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Author’s version

Ronsard at School: French Poetry as Educational Tool in the Early Modern Low Countries

Alisa van de Haar

In 1586, one year after the death of Pierre de Ronsard, his biographer Claude Binet wrote about the prince of poets:

Learned men, too, and not just ours, but foreigners as well, and especially Italians, have esteemed and praised him infinitely [...]. And this judgement was followed by everyone, as is demonstrated by his works, that were read and are still read publicly at French schools in Flanders, England, and Poland, up to Gdańsk.

Les hommes doctes aussi, & non seulement les nostres, mais les estrangers, & principalement les Italiens, l’ont estimé & loüé infiniment [...]. Et ce iugement fut suiuy de tout le monde, comme tesmoignent ses œuvres que l’on a leu, & lit encores publicquement aux escolles Françoises de Flandres, d’Angleterre & de Pologne, iusques à Danzich.¹

¹ Binet Claude, *Discovrs de la vie de Pierre de Ronsard, gentilhomme vandomois, Prince des Poëtes François* (Paris, Gabriel Buon: 1586) 29–30.

In this fragment, Binet sheds valuable light on the contemporary reception of the works of Ronsard outside of France. He indicates that already during the poet's lifetime, his works were read in educational environments elsewhere in Europe, where they were used to teach French to non-native speakers. The French schools of the Low Countries are mentioned explicitly as a place where Ronsard's writings were used. This type of institution rose in popularity in the sixteenth century, guiding many boys and girls through their formative years. Binet's remark suggests a large and relatively young readership of both sexes in a school setting, raising questions about how and to what extent Ronsard's texts might have been used in this context.

This article will test the validity of Binet's affirmation by discussing references to Ronsard and his works that can be found in sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century schoolbooks that were used in French schools in the Low Countries. This overview will provide insight into the extent to which pupils were confronted with his works, which texts were used in these schools, and the manners in which they were presented and used. Besides enhancing our understanding of the Netherlandish reception of Ronsard's oeuvre, this study also enlarges our knowledge of the educational practices in the French schools in the Low Countries. It has long been known that literary texts were used for educational purposes in these establishments. It is generally assumed, however, that these concern centuries-old popular stories rather than contemporary poetic material. The examples that will be discussed here support Binet's claim, revealing that the French schools in the Low Countries actually laid the basis for a broad local readership of Ronsard and his fellow poets. Moreover, it is the contention of this article that Ronsard's authority covered not only the field of poetry, but also the domains of orthography and music.

French schools

The French school was a relatively novel type of educational institution in the Low Countries that swiftly rose in popularity at the beginning of the sixteenth century, existing side by side with Dutch and Latin schools. Its main purpose was to teach children the French tongue, which was the local language in the southern regions of the Low Countries. French also played a major role in official domains such as administration and jurisdiction, and was on the rise as an international language, particularly in mercantile environments.² In French schools in Dutch-speaking areas, children learned French as a second language.

These institutions were located primarily in larger cities, where they targeted middle-class children. Especially families involved in international trade, for which knowledge of French was crucial, sent their offspring to French schools. Separate institutions for boys and girls developed in the first half of the century. Children attending these schools were generally between seven and fifteen years old. Their teachers, too, could be either male or female.³ They were native speakers of Dutch or French, and most schoolmasters and -mistresses of the latter group originated from the Francophone regions in the Low Countries.⁴

Each instructor taught between thirty and fifty students at the same time. In their schoolrooms, children of all ages and thus levels of language proficiency were mixed. Lessons were taught individually, not collectively in a class format.⁵ Students came to the teacher one by one to recite their lessons and have their writing corrected. If possible, the language of

² Haar A. van de, *The Golden Mean of Languages: Forging Dutch and French in the Early Modern Low Countries, 1540-1620* (Leiden & Boston: 2019) 38–92.

³ Haar A. van de, “Van ‘nimf’ tot ‘schoolvrouw’: De Franse school en haar onderwijzeressen in de zestiende- en zeventiende-eeuwse Nederlanden”, *Historica* 38, 2 (2015) 11–16.

⁴ For more information on the French schools, see: Riemens K.J., *Esquisse historique de l’enseignement du français en Hollande du XVIe au XIXe siècle* (Leiden: 1919); Dodde N. – Esseboom C., “Instruction and Education in French Schools”, in Clercq J. De – Lioce N. – Swiggers P. (eds.), *Grammaire et enseignement du français, 1500–1700* (Leuven: 2000) 39–60; Frijhoff W.T.M., “Frans onderwijs en Franse scholen”, in Koffeman M. – Montoya A.C. – Smeets M. (eds.), *Litteraire bruggenbouwers tussen Nederland en Frankrijk. Receptie, vertaling en cultuuroverdracht sinds de Middeleeuwen* (Amsterdam: 2017) 49–82.

⁵ Wolf J. de, *Meisjesopvoeding en -onderwijs te Antwerpen in de nieuwe tijden* (Unpublished thesis Ghent University: 1989) 174–175; Uil H., *De scholen syn planthoven van de gemeente: Het onderwijs in Zeeland en Staats-Vlaanderen 1578–1801* (Bergschenhoek: 2015) 461–464.

instruction was French.⁶ While the core of the curriculum consisted of language lessons, other useful disciplines, such as geography, bookkeeping, and, for the girls, music and needlework, were also discussed.⁷ For their language training, the pupils started with the Dutch alphabet, followed by the French alphabet, after which they learned how to read in both languages.⁸ Once they had mastered the basics of reading, children were taught how to write with the help of alphabetical primers in French or Dutch.⁹

In order to improve their French language skills, students made use of various types of schoolbooks. They enlarged their vocabulary by studying vocabulary books and dictionaries. To train their fluency in speaking French, students performed dialogues that were provided in mostly bilingual conversation manuals.¹⁰ Some schoolmasters even wrote school plays that their pupils could perform to practise public speaking in both French and Dutch.¹¹ For writing exercises, there were model books available containing sample letters.¹² Translation exercises were used to enlarge the students' overall knowledge of French vocabulary, grammar, and style. These translations could concern a wide variety of texts: from Biblical material to anthologies of maxims, Aesop's fables, and popular stories on Reynard the Fox or the immensely popular

⁶ Frijhoff W.T.M., "Multilingualism and the Challenge of Frenchification in the Early Modern Dutch Republic", in Peersman C. – Rutten G. – Vosters R. (eds.), *Past, Present and Future of a Language Border* (Berlin: 2015) 115–140, esp. 120; Uil, *De scholen syn planthoven van de gemeente* 549.

⁷ De Wolf, *Meisjesopvoeding en -onderwijs te Antwerpen* 176; Van de Haar, "Van 'nimf' tot 'schoolvrouw'" 12.

⁸ Dodde – Esseboom, "Instruction and Education in French Schools" 43–45.

⁹ For example: Heyns Peeter, *ABC, oft exemplen om de kinderen beqvamelick te leeren Schryven: Inhoudende veel schoone sentencien tot onderwysinghe der ionckheyt* (Antwerp, Christophe Plantin: 1568). Wal M.J. van der, "De mens als talig wezen: Taal, taalnormering en taalonderwijs in de vroegmoderne tijd", *De zeventiende eeuw* 18, 1 (2002) 3–16, esp. 11–13.

¹⁰ See, for instance: Vivere Gerard de, *Douze dialogues et colloques, traitans de diverses matieres* (Antwerp, Jan van Waesberghe: 1574); Heyns Peeter, *III Dialogues pueriles, en Alleman et Francois des quatre saisons de l'an* (Frankfurt am Main, Paul Brachfeld: 1588).

¹¹ Peeter Heyns wrote various school plays for his girls' school in Antwerp in the 1570s and 1580s. They were published more than a decade later, when he had moved to Haarlem. His colleague Gerard de Vivere wrote various French plays with classical themes for an educational use: Vivere Gerard de, *Trois comedies francoises* (Antwerp, Guislain Janssens: 1589); Heyns Peeter, *Le miroir des mesnageres* (Haarlem, Gillis Rooman: 1595); Heyns Peeter, *Le mirior des meres* (Haarlem, Gillis Rooman: 1596); Heyns Peeter, *Le miroir des vefves* (Haarlem, Gillis Rooman: 1597); Haar A. van de, "Both One and the Other: The Educational Value of Personification in the Female Humanist Theatre of Peeter Heyns (1537–1598)", in Melion W.S. – Ramakers B.A.M. (eds.), *Personification: Embodying Meaning and Emotion*, *Intersections* 41 (Leiden: 2016) 256–283.

¹² See, for instance: Vivere Gerard de, *Lettres missives familiares, entremeslees de certaines confabulations non moins vtiles que recreatiues* (Antwerp, Jan van Waesberghe: 1576). Selm B. van, *Een menigthe treffelijcke boecken: Nederlandse boekhandelscatalogi in het begin van de zeventiende eeuw* (Utrecht: 1987) 239.

fictional knight Amadis of Gaul.¹³ Pupils would translate these texts from one language to the other, and back again.

Whereas the popular works that were often used for translation exercises are now considered literary texts in their own right, in the 1960s, historian Antoine Hendrickx criticized the program of the early modern French schools:

A characteristic of the language education in the French schools of that period is the fact that there was no true literary education and that the masterpieces of French literature were not read at that time.

Een kenmerk van het taalonderwijs in de toenmalige Franse scholen is het feit, dat er van een werkelijk literair onderwijs of van de lezing der meesterwerken der Franse literatuur in die tijd geen sprake is geweest.¹⁴

Hendrickx is right in pointing out that literary education was not an integral part of the curriculum in the French schools. Rather than a goal in itself, literary texts such as the Reynard were used primarily to further students' proficiency in French and Dutch. Nevertheless, Hendrickx overlooked clear signs that contemporary literary material was used as well.¹⁵

Despite the fact that literature was not a core discipline in the French schools, pupils frequently came in contact with French literary works and their authors in the classroom, and

¹³ Luython Glaude, *La merueilleuse et ioyeuse vie de Esope [...] Dat wonderlijck ende genuechlijck leuen van Esopus* (Antwerp, Heyndrick Peetersen van Middelburch: 1548); Florianus Johannes – Plantin Christophe, *Reynaert de vos. Een seer ghenouchlicke ende vermakelicke historie: in Franchoyse ende neder Duytsch* (Antwerp: Christophe Plantin, 1566); Herberay des Essarts Nicolas, *Le premier livre d'Amadis de Gavle*. (Antwerp, Christophe Plantin & Jan I van Waesberghe: 1561). Van Selm, *Een menigthe treffelijcke boecken*, 236–240; Resoort R.J., *Een schoone historie vander borchgravinne van Vergi: Onderzoek naar de intentie en gebruikssfeer van een zestiende-eeuwse prozaroman*. (Hilversum: 1988) 209; Resoort R.J., “Een proper profitelijc boec: Eind vijftiende en zestiende eeuw”, in Heimeriks N. – Toorn W. van (eds.) *De hele Bibelebontse berg: De geschiedenis van het kinderboek in Nederland & Vlaanderen van de middeleeuwen tot heden* (Amsterdam: 1989) 41–104, esp. 56, 68; Resoort R.J., “Lezen in de zestiende eeuw: Op school en thuis?”, *Documentatieblad kinder- en jeugdliteratuur* 5, 21 (1992) 28–47.

¹⁴ Hendrickx A., “Franse school- en leerboeken in de 16e en 17e eeuw”, *Paedagogica Historica* 1, 2 (1961) 225–243, esp. 235–236.

¹⁵ Haar A. van de, “Liefde voor lezen: Franse literatuur op scholen in de vroegmoderne Nederlanden”, in Koffeman M. – Montoya A. – Smeets M. (eds.), *Litteraire bruggenbouwers tussen Nederland en Frankrijk. Receptie, vertaling en cultuuroverdracht sinds de Middeleeuwen* (Amsterdam: 2017) 143–161.

some teachers even tried to awaken their interest in literature. One of them is schoolmaster Gerard de Vivere, a native of Ghent. In a conversation manual, De Vivere explains one of his main goals as a teacher:

[S]tudents and children, or young people, to whom I try to give a desire and spark of love that incites and induces them to read books and authors that write in a more sophisticated way, and of which they can draw the complete perfection of this French language.

[Les] apprentifs, & enfants, ou ieunes gents, ausquels i'essaye de donner vn desir & esguillon d'amour, qui les incite & induise à lire Liures & Autheurs, qui escriuent plus doctement, & desquels ils peuuent puiser la totale perfection de ceste langue Françoisse.¹⁶

De Vivere makes clear, in this quote, that he tried to awaken a certain level of enthusiasm in his pupils that would stimulate them to continue to read literary texts outside of school hours and even after completing their education.

In recent decades, it has become increasingly clear that masters of French schools were often intellectuals with a strongly developed interest in literature themselves.¹⁷ Despite the fact that no specific vocational training existed, schoolmasters showed a high level of education and awareness of scholarly debates in their publications.¹⁸ Many of them took part in the literary culture of the Low Countries as members of local chambers of rhetoric.¹⁹

¹⁶ Vivere, *Douze dialogues et colloques* fol. A2r.

¹⁷ Smith P.J., “Paix et poésie en pays d’exil : Les réfugiés flamands lecteurs de la Pléiade à Haarlem autour de 1600”, in Balsamo J. – Lastraioli C. (eds.), *Chemins de l’exil, havres de paix : Migrations d’hommes et d’idées au XVI^e siècle* (Paris: 2010) 289–301, esp. 290–291.

¹⁸ Briels J.G.C.A., “Zuidnederlandse onderwijskrachten in Noordnederland 1570–1630: Een bijdrage tot de kennis van het schoolwezen in de Republiek”, *Archief voor de geschiedenis van de Katholieke Kerk in Nederland* 14 (1972) 89–169, esp. 122; Van de Haar, “Both One and the Other”; Van de Haar, *The Golden Mean of Languages* 143–193.

¹⁹ Examples of schoolmaster-rhetoricians are Peeter Heyns, who was the leading poet of a chamber of rhetoric in Berchem, in the neighbourhood of Antwerp, and Jacob van der Schuere, who was at the head of a school in Haarlem and became a member of a local chamber, *De Witte Angieren* (The White Carnations). Dixhoorn A.C. van, *Lustige geesten: Rederijkers in de Noordelijke Nederlanden (1480–1650)* (Amsterdam: 2009) 104, 113–114.

A teacher of French who was active in Arnhem at the beginning of the seventeenth century, David Beck, kept journals that provide valuable insight into the daily life and possible literary engagements of schoolmasters.²⁰ His journals of the years 1624 to 1628 have survived. In these journals, Beck carefully listed which books he was reading. As one would expect, Beck was a fervent reader of French literature. He mentions Ronsard's *Amours* multiple times, as well as works by Étienne Jodelle and Jacques Pelletier du Mans. Guillaume du Bartas is not mentioned.

Beck was not only a reader, but also a producer of poetry. He translated Ronsard's poem "La grenouille", and the famous "Quand viendra le siecle doré" by Clément Marot.²¹ It is tempting to assume that he used these translations for educational purposes. Beck did translate fragments of the French version of Antonio de Guevara's *Mespris de la cour* (1605) specifically with a pedagogical purpose in mind: 'te gebruicken onder mijne scholieren, om daernaer te leeren overzetten' ('to use among my students, to learn how to translate').²²

The texts that were used for exercises in the French schools were distributed in various ways. It seems that most often, the teacher purchased the manual in question, so that students could copy it by hand.²³ However, the extant administration of a renowned sixteenth-century French school for girls in Antwerp, run by Peeter Heyns, shows that the schoolteacher sold educational books to several pupils.²⁴ Among the titles that are listed in Heyns's account books figures a 'Tragédie d'Abraham' ('Tragedy of Abraham'), which might refer to Theodorus

²⁰ Beck David, *Spiegel van mijn leven: Een Haags dagboek uit 1624*, ed. S.E. Veldhuijzen (Hilversum: 1993); Blaak J., *Geletterde levens: Dagelijks lezen en schrijven in de vroegmoderne tijd in Nederland 1624–1770* (Hilversum: 2004) 42–102; Blaak J., "Een schoolmeester in Arnhem: Het *Journael ofte dag-boeckje* van David Beck, 1626–1628", *Arnhems historisch tijdschrift* 32, 4 (2012) 168–185; Beck David, *Mijn voornaamste daden en ontmoetingen: Dagboek van David Beck, Arnhem 1627–1628*, ed. J. Blaak (Hilversum: 2014).

²¹ Beck, *Spiegel van mijn leven* 43, 192.

²² Blaak, *Geletterde levens* 98.

²³ Resoort, "Een proper profitelijn boec" 41–42.

²⁴ Two account books of Heyns's school are preserved at the Museum Plantin-Moretus in Antwerp. They contain Heyns's administration for the years 1576 to 1584. The books contain lists of the names of the students and their outstanding costs. Museum Plantin-Moretus, Antwerp, M240 & M394.

Beza's *Abraham sacrificiant* (1550).²⁵ It is unlikely that Heyns's schoolgirls actually performed Beza's piece, as Heyns wrote his own plays with an all-female cast for this purpose. The Tragedy of Abraham in question was probably primarily used for conversation or translation exercises.²⁶

Name-dropping

Early modern schoolbooks written by teachers of French refer to Ronsard's works in various ways and to varying degrees. Some simply mention Ronsard's name or the name of other famous contemporary poets in their paratexts. These cases of name-dropping suggest that the schoolchildren using such books must at least have been familiar with the names of some of the great writers of their time. In a Dutch-French dictionary from 1591, for example, a laudatory poem praises the author of the work, the schoolmaster Eduard Mellema, by likening him to poets such as Ronsard, Joachim du Bellay, Guillaume Budé, Jean Dorat, Clément Marot, Philippe Desportes, and others.²⁷

A later edition of a dictionary by Mellema, printed in 1636, similarly contains a poem addressed to the author that mentions Ronsard. According to the poem, the songs of 'le divin Ronsard' ('the divine Ronsard') illustrate the sweet sounds of the French language.²⁸ Dictionaries like these were frequently used by students and Mellema's books even contain

²⁵ Beza's tragedy had recently been printed in Antwerp, which supports the identification of the text mentioned by Heyns as his *Abraham sacrificiant*. Moreover, Heyns was familiar with Beza's writings, as he quoted him in one of his schoolbooks. Sabbe M., *Peeter Heyns en de Nimfen uit den Lauwerboom: Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van het schoolwezen in de 16e eeuw* (Antwerp: 1929) 97, 107.

²⁶ Heyns, *Miroir des mesnageres*, Heyns, *Miroir des meres*, Heyns, *Miroir des vefves*; Van de Haar, "Both One and the Other".

²⁷ Mellema Elcie Eduard Léon, *Dictionaire ou promptuaire flameng-francoys* (Rotterdam, Jan II van Waesberghe: 1591) fol. A4v.

²⁸ Mellema Elcie Eduard Léon, *Le grand dictionnaire François Flamen: Augmenté en ceste derniere edition d'une infinité de Vocables. Dictions & Sentences. Den Schat der Duytscher Tale van nieus vermeerdert, verciert ende verrijct* (Rotterdam, Isaac van Waesberghe: 1636) fol. 25v.

images of a classroom on their title page, making it likely that pupils of French schools read these references to French poets.

Anthony Smyters, a master of a French school in Antwerp and later in Hamburg and Amsterdam, went one step further. He made an adapted translation of Maurice de la Porte's *Épithètes* (1571) in Dutch. This *Epitheta, dat zijn Bijnamen oft Toenamen*, published in 1620, contains a list of words and names, each followed by several epithets that can be used to describe it.²⁹ In the preface to the work, Smyters explains that he collected new epithets through the translation exercises of his pupils, because they failed to find Dutch alternatives for some French adjectives and descriptions. In order to help his students as well as to support the Dutch language by expanding its vocabulary, the schoolmaster adapted De la Porte's text.

While De la Porte mentioned various names of poets, Smyters removed all of these from the list of entries, except for one: Ronsard.³⁰ His entry contains a list of epithets that can be used to describe him, among which are mentioned 'd'eere der Poëten' ('the glory of Poets'), 'Prins vande Lofzanghen' ('prince of odes'), and 'Musijckbeminner' ('lover of music').³¹ It also contains some information on Ronsard's life:

The most learned and artful master P. Ronsard was a nobleman from Vendôme.

At first mocked by the ignorant, he is now so esteemed and loved by everyone, particularly by those, who know are well versed in poetry, that there is no one who does not say that he is the first among the French.

Den alder gheleertsten ende konstrijcken M. P. Ronsart, was een Edelman van Vendosme, in den beghinne bespot van d'onwetende, is nu ter tijdt van eenen ieghelijcken zoo gheacht ende bemint, voornamelijcken van die, die hun der

²⁹ Smyters Anthoni, *Epitheta, dat zijn bynamen oft toenamen* (Rotterdam, Jan II van Waesberghe: 1620). For a modern edition of this text, see: Smyters Anthoni, *Het versierde woord: De Epitheta of woordcombinaties van Anthoni Smyters uit 1620*, ed. N. van der Sijs (Amsterdam: 1999).

³⁰ Smith P.J., "Les *Epitheta* (1620) d'Anthoni Smyters", in Hache S. – Pouey-Mounou A.-P. (eds.), *L'Épithète, la rime et la raison. La lexicographie poétique en Europe, XVIe–XVIIe siècles* (Paris: 2015) 217–236, esp. 223–224.

³¹ Smyters, *Epitheta*.

Poëterije verstaen, datter niemandt en is ofte hy moet zegghen dat hy den
eersten onder de Fransoysen is.³²

Smyters's explanation stays very close to De la Porte's text.³³ It is significant that he decided to maintain Ronsard's entry in this educational text. Here, Smyters moves beyond simple name-dropping and explains to his readers who this famous poet was. In the epithets accompanying certain entries, the schoolmaster mentions Ronsard's name and that of several other poets, transformed into adjectives: 'Ronsaerts' ('in the style of Ronsard') and 'Bellaisch' ('in the style of Du Bellay').³⁴ This raises the question whether his students would have understood these epithets.

Schoolbooks could certainly go as far as to quote poetry of well-known authors. This approach is adopted in a trilingual emblem book from 1625 by Zacharias Heyns, titled *Emblemata moralia; les Emblemes Morales. De Sinne-beelden*. Heyns, who had also been responsible for a translation of Du Bartas's *Sepmaine* (1578, translation 1616), was a book seller and son of a schoolmaster, the already mentioned Peeter Heyns. It was not uncommon for emblem books to be used as educational material.³⁵ Heyns's emblem book has, furthermore, been printed together with two school plays which were seemingly meant for girls, further stimulating an educational use.³⁶ Each emblematic image represented in this book is accompanied by a motto in Latin, French, and Dutch, a French and a Dutch epigram, and an elaborate explanation which often contains citations of other literary works and their Dutch

³² Smyters, *Epitheta* fol. S8v.

³³ De la Porte gives: 'The very learned and non-vulgar poetry of M. P. de Ronsard, gentleman from Vendôme, was disrespected by the ignorant at first, but today it is so favourably received by everyone, especially by those who are skilled in the art of poetry, that there is no one who does not confess that he is the first among all French poets.' 'La tresdocte & non vulgaire poësie de M. P. de Ronsard gentilhomme Vandomois, au commencement des ignorans abbaiee, est aujourd'hui d'un chacun si fauorablement recuë, signamment de ceux qui scauent dextrement manier le baston poetique, qu'il n'y a celui qui ne le confesse estre le prime entre tous les poetes François.' La Porte Maurice de, *Les epithetes* (Paris, Gabriel Buon: 1571) fol. 233r–233v.

³⁴ Smith, "Les Epitheta" 221.

³⁵ Saunders A., *The Seventeenth-Century French Emblem: A Study in Diversity* (Geneva: 2000) 109–160; Manning J., *The Emblem* (London: 2002) 141–165.

³⁶ The plays are *Sinne-Spel van de dry hoofdevchden*, a play on the three cardinal virtues, and *Devchden-schole ofte Spieghel der jonghe-dochteren*, which portrays the moral instruction of two young girls.

translation. Among the quoted authors are Heyns's own father, Du Bellay, Ronsard, and, most prominently, Du Bartas. In total, Heyns quotes seven passages taken from the *Semaine* and the *Seconde semaine* (1584).

Ronsard is cited twice, and Heyns also inserted one poem by Louis Des Masures addressed to the prince of poets.³⁷ Heyns reproduced and translated a stanza from Ronsard's "La Salade" and several verses from his "Hymne de la Philosophie". Both are relatively long texts that deal with philosophical and moral subjects. The passages chosen by Heyns illustrate the topics of arrogance and perseverance respectively. They are very suitable for this book, in which each emblem conveys a moral lesson through the motto, the poems, and the explanations. Heyns's text brought its readers in contact with classical, French, and Netherlandish authors and their work through a discussion of good behaviour.

Ronsard as orthographic authority

In several of the schoolbooks from the Low Countries in which Ronsard's name and writings are mentioned, he is presented not only as an authority on poetry, but also on spelling. From roughly 1530 to the late 1550s, vivid discussions took place in France on the topic of orthography, and Ronsard took an active stance in them. This so-called 'querelle de l'orthographe' (quarrel on orthography) opposed a group that supported the traditional spelling, which contained numerous etymological letters that were no longer pronounced, and a group that wished to introduce a reformed phonemic spelling, in which only letters that were actually pronounced would be written down.³⁸ The spelling reformers, led by Louis Meigret, eventually

³⁷ Heyns Zacharias, *Emblemata moralia; les Emblemes Morales. De Sinne-beelden* (Rotterdam, Pieter van Waesberghe: 1625) fol. 15v–16r, 47v–48r.

³⁸ Catach N., *L'Orthographe française à l'époque de la Renaissance (Auteurs – Imprimeurs – Ateliers d'imprimerie)* (Geneva: 1968); Baddeley S., *L'Orthographe française au temps de la Réforme* (Geneva: 1993).

abandoned their quest and by the end of the 1550s, the traditional spelling was only rarely contested.

Ronsard had been very positive towards Meigret's proposals and adopted minor changes in some of his productions, depending on the wishes of his printers.³⁹ He often omitted superfluous letters such as the unpronounced 'p' in 'corps' and 'temps' and adopted many accents. Furthermore, he frequently replaced 'c' and 'q' by 'k', writing, for example, 'keur' rather than 'cœur'.⁴⁰ When the discussions came to a standstill, however, he, too, returned to traditional spelling.⁴¹

Although Ronsard had not been one of the most prominent participants in the spelling debates, Netherlandish schoolmasters did treat him as a key figure in this domain.⁴² In 1586, Jean Bosquet, master of a French school in French-speaking Hainaut, published a French grammar book. It had probably already been printed once before, in 1568.⁴³ In the preface of the work, which he addressed to his pupils, Bosquet expresses the importance of 'orthographie decente, & non corrompue' ('decent and not corrupted spelling').⁴⁴ The schoolmaster claims that he read the contributions to the French quarrel on orthography extensively and explains his decision to support the traditional spelling that had become generally accepted. Indeed, Bosquet was aware of Ronsard's visions on spelling. The schoolmaster mentions the poet's preference for 'k' instead of 'c' and 'q': 'keüe-pour-queue (selon Ronsard)' ("keüe" for "queue" (according to Ronsard)).⁴⁵ Bosquet, who did not support such reform, does not adopt the 'k' in French, but he does mention its widespread use in Dutch and German.

³⁹ Catach, *L'Orthographe française* 108–127; Baddeley S., "L'Orthographe de la première moitié du XVI^e siècle : Variation et changement", *L'information grammaticale* 74, 1 (1997) 24–31, esp. 28.

⁴⁰ Catach, *L'Orthographe française* 426–428.

⁴¹ Catach, *L'Orthographe française* 232–233; Baddeley *L'Orthographe française* 19, 417.

⁴² Van de Haar, *The Golden Mean of Languages* 164–170.

⁴³ The year 1568 is mentioned in the request written by the printer in order to obtain authorisation for the 1586 reprint. Bosquet Jean, *Elemens ou institutions de la langue françoise (1586)*, ed. C. Demaizière (Paris: 2005) 12.

⁴⁴ Bosquet Jean, *Elemens ou institutions de la langue Françoise, propres povr façonner la Jeunesse, à parfaitement, & nayement entendre, parler, & escrire icelle langue* (Mons, Charles Michel: 1586) fol. *5r. For a modern edition of the text, see: Bosquet, *Elemens ou institutions de la langue françoise (1586)*.

⁴⁵ Bosquet, *Elemens ou institutions de la langue Françoise, propres povr façonner la Jeunesse* 29.

In the same preface to his students, Bosquet states that he chose literary examples to illustrate the grammatical rules explained in his manual:

I have used all my forces and I strive to extract from the most famous, well-known, and renowned authors, both Latin and French, that which is most convenient for your education. I mean those, that use a more common and simple orthography, which we have inherited from our fathers since ancient times [...].

[I]'ay employé toutes mes forces, & veilles pour extraire des plus fameux, communs, & renommez auteurs, tant Latins, que François, ce qu'y conuient à vostre instruction. I'enten de ceux, qu'y vsent d'orthographe plus commune, & simple ; & telle, que nous tenons de nos peres de toute ancienneté [...].⁴⁶

According to Bosquet, quotes from well-known authors would help the students to understand the complex grammatical matter.⁴⁷ He incorporated verse lines by himself, Rémy Belleau, Joachim du Bellay, and various other poets. Du Bellay's verses are used, for instance, to explain nine different ways to use the exclamation 'O'.⁴⁸

Interestingly, despite his emphasis on traditional spelling, Bosquet saw Ronsard as a good example for his students and referred to his poetry twice. The first quote is taken from Ronsard's *Odes* (1550).⁴⁹ It serves as an example of the accentuation on the vowel 'a':

She, as she is carried by love,
Flies after [him], here and there

Elle comme amour la porte

⁴⁶ Bosquet, *Elemens ou institvions de la langve Francoise, propres povr façonner la Jeunesse* fol. *5r.

⁴⁷ For more information on the use of literary examples in early modern manuals and treatises on language, see: Ayres-Bennett W. "The Use of Examples in some Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century French Grammars and Observations on the French Language", in Jondorf G. – Dumville D.N. (eds.) *France and the British Isles in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: Essays in Memory of Ruth Morgan* (Woodbridge: 1991) 215–231.

⁴⁸ Bosquet, *Elemens ou institvions de la langve Francoise, propres povr façonner la Jeunesse* 20–21.

⁴⁹ Ronsard Pierre de, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. J. Céard – D. Ménagier – M. Simonin, vol. 1 (Paris: 1993) 814.

Vole apres, & ça, & là.⁵⁰

Bosquet has not altered the spelling in this quote, except for replacing ‘et’ by ampersands and adding a comma. It is possible that Bosquet used Ronsard’s writing as an example because of his reputation as a poet who made extensive use of accents.

However, in another quote, which is used to demonstrate the infinitive, the schoolmaster or his editor has made some changes:

There, page, give me Catullus,
Give me Tibullus, and Marullus,
Give my lyre, and my bow.

Ca page, donne ce Catulle;
Donne ce Tibulle, & Marulle;
Donne ma Lyre, & mon archet.⁵¹

In this case, the cedilla and accent from Ronsard’s word ‘Çà’, the first word of the quote, have been removed. This alteration might have been made by mistake, as Bosquet explicitly claimed to support both the cedilla and the accent in the passage illustrated by the first quote. The cited verse lines were taken from the *Livret de Folastries* (1553), a publication that does not adopt major spelling reform.⁵² Neither citation contains, moreover, problematic words that might contain etymological letters. It is possible that Bosquet carefully selected the quotes so he could refer to the prince of poets without compromising his orthographic ideals.

Contrary to Bosquet, another Netherlandish schoolmaster who referred to Ronsard in light of the debates on spelling did agree fully with his visions. Jacob van der Schuere, who ran a French school in Haarlem, published a treatise on Dutch orthography, titled *Nederduydsche Spellinge*, in 1612. In this work, he proposed a reformed Dutch spelling inspired by Ronsard’s

⁵⁰ Bosquet, *Elemens ov instittvions de la langve Francoise, propres povr façonner la Jeunesse* 4.

⁵¹ Bosquet, *Elemens ov instittvions de la langve Francoise, propres povr façonner la Jeunesse* 74.

⁵² Ronsard, *Œuvres complètes* 530–532, 1448–1451; Catach, *L’Orthographe française* 429.

writings. In the preface, Van der Schuere quotes a long passage from the *Abbrege de l'art poétique François* (1565) in which Ronsard voiced his opinion on the spelling of French. It mentions avoiding surplus letters, the use of the 'k', and the distinction between 's' and 'z'.⁵³

Van der Schuere expresses the wish to apply the same rules for Dutch. At the end of his preface, he has added a sonnet that is presented as a Dutch translation of a poem by Ronsard. In reality, it has been created by Van der Schuere himself on the basis of a section of Ronsard's *Abbrege*.⁵⁴ Just like Bosquet, Van der Schuere refers to Ronsard as an authority on orthography. It has to be noted, however, that his treatise does not explicitly target an audience of schoolchildren and might have been used solely by fellow teachers and others who were interested in the discussions on Dutch spelling.

A collection of songs

While the schoolbooks referring to Ronsard that have been discussed so far mostly used his writings to illustrate particular moral lessons or linguistic phenomena, there are strong indications that his poetry was also used in a more interactive way in French schools in the Low Countries. Both a school play and a compilation of songs that have strong connections with this educational environment contain poems by Ronsard that have been set to music.⁵⁵ It seems that these musical adaptations of works by the Pléiade poet were meant to be sung by students of French schools, both boys and girls. His poetry, then, was not only passively read by teenagers learning French, they actually engaged with it actively and performed it.

⁵³ Schuere Jacob van der, *Nederduydsche spellinge*, ed. F. Zwaan (Groningen: 1957) 5–6.

⁵⁴ Van der Schuere, *Nederduydsche spellinge* (1957) 8, n. 1.

⁵⁵ For more information on the process through which Ronsard's poetry was set to music, see: Collarile L. – Maira D., *Ronsard et la mise en musique des Amours (1552-1553)* (Paris: 2016).

The collection of songs containing texts by Ronsard was printed in 1576 and is titled *Recveil et eslite de plvsievr belles chansons joyeuses, honnestes & amoureuses* [Fig. 1].⁵⁶ Although it is not explicitly advertised as a schoolbook, its presentation strongly points in this direction. The two editors of this compilation were Jan I van Waesberghe and Étienne de Walcourt (Steven van Walcourt), who signed the dedication and the only laudatory poem of the work.⁵⁷ Van Waesberghe was a printer from Antwerp specializing in educational material. He also published, for example, the conversation manual by Gerard de Vivere mentioned in the above. De Walcourt was a teacher of French himself.⁵⁸ The creative minds behind the *Recveil* were thus more than qualified to produce a schoolbook.

But there are more indications that suggest that this book had an educational purpose. Van Waesberghe and De Vivere dedicated their book to Peeter Heyns, who led a renowned French school for girls in Antwerp at that time. His profession is explicitly mentioned in the heading of the dedication. It seems that the *Recveil* specifically targets girls' schools like Heyns's establishment. As mentioned, particularly in French schools for girls, singing and music lessons were generally part of the curriculum. This was certainly the case in Heyns's school, as his extant administration reveals that girls paid for lessons in music and singing. Usually, religious or moralizing profane works were used for these classes.⁵⁹

However, compilations of songs with less virtuous topics, dealing most often with love, were made for teenagers as well.⁶⁰ The title page of the *Recveil* reveals that these are the types

⁵⁶ Waesberghe Jan van – Walcourt Étienne de, *Recveil et eslite de plvsievr belles chansons joyeuses, honnestes & amoureuses* (Antwerp, Jan van Waesberghe: 1576).

⁵⁷ See also: Brunet J., *Manuel du libraire et de l'amateur de livres* vol. 5 (Paris: 1966) 1402.

⁵⁸ Vanhulst H., "La musique dans les manuels de conversation bilingues de la Renaissance: Les *Seer gemeyne Tsamencoutingen / Collocutions bien famillieres* de Jean Berthout", *Revue belge de Musicologie / Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Muziekwetenschap* 59 (2005) 93–124, esp. 98. De Walcourt was also mentioned in the laudatory poem in Eduard Mellema's 1591 dictionary for his poetic skills in French.

⁵⁹ Dodde – Esseboom, "Instruction and Education in French Schools" 46; Vanhulst H., "La musique et l'éducation des jeunes filles : D'après *La montaigne des pucelles / Den Maeghden-Bergh* de Magdaleine Valery (Leyde, 1599)", in Delaere M. – Bergé P. (eds.), *Recevez ce mien petit labeur: Studies in Renaissance music in honour of Ignace Bossuyt* (Leuven: 2008) 269–278, esp. 93–94.

⁶⁰ Resoort, "Een proper profitelijc boec" 109.

of songs that have been brought together by Van Waesberghe and De Walcourt. Most of the songs describe love stories. Despite being ‘joyous, honest, and amorous’, the printer and schoolmaster present the compilation as containing very decent and proper songs. In the dedication to Peeter Heyns, Van Waesberghe explains their approach as ‘[a]uouant seulement en nostre carolle, & auctorisant ces plus vertueuses & chastes Muses’ (‘[a]llowing in our dancing circle and authorising only the most virtuous and chaste Muses’).⁶¹ Only the most decent songs have been reproduced in the book, which makes it suitable for schoolgirls.

On the title page, the *Recveil* is presented as the ‘livre premier’ (‘first book’). The privilege explains that a second book was foreseen, and that French and Dutch texts would be presented separately.⁶² As the extant production only contains French poems, perhaps the second work, which apparently never saw the light, was supposed to contain its Dutch counterpart. These French songs and their Dutch versions might have been envisioned as useful for translation exercises, for which bilingual educational publications were frequently used. It is impossible to say whether the *Recveil* was used in such a way, especially since the Dutch text was never printed or did not survive.

Besides promising a set of chaste and virtuous songs, Van Waesberghe and De Walcourt also promote their book by announcing on the title page that texts have been chosen ‘des plus excellents Poëtes François’ (‘from the most excellent French poets’).⁶³ While they apparently considered the inclusion of material written by well-known French poets a selling point, the editors, remarkably, did not include the names of the authors of the individual songs. In only two cases, the poets’ names are given in the heading of the songs: Joachim du Bellay and a certain Jacques Moysson.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the book contains a large number of songs that are based on poetic works by famous contemporary authors. They sometimes slightly differ from

⁶¹ Van Waesberghe – De Walcourt, *Recveil* fol. A2r.

⁶² Van Waesberghe – De Walcourt, *Recveil* fol. A1v.

⁶³ Van Waesberghe – De Walcourt, *Recveil* fol. A1r.

⁶⁴ Van Waesberghe – De Walcourt, *Recveil* fol. 109r, 201v.

the original in their wording because of small changes that had been made for the musical adaptation of the works.

A first survey of the 357 songs in the volume has resulted in the attribution of 141 texts to known authors [Table 1]. Future research might undoubtedly trace even more songs back to their poetic or musical origins. The poet to whom the largest number of songs can currently be attributed is Ronsard. A total of 42 songs are based on poems from his hand that had been set to music by composers such as Jean Chardavoine. Most of the poems originate from the *Second livre des amours* (1560), while some hymns have been taken from the *Odes*.⁶⁵ In only one case, it was possible for an audience that was not familiar with Ronsard's work to discover the name of the author. In the ode "La belle Venus un jour" the Goddess addresses the poet with the words '[e]coute mon cher Ronsard' ('[l]isten my dear Ronsard').⁶⁶ Ronsard's poems are not distinguished from the texts written by other authors, as the songs are arranged according to their length and the tune to which they should be sung. Indeed, while the book does not contain any musical notation, it sometimes gives the name of a song with the correct melody. These are mostly French songs, but in one case, the book refers to a Dutch text.⁶⁷

Works by various other French poets can also be found in this *Recueil*. It contains at least 25 songs by Clément Marot. All of the identified poems are taken from the *Adolescence clementine* (1532).⁶⁸ Furthermore, 19 poems from François de Belleforest's *Histoires tragiques* (1566), which had been reprinted by Van Waesberghe in 1567 and 1569, can be found.⁶⁹ Other well-known poets are, among others, Olivier de Magny and Mellin de Saint-Gelais.⁷⁰ Several

⁶⁵ For these attributions, the following edition has been used: Ronsard, *Œuvres complètes* 2 vols.

⁶⁶ Van Waesberghe – De Walcourt, *Recueil* fol. 148v.

⁶⁷ The song in question is titled 'Vrouwe Venus aerdsche Godinne'. This title is not listed in the *Nederlandse Liederenbank*, <www.nederlandseliederenbank.nl>, consulted April 2020. Van Waesberghe – De Walcourt, *Recueil* fol. 259r.

⁶⁸ For these attributions, the following edition has been used: Marot Clément, *Œuvres poétiques*, ed. G. Defaux, 2 vols. (Paris: 1990-1993).

⁶⁹ Belleforest François de, *Histoires tragiques* (Antwerp, Jan van Waesberghe: 1567).

⁷⁰ All songs by De Magny are odes taken from: Magny Olivier de, *Les odes d'Olivier de Magny de Cahors en Quercy* (Paris, André Wechel: 1559). For the attributions to Mellin de Saint-Gelais, the following edition has been used: Saint-Gelais Mellin de, *Œuvres poétiques françaises*, ed. D. Stone, 2 vols. (Paris: 1993–1995). Moreover,

songs have been characterized in the compilation as ‘chanson nouvelle’ (‘new song’), which might indicate that the editors added new texts themselves. In a few cases, however, older poems by authors like Ronsard have, for unknown reasons, received this indication. Ronsard’s “Qvand j’estois libre, ains que l’Amour cruelle”, published in the *Nouvelle continuation des amours* from 1556, was certainly no novelty in 1578.⁷¹

It is remarkable that quite a large number of the love songs in the collection present a female point of view, which supports the hypothesis that the book primarily targeted female pupils of French schools. Several texts are presented as ‘Chanson par vne Dame’ (‘song by a lady’) or as a female response to a song by a male lover.⁷² Writings by female poets Marguerite de Navarre, Pernette du Guillet, and Claude de Bectoz (de Bectone) can be identified.⁷³ Claude de Bectoz was a learned nun and later abbess who corresponded with Bonaventure des Périers.⁷⁴ A poem written by Des Périers to De Bectoz about his spiritual love and the accompanying response by the religious woman have been reproduced in the *Recueil*.⁷⁵ Other songs in the volume are even presented as true dialogues between a lover and his beloved and thus involve both a male and a female voice.⁷⁶ Such dialogues might have served the same purpose as their counterparts in conversation manuals, training both fluency in speech, vocabulary, and, additionally, musical skills.

use has been made of: Sicard C., “Chronologie des pièces de Saint-Gelais mises en musique”, in *Demêler Mellin de Saint-Gelais*, <<http://demelermellin.hypotheses.org/>>, accessed April 2020.

⁷¹ Van Waesberghe – De Walcourt, *Recueil* fol. 196r; Ronsard, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 1 232.

⁷² Van Waesberghe – De Walcourt, *Recueil* fol. 98v, 215v, 245v.

⁷³ For the texts by Marguerite de Navarre and Pernette du Guillet, see: Van Waesberghe – De Walcourt, *Recueil* fol. 62v, 253v. Navarre Marguerite de, *Margverites de la margverite des princesses* (Lyon, Jean de Tournes: 1547) 332–333; Guillet Pernette du, *Rymes (1545)*, ed. E. Rajchenbach (Geneva: 2006) 137–138.

⁷⁴ For more information on Claude de Bectoz and her exchanges with Bonaventure des Périers, see: Martin D., “Voix de femmes, livres d’hommes. Autour de trois poétesses : Jeanne Gaillarde, Jacqueline de Stuard, Claude de Bectoz”, in Clément M. – Incardona J. (eds.), *L’émergence littéraire des femmes à Lyon à la Renaissance 1520–1560* (Saint-Étienne: 2008) 89–106, esp. 95–98. I am grateful to Denis Bjaï for this reference.

⁷⁵ Van Waesberghe – De Walcourt, *Recueil* fol. 63r–63v. There is debate on the authorship of the surrounding songs in the *Recueil*, some of which were perhaps also part of the exchange between De Bectoz and Des Périers. For more information, see: Saulnier V.-L., “Recherches sur diverses poésies de Bonaventure des Périers”, *Bulletin du bibliophile et du bibliothécaire* (1950) 225–251, esp. 238–240; Du Guillet, *Rymes (1545)* 137 n. 105; Martin, “Voix de femmes, livres d’hommes” 96–97.

⁷⁶ Van Waesberghe – De Walcourt, *Recueil* fol. 76r, 289r, 302r.

Although the songs in the *Recveil* often differ slightly from the original poems in their exact wording, the songs do not seem to have been chastened for this volume. While Marot, for instance, also wrote a large number of scabrous songs, none of those have been reproduced in this songbook. Van Waesberghe was not exaggerating when he claimed to have chosen decent texts. While most of the incorporated texts are love poems, many of them do have an educational value. Some teach moral values by discussing *memento mori* and *vanitas* themes, others convey knowledge on figures from classical mythology such as Cassandra and Prometheus.⁷⁷ Of course, the love songs also informed young women about male expectations regarding beauty, love, and marriage.

Some songs are more explicit about the topics of sexuality and the female body than modern readers might expect from a book that was probably meant for a female adolescent audience. Ronsard's poem 'Quand je seroy si heureux de choisir', for instance, describes a 'petit tetin nouuelet' ('new small breast') in some detail. Such references were not exceptional for educational material in the sixteenth century.⁷⁸ One song in the collection by Van Waesberghe and De Walcourt, nevertheless, seems to cross a line. "Pourquoy comme vne ieune Poutre" describes the female addressee as a young mare that does not want to the poet to ride her.⁷⁹ The sexual insinuations are quite obvious in verse lines such as 'En te piquant, seroy ta guide' ('While pricking [spurring] you, I will be your guide'). Did the compilers ignore the sexual undertone of this poem? Was it supposed to prepare young women for marital life? Or was it considered innocent enough for a young audience? In any case, this is an exception in a collection of love songs that are, in general, relatively chaste.

While the *Recveil* seems to target teenage girls, schoolmaster Gerard de Vivere composed an educational text containing a song by Ronsard that was probably destined for

⁷⁷ Van Waesberghe – De Walcourt, *Recveil* fol. 148r, 158v, 169r, 182r, 187v, 257v.

⁷⁸ See also: Resoort, "Lezen in de zestiende eeuw".

⁷⁹ Van Waesberghe – De Walcourt, *Recveil* fol. 51v.

boys. Like Peeter Heyns, De Vivere wrote school plays for students of French. One of these, titled *Comedie de la fidelite nyptiale* (1577), contains both male and female roles, but as De Vivere was at the head of a French school for boys, it was in all likelihood meant for male students.⁸⁰ This comedy contains several songs. Upon closer inspection, it becomes clear that these songs have not been created by De Vivere himself. They are creations of composers or musical adaptations of pre-existing poems.⁸¹

One of the songs in De Vivere's comedy is Ronsard's "Bon jour mon cœur, bon jour ma douce vie", which also figures in the *Recveil*.⁸² Only the first of the two stanzas has been reproduced. The play further contains (the first stanzas of) five songs taken from Marot's *Adolescence clementine*, three of which are also given in the song book by Van Waesberghe and De Walcourt.⁸³ The musical notations of the melodies are not given in the play, and were apparently assumed to be known to the readers and performing students. The song based on Marot's "En entrant en un Jardin" is not even reproduced completely, but simply ends in 'etc.', indicating that the actor should sing the entire song. This is a strong indication that even schoolchildren in their teenage years knew these songs.

⁸⁰ Holtus G., "Gérard du Vivier: *Grammaire françoise* (1566)", in Clercq J. De – Lioce N. – Swiggers P. (eds.), *Grammaire et enseignement du français, 1500–1700* (Leuven: 2000) 401–424, esp. 401. Peeter Heyns did, however, purchase the comedies of De Vivere for girls attending his school. Sabbe, *Peeter Heyns en de Nimfen uit den Lauwerboom* 63, 102–106.

⁸¹ Perret D., *Old Comedy in the French Renaissance: 1576–1620* (Geneva: 1992) 63–81.

⁸² Vivere Gerard de, *Comedie de la fidelite nuptiale* (Paris, Nicolas Bonfons: 1578) fol. 10v; Van Waesberghe – De Walcourt, *Recveil* fol. 267v. Perret erroneously qualifies it as an anonymous song stemming from a medieval tradition. Perret, *Old comedy* 77.

⁸³ Van Waesberghe – De Walcourt, *Recveil* fol. 12r, 13v–15r. Interestingly, Donald Perret, who failed to identify both the Ronsard and the Marot poems, witnessed a difference in style between the two groups to which these songs belong. Ronsard's song and one of the poems by Marot are performed by the lover in the play, while the remaining four texts by Marot are sung by his comic servant. Perret makes a distinction between the more elegant style of the lover and the vulgar speech and songs of the servant, a distinction which is reinforced by the songs. Perret, *Old comedy*.

Conclusion

As this survey of early modern schoolbooks from the Low Countries reveals, Binet's claims on the reception of the works of Ronsard contain a grain of truth. Even if it remains unclear whether editions of his poetry were read during class, his works were quoted in various types of schoolbooks. Several of the educational works discussed here, such as the *Recueil* and De Vivere's school play, were printed during Ronsard's lifetime. As schoolbooks have a low survival rate, it is likely that these texts form only the top of the iceberg and that the reception of works by Ronsard and other contemporary poets in the French schools in the Low Countries was actually much broader. In any case, the absence of musical notation and sometimes even of tune indications in these works suggests that such poems were sung so often that the music was familiar to the students.

It has come to light that a broad variety existed in the ways in which Ronsard's texts were used in educational contexts. While some teachers simply added authority and status to their works by mentioning his name, Ronsard's poetry also furnished moral, poetic, and language models. In Zacharias Heyns's emblem book, Ronsard's oeuvre was a source of virtuous reflection, whereas Van Waesberghe and De Walcourt used his texts on love to provide entertainment. Especially the strong connection between Ronsard and the orthographic quarrels that was established by the Netherlandish schoolmasters is striking, as his role in these debates is often considered to be less important than that of, for example, Louis Meigret.

It seems that Ronsard's poems knew a particularly important use in French schools as songs. This agrees with the poet's own predilection for sung poetry since he was, as mentioned by Smyters, a 'lover of music'.⁸⁴ Singing and performing these texts had a number of advantages. It taught children basic musical competencies, proper pronunciation, and extensive

⁸⁴ Brown H.M., "Ut Musica Poesis: Music and Poetry in France in the Late Sixteenth Century", *Early Music History* 13 (1994) 1–63, esp. 6–9.

vocabulary. The combination of song and dialogue in De Vivere's play and in the *Recveil* is remarkable and innovative. Conversation lessons were crucial for early modern language education, and singing provided an additional layer of difficulty and instruction.

The presence of Ronsard's name and works in educational material demonstrates that teenagers frequenting French schools in the early modern Low Countries in all likelihood knew who he was, and probably had also read and possibly even recited or sung some of his poetry. Many boys and girls from the middle class thus came in contact with his poetry in their formative years. It was through texts like these that De Vivere tried to awaken a love for reading in his students. And with the help of entertaining song books like the *Recveil* by Van Waesberghe and De Walcourt, perhaps he succeeded.

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Images

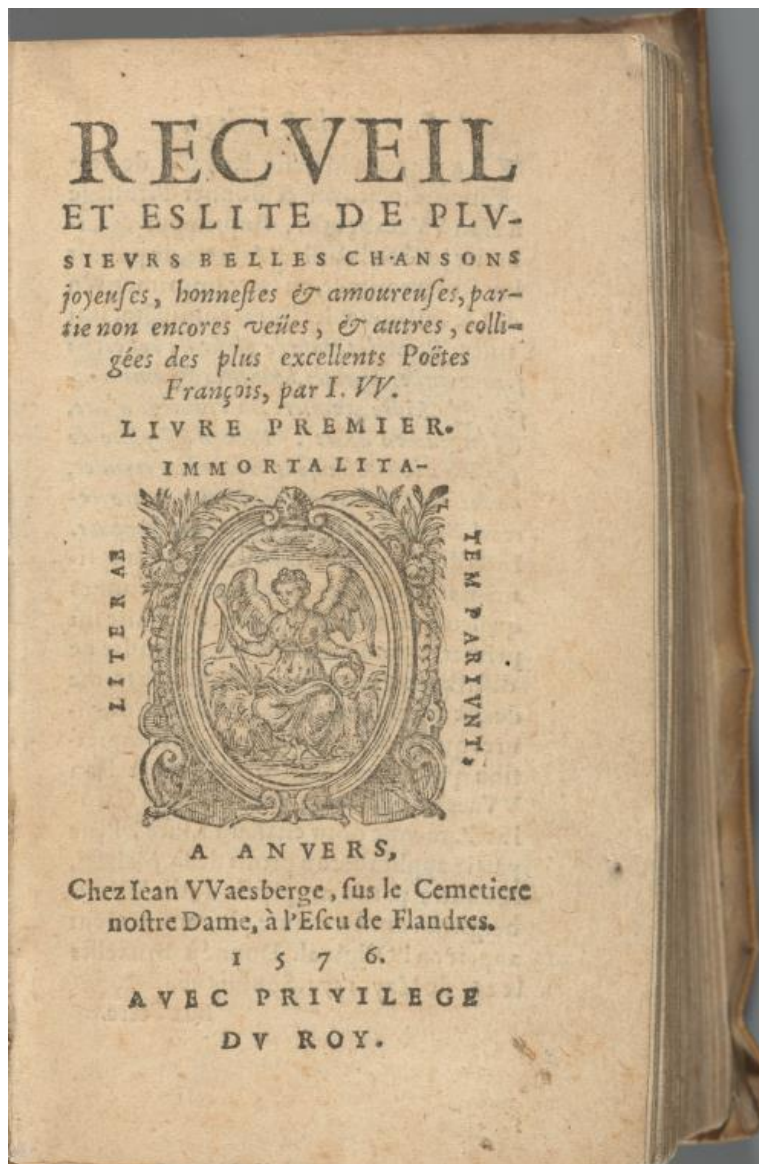


Fig. 1. Waesberghe Jan van – Walcourt Étienne de, *Recueil et eslite de plvsievr belles chansons joyeuses, honnestes & amoureuses* (Antwerp, Jan van Waesberghe: 1576), fol. A1r.

*NC5 W1423 576r. Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Name	Attributed poems
Pierre de Ronsard	42 (+ 1 adaptation)
Clément Marot	25 (+ 2 adaptations)
François de Belleforest	19
Mellin de Saint-Gelais	15
Olivier de Magny	14
Jacques Grévin	4
Jean Maugin l'Angevin	4
Jean De la Péruse	3
Jacques Moysson	2
Étienne Forcadel	2
Joachim du Bellay	2
Claude de Taillemont	1
Marguerite de Navarre	1
Jean-Antoine de Baïf	1
Louis de Bussy d'Amboise	1
Pernette du Guillet	1
Jacques Yver	1
Charles de Sainte-Marthe	1
Claude de Bectoz	1
Bonaventure des Périers	1

Table 1.

Biography

Dr. Alisa van de Haar is Assistant Professor of French Literature and Culture at Leiden University. She obtained her PhD from the University of Groningen (2018, *cum laude*), and she is the author of *The Golden Mean of Languages: Forging Dutch and French in the Early Modern Low Countries, 1540-1620* (2019, Brill).