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Building in Stones and Words: Strategies of Self Presentation in Huygens' Volumes of Collected Poetry

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Return to Sender:
Constantijn Huygens as a Man of Letters

Lise Gosseye, Frans Blom, and Ad Leerintveld (eds.)

Ghent: Academia Press / Ginkgo, 2013

PART ONE

Public Self-Fashioning

Social and Artistic Strategies

Building in Stones and Words:
Strategies of Self Presentation in Huygens' Volumes of Collected Poetry

Frans R.E. Blom

Constantijn Huygens is one of the most strategic operators of the seventeenth century when it comes to using art for the sake of social positioning. In a prolific lifelong literary production, he seems unstoppable in creating artistic opportunities to stress his capacities, prestige or reputation. This is evident, in the first place, in his domestic texts like the descriptions of his youth (*Mijn jeugd*) and city palace (*Domus*), or in the long autobiographical poem composed at the end of his life (*Mijn leven verteld aan mijn kinderen*). These ego-documentary writings are meant for the eyes of the happy few and only circulate among family and intimates. But the author does not confine his self-portrayals to his private manuscripts. In his printed publications, too, presentations of the man, his family and his possession are a dominant theme.

So far, the only Huygens-publication to be studied in terms of the author's public self-representation is the *Otia*-volume of 1625.¹ The selected juvenilia, organised in six different sections, discuss many different topics, in many different genres and languages. The collection's intellectual and artistic versatility is stressed in its subtitle: *Poemata varij sermonis, styli et argumenti*. Moreover, the poems are explicitly characterised as being made in the author's leisure time. The notion that they are just innocent, *otiose* productions, suggests that the author can be just as productive, if not more so, in a professional position. That is the reason why the title activates the leisure motive, and why Huygens addresses the reader explicitly as *Otiose Lector*. And this is also why the volume elaborates on the theme of *otium* and *negotium* in the dedication and preface. Already in these paratexts, the author makes sure that his readers will not miss the point that the capacities displayed in the volume foreshadow his value as a *negotiose* employee.

¹ M.A. Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, 'Otium en *Otia*', in: *Veelzijdigheid als levensvorm. Facetten van Constantijn Huygens' leven en werk. Een bundel studies ter gelegenheid van zijn driehonderdste sterfdag*, A.Th van Deursen, E.K. Grootes en P.E.L. Verkuyll (eds.), Deventer: Sub Rosa, 1987, 195-204, and F.R.E. Blom, 'Solliciteren met poëzie. Zelfpresentatie in Constantijn Huygens' debuutbundel *Otia* (1625)', in: *De Zeventiende Eeuw*, 23-2, 2007, 230-244.

The strategy is also at work in the organisation of the volume's poetic materials. The editorial process preceding publication reveals a particular authorial care for the poetic description of the Courtier, as printed in the fifth section. The manuscripts, as they are diligently dated by the author, show compositional peak activity for this element in the final stage of preparing the volume. Also, the *Otia* presents the Courtier in a double portrait of a good and a bad specimen, whereas all the other characters or types in the series of *Zedeprinten*, are portrayed in a single version only. The spatial imbalance is not just caused by the two opposing portraits. The positive portrait in itself (*A Wise Courtier* or in Dutch *Een wijs hoveling*) exceeds all the others by far and covers five times the average length. Moreover, because of the way they are printed in the *Otia*, namely at the closure of the whole series, the Courtier portraits are even more emphasised.

With these motives at work, in the poetry itself just as much as in the organisation and presentation, the *Otia* addresses its reader with an unmistakable message: the varied display of verbal and intellectual skills on a wide range of current topics tells what the author is able to do in his spare time, and *a fortiori* what his potential could be for a professional career. At the same time, the biased Courtier poems describe the position ambioned. As an instrument for self positioning, the *Otia* volume is adequate to the poet's actual circumstances. At the time of the volume's publication, Huygens was striving for a prestigious post at the court of the Orange family.



Huygens' collected juvenilia in his *Otia* (1625)

Huygens' collected Latin poetry in *Momenta Desultoria* (1644)

The *Otia* marks the end of Huygens' youth and the start of his *negotiose* career. In the very year of its publication, the poet is accepted as a courtier and appointed secretary to stadtholder Frederik Hendrik. It is a solid post in line with the Huygens family's prestige. As a secretary, his father served William the Silent until the Prince's assassination in 1584, and continued in the same position for the State Council (*Raad van State*) until his death in 1624. He left his career path to his *primogenitus* Maurits. Constantijn, however, the second in line in the family, parallels his older brother in following the footsteps of their father, and even surpasses him, when later on in his career he is appointed additionally as the Prince's Private Council and Accountant (1630). It is in the course of this period, as he is working for Frederik Hendrik from 1625 until his master's death in 1647, that Huygens reaches his professional and cultural zenith.

Huygens' growing professional fortune is visible in the adapted reprint of the *Otia* from 1644.² The changes did not involve any material additions. Unaltered, all poems were

² In 1644, the Den Haag publisher Aert van Meuris who had produced the eye catching first edition of the *Otia*, was no longer into literary productions. Constantijn Huygens, *Otiorum libri sex*, Den Haag: Aert van Meuris, 1625. Exemplaar Koninklijke Bibliotheek, sign. 759 C 17. Now, Huygens turned to Amsterdam where he joined forces with the upcoming book publisher Jacob Lescaille, the former right hand in the Blaeu-company, who had just started his own printing house that specialised in high quality literary

copied from the first print edition. Their presentation, however, was adjusted in the first place on the title page, which betrays an upgrade of Huygens' social standing. It qualifies the author as Lord Zuilechom, which refers to the castle and lands bordering the river Waal that he bought in 1630. The purpose of the new property, way off in the province of Gelre, was to enhance Huygens' status as a courtier with quasi-nobility. The huge amount of money spent in buying it, and the continuous painstaking efforts to protect it from drowning illustrate its personal relevance for Huygens.³ Additionally, the *Otia* edition of 1644 stresses the poet's position as a courtier, by introducing the volume's author as secretary to the Prince of Orange:

DE LEDIGE VREN

publications. (In that same year he published poetry volumes by P.C. Hooft, Joost van den Vondel and Johan de Brune as well.) Constantijn Huygens, *De ledige uren*, Amsterdam: Jacob Lescaille, 1644 [altered edition of *Otiorum libri sex* 1625]. The *Otia*-editions of 1634 and 1641, by the Haarlem publisher Hans Passchiers van Wesbusch, are reprints in considerably lower printing quality. Most likely, they were not authorised by Huygens. See also Worp's analysis of the editions in Huygens' *Gedichten*, vol. I, XXI and XXII.

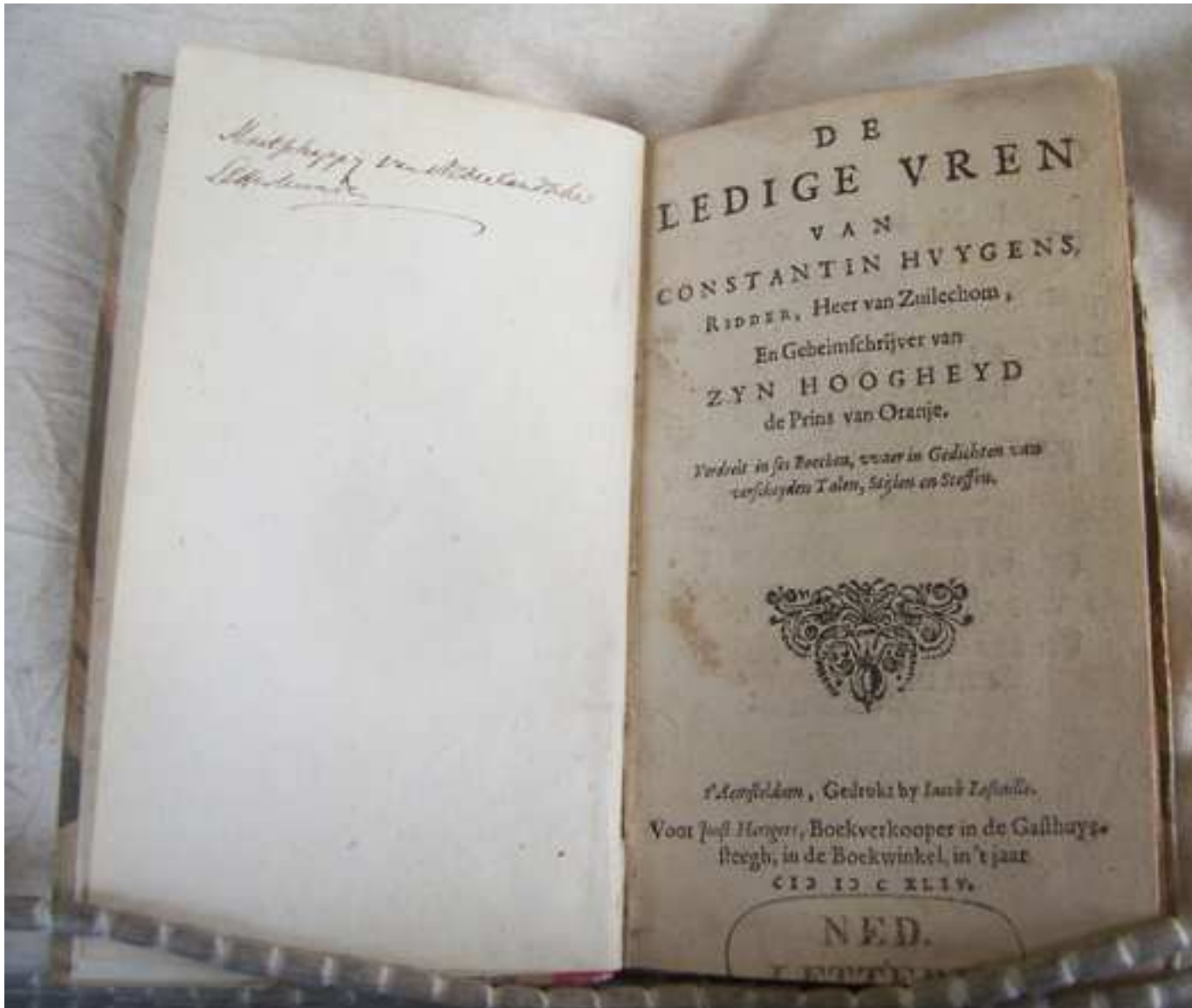
³ See C. Huygens, *Mijn leven verteld aan mijn kinderen in twee boeken. Ingeleid, bezorgd, vertaald en van commentaar voorzien door F.R.E. Blom. 2 dln.*, Amsterdam: Prometheus/Bert Bakker, 2003, II, vs. 413-429 and comm. in part 2, 275-279

Van
Constantin Huygens
Ridder, Heer van Zuilechom,
En Geheimschrijver van
Zyn Hoogheyd
de Prins van Oranje

By
Constantin Huygens
Knight, Lord Zuilechom,
And Secretary to
His Highness
the Prince of Orange

Moreover, the order of the original volume's six books of poetry has been adjusted as well. First come the poems written in Dutch. The Latin compositions, *Farrago Latina*, which were in pole position in 1625, make up book V in the 1644-edition, while the French and Italian poems, which originally came second, now find their place at the end of the volume. The conspicuous tendency towards a more distinctly vernacular product is also at work on the title page. The production of 1644 leaves out the original Latin, and exchanges

the original title of *Otiorum libri sex* for the Dutch variant *Ledige Uren*. In consequence, the knighted author is not introduced as *Eques*, but in the Dutch equivalent 'Ridder'.



Constantijn Huygens' de-Latinised *Otia* in the edition *Ledige Uren*, Amsterdam: Jacob Lescaille, 1644

The publication of this 'Dutched' or, rather, de-Latinised variant of the *Otia* with the vernacular printing company of Jacob Lescaille in Amsterdam, anticipated Huygens' new literary production of that same year. In 1644, alongside his vernacular track, the poet also publishes his Latin *Momenta Desultoria*. This publication has even more prestige and style than the *Otia*, presenting an exclusive collection of his Latin poems. In consequence, the printing is done by the renowned Leiden academy Elseviers; the quality is spotless. Furthermore, the editor of the volume is the paramount authority of cultural life at that time, the Amsterdam professor in Philosophia, Caspar Barlaeus.

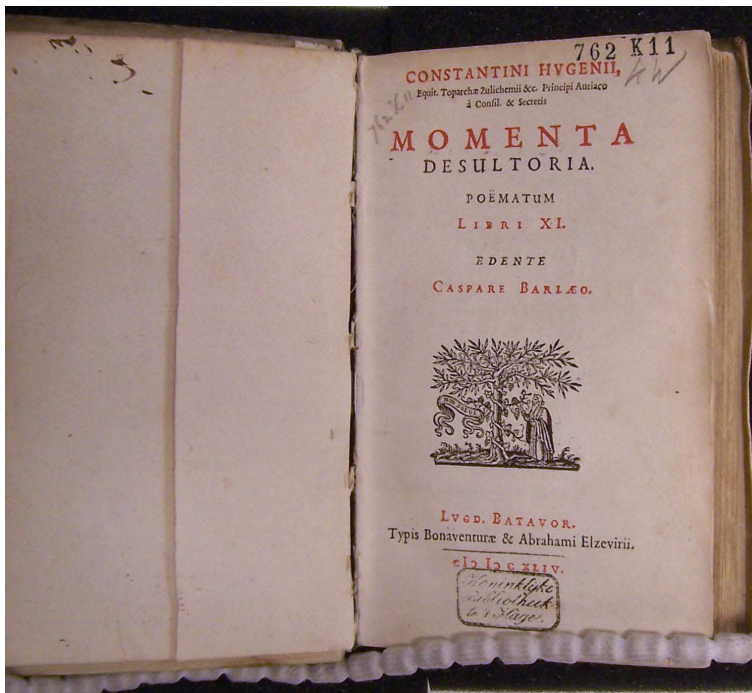
Just as in the contemporary reprint edition of the *Ledige Uren*, the author who presents himself in the *Momenta Desultoria*, has made significant social progress in comparison to the young writer of the collected 1625-juvenilia. On the title page, Huygens again stresses his quasi-nobility in terms of Knight (*Eques*) and Lord Zuylichem (*Toparcha Zulichemi*), as well as the patronage he receives at court on account of his being secretary to the Prince of Orange (a *secretis*) and Frederik Hendrik's private councilor (a *consillis*). The title of the volume, too, hints at his professional status. *Momenta* should clearly be interpreted as moments stolen from his busy working life. That is exactly how the preface to the volume instructs the reader to understand the poems that follow. According to Barlaeus, this multi-

tasking professional courtier just cannot help writing poetry. On account of some kind of poetical virus, even while working for the Prince, Huygens ‘sneezes and coughs up poems’.⁴

As for the second part of the title, the rather unfamiliar *Desultoria* (literally: jumping over), modern interpretations tend toward jumping from one horse to another. This corresponds to the idea of jumping from the professional horse to the horse of poetry as visualised in the frontispiece of the edition. Barlaeus’ preface, however, explicitly wants the reader to know that there is one more thing to Huygens’ jumping. In his sneezing moments, he jumps in all different directions touching on all different kind of topics, like a

⁴ Barlaeus in his *Praefatio ad Lectorem* (Huygens 1644, p. *4r-*4v): ‘Haec ipsa quae vides, *Momenta* sunt, et quidem *Desultoria*. *Momenta*, quia pleraque nullo molimine, sed impetus scripta sunt, non conatu, sed nutu, non ad lentas clepsydrae moras, sed subito calore et quadam festinandi voluptate, ut veluti tussiculas et interruptos singultus egesta videantur. Alia namque in castris inter lituos et tympana, alia domi inter supplicum flagitationes et amicorum officia nata sunt. Quaedam equitanti, quaedam naviganti, quaedam ambulanti exciderunt. Quod sane vitae genus uti longas moras nescit, et cunctationes fugit, ita praecipites subitosque animi motus amat.’

wagtail (in Latin *motticila*), the emblematically restless little bird, that hops and changes places incessantly.⁵



⁵ Barlaeus in his *Praefatio ad Lectorem* (Huygens 1644, p. *4v-*6v): ‘Desultoria sunt, quia cum non in castris solum, sed et in aulis alia se semper offerat rerum facies, alii hominum vultus, aliae curae, motus, jussa, non potuit non vagari mens libera et desultorie ferri in res varias. [...] Est inter aviculas motacilla, quae in saltibus non magnis spatiis volitat, sed breves facit de arbore in arborem, de virgulto in virgultum discursus. Idem facit noster in hoc operis sui salicto. Arripit argumentum et deserit, intra tut exeat, venit et abit.’

Constantijn Huygens' *Momenta Desultoria*, first edition, Leiden: Elsevier, 1644.
Koninklijke Bibliotheek The Hague, sign. 762 K 11

Apart from the paratextual presentation, the poems in the volume make clear to the reader as well that the author is a very busy man. The various compositions are not long texts, but works of a short breath, hiccups or *singultus*, according to Barlaeus, best characterised as epigrams. In fact, nine out of the volume's eleven books carry the title *Epigrammata* and present short witty poems on every conceivable topic (from prostitutes to princes, religion and war, and from meteorology to furniture). These intellectual small scale compositions are fully in line with the authorial image of the multi-tasking Orange courtier that the title page and Barlaeus' introduction to this volume generate.

Haga Vocalis or Voices of The Hague

As a follow up of the Latin section in the *Otia*, the poems collected in the *Momenta Desultoria* cover a literary production period of two decades, from 1625 to 1644, the year of publication. As with the *Otia*, however, there is a peak activity in the last year before the actual printing. The dated manuscript versions reveal that in the final stage of the editing process, Huygens, instead of sneezing and coughing up poems, worked unstoppably at his

volume.⁶ Moreover, as far as the topics of the text are concerned, the poetic flow is focused rather than *desultory*. In this period, Huygens is composing the extensive series of poems on his beloved The Hague.⁷

Highlighted as a separate group of epigrams, book seven in the *Momenta Desultoria* presents *Haga Vocalis*, or ‘Voices of The Hague’.⁸ It is a group of nearly one hundred epigrams featuring the various sites of Huygens’ hometown. Streets, buildings, squares, palaces, parks, canals and lofty lanes speak to the reader in their own voices, praising their

⁶ The manuscript versions of the poems are kept in the Royal Library The Hague, sign. KA 43 fol. 32r-48v.

⁷ The idea of publishing the *Momenta Desultoria* dates from late 1642 (see letter nr. 3195; Huygens to Daniel Heinsius, December 6th 1642). The dated manuscripts show that Huygens started to work on *Haga Vocalis* as a series on January 13th of the following year, composing the voices of the Groenmarkt, Schoolstraat, Vijverkade and Vismarkt. Within two months the whole set of streets and squares was finished, as the second part of his series, the Buildings, started on February 27th 1643 and ended March 31st, which completed the entire project of *Haga Vocalis*. Some individual poems in the series date from two earlier stages (January-February 1634 and late 1636).

⁸ C. Huygens, *Momenta Desultoria*, Leiden: Elsevier, 1644, 205-238.

qualities in the format of *prosopopoeia*.⁹ For example, the elegant three distichs on the Voorhout ('Prima sive Anterior Sylva') tell us that once it was a simple lane only bordered with double lined trees. For the old simple status, it was not an offense when humble poets tried to praise its beauty. Even a poet like Huygens did so, the text says tongue in cheek, referring to his brilliant ode *Batava Tempe* of 1621. Recently, however, the beauty of the place increased to a large extent: trees have been planted densely in patterned groups of five (quincunx, which is the five pattern on a dice). Therefore, once perhaps The Hague's Voorhout could be equaled in cheap penny poems, but now it requires a much higher prize:¹⁰

Prima sive Anterior Sijlva. Voor-hout
Passa meis modicum tilijs illudere vatem,
E duplici simplex ordine Stoa fui,
Passa vel Hugenum: Postquam quincunce stupendo

⁹ The idea of *Haga Vocalis* very much resembles the series of laudatory poems on the cities of Holland and West-Friesland (in Dutch: Stede-stemmen), which Huygens composed for the *Otia*. See Ad Leerintveld, 'Stedestemmen voor de Vrije Nederlanden. Historische argumentatie in een gedichtenreeks van Constantijn Huygens', in: *De Zeventiende Eeuw*, 24-1, 2008, 14-24.

¹⁰ Huygens, 1644, 222.

Impleor, et sijlvam spissior umbra refert,
Laus levis in vitio est: olim satis uncia fecit,
Quincunces numeros multiplicata peto.

Voorhout

I once allowed mediocre poets to sing about my lime trees
When with a double colonnade I was a simple stoa,
I even allowed Huygens [to do so]. But now with marvelous quincunxes
I have grown richer and lofty shades suggest a forest here,
Light praise is unacceptable. Once, single penny poems satisfied,
But now my quincunxes want at least five times more.

Like quite a number of the epigrams in *Haga Vocalis*, the argument of praise in the Voorhout refers to recent architectural innovations. After the famous capture of the city of Den Bosch, Prince Frederik Hendrik commissioned to transplant a great number of trees to The Hague in order to augment the Voorhout's former double line of lime trees into a new pattern, which provided more shade and loftiness. The new quincunx pattern thus created, was introduced from the Italian, classicist garden architecture, its name being a technical term derived from Vitruvius' *De Architectura*. So, in the series of *Haga Vocalis*, the argument of praise for the Voorhout concerns both Nassau and classicist architecture.

The Hague's new architecture

The Voorhout as restyled by order of Frederik Hendrik was not the only architectural innovation to be stimulated by the ambitious court in those years. Building activities were all over the place in The Hague. In fact, a whole new aristocratic quarter was arising. This was a direct effect of the cultural ambitions of the princely couple Frederik Hendrik and Amalia van Solms.¹¹ Their princely display, in imitation of international European court standards, not only concerned private Nassau possessions, but clearly affected the outward appearance of their residence, too. Theirs, however, was not the only court to reside in The Hague. Since the early 1620, the Winter King and Elector Palatine, Frederik V, and his wife Elizabeth had a conspicuous court life here. Since their exile in the Republic, they were deprived of their former centers of power in southern German Heidelberg and Bohemian Prague, but they enhanced their status, at least, by means of ostensible art

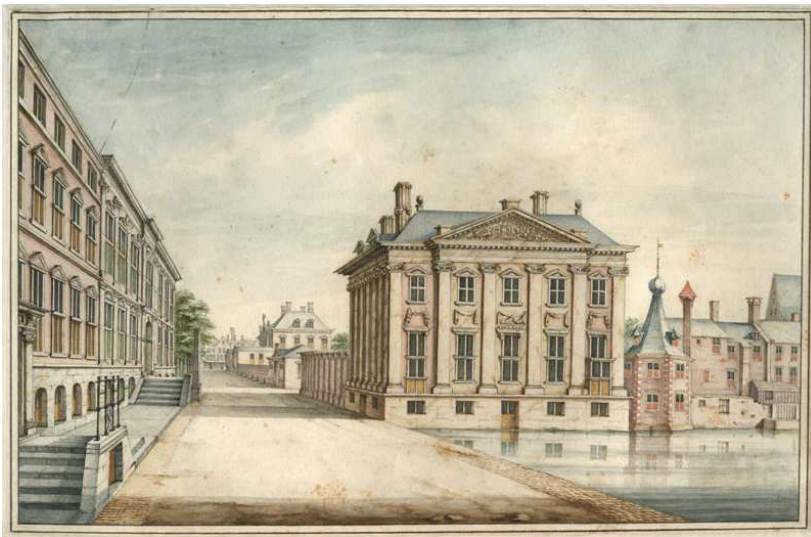
¹¹ See K.A. Ottenheym, 'Van bouw-lust soo beseten. Frederik Hendrik en de bouwkunst', in: M. Keblusek en J. Zijlmans (eds.) *Vorstelijk vertoon. Aan het hof van Frederik Hendrik en Amalia*. Uitg. ter gelegenheid van de gelijknamige tentoonstelling in het Haags Historisch Museum, 6 dec. 1997-29 mrt. Den Haag [enz.], 1997, 105-125; see also L. Jardine, *Going Dutch. How England plundered Holland's Glory*. London: HarperCollins, 2008. Transl. into Dutch as: *Gedeelde weelde*. Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers, 2009, chapter 4.

collections, ballets and other façade projects in The Hague. Moreover, a third court was held by the highly respectable royal couple William II and Mary Stuart. Frederik Hendrik's son, only eleven years old at the time, had married the nine year old daughter of England's king in 1640. However young they may have been, the two royal children displayed a court life in The Hague that could easily compete with both their parents' cultural ambitions. In line with their extravagant style, they exchanged their rather modest housings at the Binnenhof in 1642 for the aristocratic city palace Noordeinde. The palace which nowadays houses the Dutch Prince of Orange's family, had been completely rebuilt for that purpose and restyled according to the latest international classicist court style.¹² In addition to the indigenous courts, The Hague was also the Dutch *pied à terre* for foreign ambassadors and other representatives of European courts who contacted the numerous Dutch governmental institutions in and around the Binnenhof. The small village, which had never been granted city rights in the province of Holland, really witnessed an international, aristocratic court life in those years which was unprecedented in the Republic.

In its recent architectural developments under Frederik Hendrik's stadtholderate, the creation of a wide public space at the east end of the Binnenhof had been one of the first elements and certainly a major catalyst for the larger building program that captured The

¹² K.A. Ottenheym 'Architectuur', in: J. Huisken, K. Ottenheym and G. Schwartz (eds.), *Jacob van Campen: Het klassieke ideaal van de Gouden Eeuw*, Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura Press, 1995, 155-199.

Hague. The site that for a long time had been a secluded garden in neglect, was turned into the Renaissance square in the years 1633-34. (It is still visible in what is nowadays called the Plein). In order to reach this shape, a triangular piece of land at its west side had to be cut off from the open area. This was realised by means of the design of a straight and wide road covering the full length from the Voorhout to the Lange Pooten.¹³



Sight axis: the new aristocratic quarter in The Hague, view from the Voorhout towards Lange Pooten

¹³ See H.A. Bruin in: C. Huygens, *Domus. Het huis van Constantijn Huygens in Den Haag*. Uitgegeven en vertaald door Blom F.R.E., H.G. Bruin, K.A. Ottenheym, Zutphen: Walburg Press, 1999, 47-61.

Immediately after the sight axis had been laid out, three impressive new buildings arose along the road. At one end, close to the Voorhout and facing the Vijver, was the new Doelhuys or the Sint Sebastiaans Doelen, completed around 1640 (nowadays the building houses the Haags Historisch Museum). This building too was the result of an initiative by the court of Orange. The fronton inscription in the façade still tells us that the project was commissioned by Prince Frederik Hendrik, the first stone being placed by his son, the young William II.¹⁴ The classicist principles of the building testify to the overall architectural program for the new aristocratic quarter.

On the opposite side, bordering the waters of the Vijver, the second new building was the Mauritshuis, the city palace for Count Johan Maurits van Nassau, a cousin of the Prince of Orange. Built between 1636 and 1644, this architectural project was realised more for purposes of display than for living needs, since its owner resided in Recife by that time, as the governor of Dutch Brazil. However, designed and executed by the Dutch classicist architects Jacob van Campen and Pieter Post, it is a perfect example of the spirit of grandeur that possessed The Hague in those days.

The third building project was situated on the other end of the axis, overlooking the new Renaissance square of the Plein from the corner of Lange Pooten. Erected between 1634

¹⁴ E. Pluijmen et al., *Sint Sebastiaansdoelen: Haags Historisch Museum*, Zwolle: Waanders, 1989.

and 1637, this modest city palace was the first classicist house to be realised in the new aristocratic quarter, and, in fact, in the whole of The Hague. It was *Domus*, the house of the courtier Huygens, who, in his leisure time and nightly hours, had closely studied Vitruvius and his modern commentators before developing his own architectural plans in tandem with Van Campen.

For Huygens, *Domus* had two faces. Immediately after its completion in 1637, it turned into the saddest *lieu de mémoire* of his life. Just before the family was moving over from the Houtstraat, on the east side of the Plein, to their newly erected house on the opposite side, his wife Susanna van Baerle died of complications at the birth of their fifth child and only daughter Susanna. The sad memory was all the more present in the house since she had been the one who actually supervised the three years building process during her husband's frequent absences from The Hague. In his later autobiography, *My life as told to my children*, it is still an emotional memory when – forty years after the event – he remembers that his wife had to leave him and his five little children behind, dedicating, as he says, the house as an everlasting monument to her family care and personal love.¹⁵

¹⁵ Huygens, 2003, II, 401-412:

[...] Non Illa replesse

Pulchrâ posteritate Domum contenta recessit:

Digna superstitibus visa est augustior. Illam

Ingenio meditata suo, quâ parte probatur

Maximè, ad extremum perduxit sedula culmen;

However tragic for its personal history, *Domus* is also of major relevance for Huygens' public image. First of all, it contributes largely to the family's increasing wealth since the area on which the palazzo is constructed, was a gift by the Prince of Orange to his secretary, right at the time that all prices in the Republic ran up at an incredible speed.¹⁶ Besides its financial benefits, *Domus* is also of paramount symbolic value. With its location in The Hague's new aristocratic quarter and its positioning in line with the other buildings of the axis of beauty, it shows its landlord in a direct and even physical connection with the Nassau family. People walking or riding the busy Lange Pooten would see the Huygens House in good company with the city palace commissioned by Johan Maurits van Nassau and the Militia Doelhuys, erected by Frederik Hendrik and William II. Moreover, the classicist decoration program of *Domus* told the passers-by that the house

Dum Castris affixus ego mea desero castra,
Et meus ad Bredam magno molimine Princeps
Fulminat, et latè ejectum profligat Iberum.
Extremum hoc dilecta mihi sacrauit amoris
Mnemosunon pignusque sui: quò cum grege paruo
Et lachrimis commigraui, desertus ab illa
Aeternùm mihi deplorandâ compare turtur.

¹⁶ The house was valued at 35.000 guilders by the time of Huygens' death; that is an average year income multiplied by 70 (see Huygens, 1999, 70-72).

was the result of a full Vitruvian-Palladian concept. The allegorical statues on the frontispiece pointed out that both the building and its builder were well anchored in an intellectual tradition. In fact, the three ‘girls’, as Huygens calls them in his poetry, represent the principal virtues of architecture, as prescribed by the ancient master himself.¹⁷ On the left side, *Firmitas* or Strength is represented with a shield, on the right features *Commoditas* or Fit with the attributes of a snail and tortoise, and the middle girl, in full focus, is *Venustas*. Her attributes are a pair of compasses in the one hand and a miniature version of a man in the other, since, according to Vitruvius, architectural beauty should imitate the best of the world’s creations, the symmetry and proportions of the human body. Few but dominant, these ornaments in the building’s frontispiece underline the exemplary role of *Domus*, and its architect, for the new building activities in The Hague and the Republic in those years, a point equally stressed by Huygens in his equivocal Latin treatise on the house, *Domus*.¹⁸

¹⁷ ‘Drij moije Meissies voor drij Deugden aen te kijken’ in the poem 3. BEELDEN OP HET FRONTISPICE VAN MIJN HUIJS (*Gedichten*, VIII, 143D vs. 7).

¹⁸ Huygens, 1999, ch. 15: ‘Ego, dum ad ornatum patriae me accingerem, exemplo deinceps profuturum videbam. [...] Quâ parte augurij ut omnino non exciderem, res documento est. [...] ut stipes sim, nisi cum voluptate sentiam ab uno hoc qualicumque trunco regiones nostras impleri surculis infinitis.’ (‘While preparing to beautify my *patria* [by building *Domus*] I realised that I would be an example for the future. [...] And now, reality proves

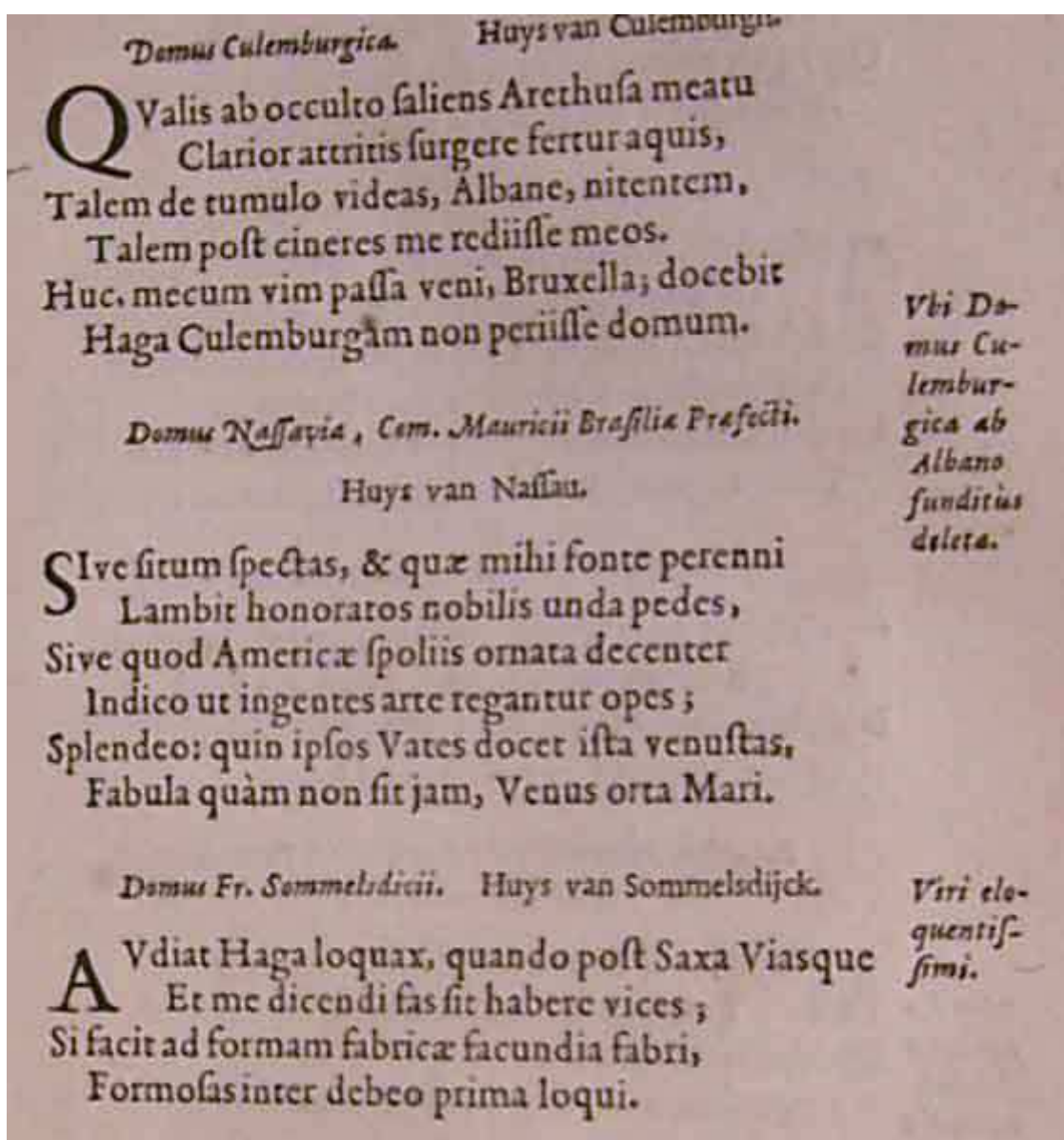
Literary representation of the new *élan*

Composed in the zenith of the building activities as just outlined, the literary exhibition in *Haga Vocalis* is strongly related to The Hague's ambition in architectural grandeur. Moreover, the series that was published in the 1644-publication of the *Momenta Desultoria* communicates Huygens' involvement and intellectual role in the architectural innovation. This personal agenda is clearly at work at the time when Huygens was collecting his source materials for publication and starting the focused production of epigrams about all the streets, places, parks, canals and squares in The Hague. Furthermore, in the organisation of the *Haga Vocalis*-series he makes a significant subdivision which is reserved exclusively for buildings. With these *Aedificia*, he creates the ultimate platform for presenting the illustrious buildings in his city of residence – especially, of course, the new ones. As such, the Doelenhuys in this section praises itself for its illustrious founder, William II, and for its architectural grandeur. The Mauritshuis, too, explicitly mentions its Nassau-origins and stresses its architectural *venustas*, which is wittily formulated in the

that my prophesies were not false. [...] I would be a block head not to notice with pleasure that in our regions many young branches have grown from this tree.’)

brilliant closure: standing with its feet in the waters of the Vijver, ‘my Beauty teaches all poets from antiquity, that Venus is no longer born from the sea!’¹⁹

¹⁹ C. Huygens, *Momenta Desultoria*. Ed. altera, Den Haag: Adriaen Vlacq, 1655, 231 vss.
5-6: ‘Splendeo: quin ipsos vates docet ista venustas,/ Fabula quam non sit jam Venus orta
mari!’



The Mauritshuis (Domus Nassavia) among other the speaking houses of *Haga Vocalis* in the *Momenta Desultoria*

But how does the poet picture his own prestigious building? In the disposition of *Haga Vocalis*, and in the special section on buildings, *Domus* is taken out of the overall alphabetical order that organises the other places and buildings in the series: it stands apart as the very last building. The poem's position reminds us of the courtier portraits in the *Otia*, which closed the series of the 'Zedeprinten'. Similarly, *Domus* is not satisfied with just one epigram, it needs two, thus making up the largest space and number of verses, ten and four lines, dedicated to one individual item in the whole of *Haga Vocalis*. And most markedly, in their invention both epigrams are *hors catégorie*; uniquely, they seem to make one and the same mistake. For, unlike the remainder of the series, neither of them is a first person speaking epigram. One explanation for this may lie in the genesis of the *Domus* epigrams. They were composed individually at an earlier stage, seven years before the rest of the series. Their manuscript versions date from November 1636.²⁰ By that time, the poems were created individually. If necessary, though, the poet could have repaired the aberration in the long meantime, for the sake of unity in the publication. Doing so, he

²⁰ 'Domus mea' no. 1 is dated November 16th 1636; no. 2 dates from the 18th in that same month (see *Gedichten*, III, 31). Interestingly, a third epigram dating from this phase (August 16th, *ibid.* p. 15) has the manuscript title Huygens Straet. Eventually, the claim to the Axis of Beauty was a bridge too far: the printed version in the *Momenta Desultoria* replaces the name with three asterisks.

would no doubt have lost the point in the two epigrams on his own house. They do not praise themselves, because they *cannot* speak yet: they have just been born. This, of course, was correct in 1636, when the author celebrated the building's completion with these two epigrams in manuscript. For the printed version the poems are unaltered, as an elegant and witty way to close a series called *Voices of The Hague*. Moreover, the human aspect featuring in the epigrams, and stressed in the final words of both epigrams 'homo est', is the highest argument of praise, corresponding to the dominant feature of the new aristocratic architecture which Huygens advocates in *The Hague and the Republic*: the principle of Beauty is man.

DOMUS MEA

Os medium, os sublime; suâ sub Fronte patentes

Hinc interuallo compare, et hinc Oculos;

Tempora; Nasum; Aures; Humeris et Pectore nata,

Pectore, ut est domini, Brachia candidulo;

Ossa nitore suo; tectas cute duplice Costas;

Conjuga sub Costis viscera, ventre cauo,

Exhibet una domus, quin, si non fallitur autor,

Ridet ad intuitus, Haga, decora tuos.

Da veniam infanti; mox ut prouectior annis,

Quae tacet in cunis, pauca loquatur, Homo est.

MY HOUSE

A mouth in the middle, an elevated mouth, and eyes under their own brows
Wide open symmetrically on one side and the other,
Temples, nose, ears, and arms stretching from shoulders
From the breast, a breast as pure as its master's,
A bone structure with its own shining grace, ribs covered with double skin,
Paired organs under the ribs in the hollow belly,
That is what this one house shows. And if its creator is not blinded,
His sweet little baby seems to smile back, The Hague, at your looks.
Please forgive the infant's silence. Soon it will grow older
And speak the few words it cannot say from its cradle, that it is a human being.

Thus, the *Momenta Desultoria* edition of 1644 with the significant series of epigrams in *Haga Vocalis* highlights the actual architectural innovation in the Hague and Huygens' particular role in it. Text-internal indications are found both in the dispositional arrangement of the series and the witty inventions for the two epigrams on his own house. The relevance for publication is confirmed in the rather focused genesis with predominant manuscript activity at this point in the editing phase. Moreover, the agenda is at work in

the presentation to the reader, realised in the paratexts of the volume. The preface by Caspar Barlaeus opens with the description of a visit to The Hague, where he walks through the beautiful place and mentions various spots and buildings that also feature in Huygens' literary representation. The geographic overture directs the readers towards *Haga Vocalis* especially with its quotations from some of the poems in the series. Moreover, just like the series itself, Barlaeus' walk is a foil to the author, as he ends up at the Huygens' house.²¹ The second hint directing the reader towards *Haga Vocalis* is in the final part of the paratexts, where a small section presents the gratulatory poems for the volume by some of Huygens' friends. None of these lines mentions any composition or division in particular, except for the laudatory poem at the closure of the section, just

²¹ Barlaeus in his *Praefatio ad Lectorem* (Huygens 1644, p. *2r-*2v): 'Cum non ita pridem Hagrae essem, studiose Lector, cepit me voluptas, ea omnia ibidem lustrandi, quae aliquâ sui vel magnitudine, vel elegantia, vel novitate spectatorem detinent. Fuere in oculis Principum palatia, sylvae partim inordinatae, partim longis ordinibus in quincunces digestae, atria tot victoriarum monumentis conspicua, fossae aedificiis hinc inde ad aemulationem exstructis illustres, curules magnificae et pilenta *Regales vectura nurus*, armamentaria et horribiles Martis officinae, aliaque plurima. [...] Verum publico subductus et per amicorum hic illic stationes domosque oberrans, forte in Muaeum Nobilissimi Clarissimi Viri Constantini Hugonii, Zulichemi Domini etc. delatus fui.'

before the reader steps into Huygens' poetry itself. That poem is an exclusive praise of the architectural series.²²

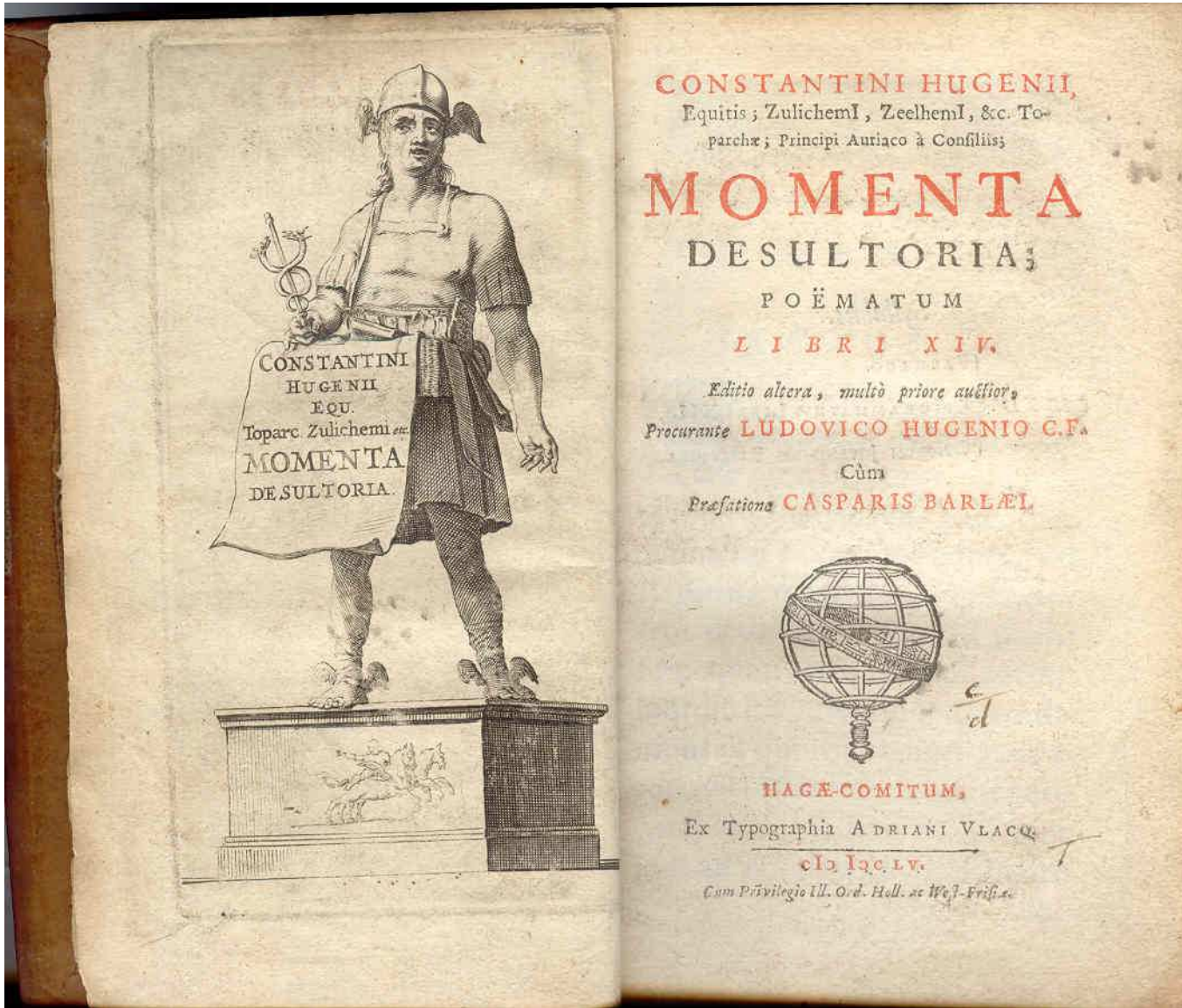
The reprint edition of the *Momenta Desultoria* in 1655

Compared to the social urgency at work in the *Otia* of 1625, Huygens' attempts at self-presentation in the *Momenta Desultoria* are more relaxed. The author has attained his ambitious goals and occupies a strong social position as a favorite employee of the Prince of Orange. He feeds *fama* with his fortunes. From this point of view, it is challenging to evaluate the afterlife of the *Momenta*, too, since the second edition was published eleven years later, when life had changed dramatically for Huygens. What was left of the man who, when he first published his Latin poetry, told his readers he was on top of the world? The house of Orange was in a deep crisis. Frederik Hendrik had died in 1647, while William II, the young Prince who in happier days had laid the first stone of the Sebastiaans Doelen, had made a complete mess of the respectable position that he had inherited from his father. The stadtholder, as the Republic's highest military commander, had lost the

²² *Momenta Desultoria* 1655, p. **5v. The poem is a contribution by Hendrik Bruno, the governor in the Huygens' family who was hired for the children's education at home. Like most of what the governor did, this poem, too, was probably under control of the author himself.

most essential basis for power at the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. Moreover, he had ruined the carefully balanced relationship between Orange and the cities of Holland by his infamous military assault on Amsterdam. And, most importantly, Huygens' new prince and patron had suddenly passed away in 1650. Now, the States of Holland tended towards an eternal banishment of stadtholders. In politics as well as in their private affairs, the house of Orange was less powerful than ever. As a consequence, their humble servant Huygens had lost a great deal of his prestige.

The second print edition of the *Momenta* in 1655 certainly reveals some loss of social position. Huygens can no longer present himself as *a secretis*. Apart from that, though, the author's social standing seems quite unaltered, judging from the title page. As for its literary contents, the edition has been expanded with three more books of epigrams. Also, the edition has been produced by another printing house. The Leiden Elsevier company, responsible for the first edition, has been substituted by The Hague's renowned printer Adriaan Vlacq.



Reprint edition of the *Momenta Desultoria* 1655, produced partly by Adrian Vlacq. From the author's personal collection

Still, one may wonder whether the printing for the *Momenta Desultoria* 1655 was really done by Vlacq. Book analytical collation of the first and second editions reveals that both derive from the same print. As leftovers, the vellums for the Elsevier edition of 1644 have been reused in the 1655 edition. In fact, Vlacq only printed the altered paratextual presentation and the additions to the volume, the extra three books of epigrams, in exactly the same letter types.²³ What is the meaning of all this? Why does Huygens choose to make a new edition of the *Momenta* while plenty of copies are still at hand in the first print edition? Apart from the artistic urgency to come up with three new sections of Latin poetry, a social interpretation also seems appropriate here. The 1644-volume was an exclusive edition, not only on account of its fine layout, its refined contents and the elite presentation, but also because of its distribution. With an explicit printing privilege for fifteen years and a fine of 150 guilders for anyone copying without consent, Huygens was in full control of his limited edition.²⁴ Moreover, his *Momenta* was not on the market.

²³ The similar copies for both editions can be traced from mutual printing errors, for example page number 163 is abusively numbered 119, and page number 219 is on 218. The similarity in copy print was noted for the first time by J.A. Worp in the edition of *Gedichten*, I, XXII (thanks to my colleague dr. A. van Strien, VU Amsterdam, for pointing me to Worp's observation).

²⁴ Huygens, 1644, fol. Xx6v 'ne quisquam poemata latina, quaeve ejusdem Hugeni deinceps Belgicâ aliisve Linguis edi potuerunt, intra quindecim annos proximos imprimat.'

Authorial correspondence over the year 1644 contains several letters written by friends, complaining they had been looking for the volume in the book shops, but that it was not there.²⁵ As for the distribution, Huygens commissioned his sons' Latin tutor Hendrik Bruno to provide a select group of friends with a personalised volume. As such, the *Momenta Desultoria* of 1644 was far from a public volume; it functioned as a present, a personal gift by the author.

Accordingly, the poet added for each addressee a personal dedicatory poem, as a true token of friendship. More than thirty dedications that were sent with the book immediately after it was printed, testify to the great concern and control of its author. The happy few recipients of the volume, in turn, could not remain silent and most of them did in fact write back, expressing their gratitude and admiration either in Latin or in French, in poetry or prose. In the decade after the first release, additional letters or poems of gratitude by other readers point out that Huygens kept on using his Latin poems edition for social purposes in later periods. Thus, the select readers of the *Momenta Desultoria* 1644 can be reconstructed to be a group of almost 50 *intimi*. They were all persons of some social

²⁵ See for example Isaac Gruterus to Huygens, 20 september 1644, who had been to several book sellers first, and then asked Bruno for a copy: 'Absentem Hugenum meliore sui parte spectandum mihi exhibit liber, Brunonis tui commodato (forsan audacius petito, cum rogata vacuum dismisissent bibliopolia)', epitomised in the Worp-edition and therefore quoted from the *Rescripta* paratexts in the *Momenta Desultoria* of 1655.

esteem, professors and other academic scholars, theologians, literary men, courtiers and persons in diplomatic service. The readers' reactions point out that the overall message of the *Momenta Desultoria* clearly came across. In their praise of the poetry and its author, many recipients wonder how Huygens could be such a prolific poet, while being burdened with numerous tasks in the service of the Prince.²⁶ The French diplomat Mazarin, for example, echoes the motive: 'How can someone *occupatissimus* like you, be so productive?' Also, most of the readers praise the author's intellect and ingenious thoughts, as for example the French philosopher René Descartes writes: 'You call them *Momenta*, but it will take more than that to grasp all the brilliancy'.²⁷ Furthermore, some of the

²⁶ See for example Pierius Winsemius, professor of history and Latin poet 13 July 1644: 'quod inter occupationes aulae ac consilia prementibus vestigia Principis saepe periculosa, eripi tibi siveris insigne hoc ingenii monumentum' (epitomised in the Worp-edition and therefore quoted from the *Rescripta* paratexts in the *Momenta Desultoria* of 1655). See also the reaction of Mazarin: 'que vous n'estiez pas moinz homme de belles letters que d'affaires, et que les fruicts de vos meditations n'estoient pas moins doux, que ceux de vostre action estoient utiles'.

²⁷ Descartes, as quoted from the *Rescripta* in the *Momenta Desultoria* 1655: 'Sed quamvis Momenta tantum desultoria esse dicantur, non tamen momentanea lectione omnia eorum acumina, omnes sales, omnesque elegantias detegi posse perspexi [...]'. See also Johan Dedel: 'Quam tersa et acuta omnia! Sed et quae talem Lectorem requirunt.'

readers also refer to the rich variety in topics, genres and styles, as the Nijmegen classicist Lambert Goris characterises the author as a true Proteus.²⁸ And finally, three reactions point explicitly at literary parts in the poetry volume. These concentrate on *Haga Vocalis*. The most elegant homage in this respect, is by Huygens' old acquaintance, the international banker Jean Louis Calandrini, who devotes a laudatory poem exclusively to *Haga Vocalis* and to Huygens' personal relevance in the architectural developments of The Hague. Copying the author's emphatic dispositional technique in the series, Calandrini's composition, too, reserves its apotheosis for the 'human' house of Constantijn Huygens:²⁹

²⁸ See for example Goris, Nijmegen 31 July, as quoted from the *Rescripta* in the *Momenta Desultoria* 1655: 'Altera laus Romae divisa est, altera Graiis, / Hugenides unus paginam utramque facit. / Ingemit, exultat, pungit, docet ac meditatur, / Proteus non Proteus, fertilitate pari / heroes, elegos, arguta epigrammata testor, / Ingenio hic genius jure perennis erit.' And also the French scholar in physics Marin Mersenne, who, if he had the same genius, would make verses like Huygens: 'je vous imiterois: c'est à dire j'en ferois une partie en vers Heroiques, d'autres Sapphiques, d'autres Jambiques etc. selon le caprice que me prendroit.'

²⁹ Vss. 11-18 of Calandrini's poem entitled *Haga Vocalis*. The series is also explicitly mentioned in the reactions of Jean Brasset, secretary to the French Ambassador in The Hague (13 July 1644), who admits to having a new view of the streets and buildings, and in the reaction of the Louvain scholar Godfried Wendelinus.

Inque his praecellens, HUGENIANA DOMUS.

Ordine quam tanto Domini symmetria struxit,

Pars ut in humano corpore quaeque sita est.

Pulchra domus, celso laqueari, et fornice constans

Architectonicos exhibit arte tubos.

Pulchrior interior, nitidusque domesticus ordo,

Quae veram faciunt vivida membra domum.

And excelling among these is HUYGENS' *DOMUS*

Which Symmetry has built after its master's order

With each part positioned as in the human body.

Beautiful is this house, standing firmly from its vaults to its elevated ceilings

Displaying bones in artful architecture.

But even more beautiful is the interior with the perfect harmony at home

These living elements truly make a House.

Calandrini's contribution, as all readers' reactions, perfectly echoes the message sent out by the 1644 volume. Consequently, the strategic relevance of the reprint volume in 1655 is not so much in the added poetry sections, but in the extension of the introductory

part. The original preface by Barlaeus and the handful of introductory poems are extended by two new sections of paratexts. In the first place, Huygens presents a highly impressive series of friends, by collecting all the inscriptions he made for the personalised copies of the first edition. They are all added in Vlacq's print as new poetry just as much as testimonies of the author's friendships and social network. In addition, he also publishes the readers' reactions collected throughout the years, in all their varieties from French prose to Latin poetry.³⁰ As such, these so called *Inscriptiuncula* and *Rescripta* are another instrument in the volume to underscore Huygens' prestige in an international circle of people of esteem. Their relevance to the 1655-volume and its author, is evident in the disproportional extension of the section. The additions in the introductory paratextual

³⁰ The reaction in vernacular by Joost van den Vondel is not published, see Huygens *Briefwisseling*, IV, 70-71, 3757, dated September 16th 1644: 'nu syn my door zekeren Bruno uwe E. luchtige en geestige buitensprongen toegezonden, die ick met vermaeck hebbe gelezen. en verwondert blyve, dat uwe E. zonder tyt noch zooveel tyts vindt; dan uwe E. aengebore lust kan zich niet sparen van de hengstebron, die u noch meer schynt te smaken dan alle hoffelycke weelden en leckernyen.' ('now a certain Bruno has sent me your lofty and witty caprioles, which I have read with enjoyment. And remain in wonder that you, who has no time, can find so much time; that your innate lust cannot stay away from the horse's well, that seems more delightful to you than all of the wealth and delights of the Court.')

materials accumulate to a newly printed body of 50 pages. Compared to the original introduction of 1644, this is a spatial increase of five hundred percent. Huygens surely can get by, in this period, with a little help from his friends.

The other extension in the paratexts involves the second preface. Next to Barlaeus, Huygens' son Lodewijk now also addresses the readers as editor. The presentation of Lodewijk Huygens in the volume is significant in the same actual circumstances of 1655 that urged Huygens to come up with an ostentatious line up of friendships and favorable testimonies in less prosperous times. All four of Huygens' sons, ranging from 20 to 27 years of age, had finished their education and were eager to find starting points for a professional career. In fact, they were in the same position as Huygens when he was composing the *Otia*. But now, with the absence of a protecting stadtholder the circumstances were far from profitable. As a caring father, at least, Huygens would welcome any opportunity to bring his sons into the light.

Conclusion

Early modern artists use their productions and public actions as platforms for self-presentation. In literature, both the materials selected for publication and the arrangement and presentation of the printed volumes are the results of choices made by the author to meet, respond or anticipate to the circumstances of publication. Collected poetry volumes

are representational platforms *par excellence*. The author's re-evaluation of the materials printed, in terms of selection, organisation, adaptation and final presentation, makes these productions manifest blueprints of social strategies. For modern scholarly research into the poet's position and ambition in the cultural field, the volumes offer paramount information when analysed in their authentic form, which is all the more facilitated nowadays by the growing numbers of facsimile editions on the internet.

The critical evaluation of the collected volumes *Otia* and *Momenta Desultoria* has touched upon an essential aspect of in the literary artistry of Huygens. Preparing his impact on readers, Huygens is in full control of a coherent publication strategy to improve his social position. He really is a great player of the game the Italians would call *fare bella figura*, that is constructing significant and useful façades or images. In that sense, a striking metaphor is found in Huygens' architectural achievements in *Domus* and the building's literary presentation in the *Momenta Desultoria*. In order to evaluate and appreciate the tactics of the game, a wide interdisciplinary approach is necessary. The building stones for interpretation are to be dug out from both the manuscripts (genetics) and the contemporary printings (publishers involved, paratexts, book-analysis). Moreover, a comparative approach to manuscripts and print representation is useful to bias the accents in the publication. And then, of course, contextual information is required about the artist's social and economic position at the time of publication, as well as about the reading audience involved. Although some of these circumstantial elements can be taken from biographical

studies, much is still to be done from the original correspondences and other historical documents, since this new approach to literature has not directed the focus of secondary studies yet. Huygens, for that matter, is a perfect case, since both his literary production and the meta-information in his correspondences and other ego-documentary sources are fully at hand. As with the *Momenta Desultoria*, there is the extra circumstantial source of the readers' circle and their reactions, which even entered the primary source in the second edition, for, by now, obvious reasons.

This contribution to *Huygens as a Man of Letters* lacks an evaluation of Huygens' last great collected poems volume, the *Korenbloemen*. The circumstances for that publication are *grosso modo* the reverse of the *Momenta Desultoria*. Its first edition in 1658 is made in the circumstances which correspond to those of the *Momenta's* reprint three years earlier. The second enlarged publication, however, occurs in 1672, definitely in relation to the major shift of scenes in these days. After two decades the Orange family was then restored to power. William III turns out to be a more powerful stadtholder than any of his predecessors and Huygens is back on top of the world, his sons being accepted as protégés of the prince. With his social position regained, his entire literary production published in a collected volume will be a strategic instrument, again, to feed *Fama* with the Huygens fortunes.

