en voor altoos overmeesterde. Ik stond een oogenblik als een beeld, maar herstelde my in zo verre, dat ik het gezelschap konde groeten. Waarlyk, myne kniën knikten onder my; 't was, op myn woord, juist of ik een electrische, ik mag zeggen Musschenbroeksche, schok door myne ziel voelde heen horten. Ik zag niemand dan deeze Bevalligheid. Zy zat, huisselyk gekleed, en drok bezig met het knopen van manchetten. Hemel... en zy heeft geen Broêr. Voor wien maakt zy die dan? Myn jonge Vriend gaf haar gelegenheid om haar vernuft te tonen; 't was stekelachtig, doch zo een prikje doet geen zeer. Zy houdt hem voor haar Bagatelle; dat zag ik klaar. De Weduw gaf vervolgens oorzaak om haar lieve kind, zo als zy deeze Engel noemde, beter vertoning te doen maken. Ik zag, dat zy een gevoelig hart en gezont oordeel hadt: hoewel zy de fraaiste zaken met de bekoorlykste losheid en onbedwongenheid voortpraatte.
Broer lief, deeze Vrouw, of geen Vrouw! Gy weet myne sentimenten op dat stuk. Nu heeft myn hart dat gevonden, daar het dus lange naar zogt. Het lieve Meisje is de Dochter van den Heer Burgerhart: zy is ouderloos. De achtingwaarde Weduw heeft zig genoodzaakt gezien Juffrouwen te logeeren; myne Beminde is eene derzelve. Het begon te regenen, en wy bleven zo al, onvermerkt, tot dat de bescheidenheid ons geboodt te vertrekken. Dat afscheid! och, die niet verlieft is, kan het niet bezeffen. Ik kan haar niet meer van my afgezondert beschouwen. Maar voor wien zyn toch die manchetten?

[...] Rien au monde, mon cher frere, n'est plus touchant pour une ame sensible que la conversation d'une femme vertueuse dans le malheur. Je lui demandai la permission de l'entretenir quelques instans en particulier. [...] Imaginez-vouz quel dut être mon embarras? Comment m'y prendre pour parler d'argent à une femme qui pense avec tant de délicatesse! Il fallut pourtant prendre mon parti, je pris courage & lui dis: 'Madame, il n'est malheureusement que trop de gens durs & injustes, je sais qu'un créancier de ce caractere vous tourmente pour une bagatelle, j'en suis vraiment touché. Faites-moi la grace de prendre de moi ces cent ducats que je ne saurois mieux placer, & permettez que je vous débarrasse par ce moyen des persecutions de cet homme. Je n'ai pas actuellement le tems d'en dresser l'obligation, je m'appelle Edeling.' Je mis aussitôt après la somme sur ses genoux. Elle fut si touchée de mon procédé qu'elle n'eut pas la force de me témoigner tout ce qu'elle sentoit. Ses beaux yeux se firent assez entendre & exprimerent bien toute la reconnoissance dont elle étoit pénétrée. [...]
Une jeune demoiselle me frappa en entrant dans la salle à manger. La voir & l'aimer ne furent qu'une même chose, & je sentis dès ce moment que je lui étois absolument & pour toujours attaché. Je restai quelque tems immobile, je me remis cependant peu à peu de ma première surprise, & assez bien pour pouvoir saluer la compagnie. Je tremblois à la vérité de tous mes membres, & je ne crains pas de dire que j'étois comme pétrifié. Je ne voyois que cette charmante personne. Son deshabillé étoit simple & point recherché. Elle brodoit des manchettes. Ciel!... & elle n'a point de frere. A qui les destineroit-elle donc? Mon jeune ami lui fournit l'occasion de faire briller son esprit; elle le plaisanta, mais ses plaisanteries étoient sans amertume, & il étoit impossible de s'en fâcher. Je vis fort bien qu'elle s'en amusoit. La veuve fournit ensuite à sa chere fille, c'est le nom qu'elle donnoit à cet ange, les moyens de se montrer sous un jour encore plus avantageux. Je vis qu'elle possédoit un coeur sensible, beaucoup de bon sens, & sans paroître en tirer avantage elle ne laissa pas de dire, du ton le plus léger & sans la moindre affectation, les choses les plus spirituelles. Mon cher frere, elle sera ma femme, ou je ne me marierai jamais. Vous connoissez ma façon de penser à cet égard. Mon coeur vient enfin de rencontrer l'objet qu'il cherchoit depuis si longtems. Cette charmante personne est la fille de feu monsieur Burgerhart; elle est orpheline.
La digne & respectable veuve s'est trouvée forcée par ses malheureuses circonstances à prendre de jeunes demoiselles en pension, & elle est du nombre de celles qui logent actuellement chez elle. Il commençoit à pleuvoir, & nous restames sans nous en appercevoir jusqu'au moment où la bienséance exigeoit que nous pensassions à nous retirer. Cet adieu!.... Oh il n'y a que ceus qui savent aimer qui soient capables d'imaginer ce qu'il me fit éprouver. Je ne saurois plus penser à m'éloigner d'elle. Mais encore une fois, à qui destine-t-elle ces manchettes?

t'Huis komende ging ik, welhaast halven, aan tafel; maar, ik had geen honger. Ik draaide het zo behendig, dat ik op het artikel van de Thee kwam en sprak van, op speculatie, te kopen. 'Is er niet een koopman in Thee geweest, die Burgerhart heette, Vader? Ja Hendrik, dat was een braaf man, ik heb hem veelmaal op de Beurs gesproken; zy zeggen, dat zyne Dochter, een losse wilde meid, hare Tante, een zotte kwezel, daar zy by inwoonde, ontlopen is, en nu ergens, wat weet ik het, inwoont, by lieden daar veel losse knapen invliegen; zo zy 't verbruidt, zal 't my spyten, om hare brave ouders, en om de kleuter ook: ik heb ook nog groen koorn op 't veld'. [...]
Ik vrees alles. Ik vrees, dat zy in zulk een man, als ik ben, geen smaak zal hebben. Ik vrees, dat haar hart niet meer vry is. Ik vrees, met één woord, voor alles wat my dit Juweel zoude kunnen ontroven! Troost, raad, help my. Komen daar veele jonge Heren!.... ô Liefde, ô Liefde! hoe duur staat my myne voorleden koelheid; en echter zou ik myne rust te rug nemen voor deeze martelingen? om geen duizend Waerelden. Ik ben geheel de hare, doch altoos de broederlyke vriend van mynen besten Broeder. Schryf spoedig.

H. Edeling

Betje Wolff and Aagje Deken, *Historie van Mejuffrouw Sara Burgerhart* (1782), Edited by P.J. Buijnsters. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980, vol. I, p.204-206.

De retour à la maison, je me mis à table par contenance, n'ayant aucune envie de manger. Je fis tomber assez adroitement la conversation sur le commerce du thé; je demandai sans affectations s'il ne seroit pas avantageux d'en acheter par spéculation, & j'ajoutai: n'auriez-vous point connu autrefois, mon cher pere, un gros marchand de thé, qui se nommoit Burgerhart? – Oui mon fils, c'étoit un très-honnête homme, je lui ai parlé plusieurs fois à la Bourse. On dit que sa fille est une jeune étourdie qui demeuroit chez une tante, vieille & sotte bigotte, de la maison de laquelle elle s'est enfuie, & qu'elle loge actuellement chez une veuve, dont la maison est fréquentée par de jeunes étourdis. Je serois fâché, & par l'estime que j'ai conservée pour la mémoire de ses respectables parens, & pour elle-même, qu'elle se tournât au mal, car je suis pere & j'ai aussi des enfans. [...]
Je crains tout, je tremble qu'un homme comme moi ne puisse lui plaire; je redoute qu'elle n'ait déja disposé de son coeur. Je redoute en un mot tout ce qui pourroit m'enlever un bien si précieux. Donnez-moi des consolations, des conseils & des secours. *Sa maison est fréquentée par de jeunes étourdis.....* Amour! amour! que mon indifférence va me couter cher, & combien mon repos seroit préférable à ce nouveau martyre! Je serois cependant bien fâché d'y renoncer, rien au monde ne sauroit en tenir lieu. Je suis entiérement à elle, ce qui n'empêche pas que je ne sois toujours l'ami du meilleur des freres.
Répondez-moi promptement.

H. Edeling

Translation by Henri Rieu: *Histoire de Mademoiselle Sara Burgerhart,* Lausanne: François Grasset, 1787, vol. I. p.226-232.

III. Broader approaches in women's literary historiography

Louise Schleiner

Voicing and the subject: early modern women's strategies within discourse domains

As Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen notes in her introduction to *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*,[1] the profession of literary studies now needs 'an approach focused on the functionality of literature', in terms of both writing and reading. My own version of this approach, not always explicitly stated, has been to study *discourse domains* in the sense of recent theorists of cultural semiotics such as the Australians Gunther Kress and Robert Hodge.[2] They define such a domain as a circulation of writing and oral exchange in and around a particular institution or set of connected institutions. In the context of my usual studies, for example, this could be all the speech and writing circulating through the state church and the two universities in Jacobean England, as a closely interlinked set of institutions. (They were one domain because the main mission of the universities was to train clergymen, and in some measure to continue supporting them with supervision and scholarly resources, during their careers.) Some of the genres in this discourse domain would be sermons, lectures, biblical commentaries, polemic treatises, academic dramas and pageants, memorial and epideictic verse, and bureaucratic documents. As with most discourse domains, some of the genres within it can be considered literary, some not.

Elizabeth Weston's discourse domains in Bohemia

To switch to a different but contemporaneous context, the neo-Latin poet Elizabeth Weston, who was an *emigrée* Englishwoman living in Prague at the court of Rudolf II in the early 17th century, took part in at least three discourse domains. The first was exchanges within the aristocratic household, such as letters, occasional poems, oral games, and other pastimes – she lived in one for a while as a poor kinswoman, through her relative Thomas Kelley's marriage to a niece of Heinrich von Pisnitz, town chancellor of Most (or Brüx). The second domain that she took part in was court patronage with its genres of complimentary poems, dedications, financial documents, verse letters accompanying gifts or appealing for money, and so on. Weston, who surprised all acquaintances with her talent for poetry, was the step-daughter of the alchemist Edward Kelley. At the court of the alchemy-loving Rudolf, where Kelley had been

[1] *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.6-7, see also her contribution to the first part of this volume.
[2] For presentation of this concept see the introductory chapters of Kress/Hodge 1988 and Hodge 1990.

patronized by noblemen and courtiers as well as the emperor himself, she thus had a ready-made patronage network for her poetic appeals after her step-father died, leaving her and her mother destitute. And the third domain was that of genteel verse letters exchanged among university-educated scholars in various parts of Europe, including published books of friendship verse from such exchanges. Of course Weston was at best a marginal participant in the second and third of these discourse domains – she had barged into them. In the patronage and friendship verse, her oddity as a female poet – a *poetria* – is constantly noted in various men's praises of her. These laudatory recognitions of exceptionality act as markers of the exotic, in the sense of present-day post-colonial theorizing about exoticism as a strategy for managing dominated groups, or interlopers into a power structure. Weston, for her part, was not pleased at having her book of published poems, the *Parthenicon* (Prague, ca. 1607-1609), take a usual generic form for that third discourse domain, namely as a collection of verse letters to and from her various correspondents: in a handwritten note in the British Library copy, she complains that verses other than her own were included.

A discourse domain is of course a perilous beast to study, and beastly complicated. One needs many resources from text linguistics, genre study, feminist and psychoanalytic theory, political history, and neo-Marxist study of ideology, to mention a few. But when we study the writings of any given woman from the early modern period, we usually discover something about her that throws light on whatever discourse domain she managed to speak within. For example, with professional women-in-waiting like the Englishwomen Margaret Tyler, Isabella Whitney, or Aemilia Lanyer, who served as readers, translators, or singers in the reading-and-sewing circle around a great lady at home, we can view their typical female scene as a 'reading formation' in the sense of the Marxist theorist Tony Bennett – a 'formation' that included not only the people in question but also the texts addressed to such circles and emerging from them, as well as the practices or habits involved in that circulation.[3] One of these habits was, for instance, personalizing all reading, so that most texts coming into the circle were read aloud, somewhat as if they were letters addressed to the great lady. Such a 'formation' can be seen as one part of a given discourse domain.

In the case of Elizabeth Weston, as with most women of the time gaining a new voice, she needed particular strategies for bursting into the normally all-male discourse domains where she managed to speak. For patronage writing, one of her strategies was to adopt a kind of doubled persona: she often speaks as 'I and my mother', *ego cum matre*, or *socia cum genitrice*. Or sometimes the doubled image is evoked through grammatically more complex formations.

> Non abs te posco munera larga mihi.
> Ne miseram vidua patiaris matre puellam
> Quod queror, indigni mole perire mali.
> [I do not ask you for large gifts for me.
> That you not suffer a girl impoverished through her widowed mother
> To perish of unworthy trouble, this is what I ask.][4]

[3] Cf. Bennett 1990, p.105.
[4] From a poem to Adalbert Poppl von Lobkowitz, in Weston 1602, Sig. A_{4v}. I thank my husband Winfried Schleiner for help with this translation.

When I tried in a recent essay to explain how this device worked for her, I took a page from Mieke Bal's textual semiotics, namely the idea of a *focalizer subject*. That is, Weston's mother never gets to say anything in the poems, she is not a speaking subject, but nevertheless is often present as a focalizer subject. She is evoked as someone present, seeing and approving, though not speaking. As such she adds a third focus, a third perspective in the text, to those of speaker and implied reader or listener, supplying a touch of matronly respectability or chaperone effect. This device also gave the poetic speaker, as young woman, an odd aura of power, since she seemed able to stage-manage her own mother – to make her kneel when told to kneel, stand by when told to stand by, and so on. Such a technique is of course something happening at the surface of a text, at the level of what Janos Petöfi, in defining 'discourse', terms 'connexities' or the level of the 'co-textual'.[5] At the same time it is contextual-impacting on the social and institutional 'context' of the patronage discourse domain, as an innovation. It creates a new possibility there.

A model of subjectivity and social text, as aid for studying women's claiming of a voice

This analysis of a Weston strategy relates to some work I am currently doing on theories of the human subject, the voicing of particular subjectivity, and the subject as always constituted by gender norms and other ideological elements. Let me suggest a model for identifying the ideological loading of a speaking or writing 'subject', that 'someone' specific whom we seem to hear, coming across to us, as the source of a given text or utterance, once it has been completed. Kristeva calls this someone, abstractly, the enunciative position behind a text. Or one might say the enunciative subject. This is not any of the portrayed speaking subjects inside a text, such as narrators, speakers, and focalizers. Rather it is the apparent agency of the place behind the text where the text seems to be coming from. Such an enunciative subject always includes elements of socially constructed gender, among other ideological traits defining him or her, and it will be useful to find ways to profile what these are in particular texts, as functional within their discourse surroundings. One must have a sufficiently nuanced model of the 'subject' for this to become possible.

Scholars of women writers are already starting to move in the direction of such analysis. In a set of conference papers from 1992 edited, in 1997, by Kate Chedgzoy and others, contributors sometimes discuss writings by Tudor and Stuart women in terms of 'subjects' or 'subject positions'. Bronwen Price for example writes about the gendering of the internal subject positions (meaning the speakers) in some love lyrics by Aphra Behn.

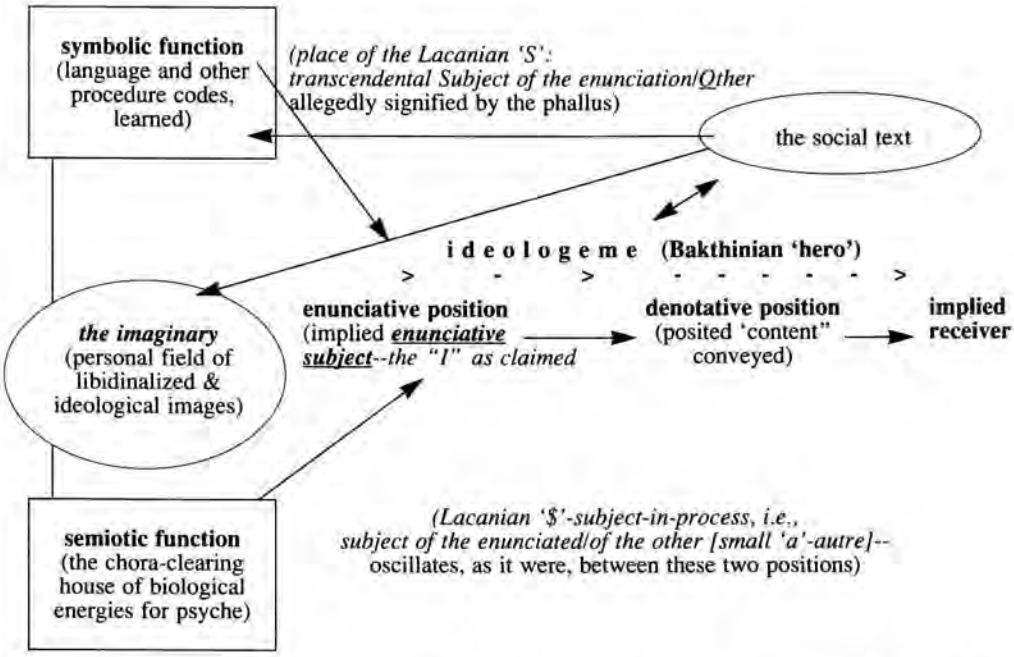
Price begins with a statement from a Behn preface: 'All I ask, is the Priviledge for my Masculine Part the Poet in me [...] to tread in the successful paths [of] my predecessors'.[6] Price explores the workings of the varied speaking voices or portrayed

[5] Cf. Sebeock et al. 1986.
[6] Price 1997, p.129.

speakers, some male, some female, in several highly erotic lyrics by Behn, and then speculates about what perspective is represented in and behind the poet's usage of these voices. In one, while a woman explicitly speaks, her voice does nothing but portray her accepting the passive conventional role of the seduced woman swept away by pleasure. She is being presented ironically, from the enunciative subject's viewpoint, even though no voice speaks but hers (a technique well developed much later in dramatic monologues such as Robert Browning's 'My Last Duchess', where the speaking duke, all unintentionally, shows himself to be a pathological dominator of his former wife). Another subjectivity is operative here, behind and beyond that of any of the discursive participants at the textual surface. A second lyric of Behn's shows a female speaker meditating on her lesbian attraction to a woman said to be like a 'lovely charming youth'. In yet another, a female omniscient narrator portrays a steamy sexual encounter of a man and woman, wherein the man after a while panics and cannot maintain his erection; the narrator then speaks in her own voice to say that she is the only person properly able to sympathize with the chagrined, disappointed woman. Price terms these various voices 'speaking subjects' and notes that, as much by their innuendoes and silences as by what they are given to say (about certain elements of the scenes), the lyrics 'require the reader to puzzle over various possible gender constructions' for their speakers, refusing to 'supply a stable meaning'.[7] This analysis suggests that one might want to look behind the portrayed speakers' voices for ways to recognize and profile the overall enunciative position from which such a lyric has been written.

It will not be a matter of looking for that old chimaera, the 'author's intention', rather of studying how a particular text works for particular kinds of readers. Along with Michael Steppat of Bayreuth University, I am working on a model for treating enunciative subjects in just this way. It is part of a more extensive effort to study the textual markings of ideology in early modern English theatre. It draws initially from Mikhail Bakhtin and Emile Benveniste, more centrally from Julia Kristeva's revised Lacanian view of how texts and utterances are produced, and beyond that from certain feminist film theorists, as well as Gayatri Spivak, Judith Butler, and Mieke Bal. My space here is too limited for even mentioning what we take from each of them. But the outlines of our model of subject and utterance can be seen in the diagram. In this model, Kristeva has revamped Lacan's view of subject and utterance into a more nuanced and gender-neutral account.[8] She has done away with the idea of a mythic feminine void pregnant with potential, out of which every utterance is phallicly thrust by the subject; she posits instead the gender-neutral 'semiotic function': this is the body's organizing site of biological energies, that makes them ready for psychic deployment through pulsations such as assertion-negation, tension-release, proprioception-rejection.[9] The contrasting side of the inner dialectic by which we make language and other kinds of meaning is what Lacan had called the symbolic

[7] Ibid., p.149.
[8] Jacques Lacan wrote about these matters in various, not always consistent ways. For a good account quoting and closely following Lacan's own texts and terms, see Bowie 1991.
[9] On these concepts see Kristeva 1980, as well as 1984.



order; Kristeva adopts this and terms it, however, the thetic or symbolic function, namely the individual's competence as a user of language and other codes learned from the surrounding society — including grammar, syntax, and strategies for innovation. Kristeva drew upon semiotics to recognize an enunciative position implied by each text or utterance as its origin place, behind which the dialectic of utterance production – the dialectic between the symbolic and the semiotic functions – has already happened, and from which the listener or reader hears an utterance or a text coming.

This is not the living, breathing writer or speaker as an intricately complex person, but rather the seeming someone from whom the particular text gives the impression of coming, *as it is heard or read.* I am using the term *enunciative subject* to mean the implied agent occupying the 'enunciative position' – the implied producer of some particular utterance as *evident* subject that has already emerged from the inner dialectic of the process of devising utterance (and thus fully deploys both the semiotic and the symbolic 'functions', which have interacted dialectically inside the person). We must remain aware that it was an internal dialectic that resulted in this *subject,* standing as it were with his or her feet in two spaces, that of the symbolic and that of the semiotic. In Kristeva's model, one can focus on the enunciative subject as definable by a reader or listener looking backward, back through the subject's own concrete utterance. It is a subject maintained in existence only as long as he or she has seemingly just finished speaking or writing, with the dialectic of his/her production already finished and in the past. Thus Kristeva provides a site in the modeling of meaning-circulation where we can recognize, can profile, the elements of ideology (including gender) that have operated within each utterance. This model can, with

further elaboration, prove useful for analyzing particular women's texts and their functioning within the discourse domains where women wrote and spoke, because it will help us to study how women overcame the psychic and social barriers that they were up against, in finding public voices.

To mention one example of how I have already worked with this concept in studying women writers (though it was not so carefully spelled out there) I argued in my book *Tudor and Stuart women writers* that Lady Mary Wroth, in her pastoral play *Love's victory*, manoeuvered her text into something being spoken by a quasi-male enunciative subject, one that Wroth constructed by setting up the male figure of 'Love', Eros, as a beneficent 'King of the mind,' to be the central agent of the action, then turning his agency over to a female enunciative subject instead, who is represented in the play by the nymph Sylvesta. That is, once Love has been posited as the tutelary god of the play and its celebration of erotic love as ultimate value, then the female leading character, Sylvesta, assumes his functions and enacts his agenda by stage-managing the love affairs of the other characters. Sylvesta is a figure of Wroth herself as active in the process of enunciating this particular text. (Of course, the enunciative subject of a text will not always be explicitly actorialized in this way.) If one sets out to recognize the enunciative subject behind the whole play, and analyzes the text in suitable ways so as to recognize its strategies with gender and other ideological elements, one can see that psychically, Wroth used this strategy for enabling herself to step into a position from which to write a play, a genre that in any discourse domain of the time called for a male enunciative subject. She sets up a 'king of the mind', then co-opts 'his' position and agency.

Conclusion

Habits of theoretical experimentation like mine may suggest part of an answer to one of the questions of our conference: should women be treated as a separate category of writers? In the sense of general study of discourse domains, I would say 'No', though in certain ways 'Yes'. That is, almost all the discourse domains in which early modern women took part involved male as well as female writers, indeed usually far more men than women, so of course the men must be studied along with the women, and vice versa. Even the domain of the 'great Lady's sewing circle' included some men, since patronized male writers would often be present in such a scene as performing *protégés*. But of course, when one asks how a particular woman could muster the psychic strength to speak, and what tactics she used to circumvent the bias heavily favouring male speakers that was installed at so many linguistic levels in the whole social text around her, then of course, one must look at strategies particular to the women. And sometimes scholars will use these as classifications for groups of women writers, as I once did in speaking about a group of English professional waiting women within the household sewing circle.

But certainly we can leave behind any notion that women writers are of interest only to a few specialist literary scholars concerned with feminist theory and bizarre instances. The women played active parts in the life and discourses of their cultures,

and there is much to be learned about how they did so, as writers of literary texts as well as other kinds of texts and oral inventions. I define prophetic and literary texts as those which are in the thick of the uptake and maintenance of value systems, in any given discourse domain. And women often had a hand in these. It has only been the 20th century practice of setting up male canons of semiotically dense texts that can sustain indefinite numbers of interpretations, for the purposes of a bourgeois educational system – only this practice has blocked our view of many fascinating women and their writings.

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Mary Trouille

'La femme mal mariée': Madame d'Epinay's challenge to *Julie* and *Emile*[1]

Louise d'Epinay (1726-1783) is remembered today as the wealthy patroness of Rousseau who lent him the 'Ermitage', where he wrote his best-selling novel *Julie, ou La nouvelle Héloïse* (1761). Among her contemporaries, she was best known as a friend of the Encyclopedists, whose home attracted some of the most brilliant minds of her time. However, d'Epinay was a gifted and prolific writer as well. Author of a remarkable autobiographical novel, *Histoire de Madame de Montbrillant* (published posthumously), she also wrote the *Conversations d'Emilie* (published in 1773), to which the Académie Française awarded a prestigious prize for its contributions to the field of education. She was also an important, albeit anonymous, contributor to the influential *Correspondance littéraire,* directed by Frédéric Grimm, her long-time friend and lover.[2]

In studying Rousseau's reception among his female contemporaries, I have found d'Epinay's response to him to be particularly important and complex. For not only was she his close personal friend (and later his bitter enemy); but, during the last thirty years of her life, she was engaged with him in an intense intellectual and literary rivalry that challenged his narrow vision of women's role and capabilities. In this paper, I examine d'Epinay's response to *Julie* and *Emile* and the challenge to Rousseau's sexual politics underlying her works.

Histoire de Madame de Montbrillant as a literary response and challenge to *Julie*

It was in the summer of 1756, during his solitary walks in the forest surrounding the 'Ermitage', that Rousseau began composing *Julie*. The following spring, Rousseau gave d'Epinay the first two sections of his novel to read. She recalls her first impressions of *Julie* in her own novel *Histoire de Madame de Montbrillant*, where she refers to Rousseau as René:

> After lunch, we read René's notebooks together. I was rather disappointed. The manuscript is beautifully written, but seems overdone to me and rather artificial. The characters don't speak naturally; it's always the author who speaks for them.[3]

[1] An earlier version of this article appeared in *Eighteenth-century life* 20 (1996), p.42-66.
[2] See Weinreb 1988, and 1993, p.143-57.
[3] D'Epinay 1951, vol.III, p.100; this work will be referred to hereafter as *Montbrillant*. Translations are mine (M.T.).

Although disappointed by Rousseau's novel, d'Epinay seems to have found it sufficiently inspiring to try writing a novel of her own. In a letter to her lover Volx (Grimm's alter ego in *Montbrillant*), d'Epinay's heroine Emilie confides:

> I just began writing a piece, and I'm quite satisfied with the beginning. It was René's novel that gave me the idea. When I have a few notebooks finished, I'll send them to you to see if they are worth continuing.[4]

Grimm was away on military duty, and Georges Roth (editor of the 1951 edition) contends that d'Epinay wrote the novel to amuse herself and her lover during his absence. The desire to fill the emotional void caused by Grimm's absence may also have been a motivating factor, as Elisabeth Badinter (editor of the 1989 edition) has suggested.[5] However, both these explanations trivialize the ambitiousness of d'Epinay's project. In my view, it was above all the desire to measure her creative talents against Rousseau's that prompted her to write her novel.

That *Montbrillant* was conceived as a response to *Julie* is made clear in the novel itself: 'René's book gave me the urge to write a novel in letter form', Emilie explains. 'It seems to me that one needs only a natural style and good taste in order to write well in this genre'.[6] The claim that Rousseau's style lacked naturalness and taste – and that d'Epinay herself could do better – is made more explicit in a subsequent letter to Volx: 'All his letters are so flowery, so overdone, that the style strikes me as cold and tiresome'.[7] D'Epinay's literary rivalry with Rousseau is expressed most clearly in a letter from Volx to Emilie, in which he conveys his initial reaction to her novel. 'It's a masterpiece', he declares:

> If you take my advice, you won't show this work to anyone until it is finished; for your writing might become constrained, your style less natural if you worried about your readers. Look upon your work as a monument reserved for yourself alone, and you will produce a work worthy of a woman of genius [...] As for René, if you have shown him any of this work, I predict trouble ahead. His judgment is too keen for him not to sense the huge difference between your Sophie and his boring, pedantic heroine.[8]

Commenting on this passage, Roth writes: 'The author makes no show of false modesty. She ascribes to Grimm's pen the same enthusiastic praise for her writing later expressed by Sainte-Beuve and the Goncourts'.[9]

D'Epinay's criticisms of Rousseau's novel parallel those made by other literary critics – Voltaire and Fréron, director of the *Année littéraire* –, who found Julie's long letters redundant, didactic, and often boring. Casting Volx in the role of omniscient literary critic, d'Epinay echoes these criticisms of *Julie* and claims to have avoided these problems in her own novel. Volx is especially impressed by the

[4] Ibid., vol.III, p.131.
[5] See Roth in d'Epinay 1951, vol.III, p.131, n.4, and Badinter 1983, p.268-76.
[6] D'Epinay 1951, vol.III, p.118.
[7] Ibid.
[8] The Sophie referred to here is Sophie de Rambure, the heroine of the novel Emilie is writing and heroine of the novel that d'Epinay herself began writing before beginning *Montbrillant*.
[9] D'Epinay 1951, vol.III, p.171-72.

naturalness, realism, and spontaneity of her style. Contrary to Rousseau, who complained that writing was often a difficult process for him, requiring constant revisions, d'Epinay underlined the ease, rapidity, and pleasure with which she wrote. Finally, in contrast to Rousseau's 'cold and tiresome style', Volx praises Emilie's ability to hold her reader's interest. 'Once I started your book, I couldn't put it down. At two in the morning, I was still reading'.[10] Volx especially praises the vividness of her character portrayals and the liveliness of her dialogue: 'Your portrait of Beauval is a masterpiece. Nothing could be truer to life, nor more delicate and refined'.[11] And later: 'Your work is truly a masterpiece and deserves to be published'.[12]

What is most striking about d'Epinay's self-appraisals as a writer is the recurrence of the label *chef-d'œuvre*, which she applies to her work more frequently than the conventions of modesty would seem to permit, with such frequency in fact that the repetition has an almost incantatory effect – as if by repeating the claim she could make it come true. And indeed, the judgment of 19th-century critics such as Sainte-Beuve and the Goncourts seems to vindicate d'Epinay's unwavering faith in her literary talents.

Ignoring Volx's instructions, Emilie does show her novel to 'René' and to another friend, who express quite different reactions to her work:

> René gave me many compliments, but Monsieur de Beauval said the style was too familiar and the overall structure very weak. I felt that what I had written was better than he thought, yet that it didn't deserve all the praise René had given it. I was even tempted to interpret René's admiration simply as surprise that my work wasn't as bad as he expected.[13]

René's praise for Emilie's writing – praise which she suspects to be ambivalent and insincere – presents an ironic contrast to Rousseau's satiric and entirely negative judgment of d'Epinay's literary efforts in the *Confessions*.[14] On the other hand, Beauval's remark that Emilie's novel was structurally weak and her style too familiar recalls criticisms made not of d'Epinay's novel, but of Rousseau's. Emilie is perplexed by these contradictory appraisals of her work, but Volx quickly reassures her in his next letter: 'What you tell me about the various appraisals of your work is quite amusing. Have confidence in my good opinion of it and in your own, and I promise you that the public will agree with us in time'.[15] Given d'Epinay's observations in her novel concerning the strong prejudices against women writers – 'Few

[10] D'Epinay 1951, vol.III, p.171.
[11] Ibid., p.124.
[12] Ibid., p.163.
[13] Ibid., p.174.
[14] In the *Confessions*, Rousseau quips: 'She decided to try her hand at literature and dabbled at writing novels, letters, comedies, short stories, and other such rubbish. But what amused her most was not so much to write them as to read them; and if she managed to scribble out two or three pages at a time, she insisted on finding at least two or three indulgent listeners with whom to share this huge production.' (Rousseau 1961, vol.I, p.411). This passage reflects a deliberate attempt to ridicule d'Epinay as an author and to trivialize her work. On a deeper level, Rousseau's satiric portrait of d'Epinay in the *Confessions* reflects the anxiety and rage generated by his financial dependence on her and by the threat she posed to him both as a woman and as a writer.
[15] D'Epinay 1951, vol.III, p.196.

people are willing to acknowledge their talent, and many are apt to accuse them of literary pretensions'[16] – this unabashed expression of self-confidence constitutes a bold challenge to the literary and social conventions of the period.

Histoire de Madame de Montbrillant as an ideological challenge to *Julie*

Let us now turn to the more complex issue of how d'Epinay's novel responds to Rousseau's on an ideological level. For not only is *Montbrillant* an eloquent response to the repression of female desire underlying Rousseau's novel. It also reflects the strivings of a woman writer to create within the confines of male-dominated novelistic genres – the aristocratic, worldly novel (best represented by Duclos's works)[17] and the bourgeois novel epitomized by Rousseau's *Julie* – a *roman de femme* in which the experiences and dilemmas of women might be presented in a more authentic manner, in which their grievances and longings could be expressed from within, rather than viewed from the outside through the refractive lens of male desire and self-interest.

Through its detailed description of d'Epinay's unhappy marriage, *Montbrillant* illustrates the painful dilemma of *la femme mal mariée* in 18th-century French society. Because of her upbringing, and especially her mother's influence, Louise d'Epinay fervently believed in the Christian ideal of conjugal fidelity and the newly evolving bourgeois ideal of domesticity that together were to find their most powerful expression in Rousseau's *Julie*. Her husband, on the other hand, belonged to the generation of financiers of the *haute bourgeoisie* who attempted to rival the lifestyle of the French court. Along with other aristocratic values, he had adopted the conception of marriage prevalent among the court nobility, who accepted and even expected infidelity on the part of both spouses. The incompatibility of the young couple's views on marriage and family life soon became evident through her husband's flagrant love affairs, his virtual abandonment of his family, his financial irresponsibility, and his thwarting of Louise's desire to breastfeed their children and to educate them at home. All these obstacles to domestic happiness, painstakingly described in her novel, challenge the idealized view of marriage presented in *Julie*.

In an effort to fill the emotional void created by the failure of her marriage, d'Epinay explored the various outlets available to married women of her age and class, with illuminating and sometimes painful results. In *Montbrillant*, she records her experiences at length, providing an inside view of the everyday lives of upper-class women of her period and valuable insight into the problems and frustrations they faced. Nearly all the options explored by d'Epinay in her life and later in her

[16] Ibid., p.141.

[17] See in particular Duclos's *Confessions du comte de* *** (1742) and his *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des mœurs* (1751), which d'Epinay read and greatly admired. Both works are culminations of the *roman aristocratique et mondain*, which were to exert considerable influence on the composition of d'Epinay's own novel. For further discussion of Duclos's literary influence on d'Epinay, see Roth's introduction to d'Epinay 1951, vol.I, p.xvi.

novel are also presented in *Julie*, either as acceptable or unacceptable outlets for female energies. However, the options Rousseau considers most appropriate for respectable married women – dedication to children and husband, close friendships with women, and religious devotion – are precisely the ones toward which d'Epinay expresses the most ambivalence. On the other hand, the options criticized most strongly by Rousseau – extra-marital affairs and participation in literary and intellectual activities – are the very ones d'Epinay comes to view as the most fulfilling. In this way, *Montbrillant* challenges the feminine ideals of self-effacement and self-sacrifice advocated in *Julie*. By refusing to deny her ambitions and desires in her self-portrayal, d'Epinay provides a far more realistic view of the problems and tensions experienced by her female contemporaries and, in so doing, points to the distortions and blind spots in Rousseau's male-centred view of women. In many ways, *Montbrillant* can be read as a survival manual for 18th-century women in their struggle to find happiness and self-fulfilment despite woefully inadequate educations, repressive social conventions, unhappy, indissoluble marriages, and all the traps and contradictions of the double standard.

In her novel, d'Epinay attempts to justify her liaison with her first lover by evoking her husband's repeated infidelities, her earnest attempts to save their marriage, the impossibility of divorce, and above all the genuineness of her love. The belief that adultery is justified in a case like hers, that a woman has the right to search for love outside an unhappy marriage, gradually becomes the core of a personal morality distinct from both the worldly morality of her husband and the Christian morality of her mother. This credo sustains Emilie through the pain and humiliation caused by her lover's gradual abandonment of her for other women. She senses that happiness would still be possible for her if only she could find some worthier object for her affection.

Before Volx appears on the scene to console her for her first lover's betrayal, Emilie undergoes a long period of emotional desolation similar to what she experienced with her husband, but rendered more painful by her own sense of remorse and humiliation. Under her mother's guidance, Emilie seems to undergo a religious conversion (not unlike Julie's) and resolves to lead a pious, retired life. However, her confessor senses that Emilie's sudden wish to renounce the world is neither genuine nor healthy. When he learns that her resolution has been prompted by an unhappy love affair, he wisely observes: 'You are in the same situation as any unhappily married but respectable woman who still feels a need for love. God becomes the focus of a restless sensibility difficult to restrain. Are you prepared to lead a life of hypocrisy that can never satisfy your needs?'[18] The priest's criticism of false conversions and of religious hypocrisy can be read as a critique of Julie's conversion experience and of her efforts to sublimate her desire for Saint-Preux through religious pietism. Emilie's realization that it is not God she desires, but a lover, poses a direct challenge to the ideals of self-sacrifice and religious exaltation advocated in Rousseau's novel. Rejecting the masochistic martyrdom that Julie embraces, Emilie resolves to seek the fulfilment of her desires not in heaven, but on earth.

[18] D'Epinay 1951, vol.II, p.371-72.

D'Epinay's response to Rousseau's vision of the ideal mother

D'Epinay's strongest challenge to Rousseau in *Montbrillant* lies in her realistic portrayal of pregnancy, motherhood, and family life – a view that contrasts sharply with the idealized vision of domesticity presented in Rousseau's *Julie* and in Book I of *Emile ou de l'éducation* (1762). She expresses considerable ambivalence toward motherhood; yet she is highly critical of the social conventions and prejudices of her period that prevented the formation of strong family bonds.

When she becomes pregnant after three months of marriage, Emilie's first reaction is irritation that this will prevent her from accompanying her husband on his inspections as *fermier général*. She complains of nausea, depression, and general lassitude – banal symptoms from everyday life that never seem to enter Julie's ethereal realm of existence. After learning of her husband's infidelity, she is so despondent that she comes to resent the 'creature' within her that forces her to go on living. As the term of her pregnancy draws near, she is obsessed with the fear that she will die in childbirth or of childbed fever, as had a number of her friends.[19]

To calm her fears, a family friend encourages her to nurse her child, insisting that breastfeeding would help protect her from childbed fever and strengthen the baby's health as well. Emilie eagerly seizes upon this plan, but her mother opposes it, fearing both for her daughter's health and for her reputation. Her mother finally agrees to the plan, as does her father-in-law, providing that Emilie's doctor and husband consent to it. Encouraged by her doctor's support, Emile dutifully writes to her husband in the hope of gaining his approval. However, his callous reply shatters her hopes:

> You, nurse your child? I thought I'd die laughing [...] Do you think I'd ever consent to such a ridiculous idea? Whatever the advice of the midwives and doctors may be, this plan is completely out of the question [...] What satisfaction can one possibly get from breastfeeding a child?[20]

The arguments presented against maternal nursing by Emilie's husband and mother provide a realistic picture of the often insurmountable prejudices and obstacles faced by middle- and upper-class women who wished to breastfeed their children. Her experience demonstrates what little voice women had even in the most important – and most personal – decisions affecting their lives. The arguments made in *Montbrillant* in favour of maternal breastfeeding and against the tyranny of social conventions are far more eloquent than those made in *Emile*, precisely because d'Epinay describes in realistic detail her own painful experiences. The rather glib advice Rousseau offers in *Emile* seems highly unrealistic and impractical in light of the attitudes described so vividly in *Montbrillant*.

Contrary to Emilie's expectations, her delivery and recovery go well. Yet her joy is clouded by her mother's choice of a wet-nurse who lives thirty miles away. Not

[19] In her *Souvenirs*, Madame d'Allard (d'Epinay's granddaughter) notes that in d'Epinay's circle of friends, twelve died of childbed fever before the age of 25. Cited in d'Epinay 1951, vol.I, p.286, n.1.
[20] D'Epinay 1951, vol.I, p.295.

only is Emilie prevented from nursing her son, but even from seeing him more than once or twice a week, which hardly makes for healthy family relations.

Later in her novel, d'Epinay recalls how her husband constantly thwarted her plans and desires concerning the upbringing and education of their son and daughter. He ignores her objections to the mediocre tutor he chooses for their son, mocks the ambitiousness of the studies she proposes, and objects to the low priority she gives to *les arts d'agrément* (music, drawing, dance, etc.). His irresponsibility as a parent and his refusal to adopt his wife's progressive plan for their children's education contrast sharply with the Wolmars' affectionate cooperation in such matters in Rousseau's *Julie*. By illustrating the difficulties faced by women married to men whose views they do not share or respect, d'Epinay's novel challenges the idyllic view of marriage and parenthood presented in *Julie*.

In *Montbrillant*, d'Epinay not only describes her frustrations and tribulations as a mother, but is surprisingly candid in expressing the ambivalence she feels toward her children. Despite her efforts to devote herself to her young children following her mother's advice, she openly admits that they cannot console her for the loss of her husband's affections. Emilie's candid recognition of her ambivalence toward motherhood contrasts with the suppression of maternal ambivalence in *Julie*. Whereas Julie pretends to fill the emotional void within her by playing the perfect mother, refusing to admit until her death that Saint-Preux had always been the first object of her affections, Emilie openly expresses her conviction that children cannot fully satisfy a woman's need for love and companionship.

In a clever subversion of the Rousseauian ideal of domesticity, Emilie uses her children's education as a pretext to invite her lover to take up residence at her country estate. Later, he shares these tutorial duties with Volx (her second lover) in an amusing *ménage à trois*, from which Emilie's husband is significantly absent. The parallels are of course striking with Julie's plan to keep Saint-Preux at Clarens as her son's tutor. Through her heroine, d'Epinay both mimics and mocks Julie's exemplary motherhood.

In *Montbrillant*, d'Epinay repeatedly expresses guilt and frustration for not having lived up to the ideals of motherhood and domesticity she herself espoused. These guilt feelings are especially apparent in a conversation between Emilie and her mother, who chides her for neglecting her maternal duties:

> Now is the time to sow the seeds of a good upbringing. You must study your children's inclinations and character, and be with them all the time [...] It is not by playing music, acting in comedies, and engaging in other frivolous activities that you will prepare yourself for your new responsibilities or inspire your children with love for their own duties. Destined to serve as an example, a mother must be very scrupulous in all aspects of her behaviour.[21]

This idealized view of the mother's crucial role as educator and moral exemplar for her children closely parallels the view presented by Rousseau in *Julie* and *Emile*. What distinguishes d'Epinay's novel from both these works is her effort to articulate

[21] Ibid., vol.I. p.547-48.

the complexities of such issues as mother-child relations, maternal breastfeeding, the choice between home-schooling and boarding-school education, and women's participation in the broader cultural sphere beyond the home. By presenting opposing viewpoints on these issues and insights drawn from her own experience, d'Epinay offers a much richer and more nuanced view of the obstacles encountered by mothers who sought to follow Rousseau's teachings yet, at the same time, to fulfil their own needs and desires as women.

As her children grow older, Emilie begins to find great pleasure in their company.[22] Yet her joy as a mother is clouded by the financial uncertainty of their situation and by her son's increasingly marked resemblance to his father. D'Epinay's foreboding concerning her son turned out to be only too well justified, for by the age of twenty-three, he had accumulated so many gambling debts that his parents had him imprisoned for six months. Her friend Galiani tried to console her by pointing to the inexorable influence of heredity: 'Were you ever crazy enough to take Rousseau and his Emile seriously? Did you ever really believe that education [...] can change the way people act and think? If so, then take a wolf and turn it into a dog if you can'.[23]

A year later, in a letter to Diderot, d'Epinay again evoked Rousseau's theories of education as she bitterly reflected on her feelings of failure as a mother:

> The claim that education can somehow be perfected reminds me of a conversation I had fifteen years ago with Jean-Jacques [...] He maintained that, by nature, parents are ill-suited to raise their children. I lacked experience in those days and was filled with illusions. I found his opinion revolting. But my illusions are shattered and I admit now that he was right.[24]

Rather than find fault with Rousseau's theories for the failure of her son's education, d'Epinay blamed her own naïveté in believing she could overcome her son's heredity and the negative influence of her husband's example. In her discouragement, she even began to agree with Rousseau's claim that parents are ill-equipped to raise children and would do better to send them away to state boarding schools. Yet this claim – which Rousseau made no doubt to defend the abandonment of his own children and which he later developed in his *Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne* – is in complete contradiction with the pedagogical theories and the ideal of enlightened motherhood he presents in *Julie* and *Emile*.[25] At first, d'Epinay failed to recognize this contradiction and found herself trapped within it. However, in her *Conversations d'Emilie*, as we shall see, she explores the contradictions in Rousseau's views on education, as well as the ambivalence they shared toward parenthood.

[22] 'I sent all my guests away tonight and am going with my children to dine with my mother,' Emilie writes to Volx. 'You can't imagine the children's joy or the pleasure it brings me. I wouldn't give up this evening for many others that might seem more appealing. Children bring a continual source of happiness that can never be enjoyed enough' (D'Epinay 1951, vol.III, p.93).

[23] Letter from Galiani to Madame d'Epinay, 19 Jan. 1771, in Galiani/d'Epinay 1993, p.36.

[24] Letter from Madame d'Epinay to Diderot, Jan. 1772, in Diderot 1970, vol.XII, p.29-30.

[25] The anti-family undercurrents in Rousseau's thought are particularly apparent in his *Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne*, (1772) as well as in his *Discours sur l'économie politique* (1775).

Emilie vs. Emile: d'Epinay's views on women's education

Both d'Epinay's autobiographical writings and her pedagogical works can be read as a response to Rousseau's views on female education – particularly to the narrow views set forth in Book v of *Emile*. In her autobiographical writings, d'Epinay carefully retraces and criticizes the upbringing she received as a child, which was not unlike the education outlined by Rousseau for Emile's future wife Sophie. 'I'm very ignorant', she confides. 'My entire education was limited to cultivating female accomplishments and to becoming adept in the art of sophistry.'[26]

In the early years of her marriage, d'Epinay claims to have been primarily motivated in her studies by the desire to be better prepared to raise and educate her children. Soon, however, she came to view study as an end in itself – as a way of becoming more self-sufficient, a source of consolation and pleasure, and a resource against dissipation and boredom. Her view of women scholars was not without ambivalence, however. In a letter to Galiani, she stressed the risks and obstacles that women scholars faced: the danger of neglecting their primary duties as wives and mothers, of being ridiculed for displaying pretensions to learning, and of trying to pursue studies too complex or otherwise inappropriate for their sex – or that they were unable to apply in any useful manner.[27] Yet she also made it clear that the gender hierarchy she was describing stemmed not from natural differences between the sexes, but from differences in social conditioning and inequalities in education. By underlining the complex network of social and educational constraints that prevented women from developing their full potential, d'Epinay implicitly challenged the naturalist-traditionalist view of women epitomized in Rousseau's *Emile*.

To help women provide a sounder education for themselves and their daughters, d'Epinay composed and published her *Conversations d'Emilie*, a series of dialogues between a mother and child patterned after conversations with her granddaughter, who lived with her from 1769 until d'Epinay's death in 1782. Spanning a period of five years beginning when the child was five, the conversations provide detailed practical advice concerning the methods and materials to be used in the upbringing and instruction of girls at home by their mothers. According to Badinter, d'Epinay wrote the *Conversations* to reconcile her aspirations and guilt feelings as a mother with her ambitions as a writer. However, in my view, she composed this work above all as a response and challenge to *Emile*.

In the *Conversations d'Emilie*, d'Epinay points to four major shortcomings in *Emile*, which she strove to overcome in her own work. In her preface, she questions the practical value of abstract theoretical formulations and pedagogical systems in works such as Rousseau's. 'In the field of education, as in most other fields, general precepts are of little use', she asserts. 'By nature, they are too vague to indicate any precise course of action; in fact it's not unusual to see people who preach the same maxims following entirely opposite paths'.[28]

[26] 'Mon Portrait', in d'Epinay 1869, vol.II, p.5.
[27] Letter from Madame d'Epinay to Galiani, 20 Jan. 1771, in Galiani, *Correspondance*, ed. Perey and Maugras, vol.I, p.349. Subsequent quotations from this letter are from this same edition, vol.I, p.347-49.
[28] D'Epinay 1783, vol.I, p.VII.

Second, d'Epinay underlines the fact that her own approach to education was drawn from her daily experience as the mother and educator of real children, which enabled her to join theory with practice and to gear her methods and goals to the real world. D'Epinay's own experience as a mother and grandmother made her wary of pedagogical treatises written by men like Rousseau who never raised children of their own. Her pupil's active involvement in determining what methods and materials were most effective presents a sharp contrast to *Emile*, where pupils are mere puppets in the hands of an omniscient tutor.

A third shortcoming of *Emile* that d'Epinay strove to avoid was Rousseau's preachy tone, 'that imperative, didactic tone which people in a position of authority tend to adopt'.[29] Instead of an abstract pedagogical treatise thinly disguised as a novel, she offered her readers lively conversations drawn from real life, in which theory and practice, style and content, were perfectly fused. Her insistence on the need for confidence and mutual respect between educator and child contrasts with the tyrannical control exercised over Emile by his tutor.

It was above all the stultifying education traditionally given to women – and epitomized in the education prescribed for Sophie in *Emile* – that d'Epinay challenged in the *Conversations*. 'I would not venture to set limits for what our sex can or cannot learn', she declared. 'When I was a child, girls usually were not taught much of anything. People never took our minds seriously and carefully avoided any kind of real instruction'.[30] While Rousseau's perspective was undeniably male-centred in the education he proposed for Sophie, the view of female education presented in the *Conversations d'Emilie* is strikingly feminocentric. D'Epinay was not interested in raising a Sophie, whose main purpose in life was to please her husband and to submit to his whims, but rather an intelligent, autonomous woman capable of finding happiness and fulfilment in herself.

Unlike Rousseau's Sophie, Emilie was taught to read and write before the age of five and, by the age of ten, had been introduced to a broad range of subjects following a plan of studies quite ambitious for the period. However, the true originality of the *Conversations d'Emilie* lies less in the plan or method of studies it proposed (which in fact resembled the more enlightened educations given to boys of the period) than in the self-confidence and self-sufficiency it aimed to foster in women.

Contrary to Rousseau's assertions in Book v of *Emile*, d'Epinay affirms the intellectual equality of women and their right to an equal education. She insists that the intellectual development of women is essential to their happiness and well-being. In contrast to the blind submission to authority instilled in Rousseau's Sophie, d'Epinay encourages her granddaughter to think for herself. Yet ever conscious of the outer constraints placed on women by the society of her period, d'Epinay seeks to give Emilie an education that balances this sense of inner freedom and critical judgment with respect for social roles and conventions.

In the final paragraphs of the *Conversations d'Emilie*, d'Epinay addresses the crucial question left unresolved by Rousseau concerning the relative merits of public

[29] Ibid., vol.I, p.vi.
[30] Ibid., vol.I, p.442-43.

education (or boarding-school educations) as opposed to the education of children by their parents at home. She alludes repeatedly to Rousseau as her 'censor', who favours certain pedagogical views and methods that young Emilie in turn criticizes and ridicules: 'It seems to me, Maman, that your censor approves or disapproves of many things'.[31] After poking fun at Rousseau's views concerning the dangers of *'une culture trop hâtive'* – education that he claims is botched by introducing subjects too early – d'Epinay returns to the choice between public education and home-schooling: 'My censor claims that a gardener who has only a single plant to take care of would run the risk of hampering its growth by too much attention; whereas if he were obliged to divide his time among a certain number of different plants, this danger would be avoided'. To which Emilie replies: 'Goodness, Maman, your censor is starting to annoy me with all his talk about gardeners'![32] She considers that she is an old chatterbox who will spoil our conversation if we let him go on preaching at us'.[33] Yet d'Epinay then surprises her granddaughter (and her readers) by offering a series of forceful arguments in favour of public education:

> One of the key advantages of a republican form of government is the possibility it provides of directly influencing the character of its people, of showing them their individual worth, which they might not have realized otherwise [...] Good public schools follow the republican model and offer the same advantages to their students. The instruction they provide is designed to enhance each student's abilities and talents [...] There, the students' individual efforts and talents [...] determine their success and rank.[34]

This glowing tribute to public education seems strangely out of place at the end of a work ostensibly devoted to promoting progressive home-schooling for girls. However, d'Epinay fully recognized the disadvantages of educating children at home – particularly the danger of spoiling them with too much attention, the lack of social interaction and of healthy competition with other students, and the risk of inferior methods and materials due to parental inexperience or ineptitude. It was only because the boarding schools and convent educations then available for girls presented even greater problems that d'Epinay chose to educate her granddaughter at home: 'After considerable uncertainty, I opted for the disadvantages of a private education at home, despite all its faults, to those of a public education which I could neither approve nor correct'.[35] Referring again to her censor, she maintains that 'as soon as he establishes a public school that follows his own principles, I will be relieved of a great burden, and Emilie will be the first to prove the innumerable advantages of so desirable an institution'.[36] In this open-ended conclusion, d'Epinay was responding to the national education plan proposed by Rousseau to the government of Poland. According to this plan, public education would be exclusively reserved for males, while girls would be relegated to the home to train them for their role as housewives

[31] Ibid., vol.II, p.457.
[32] Ibid., vol.II, p.462.
[33] Ibid., vol.II, p.458.
[34] Ibid., vol.II, p.460-61.
[35] Ibid., vol.II, p.464.
[36] Ibid., vol.II, p.458.

and mothers. In her conditional support for public education, d'Epinay points to the contradictions inherent in Rousseau's so-called republican plan, which served only to reinforce male-domination by continuing to exclude women from the public sphere.

With the passage of time, d'Epinay gradually changed from an enthusiastic admirer of Rousseau into a resisting reader and protesting writer. Drawing on her experiences as a wife and mother, daughter and lover, and responding to the powerful impulse of her talents and ambitions, she came to view his limited vision of female destiny with increasing ambivalence. By engaging in an overt literary rivalry with the author of *Julie* and *Emile*, who epitomized all the traditional prejudices against women authors, d'Epinay both proclaimed and concretized her challenge to the male-dominated literary establishment.

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Women readers romancing the South Seas: Mary Russell Mitford's *Christina*

'The possibility of reading', wrote Paul de Man, 'can never be taken for granted. It is an act of understanding that can never be observed, nor in any way prescribed or verified'.[1] The history of women's reading is inseparable from the history of women's writing, but its subject matter, as De Man intimates, is far more elusive. I wish here to outline some of the problems raised by this elusiveness, and to show how these problems are complicated by our own desires and projections when it comes to that simultaneous site of prohibition and censorship, of liberation and imagination, that is the site of reading. In particular, I want to consider how one assesses one's engagement with a text, and whether the choice, in reading, is between – as Jonathan Culler would have it – an affective or a cognitive response, or whether the rules of emotional engagement are not somewhat more complex.[2] I shall focus my observations on a particular case study, looking at the early 19th-century English writer Mary Mitford, and, especially, her narrative poem of 1811, *Christina, or the maid of the South Seas*.

To read is to enter into a dialogue, in which there is the possibility of transformation on both sides: transformation of the words on the page into meanings generated through the discursive positioning of the reader, and transformation of a reader prompted into action, stimulated into thought, made aware of possibilities beyond her immediate field of experience.[3] Reading is both a means of developing subjectivity, and of consolidating social relations, whether these involve orthodox positions towards family and home, or lead to bonding in oppression or anger or shared forms of desire. Moreover, discussing the woman reader entails a further oscillation beyond the individual versus commonality axis: it involves examining how – I borrow Judith Butler's familiar terms – because

> gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities [...] it becomes impossible to separate out 'gender'

[1] De Man 1983, p.107.
[2] See Culler 1983, p.39. The whole of the first section of this work (p.31-83) provoked some useful questions about reading, and about women readers in particular.
[3] On the issue of reading as dialogue, and the particular implications of this in relation to women's reading, see Kaplan 1996, especially p.7-19.

from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained.[4]

Throughout the history of print culture, it is easy enough to trace dominant attitudes towards women as readers, whether in spiritual or secular contexts. In turn, these need to be located within further, material conditions: records of women's libraries, accounts of reading that are found in letters, diaries, marginalia. Such individual testimonies are themselves frequently constructed in response or relation to prevalent views concerning the practice of reading, and this has frequently helped to ensure that for women, reading is something much more liable to self-conscious interrogation than is the case for men. Instantly, of course, consumption and production are united. As woman reader formulates her response, woman reader becomes woman writer: inevitably, in considering records of affective reactions, we re-enter the realm of the textual. What I want to consider in more detail is how we might go about discussing woman as reader when the subject-matter is not self-referential, and when the burden of hypothesis – about how a woman might be positioned by a text which at least appears targeted at a woman readership – falls on the later historian and critic.

Mary Mitford is a particularly interesting writer to examine in this respect, since her career became shaped by a need to write for profit, yet she balanced a shrewd awareness of a market, and the probable tastes of women readers, with literary aspirations drawn from her own very varied reading. Born in 1786, she was initially educated at home, in Hampshire, but when she was ten she was in a position to pay for her own schooling – she won the lottery. Her father, though trained as a doctor, never worked: a gambler, he quickly spent his way through his daughter's money. Mitford published her first book, *Miscellaneous poems,* in 1811: an eclectic collection. She almost immediately started work on a longer narrative, *Christina.* By the time it was ready for publication, in 1811, her father had been in debtor's prison, and her correspondence shows that financial negotiations with publishers had come to matter far more than she had originally anticipated. This situation never improved, and around 1820, Mitford started to write for money in earnest. Initially, she turned to writing plays,[5] resisting taking up the obvious chance of profit that novel writing might offer, holding back both out of apprehension at her own ability at fiction, and, perhaps even more clearly, out of her distaste at feeding the demands of a popular readership. 'I shall be driven to spinning out wretched trash of novels', she writes in a letter of 1825: 'I know it – & I know how utterly contemptible they will be – & how completely I shall sink to the level of the Minerva Press'.[6] She found a niche in the market which suited her: prose sketches of village life – a kind of gossipy, discursive journalism, making copy out of the domestic, they were drawn together in five volumes as *Our village* (1824-32) and followed by similar works *(Belford Regis,* 1834;

[4] Butler 1990, p.3.

[5] Mitford decided on this course of action after having heard that C.E. Walker's historical drama *Wallace* had made several hundred pounds for its unknown author, but although *Julian, Foscari, Rienzi* and *Charles the First* – the Byron/Shelley influence is obvious – were all accepted at London's two major theatres, only the first of these was performed.

[6] Mary Mitford to Thomas Noon Talfourd, 29 July 1825: letter in John Rylands Library, Manchester, quoted in Coles 1957, p.38.

Country stories, 1837). P.D. Edwards, in his *Idyllic realism from Mary Russell Mitford to Hardy,* convincingly maintains that Mitford's 'absorption in humble rural life, and her predilection for images of social harmony and stories of personal and social reconciliation, helped open up one of the richest and most distinctive veins of Victorian fiction'.[7] Driven by her father's debts, she continued to produce work for a newly commercialized female readership, supplying poetry and prose to anthologies, keepsake books and almanacs.[8]

I want, however, to return to *Christina,* a work balanced on the cusp between Mitford writing to explore her own interests, and producing a text with at least one eye on its possible audience. This four-book poem takes as its starting point the Mutiny on the Bounty, and the way of life which became established on Pitcairn Island subsequent to the settling there of a number of the mutineers, their Tahitian wives, and male Tahitian servants.[9] It is a fanciful development of the events of 1808, when an American ship, the *Topaz,* briefly landed at Pitcairn, thus uncovering the hiding place of those mutineers who were still alive, and their descendants. Mitford knew of this discovery from an account published in the *Quarterly review* in 1810, which drew on the logbook of the *Topaz*'s Captain Folger, and also from conversations with James Burney – Fanny Burney's brother – who had talked with those who had sailed on the ship, and who had first-hand knowledge of the South Seas, having travelled there with Cook on his second and third voyages.[10] In reality, Folger went ashore only briefly, after what must have been a surreal encounter with an English-speaking, native-looking young man in a canoe, who proved to be Friday October Christian, son of Fletcher Christian, the leader of the mutineers, and his wife Mauatua. In Mitford's poem, however, both Folger – rechristened Seymour – and an English sailor, Henry, land: their host is a young chief called Hubert, son of the one remaining white survivor. Christian's offspring in the poem is Christina, figured as somewhere between a timid child of nature and a classical nymph, mourning gracefully over the urn that contains the remains of her mother. Significantly, there is no visual hint of miscegenation, despite the maternal parentage:

> The towering youth, the graceful maid,
> Were both in Indian garb array'd;
> But not a trace of Indian feature
> Appear'd in either glorious creature:
> For his warm blood as brightly glow'd

[7] Edwards 1988, p.29.

[8] For keepsake annuals, see Booth 1938, Renier 1964 and, for a stimulating if more specifically focused discussion of their social role, Manning 1995, p.44-73.

[9] The literature on the Bounty, and on Pitcairn Island, is extensive. On the Mutiny, I have found Dening 1994 of particular use, and, on Pitcairn, Lummis 1997. Lummis is anxious to give due weight to the 'role of the women in shaping events on the island and their input into the unique identity of the community, so often ignored' (p.4). Rennie 1998 places the poem in the wide context of writing about the South Seas and, in chapter 6, in the context of Bounty literature in particular, but his account of Mitford's poem (p.169-172) is disappointingly descriptive, rather than analytical. As he states (p.172), there 'is no reason to believe that Byron had read *Christina',* but his poem *The island, or Christian and his comrades* (1823) offers another imaginative narrative account of the episode, this time very much from the point of view of the 'gallant', 'bold' Captain Bligh.

[10] For James Burney's career, see Manwaring 1931.

As if in British veins it flow'd;
And she – the roses of her cheek
Might shame the dawn's refulgent streak.[11]

Henry falls passionately in love with Christina, but she is betrothed to Hubert: indeed, the *Topaz* has turned up on the eve of their wedding day. She and her fellow islander are bound by 'childhood's silken tie', she explains to the full-blooded Englishman, by 'our sweet fraternal amity',[12] although she acknowledges that he does not possess her heart. By contrast, Hubert is devoted to her. Yet when she turns up to wed Hubert, the next day, he is not there. When he arrives, eventually, at the simple chapel, he is accompanied by Henry, and makes his sacrifice:

Oh hands should meet, where hearts entwine,
Take her, bright stranger, she is thine![13]

The poem offers a double dose of escapist fantasy:

Oh! It is sweet, in this disjointed age,
To 'scape awhile life's sad realities

comments the narrator in its conclusion: one is reminded of Janice Radway's remark, in *Reading the romance,* that the value of romance reading depends as much on the 'time-out' provided by the act of reading as by any specific relationship with an individual text.[14] It increasingly pivots around Christina's consciousness and her desire: the woman reader is offered that most familiar of identificatory positions: that of seeking, and obtaining, emotional bliss. The conservatism of the plot's resolution, at a romantic – and, indeed, a racial level – is underscored by the domestic codings in the poem. Henry is initially recommended to us since, in the storm with which the action opens,

British Henry breath'd a prayer
For mother dear, for sister fair;[15]

the orderly pastoral charms of the 'rustic cot' are stressed.[16] But although Christina is recuperated for pure-blooded Britishness, it is not clear whether the married couple will return to England, or remain on the island. For Mitford's descriptions of its charms offer an escape of a different kind, to a luxuriant site where everything – including the inhabitants – 'blossoms in healthful beauty':[17] a south-seas paradise, the fertile, fragrant feminized land welcoming the encircling sea in terms which naturalize romance:

[11] Mitford 1811, p.12.
[12] Ibid., p.161.
[13] Ibid., p.185.
[14] Radway 1987, p.89-93.
[15] Mitford 1811, p.5.
[16] Ibid., p.55.
[17] Ibid., p.11.

Nature, fair bride, in all her charms,
Woo'd her gay bridegroom to her arms.[18]

Moreover, the self-sufficient super-abundance ensures harmony of labour: a contrast to the trade relations in which Captain Bligh had been engaged, taking breadfruit trees from Tahiti to provide easy food supplies for the West Indies sugar plantations. For on Pitcairn, along with the 'plantain, palm, and cocoa tree'

Rose too – unconscious instrument
Of crime and woe, to mortals sent!
That cane, whose luscious juice supplies
Europe's blood-purchas'd luxuries.[19]

A humanitarian, political alertness is presumed from the poem's readers.

Or, to put it another way, the modes of reading encouraged by this volume are not just passive ones. This is true even at a simple level of identification. For further female positions are offered beyond the model of woman-as-exchange-gift which, effectively, is occupied by Christina. At the dynamic centre of the poem is a long account by Fitzallan – Mitford's name for John Adams, the surviving Bounty member – of the Mutiny, and of the history of Pitcairn, including the role played by the Tahitian women. All the white men apart from Adams were massacred by the male Tahitians: 'fiend-like slaves' (there is certainly no compassion shown for their exploited position).[20] In retaliation, the women rose up and killed their fellow-islanders. This episode raises interesting enough questions about gender, colonization and maternity in its own right. Two things are particularly significant about Mitford's treatment, however. First, although the role and status of women was to be treated at length by later commentators, Mitford was seizing on the barest hints in Folger's account and placing them centre stage in her own narrative. She took the topical subject of the Mutiny of the Bounty, with its necessarily male cast-list, and its masculinist emphases not just on maritime adventure, but on structures of authority within a hierarchized male community, and re-cast it in woman-centred romance form. But second, and together with this, we must note Mitford's sympathy for the Tahitian women's violence. Christina's mother, Iddeah, is like a transfigured Lady Macbeth, carrying daggers to the other women 'still dripping with the white men's gore', whilst her dark hair

Hung round that sad and pallid face,
And that tall form of loftiest grace;
Like prophetess in gifted mood.[21]

Their vengeance is given divine justification –

Swift as the thunder-bolt of Heaven
Deep were the buried poniards driven.[22]

[18] Ibid., p.139.
[19] Ibid., p.9.
[20] Ibid., p.129.
[21] Ibid., p.131.
[22] Ibid., p.132.

They are imbued with something of the energy of the maenads of the French Revolution, an episode to which Mitford repeatedly returned in her later writing: her fascination with violence is something which exists in an interesting dialogue with the writing of tame domesticity for which she is more widely known, and which made her money. In *Christina,* Mitford makes it quite clear where our sympathy should lie:

> Heroines! What Greek or Roman name
> To glory boasts a purer claim?[23]

They are impelled by their love for the men to whom they had borne children, rather than by an allegiance to their origins: it is made clear, however, that there is a higher authority backing their actions:

> Remote from their dear native land;
> Bereft of every succouring hand;
> They bow'd them to th'avenging rod,
> They sought His help – the Christian's God![24]

Mitford, however, resists any temptation to turn the events on Pitcairn into religious exemplar – unlike many later 19th-century commentators in the island, who were to look back at the theological basis laid down in the community by John Adams, and expressed their 'wonder and gratitude to contemplate so exemplary a race, sprung from so guilty a stock'.[25] She was perennially suspicious of designedly didactic writing.

Beyond its attempts to work up affective responses, however, the volume invites the reader to participate in a reading experience which goes beyond these appeals to the emotions. Mitford provides substantial notes to her poetic narrative, drawn from her own reading in, among other volumes, Hawkesworth's *Collection of voyages,* Bougainville's *Voyage round the world,* Captain Cook's *Voyages,* Dalrymple's collection of *Voyages and discoveries in the Pacific Ocean,* a missionary account of a storm in the Pacific, and even – in order to reinforce a point about Nature's sublimity – Dr Garnett's description of Fingal's Cave in his *Tour through the Highlands of Scotland.* Now, one could see the careful citation of authorities as an attempt to legitimize her own romance, giving weight and worth through the words and experiences of brave and respected men, particularly since, in the *Advertisement,* she acknowledges the help offered by Captain Burney in assembling the evidence. But I believe something else is happening, at least when we consider the potential for reader-response that is generated by these passages of prose. Mitford herself, just after she had published *Christina,* expressed her awareness of the customary limitations of women's reading and education when she wrote that 'everything is taught to women except that which is perhaps worth all the rest – the power and habit of thinking'.[26] What the dialogic positioning of these other writers in relation to her own account

[23] Ibid., p.133.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Boyles Murray 1854, p.xiii.
[26] Mary Russell Mitford to Sir William Elford, January 1812, quoted in Hill 1920, p.144.

offers is the potential to see romance as one type of narrative among others; to offer exotic locations as a source of interest and cognitive stimulation in their own right; to present indigenous ceremonies – such as the lengthy account of human sacrifice taken from Cook's *Last voyage round the world* – as objects of anthropological interest, rather than as moments of Gothic horror – 'scenes on which nature may not dwell!' as the lines in Canto II put it, from which Christian turned 'dismay'd and shuddering at the sight'.[27] The reader's imaginative eye, however, is given much to contemplate in Cook's graphic details.

Christina offers an interestingly positioned case when it comes to the consideration of women's reading, since it presents, in the first instance, the documentation of one woman's reading in preparation for writing a fictional extrapolation from recent history, and allows one to trace something of the interpretative and appropriatory use which she made of this reading – above all, the bringing of a woman-centred approach to her source material. For *Christina* presents a narrative which seems, quite deliberately, to have been crafted to appeal to elements in literary taste which were conventionally gendered feminine at the time, and which explicitly tender escapist pleasure to the reader. Yet the inclusion of the prose material in the volume offers more. It could be seen, certainly, as legitimizing the activity of reading, offering something serious alongside the escapism. But it provokes imaginative engagement in its own right with unfamiliar topography and human lives, enables some vicarious travelling and, I suggest, renders inseparable affective response and the acquisition of empirical knowledge. Moreover, the opportunity afforded to observe Mitford's transformation of her material, and her processes of selection and elaboration, implicitly encourages interpretative activity on the readers' own part, and alerts them to the degree to which they, here and elsewhere, are complicit participants in the establishment and perpetuation of generic conventions.

Necessarily, to some extent this presentation of the possibilities which *Christina* offers the woman reader of its time is a projection of my own desire: my own desire to recognize that affective and cognitive responses are necessarily bound in with one another: that there is pleasure to be found not just in empathic identification, nor even in the practice of interpretation and in the acquisition of knowledge, but, in the sense that Roland Barthes envisaged in *Le plaisir du texte* in the obtaining of knowledge, in the extension of horizons. I argue that, especially for a woman disadvantaged through her educational and social positioning, there may be a particular affective pleasure to be taken in the empowerment these cognitive acts entail. Whilst reconstructing, as far as possible, the material opportunities and conditions of women's reading is an essential part of our activity as literary historians, we also need to consider the varied possibilities for reading contained within, and provoked by, texts which appear to be deliberately aimed at women readers.

[27] Mitford 1811, p.86.

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Johanna Desideria Berchmans
(1811-1890)

Drij roosjes

Drij jonge lenteroosjes groeiden,
En geurden op denzelfden stam;
Zij werden meer en meer bewonderd,
Door elk die in den bloemtuin kwam.

Met afgunst sloegen al de bloemen
De pas ontloken zustren gâ,
Zo wel het nedrig madeliefje
Als hooggestamde dahlia.

En de oudste van de lenterozen,
De meestgeliefde van de drij,
Stond fier als bloemenkoninginne.
Met de andere zustren aan haar zij.

De zwier waarmee haar bloemkroon zwaaide,
Verried de heerszucht, pronk en waan;
Der vleiers taal had haar begoocheld,
En, trots, sprak zij haar zustren aan.

Behaagt u, dierbren, onz' bestemming?
Wilt ge eeuwig hier in de open lucht,
En tussen blaên en doornen zeetlen,
Bij doodsvervelend boomgezucht?

Hier, waar de wind ons in zijn woede
De lucht doorslingert, en onz' blaên
Ter prooi geeft aan de morsige aarde,
Of meê doet tuimlen in de orkaan?

Mijn zustren! 'k wil dit oord ontvluchten,
'k Wil heden nog, bij fakkelglans,
Op 't bal een maagdenkruin versieren;
'k Wil mede slingren door den dans.–

Het jongste zusje zweeg en zuchtte;
Het tweede sprak: mijn zusterkijn,
'k Wil ook dees dorre streek ontvlieden:
Mijn graf zal op het altaar zijn;

Drei Röschen

Drei junge Lenzesrosen standen
An einem Stamm zu duften da,
Sie wurden mehr und mehr bewundert
Von jedem, der sie blühen sah.

Mit Neid im Garten jede Blume
Die kaum erblühten Schwestern sah,
Sowohl das nied're Tausendschönchen,
Wie die erhab'ne Dahlia.

Die älteste der Lenzesrosen,
Die meistbewunderte der Drei,
Stand als die Königin der Blumen
Inmitten da der andern Zwei.

Das hohe Tragen ihrer Krone
Verrieth den Stolz, der in ihr wach,
Bethöret hatten sie die Schmeichler,
Und so sie zu den Schwestern sprach:

'Behagt Euch unser Loos, ihr Lieben,
Wollt Ihr hier stets im Garten steh'n
Und zwischen Blättern, zwischen Dornen
Euch wiegen bei des Windes Weh'n?

'Der Bäume Seufzen immer hören,
Und plötzlich dem Orkan zum Raub
Gewirbelt werden in die Lüfte,
Und dann zerstreuet in den Staub?

'Ich will von hinnen, meine Schwestern,
Ich will noch heut bei Fackelglanz
Ein Mädchen auf dem Balle schmücken
Und mit ihm fliegen durch den Tanz'.

Die jüngste Schwester schwieg und seufzte,
Die zweite sprach: 'mein Schwesterlein,
Auch ich will fort aus diesem Garten,
Mein Grab soll auf dem Altar sein.'

'k Wil needrig voor de Algoede geuren.
Nu sprak de jongste en teerste spruit:
– Hier, waar mij 't daglicht werd geschonken,
Hier, zustren, blaas ik 't leven uit.

'k Blijf op de grafstee mijner moeder,
Trots storm en woede van den wind,
Trots boomgezucht en zonnebranden,
Sterft hier uw moeders jongste kind.–

't Werd avond.– In de zaal der weelde,
Verscheen een maagd, en de oudste roos
Geurde in heur opgesierden haarvlecht,
En juichte in 't lot, dat zij verkoos.

't Werd morgen.- En, op 't heilig altaar,
Als offerande voor den Heer,
Stond 't tweede roosje nog te geuren;
En de oudste zuster was niet meer.

En weder daalde de avond neder,
En weder rees de morgenglans,
En, stervend, hing het tweede roosje
In de uitgebloeiden bloemenkrans;

Het schudde zijn verslenste blaadjes,
Nog onbevlekt op 't altaar af;
En nog stond 't jongste roosje, blozend
En geurend, op zijn moeders graf.

From: Johanna Desideria Berchmans, *Vlaemsche poëzy*. Lier: Joseph van In, 1856, p. 54-56.

Die jüngste, zarteste der Rosen
Sprach nun die leisen Worte aus:
'Hier, wo das Licht mir ward gegeben,
Hier hauch'ich auch mein Leben aus.

'Ich bleib'auf meiner Mutter Grabe,
So wild mich auch umbraust der Wind,
So traurig auch die Bäume seufzen
Hier stirbt lieb Mutters letztes Kind'.

Und Abend ward's. Im reichen Saale
Da war ein Mädchen schlank und schön,
Das trug im Haar die ält'ste Rose
Bei Fackelglanz und Festgetön.

Und Morgen ward's. Ein Gottesopfer
Lag auf dem Altar heilig hehr
Die zweite Rose lieblich duftend –
Die ält'ste Schwester war nicht mehr.

Und wieder sank der Abend nieder,
Und wieder kam der Tag voll Glanz,
Da hing die zweite Rose sterbend
Im abgeblühten Blumenkranz.

Die unbefleckten Blätter streute
Sie auf den Altar still herab.
Doch blühend stand die jüngste Rose
Noch duftend auf der Mutter Grab.

Translation by Ida von Düringsfeld, in: *Von der Schelde bis zur Maas. Das geistige Leben der Vlamingen seit dem Wiederaufblühen der Literatur.* Leipzig/Brussels: Lehmann/Claassen, 1861, vol.I, p.126-128.

Geraldine Sheridan

Women in the book trade in the 18th century: an untold story

It was long accepted as a truism by historians of the book trade, particularly in France, that the role of women in the printing, publishing and distribution of books under the *Ancien Régime* was negligible, and limited to that of printer's or publisher's widow, a mere figurehead for an enterprise effectively run by a foreman until the widow found a suitable husband to assume control of her late spouse's business. The inadequacy of these assumptions became evident with the development of women's and family history: scholars like Olwen Hufton highlighted the pivotal role of women in the family economy first suggested by Léon Abensour in his extraordinary *La femme et le féminisme avant la Révolution* (1923), as well as their often precarious, twilight existence as widows and spinsters outside the protective influence of the family.[1] These studies have provided a context for the investigation of the role of women in the book trade in Britain and France: in this paper I will review the recent research in this area, with detailed illustration from French archival sources.

One of the first things to point out is that sources of evidence are limited and skewed for a number of reasons. Most obviously, women were largely excluded at an institutional level from this key area of social and economic life, and therefore rarely figure in archives such as those of the *Compagnie des libraires* in Paris. There was a panoply of laws, regulations and traditions designed to exclude women from the trade of printer/publisher, whose journeymen were amongst the highest paid under the *Ancien Régime*. By tradition of the Parisian Booksellers' and Printers' Guild women were not allowed to become apprentices; though I have not found any actual regulation to this effect, this exclusion of women from the male trade seems to have gone unchallenged. Such was not the case in Britain, where the Stationers' Company formally admitted women to apprenticeship as early as 1666,[2] but few women rose to prominence in the trade through this route. A recent study by Tamara Hunt showed that out of 71 women apprenticed in the course of the century and registered by the Stationers' Company, only one was formally given her freedom, contrary to the norm for male apprentices. Twenty-seven others were freed by patrimony (their fathers being members of the Company), and were probably only involved in family businesses.[3] The Guild of St. Luke in Dublin

[1] Hufton 1975 and 1984.
[2] See M. Hunt 1982, p.44.
[3] T. Hunt 1996, p.48-9.

Engraving by Abraham Rose

specifically excluded girls from apprenticeships.[4] They could never, then, become free of the Guild, which was a privilege reserved for men.

All such provisions were designed to prevent the 'dilution' of the trade and the maintenance of its skilled status: female wages under the *Ancien Régime* were not generally calculated with an independent existence in mind, as women, even if working far from home, were considered to be dependants throughout their lives, and were paid a fraction (perhaps a third or a half) of the celibate male's wage.[5] Guilds therefore made every effort to resist female labour, as it would undercut male employment and would be readily exploited by employers seeking a competitive edge.[6] As a result 'official' sources such as trade directories, advertisements, guild membership lists and biographical dictionaries do not adequately reflect women's involvement in the trade; for example, contemporaries noted the fact that Andrew Brice, an Exeter printer, had a large number of female printers working in his office, but their lives, status, and training remain officially unrecorded.[7] For evidence of women's involvement we have to look to more incidental or anecdotal documents: contemporary journals or memoirs, police and prison records, or even visual records, rare though they are. For the French trade the documents in the Anisson collection at the Bibliothèque Nationale relative to the policing of the book trade proved particularly fruitful for

[4] Kinane 1991, p.10.
[5] Hufton 1984, p.359; Kinane 1991, p.11.
[6] Kinane 1991, p.11 details examples of such opposition in the Dublin trade in the 19th century.
[7] Barker 1977, p.88.

research: statements submitted by printers and booksellers in the major census of 1701, police and spy reports, letters of complaint against colleagues or family allow us to see something of the daily lives and work of the wives, widows and daughters of the book trade, a complex reality.[8] I will now try to give an overview of what we know about these three broad categories of women.

Married women

Unpublished research by Dr. C.J. Mitchell of the University of Melbourne, Australia, using the ESTC, suggests that about 50% of book trade businesses across Europe were run as family undertakings in which the woman worked, with 10% in the hands of women alone, usually widows.[9] It is clear that in this early modern period the family business took precedence over all else, and the wife, and eventually daughters of a bookseller played a major part in running the shop, selling to the public and keeping accounts. It would indeed be surprising if things were otherwise, when shop and family home shared the same quarters, the journeymen and apprentices traditionally lodging with the family, at least up to the middle of the 18th century.[10] The merchant or artisan's wife in 18th-century France or Britain was not a homemaker in the modern sense. As Olwen Hufton underlines, for such a woman 'cleaning, washing or mending clothes with any frequency, even cooking and child-rearing were fairly marginal aspects of her existence in the demands they made upon her time';[11] in many different social categories the wife's contribution as earner or worker in trade and industry was essential to the economic survival of her family.

In his study of the middle and lower bourgeoisie in France, Abensour had indeed constantly underlined how husband and wife worked side by side as a unit; almost all the legal documents signed by merchants in the archives which he consulted for Paris and the Ile de France were countersigned by their wives.[12] Babeau in his *Bourgeois d'autrefois* commented that in Orléans the daughters and wives of merchants were everywhere to be found behind the counter, trading, doing accounts and writing; that in Rouen, the mothers and daughters looked after all the correspondence; that in Bordeaux, mistresses in book-keeping instructed the daughters of merchants.[13] Such practices had been common over a considerable period of time. Maureen Bell records some of the many references made by John Dunton to wives and daughters of the book trade active in the retail end of the business in 17th-century London, or with responsibilities for finance and accounts.[14] Scholars such as Beech in her work on

[8] See Sheridan 1992, for a fuller account of this archival material.
[9] Hufton 1984, p.365.
[10] T. Hunt 1996, p.54 indicates how the increasing tendency in late 18th-century England to employ apprentices who lodged outside the master's house probably helped to exclude women from the workplace.
[11] Hufton 1975, p.11.
[12] Abensour 1923, p.168.
[13] Quoted by Abensour 1923, p.175.
[14] Bell 1996, p.18 from Dunton 1818.

Charlotte Guillard, 16th-century printer-bookseller,[15] and Zemon Davis in her study of women in the trades in 16th-century Lyons,[16] have also concluded that the women in the families of masters frequently received extensive training in technical, legal, financial and managerial skills within their family businesses.

Many of our examples of the contribution of wives suggest that women associated with the book trade may have had a higher than average level of literacy and learning. Constantia Grierson acted as partner to her husband, the King's printer in Ireland, and there are many contemporary accounts of her amazing learning: she had a knowledge of Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French and higher mathematics, and she worked both as a compositor and a printer.[17] John Lackington, the London bookseller, wrote of his second wife Dorcas:

> My new wife's attachment to books was a very fortunate circumstance for us both, not only as it was a perpetual source of rational amusement, but also as it tended to promote my trade: her extreme love for books made her delight to be in the shop, so that she soon became perfectly acquainted with every part of it, and (as my stock increased) with other rooms where I kept books, and could readily get any article that was asked for. Accordingly, when I was out on business, my shop was well attended. This constant attention, and good usage, procured me many customers; and I soon perceived that I could sell double and treble the quantity of books if I had a larger stock.[18]

In some of our examples the wife was not just the associate, but the prime mover in the firm. Sarah Slack and her sister of Newcastle, in the north of England, inherited their father's printing and publishing business: having married one of his apprentices, Sarah continued her active role, and after the death of her husband she extended the business to make it one of the most important in Newcastle, while raising a family of four or five children.[19] John Dunton, referred to above, asserted that his wife 'managed all my affairs for me'.[20]

The Anisson archives also offer evidence of French wives working as effective partners with their husbands in both the retail and the printing end of the business. One letter of complaint from the bookseller Jean Noël Leloup to the *Lieutenant général de police* written in 1750 describing a quarrel between his wife and the widow Bienvenu, another bookseller, about an alleged theft by a domestic servant, places women at the centre of the retailing operation: the detailed account makes it clear that Madame Leloup had 'to come out from her counter', where she was running the family's bookshop on the *Quai des Augustins*, to pursue the matter. Similarly, in the printing trade, Jacques Collombat, printer of the *Calendrier de la Cour*, in all the documents he published between 1716 and 1731 in relation to a dispute with Laurent d'Houry, printer of a rival *Almanach*, consistently associated d'Houry's wife with him as a leading figure in the business.[21] Some of these women had

[15] Beech 1983, p.356.
[16] Zemon Davis 1980, p.143-4.
[17] Gies 1940, p.1424-1426, and T. Hunt 1996, p.52.
[18] Lackington 1794, p.326, quoted by Barker 1997, p.95.
[19] Barker 1997, p.94.
[20] Dunton 1818, vol.I, p.79, quoted by Bell 1996, p.18.
[21] Bibliothèque nationale, Collection Anisson, ms. français 22077, f.143-76 (henceforth f.fr.)

acquired their skills in their father's business: the *veuve* Duchesne, daughter of André Cailleau,[22] and Marie Galle in Grenoble, left widowed with six children in 1696 on the death of the printer Claude Faure, who ran the business and trained her eldest son to help her, thanks to the fact that she had learnt to print in her youth.[23]

There is abundant evidence to show how such women took over the running of their husbands' businesses in the event of a protracted absence:[24] many archival sources in Britain and France, relating to the interrogation, imprisonment or disappearance of booksellers and printers who had transgressed, offer examples of the wife's ingenuity not only in running the shop and keeping the family going, but also in pleading on behalf of her husband. In one letter in the Anisson collection the wife of David, the main publisher of the *Encyclopédie,* who is absent – presumably out of caution – in Amsterdam, asks for an interview with the minister Malesherbes, known to be sympathetic to the *philosophes,* regarding the revocation of the *privilège* for the *Encyclopédie:* she continued to run the business after the death of her husband, and is mentioned by Lottin (1789) as a benefactress of the widows of the guild, less fortunate than herself. In 1749 James Esdall of Dublin had to flee to London when a pamphlet by Charles Lucas which he had printed was condemned as 'seditious libel' by the House of Commons, and his wife Anne took over the management of the firm.[25]

Similar stories can be found right back through the preceding century, and Maureen Bell, in two admirable articles on Elizabeth Calvert, has detailed the major contribution made by the wives, and subsequently the widows of the 'Confederate', opposition publishers in England, many of whom were executed. Having been gaoled herself, Calvert was forced to appeal to the paternalism of the authorities in words that are echoed time and again in letters in the French police archives: she begs freedom to attend to 'a chardge of children whom are in a deplorable condicion by reason of the want of their poore mother now in prison'. She escaped execution in a period where many printers died for lesser offenses.[26] Bell shows how the booksellers in Britain played on the paradoxically stronger position of a married woman who was regarded by the law as under civil subjection to her husband, a 'feme covert', and could therefore plead incompetence as having acted on the instructions of the conveniently absent spouse.[27] One bookseller (Frank Smith the younger), in response to a customer's enquiry for an opposition pamphlet, replied 'when my mother or my Sister comes, you may have as many as you will; for No body can touch them'.[28] Margaret Hunt, in her article on the London 'Hawkers, bawlers and Mercuries', speculates that the semi-clandestine, insecure but also highly-charged atmosphere in which opposition pieces were produced in early 18th-century Britain offered a strong inducement for all members of a family, including women and girls,

[22] Kay 1983, p.38.
[23] F.fr. 22127, f.12.
[24] Cf. M. Hunt 1984, p.54, who shows that other women family members might also step into the breach.
[25] Kinane 1991, p.10.
[26] Bell 1992, p.23.
[27] Ibid., p.31.
[28] *Observator* 1, p.164-5, 4 and 5 July 1682, quoted by Bell 1992, p.32.

to become involved.[29] The same appears to be true of France, for example in Jansenist circles: the Anisson collection, as well as the *Archives de la Bastille* bear witness to a significant number of women arrested for involvement in the printing or dissemination of Jansenist pamphlets.[30] The case of Marie-Madeleine Musier, recounted below, suggests that wives were seen by the authorities in France as responsible partners with their husbands in any transgression, and also illustrates the involvement of young women in illegal activities.[31]

Widows

Although there was wide variation between countries and periods, somewhere between 9 to 14 percent of households in Western Europe were headed by women in this period, the majority of these being widows.[32] Their position in the book trade is relatively well documented, as it appears that throughout Europe the widow of a printer/publisher was entitled to take over her husband's business by inheritance, and women's names feature on the title pages of books from the 1480s onwards.[33] These women did not necessarily enjoy the full rights of mastership, however, particularly the right to pull the press; and in France, for example, the widow of a printer/publisher was precluded from taking on new apprentices under her own name.[34] Natalie Zemon Davis has emphasized a similar exclusion in the silk-making trade in 16th-century Lyons, which guaranteed that 'mastership was to go from male to male and not pass through the female line'.[35] A widow in France was debarred from running a business if she remarried outside the trade, though, on the evidence of Barker's study, a similar regulation in England does not seem to have been enforced as stringently.[36]

In both countries, stereotypes have been perpetuated by historians concerning these women, in particular that of the 'remarrying widow' who would quickly seek out a qualified journeyman or the son of a master to take over where her husband left off.[37] On the contrary, the evidence from Britain suggests that, from the latter part of the 17th century, remarriage was not the favoured choice of widows,[38] and this was certainly the case in France, where, as we have seen, the remarrying widow had

[29] M. Hunt 1984, p.50.
[30] See, for example, f.fr. 22101, f.143; 22100, no. 26; 22175, no. 105.
[31] See below, 'Never married women' and also f.fr.22101, f.130: 'Ces deux libelles contre M. le Chancelier ont été distribué par la fille ainée d'Ormancey raison pour laquelle le Pere et la Mere ont été exilés a 100 lieues de Paris'.
[32] Hufton 1984.
[33] Gies 1940, p.1421.
[34] See Saugrain 1744, p.212-214; this was not the case in England. Cf. Bell 1996, p.19ff.
[35] Zemon Davis 1980, p.156.
[36] Barker 1997, p.92.
[37] Hufton points also to the hysterical obsession in the literature of the period among middle and upper-class males – Richardson's 'Letter from a gentleman, strenuously expostulating with an old rich widow, about to marry a very young gay gentleman' (1741) being the best example – that their widow might squander their wealth on a gigolo figure who excited her sexual appetites (Hufton 1984, p.373). No doubt the nature of the second marriages of those widows who did succumb would make an interesting theme for research.
[38] Barker 1997, p.98; Bell 1996, p.18-19.

much to lose. The impression which catalogues of the trade give of only a small proportion of 'active' widows remarrying is confirmed by a printed document in the Anisson collection under the title 'Liste alphabétique de Mesdames les Veuves, Existantes au 1er janvier 1748'.[39] A total of 64 widows who succeeded their husbands are listed, and detailed information on the length of their masterships is given for 61 of these, right up to the 1770s. Only three of the total number remarried, i.e. approximately 5%;[40] the average length of widowhood spent 'in office', as it were, was 23.2 years, the longest being 52 years. Thus the vast majority of booksellers' widows who took on a succession in the mid to late 18th century would appear to have remained at least nominally at the head of their businesses until their death.

Of the twelve widows in the list who were also master-printers, eight resigned from that mastership, some in favour of a member of the family, others selling the place to an outsider, while still retaining their bookshop. Not only was it clearly more difficult for a woman to run a printing house, where she might have no expertise, and have to deal with difficult workmen, than to manage a bookshop; but because of the strict limitations imposed on the number of printers allowed in Paris the widows were undoubtedly able to command a high price from journeymen hoping to accede to the mastership. But there are also many examples in these archives of widows who did take the principal role in running a printing as well as a retail business. We have already mentioned the *veuve* Bienvenu, whom we saw working in her shop on the *Quai des Augustins;* on at least three separate occasions she is condemned for printing unapproved and subversive material 'furtivement dans des lieux cachez où elle tenoit une Imprimerie clandestine', or for selling same in her bookshop.[41] On the third occasion, in 1747, she is declared to be deprived in perpetuity of the right to function as a bookseller,[42] but must have succeeded in having the sentence commuted, for she is listed in Lottin as a bookseller at the time of her death in 1776, after 34 years at the head of the business. None of the documents mention a foreman or *Directeur* who would undoubtedly have shared the blame if he existed, as happened in the case of, the 'exacte et avisée veuve Duchesne',[43] immortalized by Voltaire, whose works she published – along with those of Rousseau, his arch rival. In 1767 Pierre Guy was arrested for smuggling six packages of prohibited books, both philosophical and pornographic, into Paris.[44] He was described in the reports as a trader associated with the widow Duchesne, bookseller, and living close by her premises. Marie-Antoinette Duchesne, who had been recently widowed in 1765, was to continue at the head of her large and flourishing business in the *rue Saint Jacques* up to her death in 1793. Guy was clearly not a qualified journeyman, but he seemed to be recognized as manager for all aspects of the business. Although her house was searched on this occasion, and letters addressed

[39] F.fr. 22079, doc.14, p.28 (printed).
[40] In a statistical analysis of 805 wives of booksellers, printers, and binders in 16th-century France, S. Postel-Lecoq found that 12% contracted a second marriage in the trade (Postel-Lecoq 1988, p.262).
[41] F.fr. 22092, f.58; see also f.4.
[42] F.fr. 22092, f.58.
[43] Besterman 1974, vol.XXXII, p.447, D14554.
[44] This was not by any means an unusual mixture in this period, and the works inventoried included Voltaire's *Traité sur la tolérance*, Rousseau's *Contrat social*, Helvétius's *De l'esprit*, and a rather less memorable *Art de bien baiser*.

to her seized, Duchesne was not interrogated, and the police authorities held Guy responsible.[45] But in point of fact Guy had also been chief clerk to Nicolas-Bonaventure Duchesne for 13 years prior to the latter's death, and his relationship to the widow in the following 10 years was not materially different. He had no financial interest in the business, but worked for wages, and when he retired in 1775 he was given a pension of 200 *livres* by his employer.[46] The widow Duchesne was, then, the head of the firm in the same way as her husband had been before her.

A *libraire* from Strasbourg, Marie Salomée Fatty, widow of Georges-Rodius Stochdorph, *marchand libraire*, was noted for her escapades in the subversive trade; in 1771 she was arrested at the *Hôtel Plâtrière* in Paris for having smuggled several packages of subversive books into the city, and was imprisoned for the transgression.[47] But nothing daunted, she was again arrested in 1773, and having been taken to the Bastille was found guilty of running a bookshop stocked with 'livres contraires à la Religion et aux bonnes mœurs'. Because of the repeated and blatant nature of the offence she was sentenced to be put in the stocks at the *place de Grève*, with placards on either side declaring her crimes, and then banished for nine years from the cities of Paris and Strasbourg. A relative of hers, Jean-Daniel Riss, was also arrested for having been involved in the business, 'en tenant gratuitement les Registres de débit et la correspondance', but in his case there was no doubt at all who was the primary agent in the affair with total responsibility for the business.[48]

At an earlier period, in an appeal to the comte de Maurepas, the *veuve* David, Marie Clousier (again the daughter of a bookseller) explains the apparent transgression of printing two pamphlets without an *approbation* or *privilège* by the fact that she was ill and taking the waters in Passy at the time of the search, and her foreman was simply not aware that she had been granted an *approbation* and *privilège* for the first, and a *permission tacite* for the second.[49] Although such excuses were commonplace where mistakes had been made, it does appear that she, not the foreman, took the leading management role in her business.

The widow in this relatively prosperous, property-owning category had, as Olwen Hufton has pointed out, perhaps the most enviable lot of all women in this society: with control over her property and children, she was arbiter of her destiny. She could choose to be pursued as a prize in the marriage market, or make the most of her freedom – as the majority of her peers in this period appear to have done.

Never married women

The incidence of what was called spinsterhood varied enormously in the period by country and region, and was related to the economic condition of the labouring sector: for example, falling real wages in late *Ancien Régime* France both pushed up the

[45] F.fr. 22098, f.184-189.
[46] Kay 1983, p.38.
[47] F.fr. 22101, f.239.
[48] F.fr. 22101, f.222.
[49] F.fr. 22065, f.366.

age of marriage and multiplied the number of never-married persons, while the situation in Britain the same period was in complete contrast.[50] Jean Dupâquier indicates that 14 percent of the generation born in France from 1785 to 1789 remained unmarried, a significant proportion of the population.[51] Until recently, the women in this category have received little attention from historians. In general, theirs was not a happy lot, and particularly not in the book trades. In France they could not gain entry to the guild by patrimony; the daughter of a master could confer rights on a suitably qualified husband similar to those conferred by a printer/publisher's widow on remarriage, but she had no legal right to enter the trade or run a business herself.

But again documents in the Anisson collection show that girls were not totally 'absent' from the trade: as we have noted, it was not unusual for single young French women to be given training and work in their father's book or print shop. Thus the daughter of a book-trading family could be arrested or interrogated in the event of a contravention. One particularly revealing 'Interrogation' is that of the youngest daughter – just 16 years old – of Jean-François Musier, bookseller, who had been arrested while serving behind the counter and taken to the Bastille on 25 March 1759. Five pieces printed without permission were found in her pockets, about which she was questioned, and professed her ignorance; it was suggested to her that:

> dès que la répondante se mêle du Commerce de la Librairie sous les yeux de ses père et mère et qu'elle ne peut nommer les personnes à qui ont été achetés les imprimés qui se sont trouvés dans ses poches, il est évident que les Père et Mère de la repondante les ont fait imprimer pour les débiter.[52]

The young girl showed astuteness and courage in resisting this kind of questioning, and was clearly well versed in the business and the implications of being caught for illegal trading. The extent of the family involvement is further illustrated later in the document when it is pointed out to her that her mother's niece, who lives with them, has frequently gone to the Palais de Justice to sell and distribute the prohibited pamphlets, again highlighting how young single women were playing an important part in the family's legal and illegal trading.[53] Likewise in Britain, evidence of the role of daughters often emerges from the silence of official records when families were caught for printing opposition pieces: Tamara Hunt shows how Alice, Catherine and Sarah Nutt were active in their mother's business and took over whenever she was arrested.[54] In contrast to their counterparts in France, however, these daughters were made free of the Company in 1740.

Where there was a shortage of family help, other women were sometimes employed: for example on 7 March 1761 an interrogation took place of Françoise Alaneau, who is described as the 'fille de boutique' of the widow Auclou, bookseller, with whom she resides. She is over 70 years of age, and a native of Vannes in

[50] Hufton 1984, p.356-357.
[51] Dupâquier 1979, p.60-61: quoted by Hufton 1984, p.357.
[52] F.fr. 22093, f.471.
[53] See also f.fr. 22101, doc. 97, which refers to the arrest of a 'Dlle Morin parente et fille de boutique du Sr. Buttard'.
[54] T. Hunt 1996, p.49.

Brittany, and she is accused with several others of having *L'oracle des philosophes*, a prohibited work by the abbé Guyon, printed in the provinces, and distributing copies in Paris.[55] She is accused of a similar misdemeanour three years later.[56] Likewise Elisabeth Fleury, shop assistant to Simon, printer to the Parlement, is arrested in 1771 for selling and distributing a pamphlet defending the Parlement against royal absolutism.[57] Employees such as these were unlikely to come from families in the trade: they were probably from rural backgrounds, and started out in the household of their master/mistress with the hope of saving an adequate dowry from the pittance they were paid. Overall, as noted earlier, these archives indicate that the distribution of pamphlets, especially in an opposition context, was the province of women, and this conclusion is strongly supported by evidence from England.[58]

In France some single women from families of booksellers, not necessarily daughters in a direct line, were trading under their own name; such was the case of Catherine Amaulry, bookseller in the Palais de Justice, a native of Paris, aged 32 years, who was arrested in 1771.[59] She was presumably a relative, though not a daughter, of Gabriel Amaulry, bookseller, who died in 1735, and she had, of course, no statutory right to be trading at all. There were many such women, both single and widowed, selling in the Palais de Justice, whose activities would appear to have contravened the regulations, but who were tolerated as long as they did not deal in illegal merchandise: we can see one young woman standing behind her stall in a contemporary engraving.[60] But the temptation for these small retailers to indulge in the sale of counterfeit editions and subversive books, the more lucrative end of the trade, was strong; when they were caught at these activities they risked the wrath not just of the *Lieutenant de police*, but also of the guild which would put them out of business.

It seems to have been fairly widely accepted in French provincial towns, in spite of the regulations, that single daughters might succeed to their father's business: some of them, in letters to the authorities, stress that they took over a shop which had been run by both mother and father, like Claude Grangier, a native of Dijon, aged 46 years; they may have felt that they had some natural right of succession to the mother's place. Grangier pointed out that her family had been in business in the town for more than 160 years.[61] Even a girl who married outside the trade, like Jeanne-Antoine Rigoine, daughter of the late Claude Rigoine, printer and bookseller in Besançon, who was the wife and then widow of a surgeon, went on running the bookshop for 46 years.[62] Local police authorities seem to have shown a large measure of tolerance towards these women, for many of whom their small business almost certainly represented the only opportunity of earning a half-decent livelihood.

[55] F.fr. 22094, f.210.
[56] F.fr. 22096, f.374-376.
[57] F.fr. 22101, f.144 and 147.
[58] See Bell 1996, p.27-8.
[59] F.fr. 22101, f.143 and 145.
[60] See p. 198.
[61] F.fr. 22125, f.209; see also f.fr. 22129, f.379.
[62] F.fr. 22126, f.318.

It was not only in the retail trade that the daughters of the family learnt the business; in June 1763 an unmarried woman, Rosette Marie, writes to the Vice Chancellor requesting a patent which would allow her to replace her late brother, a printer in Port-au-Prince who had been granted a patent for the Island of Haïti. When he had taken up his place, she recounts, he had taken his sister with him; like him she had been trained in the art of printing in their father's business in Nantes, and since their arrival in Port-au-Prince they have run their business jointly. After her brother's death, the Governor allowed her to continue as printer, and she is now requesting a new patent from Paris to confirm her position.[63] We do not know the outcome, but the authorities may have been more willing to sanction the appointment of a woman in the New World, where many female emigrants enjoyed such opportunities, than in the closed-shop environment of Paris.[64] This case gives the lie to the assumption, widely held by historians of the book, that women never composed or pulled the presses under the *Ancien Régime*.

There is some evidence that single daughters, even in Paris, occasionally tried to keep an involvement in printing despite the fact that their father's business would have gone to a male successor or his widow; in a declaration of 1704 Charles Huguier, a journeyman printer, who had been operating under the name of the widow Vaugon, states that the widow's sisters, named Le Mercier, have been operating independently in the printing business, and he adds that they frequently print under their own names, in clear contravention of the regulations.[65] In the provinces, single women did sometimes take over their father's printing house, though this appears to be less common than in the bookselling side of the trade; these would be small businesses, which they would run with help from family or friends, sometimes taking on a journeyman if business warranted it.[66] Such women could barely scratch a living out of a much reduced business.

The position in Britain was somewhat more favourable, with single women having the right to succeed and apparently being accepted as 'masters' by the Guilds. For example in Bristol, where the two estranged Farley brothers ran rival newspapers, both dying in 1753, one left his print business to his wife, the other to his niece Sarah. The two newspapers were run by these women for the next 20 years, with fierce commercial rivalry: when Sarah's business was sold following her death, it was renamed *Sarah Farley's Bristol Journal* by its new owners.[67] The Quakers, who preached the equality of women, count a number of women among their famous printers. The eminent Andrew Sowle trained his daughters in his shop: Tace obtained the freedom of the Stationers' Company in 1695, and succeeded to the family business; a well-known figure in literary London, she became official printer for the Society of Friends in 1740. Her sister Elizabeth married William Bradford, one of the first printers in America.[68] In Dublin, where up to a third of the women inheriting in

[63] F.fr. 22124, ff.318-319.
[64] Cf. Hudak 1978.
[65] F.fr. 22064, f.123.
[66] See, for example, f.fr. 22127, f.384.
[67] Barker 1997, p.94-95.
[68] Gies 1940, p.1424.

the trade were other than widows, Mary Pepyat ran the substantial family printing and bookselling business for twenty years after the deaths of her two brothers; she was appointed official printer to the City of Dublin for the period 1740-1759.[69] However, as in France, it does seem that women were, in general, more likely to take over a retail business rather than a printworks; interesting research carried out on Northumberland and Durham shows, for example, that the majority of circulating libraries in the period were run by women, for reasons that deserve further investigation.[70]

Conclusion

Considering that there were also many women of lower status involved in peripheral, often illegal and dangerous aspects of the trade,[71] I hope it will be clear from this brief survey that women played a role in the 18th-century book trades far beyond that traditionally ascribed to them. We have drawn an outline of their activities and place in this strongly developing area of the pre-revolutionary economy, but much remains to be discovered. It is worth noting that at the time of the French Revolution more than one project sought to redress the formal – and senseless, they suggested – exclusion of women from the printing trades. A Parisian printer, Deltufo, having set up an 'Ecole Typographique des femmes' to train young women in the art of composition in his own printworks, appealed to the *Convention Nationale* for support to continue and extend the project. Despite the traditional neglect of these young women's education, he asserted that they were dextrous, able and prompt to learn; however, their training would be useless without the help of the Convention, because

> les ouvriers de l'ancien régime ne leur pardonneront jamais de s'être prêtées [...] à un plan qui anéantit en partie l'espèce d'*apanage* dont les ouvriers imprimeurs ont joui jusqu'à présent.[72]

In 1790 Madame de Bastide had already suggested an even more ambitious project to set up a free school of printing for women, extending its curriculum to all aspects

[69] Kinane 1991, p.10.
[70] Barker 1997, p.89-90.
[71] It is not possible to develop here the cases of Magdelaine de la Touche, widow of Pierre le Vacher, who is fined 2000 livres in 1721 for two different offences involving the illegal stocking of printed sheets (f.fr. 22081, f.151); of Louise Ratillon, 56 years old in 1765, widow of a type-founder, who is subjected to interrogation for having stitched 200 copies of Voltaire's *La philosophie de l'histoire* for the bookseller Merlin (f.fr. 22097, doc.69); of the widow Chardon, herself the daughter of a bookbinder, who was found with 105 quires of the *Espion chinois*, by Ange Goudar, on the landing outside her door, also in 1765 (f.fr. 22097, doc.101) – all of them women who were in no position to refuse work on the grounds that it might not have a royal permission, if indeed they could read the title pages at all. Poverty is a recurrent theme in their pleadings on arrest. In studying the cases of the lowest of all in the pecking order – women like 'la de Neel', who distributed notices announcing the arrival of ships in Rouen (f.fr. 22084, f.236), or 'the woman Truchau', who sold (apparently stolen) songs in 4 page broadsheets (f.fr. 22066, doc.6), one gets a sense of the desperate efforts these women made to fight off destitution for themselves and their families.
[72] See *Les femmes compositrices* 1862, p.8.

of the trade, including type-casting. She saw no problem in women competing with tradesmen who were frequently, she implied, inadequately educated for their work.[73] There is little evidence that these initiatives bore significant fruit, but they do indicate an explicit consciousness of women's exclusion from this major area of cultural transmission as the old regime drew to its close.

It would be useful to find journals or letters by some of the shadowy women we have encountered in various areas of the trade, which might allow us more insight into their interests and motivations, but, of course, all we have learnt indicates how little time they would have had available for recording their lives. Few would seem to have had a particular commitment to the growing female reading public, with obvious exceptions such as Ann Baldwin, who brought out *The female Tatler* in 1709, the first periodical written, printed and published by women, for a purely feminine public. She and others deserve further attention which will draw them out of the shadows.

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[73] De Bastide, 'L'Imprimerie des femmes', in Duhet 1981, p.87-93. I am grateful to Dr. Jean Bloch for bringing this text to my attention.

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Paul Hoftijzer

Women in the early modern Dutch book trade

Sometime around 1622 – the exact date is unknown – the official printer of the Dutch Republic, Hillebrant Jacobsz. van Wouw, died in The Hague. He obviously had felt his end drawing near, for already in 1618 he had made provisions for his succession. He had requested the States General, the governing body of the United Provinces, to allow his widow and heirs to continue in his place after his death. The request was granted, and in 1622 his wife Machteld Aelbrechts, herself the daughter of Van Wouw's predecessor, took over the office of state printer. During her long career, which lasted almost 40 years, from 1622 until her death in 1661, her printing establishment produced an enormous amount of all sorts of official publications, but also many pamphlets and several important legal, historical and religious publications. With considerable commercial success, so it appears. A few years before her death this remarkable entrepreneuse was one of the richest inhabitants of The Hague with a fortune of some 225.000 guilders. Today she would have been a multimillionaire.[1]

The widow Van Wouw was one of many female printers, publishers and booksellers in the Netherlands in the late 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, but surprisingly hardly any attention has so far been given to them as a group. This lacuna is too large to be remedied here. What will be presented in this article are some general observations on the conditions under which women were able to participate in the early-modern Dutch printing and publishing industry. In addition, some individual cases will be highlighted.

One of the stereotypical remarks often found in descriptions and travel journals of foreign visitors to the United Provinces concerns the remarkable participation of women in Dutch economic life. In 1682, the Oxford scholar Richard Peers wrote, for example:

> [...] their women not only in their shops sell all, and take account of all, but sail from city to city in managing the greater affairs of merchandise, the men taking mony of them for their daily expences, and gladly passing away their time in idleness and pleasure [...][2]

[1] Kossmann 1937, p.453-454.
[2] *The English Atlas* 1682, p.49.

One may wonder to what extent this and similar remarks were really based on personal observation and experience, since so often these visitors copied their guide books or other journals. The *topos* may well go back to the 16th century. Already in 1567 the Italian historian Lodovico Guicciardini, in his popular description of the Low Countries, had commented upon the independence and bossiness of Dutch women in both domestic and commercial affairs.[3]

Yet, there is ample evidence to show that women did indeed play an important role in Dutch economic life. Much research still needs to be done on the various factors that determined the working conditions of women in early-modern Holland in relation to their age, social position, legal status, education, and religion, but it is an established fact that in the 17th and 18th centuries women were employed in almost every branch of work. At a time when the Dutch economy was flourishing, women earned their wages as labourers in, for instance, the textile industries, salt works, breweries, and brickyards. They furthermore worked in agriculture, catering (including prostitution), social and medical care, education, and as housekeepers and servants in private households. In all these areas, as in society at large, their position was as a rule inferior to that of men. They earned less and had few prospects of improving their situation.[4]

In one economic sector, however, women appear to have had perhaps not an equal position, yet one which gave them better opportunities to develop their individual skills and talents: that is in the numerous small, family-based manufacturing businesses and retail shops. Here too, men – husbands and fathers – were in charge, but wives and daughters in many cases had an important, sometimes even predominant share in the day-to-day management of the family business.[5]

This situation holds true also for Dutch 17th- and 18th-century printing establishments and bookshops, which in most cases were small firms with only a few employees and apprentices.[6] Women contributed to the running of these enterprises in various ways, although it is difficult to establish exactly to what extent. The general problem of women's history in the early-modern period, a lack of source material, equally occurs in the study of women's participation in the book trade.

In all likelihood, women were not involved in the actual printing, which demanded considerable strength, but there are occasional references to women and girls operating as proofreaders and typesetters. This means that they possessed at least some elementary reading skills. One of the daughters of the great 16th-century Antwerp printer Christopher Plantin is said to have helped her father with the proofreading of

[3] Guicciardini 1567, p.30: 'Sono veramente sobrie, & poi molto attive, trattando non solo le cose familiari, della quali gli huomini poco s'impacciano, ma si mescolano ancora di comprare & vendere mercantile, & beni, & di por' mano, & bocca in tutti gli altri affari virili: & cio con tanta destrezza, & diligentia, che in molte parti, come in Hollanda, & in Silanda gli huomini lascian' far' quasi ogni cosa a loro'. See also the contribution of Marijke Spies, who argues that this situation was not to last.

[4] Cf. Dekker 1992, p.419-421.

[5] De Vries/Van der Woude 1995, p.690.

[6] Cf. on Dutch printing establishments, Janssen 1986, p.86-88. It is important to emphasize that in this period bookselling was still synonymous with publishing, due to the custom of wholesale selling and buying of books by exchange.

his publications. She was even able to read out texts in Greek, Latin, and various oriental languages, however without understanding their meaning.[7] Of an even more anecdotal character is the story that the Leiden Elzeviers, one of the most famous 17th-century Dutch printers, employed women as proofreaders, because they would never make arbitrary corrections in the text.[8] Several Yiddish works printed by the Jewish printer Moses ben Abraham Avinoe after his departure from Amsterdam to Germany, were, according to the colophons at the back of the books, set by his daughters Ella and Gella. A moving example of such a colophon in an English translation reads as follows:

> The Yiddish type I have set with my own hand
> Ella, daughter of Mozes from Holland
> I am only nine years of age
> The only girl of six children
> So if you will find an error
> Please remember, this is the work of a child.[9]

When the printing was finished, the printed sheets had to be folded, gathered, and stitched, work which in many cases will have been performed by women.[10] The binding and embossing of books was the task of professional bookbinders, but certain types of luxury bindings, particularly embroidered and painted bindings, were certainly made by women.

A more menial job was the colouring of book illustrations and engraved maps, for which work men as well as women and children were employed. They normally worked according to models, but some reached a high degree of skill and artistry. Plantin hired the services of one Myncken Lieffrincks, who ran her father's printing establishment in Antwerp from 1567 on and who was specialized in colouring and decorating maps for costly de luxe atlases.[11] There can be little doubt that in the 17th-century Amsterdam workshops of such famous map and print publishers as Blaeu, Janssonius, and Visscher women will have found similar employment, although there are no documents to prove it.

The commercial distribution of books took place in various ways. The most important channel were the bookshops and it is here that the notion of a family business can be most clearly observed. As a rule, the wife and/or daughter(s) of a bookseller were engaged in such activities as the selling of books, taking orders, and performing administrative duties. A curious example of the cooperation between husband and wife can be found in the Leiden municipal archives. In 1659 the Leiden bookseller Nicolaas Prins and his wife Maria Bastingius were both convicted for having acted as receivers of stolen books. The couple had compelled four schoolboys to stealing

[7] Voet 1969-72, vol.I, p.143-144.
[8] Cf. Meyer 1840-1855, vol. VIII, p.491, s.v. Elzevir: 'Als eine den E.n eigenthümliche Maxime erzählt man, sie hätten einen grossen Theil ihrer Drucke, durch Frauen korrigieren lassen, in der Voraussetzung, das diese dabei sich nie eine eigenmächtige Veränderung des Textes erlauben würden'. I thank Otto Lankhorst for kindly providing me with this reference. No earlier source of this story has been found.
[9] Keyser 1997; see also Fuks-Mansfeld 1998, p.54.
[10] Cf. Storm van Leeuwen 1976, p.39.
[11] Cf. Goedings 1989, p.116-117.

books from the libraries of their parents, even providing them with a list of the books they desired. In 1669, seven years after the death of her husband, Maria Bastingius was again convicted, this time for selling pornographic books to pupils of the 'Latin School'.[12]

The partnership that could exist between husband and wife in the book trade is vividly illustrated by two well-known drawings of bookshop interiors by the 17th-century Haarlem artist Salomon de Bray in the *Rijksprentenkabinet* in Amsterdam.[13] It is not known if these drawings were made from life, but they do present a reliable image of what these bookshops looked like and what objects were sold in them. They also show the prominent role of the bookseller's wife or his daughter in helping customers.

Two 17th-century library interiors, by Salomon de Bray (Haarlem)

Street trading was another way of selling books, particularly for small publications such as newspapers, pamphlets, almanacks, and chapbooks. In every city, but also in the country, hawkers and pedlars were active, carrying their wares in baskets and packs. Established booksellers looked upon these street vendors as a great nuisance, since they took away part of their trade, and the city authorities were constantly asked to take measures against what in one Amsterdam protest were called 'the large multitude of young and old people, mostly the scum of the population, too lazy to work, who in the streets vend their books, newspapers and pamphlets'.[14] Many of the hawkers were women, and it is even possible that whole families were employed in this line of work, but again the source material is very scarce. One of the rare

[12] Leiden, Municipal Archives, Notarial Archives (NA) 740, no. 38 (28 February, 1659); Judicial Archives, Correction Book N, fol. 191 (10 March, 1659) and Correction Book O, fol. 31 (28 March, 1669).
[13] Inv. no. RP-T-1884-A-291.
[14] Van Selm 1992, p.71.

documented cases is that of one Machtelt Fijnemans, who was convicted in The Hague in 1651 for peddling illicit pamphlets and newspapers. In her confession she told that she had been active in this branch of work for some six or seven years, obtaining her merchandise either under sealed cover or from nearby Delft, and selling it by going round the various inns and taverns. Her punishment was ten years banishment from The Hague, but within two years she was back in town.[15]

Examples such as the above do not evoke a picture of independently operating women in the book trade. They either worked for an employer or, when active within a family unit, held a position subordinate to the head of the family, i.e. the husband or father. The very few independent women who appear to have had a bookshop of their own did so at some distance from the commercial hustle and bustle where they caused no threat to the established firms. For instance, in some towns one finds Catholic lay-sisters (Dutch *klopjes*), who were active in the distribution of books among co-religionists. They had stalls and small shops near the various Catholic churches, which were tolerated by the city authorities. One of them was Hendrikje Kool, who according to the estate inventory drawn up after her death in 1697, had kept a good quantity of theological, historical, and literary works besides a large store of Catholic church books and devotional works in her shop in the Warmoesstraat in Amsterdam.[16] The general opinion in early modern Dutch society, however, was that women should not have a business of their own.

There was a way of escape from this convention, at least for some. Marriages in the pre-industrial period normally did not last very long due to the relatively short life expectancy of adult men and women. The chances of one of the partners dying young were quite considerable. So when a husband or father died, his wife, or in the absence of a son, his daughter took over the running of the firm. This was allowed by the local guilds of printers and booksellers, which attached great value to the continuance of businesses and safeguarding the interests of the children. For instance, article 17 of the regulations of the Utrecht guild of booksellers and printers, which was drawn up in 1667, stipulated that the widow of a deceased master could become a member of the guild herself within one year of her husband's death. If she remained unmarried, she could continue her late husband's profession in order to keep up the position she was in during her marriage.[17] It is this one rule which, as in many other branches of trade and industry, provided women with the opportunity to work as independent entrepreneurs in the book trade. And although some chose to remarry as soon as possible with a colleague of their husband or with the firm's overseer, and others transferred their rights when their eldest son came of age, there were still many who continued for as long as they could, sometimes even under their own name.

There are many examples to be given of widowed women (besides a few unmarried daughters) who were independently active in the Dutch book trade. A rough count of the number of widowed booksellers in Amsterdam alone produces some 60

[15] Kossmann 1937, p.129.
[16] Cf. Leuven 1951, p.30 and 42; Kleerkooper/Van Stockum 1914-1916, p.1234.
[17] The Rotterdam guild regulations of 1720, however, demanded that the widow of a bookbinder should hire the services of a capable servant ('bequaem knegt'); cf. Van Mourik/Vercauteren 1997, p.468.

names for the 17th century, against approximately 800 male colleagues.[18] A few remarkable cases from the 17th and early 18th centuries will be briefly presented below.

Regrettably, the activities of the widow Van Wouw, with whom this contribution began, remain largely unknown to us. It is frustrating to find that during her long career as official government printer in The Hague she left hardly any trace. Simple questions concerning her relationship with the States General, the size of her business, the number of people she employed, the possible cooperation with her son and eventual successor Hillebrant Junior, cannot be answered. It has even been suggested that she led the firm only in name and that another person was in charge.[19] That she was a shrewd businesswoman can, however, be concluded from the fact that she succeeded in obtaining the exceptional privilege from the States General for the publication of the so-called *Staten Bijbel*, the Dutch 'Authorized Version', commissioned by the Synod of Dordt in 1618. Although the actual printing of this prestigious publication took place in Leiden, it was Machteld van Wouw who financed the entire project. The bible, first published in 1637, was a great success, and despite the numerous pirated editions that soon appeared it must have brought her substantial financial revenues, which helps to explain the large fortune she had accumulated at the end of her life.

A woman about whom much more is known is the widow of the Amsterdam bookseller Jan Jacobsz. Schipper, Susanna Veselaer. Coming herself from a prominent Amsterdam bookselling family, she had married Schipper in 1650. He was an important member of the Amsterdam book trade establishment, renowned for his 1655 edition of the collected works of the Dutch statesman-poet Jacob Cats and the folio edition of John Calvin's *Opera omnia* in 1667; moreover, he was a minor figure in the Amsterdam literary scene. After his death in 1669 his widow continued the firm, but in a rather different way. Members of her family had previously been engaged in the mass production of cheap English bibles for the British market. Having secured a virtual monopoly for the printing of these bibles, Susanna Veselaer expanded this activity into one of the largest printing and publishing enterprises in Amsterdam of the second half of the 17th century. In 1673 she began a partnership with the Jewish printer Joseph Athias, who was also engaged in the large-scale production of bibles and church books for every religious denomination, besides pirating foreign bestsellers. Their cooperation was such a success that a few years later they had their own letter foundry, and in 1685 were able to set up a splendid new printing establishment, which housed no fewer than twelve printing presses. Athias was an excellent printer, who is said to have invented a new, revolutionary printing method, but he was no businessman; in 1695 he went bankrupt. Susanna Veselaer, on the contrary, was a commercial genius who directed her business with a firm hand. Like the widow Van Wouw she died an immensely rich woman, with an estimated fortune of between 300,000 and 500,000 guilders.[20]

[18] The count is based on Gruys/De Wolf 1989.
[19] Kossmann 1937, p.453-454.
[20] Cf. Van Eeghen 1960-1978, vol. IV, p.96-177 and Van Eeghen 1966.

Two other widows who were active in the Amsterdam book trade at this time deserve to be mentioned. Already in the 17th century Amsterdam was a truly cosmopolitan city. Immigrants came to the city from all over Europe for economic reasons, as a result of the rapid expansion of trade and industry, but also on political and religious grounds, for compared to other places Amsterdam was a haven of tolerance. Among these religious refugees were groups of English Protestant dissenters, most of whom had arrived with their wives and children in the decades around 1600. By the second half of the 17th century many of these exiled families had lived in Amsterdam for two or three generations, without, however, having lost their puritan zeal and hope for a return to their fatherland. Among them we find two bookselling couples: Joseph Bruyning, or Browning, as his original English name was, and his wife Mercy Arnold; and Steven Swart, who was a native Dutchman, and his English wife Abigael May.[21] For them the printing press was more than a way to earn a living; it was a God-given instrument to spread the gospel and fight against their enemies in England. After both men had died – Joseph Bruyning in 1672, Steven Swart eleven years later – they were succeeded by their widows.

The activities of Mercy Arnold and Abigael May were rather different from those of the widow Schippers, although they cooperated with her in the printing and distribution of English bibles. In the eventful years before the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89, when new groups of desperate exiles arrived in Amsterdam from England, Mercy Arnold belonged to a group of radical millenarian and egalitarian nonconformists, who were convinced that the end of time was near. As one English government spy reported on them in 1686: 'such as expect within three years the downfall of Babylon, & the appearance of Christs visible kingdom upon earth [...] for certain, if you'll believ'em'. The widow Bruyning he described as 'the retainer & printresse of all our factious pamphlets', continuing: 'these doe of their absolute power down into the pitt of hell all those that possess five hundred pounds a year; they are of the rich that can't be saved'.[22] Mercy Arnold did not live to see the resurrection of Christ or a more equal society; she died in 1698.

Steven Swart's widow, Abigael May, was more concerned with the propaganda campaign of stadtholder William III against his English uncle and father-in-law James II. She published a whole series of pamphlets to inform the Dutch public about the ill intentions of the Catholic king of England and to prepare it for William's English *coup d'état* in 1688. Abigael May is of interest for another reason as well: in 1689, at a time when Anglo-Dutch relations were in their heyday, she published the first edition of the great English-Dutch dictionary of the Amsterdam Quaker William Sewel. The dictionary, which was soon reprinted together with an English grammar, was the best of its kind for a long time to come. Abigael May died at an advanced age in 1727; she was succeeded by her only surviving son, Jan Swart.

A curious example of a widow succeeding her husband under her own name is Margareta van Bancken, widow of the Haarlem town printer Abraham Casteleyn (d. 1681). She continued the well-known printing office of her husband under her

[21] The following is based on Hoftijzer 1987.
[22] Hoftijzer 1987, p.150.

maiden name, even after having remarried in 1682. She, too, was appointed town printer, besides producing a great variety of printed ephemera such as catchpenny prints, chapbooks, and the like. She was also the publisher of the *Oprechte Haerlemsche Courant,* which was widely read all over the country. When in 1692 the Haarlem magistrates decided to raise duties on printed newssheets, she threatened to put an end altogether to the publication of her newspaper. Fearing the city would lose an excellent newspaper and a profitable source of income (the *Courant* already brought in a considerable sum in taxes), the burgomasters in the end had to go back on their decision.[23]

It was less common for a daughter to succeed to the business of her father. If she had any brothers, they normally would have preference, and if she married, the firm in most cases would continue under the name of her husband. So if one comes across an independent daughter in the book trade, there will have been special circumstances. This was the case with the three unmarried sisters Cornelia, Elisabeth, and Neeltje van Dorp, who together from 1637 until the late 1660s directed the large printing office and stationers' shop of their deceased father Jan Claesz. van Dorp in Leiden. Presumably they were in charge of the general management of the printing office and the adjacent shop in the Haarlemmerstraat. The actual printing was done by a foreman, Jacob Heeneman, who after many years of loyal service was allowed to take over the business in 1669.[24]

Another example of a daughter following in the footsteps of her father is the Amsterdam bookseller Katharina Lescailje. In 1679, when she was 30 years old and still unmarried, it was she, and not her halfbrothers who already had businesses of their own, who took over her father Jacob Lescailje's printing establishment and bookshop on the Middeldam, right in the centre of Amsterdam. Like her father, she specialized in literary works, particularly theatrical plays, for the publication of which she had a special privilege from the directors of the Amsterdam Municipal Theatre. Her shop was an important meeting point for the local literary elite, but that may also have been because of her own renown as an author. She translated several French tragedies into Dutch and wrote a large quantity of occasional verse. Remarkably, she refrained from publishing any literary work of her own. Her collected work would not be published until 1731, twenty years after her death.[25]

An exceptional case is that of Anna Margreta Claus. She was a domestic servant of the bookseller Rogier Comans of The Hague, whom she was allowed to succeed after his death in 1706 as if she were his daughter, because his son was living abroad and his two real daughters were already married. Anna's new occupation as a bookseller specialized in schoolbooks and stationery lasted for no less than 48 years, but unfortunately virtually nothing is known about her activities.[26]

[23] Cf. the facsimile edition of one of Margareta van Bancken's catchpenny prints with accompanying text by Verhoeven 1995.
[24] See, among other documents, Leiden Municipal Archives, NA 677, no. 47 (25 October, 1666) and 678, no. 57 (25 August, 1669).
[25] On her, see *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*, p.396-398 (contribution Lia van Gemert).
[26] Kossmann 1937, p.65.

Frontispice of *De mengelpoëzy van Katharyne Lescailje*.
Amsterdam: Lescailje & Rank, 1731, vol. I

There is no doubt that much research still needs to be done into the activities of women booksellers before any reliable conclusions can be drawn concerning their position in the early-modern Dutch book trade. Further study is needed of individual cases to establish the social, economical, and cultural environment in which they operated. The cases of the nonconformist widow Bruyning and the Catholic *klopje* Hendrikje Kool in Amsterdam, for example, suggest a strong link between selling books and personal religious conviction. The nature of the books published and sold by women should also be investigated to see if any other forms of specialization occurred. There are several 18th-century female booksellers who appear to have been particularly active in the production of children's books.[27] Study should furthermore be made of the relations between male and female booksellers, and between female booksellers and the authors they published. Is it correct to assume that women publishers were more inclined to publish women authors, the more so since it was difficult for the latter to get their work printed? One example of such cooperation was found in The Hague. From 1712 to 1719 Johanna Steenhouwer, widow of the bookseller Meyndert Uytwerf and at the time one of the most important figures in the book trade in The Hague, published the French-language journal *La quintessence des nouvelles*, edited by the female journalist Anne Marguerite Petit du Noyer. Every week Madame Du Noyer punctually received eight guilders for her work, but regrettably that is all we know about the relationship between the two women.[28] Another interesting aspect, which has not been dealt with in the preceding pages, is the role of women as a 'binder' in commercial arrangements. There were many family dynasties in the 17th- and 18th-century Dutch book trade, and it was common practice among printers and booksellers to marry off their daughters to the sons of colleagues in order to safeguard economic interests.

Finally, there is an agenda for an internationally oriented, comparative approach. It would be interesting to look at the nature and conditions of female involvement in the early-modern book trade in various countries and regions in the Western world. Recently, several articles have been published in the *Leipziger Jahrbuch für Buchgeschichte* on women in the English and German book trades, and there are studies on the situation in France and the British American colonies.[29] Were there any differences in the position of women between Protestant countries in North-Western Europe and Catholic countries such as France, Italy, and Spain? What effects did differences in legal systems have? How did the outside world look upon the activities of women in printing and bookselling? An answer to these and other questions will surely contribute to a better understanding of the role and significance of women in this vital segment of the early-modern communication circuit.

[27] Cf. the index of publishers, printers and booksellers in Buijnsters/Buijnsters-Smets 1997, for the names of the widow of Jan Doll, the widow Jacob van Egmont, the widow Gijsbert de Groot, the widow of Johannes Ratelband (all in Amsterdam) and the widow of Johannes van Schoonhoven in Utrecht.
[28] Kossmann 1937, p.416-417; on Madame Du Noyer, see Van Dijk 1988, p.85-133.
[29] Bell 1996; Hunt 1996; Howsam 1996; Lehmstedt 1996; Titel 1996; Hudak 1978; Juratic 1996; Postel-Lecocq 1998. See also Sheridan 1992 and the contribution by the same author in this volume.

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Anna Louisa Geertruida Bosboom-Toussaint (1812-1886)

[...] Er werd haar levenslang een jaarlijks inkomen van vijfduizend pond sterling toegekend.

Zwijgend legde ik de geschriften neer, na er kennis van genomen te hebben.

'Moet ik aannemen, Leo?' vroeg zij, mij aanziende met een onzekeren onderzoekenden blik.

'Mij dunkt, gij kunt niet weigeren, Francis!' antwoordde ik met al de kalmte die ik bemachtigen kon. 'Volkomen onafhankelijkheid naar het materiële is altijd uw vurigst verlangen geweest; die is u nodig zelfs en die wordt u bij dezen door ene vriendenhand gewaarborgd'.

'Gij hebt gelijk, Leo! Ik zal uw raad volgen, ik zal aannemen. Nu behoeft mijne fierheid niet langer te strijden tegen mijn hart. Nu behoef ik geen huwelijk aan te gaan door den nood opgelegd, en zo 'k mij een echtgenoot kies, zal niemand mij verdenken dat ik mij uit belangzucht gewonnen gaf! En zou ik nu rijk genoeg zijn de Werve los te koopen?' viel zij op eens in op geheel anderen toon, enen mengeling van schalksheid en ernst, die mij geruststelde dat hare vroegere opgeruimdheid nog niet verloren was gegaan onder het lijden.

'Neen, Francis! En al ware dat, de Werve is in handen, die haar tot geen prijs zullen overgeven. Om vrijvrouwe van de Werve te worden moet gij wat anders bedenken'.

Toen rees zij op en ging voor mij staan. 'Leo! gij zegt dat onafhankelijk te zijn altijd mijn vurigste wens is geweest. Dat placht zo te wezen; maar ik heb nù begrepen, dat het mijn hoogste geluk zoude zijn afhankelijk te worden van den man, dien ik liefheb. Leo! tante Ronselaer heeft mij een jaargeld toegekend, dat ik niet aanneem, zoals van zelf spreekt; maar zij heeft het goed met mij gemeend, dat erken ik, en haar raad neem ik wèl aan. Zij heeft mij voorgeschreven, geen huwelijk aan te gaan dan met uwe toestemming. Leo!' en zij zonk onder ene gemoedsbeweging die haar geheel overmeesterde, op beide knieën voor mij neer. 'Leo! ik wens mijn neef van Zonshoven tot echtgenoot; hebt gij daar tegen?'

Ik antwoordde alleen door haar op te heffen en in mijne armen te sluiten.

Zij schreide aan mijne borst. Ik schaamde mij niet dat ook mijne oogen vochtig waren. Wij hadden elkander zóo lief en toch wij hadden zo veel door elkaar geleden! [...]

Anna Louisa Geertruida Bosboom-Toussaint, *Majoor Frans. Novelle* Amsterdam: J.C. Lomans jr., 1875, p.398-399.

[...] Francis was to receive from the estates an annuity of three thousand pounds for the term of her natural life.

'Ought I to accept it, Leopold?' she demanded

'My opinion is you cannot refuse it, Francis. Your greatest desire has always been to have an independence and here it is offered you by the hand of a friend'.

'You are right, Leopold; I shall follow your advice and accept it. Now I shall not be forced to marry any one; and if I should choose a husband, he cannot suspect me of having done so for the sake of his money. Shall I be rich enough to buy back the Werve?'

'No, Francis; the Werve is in the possession of one who will not sell it for money. If you still desire to become Baroness de Werve, you must take another resolution'.

'Leopold', she said, rising, 'you say that independence has always been my chief desire. It is possible; but now I understand that my greatest happiness is to be dependent on the man I love. Leo, Aunt Roselaer has left me an annuity which I decline to accept, as a matter of course; but her intentions towards me were kindly, and I will follow her advice. She has forbidden me to marry without your consent'.

Then with an indefinable mixture of grace, confusion, and malice, she sank down on her knees before me, and said –

'Leo, I wish to marry my Cousin van Zonshoven; have you any objections?'

'Heaven forbid! I have no objections!'

And with what rapture did I raise her, and clasp her to my breast, where she shed many tears, whilst my own eyes were not dry. We had loved so much, and suffered so much for each other.

[...]

Translation by James Akeroyd: *Major Frank*. London: Fisher Unwin, 1885, p.325-326.

The weight of a laurel-crown: the future of Dutch early modern women writers

Compiling an anthology of Dutch women writers between 1550 and 1850, called *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*,[1] has been a very interesting task. At first, the 26 Dutch and Flemish contributors did not expect to find very much material because the Dutch and Flemish countries form a relatively small area, but in the course of the project they became accustomed to finding ever more facts and to developing many hypotheses based on them. There was at least one profitable consequence of this. When the book appeared, it was so huge and heavy that it could hardly be overlooked. However, this created a countereffect. Dutch and Flemish bookstores were not so eager to put *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* onto their shelves, including women's bookstores. Apparently, even proprietors of women's bookstores had not reckoned that their own past has its 'monuments of maidens' too.

In this paper various responses to *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* in the Dutch media are discussed. They will lead to some thoughts on future investigations concerning women writers. Finally, the problem of extending projects like these for a broader audience will be considered.

The Dutch media

Met en zonder lauwerkrans was given a good deal of attention in Dutch daily newspapers and cultural magazines, where both professional reviewers and professional scholars gave their impression for a broad public.[2] Most reactions were positive. The majority of the reviewers were women. This indicates not only that women conduct

[1] In 1997, a survey on women painters in the Republic was published too (Kloek et al. 1997). I thank Annelies de Jeu, G.R.W. Dibbets and Frank van Wijk for their help in collecting the work of Elisabeth van den Heuvel. I also thank Annelies de Jeu for her information on some material in this paper.

[2] Some 40 reactions appeared in magazines, newspapers etc., among them the influential Dutch daily journals *De Volkskrant* (K. Fens, 8 December 1997) and *NRC Handelsblad* (M. Meijer, 16 January 1998), and the weekly magazine *Vrij Nederland* (A. van den Oever, 28 March 1998). Also, some 10 radio programmes payed attention to the book. Within a year reviews were published in some scholarly journals: *Neder-L* 7 February 1998 (M. Smolenaars); *Historica* 21/2, 1998 (D. Sturkenboom); *Literatuur* 15/3, 15/5, 1998 (N. Noordervliet/J. Stouten); *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse taal- en letterkunde* 114-4, 1998 (T. Streng/A. van Toorn); *Boekmancahier* 10-37, 1998 (S. Janssen); *Nederlandse letterkunde* 3-4, 1998 (M. de Baar); *Tijdschrift voor genderstudies* 1-4, 1998 (S. van Dijk).

the prominent research in this field, but also that men still rather leave this tricky business to the other sex.

Most critics were amazed that so many women writers had been active in early modern times, and they were even more surprised when they realized how many had been left out of the book. We left out a number of authors, partly because only printed material has been selected, and partly because beyond some point – about a year before publication of the book – no new names were added any more, unless someone turned out to be a striking case of female authorship.[3]

Most of the reactions combined astonishment with praise. In brief, the critics especially applauded the way in which the vast amount of new names was brought to life: their writings are now – at least partly – accessible, while the short essays on lives and ideas give an adequate description of the authors, along with the many portraits and other illustrations. In addition, the thematic introduction provides a lucid analysis of 300 years of female authorship in the Northern and Southern Netherlands. This positive reception makes it clear that one of the contributors' goals has been reached. They wanted a book that would not only be read by professional historians of literature, but that also would be interesting for other colleagues within the field of history, literature and women's studies, and preferably also for the large but rather unknown group of general readers. The reactions confirm a certain level of accessibility.[4]

But this does not mean that the problem of reaching a wider circle has been solved. Again, the reactions illustrate this. Although the critics praised the thematical introduction, they found it hard to jump forward and back in time, meanwhile having to remember names and dates of unknown people. Some suggestions for an alternative order were made, for instance a totally thematic one.[5] An additional problem is how to hold up this colossal book in order to read it. Simply reading *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* almost immediately becomes studying. More than once reviewers suggested that a pocket edition would be very helpful, especially for teaching purposes. Such an edition would be even more fruitful if it appeared in English, containing both the original texts and translations.[6] The point of reaching a broader audience will be discussed again at the end of this paper.

[3] Like Meynarda Verboom, who severely criticized the famous Dutch poet Joost van den Vondel, for his play *Adam in ballingschap* (Adam in exile, 1664). Vondel was a leading author, especially in the field of tragedy, praised by many of his colleagues. Not many people dared to gibe at him. See *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*, p.304-312 (Contribution Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen) and Schenkeveld-van der Dussen 1997.

[4] Streng/Van Toorn (note 2) would have preferred a more scholarly study with elaborated theoretical questions, footnotes etc. De Baar (note 2) remarked that the book halted between two intentions: a study and an anthology. She also pointed out the risk of reproducing the old but unproductive antithesis between women's and men's literature. One critic, Monica Soeting (*Surplus* 12/2, 1998) even saw the book as a superseded and old-fashioned confusion of biological aspects with qualities of art. Soeting's opinion was severely countered by Elsbeth Etty in *NRC Handelsblad* (9 March 1998).

[5] See Sturkenboom (note 2). Furthermore, a subject index would certainly have been helpful to facilitate browsing through the book.

[6] Meijer 1998, a bilingual anthology entitled *The defiant Muse*, presents poetry by 45 Dutch and Flemish women from the Middle Ages to the present.

Another topic arising from the reactions is the question of completeness. A few suggestions about missing sources have been made.[7] To some extent it is possible to predict what kind of material is still to be found. Considering the southern part of the Dutch-speaking Low Countries (Flanders; today part of Belgium), there may be a number of names from the 17th and 18th century hidden in church archives that are not yet accessible. However, our knowledge of the cultural situation in Flanders seems to indicate that 'new' authors will not differ very much from the religious women in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*. Of course, further research has to prove this point. For the northern part of the Netherlands, the Dutch Republic, the situation is more complex, as women writers there produced lyrical poetry, drama and prose fiction.

Striking aspects of – at least Dutch – women's literature are its links with networks of writers (of both sexes) and its conversational character. This goes especially for the many occasional poems. In fact, quite a number of women were discovered *because* they wrote a dedication poem to praise a new book of a friend. Tracing such a poem often meant tracing more poetry, for instance on the occasions of birthdays, weddings and funerals.

This kind of verse underlines the communicative character of early modern poetry, and from a number of papers in this book it can be seen that the Dutch were not alone here: throughout Europe poetry reflected communication. This also makes it possible to reconstruct social circles of acquaintances. My impression is that in the Republic these networks almost always consisted of a number of males (a majority) and a few females (the minority).[8]

It will be useful to continue this kind of investigation. To illustrate this, I focus attention here on Elisabeth van den Heuvel, a 17th-century widow of a clergyman, probably living in The Hague, the city where the affairs of central government of the Republic were conducted.[9] Van den Heuvel is one of the authors who was not included in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*, because she turned up after the closing date

[7] Van Dijk pointed to the Heinemeyer archive in Leyden, containing mainly 18th-century material (see note 2; see also Hochstenbach/Singeling 1988). Other new material was presented by De Jeu in *Musaeus* (5-4, 1998). It concerns the Flemish Everarde van Gent (around 1653), and Cornelia Steengracht from Middelburg (around 1702). The *Musaeus* editors also elaborate on Helena Smunnicx (?-1733; Zwijndrecht and Dordrecht), Grietje van Dijk (Leiden) and Johanna Corleva (Amsterdam). (For copies of *Musaeus:* B. Thijs, Prins Bernhardstraat 4, 3171 CP Poortugaal, The Netherlands.) Streng/Van Toorn (note 2) mention three writers from the early 19th century: Ernestine van Beijeren (alias Lucretia Tornaar), and the two Boëseken sisters, all authors of historical novels. G.J. Schutte and V. Pieters focus on Aletta Beck, who in the early 18th century left Arnhem to live in South Africa (*Zuid-Afrika* 74-9 (1997), 75-2 (1998), 75-3 (1998)). Furthermore, we did not explore daily newspapers. Political poetry by women can be found there, for instance in the revolutionary decade 1790-1800 (i.a. J.J. van Haren-Beaumont (*Haagsche Courant* 1798, January 10, July 4)). With thanks to Peter Altena and Hans Ester.

[8] Annelies de Jeu is preparing a Ph.D. thesis on literary networks, which will appear in 2000. She has already shown that the literary starting point leads to intellectual, political, religious and economic networks, not only in big cities like Amsterdam, but also around the cities of Groningen and Leeuwarden. See De Jeu 1996, 1998.

[9] Her date of birth probably was 7 February 1631, as can be concluded from the poems by her friend Vollenhove (Vollenhove 1686, p.207-209 and 539-540, see note 11). In 1659 she married Johannes de Carpentier, clergyman at Barendrecht, near Rotterdam. He died in 1660 or 1661. According to one of

for admission. With a few variations, the works of this author fit into the pattern of conversational lyrics directed to friends. We become acquainted with her when she publishes some religious work of her husband after his death. This indicates a relatively independent lifestyle; otherwise she seems to be a self-conscious widow too, truly pious but not satisfied to be a perfect housekeeper like the biblical Martha. From 1665 to 1695 Van den Heuvel produced some 40 poems.[10] The word 'produce' is used here intentionally, because many verses are of the type 'variations on a theme', or even: 'variations on one occasion'. Her friend Johannes Vollenhove, a poet himself, once thanked her ironically for the great quantity of poems she produced on the occasion of his birthday.[11] Quantity is a dominant element in Van den Heuvel's work: in mourning someone's death, seven or more variations are no exception. The same goes for poems of praise, especially a series of more than 20 on the Royal family of William III and his wife Mary Stuart. Obviously, writing meant playing with language: besides the variations on a theme, one finds many examples of word play in anagrams and acrostics. And letter games seem to have been a speciality: almost every name is shifted into a sentence. She used four devices herself, all derived from her name: 'Belust na de lieve Haven' (Longing for sweet Heaven) and 'Helt Jesu dau val(t) beneen' (Lord Jesus, inspire us), plus two variations on the last one.[12]

Van den Heuvel's work has a religious character. Apart from many references to the Scriptures, there are allusions to sermons and poetry by several clergymen, colleagues of her late husband. Maybe they paved her way to a writer's network. The most important of these clergymen is the above-mentioned Johannes Vollenhove.[13] He was a poet from the 'second level' and showed great admiration for the great Dutch model Joost van den Vondel. In fact Vollenhove imitated Vondel so often that he was ironically called 'his son'. Whether Van den Heuvel caught this fever too is doubtful. She wrote a poem on the melody of the famous Vondel-song 'O Kerst-

the Dutch biographical lexicons, Van den Heuvel may have had a son, Casparus (*Nieuw Nederlands biographisch woordenboek* vol.II, p. 300). We do not know when she died.

[10] So far poems have been found in J. de Carpentier, *De bruyloft des Lams [...]* (The wedding of the Lamb). Amsterdam 1662; J. Vollenhove, *Afscheit [...]* (Good-bye). The Hague 1666; *Verscheide lykdichten [...] Simonides* (Funeral poems on Simonides). The Hague 1675 (Knuttel's pamphlet catalogue nr. 11362); *Zions herten-leet [...]*. (The grieve of Sion). The Hague 1681 (Knuttel's pamphlet catalogue nr. 11791); *Vorstelyke eertrap [...] 1660 [...] tot 1688* (Royal stairway from 1660 to 1688). The Hague 1689 (Knuttel's pamphlet catalogue nr. 13287); *Vorstelyke helden victorykroon [...]*. (Crown of victory for royal heroes). The Hague 1695 (Knuttel's pamphlet catalogue nr. 14036); *'t Ontstelde Europa* (Europe upset). The Hague 1695 (Knuttel's pamphlet catalogue nr. 14088).

[11] In 1679 Vollenhove wrote: 'Vriendin, die ons verplicht/ En sticht met dicht op dicht' (Friend, we are obliged to you, because of the many edifying poems you send us). Apparently Vollenhove did not always send a birthday poem, although he regularly received one from her. He apologizes: '[...] menigvuldig/ Vont myn gemoet zich schuldig/ Aan uw goet hart voorheen,/ Als myn verjaarzon scheen' (Often, I felt guilty towards your good heart when my birthday came). J. Vollenhove, *Poëzy*. (Lyrical verse) Amsterdam, 1686, p.207 (also p.539-540).

[12] 'Jesu dau helt val beneen' and 'Jesu dau val helt beneen'.

[13] Van den Heuvel mentions for instance (in her words): Vollenhove's *Paessang, Cruys-triumph, Christi ballingschap*, and Sluyter's *Triumpherende Christus* (Eastern song; Triumph on the cross; The exile of Christ; Christ in victory). Among the sermons are those of Vollenhove, Simonides and Lantman. On Vollenhove see especially Dibbets 1991.

nacht' – from the play *Gysbreght van Aemstel* (1637)[14] –, but for a thorough assessment of Vondel's influence more research is necessary. The same holds for the question whether Van den Heuvel had access to poetry from others in the Vollenhove-milieu of Vondel-epigones, for instance Geeraerdt Brandt, Joan Antonides van der Goes and Katharina Lescailje. Maybe she preferred to stick to the closer circle of personal acquintances. In that way she also may have avoided entering religiously dangerous domains; after all Vondel was a Roman Catholic.

Thus, Van den Heuvel assumed a marginal position in a network around Vollenhove, who himself played his part in a group around Vondel. Again – as has been shown many times in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* – poetry sheds light on social contacts in the Republic. There, ambitious women could enter poetic circles. Even literature itself sprang from contacts and networks. My impression is that isolated individuals never published anything, and maybe writing itself was directly connected with intellectual contacts. To take up writing, one had to be a member of some network or other. Regarding Dutch literature, this thesis may hold very well until 1850. And I think this is also a key to poetry throughout early modern Western Europe.

The thesis that writing was connected with social networks can also be tested on material other than lyrical verse, for instance drama. *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* has shown that Dutch women only hesitatingly entered this genre. It brought them out in the open and it took a certain level of intellectual acumen. This goes especially for tragedies, the most esteemed form of drama: it was not until about the middle of the 18th century that women started contributing texts of their own to this genre.[15] Before that, they merely chose the genre of comedy.

Furthermore, their plays were often translations out of French, English or German, or adaptations based on translations, like Catharina Questiers' *D'ondanckbare Fulvius, en de getrouwe Octavia* (The ungrateful Fulvius and the faithful Octavia), originally a Spanish comedy.[16] It served as the opening play for the rebuilt Amsterdam theatre in 1665. Ten years before, another comedy by Questiers had been performed, *Den geheymen minnaar* (The secret lover), an adaptation of *Si no vieran las mujeres* by Lope de Vega. Annelies de Jeu (1996) has shown that this piece was successful. Next year another one appeared: *Casimir, of gedempte hoogmoet* (Casimir or composed pride), adapted from a play by Antonio Enríquez Gómez. In her turn, Questiers

[14] 'Nasang, Op 't Wettig verkiesen der Majesteyten William en Maria [...]', 'Stem: O kersnagt'. *Vorstelyke eertrap*, p.23-24 (Song to the legal election of Their Majesties William and Mary, on the melody of the song 'O Holy Night'. In: Royal stairway).

[15] In Antwerp, Barbara Ogier (1648-1720) may have written original plays, serious and comic. In the Northern Netherlands, tragedies were adapted by, for instance, Katharina Lescailje (French) and Maria de Wilde (French, English and German). In 1745, Lucretia van Merken delivered her first tragedy, later to be followed by more plays and by other authors, like Juliana de Lannoy, Adriana van Overstraten, Maria van Zuylekom, Petronella Moens and Anna Barbara van Meerten-Schilperoort. See *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.391-395 (contribution Marc van Vaeck/Nicole Verhouft); p.396-402 (contribution Lia van Gemert); p.468-472 (contribution Annelies de Jeu); p.572-579 (contribution Marijke Meijer Drees); p.632-638 (contribution Pim van Oostrum); p.742-754, 707-714, 715-720 (contribution Lia van Gemert); p.784-792 (contribution Arie Jan Gelderblom). See also Gelderblom 1996, Van Gemert 1996.

[16] Maybe Questiers' play was adapted in German under the title *Die gedreue Octavia* (Zealous Octavia). See De Jeu 1996, p. 183.

may have been inspired and encouraged by her friend Katarina Verwers, whose *Spaensche heydin* (The Spanish pagan woman) had been performed already in 1644. As far as we know, this comedy, adapted from Miguel de Cervantes' popular *Gitanilla,* was the first play by a woman to be performed on the Amsterdam stage in the 17th century.

The drama material points in the same direction as the occasional lyrics. Again, in order to have one's plays performed, it was essential to be a member of a network. Only they who had contacts in circles around the theatre wrote plays. Besides Questiers and Verwers, Katharina Lescailje and Adriana van Rijndorp are special examples here. Lescailje owned a bookshop that was closely tied to the theatre and sold many plays; she herself translated plays from French. Van Rijndorp managed a theatre company of her own – the 'Duytse comedie' – in The Hague in the first half of the 18th century; she wrote a comedy for her company.[17]

But the drama material may also shed light on other sorts of literature, making it possible to predict what kind of work is still to be found. Looking at the performed plays written by women, it is striking that they are all based on Spanish originals and adapted from Dutch (or possibly sometimes French) prose translations. Thus, it is shown again that Dutch women confined themselves to the popular, but more lowly esteemed, trivial models.[18] Also the conversion from prose to verse is important: prose required much less technical skill than lyrics and often reflected the starting point of a career or modest aspirations – for both male and female writers. And a third point can be added: as we know, prints of plays did not always reveal their author. Concerning women, this is shown in the cases of Petronella Keysers (around 1640), and Lucretia van Merken (a century later).[19]

Let us have a look at the third genre that was mentioned earlier: prose fiction. This kind of literature got a minor place in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans.*

Concerning the novel, there seems to be a difference between France and the Netherlands, at least for the 18th century. In France, women began writing novels earlier than in the Dutch Republic, and it seems that they took more opportunities to bring specific women's themes to the fore. This has also been suggested concerning (English) Orientalism and the oriental tale of the 18th century: this new, exotic 'genre' provided women – and other 'marginal' groups like homosexuals – with the opportunity to develop their own forms.[20] To explain the difference between France and the Netherlands, certain factors have to be taken into account.[21]

[17] See *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*, 1997: p.316-321 (contribution Theanne de Boer/Lia van Gemert); p.240-243 (contribution Annelies de Jeu); p.396-402 (contribution Lia van Gemert); p.536-539 (contribution Nelleke Moser). On networks around the Amsterdam theatre see Grabowsky/Verkruijsse 1996.
[18] See on the huge popularity but low official esteem for Spanish drama Smits-Veldt 1991 and De Haas 1996.
[19] See Van Vaeck 1996 and *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.213-218 (contribution Marc van Vaeck); p.572-579 (contribution Meijer Drees).
[20] See for instance Mack 1992, p.XVI-XVII; Melocarro 1992.
[21] See also Schenkeveld-van der Dussen's notions on the contrast between milieus of cities and provinces in France, and Van Dijk's paper, both elsewhere in this book.

The Dutch novel began its heyday relatively late, around 1780, with epistolary novels similar to Richardson's. Soon Wolff and Deken placed themselves in the forefront. They immediately took the opportunity to put a woman at the centre of their stories, and in this respect Elisabeth Post was soon to follow them. It is hard to tell whether Dutch women found their lives more or less problematic than those of foreign colleagues, but it is useful to remember that the Republic had been established on the humanistic philosophy of every individual making his or her own decisions within his or her domain. This philosophy took a kind of balanced model of responsibility and freedom as a basis for behaviour. Of course, this does not mean that women did not have specific problems, but possibly they were less acute than for women in other countries. Further, to denounce their situation, women seem to have chosen lyrical verse rather than prose fiction, as for instance Juliana de Lannoy and Elisabeth Post show.[22] Maybe before 1780 the Dutch novel was too little appreciated to be a serious channel for discussing women's themes. In this view it would have been just the epistolary novel that gave them more possibilities to draw attention to their case.

Before 1780, the prose circuit in Western Europe (for instance in the Netherlands, England and Germany) mainly consisted of 'spectatorial' essays and adventurous love novels, that often showed libertine elements. The problem here is that in most cases we have no idea who wrote them. Although a number of *'spectatorial'* writers has been identified – among them two women, Wolff and Moens –, it is difficult to trace authors of anonymous *novels*, male or female. On this point there are not many results yet, and the recent bibliography of 18th-century prose fiction by Mateboer does not raise much hope.[23] From Mateboer's account we can see that foreign authors like Elizabeth Hamilton and Madeleine de Scudéry have been translated into Dutch, but by whom we mostly do not know. Likewise, up until now investigations into a great number of Dutch prose tales 'from the East' have revealed only a few women, the well-known Betje Wolff and one of the minor authors, Anna van Streek-Brinkman.[24] They both belonged to intellectual networks of a kind, and had to earn their living by writing. It is possible that more women will turn up among the translators,[25] although before 1780 literature does not seem to have been a common way to earn one's living, at least not for women. And the men who tried it, like Van Effen, Weyerman and Kersteman, were not very successful.[26]

[22] See *Lauwerkrans* 1997 p.632-638 (contribution Pim van Oostrum); p.696-706 (contribution Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen) and Van Gemert 1995.
[23] See Mateboer 1996. Altena (1997) argued that the author of *De Delfsche Juffer* (The young woman from Delft) (1758) may have been Franciscus L. Kersteman. He also made plausible that the leading character of the book, 'miss W**' from Delft, was based on Willemijntje Wijnmalen (1729-?). In a letter, Altena suggested to me that the more private circuit was still important for women writers during the second half of the 18th century, as can be seen in *alba amicorum* and in local societies of poets ('dichtgenootschappen'). In my view this might indicate again that women in the Netherlands started to write serious prose fiction later than in adjacent countries.
[24] With thanks for this information to Christien Dohmen, who is preparing a Ph.D. thesis on this subject.
[25] See Kloek 1997. Mateboer mentions J.E. Geroe-de Gast (1996, nr. 1735).
[26] See Kuitert 1994 and Mathijsen 1996.

This does not mean that there is no prose material to be found any more. If we go back one century, we see a lot of religious meditational prose going together with the religious verse. To give just one example: Geertruida Sluiter published pious thoughts on the life of the soul in Amsterdam in 1685. This book was at least five times reprinted until 1741.[27]

On the other hand, we must be cautious: not every woman is a woman. In prose pamphlets for instance, male authors now and then use female pen-names to criticize political or religious matters. Authors of erotic 18th-century novels also disguised themselves as writers of women's memoirs.[28]

Thus, especially concerning so-called 'trivial' prose fiction, a lot of material is anonymous. And as history has told us before: the 'lower' someone sinks, the harder it is to retrieve him or her. It will be difficult to associate specific authors with anonymous works. In fact, it may be wise to shift the focus of attention from questions of authorship to problems of female and male point of view, introduced by either a female or a male author. At this point it is possible to benefit from results in other fields of women's history, for instance in the study of gender.

The question of gender

Generally speaking, gender is not given very much attention in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*, except for the basic observation that women had fewer opportunities than men to participate in literary life. The gender observations do not go much beyond confirming the model of harmony that was dominant in the early modern period throughout Western Europe. Both sexes have their complementary tasks in keeping the world balanced, the man outside, the woman inside. Following this principle, explanations were offered for female docility and modesty, and for women's limited participation in literary affairs. There is certainly some truth in this. The concept of balance restricted the number of political works by women and resulted in their reluctance to write plays.[29]

But we have to find a way to get to other questions, like whether women really did not want to be their opponents' rivals, and what the consequences were of the so called 'double identity'.[30] The role of the rhetorical tradition will have to be taken

[27] I.C.S.V. [Geertruida Sluiter], *Het gee[s]telyk leven der ziele [...]* (The spiritual life of the soul). Amsterdam, 1685. De Jeu will explore this subject in her thesis.

[28] See for instance Anna Vlas-braeck, *Pannekoeck voor Sceperus op den Vastelavondt ofte Buurpraetje, Tusschen Grietje van Moordt, ende Annetje van Wenst-veen [...]* (Pancake for Sceperus on Shrove-Tuesday, or dialogue between neighbours Gretha Murderess and Ann Wishful). Gouda 1664 (Knuttel 776583). Baking her pancake, this so-called 'Anna Vlas-braeck' (her name indicating that she breaks the flax instead of neatly spinning it into a thread) comments on quarrels between clergymen from Gouda. Using the topsy-turvy world of Shrove-Tuesday, the author obviously hides behind the pen-name Vlas-braeck. This pattern shows itself often in 18th-century material too, for instance in titles like *De Engelsche Vrouwelyke Robinson [...] Volgens haar eigen Handschrift in het licht gegeven* (The English female Robinson, from her own diary) (Mateboer 1996, nr. 357), or *De Ongelukkige Wilhelmina [...] Door haar zelve beschreven* (Unlucky Wilhelmina, from her own diary) (Mateboer 1996, nr. 1184).

[29] See also Sneller 1996, Van Gemert 1998.

[30] See Schenkeveld-van der Dussen 1996, Van Gemert/Veltman-van den Bos 1997, Gelderblom 1997, Streng 1997.

into account here, especially concerning the 17th century. For the Dutch material a thesis on this subject is currently being prepared by Simone Veld.[31] After 1700, the influence of rhetorical principles decreased, but Sturkenboom showed in her outstanding thesis that the stereotyping of (undesirable) passions – often linked to the female sex – did not.[32] Furthermore, investigations into relatively new fields like journalism, bookselling etc. should not only concentrate on finding new women or facts, but they should also emphatically make comparisons with other relevant individuals, groups and phenomena. In this way the fact that the whole literary world is 'gendered', instead of just the women's part of it, can be fully acknowledged.[33]

The glass ceiling

Some final observations on the weight of a laurel-crown will be made from the starting-point of literary history. There is no doubt, as for instance Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen states elsewhere in this book, that the anthology *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* springs from sociological and functional research. In the Dutch language area this research has been going on since the 1960s, mainly concentrating on Dutch and Flemish historical literature. In fact, because of the results of this method – also to be seen in the success of authors like Bourdieu –, research on modern Dutch and Flemish literature tends to become more and more functionalistic too. Many scholars emphasize the necessity of breaking the established order of famous 'classics'. They appreciate the broadening of the literary field and the growing opportunities to investigate more elements in it than just a highly esteemed text. Most of the reviewers of *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* in the Dutch media expressed this opinion too.[34]

In this connection, it is striking that the reviewers of *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* immediately constructed a new shortlist, as we had done ourselves, working on the book. This illustrates that it is hard to relinquish old habits, but also that reading literature often means looking for aesthetic pleasure. At the top of the ranking are for instance the already well-known Anna Bijns, the sisters Anna and Maria Tesselschade Roemer Visscher and Rosalie and Virginie Loveling, and the novelwriting duo Wolff and Deken. Newcomers are the Amsterdam circle of Lescailje, Questiers and Van der Veer, the champions of irony De Lannoy and Jeanette Delcroix the dancing nun Berchmans, the blind Gerijts and Moens, the maid De Boer and the talented novelist Hasebroek. They all illustrate 'the law of canonization', as I would like to call it: only extremes are taken into shortlists, either because of their talent or because of other remarkable features, that mostly do not have much to do with literature.

[31] Since Spies 1986, quite a few contributions to the Dutch part of this field have been made. For recent results see Van Gemert 1994, Sneller 1996, Veld/Jimkes/Thijs 1996, Veld 1998a and b.
[32] Sturkenboom 1998.
[33] See Meijer 1997 and Meijer's contribution to this book. Lotte Jensen is preparing a Ph. D. thesis on Dutch women's journalism 1785-1870.
[34] Striking examples of this are the reviews by Janssen in *Boekmancahier*, and Smolenaars in *Neder-L* (see note 2). The latter explicitly judges the 'dull poetry' positively because it leads to a more pluriform and realistic picture of the past. Contrary to this attitude, Fens comments on the relatively low degree of poetic quality (see note 2).

At this point, the real question of the weight of *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* poses itself. First, to the scholars. If the results of the search for women writers are to be taken fully into account, the historiography of literature will have to be renewed. New phenomena must be integrated, like the construction of shortlists, the existence of what seem to be the two fundamental concepts of literature (renewal and tradition), the position of various networks and their living up to the conditions of the literary world etc. In the Dutch language area the project of writing a new history of literature, which has just been started, will have a task here.

But secondly, a broader audience for these results has to be spoken to more effectively than has been done up until now – at least in the Dutch language area. It can be found among students of universities, high schools, secondary schools and among all kinds of general readers. This may seem difficult because *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* has relatively little poetical talent to offer. However, the pleasure of literature does not come from aesthetic value alone. Often, people ask what those men and women from the past were *really* like. And to this question, women writers have the perfect answer: a great deal of literature reflecting on everyday life. When, for instance the 18th-century baroness Clara Feyoena van Sytzama adresses her staff out in the open field as follows: 'Don't think, my peasants, that I forget you, or that I ignore your warm sweat falling on the ground [...]', this is a perfect introduction to Enlightenment views on social relations. And when Elisabeth Koolaert-Hoofman urges women with brown curls not to change their colour, no one ever forgets that dyeing your hair was as much an 18th-century habit as a modern one.[35]

Using examples in this way, a different view on literature is offered from those old rankings of superior poets. This may be just the tool to bring the pluriform concept of literature to other platforms than circles of scholars alone. The same goes for views on gender, which often lead to tired reactions from students when they are presented in an isolated form. When integrated into a deeper view on society, for instance through literature, they can be much more effective. Here a pocket edition of the anthology would help, but in the meantime let us use the big red book. This laurel-crown is heavy enough to smash through the glass ceiling one day.

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[35] See *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.592-601 (contribution Arie Jan Gelderblom), quotation p.600: 'Denk niet, mijne veldelingen! dat ik achtloos u vergeet,/ Of met onverschillige ogen zie uw warm en druipend zweet'; p.441-444 (contribution Ton van Strien), quotation p.89: 'Ruilt no[o]it uw kleur bevallige bruinetten/ Voor blanke verf of blonde kuif'. On this point see also Porteman 1997.

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Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen

Met en zonder lauwerkrans in an international perspective

In *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*, history and anthology of Dutch-language female writing, only incidental attention is paid to international aspects. This was inevitable given the method and purpose of the book, but it is a pity. The Low Countries have been internationally oriented in many fields, and it is of crucial importance to know what the position of Dutch women's writings was in the international field. On this subject almost all the work still has to be done, so what I offer here are some introductory remarks and suggestions.[1] I shall confine myself to a number of points of comparison, in certain sub-areas, in the hope that the not too distant future will bring us a 'History of European women's literature', surely desirable from not only a Dutch perspective.

Similarities

In the first place I should like to note a few similarities between our findings and what has been remarked in other countries. With regard to the dissemination of texts, for example, the common practice in the Netherlands of copying by hand was also widespread in the rest of Europe.[2] Many of the same complaints and strategies with regard to writing itself can be noted. The conflict between household work and writing poetry, spanned the continent. 'My work doesn't amount too much, I did it while rocking the cradle', wrote Johanna Coomans (1623). Anna Roemers complained (1619), half seriously, half in jest, that she had no business on Mount Helicon any more now that she had to care for her aged father. Her Scottish contemporary Mary Oxlie (1620) echoed her complaint: 'Perfection in a Woman's worke is rare, / [By] Hoarse encumbrances of household care', as did Lady Masham (1620): 'T'is in Vain that you bid me Preserve my Poetry, Household Affairs are the Opium of Soul'. No less effective is the sonnet 'A ma quenouille' by Catherine des Roches (1579), in praise of her spindle, which she will never neglect in favour of pen and ink, although she points out that it is pen and ink that have made her tribute possible.[3]

[1] Currently in preparation, a volume with the working title *'I have heard about you'. Women's writing crossing borders* will discuss the question of the international relations between female authors in different countries and illustrate the role played in the Dutch literary landscape by foreign women (Middle Ages – ca. 1900). Editors: Petra Broomans, Suzan van Dijk, Janet van der Meulen, Pim van Oostrum.
[2] See e.g. Greer 1988, p.6 and passim; Gifford/McMillan 1997, p.xvi and 28.
[3] Coomans: *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.159 (contr. Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen); Roemers: Roemers 1999, p.94; Oxlie: Gifford/McMillan 1997, p.28; Masham: Greer 1988, p.317; Des Roches: Aubaud 1993, p.30-31.

Just as topical but no less genuine are the complaints regarding opportunities to study. Margaret Cavendish (1655) laments: 'we are become like worms that only live in the dull earth of ignorance', and Marie de Gournay expresses her anger in invective (1626) against the only virtues allowed to a woman: 'ignorer, faire le sot et servir', which made it impossible for her to be 'sage sans crime'. In the Netherlands, Johanna Hoobius is somewhat less fierce when in *Het lof der vrouwen* (In praise of women 1643) she has to admit that she hasn't learned a great deal, although she knows that there have been many wise and learned women, and ends her text with a tribute to the eminently learned Anna Maria van Schurman.[4]

What is also present in Dutch women's literature is the strategy of hiding one's learning. Madeleine de Scudéry warns (1649) against the 'femme savante', preferring the 'femme cultivée' who wears her learning lightly and knows how to 'cacher adroitement ce que l'autre montre mal à propos'.[5] Less intellectual women were apparently jealous of their gifted sisters: Maria Burghope complains (1699) of 'the illiterate part of our Sex [..] They know not the use and value of Learneing, and like Brute Beasts speak evill of that they understand not'.[6] One way of protecting themselves from jealous fellow women is to show solidarity with the traditional womanly occupations. Betje Wolff is bitter about other women who despise her or regard her as a curiosity, but she – whose erudition was equalled by her ambition – was remarkably sympathetic to men whose wives were less interested in attending to the needs of their husbands and children than in reading the works of Rousseau. In the same way Juliana de Lannoy emphasized 1766 that she in no way considered herself too good for the society of women as long as her right to engage in writing was recognized.[7]

Admittedly, every country had its own, learned exceptions to the rule who were then seen as examples for others. Erasmus, for example, speaks of learned women in Spain and Italy, goes on to describe the daughters of his friend Thomas More, and concludes with Caritas Pirckheimer (1467-1532), the *virgo docta*, indeed, *doctissima*, who came from a cultivated, aristocratic family with excellent contacts at Court.[8] Although she was a nun, Pirckheimer led the life of a humanist behind the convent walls, conducting learned discussions, correspondence and her writing. In the Netherlands a similar role was played by Johanna Othonia (1560-after 1617), who wrote in Latin, and of course by Anna Maria van Schurman (1607-1678), who was celebrated throughout Europe. Nor is it a coincidence that they were all 'virgines', that is to say, unmarried.

The strategies of Dutch women writers were thus the same as those of their foreign counterparts and they, too, expressed themselves in the double-voiced discourse. On the one hand they conformed to the prevailing mode of poetics and wrote in a learned

[4] Cavendish: Gifford/McMillan 1997, p.39; Gournay: Aubaud 1993, p.31; Hoobius: *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.230, 233-234 (contribution Els Stronks).
[5] Aubaud 1993, p.35.
[6] Greer 1988, p.21.
[7] *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.627-628 and 636 (contribution by resp. Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen and Pim van Oostrum).

fashion and with frequent mythological references; on the other hand, they resort to distance and irony as weapons. Let me briefly refer to Anna Roemersdr. Visscher (1583-1651), one of the first women poets who acquired a kind of structural position in 'the' literary world of the time, i.e. that of the 'famous exception'. Every well-known poet in the Netherlands, be it Vondel, Cats, or Heinsius, threw himself at Anna's feet and showered her with accolades. Anna Roemers' function was to prove to her male counterparts that the Netherlands now had its own Sappho and could therefore compete on equal terms with other civilized countries. Now, Anna Roemers, when she so desired, could hold her own very well in that world: she could write with verve and according to the rules of rhetoric and poetry. Her alexandrines flow, her use of mythology is appropriate, her literary manners are excellent. But it is also clear from numerous poems that she in fact kept the literary in-crowd and the rules they followed at a considerable distance. The acclaim she received from every quarter she dismissed, but not only that: she made fun of it and made it clear that she rejected the insincerity of the prevailing literary discourse.[9] There is a similar figure in Germany, fifty years later, Christiana Mariana von Ziegler (1695-1760).[10] She had her own salon, was a cult figure in Leipzig and even received a wreath as the Emperor's poet laureate at the university of Wittenberg. She, too, was the living proof that Germany had now reached the summit of civilization by possessing such a woman poet. And Ziegler reacted in exactly the same way as Roemers with a sober self-appreciation and a critical distance from literary society, and finally, just like Anna Roemers, with silence. That last reaction is in fact a dramatic one: highly gifted, successful authors who because of the utterly inadequate reception given to their work, that is, a failure to take it seriously, have no other option than to abandon it.

One last example involves the defence of the writing of pious literature by women. This was a complex question: on the one hand piety and women went together, and there was a theory that women were more susceptible to religious experiences.[11] On the other, there was St Paul's prohibition on teaching for women. The already mentioned German nun Caritas Pirckheimer was caught up in this dilemma. Apparently concerned by her international successes, the church authorities forbade her to use Latin. One of the most common weapons used in this conflict throughout Europe was that of a display of humility.[12] In this way the Scot Elisabeth Melville pointed out (1603) that it was exclusively 'at the request of friends' that her work was published.[13] Others emphasized that they wrote mainly for other women or children and yet others presented themselves as humble sinners who had in fact nothing to offer and therefore did not constitute a threat. In Dutch literature the Mennonite Soetken Gerijts provides an instructive example: her biographer explains in the introduction to her collected poems that she suffers from a triple handicap. She is blind, illiterate

[8] See Ursula Hess in Brinker-Gabler 1988, p.118-127.
[9] Cf. Schenkeveld-van der Dussen 1997.
[10] See Magdalene Heuser in Brinker-Gabler 1988, p.295-302.
[11] Brinker-Gabler 1988, p.269.
[12] Beilin 1987, p.48-51.
[13] Gifford/McMillan 1997, p.31.

(she cannot distinguish a from b) *and* a woman. And through this weak vessel God can demonstrate that it is not the messenger that matters, but the message. It is probably no coincidence that Soetken Gerijts was a member of the Mennonite community, one which does not seek salvation in organized religion but allows space for the Holy Spirit to work its will. Later in the century too, it is precisely women from outside the orthodox Calvinist faith who make their voices heard, like the self-confident Geertruyd Gordon.[14] And completely in line with this are the words of Margaret Fell (1667): 'And whereas it is said, I permit not a woman to speak, as saith the Law;but where Women are led by the Spirit of God, they are not under the Law'.[15] In this way one biblical text is deployed as a strategic weapon against another. Karel Porteman, one of the editors of *Met en zonder lauwerkrans,* has put the parallel phenomenon of writing in Catholic communities in the Southern Netherlands (modern Belgium) in a South European (and also French) context to show how the improbable humility of that unique *doctor ecclesiae* Teresa of Avila, which was also a strategy to ward off the Inquisition, was imitated by many of her sisters in the Low Countries.[16]

In brief, Dutch women writers on the whole fit well into the pattern that existed in other Western European countries. This is also true with regard to the issues which modern research has raised. The Dutch situation, too, demonstrates that 'a smooth story of sisterhood and continuity [...] may involve papering over the cracks' and that 'women writers may often not have looked to «mothers» or «sisters» but rather to «fathers» and «brothers» as their literary forebears'.[17] Nor was the history of Dutch women writers a continuing success story of unending progress led by admired pioneers. On the contrary, an early period such as the second half of the 17th century in which women acted with a degree of self-confidence forms a favourable contrast with a later era such as the Biedermeier, in which they crept back almost entirely into the shell of subordination and domesticity.

Dissimilarities

All these similarities are of course no cause for surprise: all these Western European women were in a similar, disadvantaged position and experienced similar problems in attempting to work their way out of the mire. It is therefore perhaps more interesting to discuss a few dissimilarities which vary according to situation.

A very radical difference between the 17th- and 18th-century Dutch Republic and other countries was the absence of a royal court and the culture that went with it. This also implies the absence of a structural role for the aristocracy. Dutch culture is a bourgeois culture. No studies have been made of the consequences of this fact for women's literature, so I shall have to confine myself here to a few intuitive assumptions. But I am convinced that it is an important difference. In a recent study, Marc

[14] Schenkeveld-van der Dussen 1994, p.16-26.
[15] Gifford/McMillan 1997, p.31.
[16] Porteman 1993, p.206-211.
[17] Gifford/McMillan 1997, p.xiv.

Fumaroli refers to the great significance of French women to language: they were the guardians of civilized conversation in the spoken word and in writing.[18] In my view, that role could only have evolved for French women – and its most visible form was in the *salon* – thanks to the court. For a court is a place where contact and distance have to be maintained in a closed social environment, where friend and enemy have to communicate in courtly language, where underlying conflict has to be concealed in fine words on the surface. In such a field women can play an important role: they are not the principal participants, and precisely because of their distance from actual power they are able to enforce on everyone the good manners, in terms of language, which are necessary to survive in this context. In the neutral area of conversation and culture they are able to bridge two worlds. They can, as shrewd observers, give form to what they experience in such a greenhouse atmosphere, as Madeleine de Scudéry did in her novel *Clélie* or Madame de Sévigné in her letters. Another function of a courtly culture was to drive away the boredom which constantly threatened given the time courtiers had on their hands, which had a stimulating influence on all kinds of art and esprit. What is also important, courtly culture gives a certain degree of acknowledged leeway to evil, adultery and deception. Of course, this is officially not allowed, but within such small circles, a culture in a pressure cooker, in which everyone is familiar with everyone else's faults, life has to be kept liveable through commonly accepted rules. In her introduction to the anthology *Kissing the rod* (1988), Germaine Greer also refers to the role of the court, and in particular of Queens, in making women visible, in jest and in earnest: 'Ladies of high birth are known to have participated in the production of scurrilous lampoons on affairs of court and state'.[19]

In the Netherlands there was nothing of this, and therefore no incentive for women to play the role of the repository of wit and esprit and as reporters of the activities of the chic in-crowd. Dutch women's writing is also thoroughly bourgeois: it consists to a large extent of texts which emerge from the middle-class ranks of ministers and magistrates; they express a Christian, middle-class morality, they describe the life of the bourgeoisie. And anything which might suggest evil is banned: no perfidy, no hypocrisy, no unfaithfulness, no piquancy unless, and then only to a very limited extent, embodied in indisputably objectionable personages. Dutch women's literature is thoroughly virtuous, intolerably so, and I am inclined to seek the explanation for this to a large extent in the absence of a courtly culture.[20] But there is also a positive side: the voice of the ordinary middle-class woman perhaps never sounded so early and so pervasively anywhere else in Europe, and in this respect the Netherlands have made an indispensable contribution to European women's literature.

By far the greater proportion of *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* consists therefore of religious, moralistic and social lyric poetry. This corresponds to the findings in English

[18] Fumaroli 1994, p.138, 139, 141, 295.
[19] Greer 1988, p.22.
[20] Even in the rare periods when the Netherlands had some kind of court, like that of stadtholder Frederik Hendrik (1625-1647), there was no influence on Dutch literature, the language of the court being French.

and German literature, but not to modern French studies and anthologies. Did they not exist in France, then? That seems to me almost impossible, and certain incidental finds reveal another picture, although no systematic and large-scale attention seems to have been paid to this genre as yet.[21] I think that the problem lies in an embarrassment of riches. France has a long and rich female prose tradition – with regard to both content and intellect – starting with Christine de Pizan's *La cité des dames* (1405), through Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron* (1548), to the abundance of novels in the 17th and notably 18th and 19th century, with George Sand as the provisional conclusion within our early modern framework, and a literature which possesses this has no need to concern itself with lyric trivia. Even feminist studies apparently prefer to focus on the highlights.

Yet this does distort the picture slightly. A comparison of Dutch literature with that of the French provinces would perhaps demonstrate greater similarities. While in Paris it was the court and its culture that dominated, in the provinces it was the local aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. Could we perhaps better compare Lyons in the second half of the 16th century with Amsterdam in the 17th?[22] There were apparently a large number of women writing in 16th-century Lyons, with the names of Pernette du Guillet (1520-1545) and above all Louise Labé (1524-1566) having lived on.[23] The work of Pernette du Guillet fits within the usual framework. She came from a noble family and received a cultivated education as befitted a woman of her class. She spoke several languages and played various musical instruments. After a romance with a celebrated poet of Lyons, Maurice Scève, she was married off to another man. She died very young, at 25, and her poems, including love poems, were published by her husband. This kind of thing happened in the Netherlands, too. A woman writer moves in the same circles as a male colleague. She does not publish herself, but after her death others publish her writings on her behalf. Louise Labé was probably familiar with Italian literature and therefore knew of the flourishing tradition of love poems written there by women, for example by Venetian courtesans. The reception given to her work in any event would appear to indicate that people, in this case men, rejected this kind of work and regarded the writer indeed as some type of courtesan. Calvin referred to her as a 'plebeia meretrix'.[24]

There is nothing like this that I know of in 17th-century Dutch literature. In fact there is virtually no poetry at all in which women profess their love for men, apart from the odd poem to a spouse which even then expresses friendship rather than passion.[25] Is this, too, related to the bourgeois nature of the Dutch, or rather to the

[21] Rare examples in Aubaud 1993, p.21-22. Some five names in Allem 1966, Sainte-Beuve 1952-56, vol.I,, p.885, vol.II, p.184.

[22] The time difference of some fifty years seems about right. The Netherlands were half a century behind Southern France in assimilating the new Renaissance influences.

[23] Aubaud 1993, p.16, 17, 25-26.

[24] It is interesting to compare her work with the love poems of Mary Stuart (1542-1587). These were written, not by coincidence I assume, in French, and are partly a tribute of love to her first husband, and therefore acceptable, while the later sonnets are addressed to a lover, and as such break through the strict convention that men take the active role in matters of the heart.

[25] For love poetry by women (for men and women), see Schenkeveld-van der Dussen 1995 and Van Gemert 1995.

dominance of Protestantism? The Calvinist civilizing campaign has as its central theme the blessings of marriage – in contrast to the Catholic exaltation of celibacy – in which women, on the one hand, are given an important position as the hub around which daily life revolves, in bringing up children and providing support and friendship to their husbands, but in which their subservience and dependence are strongly emphasized on Biblical grounds, even in the new religious environment. Initiative is not expected from them, in any area of life. In love too, it is 'man's hand above' as Constantijn Huygens, a Calvinist poet, put it.

As important as Louise Labé's poems is the renowned introduction in which she dedicated her *Elégies* (1555) to another woman poet of Lyons, Clémence de Bourges. The time has come, she wrote, for women to be allowed to devote themselves to all kinds of learned occupations. We should make use of this opportunity. If we write down our thoughts we must do so carefully, nor should we disdain glory. These are weighty pronouncements, for the first opposes dilettantism and a lack of commitment, while the second demands honours for women which are earned outside the home.

A Dutch parallel can be found only much later. At the beginning of the 17th century, when women in the Republic first began to publish the odd poem, the predominant note was one of modesty and constant assurances that they were merely amateurs indulging their fancy when the higher obligations of the home did not call. Only later, in 1665, was a book published in which fame became a theme treated by women: the *Lauwer-stryt* (Battle of the laurels) between Catharina Questiers and Cornelia van der Veer. In a long exchange of poems each woman repeatedly yields to the other when it comes to acquiring eternal fame. In the Dutch context this was an important statement, but little attention was paid to it by contemporaries or succeeding generations. Possibly because besides the theme of women's fame, it contains little else of substance, as a result of which the contest for the laurel wreath is in fact conducted in a poetic vacuum.

What France has – and, of course, England – and that was absent in the Netherlands until well into the 18th century are women's novels – at least, we have been unable to find any. In the Netherlands the novel as a whole was a completely unimportant genre, at least from the strictly literary point of view. There were hardly any original Dutch novels: people read stories translated from the French or Spanish. Those who read French belonged to the upper classes, i.e. the reading classes, and they did indeed read a great deal in French.[26] But this too gave rise to a number of problems: France was regarded as a bad example of loose morals and it was thought that the reading of 'French novelettes' was characteristic of fops and frivolous women from the bored upper middle-class. The novel was therefore despised as a genre. Important writers had nothing to do with the novel and if women wanted to succeed in the literary world, their choice of precisely this genre was probably the worst thing they could have done.[27]

[26] Alicia Montoya has carried out research into the presence of French and English novels in 18th-century private libraries: her findings will be published in the volume mentioned in note 1.
[27] Buijnsters in the introduction to Wolff and Deken 1980, vol.I, p.29-38.

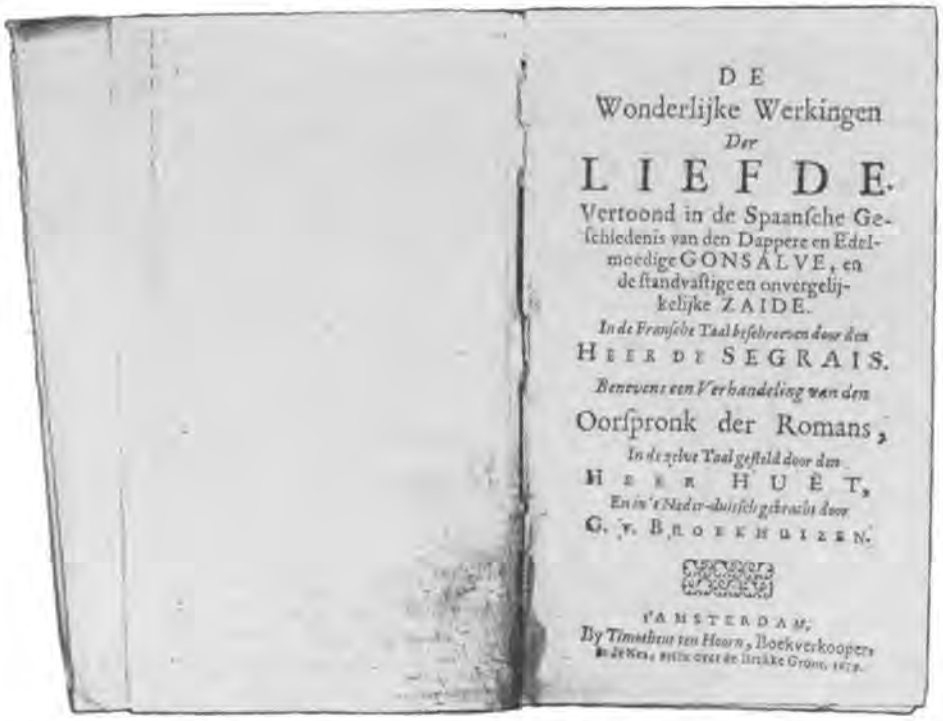
DES
Doorluchtigen Bassa
IBRAHIMS
En der Volstandige
ISABELLÆ
Wonder-Geschiedenissen.
In't Fransch beschreven door den vermaerden Heer SCUDERY.
Een werck, niet alleen treflijck door veelerley wonderlijcke en vrolijcke Gevallen, maer oock bysonder aengenaem door de sierlijcke wellsprekenheyd.
Vertaelt door
S. DE VRIES.
EERSTE DEEL.
AMSTERDAM,
By JAN BOUMAN, Boeckverkooper in de Kalver straet. ANNO 1679.

Frontispice of the Dutch translation of Madeleine de Scudéry, *Ibrahim ou l'illustre Bassa* (1641), attributed - as often happened - to her brother; translation by the prolific Simon de Vries, via the German version by Philip von Zesen.

In addition, 17th-century novels written by Frenchwomen did not receive much attention in this country, and where they did, they were hardly recognized as women's writing. They could not thus function as an example. Madeleine de Scudéry's *Clélie* was translated into Dutch, but the author was called *Mr* de Scudéry. And her *Ibrahim ou l'illustre Bassa* was described in translation (1679) even more explicitly as the work of *Georges* de Scudéry. Things were no better for Madame de Lafayette: *La princesse de Clèves* was published without mention of its author under the title 'The strange and unhappy love affairs of the Duke of Nemours and the Princess of Cleves', thereby placing the book entirely in the tradition of old-fashioned adventure stories and making it difficult for the Dutch public to recognize that the book was a refined psychological study written by a woman.[28]

What we have here is a tale of lost opportunities. France did not provide the example for the Netherlands that might have been expected. The first novel written in Dutch by a woman appeared quite late on, in 1782: *Sara Burgerhart,* written by Betje Wolff and Aagje Deken. The inspiration for the novel came not from France

[28] Gieles/Plak 1988, p.148-153, 193.



DE
Wonderlijke Werkingen
Der
LIEFDE.
Vertoond in de Spaanſche Geſchiedenis van den Dappere en Edelmoedige GONSALVE, en de ſtandvaſtige en onvergelijkelijke ZAIDE.
In de Franſche Taal beſchreven door den
HEER DE SEGRAIS.
Benevens een Verhandeling van den
Oorſpronk der Romans,
In dezelve Taal geſtelt door den
HEER HUET,
En in 't Nederduitſch gebracht door
G. v. BROEKHUIZEN.
t'AMSTERDAM,
By Timotheus ten Hoorn, Boekverkooper

Frontispice of the Dutch translation of Marie-Madeleine de Lafayette, *Zaïde, histoire espagnole* (1669), attributed - as often happened - to Segrais; translation by Gotfriet van Broekhuizen.

but from England, and in particular from Samuel Richardson, whose *Clarissa* was immensely admired by both writers, albeit not uncritically. They found repugnant his extremely frank – in their eyes over-frank – approach to erotic matters.[29] Now, in this respect the adventures of their main character are described with great reticence: the dramatic climax of the story, the unmasking of the charming Mr R. as a bold seducer, rests on little more than a visit to the Botanical Gardens in Amsterdam which got somewhat out of hand. With their novel Wolff and Deken created a model which was followed for decades: an epistolary novel concerning the fortunes of a young woman from the upper middle-class, mainly in the area of love, but anchored within a description of Dutch society in all its aspects. With such an example, foreign works were hardly necessary.

Only about 1840 did something new begin to appear, as a result of the efforts of Betsy Hasebroek. She wrote what one might describe as the first psychological novel in Dutch and she departed from the well-worn path of the epistolary novel. Her work has hardly been studied to any extent and nothing has been written on her sources of inspiration. However, on the basis of a reading of her novels we can say something at least. She read in three languages: French, German and – surprisingly in that

[29] Buijnsters in the introduction to Wolff en Deken 1980, vol.I, p.33-34.

period – in English. One might have expected that she knew something of Jane Austen. But as far as I know that was not the case. Austen was indeed largely unknown in the Netherlands of her era, as she was in continental Europe. Hasebroek was however a great admirer of Charlotte Bury (1775-1861), whose name seldom appears even in studies of women's literature in England. She did receive some recognition in the Netherlands: several of her novels were translated into Dutch in the first half of the 19th century. Another English author whose name is to be encountered is Hannah More (1745-1833). Her consideration of the 'smaller virtues' gave Margaretha Johanna de Neufville the title and theme of her *De kleine pligten* (1824), a novel that points out to women how much satisfaction they can find in fulfilling the small duties of housewifely service, set in a broader setting in that they are seen as an imitation of Christ. There is therefore all the more reason to look forward to a study on the reception given in the Netherlands to women English-language novel writers between 1780 and 1840.

Finally, still in the context of the novel, a brief look at quantity. The Netherlands have always been a small country. Any comparison must bear in mind the consequences of this. Take Germany. In an old *Speziallexicon* dating from 1822-1825 there are already over 500 women writers named and that only a quarter of the way through the century![30] Compared even with England and France these are enormous, almost mystifying numbers. Put that side-by-side with the Dutch situation: in the first quarter of the 19th century there were roughly 25 to 30 women writers who together produced perhaps 25 original novels. When does quantity turn into quality? Or in other words, it *must* make a difference if you are writing within a tiny group rather than emulating lots of other writers, are able to learn from them and, perhaps most importantly, have to compete with them. In that last respect Dutch authors had an extra disadvantage. Here in the Netherlands, a great deal was translated from other literatures, and recent studies have shown that it was extremely difficult for new writers to find their niche. Publishers much preferred to put cheap, translated novels on the market.[31] This problem was not specific to women writers, but it was particularly difficult for them in that it was precisely in this genre that they had won a pre-eminent position – at the end of the period discussed.

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Joep Leerssen

Women authors and literary history

> Wodurch nutzt dem gegenwärtigen die *monumentalische* Betrachtung der Vergangenheit, die Beschäftigung mit dem Klassischen und Seltenen früherer Zeiten? Er entnimmt daraus, daß das Große, das einmal da war, jedenfalls einmal möglich war und deshalb auch wohl wieder einmal möglich sein wird; er geht mutiger seinen Gang, denn jetzt ist der Zweifel, der ihn in schwächeren Stunden anfällt, ob er nicht vielleicht das Unmögliche wolle, aus dem Felde geschlagen.
> [...]
> Hier wird es deutlich, wie notwendig der Mensch, neben der monumentalischen und antiquarischen Art, die Vergangenheit zu betrachten, oft genug eine dritte Art nötig hat: die kritische [...] Er muß die Kraft haben und von Zeit zu Zeit anwenden, eine Vergangenheit zu zerbrechen und aufzulösen, um leben zu können.
>
> Nietzsche, *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*

Literary history as a scholarly pursuit is a historical growth in its own right. Its assumptions and methodology can be better understood if seen in the context of their historical development, and that is what I propose to do here, briefly, with regard to a project in women's literary historiography such as the tome *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*.

To chart the rise of literary history is nothing new. The tone was set half a century ago by René Wellek in his classic *The rise of English literary history* (1941), followed by his magnum opus, the multivolume *History of modern criticism*. For France and Germany, we have the more recent, excellent multivolume enterprise of Michel Espagne and Michael Werner, *Philologiques*. In the Netherlands, there has been a very good survey of the development of literary history-writing by Nico Laan.[1]

However, most of this type of work has been done by scholars who in the first instance were critics, members of the discipline of literary studies, rather than by historians. Historians and cultural historians have, in their theoretical and historiographical concerns, rarely given much specific attention to *literary* history,[2] and literary scholars have on the whole been only marginally interested in theoretical and methodological issues within the craft of history or cultural history. As a result, the obvious truth that literary history-writing is as much part of cultural history as it is of literary studies has been overlooked in institutional practice.

[1] Espagne/Werner 1990 (and cf. Marquardt 1994); Laan 1997; Wellek 1941; Wellek 1961-1992.
[2] Thus, literary history is absent from a recent programatic volume like Rioux/Sirinelli 1997.

Thus, those who have charted the historical development of literary history have usually been literary scholars in the first place, and have placed literary history-writing primarily in the context of the development of literary studies generally: the development of criticism or of taste, or even the development of literature itself. Someone like Wellek, whose ultimate interest in literary studies was the aesthetic problem of what defined 'literariness' in a given discourse, naturally anchored his survey of literary history in a concept of 'criticism' in which textual-aesthetic analysis was the core concern and in which historical investigation was secondary.

If one were to interrogate literary scholars nowadays as to the status of aesthetic judgement ('criticism' in the Matthew Arnold sense of the word, an activity of informed discrimination predicated on artistic value judgements), then practically no-one would admit to this outmoded fashion of a glorified wine-tasting with academic and scholarly trappings. That Leavisite/Wellekian paradigm died out in the 1970s. Even so, old habits die hard, and so, too, in the writing of literary history, the valorizing concepts of achievement, canonicity, taste and artistic merit still enjoy a status which they have lost in current critical practice. Loaded terms like 'smaak' (taste) in Nico Laan's recent survey, or the 'laurels' of canonicity mentioned in the title of Schenkeveld's volume, continue to refer to this valorizing paradigm. Obviously, literary history is seen in the first place as a dynamics of canonicity and artistic prestige.

Indeed, the book that forms the occasion of our gathering here, *Met en zonder lauwerkrans,* is probably highly deliberate in applying, almost posthumously, the paradigm of valorization, value judgement and canonicity. The inclusion of authors in this particular work is not the *result* of a (pre-existing) selective canonization process but rather its *intention:* to establish a new canon, as it were, to redress the balance of centuries of neglect and marginalization. The book is full of evaluative predicates to demonstrate these authors' achievements, their wit and literary skill. Indeed in its very presentation the book is brashly monumental, an in-your-face statement that the women included here deserve a book like this. The epithet 'monumental' has been used repeatedly, by the publisher and by the reviewers, and a monument it is. If, then, the introductory chapter states that 'the intentions of this book are not aesthetical, but rather literary-historical in the broadest sense of the term',[3] then we must be aware that even that avowedly historical aim does not exclude a literary-historiographical approach in which the aesthetic principle of value judgement occupies a central, if discreetly occulted place.

But of course it would be highly unfair on my part to even see this work as a literary history, because it is in part also something else; an anthology. Indeed the word 'history' is absent from the very title; a historical perspective is brought on the material mainly by virtue of the chronological way in which it is arranged. It devotes most of its space not to the description of dates, events, schools and periods, but rather to the presentation of primary material in annotated form. This means that such a hands-on, see-for-yourself literary history can do something which Roland Barthes had

[3] *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* 1997, p.2: 'De bedoelingen van dit boek zijn niet esthetisch, maar literair-historisch'.

claimed was impossible for history-writing as such: the possibility of actually taking the reader to the reality it describes. Given the impossibility of time-travel and the fact that history is about the past, Barthes pointed out that although history claimed to write about 'real' things rather than fictions, it was impossible to actually get to those real things: its topic was considered to lie outside its own discourse, yet was unreachable outside the confines of that discursive representation.[4]

Not so, obviously, for literary history. To the extent that literary history describes *texts* rather than past events or situations, it can do what no evenemential history can do: it can incorporate within its own discourse the things, the texts, which it describes.[5] And precisely this is what intrigues me. The 'monumental' (that is to say: self-referential) quality of literary history, the power of literary history of actually reproducing the data rather than merely referring to them, and the apparently inescapable presence of the organizing criterion of value judgement: all this sets literary history apart from other genres of cultural history, and also seems to affect the specific pursuit of women's literary history in heightened form.

This brings me to the point I want to concentrate on. I want to offer some thoughts on the status and praxis of literary history-writing, not as part of the discipline of literary studies, but as part of cultural history; as a specific form of historiography rather than as a specific form of literary criticism. An analysis of the relationship between literary history and cultural history may also, I hope, throw some light on the specific issues regarding women's literary history.

Literary history is multi-dimensional. On the one hand it is a succession of authors, instances of textual production and instances of textual reception; that is the aspect which it shares with other forms of history, which consist of a succession of acting figures, events being committed and recalled. This dimension of history I call its *successiveness*, a term which I loosely borrow from Gotthold Ephraïm Lessing and his notion of the *Nacheinander*, the 'one-thing-after-the-other'. In this successiveness of literary history, the chronology is fixed. Cervantes comes before Borges, Sainte-Beuve comes before Proust, Austen before Woolf; and thus it is possible for a later author to reflect upon an earlier one, but not vice versa.

The other dimension is more peculiar to literary history, which is also a *canon*. On our bookshelves, Austen and Woolf stand side by side, both accessible to a contemporary reader at the same moment. In that respect they are contemporaries – or at least, the historical distance between their evenemential moments, their *successiveness*, is suspended in their simultaneous availability to a reading public. A canon is not successive but cumulative; it is not a *Nacheinander* but a *Nebeneinander*.[6] The canon is a de-temporalized reservoir of available texts, and thus a contemporary reader may be in a position to read Jane Austen – an earlier author – in the light of a previous reading experience of Virginia Woolf. None of us who have read Borges' story on Pierre Menard, author of the Quijote, will ever read Cervantes with the same

[4] Barthes 1982, p.20: 'Ce discours est sans doute le seul où le référent soit visé comme extérieur au discours, sans qu'il soit pourtant jamais possible de l'atteindre hors de ce discours'.
[5] Cf. also Spiegel 1997, especially her comments on p.21-22.

eyes again. And so, counter-chronologically, it becomes possible for later authors to reflect upon earlier ones – a possibility which the history of literary production excludes and the history of literary reception allows.

This paradox presents a fascinating challenge to readers and critics, who will have to decide from moment to moment at which point the categorical and self-evident pre-given of one's own subjectivity drifts into anachronism; and thus the hermeneutical problem of literary interpretation turns out to be very intimately linked to the dual nature of literary history.[7]

To my mind, therefore, the specificity of literary history, amidst other branches of cultural history, lies in the importance of the cumulative dimension, the fact that literary history works by accretion as well as succession. Something of the same sort could be said of music history and art history, of course, and even, to some extent, of political history, which proceeds by the remembrance of things as well as by their perpetration; but the case is different for literary history. This is largely due to the fact that the historical reflection on literature proceeds through the same medium as does the production of literature: both take shape through verbal discourse. It is for that reason, again, that the pursuit of anthologizing is such a prominent and specific aspect of literary practice, and that a survey like *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* can so effortlessly blend the genres of history-writing and anthology.

Literary history is a blend of the history of writing and the history of reading; the interlocking history of production and of reception, and that is what makes it special. It also imposes upon the scholar a set of clear choices and methodological responsibilities.[8] However, in actual practice matters seem to be more muddled. Although the importance of reception history is implicitly admitted by literary historians by their very insistence on the importance of canonicity and taste (factors which govern the reception and reading of literary texts), the actual substance of literary histories is almost invariably a history of literary production: what we read about is the authors, the moments when texts originated, came into being. The organizing principle of practically all literary histories, even those which aim to be innovative and anti-traditional, is originary and *genetic*, governed by the genesis of the texts in question.

Let me briefly illustrate this with an example. In the histories of French, English, and Dutch literature, medieval texts like the *Chanson de Roland, Beowulf* and *Karel ende Elegast* (Charles and Elegast) are unquestioningly placed at the beginning of the historical survey. But for centuries these texts slumbered, undiscovered and unread, in mouldering and neglected archives. Their presence in the literary imagination of 16th, 17th and 18th-century France, England and Holland was simply nil, tantamount to complete non-existence. It was only when romantic cultural historians and philologists in the early 19th century began to inventorize these archives that these texts were discovered and edited, and they then began to play their role in the literary imagination. The *Chanson de Roland* hits the scene between Chateaubriand and Victor Hugo; *Beowulf* intervenes between Wordsworth and Carlyle; *Karel ende Elegast*

[6] Cf. Leerssen 1998.

[7] Among those who have posited the problem of interpretation in such historical terms are Hirsch 1967 and Jackson 1989.

[8] These have been spelled out most clearly by Vodická 1976.

comes between Bilderdijk and Alberdingk Thijm. Yet that chronology of reception, which explains much in the 19th-century development of the literary imagination and of literary taste, is mentioned, if at all, only in the footnotes, because it fails to fit the overridingly *genetic* paradigm in which literary histories are constructed.

Recently, medievalists have recognized this genetic paradigm for what it is and have begun to scrutinize its implications. In the wake of the work of Michel Foucault it has been argued that this type of historicization is part of an episteme which reflects the values of print culture (rather than manuscript culture or oral culture), with pride of place given to the *author* or *author-instance*. Texts are primarily anchored in the authority of their authorship: their very substance, that is to say, what precise verbal form they take, becomes a matter of philological concern where the guiding principle is some implied idea that the ideal-typical text is the text as it left its author's hands. The further, highly fascinating implications of this fixation on a textual *Idealtypus* are spelled out by Bernard Cerquiglini in his fascinating pamphlet *Eloge de la variante:*

> Partir de textes sûrs, ou que l'on a rendus tels, afin de construire une théorie supérieure du commentaire: démarche que les théoriciens, fort différents, de la 'textualité' contemporaine ne sauraient totalement renier. Le texte comme pierre d'achoppement, de quelque regard très divers que l'on examine, semble une des valeurs de notre Modernité. Origine du discours critique, car il pose lui-même crucialement la question de l'origine (qui énonce, ou le transmet, dans quelles conditions et à quelles fins?), défi et garant du commentaire, car il est la matérialité même (publié sous le contrôle de l'auteur ou du philologue, imprimé, joint au trésor sacré de la bibliothèque).[9]

This helps to situate, historically, the genetic paradigm which itself seems to govern our praxis of literary history-writing: literary history-writing as a pursuit is part of that European modernity which arises conjointly with print culture, with the emerging status of that institution known as 'the author'; conjointly also with that rationalism which privileges the cerebral control of the autonomous individual subject. It is no surprise to find that indeed literary history-writing arises together with the modern genre of the biography in the early Enlightenment, and that as such literary history-writing is almost congenially predisposed towards privileging the genesis of texts, the authorship of texts, the arrangement of texts by author and by date of incipience; at the same time, we witness the rise of *nationality* as the primary organizing criterion of culture and literature.[10]

To recognize this means also to recognize that there are a number of lacunae in this paradigm. To begin with, it means that the elaboration of a history of reception, while it may sound like a good idea, still lacks a cogent, practical, operational methodology. It also means that this is a mode of literary history-writing which privileges Western print culture and its implicit assumptions – and, of course, its inherent privileging of masculine values and male-centred historical factors. I have found

[9] Cerquiglini 1989.

[10] Cf. Marquardt 1994, an article based on the author's *Habilitation* thesis (Leipzig, 1988), 'Theoretische Grundpositionen der deutschen und französischen Literaturgeschichtsschreibung in der ersten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts'.

it fascinating, for instance, to see how our literary-historical assumptions prove completely unworkable in the case of a highly interesting corpus of 18th-century Gaelic texts, transmitted in manuscript, anonymous but obviously written by women. Such texts, although they are of undoubted and universally recognized literary importance, are completely impervious to all our usual historical approaches because their genesis (let alone their authorship) is unknown and all we have to go by is their textual substance in its variable manuscript transmission. Indeed the best way, I have found, of approaching such texts is by the methodology of structuralist folklore studies, as heralded by Jakobson and Bogatyrev, rather than by the 'la vie et l'œuvre' approach of traditional literary scholarship.[11]

So what can I offer by way of conclusion? The marginalization of women's writing in traditional literary history is in part a very deep-rooted side effect of the genetic paradigm which governs the very methodology of literary history-writing and which is also responsible for the marginalization of manuscript literature and oral literature. There are, as I see it, two possible responses to this problem.

To begin with, one can try to redress the balance by setting aside a field of effort where women are singled out for attention. Such an activity is certainly justified in its motivation, will have an obvious relevance for women's studies, and may, besides its primary gender agenda, also have a more general relevance in its findings. For instance, the foregrounding of women writers may help to redress the imbalances of traditional canonization processes, not only in gender terms, but in other aspects as well. What struck me, for instance, in *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* was that it managed to transcend one of the traditional bones of contention in Dutch literary studies: the relationship between Northern and Southern, 'Dutch' and 'Flemish' authors. As the local participants in this conference know full well, traditional literary histories have almost invariably stumbled over this duality, which the gender-based perspective has rendered almost unproblematical.

But I could also think of a different approach. The genetic paradigm as such could do with some re-thinking, and women could more easily be given their proper place in a history which is not just that of literary production, but also one of literary reception. In a history of production, one is continually forced to make excuses why such-and-such a meritorious author failed to acquire the recognition she appears to deserve. The result is a type of historical description which vacillates between the rhetorics of celebration and of apology. It might be refreshing instead to look at literary history, including women's literary history, as a history of readers; for everyone agrees that women have been the prime *readers* in European literary history.[12] The transmission and dissemination of texts could fruitfully be studied with due attention to women readers and reading networks.

A good interface between the aspects of production and reception could be found, I believe, in the area of imagery. For what matters in literary history and in the his-

[11] See Leerssen 1996.

[12] Certainly from the late 18th century onwards. For an inspiring example of a reader-oriented approach to literary history, see Flint 1993.

tory of literary praxis and canonization is not how a given text really was, or how a given author really was – that is a form of historical essentialism which historians have abandoned for decades now. What matters is how texts and authors were perceived; and what matters in women's literary history was how authors, particularly woman authors, and texts, particularly 'feminine' texts, were seen and perceived, particularly by women. So rather than a conclusion I offer a suggestion. On the basis of the achievement of *Met en zonder lauwerkrans* and similar ventures in women's literary history, I think it is time for a synoptic history of literary reception, a history, not of authors but of readers, and in particular for a history of reading as it was governed by images, perceptions and stereotypes.

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Index (names)

The present index lists authors, contemporary critics and journalists, and individuals (such as booksellers and their employees) involved in the publishing industry; contemporary readers, in the broadest possible sense of the term, of the literary works discussed in this volume; and early literary historians – in short: all those who belonged to the corpus discussed in the various contributions. Authors of secondary works are to be found in the separate bibliographies following each article.