

‘His Best Part Lies Hidden in His Learned Heart’: Aernout van Buchell’s *Alba Amicorum*

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Abstract

This article proposes that the historian Aernout van Buchell was a cultural go-between, quietly engaged in a transnational project of globalization. The young van Buchell’s first album amicorum, begun in 1584, reveals an intellectually restless young man who was given to depression and even attempted suicide but who discovered the study of antiquities on his year-long stay in Paris. His second album reveals an older, settled, purposeful historian whose album friends were scholars and artists of considerable reputation. At least since his year in Paris, van Buchell was committed to obliterating the boundaries of space and time and removing the intellectual limits of his mind. As with the antiquities he studied, van Buchell’s *alba* endorse a common heritage and offer to posterity the wisdom of the ancients and that of the many contributors to his album. His stance was that of a humanist, which, in the early modern period, entailed a revival of classical languages, literature, and moral precepts.

Keywords: Aernout van Buchell, Johannes de Witt, album amicorum, intellectual history

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Around 1596, Johannes de Witt (1566-1622), a Dutchman, gave or sent his friend Aernout van Buchell (1565-1641), also a Dutchman, a sketch of the Swan theatre in London. De Witt had visited London's Bankside and was taken by the architecture of its grandest arena theatre; he knew his friend would find the building intriguing, so he passed the drawing on to him. Van Buchell, in turn, copied it into his *Adversaria*, a kind of commonplace book or scrapbook in which he collected items of interest.¹ De Witt's drawing of the Swan has disappeared, but van Buchell's copy stands, uniquely, as the only known drawing of the inside of a purpose-built London amphitheatre done in Shakespeare's time.

For van Buchell and de Witt, the drawing of the Swan was a cross-cultural bridge, connecting sixteenth-century England with first-century BCE Rome. Had the two discussed the English structure, they surely would have commented not only on its form but also on its function, imaginatively recalling the savage events that took place in the huge Roman amphitheatre and the gory spectacles that thrilled London audiences in Elizabethan times. The pair, of course, could not have appraised the drawing's future importance, yet van Buchell's Swan reached into the twentieth century, where it became an important resource for the scholars and architects reconstructing Shakespeare's Globe. Without the drawing that more than four hundred years earlier had crossed the North Sea to Utrecht, those who advised the builders of that now iconic theatre, completed in 1997, may not have placed the pillars where they did or fashioned the lip of the rectangular stage so close to where the groundlings stood in the yard.

At the end of the sixteenth century, the young Dutch Republic was a major player in a burgeoning transnational culture that was redefining personal life and national identity. With the Dutch East India Company (voc) employing tens of thousands of Dutch people in the first decade of its incorporation (including, a few years later, van Buchell), the Dutch were enjoying trade routes connecting them to ports that supplied their kitchens with exotic spices and their parlours with Chinese porcelain. In Cologne, Crispijn de Passe, the best-known engraver of the time, was selling his prints to van Buchell and others and, in England, carrying out commissions for King James I. With William Camden, who wrote

¹ Utrecht, University Library (hereafter UBU), Ms. 842, Aernout van Buchell, *Adversaria*, fol. 132r.

a chorographical study of *Britannia*, historians and geographers, including van Buchell and de Witt, were studying the traces of earlier civilizations and sketching thousands of inscriptions recovered from those remains. Moreover, individual Dutchmen seeking intellectual relationships were reaching out to experiences abroad, extending their own knowledge and bringing back to their places of origin a surer awareness of what lay beyond its borders.

As an historian, an antiquarian, and a traveller, the young van Buchell was a part of this move toward globalization, as was his friend de Witt, who, despite serving Utrecht as both a canon of the Mariakerk and a lawyer, spent much of his life travelling. Fortunately for later historians and biographers, van Buchell, who clearly understood the power of archives, left behind a record of his life in letters, journals, diaries, drawings, and – most important for our purposes – two *alba amicorum*. Together, these two *alba* hold not only the story of van Buchell's travels in an ever-expanding world but also a more personal developing sense of his own 'learned heart'.

As with others whose *alba amicorum* were always at the ready, van Buchell saw in the genre an opportunity to construct, to authorize, and to advertise 'the self'. For the young man away from his home in Utrecht for the first time, an album offered an opportunity to give voice to a self that was only just emerging. For the album owner later in life, an album helped solidify his own precepts and beliefs. Entries from friends who praised his virtues and from men of achievement who identified with the ancients contributed to the developing portrait of the album owner and to his growing sense of self. In his youthful album, for example, van Buchell revealed his obsession with a fate that proved uncontrollable despite his efforts to assert agency. And in his later album, the well-regarded elder expressed an interest in his own homebred diplomacy. As the album pages filled and his sense of self took clearer form, van Buchell would have recognized that, in assembling the remarks of likeminded men, he was endorsing a humanistic community whose beliefs were a hallmark of his own learning.

Nicolaus Fabri Vilvordiensis's commentary following the poem he inserted in Ortelius's album bears witness to the presence of the self in *alba*:

Would that by these verses I might earn imperishable glory and your friendship; there is no one in your Album who has a greater regard for you than I, though I am unworthy of being in the company of such learned men, whom all posterity will praise. But though I am unworthy of you, still my verses will I hope evince my grateful disposition towards you who are so kind and free from pride.²

Humble, self-effacing, unworthy of being among the learned men who signed, the contributor nonetheless anticipates 'imperishable glory' through his friendship with the album owner. And the album owner, 'kind and free from pride', generously accepts the contributor into his circle of friends, even as he anticipates the praise of posterity.

Van Buchell's First Album Amicorum

In 1576, Johan Ruysch enrolled his stepson, Aernout (or Arend), in Utrecht's Hieronymus School, where the boy remained until 1578 before transferring to the Latin school in

² Hessels (ed.), *Abrahami Ortelii*, 280.

Arnhem, where he studied until 1581. Van Buchell met de Witt at the Utrecht school, and they became lifelong friends and correspondents. Later, in 1583, at the University of Leiden, the two enjoyed the mentorship of Justus Lipsius, the celebrated philologist, philosopher, and humanist. Nonetheless, van Buchell was restless. He left Leiden after only five months at the university, and in February 1584 he enrolled in the Jesuit university in Douai. There, he read widely on subjects ranging from the eating habits of the ancient Romans to the nature of dreams, the direction of the winds, and the gold mines of Peru.

In June 1585, after a year and a half of study, van Buchell left Douai for Paris, where he spent another year. En route, he and the brothers Verspuelius from Amersfoort met Ludovicus Carrio (Louis Carrion), a philologist, antiquarian, and humanist from Bruges who joined the travelling trio. In Paris, Carrion introduced van Buchell to his circle of friends and to the discipline that was to occupy van Buchell throughout his life. Excited about pursuing antiquities as a historian, the young man, often with his friend de Witt, explored the ruins of Paris. When van Buchell returned to Utrecht in June 1586, he was fluent in French and committed to the task of uncovering history, particularly the era of ancient Rome.³

In 1584, when the nineteen-year-old van Buchell began the first of his two *alba amicorum* – the album now held by the Kunstbibliothek in Berlin – a growing number of privileged Germans and Dutchmen were engaged in the practice of securing autographs from friends and dignitaries.⁴ University students in particular were eager to have the pages of their *alba* signed, so when they set out on their youthful travels, they were sure to take their *alba* with them. Van Buchell's album was in his pocket when he left for Douai, and in 1584 he asked Henricus Duystius from Voorhout, a childhood friend, to sign. He later collected several other signatures, including those of Ernestus Taets from Amerongen, also a childhood friend who was in Douai and would later become an Utrecht patrician; Hugo Ruyschius, who was related to van Buchell through his mother's marriage and, with van Buchell, learned to fence in Douai; and Clemens and Joannes Verspuelius (Vanderspuelde or van Spuelde) from Amersfoort, who journeyed with him from Douai to Paris.⁵

This was van Buchell's first excursion abroad, yet in Douai his contributors were all countrymen. It took the stay in Paris – and perhaps an extra dose of courage – before he would present his album to others. To be sure, several countrymen signed: Theodoricus Schoutenus, for example, later a jurist in The Hague, and Philips van Winghe, a medallist, draftsman, archaeologist, scientist, and Jesuit scholar. But in this international metropolis, van Buchell also obtained the signatures of Jacobus Krug from Speyer, Augustinus Lanserius from Trier, Jean Dorat from Limoges, Paulus Francus Melissus, and François de la Croix. Melissus, a German, was a celebrated neo-Latin poet, translator, composer, philologist, and humanist who was named poet laureate of Vienna in 1561. Jean Dorat

3 Pollmann, *Religious Choice*; UBU, Ms. 1640, Aernout van Buchell, *Acta diurna in itinere Gallico et Italico*, 6 August 1584, fol. 7v; 12-13 August 1584, fol. 9r; September 1584, fols. 12v-13r; 5 September 1584, fol. 14v; November 1584, 19r; December 1584, fol. 20v.

4 Berlin, Kunstbibliothek Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Lipperheidesche Kostumbibliothek (hereafter *KSMB*), Ms. Lipp. oZ3, *Album amicorum* of Aernout van Buchell.

5 Vignau-Wilberg, 'Die *Alba Amicorum* des Arnoldus Buchellius', provides a list of contributors and gives the Latinized name of each. The entries were first recorded in Kiesling, 'Die Stammbücher'.

was a classical scholar and poet – ‘the king’s poet’ under France’s Charles IX and a prolific writer of Latin and Greek verse, who included two anagrams in his album entry. François de la Croix was a French nobleman, book collector, and humanist. Clearly, van Buchell, who was at the beginning of his commitment to antiquarianism, humanism, and transnationalism, had begun networking with men other than those of his native country, and he must also have been starting to think of himself as a citizen of the world.

In April 1587, van Buchell set out again, this time for Rome. Although travel in early modern Europe was growing in popularity, particularly among students who had recently completed their university education, getting from one place to the next safely was not easy. The young traveller was able to avoid the war-torn regions of the Habsburg Netherlands and beyond, but he encountered a number of practical obstacles. The most serious of these was the illness of his (unnamed) travel companion, who had to turn back. Wary of continuing the journey alone, van Buchell decided he too would return. He inscribed a poem in his album about his first trip to Germany and secured the signatures of Winandus Schellart from Oberndorf, who accompanied him on the ship to Frankfurt; Christophorus and Thomas Mildenit from Pomerania; and Arnoldus Creisserius (Arnold Kresser aus Burgsteinfurt) from Hesse, advisor to Landgrave Ludwig IV, then headed home.⁶

Van Buchell’s intentions were good: he was interested in furthering his education and in meeting others in the intellectual community. But his experience did not match his intent. In September, he set out for Rome again. This time, he was robbed in Germany and cheated in Italy; he took ill and endured bouts of depression that left him contemplating suicide. After less than four months in Rome, he was forced by financial and health problems to return. Exhausted and discouraged, he arrived back in Utrecht in July 1588, fifteen months after he had left. Van Buchell wrote about his visit to Italy and left traces of his stay in his album. In a sequence of entries, he inscribed a quotation from Ovid, dating the entry December 1587, and collected three signatures: Jo. Baptista Scepperius, Arnoldus Bousenius, and Joannis Horstius Gelder. He also entered drawings and poems related to Italy.

But he saved the opening pages of his youthful album for his own drawings, which reflect the self-absorption he experienced as a nineteen-year-old.⁷ The first drawing is captioned ‘Sors’ (Fate). Blindfolded, Fate, the son of Fortuna, stands upon a silver ball at the centre of a divided landscape, one half flourishing, the other half desolate. He holds a second ball in his right hand, which he is poised to drop into the pleasing landscape. But a third ball, already released, is about to fall into the ruins on the other side (fig. 1). Opposite the drawing is a painting of van Buchell’s coat of arms: three silver balls in a field of red (fig. 2), followed by the motto ‘Aut sors aut virtus’ (‘Either Fate, or Virtue’). Van Buchell’s artwork appears to be an indictment of fortune and fate, which behave arbitrarily in the world and in his own life.

The meaning of van Buchell’s drawing of an eagle contemplating the sun while smaller birds peck at crumbs is more elusive (fig. 3). A Latin *sententiae* reading ‘Alta contemplare’ (‘Contemplating the high’) and a Latin poem on the opposite page offer a possible

6 Pollmann, 56-58; UBU, Ms. 798, Aernout van Buchell, *Commentarius rerum quotidianarum*, 1, May 1587, fols. 217r, 218v; 26 June 1587, fol. 227r; KSMB, Ms. Lipp. oZ3, *Album amicorum* of Aernout van Buchell, fol. 55r.

7 KSMB, Ms. Lipp. oZ3, *Album amicorum* of Aernout van Buchell, fols. 2v-4r.



Fig. 1 Aernout van Buchell, Sors, son of Fortuna, c. 1586, ink on paper, 14,2 x 19,0 cm, in the album amicorum of Arnoldus Buchelius, Berlin, Kunstbibliothek Staatliche Museen.

explanation (fig. 4). The eagle that raises its head to look toward the sun and the heavenly stars deserves praise; lesser men who prefer to look downward do not. Van Buchell, then, should be the eagle and use God's gifts to look at the skies and explore the world.

Taking her cue from van Buchell's own writings, Judith Pollmann calls this period in van Buchell's life – 1586 to 1593 – a personal purgatory. One of three children born to his father and his father's mistress, Brigitta Jans, van Buchell was painfully conscious of his illegitimacy, even though it did not appear to matter to the tolerant Utrecht community that a canon of the Catholic church would be sexually active outside of marriage. Clearly, van Buchell thought he had been treated unfairly. He inscribed an imagined epitaph with 'I am Arnoldus Buchelius Batavas, whom *fortuna* has troubled with various mishaps from my very cradle'.⁸ He even wrote a suicide note, explaining that 'I see myself born as one doomed to sorrow'. Styling himself a victim of the fates, he described his mental suffering as a 'sickness of the imagination', writing that 'never and nowhere is there peace'.⁹

Van Buchell spent the next few years at home in Utrecht. Occasionally, he explored nearby Roman ruins, at times with de Witt, and he collected a few signatures for his album,

⁸ Cited in Pollmann, *Religious Choice*, 61; UBU, Ms. 841, Aernout van Buchell, *Adversaria de epitaphis*, fol. 9r.

⁹ Cited in Pollmann, *Religious Choice*, 61; UBU, Ms. 798, Aernout van Buchell, *Commentarius*, II, 20 June 1589, fol. 108r.



Fig. 2 Aernout van Buchell, Coat of arms of van Buchelius, c. 1586, ink on paper, 14,2 x 19,0 cm, in the album amicorum of Arnoldus Buchelius, Berlin, Kunstbibliothek Staatliche Museen.

usually of friends or relatives. But during this period of his life, just before he met the woman who would become his wife, his interests were not only in antiquities; he was also interested in sex. Although he recorded in his *Commentarius* the many sexual encounters he had with women (professional or otherwise), he did not appear to be enjoying promiscuity. Restless again, he left his employment as secretary to Johannes van Hornes, Baron of Boxtel and Count of Baucigny, and returned to the University of Leiden. In 1593, he completed his law degree and married Claesje van Voorst, and in April 1594 his wife gave birth to a son.

From 1592 to 1600, van Buchell collected several signatures, including Thomas Scotius (Thomas van Schoten) from Brugge, who signed in Alkmaar; Bonaventura Vulcanius from Brugge, a philologist and professor of Greek at the University of Leiden, who signed in Leiden, probably when van Buchell was in town to receive his law degree; and Gilbertus de Potres from Brussels, an Utrecht patrician who shared van Buchell's interest in antiquity. And, of course, in 1585 he had also secured the signature of his long-time friend de Witt, who celebrated their friendship with a Latin inscription and a symbolic watercolour lily. Above the bloom, he signed his name – Joannes De Wit Ultraiectinus – and below he wrote 'Candide', van Buchell's name for him at the University of Leiden (fig. 5). His old



Fig. 3 Aernout van Buchell, Drawing of an Eagle, c. 1586, ink on paper, 14,2 x 19,0 cm, in the album amicorum of Arnoldus Buchelius, Berlin, Kunstbibliothek Staatliche Museen.

friend's signature, along with that of his new friend, Louis Carrion, stand as symbols of van Buchell's unceasing study of antiquarian and modern tombs, inscriptions, and architectural remains.

As the decade waned, however, van Buchell appears to have lost interest in his album. There are three additional signatures, dated 1599 and 1600, but otherwise one-third of the album's 182 pages remained empty. Importantly, in 1614, just before the closing page that he had autographed in 1589, van Buchell reactivated his youthful album by pasting in a print of de Passe's engraved portrait of him at age forty-nine. Notably, the portrait included a legend in Latin by Gisbert van Elburch celebrating the subject's character, which even the most skilful engraver intent on replicating his appearance could not capture: 'Pars melior docto pectore clausa latet' ('His best part lies hidden in his learned heart').¹⁰ Not only did van Buchell add the portrait to his album, he also sent a copy to de Witt – gestures suggesting that, in middle age, he was seeing himself as a person of worth. In the caption to his second drawing in the album's early pages, van Buchell had pledged that God would be his travel companion and guide. It would appear that, as he journeyed through life, he did indeed actualize that pledge.

¹⁰ KSMB, Ms. Lipp. oZ3, Album amicorum of Aernout van Buchell, fol. 90v. Cited, with a reproduction of the engraving, in Veldman, *Crispijn de Passe*, 179-180.

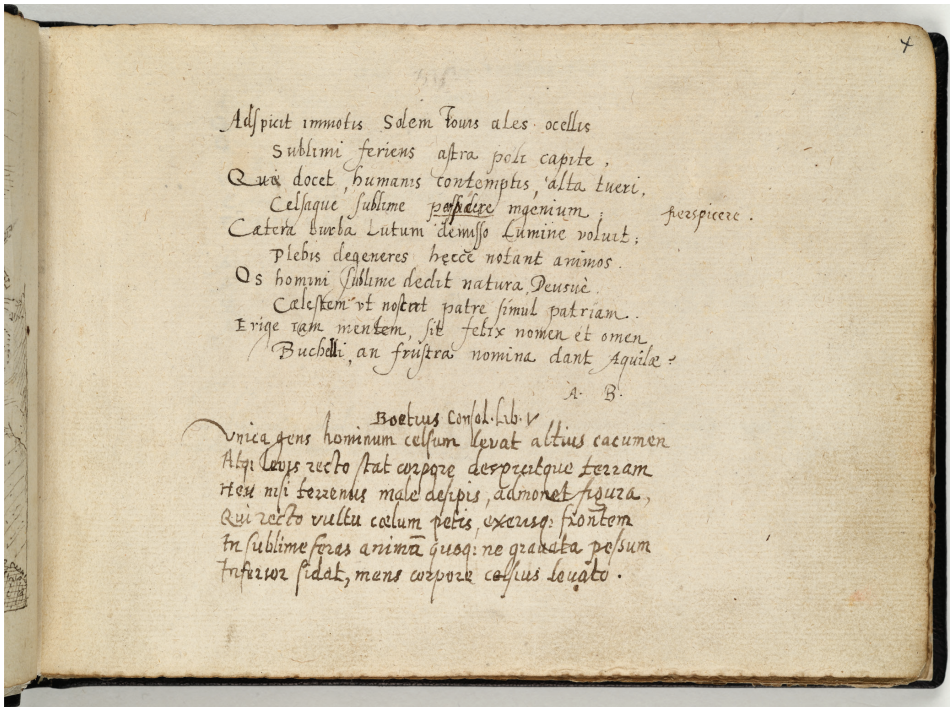


Fig. 4 Aernout van Buchell, Poem, c. 1586, pen on paper, 14,2 x 19,0 cm, in the album amicorum of Arnoldus Buchelius, Berlin, Kunstbibliothek Staatliche Museen.

The young van Buchell did not return to France or to Rome, but he maintained his interest in other cultures, as evidenced by his having re-purposed his early album. Its pages now held poems, classical quotations, and *Trachtenbilder*, or pictures of costumes worn by women. He had entered and signed a costume drawing as early as 1584, and, over the years, he entered nearly two dozen more. Occasionally, a friend, knowing van Buchell's interest or inferring it from his album, would commission an artist to do a costume picture as well. Van Buchell's album incorporates women of Brabant, Flanders, France, Greece, Macedonia, Venice, and Bologna, as well as a Jewish woman and a wild woman from Africa with loincloth and naked breasts. Van Buchell's idle album amicorum was becoming a costume book, a genre also favoured by early modern travellers. And it was also becoming a *poesiealbum*, a repository for his own and others' poems, another genre that was associated mainly with women's alba.¹¹

Van Buchell also used his album to memorialize friends who died. There are four monuments in the album, hand-drawn in the style of a Roman tomb, with inscriptions. Each is dedicated to a friend: Adam Verdun, who had travelled with him to Douai and died from tuberculosis on 16 October 1587; Henricus Duisthius from Delft, who passed away

¹¹ Reinders, *De mug en de kaars*.



Fig. 5 Contribution by Johannes de Witt in the album amicorum of Arnoldus Buchelius, 1585, pen on paper, 14,2 x 19,0 cm, Berlin, Kunstbibliothek Staatliche Museen.

in 1588; Jean Dora, who died on 1 November 1588; and Philips van Winghe, who died in Florence in October 1592.¹² The drawings were intended not only to preserve the memories of three special friends and a major scholar he had met and admired in Paris but also, like any *memento mori*, to remind anyone perusing his album – and himself – of the transience of life.

Van Buchell's Second Album Amicorum

It turned out that van Buchell had not lost interest in his first album; he had simply started a second one. In 1590, on an early page of the album now held by the University of Leiden, Abraham Bloemaert readied the album for his friend's use by drawing a winged putto holding a shield. Although the shield remained empty, it was undoubtedly intended for van Buchell's inscription, identifying the album as his (fig. 6).¹³

Van Buchell kept his second album active for nearly three decades, beginning in 1596. The result was an impressive collection of contributions from well-known learned men.

¹² KSMB, Ms. Lipp. oZ3, Album amicorum of Aernout van Buchell, fols. 8r, 10r, 27v, 46v.

¹³ Leiden, University Library (hereafter UBL), Ms. LTK 902, Album amicorum of Aernout van Buchell.



Fig. 6 Abraham Bloemaert, Putto with shield, 1590, ink on paper, 15,9 x 19,7 cm, in the album amicorum of Arnoldus Buchellius, Leiden, University Library.

In 1600, the celebrated French classicist Josephus Scaliger contributed a twelve-line poem in Latin. Others followed in 1616 and 1617, including Petrus Scriverius, a Dutch historian; Thomas Erpenius, master of eastern languages; Daniel Heinsius, a Dutch classicist, philologist, and poet; Adolfus Vorstius, a botanist and doctor of medicine; and Philippus Cluverius, a German geographer and historian. Each of the signatories in this distinguished group was well versed in the liberal arts and deeply educated in classical antiquity, each held (or would hold) a position at the University of Leiden, and each was a highly regarded scholar whose lectures and writings had a significant impact on the developing discipline of the history of ideas.

Their contributions to van Buchell's album strongly suggest that the album owner, now in his later years, was respected and admired. Vorstius, for example, entered a poem in Latin, preceded by lines in Hebrew, Arabic, and Greek. Erpenius did so as well, and added Syrian. Erpenius had formalized the study of eastern languages, particularly Arabic, at the University of Leiden. But he was doing more than showing off his own learning when he used exotic languages in van Buchell's album. Whether or not van Buchell spoke these languages, he would have recognized their inclusion as a gesture of shared learning. He would have been honoured that Erpenius counted him among those equipped to appreciate the languages of other countries and cultures. Scriverius's dedication to van Buchell also stands as an example of the esteem afforded to the Utrecht historian. Atop the sixteen-line poem entitled 'Accipe, dague fidem' ('Accept the Good Faith'), he used a string of adjectives acknowledging van Buchell's genius, his modesty, his integrity, and his learning. Clearly, van Buchell was part of the intellectual community that made the young Dutch Republic a major cultural force in early modern Europe.

In van Buchell's first album, one could trace his biography through the signatures that directly or indirectly pointed to his desire for the kind of travel that yielded new knowledge. Now, van Buchell was leading a settled life, personally and professionally. He travelled abroad occasionally – in his employment and to study antiquities – but he had clearly

emerged from the Wanderlust, the depression, and the questionable behaviours of his earlier life. The Dutch Republic continued to grow globally, even as the youthful cultural explorer now seemed content to continue his explorations from the comfort of his armchair.

From that armchair, van Buchell still made his mark. His second album hosts contributions not only from esteemed scholars but also from a host of well-regarded artists. The album-signing culture was such that if a contributor was artistic, he would almost certainly provide a pen-and-ink drawing or a watercolour painting. Those who were interested in leaving a visual souvenir but lacked artistic competence might purchase a watercolour at a picture shop and bind or paste it into the album. Anticipating the market for such ready-made pictures, de Passe engraved suites of prints: *The Four Elements*, *The Six Ages of Man*, *The Seven Virtues*, *The Twelve Months*, and others. Matthias Quad, who, like van Buchell after him, wrote the Latin verses for de Passe's engravings, was the first to recognize the commercial value of such prints: 'For it can be welcome and useful to theologians, philosophers and poets, as well as to every artist and yes, indeed, for the throng of studious young people who are in the common habit of inserting such images and delicious things in their *libri amicorum*.'¹⁴

Like many others, van Buchell was impressed with de Passe's engravings; between 1589 and 1599, he made at least three visits to de Passe's shop in Cologne. Ilja Veldman has documented van Buchell's purchases, which reflect not only the collector's interest in fine art but also his interest in the subject matter. In 1612, when de Passe moved to Utrecht and joined the artistic community there, van Buchell immediately wrote to de Witt to share the news. And when, two years later, de Passe engraved van Buchell's portrait, van Buchell was sufficiently honoured, flattered, or pleased to send a copy to de Witt and to insert the engraving into his album.¹⁵

Van Buchell, himself an amateur draftsman, knew a fair amount about art. One of his important sources of learning was de Witt, whose correspondence often offered comments on art and artists, many of whom de Witt planned to include in his *Coelum Pictorium*, his now lost catalogue of ancient and modern artists. In one letter from France, in which he spoke of his study of antiquities, de Witt registered his pleasure at the many examples he had collected. In 1612, he wrote of the magnificent royal works, the halls of antiquities, and the Parisian antiquarian Jacques de Breul, who took him on a tour of his collection, praised the sharp eyes of 'Flemish' observers, and admitted de Witt into the Society of Antiquarians. In another letter that year, he expressed admiration for Bloemaert's painting of the Nativity. In 1613, de Witt sent van Buchell copies of the program for the erection of a bronze equestrian statue of Henry IV sculpted by Giovanni da Bologna. In a letter of 1612, de Witt expressed the hope that he too could join the artistic community in Utrecht when he returned.¹⁶

Van Buchell's second album hosts the work of a number of Dutch artists, namely Abraham Bloemaert, Paulus Moreelse, Crijn Coenz. van der Maes, Pieter van Veen,

¹⁴ Cited in Veldman, *Crispijn de Passe*, 152. For the full Latin text of Matthias Quad's commentary, see Veldman, *Crispijn de Passe*, 401, n. 353.

¹⁵ For an account of the friendship between van Buchell and de Passe, see Veldman, *Crispijn de Passe*, 178-182.

¹⁶ Hulshof and Breuning (eds.), 'Brieven van Johannes de Wit', 87-208; Hulshof and Breuning (eds.), 'Zes brieven van Joh. De Wit', 60-99.

Coenraet van Schilperoort, Abraham Adam Willaerts, and Crispijn de Passe. Like Bloemaert more than twenty years earlier, Moreelse turned to the classics. In 1611, he offered a pen-and-ink drawing of Aesop's fable of the satyr and the farmer. Van der Maes drew a classical scene of the race between Hippomenes and Atalanta. The stories reflected in these drawings, along with the latter's tri-lingual inscription in Greek, Latin, and Dutch, again testify to a shared knowledge among the educated elite.¹⁷

Van Buchell's interest in art also included the contemporary. As a souvenir for his friend, van Veen placed a profile portrait of a young woman into his album, and van Schilperoort sketched a mountainous landscape, a castle at its top, with a deep valley. The most impressive and detailed of the drawings came from Willaerts: across two pages, the artist drew two ships in a sea battle, one flying the flag of Habsburg Spain with the Cross of Burgundy, the other the flag of the Prince of Orange with the lion of the Netherlands. Finally, the newest member of the Utrecht academy, de Passe, did a drawing of the Holy Family.¹⁸

Another print in van Buchell's collection might well have been the most meaningful to him. In 1611, tragedy struck van Buchell and his wife when their seventeen-year-old son Arent died. Shortly after, Simon de Passe, Crispijn's son, did a poignant engraving of a putto pointing to a skull, an hourglass behind him, a vase of cut flowers alongside. The message, as with all *memento mori*, was the folly of vanity and the transience of life.¹⁹ One wonders whether the young Arent's death may help explain why nearly half of the album's 210 pages were blank.²⁰ It would be October 1638 before the seventy-three-year-old van Buchell would add any new signatures, at which point he secured three: Philibertus and Reynoldus Tuyll and Gerrit van Reede, the latter providing a twenty-two-line poem in couplets, in Dutch.²¹

Simon's print did not find its way into van Buchell's album; rather, it joined an archive of manuscripts that tell the story of a troubled young man who managed to change the fortune he felt had been assigned to him and lead a purposeful life, only to be challenged by fate to suffer the loss of his son. It is a narrative that his *alba amicorum* extend, providing a deeply personal adjunct to the story.

Conclusion

Tucked in the album owner's pocket wherever he travelled, and at the ready when he was at home, an album has much to say about its owner. Van Buchell's *alba amicorum* were documents in early modern self-fashioning, occasioned by a revival of the ancients, an excitement over the potential of the young Dutch Republic, and a growing self-consciousness of one's

17 For the drawings of Moreelse and van der Maes, see UBL, Ms. LTK 902, Album amicorum of Aernout van Buchell, fols. 83r, 98v-99r.

18 UBL, Ms. LTK 902, Album amicorum of Aernout van Buchell, fols. 37r, 53r, 103r, 94v-95r.

19 See for a reproduction of the engraving: Veldman, *Crispijn de Passe*, 183-184.

20 A number of the empty pages did not remain empty long. Following van Buchell's death, the album came into the possession of Johann van Nellesteyn, a mayor of Utrecht, who, in 1676 and 1677, added several signatures and coats of arms. Then, in the early nineteenth century, Petrus van Musschenbroek, an Utrecht archivist, placed annotations, at times lengthy, on a number of the album's blank pages.

21 UBL, Ms. LTK 902, Album amicorum of Aernout van Buchell, fols. 24v-26r.

own identity. Always careful about who would sign his album, van Buchell would have silently assessed his contributor's status and worth and formed a judgement as to what he might say. As an album owner, he would have hoped that with each new signature the album would incrementally enhance the perception of his character, and, once complete, it would stand as a repository of tributes to him, even after he died.

Some four centuries later, however, van Buchell's alba reveal more than the triumphs and disappointments of the fifty-four years covered in their pages. Even as a young man, van Buchell was intent on reaching beyond the boundaries of his country through travel and study. As his experience broadened and his knowledge deepened, he developed a growing respect for classical history and classical moral precepts. But even in his armchair, the mature van Buchell rightly saw himself as a cultural go-between, intent on establishing contacts and friendships among humanists, artists, *literati*, and intellectuals of other nations and his own.

When van Buchell copied de Witt's sketch of the Swan into his *Adversaria*, the drawing became a permanent link between two friends, two nations, two epochs, and others yet to come. The same may be said of van Buchell's alba amicorum, which are demonstrably meaningful both within and beyond the moment. Twenty-first-century readers who examine van Buchell's alba will find in them not only the biography of a Dutchman but also a persistent subtext revealing the album owner's desire to erase the boundaries of time and place and remove the intellectual limits of his mind. When van Buchell died in 1641, at age seventy-six, his was no longer 'a mind contented with its own insignificance'.²²

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²² Cited in Pollmann, *Religious Choice*, 115; UBU, Ms. 836, van Buchell to de Witt, undated [1614-1615], fol. 192v.

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