

Found through Translation: Female Translators and the Construction of ‘Relational Authority’ in the Eighteenth-Century Dutch Republic

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Abstract

‘It is a pity that not someone like Christina Leonora de Neufville found the time to take on that work’, translator and author Elizabeth Wolff stated when she set eyes on one of the Dutch translations of Voltaire’s *Mahomet* (1741) in October 1770. Wolff’s comments on these translations provide fascinating insights into some of the underlying dynamics of the eighteenth-century Dutch literary marketplace, where translations made up an important part of the literary production. As recent studies in the field of translation studies have stressed, early modern translations seldom proved to be straightforward renditions of the original but provided eager and upcoming authors to make their claim to literary fame as the translator of more renowned authors. Translating in particular turned out to be a unique opportunity for many early modern European women writers, who often still struggled to establish their names. The case

of the Dutch Republic, with its advanced print culture and strongly internationally oriented book market, however, remains hitherto understudied.

This article examines the role translation played in the careers of three Dutch women writers by showing how they used their role as translators to establish and renegotiate their name and (literary) authority, often by interacting directly with the reputation of the translated author. We will use the concept of 'relational authority' to address the ways in which Wolff herself, as well as fellow authors Christina Leonora de Neufville and Margaretha Cambon-Van der Werken, used translation as a textual platform to convey their intellectual posture and voice. Our analysis will focus specifically on both the textual and visual dimension of their public image-building by considering how 'relational' representations appear in paratexts and portraits respectively.

Keywords: Dutch women writers, relational authority, translation, self-representation, authorship construction

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When Elizabeth Wolff (1738-1804), nowadays considered the most celebrated female novelist and translator of the eighteenth-century Low Countries, set eyes on one of the Dutch translations of Voltaire’s *Mahomet* (1741) in October 1770, she was not impressed at all. In the letter that accompanied the copy back to its owner, her good friend and Amsterdam lawyer Herman Noordkerk (1702-1771), she made no effort to hide her disappointment upon reading the translated verses of the widely celebrated Voltaire. ‘It’s a pity that not someone like Neufville has found the time to take on that work’, Wolff wrote. Indeed, the Amsterdam poetess Christina Leonora de Neufville (1714-1781) had just made a name for herself with her Dutch translation (1741) of Voltaire’s *Discours en vers sur l’homme* (1738) and her well-received translation (1738) of Paul de Morand’s tragedy *Childéric* (1736). Wolff’s critique, however, stemmed from more than her admiration for De Neufville’s work. When stating that only De Neufville or ‘someone like her, would have brought it to the scene, worthy of the original’, Wolff hinted at the superior qualities of the work produced by female translators more broadly.¹ The weight of her judgment only increases when one realises it was not the first but the fourth attempt by a male author to produce a satisfying Dutch translation of Voltaire’s controversial and already three-decades-old play.² It was not the first time either that Wolff had stressed the superiority of female translators over their male colleagues. While comparing two translations of Jean-Gaspard Dubois Fontanelle’s tragedy *Éricie ou La Vestale* (1768), one by Gerrit van Gulik and the other by Margaretha Cambon-Van der Werken (1734- after 1796), only a few weeks earlier, Wolff

¹ Buijnsters, *Briefwisseling van Betje Wolff en Aagje Deken*, 138: ‘t Is jammer dat niet een Neufville zich heeft verledigt om dat Werk op zich te nemen. Zy, zo iemand, zoude het, het Origineel waardig hebben ten tonele gevoerd.’ All references are to this edition. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are the authors’.

² Voltaire, *De dweperij*. In his preface, Schaaf mentions at least three other translations of Voltaire’s play: a translation in prose published by the Amsterdam printer Hendrik Boussiere, an unpublished translation belonging to H.W. Rechtering, and a third translation, in verse, by Anthony Hartsen, printed for the members of the Amsterdam art society *Diligentiae Omnia* months earlier. See also De Haas, ‘Vrijheid, geloof en liefde’, 162-163.

had already ruled in favour of her own sex: 'It seems as if men intend to give my sex the opportunity to show she thinks better, and chooses more wisely.'³

It appears, then, that for Wolff translating was not a trivial practice, especially with regard to some of her contemporary women writers whose translations seem to have superseded alternative versions produced by their male colleagues. As such, Wolff's observations fit in a broader discourse on the authoritative function of early modern translations and the position of female translators in particular. Recent scholarship has transformed the view of early modern translation practices from being a subsidiary act of transposing a text from one language to another to an active and often self-conscious way of taking up position in the literary field.⁴ Early modern translations seldom proved to be 'simple' renditions of the original, but, in many cases, were regarded as literary texts in their own right. The growing demand for translations in the early modern book market thus provided aspiring authors, both male and female, with the opportunity of taking their first meaningful steps into the literary world. Whereas male literati could be acclaimed translators quite apart from being recognised for the original work they produced, early modern women writers – as previous studies have demonstrated – frequently depended solely on their translating activities to showcase their literary talent.⁵ They eagerly adopted their role as translators, albeit of often less prestigious genres and languages than their male colleagues, and took 'advantage of the generic flexibility of the translator's preface to reflect on their position.'⁶ Certainly, the authorising effect of these translations depended, amongst other things, on the particular status of the source text and its writer, and translating often only allowed women to 'occupy a marginal position within the literary sphere', rather than being acknowledged as authors in their own right.⁷ Nevertheless, translating was a zone accessible to women, allowing them to gradually establish their name and, eventually, (literary) authority, usually by capitalising on the literary authority and intellectual reputation of the translated author.⁸ In this respect, Sherry Simon's study on the role of translation for women's literary careers in different periods is crucial in its reflection on translation 'as an intensely *relational* act:

3 Buijnsters, *Briefwisseling van Betje Wolff en Aagje Deken*, 130: 't is of de mannen het erop toelagen om myne Seks de occasie te geeven van te toonen dat zy beter denkt, & verstandiger weet te kiezen'. The referenced translations are Dubois-Fontanelle, *Ericia of De Vestaelsche maegd*, and Dubois-Fontanelle, *Ericia of De Vestaale*. For a contemporary comparison between the two translations, see *Vaderlandsche letteroefeningen*, 554-557. Whether Wolff herself had already laid eyes on Van der Werken's version is unknown, which makes it all the more remarkable that she seized the occasion to comment on the lack of quality and appeal of translations produced by male literati.

4 See, for example, Cohen and Dever, *The Literary Channel*; McMurrin, *The Spread of Novels*. For references on the increased focus on translator's agency in literary history, see Delisle's and Woodsworth's seminal work *Translators through history*, with Emilie du Châtelet, translator of Newton, on the cover.

5 Hayes, 'Gender, Signature, Authority', 142-144; Agorni, 'A marginalized perspective', 819. See also Von Flotow, *Translation and Gender*; Simon, *Gender in Translation*; Vanacker, 'The Gender of Pseudotranslation'.

6 Hayes, 'Gender, Signature, Authority', 142-144.

7 Agorni, 'A marginalized perspective', 820.

8 See for instance Dow, 'Translation, cross-channel exchanges and the novel'; Van Dijk, Fidecaro, Partzsch, and Cossy, *Femmes écrivains*, and Simon's analysis of Aphra Behn in Simon, *Gender in Translation*. On the German perspective, see, amongst others, the *Women and translation in Early Modern Germany* project, led by Hilary Brown at University of Birmingham; Wehinger and Brown, *Übersetzungskultur im 18. Jahrhundert*; Piper, 'The making of transnational textual communities'.

one which establishes connections between text and culture, between author and reader'.⁹ This relational perspective is further developed in Julie Candler Hayes' analysis of eighteenth-century British and French female translators, which applies the concept of a 'middle voice' (as distinct from both active and passive voice) to define translation as a 'stimulating and creative environment' that allowed for 'forms of authorial agency within translation'.¹⁰

Recent scholarly attention for the ways early modern women writers used translations to position themselves in the literary field has predominantly focused on the large-scale European book markets of England, France, and Germany, leaving the interesting case of relatively small-scale vernacular markets, including the Dutch Republic, largely unexplored. Wolff's comments on Dutch translations of Voltaire already provide insight into some of the dynamics and challenges of the eighteenth-century Dutch literary marketplace which – however vibrant – clearly had its limitations. As such, it provided authors with little opportunity to publish their (more expensive) original works, which could result in fierce competition when it came to translating the international bestsellers.¹¹ Indeed, bibliographical research based on the Short Title Catalogue of the Netherlands (STCN) shows that one out of five publications printed in the Dutch Republic was actually a translation or an adaptation. And the number increases radically where literary genres – such as novels and plays – are concerned, since it appears that over 40 percent of these texts were not originally written in Dutch.¹² This dominance of literary translations on the Dutch book market has not, however, inspired literary scholars to thoroughly analyse the impact of translating on the reputation building of Dutch women writers.

In this article, we will explore forms and functions of female translation strategies in the Dutch Republic by showing how the three aforementioned translators – Christina Leonora de Neufville, Margareta de Cambon-Van der Werken, and Elizabeth Wolff – used what we describe as 'relational authority' in crafting their role as translators to establish their own literary authority. These three authors are of special interest because they were active as translators during the same period, and because of the connections between their literary activities, as referred to in Wolff's correspondence. In our analysis we will examine the ways they actively incorporated their role as translators in their public image – both textual and visual. In particular, we will focus on their (self-)representation in paratexts and portraits.

Relational Authority and the Construction of Literary Authorship

This article's central concept of *authority* builds on scholarship on (self-)representation and constructions of literary authorship.¹³ It is particularly apt at addressing the multimedia self-representation and authorial positioning played out in some of the paratexts

9 Simon, *Gender in translation*, 79 (emphasis in original).

10 Hayes, 'Gender, Signature, Authority', 142-144.

11 Johannes, 'Development of the Literary Field'; Johannes, *De lof der aalbessen*.

12 Leemans and Johannes, *Worm en donder*, 103-104, 294; Nieuweboer, 'De populariteit van het verhalend proza'. See also, Korpel, *Over het nut en de wijze der vertalingen*.

13 For theoretical sources on authorial (self-)representation, see esp. Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*; Meizoz, *Postures littéraires*. In recent years, literary scholars have also addressed the historical and conceptual

and portraits.¹⁴ By using authority as a central concept, the issue of authorship also becomes more directly related to other forms of recognition (social, ideological, and political) that were at stake in the Republic of Letters, that supranational society of learned men and women, during the Enlightenment.¹⁵ Furthermore, ‘authority’ implies ‘relational’ ties, not just through the authoritative power an ‘agent’ can yield over other players in the field, but also because authority itself is mostly established ‘interactively’.¹⁶ As such, it can be seen as a ‘credit contributed by a group of agents whose relational ties are made all the more relevant by the fact that they have more credit themselves’.¹⁷

Likewise, in literature, transmission of authority often takes the form of a horizontal network. Even if an author’s capacity to affirm authority and establish a position as an author is in many ways self-representational and self-affirmative, this process is shaped in relation to (images bestowed upon) the actors (writers, correspondents, social contacts) with whom (s)he interacts. Apart from being relational, authorial self-representation is thus also a dynamic and complex process. Self-representations are reshaped over time, not in the least because gradual recognition of one’s own authority often entails a remodelling of relations with other agents. In the case of female authors, the transcultural and international nature of these networks appears to have been both particularly effective and complex.¹⁸

In this respect, translations are – by definition – effective platforms for the negotiation of authority, especially when preceded by an elaborate paratext, which serves, among other things, to establish authoritative networks between the different agents involved (the author and translator respectively). In the eighteenth century, where translations (*belles infidèles*) were often still adaptations, or at least free renditions, rather than faithful copies of the original, they provided emergent authors with a discursive space where they could capitalise on the cultural, intellectual, or literary authority of the author and their original text in order to legitimise themselves, while also affirming their creativity as a translator.¹⁹ In the case of Wolff, Van der Werken, and De Neufville’s translations, the relational patterns laid out in their portraits and poses also show how all three authors negotiated between national recognition on the one hand, and reference to internationally acclaimed authorities on the other.

link between authorship and authority: Bouju, *L'autorité en littérature*; Donovan, Fjellestad, and Lundén, *Authority Matters*.

14 Donovan, Fjellestad, and Lundén, *Authority matters*, 2-3.

15 For France, see Herman, Kozul, and Kremer, *Le roman véritable*; for England, see Davis, *Factual Fictions*. For a volume dealing with both French and English women writers: Lanser, *Fictions of Authority*.

16 Bourdieu, ‘La production de la croyance’. On authority more generally, see Cléro, *Qu'est-ce que l'autorité?*; Kojève, *La notion de l'autorité*, 58; Lanser, *Fictions of authority*, 6.

17 Bourdieu, ‘La production de la croyance’, 7: ‘L'autorité n'est autre chose qu'un "crédit" auprès d'un ensemble d'agents qui constituent des "relations" d'autant plus précieuses qu'ils sont eux-mêmes mieux pourvus de crédit.’

18 For an introduction on strategies of diachronic and mimetic authority construction by female intellectuals in the early modern period, see Trotot, ‘Women’s portraits of the self’.

19 It would be interesting to address the performative function of paratexts for female translations from a diachronic perspective in order to bring out some of the consistencies. See also von Flotow, *Translation and Gender*, 35.

In the eighteenth century, moreover, discursive self-representation was increasingly intertwined with visual forms of authorial self-representation, which responded to similar relational dynamics. The disciplinary intertwining between visual and discursive forms of (authorial) self-representation is addressed most convincingly by Caroline Trotot. She refers to a historically embedded connection between arts and literature since at least the seventeenth century, as ‘relations among the arts were marked by the influence of the analogy *ut pictura poesis*’, leading to ‘many reciprocal creative exchanges and a metaphorically unified collective imagination’.²⁰ Especially from the 1650s onwards, a writer’s face became an increasingly important feature of authorship, resulting in a fast-growing demand for printed portraits – both to be included in books and collected separately.²¹ This presented women writers, who increasingly participated in the literary field and slowly but surely started to publish their works individually, with the challenge of also presenting their physical image to the public.²² Publishing portraits proved an obstacle in a woman writer’s process of public self-display: if speaking and writing were already considered challenges to the prescriptive definition of modest female behaviour, circulating a picture of one’s person could seem even more scandalous. Illustrative in this regard are the reactions on the first printed self-portrait by the young and aspiring intellectual and author Anna Maria van Schurman (1607-1678). Her portrait became the topic of a poetic duel in which two of the most renowned scholars of the Dutch Republic, Constantijn Huygens (1596-1687) and Caspar Barlaeus (1584-1648), competed in erotically charged verses for the hand of Van Schurman.²³

Despite this continued tension between the demand for author portraits on the one hand, and women’s restricted possibilities for visual self-representation in the public sphere on the other, in the course of the eighteenth century a growing number of Dutch women writers started to use author portraits as vehicles for public image-building.²⁴ It became common to depict women writers in their libraries, often in the act of writing and surrounded by meaningful iconographical elements such as pens, books, and instruments to stress their literary authority. Several women writers also included their position as translator in their visual *persona* by incorporating references to admired international authors and their books. In doing so, they directly linked their physical, individual, and undeniably female self to the literary and intellectual authority of those who were often internationally renowned male authors.

Our focus on paratexts and portraits thus allows for a reassessment of the process of relational authority and is based on a decidedly cross-cultural and interdisciplinary perspective. Our preliminary research on eighteenth-century Dutch authors and translators

20 Trotot, ‘Women’s portraits of the self’, 3.

21 Griffiths, *The Print in Stuart Britain*; Burke, ‘Reflections on the Frontispiece Portrait’, 150-162; Smith and Wilson, *Renaissance Paratexts*; Antoine Lilti, *The invention of celebrity*, 14-23.

22 Ezell, ‘Seventeenth-Century Female Author Portrait’, 31-45; Simonin, ‘Les portraits de femmes auteurs’, 35-37; Van Deinsen and Geerdink, ‘Cultural Branding in the Early Modern Period’.

23 Van der Stighelen and De Landtsheer, ‘Een suer-soete Maeghd voor Constantijn Huygens’, 149-202.

24 See Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, *Met en zonder lauwerkrans*. Van Deinsen’s ongoing nwo Rubicon project *Female Faces, Intellectual Identities. Author portraits and the shaping of female intellectual authority, 1650-1800* (2018-2020) aims to provide the first systematic inquiry into the matter.

indeed reveals a whole array of strategies and poses which confirm that (relational) author-ity was in many cases ‘moulded’ through a combination of self-portraits, both visual and textual. Our comparative approach, then, allows to illustrate how (para)texts and portraits represent different yet often complementary dimensions of the same self-representational process.

Paratexts: Positioning the Translator

Elizabeth Wolff, as P.J. Buijnsters has already pointed out, was an avid translator, and she considered these works to be an important part of her oeuvre.²⁵ As for Van der Werken and, especially, De Neufville, they were often referred to as translators and/or imitators of Shakespeare, Richardson, and Voltaire by contemporaries, but they were certainly given (some) authorial credit. This can be explained by the prevalent translation norms and practices of the time, which allowed translators to take liberties with the source text. We should also note that in all three cases translation and original writing were, at first, concomitant activities. Wolff, for instance, never ceased to translate French, English, and later on German novels after she had gained recognition as a novelist herself. Researchers have already pointed out that the reason for this was partly economic, as Wolff was struck by financial woes in the later stages of her career.²⁶ Van der Werken also turned to (re)translating at the end of her career and, interestingly, was wrongly accredited as the author of *Maria en Carolina* (1800), which was in fact an (indirect) translation of Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Original Stories from real Life* (1788) into Dutch.²⁷ Her name (‘mevrouw de Cambon, geboren Van der Werken’) is clearly visible on the title page and she is referred to as the ‘famous’ author (‘geschreeven door de zich beroemd gemaakt hebbende mevrouw de Cambon’) in the *allographic* preface (‘Voorbericht’).

Upon closer inspection of the paratexts, it appears that on the title pages of the respective translations the translator’s visibility varies from a subservient visual presence to a consecrated authorial portrait. On the title page of the Dutch translation of *Adele en Theodoor* (1782), Elizabeth Wolff is mentioned as the translator, but the emphasis lies on Madame de Genlis, whose literary status as the original author is strategically connected with her social status as a countess (‘mevrouw de Gravin de Genlis’). Nevertheless, Wolff’s creative – and critical – contribution as a translator is hinted at, since the title page clearly affirms that she added ‘comments’ (‘Aanmerkingen’) to the original. As for De Neufville’s 1738 translation of de Morand’s play *Childéric* (1736), the title page does not refer to her

²⁵ See Buijnsters, ‘Betje Wolff als vertaalster’, 219-230; Van Strien-Chardonneau, ‘Betje Wolff’, 489-500. Both authors mention no less than 23 translations. Buijnsters adds that in all but four cases, Wolff’s name was mentioned on the title page.

²⁶ See for example Van Dijk, ‘La préface comme lieu de rencontre’, 393. See also Buijnsters, ‘Betje Wolff als vertaalster’, 225.

²⁷ The authors wish to thank Feike Dietz, who first drew our attention to this Dutch work by Van der Werken and identified it as a translation of Wollstonecraft. The Dutch version might have been translated from the French, *Marie et Caroline, ou Entretien d’une Institutrice avec ses Elèves*, translated in 1799 by Antoine Lallemand.

as the translator, though she does come to the fore as translator in a long dedication on the following page, which emphasises both her admiration for the original and an overview of some adjustments that she deemed it necessary to make. More discernible mechanisms of self-authorisation are at play in the case of De Neufville's *Bespiegelingen voorgesteld in dichtmaatige brieven* (1741) and Van der Werken's translation of Beaumarchais's famous play *Het Huwelijk van Figaro* (1786).²⁸ In both cases, the translators are clearly mentioned on the title page, with no reference being made to their specific role. If this is all the more surprising in the latter case, given Van der Werken's faithful rendering of the source text, the play's international notoriety probably made any allusion to its cultural origins redundant.

When examining the prefatory texts (and, occasionally, afterword) more closely, then, some parallels catch the eye. Firstly, one cannot help but notice that De Neufville (in her preface and notes to the second edition of *Bespiegelingen*), Van der Werken (for example in her afterword of *Hamlet*)²⁹, and Wolff (in almost all her paratexts) all show their knowledge of the intellectual and cultural debate of their time, whether by inserting critical comments on the role and nature of the *belles lettres* or through referencing. These women thus seemed to align their Dutch versions with an (inter)textually construed Republic of Letters, through which personal authority was conferred. As was the case for de Neufville and Van der Werken, the international network laid out in Betje Wolff's paratexts (and her letters) attests to what can be defined as an 'imaginary' network of references whose work she read, admired (or rejected), and sometimes even chose to translate, transmit, or even imitate in some form. Her letters, however, were mostly addressed to members of the Dutch-speaking Republic. Their assertions thus create a solid discursive network that displays their international connectivity and legitimises their own participation in the cultural domain, as translators but also as intellectuals in general. Secondly, and more importantly, they do not comment from the side-lines, as would befit the subordinate role of translator, but rather take on an intensely dialogical and dialectical stance as part of their self-representational process.

This is perhaps best illustrated by Elizabeth Wolff's preface to her translation of Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* in *Lier- veld- en mengelzangen* (1772). First, it should be noted that the preface is in fact a reproduction of a letter she previously wrote to her friend Charlotte Schippers. In this letter, she defended her choice of translating the original into prose, instead of maintaining the more acclaimed verse form. To this effect, she not only adopts the typical *excusatio propter infirmitatem* stance by claiming that she is incapable of providing a proper verse translation, but also compares her own approach both to that of her fellow translators and to the theoretical stance of internationally renowned authors and critics.³⁰ In critically examining her skills as a translator, she refers to Christina Leonora de Neufville's exemplary attention to the translation of verse form.³¹ This emphatic reference to De Neufville also allows her to highlight her own creativity and independence as

28 Cambon-van der Werken, *Het Huwelijk van Figaro*.

29 Cambon-van der Werken, *Hamlet*.

30 Wolff-Bekker, *Lier-Veld-en Mengelzangen*, 165.

31 Wolff-Bekker, *Lier-Veld-en Mengelzangen*, 165.

a translator, in opposition to the ‘cool timidity’ required for translations.³² At the same time, she continuously positions her own authorship in relation to that of acclaimed *literati*, such as Voltaire, d’Alembert, Racine and, of course, Pope himself. In this specific paragraph, she draws on the opinions promoted by the *Encyclopédiste* d’Alembert and the aesthetic authority of the *abbé* Du Bos to articulate her own ideas. While she does not agree with d’Alembert when he criticises prose translations, she finds confirmation of her own opinion on the subject in the *abbé* Du Bos’s comparison between the aesthetic quality and pleasure to be found in the prose translation of a poem and that of a drawing based on a painting: ‘The colour is lost; but the master’s style, hand, and ordonnance are still visible.’³³ As such, this preface provides a telling example of how a woman novelist and translator in search of recognition could spin a web of references to other authors and translators – and their respective views on authorship and ‘translatorship’ – to further define her own position within the Republic of Letters.³⁴ Wolff’s self-deprecating assessment of her skills as a translator of poetry is interspersed with quotations from texts written by a myriad of authoritative voices (not just d’Alembert and Du Bos, but also Plato and Corneille), a rhetorical move that asserts her erudition. Even when she evaluates her own literary talent against that of others, self-deprecation and self-assertion go hand in hand. As Caroline Trotot rightly argues, self-depiction in the eighteenth century involved ‘finding a balance between resemblance and difference, between the collective and the individual’.³⁵ Likewise, Wolff demonstrates an acute awareness of other Dutch female authors and translators’ voices, again often by way of comparison. Yet while she refers to De Neufville as an alternative poetical voice, whose exceptional ‘respectability’ and ‘orderliness’ she greatly admires, the emphasis Wolff places on a more creative and emotionally-based approach clearly serves to foreground her own writerly posture.³⁶

In the preface to the second edition of *Bespiegelingen voorgesteld in dichtmaatige brieven* (1762), De Neufville oscillates between the subservient role of the translator, that of the cultural mediator concerned with transmitting her predecessor’s knowledge, and that of an intellectual in her own right, adding her critical voice to the philosophical debate. In the original ‘Voorbericht’, she constructs a rather modest stance when she acknowledges the struggle to emulate the great ideas of an exceptional author such as Voltaire. Allegedly, her own contribution is to be found in style and form, rather than content.³⁷ In the following, however, she acknowledges having already added some ideas of her own to the first edition, despite her inexperience, while in the footnote she also hints at the emancipation process underpinning this new edition. As we read in the editorial note, the second edition not only led her to further incorporate her own ideas in a critical dialogue with Voltaire, but also to complement his letters with those of her own invention.³⁸ She fully displays this

32 Wolff-Bekker, *Lier-Veld-en Mengelzangen*, 165, 167: ‘of onze Imaginatie wordt koud’.

33 Wolff-Bekker, *Lier-Veld-en Mengelzangen*, 165: ‘t Koloriet, zegt hij, is ’er uit; doch de manier, de hand, en de ordinantie des meesters zijn ’er in te zien.’

34 Bots and Waquet, *La République des lettres*.

35 Trotot, ‘Women’s portraits of the self’, 11.

36 Wolff-Bekker, *Lier-Veld-en Mengelzangen*, 167.

37 De Neufville, *Bespiegelingen voorgesteld in dichtmaatige brieven*, *2v. Note that the first edition is not extant.

38 De Neufville, *Bespiegelingen voorgesteld in dichtmaatige brieven*, *2r.

invention in the 'Bericht voor den tegenwoordigen Druk'. Rather than being concerned with a faithful rendering of Voltaire, she emphasises that she felt obliged to contradict the original in some places, claiming that it is more important to her to prevent careless readers from mistaking her rendition for inconsistency.³⁹ The association with Voltaire remains functional, however, in that she admits that her letters might lose their appeal ('min[der] lezenswaardig mocht keuren') if published separately.

The intricate process of negotiation between a more authorial and translative stance is thus, at least partially, based on a dynamic of relational authority. This idea gains further credence when we look at the vehement position adopted by Van der Werken in her afterword to the second edition of her Dutch rendition of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. In her critical response to reviewers of the Dutch journal *Vaderlandsche letteroefeningen*, she at first explicitly disavows her writerly responsibility towards the piece, claiming that, though '[she] d[id] not have the luck to call *Hamlet* [her] own', she nevertheless had taken 'great pleasure' in closely following both Shakespeare's original and Jean-François Ducis's French rewriting of the play.⁴⁰ What follows is Van der Werken's own engaged reading of the moral depiction of the main characters, during which she gradually regains a more authoritative stance, until, towards the end of the afterword, she begins to identify with the characters, claiming to have spoken 'on behalf of the characters of my free translation'.⁴¹ Finally, she also refutes the reviewers' attempts at criticising, and therefore disempowering her work by emphatically giving credit to other players in the field instead, such as dramatists.⁴² Again, a parallel is to be drawn between De Neufville and Van der Werken, who both chose to focus on the (popular) readers' response in order to counter literary criticism.

One finds, then, that these paratexts provided women writers with a dynamic manoeuvring space, allowing them to engage with the voices and opinions of different actors of the literary scene, whether they be male or female, Dutch or more broadly European. These dynamics become all the more apparent when considered on an intertextual level, not just between the paratexts of several authors, but also within the oeuvre of one and the same author. These show the constant need these women felt to reposition themselves as authors, intellectuals, and participants of the pan-European cultural domain. Even if this is the case for all three authors of our selected corpus, Wolff's oeuvre stands out, not only because of her important production, status, and ongoing conflicts with literary critics, but also because of the particularly dense and dynamic network underpinning her authorial self-representation – a network which, on several occasions, is shaped in reference to the French author and educator Stéphanie Félicité, Countess of Genlis.⁴³

39 De Neufville, *Bespiegelingen voorgesteld in dichtmaatige brieven*, *2r.

40 Van der Werken, *Hamlet*, 'Nareden', 1: 'Ik hebbe het geluk niet Hamlet mijn te heeten.'

41 Van der Werken, *Hamlet*, 'Nareden', 7: 'wegens de karakters van mijn vryë vertaling gezegd hebbe'.

42 Van der Werken, *Hamlet*, 'Nareden', 8.

43 Several scholars already pointed out that Wolff actually used the paratextual space to comment on her own work and its domestic critical reception, rather than that of the translator: Buijnsters, 'Betje Wolff als vertaalster', 221; Van Dijk, 'La préface comme lieu de rencontre', 396. They have not, however, used our theoretical framework to address the intertextual and relational nature of this self-representational process throughout Wolff's oeuvre, in relation to contemporary female Dutch authors.

In her preface to *Adèle et Théodore*, for instance, Wolff happily capitalises on the French author's literary reputation and social status, which – on a discursive level – is reflected by the epistolary *scénographie* of the paratext that brings about a traditional unidirectional author-translator relationship. In a letter that was presumably never sent, Wolff solicits Genlis's approval, thereby adopting a clearly self-deprecating position that stands in sharp contrast to the French author's more celebrated position in the Republic of Letters. At the same time, she uses the intimate setting of the epistolary mode to develop an imaginary dialogue with Genlis, in which the latter becomes the pretext for Wolff's self-representational process. 'Who is the translator of my work?', Genlis supposedly asks, to which Wolff replies, with an explicit reference to Montaigne's *Essais*: 'It is difficult to speak of oneself, followed by 'I make books, Madam, and I write simple verses rather well'.⁴⁴ A few paragraphs below, however, Wolff abandons her initially subservient role when she admits to having annotated the text, thereby displaying her intellectual autonomy. What is more, by using the plural possessive pronoun, Wolff subtly replaces the dialectic stance with a sentimental association with Genlis, when she states that '*our* objective is to be read'.⁴⁵ It then becomes clear that the relational authority she seeks to establish is not only based on her role as a translator, but also clearly activates an authorial posture on which she draws in later prefaces. Before returning to Genlis, however, Wolff first translated another novel, *Fanny Spingler, ou les dangers de la calomnie* (1781), written by the fairly unknown author Madame Beccari, who herself wrote French novels in the English fashion.⁴⁶ Wolff uses this context of pseudo-English fiction and cultural transfer to insert a programmatic essay on novel writing in the paratext to *Fanny Spingler*, in which she clearly takes a more authorial and authoritative stance than in previous translations. Here, Wolff intersperses her argument with references to internationally renowned English authors, such as Richardson and Fielding. Although she also refers to the seventeenth-century author Madeleine de Scudéry, she is evidently inspired by the general aesthetic debate on fictional discourse as it was developed and circulated in the Republic of Letters at that time.

Yet the paratexts preceding her two last translations of Genlis (*De Kleine La Bruyère*, 1800 and *De twee moeders, of de laster*, 1801 – *Les mères rivales, ou la calomnie*) indicate a significant shift and put the dynamics of authorship construction in a different light once again. Instead of solely drawing on Genlis's literary reputation, Elizabeth Wolff – who by then has established a reputation of her own – incessantly refers to the public debate on the former's questionable moral authority and political profile. While Wolff reflects on the intricate pathways and pitfalls of female authorship which, she confirms, is far more susceptible to public scrutiny and criticism than that of men, she does some manoeuvring of her own. By painting a vivid portrait of this vilifying discourse and its effect on Genlis's position within the literary marketplace, Wolff carefully distances herself

44 Genlis, *Adele en Theodoor*, iv: 'wie is toch de vertaalster mijner Werken?'; 't is moeilijk van zich zelfs te spreken'; 'ik maak boeken, Mevrouw, en taamlijk goed slecht V[a]erzen'.

45 Genlis, *Adele en Theodoor*, v: 'ons Oogmerk is gelezen te worden'. Van Dijk, 'La préface comme lieu de rencontre', 392, also notes that the prefatory letter showed a surprising tension between the desire to get in touch and the claim to her own identity.

46 Beccari, *De Gevaaren van den Laster*.

from Genlis – especially from her status within high society – while also establishing her own reputation as an author and intellectual, one who can in turn manifest the authority required to publicly defend the aesthetic qualities of Genlis's work.

If anything, these paratexts reveal a careful and continuous shaping of authorial postures, which are not only dynamic but also in many ways relational. What comes to the fore, moreover, is an intricate manoeuvring space in which institutional, intertextual, and intermedial forms of association and disentanglement are redesigned and rewritten in the process.

Visualising Relational Authority: Portraying the Translator

The importance of relational authority in the process of image-making for female authors becomes clear once more when we examine how they chose to represent themselves visually. Elizabeth Wolff, for example, reflected extensively on the subject. She uses the opening poem in her collection *Lier- Veld- en Mengelzangen* to scrutinise the portraits made of her over the years.⁴⁷ In the opening lines, she apologises to her readers for not including an engraved portrait in the edition, instead presenting her audience with a detailed and chronological account of the portraits made of her throughout the years. Despite the efforts of several portraitists, such as Joseph Marinkelle (1732-1782), Daniël Bruyninx (1724-1787), and Johannes Mertens (1742-1823), Wolff's vivacious appearance was never immortalised to her satisfaction. As far as Wolff was concerned, a successful portrait was very much a replica of reality. Although these efforts did not please Wolff, she remained actively involved in modelling her visual *persona* throughout her life.

One portrait that is particularly interesting with regard to her role as a translator is a drawing in Chinese ink, now lost, that shows Wolff as a young woman holding a copy of Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man* in an English edition (fig. 1).⁴⁸ For a long time it was assumed that this portrait dates from around 1754, as it represents the then only sixteen-year-old Elizabeth as an up-and-coming *savante* and a learned woman, years before her literary debut.⁴⁹ Yet this dating is in all probability a subjective guess based on the poet's physical appearance in the portrait. More likely, the portrait was created years later by the Dutch painter Tako Hajo Jelgersma (1702-1795), during the early days of Wolff's

47 The importance of the topic for Wolff was stressed again when she published her *Mengel-poezy*: it included an extended version of the poem in which she elaborated on two other portraits made of her. See Wolff-Bekker, *Mengel-poëzy*, 164-170.

48 At the turn of the twentieth century the portrait was owned by Pieter Molenaar, a bookseller in Zwolle, and included in J. Dyserinck's edition of the letters of Wolff and Deken (1904). After Molenaar's death in 1905 the portrait went missing. A photograph of the portrait still exists at RKD – Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis in The Hague.

49 See for this dating: Dyserinck, *Brieven van Betje Wolff en Aagtje Deken*, xvii-xviii; Buijnsters, *Bibliografie der geschriften*, no. 628; Romein, *Erfaters van onze beschaving*, 520; Meijer, *Literature of the Low Countries*, 174; Koch, 'Geluk, geld, geloof', 188, fig. 1.



Fig. 1 Tako Hajo Jelgersma (attributed to), Portrait of the young Elizabeth Wolff holding a copy of Pope's *Essay on Man*, c. 1765, drawing on paper, current location unknown, photographic reproduction in *The Hague, RKD – Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis*.

literary career.⁵⁰ In this light, the demonstrative holding of Pope's work takes on a different meaning and can be interpreted as a conscious effort on the part of the young and highly ambitious Wolff to seek relational authority with the admired poet who would accompany her first steps into the literary world. As mentioned above, the originals she rendered into

⁵⁰ The ring on her right ring finger, for example, could very well be the wedding ring from her 1758 marriage: Te Rijdt, 'Tako Hajo Jelgersma', 27-36, fig. 3. An additional argument can be found in the aforementioned poem in *Lier- veld- en mengelzangen* (1773). In the poem, Wolff presents a chronological overview of the portraits that were made of her. The portrait by Jelgersma is second in line and succeeds Joseph Marinkelle's – now lost – attempt to capture the young woman. Marinkelle, a relatively late bloomer, only became actively known as a portraitist in the late 1750s and early 1760s. In addition, Jelgersma only worked nearby Wolff after 1757, when he moved from Harlingen to Haarlem.



Fig. 2 Hendrik Roosing (after Hieronymus Lapis), Portrait of Margareta Geertruid van der Werken, c. 1790, etching and engraving, 23,2 × 17,5 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

Dutch were primarily English and French works. In addition, her first original poems were openly inspired by Pope and covered rational discussions on a number of general topics such as mankind, religion, virtue, freedom, and tolerance, all the while mimicking his lyrical and satirical style. This direct association with Pope would prove a constant inspiration throughout her career. In 1772 she published a Dutch translation of his mock-epic *The Rape of the Lock*, the paratext of which was analysed above. It would take until 1783 before she ventured to translate Pope's admired *Essay on Man* into Dutch (*Proeve over den mensch, zedelyke proeven, en oordeelkunde, uit het Engelsch*).

Relational authority was also at play in the case of Margaretha Cambon-Van der Werken's author portrait, produced around 1790 and included in her pedagogic novel (fig. 2). The engraving captures Van der Werken in the act of writing. Seated at a desk, quill and ink at the ready, she gives her readers a serious stare while they in turn watch her commit the title of her latest novel to paper. This title, *De Kleine Klarissa* (*Young*

Clarissa), is clearly visible and most certainly meant something to her reading public. The title alludes to the popular epistolary novel *Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady*, which was published in 1747-1748 by Samuel Richardson and was translated into Dutch by the Mennonite minister Johannes Stinstra only four years later.⁵¹ It was not the first time Van der Werken used relational authority with the established English novelist in the process of constructing value for her works. Van der Werken's most successful publication until that moment, the epistolary novel *De kleine Grandisson of de gehoorzame zoon* (1782) (*The Little Grandisson, or the Obedient Child*), follows – at least through its title – in the footsteps of Richardson's *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753-1754). Again, Richardson's novel was highly successful in the Dutch Republic by the time Van der Werken made the reference. The formal and thematic specificities surrounding the intertextual connection that exists between Van der Werken's work and Richardson's have been the subject of debate.⁵² The clear and intended relation between the two titles, however, was never doubted. In the introduction to her novel, Van der Werken elaborates on the subject herself, stressing that she could not think of a 'better title than *De Kleine Grandisson* for there are few households, where that name does not already ring a bell'.⁵³ She writes that 'Richardson has written his *Grandisson* to improve Mankind. I have tried to follow his footsteps from afar, to provide the children a virtuous model.'⁵⁴ Although Van der Werken creates her own stories for both *Grandison* and *Klarissa* (a fact for which she would eventually receive due credit), she initially sought to establish relational authority with Richardson in order to guarantee her pedagogic novels a readership. The author portrait produced for her *Klarissa* encapsulates this strategy. The portrait displays the chosen title, and thereby activates the association with Richardson. Meanwhile, it is through this same portrait that Van der Werken establishes a physical presence that is entirely her own and which allows her to claim authority over her words.

Sometimes the process of referential authority was not literally included in the portrait itself, but established by contemporaries who commented upon it. In a sense, this portrait audience would end up creating a 'literary' portrait to accompany the painted one. This was the case with Christina Leonora de Neufville. As already mentioned, she consolidated her claim as author with the publication of *Bespiegelingen* (1741). It was indeed this publication that earned De Neufville her place in the *Panpoëticon Batavûm* (which may be translated as 'all the Dutch poets'), a collector's cabinet of eighteenth-century author portraits that included the major figures of the Dutch literary canon of the time.⁵⁵ Over

51 Richardson, *Clarissa*. On the translation, reception, and popularity of Richardson's *Clarissa*, see Mattheij, 'De ontvangst van Richardson in Nederland'.

52 See for example Tigges-Drewes and Groot, 'Een eeuw kleine Grandisson'.

53 Cambon-van der Werken, *De kleine Grandisson*, vii: 'Denkbeeldig voorbeeld meende ik niet beter te kunnen schetsen dan onder den Tytel van De Kleine Grandisson, voorzeker houdende, dat 'er weinige Huishoudens zyn, waar in die naam niet reeds by der kinderen in achtung is gebragt.'

54 Cambon-van der Werken, *De kleine Grandisson*, viii: 'Heeft Richardson zynen Grandisson geschreeven, ter verbetering van 't Menschdom; ik trachtte van verre zyn voetspoor na te treden, om den Kinderen een voorbeeld tot deughtmin voortestellen.'

55 Van Deinsen, *The Panpoëticon Batavûm*.



Fig. 3 Nicolaas Verkolje, Portrait of Christina Leonora de Neufville, c. 1743, oil on copper, 11 × 9,5 cm, Graz, Universalmuseum Joanneum, Alte Galerie.

the course of the eighteenth century, hundreds of literature lovers visited the cabinet, and many of them articulated their strong reactions at beholding this tangible depiction of Dutch literature.

Shortly after *Bespiegelingen* appeared, the Amsterdam painter Nicolaas Verkolje was commissioned to paint De Neufville's portrait from life for this collection (fig. 3).⁵⁶ The portrait shows a fashionably dressed De Neufville in her study during the writing process: she holds her writing utensils gracefully between the thumb and forefinger of her right hand while looking thoughtfully over her left shoulder. The installation of her likeness in the cabinet was praised by Pieter Boddaert (1694-1760), who stressed the relational authority between the woman portrayed and the author she translated, directly linking his reputation to hers:

Thus did Verkolje's hand capture Neufville in paint,
That clever maiden, the jewel of the world city on the Y,
To give new lustre to the Panpoëticon.

56 See also van Deinsen, 'The Face of the Female Voltaire'.

Voltaire's poetry, followed by her in Dutch verse,
Shows that her art does not yield to his:
Her fame too shall live as long as the Frenchman's.⁵⁷

The portraits discussed here of Wolff, Van der Werken, and De Neufville each captured the dynamics of relational authority between the Dutch writer portrayed and the internationally renowned author they associated themselves with in their own way, and made this association legible to the general reading public. By incorporating this association into the artwork itself, these portraits add another layer of complexity to the process of authorial image building.

Conclusion

In the second half of the eighteenth century, a number of Dutch women writers cleverly turned the high demand for translations on the Dutch literary market to their advantage. Translation not only offered them the rare chance to publish in the limited market that existed for books in the Dutch language; it also provided them with a platform to negotiate their literary status in order to claim relational authority with the translated author, and by so doing with the transnational Republic of Letters. The translation practices and (self-) representation of Wolff, De Neufville, and Van der Werken, as discussed in this article, demonstrate how these women incorporated the association with the name and fame of internationally renowned authors, both male and female – such as Voltaire, Richardson, Pope, and Genlis – into their own public persona. They tried to convince their reading public of their literary authority, using a range of discursive negotiation strategies and self-images in order to claim a form of authorship, even through the act of translation.

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57 Arnoud van Halen's *Pan poëticon Batavûm*, 219: 'Dus bragt Verkoljes hand Neufville in schildery,/ Die schrandre Maagd, 't sieraad der Waereldstad aan 't Y,/ Om 't Pan Poëticum een nieuwen glans te geven./ Voltaires Poëzy, door haar in Neêrduitsch dicht/ Gevolgd, toont, dat haar kunst niet voor de zyne zwichet:/ Ook zal haar roem zo lang als die des Franschmans leven.'

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