Lyrical correspondence: Maria Tesselschade Roemers Visscher, 'To My Lord Hooft on the death of Lady Van Zuilichem' (1637)

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Aen mijn Heer Hooft op het ooverlyden van Mevrouw Van Sulecom

Die als een Baeck in zee van droefheidt wort gehouwen
Geknot van stam en tack, en echter leeven moet,
Zeijnt uw dit swack behulp voor 't troosteloos gemoet,
Gedompelt in een meer Van Baerelijcke rouwen.

Zeght Vastaert dat hij moght pampieren raet vertrouwen
Zoo dinnerlycke smart zich schriftlyck uyten kon,
Hij staroogh in liefs glans als Aedlaer in de Son,
En stel sijn leed te boeck, zoo heeft hij 't niet t'onthouwen

Pampier was 't waepentuijch waermee ick heb geweert
Te willen sterven, eer 't den Heemel had begeert,
Daer ooverwon ick mee, en deed mijn Vijand wycken,

Zijn eijgen lesse leer hem matijghen zyn pijn
Want quelling op de maat en kan soo fel niet sijn
Besweer hem dat hij sing op maetsangh droevelijcken

September 1637
Tesselscha Roemers Vischers

To My Lord Hooft on the death of Lady Van Zuilichem

One wedded like a beacon to a sea of sadness
Bereaved of trunk and branch, yet due to live no less
Sends you this frail aid for a soul so comfortless
Drowning in a moor of Baerless mournfulness

Tell Constantheart to trust this paper's counsel kind
If writing could express the suffering inside
Face up love's glance, as Eagle faces Sun, eyes wide
And trust grief to the page, thus spared to bear 't in mind

't Was paper armoury with which I have contained
Desire to dissolve before Heaven ordained
That gained my victory, made my assailant flee

May his own lesson teach that measure lessens pain
Vexation tamed by verse cannot so fierce remain
Implore him sing a song, in metres grievingly

Translation: Frans-Willem Korsten & Marijn van Dijk

6 Lyrical Correspondence

Maria Tesselschade Roemers Visscher, 'To My Lord Hooft on the death of Lady Van Zuilichem' (1637)

Marijn van Dijk

The death of his wife Suzanna van Baerle on 10 May 1637 muted the lyrical voice of Constantijn Huygens. From 28 April until 28 October, he did not write one single poem. In September 1637, Maria Tesselschade Roemers Visscher wrote a sonnet that aimed to break the silence caused by the grief that had captured the poet. Yet, she did not address and send her poem to Huygens himself, but to Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft, a mutual friend and fellow poet. In the poem, the sender asks the addressee to convey a message to *Vastaert* (l. 5), a Dutch variant to 'Constanter', the Latin name that Constantijn Huygens used for himself.[1]

The address of this sonnet displays an interesting combination of intimacy and indirectness. The poem was never intended for any audience apart from the intimate friends involved in it. In what follows I want to argue that Tesselschade's choice for a lyrical form in her intimate communication is related to the vital role of the musical dimension of language in what Tesselschade aims to achieve: that Constanter will use lyric to heal himself.

Grief in measure: images and sound

In the first quatrain the addressee, *uw* (l. 3), is placed between two grievous waters: a sea of sadness and a lake of billowed mourning. The former contains the sender, the latter the receiver, but between their situations a difference can be discerned. The sender is compared to a beacon detained within the sea. A beacon is a fixed object, but it is floating and as such at least partly above the water. In opposition to this, the receiver in the lake is submerged, under water. The suggestion is thus that the 'frail aid', *swack behulp* (l. 3), the sender offers by means of the poem is not to save the receiver from the water, but to save him from drowning in it.

1 From here on I will refer to Constantijn Huygens as Constanter and Maria Tesselschade Roemers Visscher as Tesselschade.

In historical reality Tesselschade lost both her eldest daughter Teetgen and her husband Allard Crombalch on the same day in May 1634. The nine-year-old girl died of smallpox and this upset her father so much that the doctor gave him a tranquilizing drink which instantly made him cough up large amounts of blood until he was dead too. Tesselschade was left with their youngest daughter, Maria Tesselschade. This sad history filled the sea in the first line of the sonnet and is depicted in the second with the image of a (family) tree that has both trunk (husband) and branch (daughter) cut off.

As the address announces, the real event of the death of Constanter's wife forms the occasion for the poem.[2] *Van Baerelijcke* (l. 4), written with capitals, obviously refers to Suzanna van Baerle who did not recover from the birth of their fifth child and died within two months after her delivery. In the text, the word *Baerelijcke* is so heavily loaded with meaning that it seems to enact giving birth itself in the act of reading. *Baarlijk* means that something shows itself undisguised and is commonly used in relation to dreadful subjects, mourning (*rouwen*) in this case. A related meaning of *baarlijk* as a derivative of *baar* is naked, referring to the human body and thus creating a physical, almost tangible presence of Suzanna in the text. In relation to the metaphor of the lake, *bare* means wave and creates a billowing motion that comports with the motion of *baren*, giving birth, with the contractions of the bare female body. The outburst of meaning in van Baerle's name also involves a sound dimension since yet another meaning of the word *baer* is clamour. Switching on sound makes audible the howls of the mourner, the moans of the mother, and the roaring of the waves. Yet simultaneously the word produces the dead silence of the body lying motionless on the bier, the *lijkbaar*.

In opposition to Tesselschade's treatment of van Baerle's name, a clear example of linguistic virtuosity, she univocally calls Constanter by his own name, *Vastaert* (l. 5) in Dutch, meaning one who is steadfast in temperament. As it is represented in the poem, Constanter seems to have drifted away from his name, in reality failing to sign any poem with it for months. In calling his name, Tesselschade calls him back into presence, demands him to be Constanter again. Yet the demand is indirect, via the addressee who is instructed to tell Constanter that he should express his inward pain by writing.

Putting his pain to paper implies that Constanter has to face his emotions. The word *staroogh* (l. 7) condenses meaning. The verb means 'to stare',

2 Constanter bought the title Heer (Lord) van Zuilichem together with a castle in 1630. Sulecom is a variant of Zuilichem.

referring to the eagle who is said to be able to look straight into the sun without getting blinded by its light. But the word also combines 'star' and 'eye', where 'star' refers to Sterre, Constanter's nickname for his wife. This implies that Constanter should look into the rays of his star, but like the eagle, without getting blinded by its light. Writing about Sterre is the most confronting manner of facing his grief, but Tesselschade tells him that she knows from her own experience that this will bring relief to such an extent that one can live with the loss.

With her advice to write, Tesselschade specifically means writing lyrics, the practice where the musical dimension of language rules. She uses Constanter's own lyrics to teach him this, reminding him of a line (l. 13) from his translation of the poem 'The Triple Fool' by John Donne, originally: 'Grief brought to numbers cannot be so fierce' (Donne, 2000, p. 96). A literal translation of Constanter's translation would be: 'For vexation within measure cannot be so fierce' ('Want quelling op de maet en kan soo fell niet zijn').[3] The word 'measure' (*maat*) has both a quantitative and a musical dimension. It appears in all three lines of the final tercet in this twofold meaning, corresponding with the gist of the poem that connects moderation of emotion to musical measure. 'Matijghen zyn pijn' (l. 12) in a quantitative manner means to moderate his pain and in a musical manner to set this pain to metre. The borrowed line by Donne teaches that pain becomes moderate once it is chained within a metrical structure. The final line can be read simultaneously in two ways, firstly as an imperative for the addressee. Hooft should implore (*besweer*) Constanter 'to sing in mournful measure'. In the other reading 'him' (*hem*) is not Constanter, but the grief, *quelling* (l. 13), and *besweer* means getting this grief within one's power, like a snake charmer bewitching the animal by the sound of the flute. In the former reading, Constanter is the one who is singing, while in the latter the grief itself would be singing, but conducted by Constanter. The word *maatzang* is significant here, again with respect to the twofold meaning of *maat*; singing in measure implies that the grief, however mournful of sound, keeps measure because Constanter is in control. Expressing one's grief in language that is composed according to the musical principle of measure is a way of getting a grip on it, of mastering instead of being overpowered.

3 For Constanter's full translation, see the online edition of Huygens poems of Leiden University, where the poem is numbered as CH1633:049.

Lyrical correspondence

As a text that was sent from one person to another and concerning the real misfortune of a real friend, Tesselschade's sonnet has a number of characteristics in common with a personal letter. The address above it can be read as a kind of letterhead. Not only was the poem physically sent to Hooft, its content is also concerned with sending a message. The addressee is called upon to act like a letter in conveying the message of the sender to the receiver. Yet although the sonnet behaves like a letter, it does not show similarities with other literary epistolary genres. Compared to the letter of consolation, the sonnet lacks the typical tropes of *consolatio*, like 'all must die' (see Witstein, 1969). Compared to the genre of the verse epistle neither Horace's moral philosophy nor Ovid's sentiments resound in Tesselschade's lyrics (Maurer, 2011, p. 207). In fact Tesselschade asks Constanter to write so that he can lyrically console himself. Rather than resembling literary epistolary genres, the sonnet relates to intimate letters and verses sent between the persons involved. The text is part of a correspondence carried on years before and after this specific item. As I will argue, this context is essential for its interpretation. I therefore propose to tag the poem as *lyrical correspondence*.

The large amount of surviving correspondence from the circle of literate friends that Tesselschade, Hooft and Constanter shared, betrays a mysterious absence. No direct private writing between Constanter and Tesselschade is known. Their only known correspondence was conducted via others, often via Hooft (see Roemers Visscher, 1976, p. xlii). In relation to Tesselschade's 1637 sonnet, the most important item of correspondence between this trio concerns the occasion of the 1634 disaster mentioned above, when Tesselschade lost both her daughter and husband. Hooft and Constanter learned the dreadful tiding from different sources and immediately wrote to each other about it, but not yet to Tesselschade. Hooft asked Constanter to offer her some words of consolation, but the latter replied that he did not dare to write to her yet, or rather that he was not able to do so:

> To this miserable head, struck by such a sudden fate, I do not yet dare to reach out my hand. The fresh wound made dear Tessel too insensitive, myself too sensitive, her to be able to hear, me to be able to speak.[4]

4 Huygens, 1911-1913, vol. 1: p. 466 (Letter 924): 'Aen 't ellendigh hooft met soo schielicken donderslagh overvallen vervoordere ick mij noch gheen' hand te steken. De versche wonde

In this quotation Constanter shows an emotional response similar to the one he will display in 1637 when the sudden loss of his wife struck him. He is overpowered by emotion to such an extent that words fail him. But he is not completely muted, for he does write to Hooft about the subject. Yet he cannot meet with the request to write words of consolation, perhaps more specifically lyrics of consolation.

If in this case Constanter specifically lost his lyrical voice as well, it would not be mute for long. Ten days later, he wrote a sonnet about Tesselschade's catastrophe in which he used a maritime idiom that combines both the meaning of Tesselschade's name, referring to a disaster at sea that cost her father a fortune, and the profession of her husband, probably a naval officer, with, metaphorically, the tears and bloodshed of the occasion.[5] Although this sonnet most deeply concerned Tesselschade, Constanter did not address it to her. In fact, he did not even intend it for her to read, or at least not directly. Apparently he sent the poem to Hooft with the request not to show it to Tesselschade. But as was to be expected, Hooft did show it to her. In a letter to Constanter from 30 June 1634, Hooft writes that he hopes to find a merciful judge in him for his disobedience (Hooft, 1977, Letter 641, p. 536).

An answer to the question why Constanter did not direct this sonnet to the one it concerned could be that it does not meet with expectations regarding consolation and propriety. Constanter seems to criticize Tesselschade's husband for not being strong enough to abide with her and the last lines, presented as his last words and playing with the saying 'blood is thicker than water', do not appear without irony. Maybe the inappropriateness of Constanter's treatment of the subject could only be overcome in a situation where the poem reached Tesselschade explicitly against his will. Yet, Constanter's occasional poem from 1634 appears fundamental for Tesselschade's occasional poem from 1637. She adopts both the lyrical form of the sonnet and Constanter's presentation of herself within a sea of sadness, adding him, struck by a comparable fate, in a lake of billowed mourning. Constanter's repetition of the word *baren* in the lines describing her husband's death, becomes the emotional core of Tesselschade's lyrics with *Van Baerelijcke*. Like Constanter, she does not follow conventional tropes of consolation and moreover, she explicitly imitates his manner of reaching her via Hooft.

heeft Tesseltjen te ongevoeligh, mij te gevoeligh gemaeckt, haer om te hooren, mij om te konnen spreken'. My translation.

5 For full text and translation of Constanter's sonnet see Huygens, 1996.

Reading Tesselschade's sonnet as part of an intimate correspondence blurs the fundamental distinction that poetic theory usually makes between the lyrical subject and the author. In their attempt to define poetry Ernst van Alphen et al., based on the work of Jonathan Culler, state that poetry does not concern the empirical situation of communication between the sender and the receiver, but what they call the language situation, immanent in the text, between the one who addresses and the addressee (van Alphen et al., 1996, p. 19). In this context, what Culler calls *triangulated address*: 'address to the reader by means of address to something or someone else' (Culler, 2015, p. 186), is pivotal. Culler defines the angles of the triangle as follows:

> I will use the term *addressee* for whomever or whatever is designated by the pronouns of address and the term *audience* for the presumed beneficiaries of lyric communication – most often listeners or readers. (Culler, 2015, p. 187)

This definition motivates my proposal to tag lyric address in Tesselschade's sonnet differently. In lyrical correspondence the real sender and receiver concur with the immanent addresser and addressee, but the explicit addressee here is Hooft and the explicit audience is Constanter. Thus we have a triangle of the positions Culler described, except for the fact that Hooft is not the real addressee and Constanter not comparable to a general (immanent) audience. Constanter is indirect addressee and direct beneficiary; Hooft is direct addressee and indirect beneficiary, intended to 'overhear' the poem addressed to Constanter. We as readers are not Culler's beneficiaries of lyric communication. We invited ourselves into a private communication that is structured lyrically. Consequently, we should not read the sonnet as a sonnet, enacting a classical lyrical triangle that puts us in the position of the audience. We are readers of the triangle.

This reconfiguration of the triangular address may explain the relative neglect of Tesselschade's work by literary scholars.[6] Scholars struggle with the fact that biographical elements keep appearing in analyses of her work as if it is not good enough to speak independently, as poetry. In their edition of Tesselschade's poems, Olga van Marion and Agnes Sneller did not opt for a chronological presentation in order to ward off the danger of

6 Sneller and van Marion point out that even though Tesselschade is probably the most famous Dutch woman from the seventeenth century, her poetry has hardly received any attention (Roemers Visscher, 1994, p. 9).

interpreting them from biographical particulars.[7] But why is the urge to understand poetry within the realm of literature, provoking the lyrical mode of reading that Culler defines, so vital for the appreciation of poetic skills? Since Tesselschade did not display any ambition to publish her work, she had no reason to be concerned about outsiders not understanding inside references. She communicated with fellow poets in an ingenious manner that scholars can only follow insofar as there are sources left to enlighten them. Criticizing Tesselschade's lyrical work as too artificial or mannerist, as several scholars have done, is not an adequate way of considering this literature, which is of a different kind.[8] Ironically, the issue here might be a problem of address; of scholars unwilling to accept that behind the actual address there is no transcendent lyric address: an address, eventually, to them.

Constanter seems to have shared this frustration about what feels like a lack of ambition on Tesselschade's side. This might explain his paramount appreciation of one line from her 1637 sonnet that according to him surpassed anything she had ever written. In his answer to the letter by Hooft that included Tesselschade's sonnet, Constanter writes:

> Tesselschade never surpassed herself so much as with this one line amidst the altogether good ones that you took pains to send me: And trusts grief to the page, thus spared to bear 't in mind. All men and men's progeny hereafter must envy her for it.[9]

At the age of 84, decades after Tesselschade's death, he repeated this conviction in a poem called 'Tesselschade's wise lesson from 1637' ('Tesselschades wijs onderwijs in 1637'). Apparently, Constanter did not only appreciate the quality of the line, but also its ability to speak to a general audience, more specifically, a male audience with poetic aspirations. As such, it could set an example, as he emphasizes in parenthesis: '(hear, ye men, be taught to speak

7 'Daarnaast dreigt het gevaar [bij een chronologische opbouw] dat de teksten te snel vanuit biografische bijzonderheden worden geïnterpreteerd'. (Roemers Visscher, 1994, p. 12).

8 In comparing poetry by Tesselschade and Hooft, Strengholt judges that Hooft's work exceeds hers because of his *immediately recognizable* outstanding poetic vigour, while Tesselschade's work is somewhat artificial-mannerist (my emphasis). (Strengholt, 1988, p. 139).

9 Huygens, 1911-1913, vol. 2: p. 331 (Letter 1758) Aan P.C. Hooft, 2 November 1637: 'Tesselschade is noijt soo hoogh boven haer self gesteghen als met eenen reghel onder de gesamentlicke goede, die U.E. de moeyte genomen heeft van mij te senden: En stell' syn leed te boeck, soo hoeft hij 't niet t'onthouden. Alle mans ende manshoiren hiernaermaels moeten 't haer benijden'. My translation.

like this by women!)'.[10] If Constanter wanted to promote Tesselschade's skills, he could have published the entire sonnet, but he didn't. Instead, he provided the context to the line himself and I take this as an indication that he did not consider the original sonnet fit for publication. As a whole, the sonnet conveys a private message, not intended for a general audience. Understanding Tesselschade's sonnet as lyrical correspondence might change the appreciation of a form of poetry that was not written for the public, nor written to be published.

The sound of apostrophe

Tesselschade's sonnet not only escapes van Alphen's definition of poetry, it also works differently in terms of apostrophe, a figure directly concerned with the issue of address. The apostrophe goes back to Quintilian, who defines it as 'a diversion of our words to address some person other than the judge' (Quintilian quoted in Culler, 1981 p. 135). The figure differs from other rhetorical figures in that it makes its point by troping not on the meaning of a word but on the circuit or situation of communication itself (Culler, 1981 p. 135). Culler considers the apostrophe as a central figure in the poetics of the lyric, identifying triangulated address as the root-form of presentation for lyric (Culler, 2015 p. 186).

Apostrophe traditionally serves to intensify a message. Quintilian writes that occasionally 'some striking expression of thought is necessary … which can be given point and vehemence when addressed to some person other than the judge' (Culler, 1981, p. 135). I would say that Tesseschade's address to Hooft works the other way around, not intensifying but attenuating a message that touches emotions too strong to be addressed directly. And while Culler states that apostrophe is an embarrassing figure, the address here serves to tone down the embarrassment of an overpowering emotional content. But the use of an intermediate addressee also shifts the embarrassment, inflicting upon Hooft the unpleasant job of addressing Constanter. When he included the sonnet in a letter to Constanter dated 19 October 1637, Hooft wrote:

> The enclosed poem, coming from Alkmaar, I scrupled less to send on, in reliance that amidst the trumpets' and drums' joyous songs of victory, it will bring less harm to your ears, and to your mind, amidst the abundance

10 Huygens (online edition), CH1681:014. '[…] (hoort, en leert soo spreken, Mans, van Vrouwen)' (l. 9). My translation.

> of melancholy repellent occupations. That I dare send these verses, you will impute to your own courtesy, which gives the audacity to transgress it, Mylord, to yours etc.[11]

As a secretary to Frederik Hendrik, Constanter attended the siege of Breda during the summer of 1637, ending in victory on 11 October. Hooft's formulation, though light-hearted in tone, displays some hesitation in the execution of the charge commissioned by Tesselschade's sonnet. She wrote the poem in September, but the exact date upon which it reached Hooft is unknown. The victory at Breda might just have been a happy coincidence occurring not long after Hooft's reception of the poem, but the event can also have served as a nudge to do away with hesitations delaying the act of forwarding.

Sound is prominent in Hooft's formulation; the trumpets and drums of victory must serve as an acoustic shield to protect Constanter's ears and mind from the sound of the sonnet. Hooft's words hint at the risk of reading the poem: melancholy. In depending on melancholy-repellent (*gepeinsbreekende*) occupations to shield Constanter, Hooft reveals himself as an adherent of allopathic therapy, using opposite emotions to drive feelings of melancholy away. Here, Tesselschade's sonnet promotes the exact opposite approach following the progressive homeopathic therapy advocated by Robert Burton in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (see Smits-Veldt, 1994, p. 76).

In his letter, Hooft appears as a messenger trying to hush up the sound he is commissioned to convey, only daring to send it with the assurance of an acoustic environment to overrule it. As Hooft formulates the problem in terms of sound, it might be productive to explore the sound of apostrophe. The message to Constanter being sent via Hooft results in a double 'soundtrack'. On the track of the formal address, it dictates a message loud and clear, which imprints itself with iambic pounding in the messenger's mind and forestalls misunderstandings in communication. But on the track of the message's content, sound is hushed up, though so heavily charged with emotion that perhaps if it were not covered by the tone of dictation, the lyrical voice would run the risk of breaking. The outpouring of sound in *Baerelijcke* is a moment in the sonnet where the dictation almost loses its

11 Hooft, 1977, p. 971 (Letter 898): ''T nevensgaende gedicht, overgewaeit van Alkmaer, heb ik te min geschreumt voorts te veirdighen, in toeverlaet, dat het, onder 't vroolijk zeghegeschal der trompetten en trommen, Uwer Ed. Gestr. ooren te min quetsen zal, en te min haer gemoedt, onder die meenighte van gepeinsbreekende bezigheden. Dat ik ze steuren dar, wijte U Ed. Gestr. haer' eighe heusheit, die de stoutheid om er op te zondighen geeft, Mijnheere, aen […]'. My translation.

dominance. And there is another point where the emotional content is so vulnerable that Tesselschade literally fortifies it by means of a sturdy idiom. This is in the first tercet where she testifies to her own wish to die, overcome by paper weaponry. Would Hooft, addressed merely as a messenger, have known about this profound inner struggle of his beloved friend? Learning this would transform the factual tone of dictation into the vulnerable tone of confession, a confession so painful that neither Tesselschade's own declaration of victory nor the victorious trumpets over Breda can outvoice its mournful tune.

Though covering up her own song, Tesselschade's sonnet aims to make Constanter sing in mournful measure. Two other qualities of the apostrophe described by Culler are relevant with regard to this. Culler relates the apostrophe to 'the power of poetry to make something happen'. He writes: 'to apostrophize is to will a state of affairs, to attempt to call it into being' (Culler, 1981, pp. 139-140). Tesselschade lyrically addresses Hooft with exactly this purpose, but here again the sonnet operates on two tracks, unsettling another characteristic of the apostrophe defined by Culler, its time dimension: 'Apostrophe resists narrative because its *now* is not a moment in a temporal sequence but a *now* of discourse, of writing' (Culler, 1981, pp. 152-153). The *now* of apostrophe in Tesselschade's sonnet coincides with the *now* in the historical present when Hooft reads the poem and yields to its commission. But this *now* of the poem is only the first step towards the state of affairs the poem attempts to call into being. Its ultimate power to make something happen manifests itself not in the present of discourse but in the future where it should return Constanter's lyrical voice. Tesselschade's lyrical message functions as the herald for the actual poem, the eventual lyric of consolation that Constanter must write.

Language as lyre

Tesselschade uses Constanter's lyric from the past to persuade him into writing future lyric. His translation of 'The Triple Fool', dated 7 October 1633, was the last in a series of Donne's poems he had been translating since 1630. The translations were occasionally read and exchanged within their circle of literate friends and it was Tesselschade's wish to collect them in a fair copy. Constanter did not manage to find time for this until the beginning of March 1634, when they first circulated in Amsterdam before ending up in Alkmaar with Tesselschade. On 28 May, Hooft wrote her a letter wondering why he has not heard anything since, addressing

her boldly with: 'Dear Tessel, are you still alive?' and inquiring whether Constanter's work pleases her.[12] But this letter was never sent because on her way to post it, Hooft's wife learned about the death of Tesselschade's daughter and husband.

Constanter's Donne translations thus reached Tesselschade on the threshold of a fateful turn in her life. This accidental timing might have connected this poetry intrinsically to her ordeal. Donne seems to resound through Constanter's 1634 sonnet in the use of metaphors not from classical mythology, but from the realm of natural sciences, and in the application of irony in spite of the subject. Irony can also be found in Donne's 'The Triple Fool' that mocks the poet's habit to express his emotions. The lyrical 'I' intends to master his grief by fettering it in verse, but where the musical elements of language, rhyme and metre, were supposed to contain it, music itself becomes responsible for this emotion to burst out even more vehemently when 'some man' (l. 13) sets the words to music and starts singing them. Now the poet, who was already one fool for loving and another for writing whining poetry about that, is turned into a triple fool when his failed effort to tame emotion has been turned into public delight.

Donne's ironic mockery of any poetic endeavour, clearly present in Constanter's translation, is completely absent in Tesselschade's adoption of the line. This absence could be related to the absence of a public address. Donne's poet makes a triple fool of himself because he enables strangers to take free reign with his pain. But Tesselschade does not involve any strangers in her lyrical communication. In demanding Constanter to be a singer, she recalls Donne's singing man, but replaces this other by the poet himself. This lyrical correspondence was carried on between friends who shared not only an involvement in poetry, but also one in music. Hooft was not a performer, but Tesselschade and Constanter were both very talented musicians, and for them, the act of the singer was not the act of someone else (see Rasch, 1992). They knew the emotional power of music from within, and Tesselschade takes this power very seriously, as a matter of life and death. In her presentation the poet will not fail, for unlike Donne she does not distinguish between the lyrical voice and the musical voice, but allows them to coincide in her poetics of lyric.

In using Donne's line stripped of irony, Tesselschade neutralizes Constanter's offensive irony from his 1634 sonnet as stylistically initiated by Donne. She also responds to his presentation of her husband as inconstant, unable to bear the weight of both his own and his wife's grief and escaping

12 Hooft, 1977, p. 511 (Letter 628): 'Tesseltje, leef je nog?' My translation.

this burden by the act of dying. Exactly in the line where Tesselschade is telling Constanter to be constant, to not run away from his grief, Allard appears through the addition of a capital to the word for eagle, *Aedlaer* (l. 7). The Allard/Eagle flies above the syntax of the line, for it makes no sense within the comparison of Constanter and Sterre to the eagle and the sun to literally substitute the bird for Tesselschade's husband. Yet, in another dimension, Tesselschade presents her husband in contrast to Constanter's 1634 presentation, devoid of any blame and able to look straight into the fullness of God's light. By inserting this image without touching the level of syntax, Tesselschade uses the material of language as musical material where different themes can sound simultaneously.

Lyric address cannot be understood apart from the sound dimension of language. Tesselschade's sonnet displays a poetics of the lyric that essentially turns language into a lyre, a musical instrument. Lyric uses language in a manner that foregrounds its sound dimension and has an emotional force similar to music. Sound appears to be structurally meaningful in Tesselschade's text: the outcry of *Baerelijcke*, the double soundtrack of her use of apostrophe, and the musical core of the message to Constanter to express emotion in musical measure. From a musical reading of Tesselschade's sonnet it becomes clear why she preferred a lyrical form in communicating with her friends. Not the part of language restricted to reason could potentially heal Constanter's muteness, but the musical, emotional force of language that forms the core of the lyric.

Lyrical consolation fulfilled

Tesselschade's complete disinterest in any audience beyond her private friends makes her sonnet a clear example of lyrical correspondence. Her fellow poets who did aspire to literary fame took care to address eternity even in their occasional poetry. Yet their obvious literary ambition might distract scholars from the degree of lyrical correspondence present in their work. Constanter's sonnet 'Cupio Dissolvi, On the death of my Star' ('Op de dood van Sterre') (1638) was never primarily read as the fulfilment of Tesseschade's lyrical command. But just like Tesselschade positioned her 1637 sonnet immediately in the opening quartet in relation to Constanter's 1634 sonnet, recalling his image of her sea of woe, Constanter opens his 1638 sonnet with obeying Tesselschade's command to look into the rays of his Star. The lyrical 'I' literally strives to do this, but does not manage to see her:

Do I dream, is 't night, or did my Star fade out?
I wake in bright daylight and do not see my Star.[13]

Constanter's 1638 sonnet is not only a lyrical expression of his grief, but also a reply to Tesselschade's confession of her wish to die. The Latin part of the title already suggests this: *Cupio dissolvi*, *I wish to be dissolved*, a locution from the Vulgate translation of Paul's epistle to Philippians 1:23-4, expressing the Christian desire to leave earthly life and join Christ in eternal life. This phrase played an important role in discussions on the topic of suicide from the Middle Ages to the early Modern period.[14] Thus the performative power of this sonnet is to establish Constanter as a singer in control of his own mournful tune, and to act as a lyric of consolation for Tesselschade, allowing her wish to die without feelings of guilt. While Tesselschade advised him to use paper weaponry in order to defy this wish, Constanter uses his lyrical voice to express it, not hushed, like Tesselschade trying to cover her own mournful tune, but out loud. And as apostrophe is allowed to work undisrupted here, Constanter is able to fulfil his desire without the actual act of dying, uniting himself with God, Suzanna and Tesselschade in the discursive event of the poem.

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13 Huygens (online edition), CH1638:009: 'Of droom ick, en is 't nacht, of is mijn' Sterr verdwenen? / Ick waeck, en 't is hoogh dagh, en sie mijn' Sterre niet'. (1-2). My translation.

14 See Screech, 2000, p. 42-46. Donne treated the subject in one of his sermons, see Lerner.

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