

'Dear Song': Scholarly whitewashing of the correspondence between Constantijn Huygens and Dorothea van Dorp*

We are talking in this conference about the self-fashioning of a successful seventeenth-century individual via the written form most typical of self-awareness in the period – the familiar letter. Nowhere is that image-shaping more energetic, pragmatic and, we might say, obvious than in Constantijn Huygens's early personal life, as this ambitious young member of the élite circle in The Hague explored every available avenue of patronage and service, so as to assure himself a successful and privileged future career.¹ Yet precisely here, it seems, scholars have tended to turn a blind eye to the amount of self-construction involved in crafting his meteoric rise. Rather than subjecting the early letters to close critical scrutiny, they have preferred to accept Constantijn's self-evaluation – as a virtuous, unassuming, amiable sort of a fellow -- at face value. They have, furthermore, largely used Huygens's highly contrived early poems as the biographical basis for their account.²

In many ways this is surprising. There are plenty of clues to be found in Constantijn's early poems revealing the extent of his self-conscious efforts towards appropriate presentation of himself and his emotions for success in public life at this time. Thus, for example, Jan Bloemendal and Ad Leerentveld have elegantly excavated the way he uses contemporary,

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¹ Huygens's early letters home to his parents from his embassy trips abroad are full of descriptions of his manoeuvring to secure himself a desirable official appointment, and he displays considerable self-consciousness about this: 'Il faut que le contentement cede un peu à la nécessité, mon tour viendra s'il plait à Dieu' (Worp 25 [not transcribed]). In a letter to his parents (usually his enthusiastic supporters in every move to secure a future role for himself at court) written in January 1622, Huygens responds to a rebuke from them which suggests that even they are finding his aspirations towards preferment excessive. They have, it seems, commented on his high-blown language: 'Je ne considere point sur quoy se fonde la reproche de mon stile affetté. Certes, quand l'envie m'en prendroit, le loisir m'en reculeroit bien. C'est une vanité que j'ay tousjours detestée en autruy, evitée en moy mesme. Aussi n'est ce point devers mes parents que je presumeroye d'en user. Je pense m'estre esvertué au possible, en vous faisant entendre ce qui me vient au devant en aussi peu de paroles que les affaires de mes maistres me permettent de jeter à la haste; d'affiquets ou de fard ne croyez pas que je m'y mette. Ce seroit me friser les cheveux, où à grand peine ay-je loisir à me les peigner' (Worp nr. 120).

² On Huygens's life see most recently J. Smit, De grootmeester van woord- en snarenspeel. Het leven van Constantijn Huygens (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980). On Huygens and Dorothea van Dorp see J.A. Alberdingk Thijm, 'Constantin Huygens en de familie van Dorp', De Dietsche Warande (Amsterdam: C.L. van Langenhuysen, 1864), 465-489, and 'Constantin Huygens. Onuitgegeven Hss. en nadere letterkundige bijzonderheden. Nog iets over Dorothea van Dorp', De Dietsche Warande (1869), 477-482; J.A. Worp, 'Brieven van Constantijn Huygens aan Dorothea van Dorp', De Dietsche Warande (1892), 335-344; F.L. Zwaan, 'Huygens en Dorothea', Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde 98 (1982), 131-136; E. Keesing, Het volk met lange rokken. Vrouwen rondom Constantijn Huygens (Amsterdam, 1987) and 'Hoe is het met Dorothee van Dorp verder gegaan?', De Zeventiende Eeuw 3 (1987), 115-124. On Dorothea van Dorp see J. M.L. Lechanteur: 'Dorp, Dorothea van' in Digitaal Vrouwenlexicon van Nederland:

<http://www.inghist.nl/Onderzoek/Projecten/DVN/lemmata/data/DorotheavanDorp>.

typically Dutch emblem books like Otto Vaenius's *Amorum emblemata*, to construct a highly-wrought, conventionally recognisable version of the emotional bond between himself and the 'girl next door', Dorothea van Dorp, as a virtuous friendship, in his January 1619 poem 'Is 't quellend sonder maet'.³ Each stanza of that poem – which he may have presented in manuscript as a gift to Dorothea – is contrived from a carefully chosen emblem, so as to craft and locate their feelings for one another into a form identifiable within a well-understood contemporary context, thereby proposing a passionate commitment directed towards spiritual and intellectual, rather than worldly (let alone carnal) goals.

Bloemendal and Leerentveld prefer not to reach a conclusion as to the motive behind Huygens's flamboyantly erudite verses. I suggest that 'Is 't quellend sonder maet' is a well-executed example, carefully matched to contemporary expectations (the very basis for a plausible self-fashioning) for the consumption of those around the pair who might remark on their intimacy, of the poetic re-presentation of an actual love affair as a conventional, appropriately chaste, morally admirable and decorous, socially acceptable literary relationship.

Although not a reliable source of the 'facts' behind the Huygens-Dorp affair, Huygens's poetry may give us some pointers towards decoding their contemporary epistolary exchanges. The careful composition of the poem I refer to indicates, perhaps, that by 1619 Constantijn understood that marriage to Dorothea (whom he had first met in 1614) was not advisable or even a real possibility, if he was to achieve his career ambitions.⁴ In April 1618, almost a year before he composed his emblematic celebration of his love for Dorothea, Huygens had already acknowledged what he considered to be the limitations of this close attachment in writing. In a letter to his mother, he had reassured her that he was not about to rush into marriage. Rather, he would take parental advice and wait until he had found a suitably well-placed, wealthy bride before committing himself:

The marriage of Van de Weerde, so one hears, is a certainty. His bride is a rich heiress, whom he is going to marry in spite of all those rejected suitors [*blauwscheenen* heeren] who did not expect it to turn out that way. As for myself, I kiss your hands for the good advice you have given me, to look for a bride for myself

³ J. Bloemendal and A. Leerentveld, 'De "Literaire" vriendschap tussen Constantijn Huygens en Dorothea van Dorp: Een verliefde jongen te rade bij een emblematicus?', *Spiegel der Letteren* 47 (2005), 275-85. See also A. Leerentveld (ed.), *Constantijn Huygens, Nederlandse gedichten 1614-1625. Historisch-kritische uitgave, verzorgd door Ad Leerentveld*, 2 vols (Den Haag, 2001). *Monumenta Literaria Neerlandica* 12, 1-2. For a full, commented version of Vaenius's *Amorum emblemata* (1608) see the full text and transcription in the collection of online emblem books at Utrecht University: <http://emblems.let.uu.nl/v1608.html>.

⁴ Shortly after his family moved into a new home the Vorhout in 1614, Huygens wrote in his commonplace book (*Dagboek*): 'Dorothea innotui'. He notes his first meeting with Anna Roemers Visscher in the same words in 1619.

at an equivalent price. When the prospect is 100,000 francs, I have no inclination to hang myself so early.⁵

As if to consolidate this determination, three months later, while comfortably settled in the residence of Noel de Caron, heer van Schoonewal, in London during his first embassy attachment there, Huygens wrote a pastoral poem, 'Doris oft Herder-clachte' (Doris, or the shepherd's complaint), which again effects the distancing of himself emotionally from any sort of on-going 'real', publically recognised 'betrothal' or commitment. In this poem, the shepherd weeps for the loss of his beloved Doris, for whom he professes undying love, but a love which will be unrequited, because the object of his love, who had promised herself to him, has spurned his affections and rejected him for another man. By this means he (the authorial voice) can play or perform histrionically as a lover, without there being any danger (supposedly) that his intentions will be misunderstood.

Although critics have identified this poem also as autobiographical, and used it to maintain that the love-sick Huygens was actually jilted by Dorothea while he was away in England, there is, to my knowledge, no extra-literary evidence that this was really the case. Indeed, as we shall see, a full nine years later, the official announcement that Huygens himself was to be married to somebody else -- the much more socially suitable, and wealthier, Susanna van Baerle --, which apparently reached Dorothea only weeks before their engagement, came as a complete shock to his 'friend' and caused outrage to Dorothea's family. It may have caused lasting strain between the two households, closely located to one another on the Voorhout in The Hague.⁶

⁵ 'Le mariage de Van de Weerde à ce qu'on tient est assuré; c'est une riche heritiere qu'il va espouser au despit de beaucoup de *Blauwscheen-Heers* qui n'avoient point attendu leur cassade de ce coté la. Pour ce qui est de moy, je vous baise les mains pour le bon advis que me donnez, d'en chercher une pour moy au mesme prix. Quand la potence vaudroit 100000 francs, je n'ay pas envie de me faire pendre de si bonne heure.'. Worp 43. 'De Zierixzee, cet 11e d'Avr. 1618.' Another letter to his parents, a few months later, testifies to the intimacy that at this time certainly exists between Constantijn and Dorothea: 'A mon retour de Bagshot, où nous avons employé toute la septmaine passée, je me suis estonné de ne trouver de vos letters au logis. Pour ce qui est des mienes, je m'asseure qu'en aurez receues deux presque à la fois, don't la nonchalance du porteur de la première a esté cause, comme les dates vous pourront faire croire. La présente va de compagnie avec deux pastez de vénaison, desquels Monsieur mon hoste vous envoie l'une, et l'autre au Greffier Aerssens, ayant change de resolution qu'il avoit prise d'en envoyer deux à Son Excellence pour des considerations qu'entre autres siens amis je luy ay mises en cervelle. Ce sont les quartiers d'un cerf qui à donné de la peine au Roy depuis les dix heures du matin jusqu'aux onze du soir, quand finalement, ayant desjà deux blessures au corps (l'une de la main du Roy), Monsieur le Prince luy bailla le coup mortel avec son arbaleste justement dans le Coeur, ce grand animal nageant plus de trois quarts d'heure dans un grand / vivier, où il se pensa sauver. Don't pourrez conclure s'il vault la peine d'estre mangé en reverence et attention. Je me souviens avoir promis par jeu à Mademoiselle van Dorp de luy faire manger de la venaizon d'Angleterre; je vous prie qu'à cette occasion elle en puisse avoir sa part'. Worp nr. 56, in Rasch, 257-8. 'De South-Lambeth, ce 7e de Septembre 1618, Viel Stile'.

⁶ I have found no evidence for the details of the vows and rings exchanged by Constantijn and Dorothea, followed by her spurning him and turning to another, apart from the devices in this poem.

By 1619, then, whatever his conduct towards Dorothea in private, or, indeed, her personal understanding and expectations, Constantijn Huygens had already honed to his satisfaction the 'official' version of his relationship with Dorothea van Dorp, fashioning it into a recognisable seventeenth-century portrait of chaste love – a love based on mutual respect and designed to enhance the moral standing of both parties, and celebrate their union as a shared, blameless endeavour.

He had, as it happens, an available, socially recognisable context nearby for such a public affirmation of the possibility of chaste relations between an unmarried man and woman. Huygens's version of his 'love' for Dorothea as conveyed in the poems I have referred to, matches closely the fashioned version of male-female friendship as intellectually uplifting and life-enhancing, which he and others had carefully constructed and circulated within a group of artistically and musically gifted young men and women centred on The Hague. These are the members of the so-called 'Muiden circle' or salon, led by Huygens's close friend and literary sparring-partner, supposed to have met regularly (though, once again, more recent scholarship suggests that this too was a literary construct). The central figure was the poet P.C. Hooft, whose official residence was the Muiden Castle. The idea of regular meetings may have been a fiction, but Hooft, Huygens, Vondel and the sisters Anna Roemers Visscher and Maria Tesselschade Visscher did together form an epistolary network, exchanging intellectual letters, poems and compliments.

Literary historians have been content, by and large, to accept at face value the heavily sanitised self-presentation of intellectual and musical 'conversation', in salon circles generated by those like Huygens who frequented them, just as they have accepted the correspondingly tidied-up version of what happened between Constantijn and Dorothea. One might almost say that the social convenience of the 'Muidenkring' as a context within which highly educated, marriageable young men and women could mingle with propriety has provided critics with an alibi for Constantijn Huygens's perhaps less-than-laudable youthful behaviour towards his first sweetheart.

Nothing could show more apparently secure propriety, surely, than the picture generally painted of relations between the talented poet, painter and glass-engraver Anna Roemers Visscher, say, and De Muidenkring. However, in spite of the temptation to celebrate such an early example of gender equality, it is readily apparent that the dividing line between decorous participation and unseemliness was perilously narrow at the time. At the beginning of 1624, for instance, one of the most renowned of the female members of the circle, Anna Roemers Visscher, 'fell in love' and married at the age of 40. In a letter to Constantijn that spring, thirty-something Dorothea van Dorp did not mince her words about how ridiculous she considered Anna's behaviour:

Anna Roemers is here with her husband. Madame Dimmers has seen her. She shows her husband off as if she were a lovesick young girl. And she's pregnant already – the silly woman! I shall not arrange to see her. I feel sick when I see such a old carcass behaving so idiotically.⁷

In spite of her celebrated talents, then, as soon as Anna Roemers leaves the rarified world of 'art' and becomes emotionally entangled in the 'real' world, her pretended respectability and dignity as a fully-participating artistic figure, alongside virtuosi men like Huygens and Hooft, falls away from her. She is in fact nothing more than another stupid woman (by implication, of rather inferior social status), whose company is to be avoided rather than eagerly sought after.⁸ In the present context, it is obviously striking that Dorothea van Dorp herself is here prepared to endorse the social vilification of an artistically active and talented woman, as soon as she joins the ranks of common-or-garden wives. The suggestion in this letter is supposed to be, I think, that, as a couple, Dorothea and Constantijn are above such humdrum versions of male-female liaisons.

To strip away such surface convention and to explore the Constantijn-Dorothea relationship a little further here, I propose to look at a selection of the surviving letters closely connected with it, to try to excavate a rather more subtle version of their 'friendship' as it is fashioned by epistolary means in the public domain. These are 6 letters from Constantijn to Dorothea in French (Worp numbers 80, 84, 177, 310, 311, 342), and six letters from Dorothea to Constantijn in Dutch (Worp numbers 222, 234, 237, 242, 243, 248). These last were clearly never meant for public circulation, and are, at points, almost alarmingly frank – it is from one of these that I took the passage just quoted about the recently-married Anna Roemers Visscher. I shall also be examining two draft letters from Dorothea to the musically accomplished London society hostess, Lady Mary Killigrew in English.

⁷ 'Anna Rommers is hier met haren man. Joffrou Dimmers heeft haer gesien. Sy is soo versiert met den man als ofse een jonghe malote waer. Al bevrucht – de siekelijcke vrou! Ick en sal haer niet verwachten om te sien. Ick sou qualijck worden om sulken ouwen crijing soo mal te sien.' Worp 242, but last sentence missing, presumably omitted as offensive. Cited from J. A. Alberdingk Thijm, 'Constantin Huygens en de familie van Dorp', *De Dietsche Warande* 6 (1864), 465-489; 485. See also J.A. Worp, *De Dietsche Warande* (1892), 335-344 and 451-460.

⁸ The same thing had happened a year earlier, when Anna's even more talented and celebrated sister, Maria Tesselschade Visscher, found herself a husband. To support the argument of the present article, one could indeed look in detail at Huygens's epistolary exchanges with Maria Tesselschade Visscher. These are sustainedly highly-wrought in their compliments and admiration. Every epistolary convention is employed (including use of Latin to elevate the style) to ensure the decorum of the exchange. Yet in letters to his friend Hooft, Huygens was quite capable of down-to-earth comment on her behaviour – see for example his comments to Hooft following her marriage in 1623 (Worp nr. 216). When the outstanding musician Utricia Ogle married William Swann, Huygens went to elaborate lengths to 'adopt' the husband as well as the wife – something he appears to be recommending to Dorothea van Dorp (that she marry someone congenial to him, so that they can continue their virtuous friendship).

The first of Constantijn's extant letters to Dorothea, in elegantly poised French, dated 18 May 1620, while Constantijn was on his second diplomatic trip, this time to Venice, begins with what at first sight reads as a declaration of undying love, in terms which conveys the flavour of their relationship as he chooses to represent it:

Little song. I find myself separated from you by a good many days. But I assure you from deep within my heart that you remain perpetually beloved, ranking among those whom God and nature oblige me to honour as well as to love. I take enormous pleasure in recalling your friendship [amitié] – how I wish I were able adequately to begin to express how deeply I feel about it. Circumstances, however, do not allow me to indulge myself at the moment.⁹

At this point, the letter swerves away, without warning, from what reads thus far convincingly as a heartfelt expression of intense feeling for the absent beloved, articulating the love Constantijn feels for Dorothea and his sadness at their separation. Constantijn now adopts instead a high moral tone, which transforms and generalises Dorothea's loving

⁹ Worp nr. 80. Aan Dorothea van Dorp [KB]. 'Songetgen. Je me trouve esloigné de vous de beaucoup de journées. Cependant je vous assure du dedans de moy, qui vous demeure perpetuellement affectionné apres ceux que Dieu et nature me font honorer autant qu'aimer, je trouve mon grand contentement au resouvenir de vostre amitié, laquelle je voudroye vous pouvoir exprimer combien j'estime. L'occasion ne veut pas que j'en jouisse en presence; au lieu de cela je desire que les miens en puissent tirer contentement et prouffit. Ce sont mes bonnes soeurs que je vous recommande et supplie de leur vouloir servir de salutaire exemple, continuants tousjours paresemble cette honeste amitié que je me vante d'avoir gardé quelques années avec vous. Je souhaite qu'elles puissent tirer de vous ce que j'eusse désiré qu'eussiez prouffité de ma conversation. Prestez leur la main au chemin de la crainte de Dieu, qui est la source de toute vertu, et je m'assure que vous les trouverez sorties de l'apprentissage de deux honestes et soigneux parents qui n'y ont rien planté que bonnes herbes, qui doibvent s'avancer quelque jour en des fruits saints et salutaires. Je ne touche point au soing que devez avoir de vous mesme, car vous mesme vous le sçavez; en un mot, faites moy l'honneur de vous resouvenir quelquefois de ces exhortations à gravité et modestie dont je vous ay battu les oreilles si souvent. Si les plus avisez ne s'y conforment, je veu qu'à tousjours mais ma parole soit hors de credit chez vous. Or, Thehen, Dieu sçait que je soigne de bon coeur à l'avancement de vostre bonne reputation, pour vous aider à la rendre impenetrable à toute sorte de calomnie. Je suis vostre sincere ami, donc je vous parle rondement; si cela vous deplait, j'en dois estre adverti en temps. Voici des pieces mal cousuës que je verse en toute haste environ minuit, mais le contentement de parler avec vous m'oste tout autre souvenir. Kint, ne vous alienez jamais de moy, et que pour si peu de mois je ne puisse trouver du changement en vostre coeur; c'est cettuy la seul que je m'approprie; resolvez du reste comme maistresse du logis, je n'y pretens rien. Mais encor, si peut estre en mon absence l'envie vous prend de vous engager à quelque autre –vous, je supplie, choisissez le un peu selon mon humeur, et vous reglez au petit contentement de celuy qui fait estat de vous continuer une immortelle amitié, mesme aprez le jour qui vous aura rendu proprement propre à un mari, car, Thehe, ce me sera un des grands plaisirs de vous pouvoir trouver en vostre mesnage, si notamment le chef en soit tel et qualifié comme je vous le souhaite. Je remets tout à vostre discretion et apprens mon scel desasteure à tout ce qui resoudrez. Adieu Kint, j'attendray de vos lettres à Venise. Si vous desirez nouvelles de nostre voyage, enquestez en vous chez nous ou à la Plate, de buermeyt [eene der drie dochters van François van Aerssen. De families Huygens en van Aerssen woonden dicht bij elkander in het Voorhout]. Den Trello, de Van Santen, den Dimmer et toute la cabale soit saluée s'il vous plait tres affectionnement en mon nom. Devant touts Mad[ame] d'Eussem, etc. Mandez moy si avez receu le pourtrait. Adieu, adieu. En haste de Stutgard, au pais de Wirtembergh, ce 18e de May 1620.'

influence on himself into a benign, morally advisory role as guide and muse to his close family:

Rather [than continuing to express my affection], let me express desire that those closest to me can, in my absence, derive contentment and profit. That is, my good sisters, who I recommend to you, and beg you to be prepared to serve as a salutary example to them, so that they together can continue that honest friendship that I can boast to have maintained for several years with you. I hope that they can derive from you that profit which I would desire you to have gained from my conversation [company]. Take their hand on the pathway towards Godfearingness, which is the source of all virtue, and I can guarantee that you will find that they have emerged from an apprenticeship to two honest and supportive parents, who have planted within them only healthy plants, which will grow some day into saintly and salutary fruits.¹⁰

Modulated in this fashion, Huygens can now return to his intense scrutiny of Dorothea herself. She has by now been safely elevated to the status of a moral beacon to his sisters, and he addresses her in a tone or register more appropriate to a treatise on conduct than a familiar letter to a sweetheart:

I do not touch upon the care you must take for yourself, for you know that yourself. In a word, do me the honour of remembering from time to time those exhortations towards gravity and modesty with which I so often assailed your ears. If the most well advised do not conform to these instructions, may my advice be forever out of credit with you. For, *Thehen*, God knows that I attend with a good heart to the advancing of your good reputation, to help you to render it unassailable by any kind of calumny. I am your sincere friend, and thus I speak bluntly to you. If this displeases you, you had better warn me. Here are ill-stitched offerings which I pour out in all haste towards midnight, but the pleasure in speaking to you distracts me from all else.¹¹

Having completed his Polonius-like instructions to Dorothea on her proper behaviour in his absence, in the final section of the letter Huygens the lover returns to the lover's conventional concerns – though still in highly contrived fashion. He expresses his anxiety that his frequent, extended absences from The Hague may lead her to turn to another, in which case, he will be reduced to continuing his loving friendship with her as a visitor to her marital home:

Kint [little one], never ever distance yourself from me, and please let it be that I find no change in your heart because of these few months of separation. It is that alone [your

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ *ibid.*

heart] which I claim for myself. Dispose of the rest as befits the mistress of the house, I lay no claim to it. But still, if perhaps in my absence the desire takes you to attach yourself to somebody else, I beg you to choose someone in tune with myself, and to govern yourself so as to please a little he who lays claim to continuing an immortal friendship with you, even after the day which will see you once and for all given to a husband. For, *Thehe*, it will give me the greatest of pleasure to be able to find you in your household if the head of it is qualified in the ways I would wish for you. I hand over everything to your discretion and will accept the unfortunate outcome of whatever happens.¹²

The highly-wrought conventionality of this letter (and those that follow) ought not to surprise us. We should remember that any letter Huygens sent to Dorothea through official channels would be expected to be shown to her parents, and indeed, passed around her familiar circle – in at least one of his letters, Constantijn instructs Dorothea to show her own letter to another member of their circle to whom he owes a letter, but to whom he has not as yet had time to write.¹³

Subsequent letters oscillate in precisely the same manner between expressions of intense feeling, testifying to strong emotional commitment, and studied avowals of morally uplifting bonds between Huygens and the entire Dorp family – represented as beacons of propriety and seriousness. This is, in my view, a classic piece of conscious self-fashioning, in which the subject strenuously re-organises his sentimental environment to his own best advantage, by adopting and using adeptly conventions agreed on by the community in which he operates.

It hardly needs saying that the idea of Dorothea as a muse to the Huygens family is not a version of the Huygens-Dorp family relations which is to be found anywhere else in the historical account – Dorothea, indeed, subsequently complains to Constantijn of his family's coldness towards her. And of course, we are only here glimpsing the epistolary relationship here being constructed. The surviving letters I am considering are only a small sample of the many letters being exchanged between Constantijn and Dorothea in the period 1620-1624. In a letter of 12 May 1624, for instance, Dorothea writes to Constantijn that 'if I had had the opportunity to write to you as often as I wished, you would have a letter a week from

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ 'Thank Mad[ame] Trello for the delightful letter she did me the honour of writing to me. I take this as firm assurance of her affection towards me, on the grounds that a single word is worth more than ten thoughts. To excuse me from having failed to reply to her, just show her this word, so that she can judge how precious my leisure moments are to me, and how few of them I have' (Worp nr. 84, 18 June 1620).

me. I have, in the time you have been away, received 4 letters, and this is also [my] fourth'.¹⁴ The tone of Constantijn's letters is such, though, that there is no reason to think that missing letters from this period would differ significantly.

Dorothea's letters in Dutch to Constantijn, by contrast, are in an entirely different register. They are racy, colloquial, full of local gossip, and charmingly direct. Of course, familiar Dutch necessarily has a different 'feel' to it from court French. Still, Dorothea's letters are liberally strewn with gossip and scandal of a kind, and in a tone of voice, which is surely only intended for Constantijn (remember those barbed remarks about Anna Roemers Visscher). To take their full implications for an evaluation of the fashioned version of their friendship on show in Constantijn's letters, however, it is necessary to introduce here some background information concerning Constantijn's circumstances on his second and third periods of residence in London, which is the setting for many of Dorothea's most pointed epistolary exchanges.

On his second stay in England in 1622, Constantijn Huygens struck up a lasting friendship with the well-connected, welcoming Killigrew family, who were close neighbours to his diplomatic lodgings in London. Theirs was a bustling, vibrant artistic household, with parents and at least eight children (the eldest about 17) all of whom participated in well-attended musical soirées. A talented lutenist and singer himself, Constantijn acknowledged in later life that he had been deeply influenced by the Killigrews and the excitement of intoxicating intellectual milieu. His enthusiasm betrays perhaps the 'provincial' Dutchman's fascination with the 'high' metropolitan atmosphere. There, alongside the royalty and nobility who regularly visited to be entertained – and as well as the music – he first encountered the celebrated English poets John Donne and Ben Jonson, and rubbed shoulders with those we would call 'scientists' like the Lord Chancellor Sir Francis Bacon, and the inventor and illusionist Cornelius Drebbel.¹⁵

Presiding over this glamorous household was Lady Mary Killigrew, later to become 'Lady Stafford' after her remarriage to Sir Thomas Stafford, gentleman-usher to Queen Henrietta Maria, following the death of her first husband Sir Robert Killigrew in 1633.¹⁶ Although in

¹⁴ 'Had ick soo dickmaels gelegenthijt om te schrijven als lust, ghij hadt alle weeck eenen brief van mijn. Ick heb, soo lang all ghij wech geweest hebt, 4 brieven behadt, en dit is oock den vierden' (Worp nr. 237).

¹⁵ See A. G. H. Bachrach, *Sir Constantijn Huygens and some Trends in the Literature and Art of Seventeenth Century England and Holland* (DPhil, University of Oxford, 1951). I am extremely grateful to Dr Ad Leerintveld of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek for bringing this thesis to my attention.

¹⁶ The change in name has meant that her continuing friendship with Huygens gets overlooked as he begins to correspond with 'Lady Stafford' rather than 'Lady Killigrew'. Inge Broekman tells me that

later life Constantijn Huygens would insist that his infatuation with the Killigrews had extended to the entire family, his surviving correspondence, and his Latin poetic autobiography, make it clear that he was particularly taken with (and emotionally involved with) Lady Mary, with her ‘snow-white throat’ and ‘divine voice’ (as he later recalled them). At the time at which he first knew her, Lady Killigrew was referred to in London as ‘the young, French’ Lady Killigrew (implying a certain moral laxity, one gathers). She appears to have been pregnant for most of Huygens’s time in London (her last two children were born in 1622 and 1623), so I am not suggesting that this was more than a flirtation. On the other hand, the decorum of their relationship was surely questionable. Even late in life, Huygens would remember his hostess with particular passionate fervour. Tellingly, that same autobiographical poem which refers to Lady Killigrew’s physical attractiveness and musical brilliance contains no mention of Dorothea whatsoever.¹⁷

In March 1623, Dorothea wrote two letters in English to Lady Killigrew – or at least, that is when the letters were drafted, according to the dates at the bottom of the manuscripts preserved among the KB Huygens letters. To be more precise: at the bottom of the first letter has been written ‘Hague, this [blank] of March 1623’, indicating that the date is to be filled in later; the second letter carries no date, but at the top, in a later hand is written ‘1623 perhaps (‘for[si]tan’). Both letters carry the superscription, ‘For m[adam]e dor[othea] van dorp for the Lady Killigrew’.

The first letter is a kind of self-introduction, offering a small gift and dedicated service to Mary Killigrew, based on Constantijn Huygens’s glowing recommendation of her virtues. It might be intended to commence a negotiation concerning some kind of position for Dorothea in the Killigrew household (elsewhere in her letters Dorothea makes it clear that she is working hard on her English: ‘you know why’, she says to Constantijn):

Madame: The testimonies my friend S[ir] Constantin Huygens hath giuen me heretofore by his letters of y[our] Lad[yships] most rare and singular qualities, are so great and so manie, that even afore I saw him I found myselfe short of wordes in mine owne language, by w[hich] I could haue giuen y[our] Lad[yship] the thankes I owed y[ou] for esteeming me worth the offering of y[our] special loue and friendshippe; the remembrance of w[hich] kindnesse hauing since beene renewed to me by the said my

there exists a reference to Huygens’s having owned a portrait of Mary Killigrew, which hung in his private art collection (I. Broekman, personal communication, 28 November 2008).

¹⁷ ‘... solam, / Killigraea domus, si te cito, dixero multas. / ... Tota domus concentus erat: pulcherrima mater, / Mater (adhuc stupeo) duodenae prolis, ab illo / Guttore tam niveo, tam nil mortale sonanti / Quam coeleste Melos Citharae sociabat, et ipso / Threicio (dicas) animatis pollice chordis!’ Constantijn Huygens, *Mijn leven verteld aan mijn kinderen in twee boeken*. Ingeleid, bezorgd, vertaald en van commentaar voorzien door Frans R.E. Blom (Amsterdam, 2003), 2 vols. Sermonum inter libros. Lib. II, 150-187, Part. 1, 124-126, Part 2, 216-273.

friend in report of y[our] deserts hath putt me backe from expressing in this forreine language what in my owne I was not able to do before. Yet notwithstanding choosing rather to haue my ignorance discovered then my unthankfullnesse suspected, I resolved to send y[our] Lad[yship] these lines for to accomanie these poore trifles, upon w[hich] (though in their value most like their giuer) I will humble beseech y[our] Lad[yship] to bestow the honour of y[our] wearing, and sometimes at y[our] best leasure remember by them that in Holland liueth. Madam; Y[our] Lad[yships] humble and most loueing seruant D. v. D.¹⁸

The second letter, whilst still formal, is less conventional in its phrasing and sentiments. It vividly conveys Dorothea's strong reaction to what appears to have been a letter of congratulation of some kind from Lady Killigrew, probably a suggestion that Dorothea was not 'attached', or promised in marriage to Constantijn. Such an imputation might have been entirely innocent – part of Lady's Killigrew's inquiries as to whether Dorothea was free to come to England, say. But the clarification as the fact that she was entirely unattached, could, of course, only have come from Constantijn and would have been a convenient fiction if he wished to indicate his own freedom from commitment at home, in order to flirt with Mary Killigrew. Either way, Dorothea took it to mean that Constantijn had declared that their past attachment to one another was at an end:

Madame: I do not know what impressions my friend hath bene about to giue y[our] Lad[yship] concerning I cannot tell what change of the condition of my life: but guessing at it by y[our] Lad[yships] answeres, I dare say he doth long to see thinges brought to such an ende as he hath bene pleased to imagine, afore nor I nor anie liuing sowle thought of it. For the truth is, I do liue quietlie in the same estate, he left me and found me at his going and coming from England: neither do I see anie reason why I should wish to alter it. Howbeit, what kind of life so euer one day or other God shall be pleased to call me unto, he needeth not to feare for a while. The willing friendship I contracted w[ith] him euen almost from his childhood is such as no alteration will be able to alter it no, not this very unciuill doing of his. No more then the affection I vowed to the seruice of y[our] Lad[yship] in regard of w[hich] I am bold to call my selfe for ever Madame y[our] Lad[yships] Humble and most aff[ectionate] seruant, D.¹⁹

What is at first sight remarkable is that not just the first, but also the second of these letters is in Constantijn Huygens's unmistakeable handwriting (which explains the 'For m[adame]

¹⁸ Den Haag, Kon. Bibl., Hs. KA XLVIII, f. 56.

¹⁹ Den Haag, Kon. Bibl., Hs. KA XLVIII, f. 57. These letters have been transcribed in R. L. Colie, 'Some Thankfulness to Constantine'. A Study of English Influence upon the Early Works of Constantijn Huygens, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1956), 27-8.

dor[othea] van dorp for the Lady Killigrew' – these are drafts for her use). They are also, to anyone who has worked with his English letters, rather obviously entirely drafted by him (they are, as they say, in his 'voice'). Both preserve clear signs of having been folded in the manner of a standard letter of the time, implying (since they lack addresses) that they were sent as enclosures, presumably to Dorothea, for copying in her own hand.²⁰

That this should be so in the case of the first letter is perhaps not surprising. Huygens is assisting Dorothea in a patronage-bid, and therefore provides her with the language, style and register appropriate to such a formal approach. The same cannot be said of the second letter. It voices sentiments of indignation against Constantijn – the very person drafting the letter (though, because of the complexity of its language and syntax Dorothea, with her limited English, could perhaps not follow precisely what was being said).

Here we have a positively soap-opera scenario, perhaps engineered by a mischievous Lady Killigrew, which Constantijn now has to rectify, to preserve his reputation, not to mention those of his London hostess and his 'fiancée' in The Hague.

Dorothea van Dorp makes it quite clear that she considers the friendship which has developed between Constantijn and Lady Mary (twelve years older than him, attractive and vivacious, mother of a brood of adorable children), during the 14 month Dutch Embassy to London of 1622-3, to be by no means innocent, and is signalling that Lady Killigrew is treading on her sentimental toes. We have evidence from Dorothea's own letters (in Dutch) that this was indeed so. In May 1624, when Constantijn returned for some months to London, following the death of his father in February of that year, Dorothea's letters refer pointedly to the competition between herself and Lady Killigrew.²¹ When Lady Killigrew sends her the gift of a bracelet, Dorothea retorts with emotion: 'I deserve this and more for my lending her so long what I can do without so badly.' 'I shall also have my picture dispatched to her', she goes on, though this will have to wait until a portrait she is currently sitting for by Michael van Mierevelt is finished' (if only that portrait, which she suggests elsewhere is intended for Constantijn, survived).²²

²⁰ It was a graduate student from Utrecht University, David van der Linden, participating in a Masterclass led by myself for the Huizinga Institute, in the KB library in November 2008, who pointed out the folds (but no address) which showed not only that these drafts had been sent inside another letter, but also that the second one had been kept folded for some time (as the dirt-marks on its outer side show). I am extremely grateful to David for this important insight into the fortunes of these two curious missives.

²¹ Huygens finally returned to The Hague on 5 July 1624 (see 'reversus' against this date in Dagboek, 10).

²² Bachrach, 223.

When Dorothea responds with her own reciprocal gift for Lady Killigrew (as convention and good manners requires), her barbed comment to Constantijn makes her feelings about the situation very clear:

I am sending you the amber bracelet for Lady Killigrew. I am pleased that she desires something from me. It and all that I have in the world are hers to command. She will do it the greatest honour by wearing it, and will oblige me by doing so. Tell her this comes from someone who is her servant more than anyone has ever been, all her lovers notwithstanding. ... Please send my respects to her gracious goodness. Tell her she may indeed believe I love her, because I am prepared let her share the same joy as myself, and am willing to renounce my own pleasure for her sake. Do tell her so. Please do not forget the little ring she promised me.²³

In a particularly personal postscript, Dorothea asks Huygens to secure for her some additional cornelian beads for her own bracelet – the one, presumably, that Lady Killigrew has sent her – if he can do so easily. The bracelet is too small to go around her wrist.

There can be no doubting the strength of feeling here, nor the sense of ownership Dorothea feels entitled to express in an intimate letter to Constantijn. Nor does she seem to have been mistaken. Her view that Constantijn had become emotionally entangled with Lady Killigrew was evidently shared by others in the privileged circle around the Killigrews at the time. Some years later, responding to a teasing remark in a letter from the Countess Lewensteyn (or Countess of Levingstone as he calls her in English), Huygens responded: ‘I will not deny that in reminding me of Lady Stafford’s kindnesses towards me you have revived in me a glimmer of those old affections; but at least rest assured, Madam, and mark it well, that there was never more than a legitimate flame in play, which could not have made anyone blush’.²⁴

So what are we to make of the two letters from Dorothea to Lady Killigrew ‘ghosted’ by Constantijn Huygens? My suggestion is that here we see Huygens’s self-fashioning fully at

²³ ‘Ick sendt UE de baseledt van amber voor Mevrouw Killigrew. Ick ben blij, datter iet is dat sij van mijn begeert. Dat en al dat ick heb in de waerelt is om haer te dienen. Sij salt te veel eer aan mijn doen, dat sij t dragen sal, warme sij mijn grootelijckx sal verobligeeren. Segt haer, dat het compt van eene, die haer diners meer is also oit imant geweest is, niettegenstaende alle haer liefhebbers. Mijn is leet, dat sij vandaer vertrocken is, omdat UE daer vermaeck hebt in huijs kennis te hebben. Doet toch mijn dinstighe gebidenis aen haer goede graci. Segt, dat sij wel mach geloven, dat ick haer liefheb, want ick gun haer van herten deselfde vreucht, het haer toch. Ick bidde, vergeet niet het rinckxken, dat sij mijn beloft heeft. Sij is soo leelijck geworden, dat het ongeloflijck is. Hij siet er al vrij wat betrou of berout uut’ (Worp nr. 242).

²⁴ Huygens to Lewensteyn, 23 June 1639 (Den Haag, Kon. Bibl., Hs. KA XLIX, f. 909, Worp, nr. 2136, transcribed by Bachrach, 352): ‘Je ne dissimule pas qu’en me rememorant les bienueillances de Mad[am]e Stafford, vous ne m’avez vacciné quelque étincelle de ces anciennes amities; mais au moins, Madame, sçavez vous, et l’aurez bien appris pardelà, comme il n’y a eu que du feu legitime sur le jeu, et dont personne n’a que faire de rougir.’

work – extending, indeed, beyond the contours of his own body to include that of his ‘friend’ Dorothea.

First, Constantijn orchestrates – literally ventriloquises – the giving of token gifts to his English hostess by Dorothea, carefully crafting the approach as the courtly gesture, or ‘paying court’ it is intended to be. Perhaps he salves his conscience by explicitly involving Dorothea in his London life, perhaps he persuades himself that he is thereby offering her a golden opportunity to ‘come up’ in the world, by putting her in a position to enter Lady Killigrew’s household herself. Eager to please, as always, Dorothea obliges by transcribing his letter creating her as a gracious English courtier, and ascribing it to herself.

Lady Killigrew evidently replied (as she would be required to do out of pure *politesse*), and in doing so implied that she had been informed that Dorothea was not in any way attached to Constantijn, was, indeed, spoken for elsewhere. Now Constantijn is required to repair the damage done at both ends of his carefully engineered correspondence between rivals for his affection. The result is the second letter. Once again the genuinely aggrieved Dorothea obligingly goes along with the fiction that this had been, at worst, a misunderstanding. But she makes it extremely clear that whatever claims she has on Constantijn persist:

I dare say he doth long to see things brought to such an ende as he hath bene pleased to imagine, afore nor I nor anie liuing sowle thought of it. [But] the truth is, I do liue quietlie in the same estate, he left me and found me at his going and coming from England: neither do I see anie reason why I should wish to alter it. ... The willing friendship I contracted w[ith] him euen almost from his childhood is such as no alteration will be able to alter it no, not this very unciuill doing of his.

If this seems a far-fetched interpretation (it is, by the way, the only one I am satisfied by which makes sense of all the data), let us turn, finally, to the last letters we have that Constantijn sent to Dorothea, in 1626-7. By this time, as numerous poems to ‘sterre’ or Susanna van Baerle, written during the same period, make clear, Constantijn had committed himself to the woman who would become his wife in April 1627.

In April 1626 Constantijn wrote two letters to Dorothea, dated close together, or perhaps even on the same day. They are written in response to a report (received by Huygens via her brother, perhaps with strong accompanying protest) that there has been a violent altercation in the Huygens household, between Dorothea’s step-mother and Constantijn’s mother. He has no idea what the cause of the to-do is, he claims, but if it is supposed to have anything to do with him, he is blameless:

I was not present at this discussion that Madame van Dorp had with my mother, and which she has no doubt told you all about – since, unkindly, it erupted in front of those who have very little to do with it. But if she continues to lay the blame on me, as I have learned indirectly she is trying to do, I will find myself finally forced to open my books [i.e. show my correspondence] publicly. I can assure her that when I do so she will read there her own confusion, and my sincere affection towards her and all her family. Only someone truly ungrateful could claim the contrary.²⁵

Here the care Huygens had taken with those fashioned letters we looked at earlier provides him with precisely the moral ‘cover’ needed at the moment when he discards the passionate ‘friendship’ with Dorothea in favour of a passionate marital union with Susanna van Baerle. Let anyone who chooses read his letters to Dorothea, and they will find them beyond reproach, he writes. That, after all, was exactly how they were contrived in the first place – to be able to be read in two senses, depending on the inclination of the reader to find passion or chastity in their language and expression.²⁶

Constantijn’s second letter reiterates to Dorothea – who has apparently fallen gravely ill in the aftermath of the announcement of his engagement to Susanna – that she should pay no heed to the tittle-tattle of ‘friends’ who consider her, Dorothea, to have been spurned, and her reputation damaged:

At the moment, in my view, you are taking the gossip too seriously, and the discontent your friends have conceived towards you cannot be rebutted to your advantage, as I promise myself you will be able to do once you can defend yourself to them face to face. I see difficulties arising here from the fact that people never understand the way things are in depth, and others do not want to do so. As for myself, I have always had reserves of strength which at worst guarantee me against all calomny. But I am upset to see the disorder among our friends, and would be pleased if you would take the time to explain things to them, instead of letting others do so, thereby making things seem worse than they really are.²⁷

²⁵ ‘Je n’ay pas esté present à cette conference que Mad[ame] van Dorp a eüe avec ma mere et dont elle vous aura donné advis sans doubte, puisque peu sagement on la fait esclatter devant ceux qui en ont bien peu à faire. Mais si elle persevere à me charger de blasme, comme j’apprens que desja de travers elle s’est meslée d’y toucher, je me verray enfin forcé à faire ouverture de mes livres, et l’asseuré bien qu’elle y lira sa confusion et ma sincere affection pour le service d’elle et des siens, n’y ayant que l’ingratitude qui la puisse disputer’ (Worp nr. 310).

²⁶ As early as 1620, on his embassy to Venice, as noted above, Constantijn suggests to Dorothea that she might like to show the letter he has written to her to ‘Madame de Trello’ (Dorothea’s step-mother’s sister, who formed part of their intellectual and musical circle), in lieu of his replying to a letter from her himself. In other words, he writes on the assumption that his letters will be shown to others than the recipient (as indeed do letter writers generally in this period).

²⁷ ‘A cet heure à mon advis vous la faites trop longue là, et des mescontentemens que voz amis ont conceu contre vous ne se debattent pas ici à vostre advantage, comme je me promets que vous vous

In spite of these protestations, Dorothea herself was clearly not mollified, even if Constantijn could absolve himself from blame by referring to those dozens of carefully contrived letters he had sent her over the preceding five or more years. Huygens's final letter to her in this sequence acknowledges this to be the case. On the eve of his marriage, he writes to tell her that he has been successful in securing the position of admiral-lieutenant for her brother Philips – an achievement he apparently hopes will mend bridges between himself and the van Dorp family. He does not, however, hold out much hope that this will appease Dorothea:

You have so misunderstood my intentions, that it seems to me that nothing I do now can cause you any less offence. I mean to say that you wear the importunity of my behaviour like a scar.²⁸

So much for the scholarly view that Dorothea herself had jilted Constantijn for another while he was away, ten years earlier. Which brings me to my conclusion. What is surprising here is not the story I have just narrated, which resembles many others, then and now, in which the construction being placed on a relationship differs according to which of the parties concerned is describing it. No, what comes as a surprise is the tacit agreement shared among almost all serious scholars of Constantijn Huygens that there had been nothing disreputable or to be reproached in his behaviour towards her – that any fault lay on her side. The fiction extends to the often repeated information that Dorothea 'went off and married someone else' – in fact she never married. It is as if the scholarly community would rather abandon its customary critical scruples, and agree to turn a blind eye to the youthful behaviour of Holland's greatest virtuoso.

And please understand, I am not, here, taking sides. Who is to say whose version of the love between Constantijn and Dorothea was the more accurate, not to mention the most appropriate? But as we reflect upon the textual self-fashioning of that great connoisseur and musical virtuoso, cultural advisor to princes, and pre-eminent Dutch statesman, Sir Constantijn Huygens, here, surely, is a striking example of his early ability to fashion himself to his future destiny, to which scholars heretofore should have given serious and sustained

en sçauriez defendre en presence. Je voy naistre des inconveniens de ce qui tout le monde ne sçait pas le fonds des affaires et d'autres ne le veulent pas sçavoir. De moy j'ay tousjours des troupes de reserve, qui au pis aller me garantiront de toute calomnie, mais comme je suis mari de veoir du desordre parmi des amiz, aussi voudroy-je que prinsiez la peine de les venir developper, au lieu d'autres, qui par faute d'instruction peuvent rendre vostre cause pire qu'elle est' (Worp nr. 311).

²⁸ 'Vous avez tant eu la teste rompue de mes intentions, qu'il m'a semblé que la communication de cette derniere ne se pouvoit faire en aucune part à moins d'offense. Je veux dire quie vous portez comme une cicatrice l'importunité de mon entretien et que par ainsi vous avez moins de sensibilité aux coups nouveaux' (Worp nr. 343).

attention. At least let us hope that in future they will take more care to give letters like these in the Huygens corpus their full critical attention, thereby allowing them to see beyond the surface conventions which we now understand fashioned the very public presence of this extraordinary figure.

Lisa Jardine

Centre for Editing Lives and Letters, Queen Mary University of London

Appendix: letters from Huygens to Dorothea van Dorp

Worp 80. Aan Dorothea van Dorp

Songetgen. Je me trouve esloigné de vous de beaucoup de journées. Cependant je vous assure du dedans de moy, qui vous demeure perpetuellement affectionné apres ceux que Dieu et nature me font honorer autant qu'aimer, je trouve mon grand contentement au resouvenir de vostre amitié, laquelle je voudroye vous pouvoir exprimer combien j'estime. L'occasion ne veut pas que j'en jouisse en presence; au lieu de cela je desire que les miens en puissent tirer contentement et proufit. Ce sont mes bonnes soeurs que je vous recommande et supplie de leur vouloir servir de salutaire exemple, continuants tousjours paresemble cette honeste amitié que je me vante d'avoir gardé quelques années avec vous. Je souhaite qu'elles puissent tirer de vous ce que j'eusse désiré qu'eussiez proufité de ma conversation. Prestez leur la main au chemin de la crainte de Dieu, qui est la source de toute vertu, et je m'assure que vous les trouverez sorties de l'apprentissage de deux honestes et soigneux parents qui n'y ont rien planté que bonnes herbes, qui doivent s'avancer quelque jour en des fruits saints et salutaires. Je ne touche point au soing que devez avoir de vous mesme, car vous mesme vous le sçavez; en un mot, faites moy l'honneur de vous resouvenir quelquefois de ces exhortations à gravité et modestie dont je vous ay battu les oreilles si souvent. Si les plus avisez ne s'y conforment, je veu qu'à tousjours mais ma parole soit hors de credit chez vous. Or, *Thehen*, Dieu sçait que je soigne de bon coeur à l'avancement de vostre bonne reputation, pour vous aider à la rendre impenetrable à toute sorte de calomnie. Je suis vostre sincere ami, donc je vous parle rondement; si cela vous deplait, j'en dois estre adverti en temps. Voici des pieces mal cousuës que je verse en toute haste environ minuit, mais le contentement de parler avec vous m'oste tout autre souvenir. *Kint*, ne vous alienez jamais de moy, et que pour si peu de mois je ne puisse trouver du changement en vostre coeur; c'est cettuy la seul que je m'approprie; resolvez du reste comme maistresse du logis, je n'y pretens rien. Mais encor, si peut estre en mon absence l'envie vous prend de vous engager à quelque autre –vous, je supplie, choisissez le un peu selon mon humeur, et vous reglez au petit contentement de celui qui fait estat de vous continuer une immortelle amitié, mesme aprez le jour qui vous aura rendu proprement propre à un mari, car, *Thehe*, ce me sera un des grands plaisirs de

vous pouvoir trouver en vostre mesnage, si notament le chef en soit tel et qualifié comme je vous le souhaite. Je remets tout à vostre discretion et apprens mon scel desasteure à tout ce qui resoudrez. Adieu Kint, j'attendray de vos lettres à Venise. Si vous desirez nouvelles de nostre voyage, enquestez en vous chez nous ou à la Plate, de buermeyt [eene der drie dochters van François van Aerssen. De families Huygens en van Aerssen woonden dicht bij elkander in het Voorhout]. Den Trello, de Van Santen, den Dimmer et toute la cabale soit saluée s'il vous plait tres affectionnement en mon nom. Devant touts Mad[ame] d'Eussem, etc. Mandez moy si avez receu le pourtrait. Adieu, adieu. En haste de Stutgard, au païs de Wirtembergh, ce 18e de May 1620.

Worp 84. Aan Dorothea van Dorp

Lieve Sontgetgen, Je derobe ce moment de temps de l'importunité des mes affaires, pour me condouloir de la maladie qu'on me fait sçavoir vous avoir surprise. Quelle en esté ou la qualité ou la cause, je ne le sçay point; bien puis je juger que c'a esté quelque chose d'extraordinaire qui vous a empechée de me continuer la faveur accoustumée de vos lettres. J'espere que l'espoir que m'a donné mon frere de vostre guerison n'aura esté en vain, et que hormais vous estes hors de peine. Parmi les triumphes et magnificences qui nous ont accompagnez depuis qu'avons mis le pied en ce païs delicieux, je n'ay jamais manqué de raffraichir la memoire de vostre amitié et conversation, qui me valent plus, sans comparaison, que toutes ces splendeurs du monde. De ce qu'avez prins la peine d'aller entretenir mon bon pere en son infirmité, je vous en ay de l'obligation comme d'un devoir presté à ma personne. Ne permettez jamais que cette amitié entre vous et les nostres defaille, et vous ne vous en plaindrez point. Remercie Mad[ame] Trello de sa jolie lettre qu'elle me fait l'honneur de m'escire; je l'ay prise pour d'autant plus solides assurances de son affection envers moy, qu'une parole vault mieux que dix pensées. Pour m'excuser de ce que je manque à luy respondre, montrez luy seulement ce mot, qui le fera bien juger comme le loisir m'a esté cher et escart (?) [sic]. Adieu *Songetgen*, ne doutez point que je ne soye tousjours vostre ami indubitable. Mais de grace escrivez moy à toutes occasions. Si la prochaine fois il me reste quelque peu de temps d'avantage, je vous communiqueray certains miens advis qui me sont venus en cervelle par chemin, comme en cheminant à cheval on a loisir de penser et repenser dix mille choses sans destourbier. Tenez toujours bonne amitié avec Edmond, mais temperez vos actions avec cette discretion qui vous est naturelle. Aprenez de moy que, si vous vous jettez vous mesme, personne ne vous relevera. Je veux du bien à S[eigneur] Thomas, mais à vous aussi et à touts deux ensemble; c'est pourquoy je souhaite quelque jour de venir à bout de quelque bon dessein, mais en reputation et honneur. Un autrefois plus à plein de ceci. Mais baisemains à M[adame] d'Eussum, Santenskind, Trello, Dimmer, Claesje, Kilgrew, Mess[ieurs] vos freres, Edmond, Connervay et tout le Voorhout. Adieu Kint. De Venise, en courant, 18e Juin 1620.

Worp 177. Aan Dorothea van Dorp

Songetgjen, Vostre voyage de Kenenburgh m'aggrée pour la mesme raison qui vous l'a rendu moins agreeable; il est bon d'avoir `a faire parfois à des gens d'opinion contraire à la vostre pour se roidir à la defense de chascun la sienne et, par voye de dispute, se decouvrir soy mesme à soy et sçavoir combien c'est qu'on sçait. Puis on aiguise sa trenche à la frotter à l'acier de l'obstination des ignorans; c'est ce qui a donné occasion aux premiers disputes d'escole, ou elles s'appellent les espluschements de la verité. Mais aussi apres l'avoir acquise, il reste le grand point de la pratique qui s'enseigne hors des escolles, ou au moins exercée avec moins d'aigreur. Cette pratique, comme en tous les chefs de nostre foy, ainsi notamment en ces dernieres controverses, doibt estre la visée et le but de l'exercice, afin que l'ame, s'estant eslançee de tout son pouvoir jusques au plus haut degré de l'election absoluë de Dieu, se regarde par apres au dedans et, assurée de ce qui est de la racine de l'arbre, en vienne par apres aux fruits, esquelz la dependance du haut avec le bas luy doibt fournir tout le sujet de sa consolation et l'assurance de son salut.

Si apres vostre retour à la Haye mes soeurs vous ont esloigné les apparences du mien, elles vous ont fidelement communiqué mes derniers adviz, que je ne sçauroy desdire pour encores. Le temps de neuf moiz à la verité est tres-long pour une ambassade extraordinaire, mais encor nous consolerions nous en la misere commune de vostre sexe, si au bout de ce terme peussions nous descharger le ventre d'un fardeau si importun. Je n'y voy nulle apparence et en mon particulier toutefois m'appaise des raisons que vous ay souvent alleguées. Cependant de loing je considere comme spectateur l'effroyable estat de ma patrie et, ne fut que j'esperasse en la providence de l'Eternel pour le regard de la manutention de sa propre cause, la representation de noz mauvaisetez me feroit desesperer de sa merci. Je le prie de coeur, qu'il vous la continuë en vostre particulier, comme je suis d'affection interne vostre ami tres-ami

Den Song.

Mais baisemains à Mad. Vostre hostesse avec tous les siens, *'t schoone kint* devant tous. Je m'attends à la promesse que me faictes de m'aviser des amours de mon bon frere; il me contente infiniment d'entendre l'heureux estat auquel à present se rencontrent tous les troiz vostres. Londres, ce 11e de mon mois (Sept.) 1622.

Worp 310. Aan Dorothea van Dorp.

Song. Mons[ieur] vostre frere m'envoya hier au soir vostre lettre, sur laquelle cette ci va de response, pour vous dire que là où luy ou quelqu'un des vostres pourra avoir besoin de mes advis ou adresses, je m'y employeray de pleine affection, de sorte qu'on ne desirera jamais rien en moy que le pouvoir de vous obliger tous, la volonté m'en demeurant tres parfaite. Pour les differents où ce voisinage est tombé passé quelque temps, je n'y pretends part ni

portion, et croy qu'entamé par les femmes il pourra estre vidé de mesme, mais, comme j'ay dit, si vous vous en rapportez `a l'entremise de ces gens icy, il n'e ira que de mal en pis; à faute d'instruction sur le principal ilz sont capables de s'esgarer et s'en prendre où ilz en ont le moins de subject. Je n'ay pas esté present à cette conference que Mad[ame] van Dorp a eüe avec ma mere et dont elle vous aura donné advis sans doubte, puisque peu sagement on la fait esclatter devant ceux qui en ont bien peu à faire. Mais si elle persevere à me charger de blasme, comme j'apprens que desja de travers elle s'est meslée d'y toucher, je me verray enfin forcé à faire ouverture de mes livres, et l'asseure bien qu'elle y lira sa confusion et ma sincere affection pour le service d'elle et des siens, n'y ayant que l'ingratitude qui la puisse disputer. Mais le desir de paix et concorde qui me gouverne dessus tout me fait esperer et souhaitter que le proces sera vidé devant que j'aye besoin de cetter production, et que, s'il plaist à Dieu, l'estrif se terminera en risée un jour; ce que je ne di pas certes par defiances de nostre cause, car j'estime qu'elle se defend soy mesme et que pour la combattre vous aurez besoing de bons coups d'escrime, mais, encor un coup, par pure envie d'union et d'amitié à laquelle je porteray tousjours autant que pourrez desirer du

Song.

De la Haye, ce 11e d'Avril 1626.

Mes recommandations à tout le monde.

Worp 311. Aan Dorothea van Dorp.

Song, Apres que mes occupations m'ont fait fausser trois jours de suite le debvoir de vous respondre et à quantité d'autres amiz qui se plaignent de mesme stile que vous, encor aujourdhuy me bornent elles mon loisir de si près que je ne sçauroy que vous dire en tres grande haste qu'à mon advis Mons[ieur] vostre frere fera bien de se presenter devant le Prince à cet heure qu'il doibt aller songer à disposer d'un si beau commandement. L'admiral m'asseure qu'il aura sa voix et que ce seroit luy faire tort de ne le luy donner point. Mais puisque la resolution en est cachée au coeur de mon Maistre, où peut estre elle n'est encore conceuë, c'est chose douteuse d'en juger.

Le S[eygneur] Calvart nous avoit desjà donné l'alarme de vostre maladie, qui m'estonna du commencement, mais apprenant qu'un peu plus d'apprehension qu'il ne falloit pour si peu de mal vous avait fair fare la mourante, quand grace à Dieu il n'en estoit guere temps encore, j'ay fait du complaisant à me rire de ce que d'autres me disoyent avoir esté ridicule à veoir, lorsque vous prinstes congé des parens et vous imaginastes d'avoir la mort au bout des ongles. A cet heure à mon advis vous la faites trop longue là, et des mescontentemens que voz amis ont conceu contre vous ne se debattent pas ici à vostre avantage, comme je me promets que vous vous en sçauriez defendre en presence. Je voy naistre des inconveniens

de ce qui tout le monde ne sçait pas le fonds des affaires et d'autres ne le veulent pas sçavoir. De moy j'ay tousjours des troupes de reserve, qui au pis aller me garantiront de toute calomnie, mais comme je suis marri de veoir du desordre parmi des amiz, aussi voudroy-je que prinsiez la peine de les venir developper, au lieu d'autres, qui par faute d'instruction peuvent rendre vostre cause pire qu'elle est. Le reste de vostre belle lettre et celle que vous laissates icy sont l'infirmité mesmes et ne meritent point de response, si n'est que je suis tousjours le mesme de coeur et d'intention que j'ay esté tousjours et le seray pour tous changemens qui puissent arriver au train de ma vie, sçavoir

den Song.

Recommandations partout, s'il vous plaist.

342. Aan Dorothea van Dorp.

Vous avez tant eu la teste rompue de mes intentions, qu'il m'a semblé que la communication de cetter derniere ne se pouvoit faire en aucune part à moins d'offense. Je veux dire quie vous portez comme une cicatrice l'importunité de mon entretien et que par ainsi vous avez moins de sensibilité aux coups nouveaux. J'enfantay cette conception pierreuse aujourdhuy dans mon lict, pour vous dire que les *Brygoms* comme moy se donnent assez de loisir à porter ailleurs la pensée qu'au pucelage de la maistresse. C'est bien vous qui me cognoissez des mieux, mais apprenez qu'en ces entrefaites, où volontiers la pluspart du monde s'oublie, je m'esvertue à ne rien faire qui oblige ma ressouvenance à me faire rougir ci apres. C'est en partie pour vous conserver entier l'honneur qui vous demeure de m'avoir nourri et eslevé sagement. J'attens qu'à tout heure on m'apporte la nouvelle du choix que Mess[ieurs] de Zelande auront voulu faire de la personne de Mons[ieur] vostre frere [Philips van Dorp is in 1627 Willem Haultain opgevolgd als luitenant-admiraal van Zeeland]. N'apprehende rien quoyqu'ilz tardent; son merite luy en a desjà despesché la commission au coeur des gens de bien, et les meschans ne seront jamais capables de l'en effacer. Ce frere vault largement les autres, quelque impression que vous ayez du cadet [Arend van Dorp]. Cettuyci s'est insinué trop avant en ma cognoissance, desjà devant que ses comportements me fussent autres qu'indifferens, pour me faire soubcrire au jugement que vous en faictes par amour ou par charité. S'il a les bonnes parties que vous en imaginez, je veux bion m'en resjouir aveq vous, mais si aussi je tesmoigne n'ignorer point le surpris de ses imperfections, je demande que vous n'en attribuyiez rien à la passion ou à un fol ressentiment de la folie qu'il a voulu employer contre moy. Car de faict, je tascheray tousjours à me tenir aussi lin de reven[che] qu'il a tesmoigné l'estre de la discretion. Outre que mon inclination naturelle me porte à cette resolution, pouvant bien me vanter de par la grace de Dieu, comme il y a en Sa parole, *qu'il m'est éschéu une bonne ame*, la consideration de cette alliance est assez capable de me

persuader à la paix et à cette concorde où il fait si beau veoir freres uniz s'entretenir. Mais depuis que dernièrement je vous en enseignay la voye aisée et ouverte, j'ay souvent pl[aint] à par moy d'avoir veu comme vous eustes peu agreable d'apprehender mes raisons. Je prie Dieu qu'il ne cesse de vous illuminer de son saint esprit, comme estant à tousjours de bon coeur

den Song.

Amsterdam, 2 Mars 1627.