

Marot or Ronsard? New French Poetics among Dutch Rhetoricians in the Second Half of the 16th Century

Abstract

French literature was the dominant influence in developing new versification and new poetic genres in the art of the rhetoricians.¹ Lucas D'Heere of Ghent published the first Dutch sonnets. He imitated the poetry of Cl. Marot and conformed to the prescriptions of Th. Sebillet. D'Heere wrote in isosyllabic verse. Inspired by P. de Ronsard, Jan van Hout invited his fellow rhetoricians for a refrain contest in Leiden by means of metrically correct sonnets. However, the new French verse was difficult to write: all great contests between the chambers of rhetoric asked for refrains in the traditional metre or in free measures.

The posthumous publication of *De Const van Rhetoriken*, a manual of poetics for rhetoricians, written by Matthijs De Castelein, marked an important step in the codification of rhetorical poetics in the 16th century. I am not primarily concerned with the text proper of this work, however. Instead, I would rather call attention to surrounding matters, namely to the preliminary texts and to the epilogue of that book. Both were written by the printer, Jan Cauweel, who addresses himself in the beginning 'to all Dutch poets and lovers of poetry which is called rhetoric'.² He starts bluntly by referring to the fact that most rhetoricians criticize contemporary poetry for being printed. Such self-promotion is considered a token of ambition and vain glory. Cauweel disapproves of this criticism with an *argumentum ad absurdum*: if all previous authors had maintained this principle, what would have become of all earlier philosophy, oratory and literature? Even the authors of antiquity, although they did not have the art of printing at their disposal, disclosed their works during their lifetime. Cauweel corroborates his argument by adding the innumerable (so he says) 16th-century Latin authors of all disciplines to their predecessors. Then he turns to the French. As poets appearing in print, he quotes 'Molinet, Lemaire, Habert, Ronsard, Du Bellay, Le Caron, Magny, Fontaine, Colet, Muret, Gruget and Marguerite d'Angoulême among countless others', who are for the major part still alive and whose works are available in print. Finally, he comes to the

¹ The term "rhetoricians" is used in favor of the more common, but anachronistic word "rederijkers".

² De Castelein 1555: 2r.

Dutch writers, a growing number of whom are publishing. Cauweel mentions seven of them, including De Castelein, who are gaining eternal fame by the divulgation of their works. Supported by all these authorities, Cauweel then goes on to summon all Dutch authors to enrich and adorn their language by publishing their works in time. By so doing, the real poet and follower of Orpheus will be known from the vulgar street rhymers.

In our century, this appeal by Cauweel has caught the attention of Dutch literary historians.³ In fact, the printer pointed out a historical anomaly. Printing in the Netherlands started as early as 1473; from around 1500 Antwerp became a leading centre of book production; Antwerp printers provided the English and Danish market with books in the vernacular. Yet the texts of the rhetoricians, the mainstream of Dutch literature in the 15th and 16th centuries, was rather slow to be circulated via the printing-press.⁴ A comparison with neighbouring countries marks the difference: in England, Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* were published by William Caxton as early as 1478; in France, at least six editions of François Villon came out before 1500.⁵ By contrast, the *Rethoricale Wercken* (Rhetorical Works) of a comparably leading rhetorician like Anthonis de Roovere (1430-1482) from Bruges, were first printed posthumously in 1562.⁶ The reason for this backwardness is, on the one side, of an economic nature. Within the rather small Dutch speaking area, printers survived best by publishing Latin texts or religious literature in the vernacular, which had proved to be a long-lived success. On the other side, there was the reluctance of the rhetoricians to allow texts out of their hands. Usually, the statutes of the chambers stipulated that plays or texts written on behalf of rhetorical contests were to be kept locked up.⁷ They should only be handed over to the members in cases of need. The combination of economic pressure and intellectual reticence caused a retardation in the printing of Dutch literature, which could still be felt as late as the 16th century. In fact, the debate on poetics was to suffer from these material causes of poor communications.

The call of Cauweel was a token of great modernity, as he tried to raise the Dutch rhetoricians to the same level as that of the surrounding language communities. This aspect of modernism is also apparent in the lay-out of the book, to which Cauweel himself drew attention. The didactic part of the text had been set in italic type, the exemplifying poems were set in roman type. The printer was well aware of the break with tradition, according to which Dutch texts had to be produced in gothic type. In this respect, he imitated the best Dutch printer of the 16th century, Joos Lambrecht of Ghent, who issued in 1539 the refrains of the famous Ghent rhetorical contest in roman type, advocating the neatness and grace of this new type face. In both cases, the printers reacted against the clumsiness and lethargy of the public. In the epilogue to *De Const van*

³ Willems 1921: 329-336; Waterschoot 1992a: 30-31.

⁴ Pleij 1992: 245; Rouzet 1975: 56, 239.

⁵ *Catalogue* 1897-1981: CCX, 747-750.

⁶ Waterschoot 1982: 152.

⁷ Willems 1843: 258; Stroobant 1843: 383; Willems 1844: 70.

Rhetoriken, Cauweel linked the use of modern typography with his dislike for vulgar rhymers expressed before: whoever has not studied long enough to decipher these characters should not start with the art of rhetoric at all, as De Castelein did not write for such blockheads.⁸

Cauweel's message was clear enough, but was the exaltation of his tone justified? Here the discrepancies begin. Cauweel was active as a printer during the period 1553-1556 only. *De Const van Rhetoriken* was the first and most important product of his press. After that he printed some five devotional tracts and a monetary list, all of them in a traditional lay-out and in gothic type.⁹ His publication of *De Const van Rhetoriken* was manifestly an isolated initiative and remained so. One may wonder from where this man received both the stimulus to print the book and the authority to admonish his audience so firmly. The answer to these questions becomes yet more complicated, if we remember the incongruous company of French authors mentioned during the argument in favour of printing one's own work.¹⁰ Molinet, Lemaire de Belges, Habert and Ronsard are all well-known to us, but who is Gruget?¹¹ And why do we miss Marot? The printer dated his introduction on 12 november 1555. Almost all authors mentioned (apart from Molinet) had books published during the years 1553-1555: Cauweel summed up the most recent publications in the field of French literature. From where did a rather obscure Ghent printer get such up to date information? Cauweel must have received it from Hendrik van den Keere, the second man whose name appears in the preliminaries of *De Const van Rhetoriken*. In fact, after Cauweel's apology, Hendrik van den Keere, or Henri du Tour as he called himself in French, pleaded De Castelein's cause against malicious critics. Van den Keere was acquainted with Cauweel.¹² Peter van den Keere, Hendrik's father, bought the house and the printing material of Joos Lambrecht in 1553 and let it to Cauweel until 1556, when Hendrik took over the business. Besides being a printer and an author himself, the latter acted as a French schoolmaster. Hence the names of recently published French authors in Cauweel's text. Perhaps Van den Keere's part in the preliminaries of *De Const van Rhetoriken* was even more substantial than the composition of a laudatory poem and the cataloguing of French poets. As a man steeped in French literature he may have stimulated Cauweel to write this plea to publish. It was not until several years later that two authors answered his summons.

Meanwhile, in 1562, the most voluminous 16th-century publication of and about the rhetoricians appeared: the *Spelen van Sinne* (Moralties) which had

⁸ De Castelein 1555: 252; Waterschoot 1992a: 27-28.

⁹ Vander Haeghen 1858-1869: I, 132-138.

¹⁰ In his response to this paper, Michael Randall pointed out the incongruity of this list: 'Du Bellay's advice would seem quite clearly to exclude Molinet from the list of inspired poets he and the other members of the Pléiade were trying to form'.

¹¹ Claude Gruget (°Paris + ca. 1560) was active as a translator. Among his publications we list: *Les épitres de Phalaris* (1550), *Les diverses Leçons de Pierre Messie* (1552) and *Les épitres d'Isocrate et le manuel d'Epictète* (1558). See *Nouvelle Biographie* 1857-1866: xxii, 244-245; *Dictionnaire* 1951-...: II, 366.

¹² Vander Haeghen 1858-1869: I, 132-133, 159; Rouzet 1975: 34; Waterschoot 1992a: 30.

been staged at Antwerp in 1561.¹³ In the introductory pages the editor discusses the staging of classical Greek tragedies and Roman comedies and exalts the action of the chambers of rhetoric. The Antwerp contest was the seventh and last meeting of the Brabant *landjuweel*, a contest exclusively held between chambers of the duchy. The winner had to organize the next encounter. The prize was won with the *esbatement*, a comic play, although in the course of time the serious morality had gained more importance.¹⁴ The bulk of the 1562 volume consists of moralities, presentations and salutations; no *esbatement* was included. The editor justifies the preponderance of moralities by arguing that minds are now more sophisticated, arts better understood and poets more numerous. He rightly extols the collection as the first *landjuweel* texts ever printed and finds the art of rhetoric so prosperous 'that before long we may parade our poets like Italy does with Petrarch and Ariosto and France with Marot, Ronsard etc.'¹⁵ This enumeration is important, since for the first time, the two French celebrities were singled out in a context of rhetoricians. Once, when dealing with rhyme, De Castelein had indistinctly mentioned Marot among a series of French poets ('Villebrême, Hanton, Jean de Paris, Vigne, Jean Lemaire').¹⁶ In 1562, the editor of the plays (we do not know whether he was the printer Willem Silvius or the Antwerp rhetorician Willem van Haecht) showed more discernment and hoped for outstanding talents 'to honour the noble art of Rhetoric and to adorn our Dutch language'.¹⁷

Two poets, Jan Baptist Houwaert and Lucas D'Heere, answered the above appeals, but they did it quite differently. Houwaert, a Brussels nobleman, published his *Retrogratie Incarnatie* in 1563.¹⁸ It is a collection of verse in the pure tradition of the rhetoricians in its most extravagant vein, known as 'Rhetorijcke extraordinaire' (extraordinary rhetoric): retrogrades, chronograms and anagrams. The structure starts strangely from a chronogram at the end of the booklet. The publication counts 18 folios, which is the exact number of words in the chronogram. There are as many intervals in the collection as there are letters in the chronogram. It has 24 syllables, which is also the number of retrograde poems in the book, etc. It takes Houwaert a whole page to elucidate the subtleties hidden in this painstakingly constructed artefact. It is all extremely tortuous, amazingly cunning and totally discouraging. Houwaert's poetry illustrates a direction without a future: the art of the rhetoricians as an idle play, a self-indulgent verbal acrobatics. On the other hand, two elements in the book suit subsequent literary evolution, Houwaert's publication of his own poetry, without any mental restraint, and his expressly stated restriction of verse length between 10 and 12 syllables. Both facts are promising but not wholly unexpected, since as a wealthy patrician Houwaert had at his disposal both the financial resources and the necessary self-confidence to take this initiative, and, in restric-

¹³ *Spelen* 1562: B.2v. See Valkema Blouw 1990: 190.

¹⁴ Steenbergen 1950: 144; Van Autenboer 1981: 48.

¹⁵ *Spelen* 1562: B.2v.

¹⁶ De Castelein 1555: 45.

¹⁷ *Spelen* 1562: B.2v.

¹⁸ Waterschoot 1987: 325.

ting the verse length, Houwaert simply put into practice the Brabant metre of 10 to 12 syllables as it had been prescribed for the Antwerp plays in 1561.¹⁹

In fact, the rhetoricians had established different regulations as to the length of verse. As a general rule, gleaned from poets, De Castelein proclaimed that a verse line could have the length of a breath, but he added at the same time that each chamber had its own rules. 'In this land' — he meant the county of Flanders — he said, '9 and 12 syllables are used'.²⁰ We know from the sources that for contests in Holland 10 to 14 syllables were required, whereas the Brabant rhetoricians, as in Antwerp 1561, preferred a length of 10 to 12 syllables.²¹ Dirck Volckertsz. Coornhert, one of the most open minds of the whole 16th century, was heavily against these rules in 1561, when presenting his translation of the first twelve books of the *Odyssey*, quoting Vergil and Louis Vives.²²

After Houwaert, Lucas D'Heere came to the fore. In 1565, he published in Ghent *Den Hof en Boomgaard der Poë sien* (The garden and orchard of poetry), a book that marks the beginning of the renaissance in Dutch literary history. The book opens with an address by the printer, Ghileyn Manilius, to the reader, stating that the author has made use of regularity: all verses of any given poem are of the same length; of course, in case of feminine rhyme, one more syllable must be permitted. In the dedication of the book to his maecenas, the Ghent high bailiff, D'Heere justifies his publication. As a painter, he only wrote verse for pleasure; at the instigation of some of his friends, he brings out this volume of poetry, hoping that some poetic invention may be found in it. For this invention, the poet deserves to be called 'heavenly' and even 'divine', as Cicero, Ennius and Plato teach us. D'Heere calls himself an imitator of Latin and French poets, both in matters of subject and metre. He exhorts his readers to enrich and magnify their own Dutch language by following the French models. In this respect he assigns a role to the chambers of rhetoric, hoping for the actual help of the sovereign.²³ This dedication is a curious and complicated work. As regards poetry, the most interesting point is the exaltation of the origin of poetry: thanks to divine inspiration, the poet may claim a heavenly name. D'Heere borrowed this thesis from the first chapter of Thomas Sebillet's *Art Poétique françois*. On the other hand, some reminiscences of Ronsard's preface to the first book of his *Odes* and of Joachim du Bellay's *La Deffence et Illustration de la Langue françoise* are unmistakably present. He further made use of the writings of Franciscus Patricius, a 16th-century Italian humanist of Siena.²⁴ The hope expressed for royal benevolence may have been inspired by Sebillet as well as by the introduction to the 1562 Antwerp *Spelen van Sinne*.²⁵ The poetry in *Den Hof en Boomgaard* is equally heterogeneous. The collection

¹⁹ *Spelen* 1562: A.4r.

²⁰ De Castelein 1555: 34.

²¹ Kossmann 1922: 30.

²² Coornhert 1939: 7. Coornhert was the most important representative of the new Christian-Ciceronian rhetoric in the vernacular. See Spies 1993b: 84; Spies, Meerhoff 1993: 11.

²³ D'Heere 1969: 2-4.

²⁴ D'Heere 1969: 112. He stresses that poetry is different from rhetoric. See Spies 1993b: 84.

²⁵ Sebillet 1932: 14-15; *Spelen* 1562: A.3v.

starts with a translation of Marot's 'Le Temple de Cupidon'. The subsequent pages contain no fewer than 22 adaptations of poems by Marot; among them such typical Marot genres as two 'blasons' and one 'Du Coq a l'Asne'. Moreover, the structure of the collection — the succession of epigrams, New Year's wishes, epitaphs and epistles — clearly follows the pattern of 16th-century Marot editions after the model of Antoine Constantin, published in 1544. Parallel with his preference for Marot is his consultation of Sebillet. D'Heere's epigrams, blasons, epistles and elegies (all new genres in Dutch literature) harmonize with the prescriptions of Sebillet as far as these genres are concerned.²⁶ D'Heere's familiarity with French literature should not amaze us, since in the years 1559-1560 he had stayed in Paris as an artist in the service of the queen-mother, Catherine de Medicis.²⁷ However, his acquaintance with Marot's work dates back to earlier years. The allusions in his poem 'Vanden Hane op den Esel' (Du Coq a l'Asne) date from before his stay in Paris. Marot was available on the Dutch market, since as early as 1539 the Antwerp printer Johannes Steelsius had brought out an edition of the *Adolescence Clémentine*, Marot's juvenile poetry anterior to 1532.²⁸ Sebillet's handbook too must have been known to D'Heere before he left for Paris. Only recently Dirk Coigneau discovered that Van den Keere's laudatory poem in De Castelein's *De Const van Rhetoriken* is a translation of Sebillet's poem 'A l'envieus' which is found at the beginning of his handbook. D'Heere knew Van den Keere very well: in 1556 he contributed a short poem to the baptism of one of Van den Keere's daughters.²⁹ Most probably Van den Keere drew D'Heere's attention to the anonymous *Art Poétique françois*, when the latter was in search of a recent manual of French poetics. Indeed, it would be very unlikely if a Ghent French schoolmaster did not discuss such poetic matters with an enthusiastic reader of French poetry, living in that same town. Marot's pre-eminence in the eyes of D'Heere was consecrated by placing his name alone in the title of a poem. The translation of Marot's famous epistle 'Au roi, pour avoir été dérobé' is called 'Wt d'Epistel die Marot zand totten Coninc sprekende vanden dief, diet hem al ghestolen hadde' (From the epistle, which Marot sent to the king, about the thief who robbed him completely).³⁰ To D'Heere, Marot was also important in another respect. Again in 1565, he published *Psalmen Davids*, a collection of psalms, translated after the French Huguenot psalter of Marot and Théodore de Bèze.³¹

D'Heere's interest in French literature did not end with Marot. I have already mentioned borrowings from Ronsard and du Bellay in the dedication of *Den Hof en Boomgaerd*. It is not unlikely that during his months in Paris D'Heere would have become acquainted with more recent currents in French poetry. It would explain why two new genres, the ode and the sonnet, to which prominent places are given in his collection, no longer agree with Sebillet's theory. D'Heere

²⁶ Waterschoot 1992b: 304, 306.

²⁷ Waterschoot 1974: 32-33.

²⁸ Waterschoot 1992b: 304.

²⁹ Waterschoot 1974: 23.

³⁰ D'Heere 1969: 77.

³¹ Lenselink 1959: 433.

puts his odes in a conspicuous position, at the beginning of his work, after the translation of 'Le temple de Cupidon'. They are high-pitched songs of praise, which are nearer to du Bellay's wishes than to Sebillet's prescriptions. To his sonnets as well D'Heere accorded a notable place: they are found in the typographical middle of his collection. D'Heere dedicated each of them to prominent figures in the cultural field who would have appreciated the real value of so rare a gift. But he did not follow Sebillet's rules, either in the rhyme scheme or in the length of the verses. The sequence of rhymes reminds us of some refrains, and, as for the length of the verse, in most of his sonnets D'Heere uses a line of twelve syllables, whereas Sebillet prescribed the *vers commun* (ten syllables).³²

So far, the impression may have been created that *Den Hof en Boomgaard* only contains French matter. One should realize, however, that the last quarter of the book is still occupied by refrains written in the traditional manner, but with isosyllabic verse.

After the publication of *Den Hof en Boomgaard* there followed no debate between the champions of the older poetry and of the new one. One year later, the Netherlands were struck first by the iconoclast riots and afterwards by the reaction of the authorities. D'Heere, being an active Calvinist, fled to London where he met Jan van der Noot, to whose works in England he contributed formally correct odes and sonnets. But at home the poetic dialogue ceased, especially after the duke of Alba had suspended all activities of the chambers of rhetoric.

In 1568, Peter Heyns, a French schoolmaster in Antwerp and *factor* (i.e. leading poet) of the chamber 'Den bloeyenden Wijngaert' (the Flowering Vineyard), published a manual for writing. In an address to the Dutch poets, Heyns announces that the work is written in French metre. He is leaving the good Brabant custom for a better one. The syllables are counted, but the use of caesura is defective.³³

After 1574, the Dutch Revolt was mainly fought out in the southern Netherlands, and the northern provinces recovered both economically and culturally. The first signs of a renewed interest in poetical matters appeared there in Leiden. That city experienced a powerful intellectual stimulus by the foundation of its university in 1575. The town clerk, Jan van Hout, who, together with Janus Dousa, was one of the leading figures during the memorable siege of Leiden, became secretary to the curators of the university. Van Hout grew up in a rhetorical environment. His father, Cornelis Meesz., was active as a rhetorician and in 1561 stayed in Antwerp to see the plays performed. On behalf of the Leiden chamber 'De witte Acoleyen' (the White Columbines) Van Hout invited his fellow rhetoricians for a refrain contest in August 1577. The invitation consisted of four sonnets, written in alexandrines; they are metrically correct, but, as Johan Koppenol rightly observes, Van Hout at that moment

³² Waterschoot 1992b: 309; Vermeer 1979: 86.

³³ Sabbe s.d.: 98; Kossmann 1922: 32.

considered the sonnet as a strophic unit, not as a separate lyrical genre.³⁴ In this respect, his attitude is comparable to that of D'Heere in 1565, who also wrote his sonnets starting from the rhyme-scheme of the refrain. Van Hout displayed his command of the sonnet without asking his colleagues to produce anything similar. In 1578, however, Van Hout called on the rhetoricians of the free Netherlands to participate in a new Leiden contest, requesting that they should follow him in measure. The invitation was again formulated in sonnets, six of which were linked together. Six of the 17 poets who answered this call came from the south. The most prominent participants were Willem van Haecht, *factor* of the Antwerp chamber 'De Violieren' (the Gillyflowers) and Jeronimus van der Voort, *factor* of another Antwerp chamber, 'De Goudbloem' (the Marigold). None of them succeeded in writing metrically correct verses. Van Hout did not make their task easy, because he himself inserted an incongruous element in his modern verses. He made use of the *rime batelée* (i.e. the ending rhyme is repeated in the middle of the next verse), which lengthens the alexandrine unduly in case of a feminine rhyme. In spite of this anomaly, Van Hout carefully corrected the contributions of his 17 colleagues, even without taking elisions into account.³⁵ Van Hout quite naturally acted as a disciplinarian, because he was writing at the same time his well-known preface to his (lost) translation of Buchanan's *Franciscanus*. In this preface, he addresses the society which is practising Latin and Dutch poetry in the new Leiden university. He expounds a poetical program concentrated on four themes: the ignorance of the crowd, the moral integrity of the artist, the poet being inspired and technical aspects of verse and rhyme. In the most recent edition of this preface, Van Hout's sources have been for the most part identified.³⁶ In his address to the society he seems to have profited from the presence of Justus Lipsius and of Janus Dousa. His use of alexandrines with caesura and the alternation of masculine and feminine rhymes correspond mainly with the prescriptions in Ronsard's *Abbrégé de l'Art Poétique François*. Koppenol stresses the mediation of Dousa in this respect. Dousa studied in Paris under Jean Dorat, the mentor of Ronsard and other Pléiade poets. So Van Hout could have learned about new ways in French poetry and poetics from a very well-informed source. But he also acknowledged Marot's role. In a rhyming letter to Kuenraet de Rechtere he praised the French for adorning their language, saying: 'Marot laid the foundations of that building; Ronsard, Baïf, Des Autels, Desportes, Peletier du Mans, Jodelle, Garnier and many others continued to build'.³⁷ As their Dutch counterparts he mentioned Coornhert, Heyns and D'Heere. Indeed, the preface to the *Franciscanus* contains elements that are taken directly from D'Heere's dedicatory address in *Den Hof en Boomgaard*: for instance, when Van Hout blames humanists for despising their mother-tongue, when he says that

³⁴ Koppenol 1992: 61.

³⁵ Koppenol 1991: 70. Van Hout did not know that in the south the use of the elision was rather free. See Waterschoot 1988: 120-121.

³⁶ Van Hout 1993: 28.

³⁷ Prinsen 1907: 173.

poetry is unjustly called rhetoric, when he employs the topos of false modesty by calling his work 'beuzelkens' (trifles), echoing D'Heere's 'beuselinghen', and finally when he justifies his poetry as being written in his short time of leisure.³⁸ At the end of this preface, Van Hout promised the society that, in spite of the fact that he had been writing this type of modern poetry only two years, he would offer his psalms and odes, his sonnets, epitaphs, epigrams and love-poetry. But it all remained in manuscript, as did the preface to the *Franciscanus*.

Elsewhere, the acceptance of the new French verse was less general. Heyns, whom we met already in 1568 as the author of a schoolbook in the new metre, composed in 1577 the *Spiegel der Werelt* (Mirror of the world), a small atlas after the model of Ortelius' *Theatrum*. In this work, he again used the Brabant verse of ten to 12 syllables. He justified himself at the end in a kind of sonnet (with the correct rhyme-scheme, but not written in alexandrines and without a caesura) stating that he would write in the Brabant way. Was it mere coincidence that he adopted at the same time the restrictions pointed out by D'Heere's printer in *Den Hof en Boomgaard*, viz. the use of elision and of isosyllabic verse?³⁹ Six years later, the *Spiegel der Werelt* was reissued. Heyns inserted a sonnet 'to the Dutch poets, in French metre'. Indeed, he produced a metrically perfect sonnet with correct alexandrines, correct caesura and, as Ronsard wanted it, regular alternation of feminine and masculine rhyme. Heyns applied these strict rules as an act of self-defence. He stands up for his book, which is not written in the new style, saying that he speaks the Brabant tongue and consequently will write Brabant verse.⁴⁰ His work must have been considered old-fashioned for its lack of caesura and alternation. With this sonnet, on the contrary, he proves his command of the new idiom. The concrete reproach means that in 1583 some people actually had attacked Heyns on these points in Antwerp. I do not consider them as belonging to the rhetoricians, they rather would make up Van der Noot's milieu, a group of people with direct access to French literature.⁴¹ Heyns' atavistic reaction was not the only one. In 1582 Coornhert repeated his attack on strictly regular verse patterns, pleading for freedom of versification against the irksome regulations of the chambers, the members of which he called sectarians.⁴²

In June 1581, the Delft rhetoricians organized a refrain contest. In an address to the Delft municipality, Pieter Jansz. Helleman, head of the Delft chamber 'De Rapenbloem' (the Turnip's Flower), assimilated a lot of details from the introduction to the Antwerp plays of 1561, published by Silvius in 1562. From the Antwerp salutation 'to the benevolent reader' he borrowed the story of Greeks and Romans building theatres. The 'Short description of the entry of the chambers' in 1562 supplied the location of the muses on the Helicon, their

³⁸ Compare D'Heere 1969: 3-4 with Van Hout 1993: 53, 57, 59.

³⁹ Kossmann 1922: 33; Van der Elst 1922: 30.

⁴⁰ Kossmann 1922: 34.

⁴¹ In an 'Apology' (1584-1585) Henrick Ackermans praises Van der Noot and propagates writing in the new French way as well. See Van der Noot 1975: II, 160-161.

⁴² Kossmann 1922: 37.

epithet 'Castalides', the feeling that the Parnassus was transferred to the poeticizing Netherlands, the presentation of the rhetoricians as children of Apollo; all these rhetorical paraphrases came from Antwerp. In one instance, the text of 1562 had been made up to date. The Antwerp editor hoped for the coming of great poets, comparable to Petrarch and Ariosto in Italy and to Marot and Ronsard in France. Helleman sees this wish fulfilled in a larger scope. As the Greeks had Homer, the Romans Vergil, the French Marot and Ronsard, so Brabant now has Van der Noot, while Holland is still waiting for such a poet.⁴³ Why was Helleman so dependent on Antwerp, without giving any particular notice to Van Hout's efforts in Leiden? Most probably, it was a matter of communication or, rather, lack of communication. Both the Antwerp plays and Van der Noot's work were circulating in printed form. In 1583, three handsomely printed books by Van der Noot were on the Antwerp market: *Cort Begryp der xii Boeken Olympiados* (Summary of the twelve books on Olympia), *Lofsang van Brabant* (Hymn to Brabant) and *Verscheyden Poeticsche Werken* (Poetical works).⁴⁴ The refrains that were sent to Leiden in reply to Van Hout's invitation in 1577 and 1578 were not printed.⁴⁵ On the other hand, this import from Antwerp did not interfere with the Holland essentials in 1581. The Delft invitation-card stipulated that the refrains should not have less than ten and no more than fourteen syllables, i.e. they should be written in the traditional Holland metre.⁴⁶

Hendrik Laurensz. Spiegel was the principal initiator and author of the famous *Twe-spraack vande Nederduitsche Letterkunst* (Dialogue about Dutch grammar).⁴⁷ In this handbook, published in 1584 by the Amsterdam chamber 'De Eglantier' (the Eglantine), he indirectly deplored Dutch backwardness. The book is set up as a dialogue between Roemer and Gedeon, a schoolmaster who teaches Dutch and French. In the chapter on prosody, Gedeon sarcastically observes that the Holland metre, the verse between 10 and 14 syllables, is considered quite an achievement in that country.⁴⁸ He would prefer the French manner in which corresponding verses in corresponding stanzas should be of equal length and masculine and feminine rhyme should alternate. The latter point of view corresponds with Van Hout's exposition in the preface to his Dutch *Franciscanus*.⁴⁹ The concordance is not surprising since Van Hout and

⁴³ *Refereynen* 1581: A.2v-A.3v. Michael Randall pointed out the same reasoning in Jean Lemaire de Belges' *La Concorde des deux Langages* (1511): 'Just as Italian culture tended to exist by and for French culture in the *Concorde des deux Langages*, so too, to a certain extent, French culture exists by and for Dutch culture in these works on poetics'.

⁴⁴ Van der Noot 1956; Van der Noot 1958; Van der Noot 1975.

⁴⁵ Koppenol 1991: 63.

⁴⁶ *Refereynen* 1581: B.2v.

⁴⁷ *Twe-spraack* 1985: 26. The *Twe-spraack* has a short but truly humanistic Ciceronian rhetoric. See Spies 1993a: 112.

⁴⁸ Up to now, Gedeon's sarcasm has not been recognized as such. See Kossmann 1922: 42; *Twe-spraack* 1985: 201, 433.

⁴⁹ *Twe-spraack* 1985: 202; Van Hout 1993: 67.

Spiegel were friends. Consequently, the *Rederijck-kunst* of 1587, the sequel to the *Twe-spraack*, equally propagated the use of caesura and of alternation.⁵⁰

In 1596 the Leiden chamber 'De witte Acoleyen' (the White Columbines) organized a meeting of Holland chambers. Their contributions were printed as *Den Lust-hof van Rethorica* (The Pleasure-garden of Rhetoric). In an address to all participants, the Leiden rhetoricians justified their initiative, which was intended to benefit the lottery for the municipal hospital, by referring to the Antwerp contest in 1561. They not only mentioned this feast, they also borrowed, as did their Delft colleagues in 1581, some ideas from the introductory pages in Silvius's edition, e.g. references to the antiquity of Dutch rhetoricians, as proved by old chronicles; the splendour of the Antwerp festival, illustrated by the presence of many noblemen; and the mentioning of the Helicon as beloved residence for poets. The paraphrase 'Castalides Nimphen' for the muses and the assurance that these goddesses have found a home in Holland may be reminiscences of Helleman's words, published in the Delft collection in 1581.⁵¹ The 1596 Leiden invitation is misleading. At first sight, the old rhetorical program seems to prevail, since the refrain 'on the rule' (i.e. the ending-line of which poem was proposed) should be written in free measure, according to De Castelein's principle 'as long as a breath may last'.⁵² But the first stanza of the invitation is composed within strict terms: in alexandrines, with caesura and alternating masculine and feminine rhyme, yet in the form and with the fitting rhyme-scheme of a typical rhetorical 17-line refrain-stanza. The influence of Van Hout upon Leiden rhetoricians was unmistakable.

The last rhetorical contest of the 16th century in Holland took place in Rotterdam in August 1598. An edition of its 60 refrains and songs appeared in Leiden as *Der Redenrijke Constliethebbers Stichtelicke Recreatie* (The edifying leisure of art-loving rhetoricians) (1599). Here we find procedures that are no longer surprising. In an introductory address by the members of the Rotterdam chamber 'De blauwe Acoleyen' (the Blue Columbines) to their municipal corporation, the publication of the Antwerp plays is consulted about the erection of theatres and the staging of comedies and tragedies. The Leiden Pleasure-garden of 1596 may also have been employed for some details about the presence of Dutch nobility in Antwerp in 1561.⁵³ In their invitation, the Rotterdam rhetoricians allowed free measure for the three categories of refrains. The leading poet of the Rotterdam Chamber, Willem Yselveer, was obviously more interested in the political message (in what way do the Dutch supersede the old Romans?) than in questions of old or new versification. The same point of view was also apparent in his contribution to Delft 1581.⁵⁴

On the threshold of the 17th century, I will end with Karel van Mander. The first part of his well-known *Schilder-Boeck* (The lives of the painters), called *Den*

⁵⁰ Kossmann 1922: 40.

⁵¹ *Lust-hof* 1596: A.2r-A.3v. See for the lottery Bostoen 1990 and Koppenol 1990.

⁵² *Lust-hof* 1596: B.3v; De Castelein 1555: 34.

⁵³ *Recreatie* 1599: 2r-v.

⁵⁴ Waterschoot 1980: 134.

Grondt der edel vry Schilder-const (The ground of the noble and free art of painting) was begun in 1596.⁵⁵ In the preface to *Den Grondt*, written in 1603, Van Mander admits that, when starting this work, he did not exactly understand the new French metre. Consequently he took the length of the Italian ottava rima but with the rhyme-scheme as in Dutch. He always used feminine rhyme and avoided repeating the same rhyme-word within one hundred lines. Van Mander admits that the use of French feet (i.e. the regular succession of unstressed and stressed syllables) might please the literati, but to the younger painters, it would be incomprehensible. He recognizes the high status of the French alexandrine but considers writing it very hard labour. He welcomes the use of regular feet, a system, he says, 'which was first used in our language by the great poet Jan van Hout, who already in his youth had noticed this practice in Petrarch, Ronsard and others, and imitated it.'⁵⁶ Next, Van Mander goes into more detail, quoting examples of good and bad use of caesura and aspiration and pleading for fixed spelling. Van Mander learned quickly. In 1596, he wrote the *Tweede Beeld van Haarlem* (Second image of Haarlem) like *Den Grondt* in isosyllabic verse. In 1597, his translation of Vergil's *Bucolica* came out. Here he already proved to have a perfect command of French verse: the book is composed of 'vers communs' with alternation of masculine and feminine rhyme. As a New Year present for the year 1600 he was to write his first lengthy poem in alexandrines, *De Kerck der Deucht* (The temple of Virtue).⁵⁷ Thus it seems that the poetic form of *Den Grondt* in 1596 was characteristic of a period of transition in Van Mander's poetic opinions and applications.

The provenance of his poetic models was accordingly diverse. Van Mander, as a painter, had had D'Heere as his first teacher during the years 1566-1567. From him, he borrowed the use of the isosyllabic verse. After D'Heere fled the country from the duke of Alba, Van Mander, who came from a wealthy background, stayed at home, writing refrains and plays for all sorts of rhetorical contests. In 1573, he went to Italy for four years. Shortly after he returned home, his birthplace Meulebeke in Flanders was ruined by force of arms and Van Mander ultimately settled in Haarlem in 1583. Since his apprenticeship with D'Heere, Van Mander kept the use of 'reghels mate', the mere counting of syllables in his verse. His acquaintance with the Ghent master must have impressed Van Mander very much. He used the same verse-form for 30 years and had *Den Hof en Boomgaerd* constantly on his working-table when composing the *Schilder-Boeck*, since he quotes from *Den Hof en Boomgaerd* whenever possible and in 1603 still knows that D'Heere translated Marot's 'Le Temple de Cupidon'.⁵⁸ The interest in Marot, as shown later on by Van Mander's followers in *Den Nederduytschen Helicon* (The Dutch Helicon) (1610) may have originated from that Ghent connection. During Van Mander's rhetorical activities in contests during the 1570s, he certainly must have had to consult *De*

⁵⁵ Van Mander 1973: 314.

⁵⁶ Van Mander 1973: 42-43.

⁵⁷ Van Mander 1977.

⁵⁸ Waterschoot 1986: 144.

Const van Rhetoriken. In 1596 he borrowed from this work the prohibition against using the same rhyme-words again within one poem and the rhyme-scheme of the Dutch ballad.⁵⁹ His stay in Italy exposed him to a new type of poetic diction: the ottava rima with feminine rhyme, as Italian does not have a masculine rhyme-ending. Finally, he was directed to Ronsard, most probably by Van Hout: both of them depend on Ronsard's *Abbrégé de l'Art Poétique François* for their theoretical expositions. Van Mander even translated the verses which Ronsard quoted as examples of metrically correct poetry.⁶⁰

Having reached the end of the 16th century, it is time to come to some conclusions.

First of all, the new verse comes from the south. French literature is the dominant influence in developing the new style of versification and in propagating new poetical genres. This goes hand in hand with the prominent part played by French schoolmasters and by travellers to France. In the middle of the century, Marot is still popular among them. In the sixties, Ronsard's star is rising. Both are often praised together by Dutch poets, but their mention, sometimes in the company of other European *poetae laureati*, does not warrant any special interest on the part of glorifying rhetoricians. D'Heere's concentration on Marot's œuvre remains exceptional. The influence of this Gent poet may extend, through Van Mander, to *Den Nederduytschen Helicon*.

Next, there is the great importance of the press: we find Silvius's edition of the Antwerp plays in several hands, as is the case with *De Const van Rhetoriken*. The accounts of the northern contests in the 1580s and 1590s are successively consulted by their followers. Parallel to the wider dissemination of French literature, mainly due to its printing tradition, rhetorical texts in printed form were more likely to promote their views.

Further, the art of imitating Ronsard is a matter reserved for the happy few. From Van Mander we learn that the new French verse was difficult to write and difficult to understand; the fact that in 1578 no single experienced rhetorician was able to sustain the new prosody throughout a complete refrain corroborates this view. And yet, in 1583, Heyns fears that in Antwerp his Brabant metre would be considered obsolete. This sort of critical remark would hardly arise among rhetoricians. The cry for French innovations could be expected from Van der Noot's followers.

Indeed, Van der Noot is the great absentee in this picture because he was not active in rhetorician circles. His aristocratic individualism and his belief in his poetic uniqueness were incompatible with the crowd. Moreover, the man with the widest reading in 16th-century French poetry was ready to accept poetic admirers, but he did not tolerate rivals.⁶¹ Van Hout, who was also very well-read in French literature, acted in the opposite manner, scourging the self-complacent rhetoricians in order to modernize their activities. Van Hout attributed

⁵⁹ De Castelein 1555: 30, 71.

⁶⁰ Van Mander 1973: 43, 339-340.

⁶¹ Van der Noot 1975: II, 135.

his successes to personal contacts and to friendship, and he reached men of influence such as Spiegel and Van Mander.

Finally, in spite of the attacks by these progressive individuals, many chambers of rhetoric remained as impregnable in their conservatism as bastions.⁶² Particularly in their contests, tradition prevailed. Rhetoricians, who in their introductory speeches proclaimed the fame of Marot and Ronsard, continued to ask for refrains in traditional Holland metre or in free measures throughout the 16th century. Their poetic self-reliance was built on social acceptance and historical prerogatives. As a result, their poetic techniques and rules were slow to alter. Thus, only in the 17th century would French metre supersede the old Holland standard. From the 1570s on, the debate about poetics was held almost exclusively in the north. Yet the share of the southern Netherlands was not insignificant: Willem van Haecht, Jeronimus van der Voort, Karel van Mander and, somewhat later, Jacob Duym and some poets from *Den Nederduytschen Helicon* contributed to the ultimate success of the new verse style.

University of Gent

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⁶² In the discussion after the reading of this paper, Eddy Grootes rightly warned against an oversimplification in positioning all rhetoricians. The panorama is diverse. See Grootes (1992), 61.

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