

Jeroen Jansen

Gerbrand Bredero's handling of Antiquity. Transfer of classical knowledge into seventeenth century vernacular culture

1 Introduction

In early modern period literary authors mainly based their texts on existing material. In a process of creative imitation they added material, cut verses and passages, rearranged the source text, portrayed characters in a different light, and changed expressions and structure. The way in which they produced, used and reused knowledge, was not a static one, but part of an active and cumulative process in which creativity and originality gained a permanent position. Adaptation, offering all kinds of possibilities for creative expression, could leave unmentioned their parallels to the source text, but could also consciously flaunt them to their readers, naming the imitated authors or texts, and (implicitly) inviting the readers to compare both versions (source and imitation). Finding the source texts that inspired the author is no easy task, since genre conventions and prevailing norms influenced the process of imitation, forcing the author in many cases to swerve from them to others, sometimes making him alter the material considerably, translating and adapting it, sometimes merely causing him to reorder and make a selection.¹ In a period in which the revival of antiquity was current and classical texts prevailed as a Pierian Spring, Latin reading authors were ahead of illiterate writers, who had to appeal to books in their vernacular and were dependent on translations. However, as I will show, for both groups the idea of imitation and process of knowledge transfer could have been more or less the same.

Writers who took a more individual, creative course, possessed additional literary memoranda, like personal notebooks of quotations and printed commonplace books. The personal notebooks were generated at the moment they were reading texts as a student or writer. In the margins of a printed book they

¹ Cf. JEROEN JANSEN: *Imitatio. Literaire navolging (imitatio auctorum) in de Europese letterkunde van de renaissance (1500 – 1700)*, Hilversum 2008.

had marked those words and passages which were to be remembered.² They copied them into a notebook. Subsequently, they made a fair copy of them in a commonplace book, organized by themes and topics. In this way they developed a little, personal library of extracts, references, and examples, available for the creation of new discourses, including literary ones. In this age, literature required *copia verborum ac rerum*, which were constructed from variations on borrowed themes and motifs, and which presupposed the accumulation of references to *auctoritates*.³

Printed compilations also gave access to writings that weren't available in their original form, for whatever reason. Moreover, hurried (or too ambitious) authors could use such indices as a tool for finding excerpts to increase their stock of commonplaces without necessarily engaging with the argument or context of the original texts.⁴ In fact, this was daily routine for most authors in this period. In the transformation of reading into writing literary authors normally made use of *florilegia*, quotation books, etcetera to work out their ideas.⁵ The way in which they fell back on these compilations, was a personal one. After all, the manner in which expressions and turns of phrase were memorized, recalled at the right moment and applied, can be considered part of individual creativity and talent.⁶ Even when these compilations were not worked out in a special direction, this immense source of *topoi* may create the condition for a new disposition of knowledge, in which the *topoi* developed in a novel and individual way.⁷ In short, the compilations, most of them in Latin, organized knowledge in this period, and arranged it alphabetically or methodically for easy retrieval and re-use.⁸ Pupils of humanist schools, the Latin classrooms of the

2 Cf. ANTONY GRAFTON: Textbooks and the Disciplines, in: *Scholarly knowledge. Textbooks in Early Modern Europe*, Geneva 2008, pp. 11–36, esp. p. 27.

3 JANSEN (see n. 1), p. 199 ff.; FERNANDO BOUZA: *Communication, Knowledge, and Memory in Early Modern Spain*, Philadelphia 2004, foreword by Roger Chartier, p. xiii.

4 Cf. ANN MOSS: Locating Knowledge, in: KARL A.E. ENENKEL and WOLFGANG NEUBER: *Cognition and the Book. Typologies of Formal Organisation of Knowledge in the Printed Book of the Early Modern Period*, Leiden/Boston 2005, pp. 35–49, esp. p. 39.

5 ANN MOSS: *Printed Commonplace-books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought*, Oxford/Clarendon 1996, p. 514.

6 JANSEN (see n. 1), p. 113 ff.

7 WILHELM SCHMIDT-BIGGEMAN and ANJA HALLACKER: Topik. Tradition und Erneuerung, in: THOMAS FRANK, URSULA KOCHER and ULRIKE TARNOW (eds.), *Topik und Tradition. Prozesse der Neuordnung von Wissensüberlieferungen des 13. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen 2007, pp. 15–27, esp. p. 24.

8 MOSS (see n. 5) (on theories of and manuals for commonplacing). See on note-taking and student manuscripts from the early modern classroom: ANN BLAIR: Student Manuscripts and the Textbook, in: EMIDIO CAMPI et al. (eds.): *Scholarly Knowledge. Textbooks in Early Modern Europe*, Geneva 2008, pp. 39–74, esp. p. 47 ff. An overall view of the history of the commonplace book can also be obtained from FRANCIS GOYET: *Le sublime du lieu commun. L'invention rhétorique dans l'Antiquité et la Renaissance*, Paris 1996.

grammar schools, were trained to use this method, and learned to make quotation lists themselves. Consequently, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries reading or writing a book invariably involved the presence of these kinds of notebooks.⁹

Illiterate authors and women did not learn this practice in the same way, as Edith Snook has stated, although they were not completely debarred from the »mental community of the commonplace-book«. They used vernacular ones – if there were any – and made personal lists of relevant quotations and phrases.¹⁰ After 1600, the commonplace-book format began to naturalize in the vernaculars, and provided containers for collecting aphorisms, similitude's, examples, and proverbs on a large scale to vernacular authors as well.¹¹ For those who could only read vernacular texts, there were yet other appliances, for example school books, providing general knowledge in a wide field, easy accessible and, due to their explanatory style, easy to understand. School books must have helped illiterate authors to collect literary substance, to insert passages, as well as to develop the design (*verba*), ordering and invention.

We are fairly well informed about the theory of commonplace-books and the practice of the *respublica litteraria* in applying auxiliary inventive means.¹² Therefore, in this article I will focus on the other side, on a school book and on a Dutch author who had to rely on what was available in Dutch. I will show on the basis of such an »illiterate« author (i. e. a writer without knowledge of Latin) how knowledge of this kind, e. g. classical knowledge, was searched for, found, used, and reused (in fact one should say: »re-created«). How did a Dutch author, lacking knowledge of even small Latin and only fostered with some school French, cope with the authoritative, classical, material from which he was excluded, considering his education, in a period in which the rediscovery of ancient knowledge was often more highly valued than the creation of new knowledge? My presumption was that there should have been a considerable difference in this respect between the literate practice (as a result of the edu-

9 Moss (see n. 4), p. 35, 46.

10 EDITH SNOOK: *Women, Reading, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern England*, Aldershot/Burlington 2005, pp. 98 – 102. Moss (see n. 5), p. viii; Moss (see n. 4), p. 47: »In the 1570s, both in England and in France, commonplace books of excerpts were translated from Latin. [...] Nevertheless, the early translated commonplace books allowed only restricted access to the cultural patrimony of the élite.«

11 Moss (see n. 4), p. 47.

12 For the Dutch, vernacular practice (among others Constantijn Huygens en Jacob Cats): TINEKE TER MEER: *Snel en dicht. Een studie over de epigrammen van Constantijn Huygens*, Amsterdam 1991, pp. 52 – 110; HANS LUIJTEN, in: JACOB CATS, *Sinne en Minnebeelden*, ed. HANS LUIJTEN, 3 vols., Den Haag 1996, vols. 2, pp. 63 – 65; ANNE FRANK-VAN WESTRIENEN: *Het schoolschrift van Pieter Teding van Berkhout. Vergezicht op gymnasiaal onderwijs in de zeventiende-eeuwse Nederlanden*, Hilversum 2007, p. 148 ff., esp. p. 164; JANSSEN (see n. 1), p. 127 ff.

cation in grammar schools) and the illiterate one. This presumption will turn out to be not entirely correct, as I will show in this case study. On the basis of this specific example, it will be demonstrated in which medial form classical knowledge was transferred as well, and which value was given to the authority of classical philosophers.

2 Gerbrand Bredero writing to Carel Quina

The Amsterdam author Gerbrand Adriaensz. Bredero (1585-1618) was a famous and successful playwright of tragedies, farces, and comedies, as well as a writer of several poems collected in a small songbook. He was such an illiterate writer, who had not passed a Latin school education and presented himself more than once as a simple Amsterdam man to whom only a little filial school French was »shaking« in his head.¹³ His father was a cobbler and his social background was middle class. Around 1611 he became a member of the *Eglentier*, the Amsterdam Chamber of rhetoric. For a young author such a membership was still a requirement, because the chamber was the predominating literary institution in the first decades of the seventeenth century. The prominent writers in this circle were all well equipped and prepared for their literary task, having received a good education on Latin schools, where the basic studies were in Latin, along with some other subjects such as rhetoric, philosophy, and the unavoidable Christian doctrine. With these well strained colleagues Bredero had to »compete« in the literary field. As he could not read Latin, Bredero must have taken advantage of the many classical texts that were translated into Dutch: Homer and Sophocles, Ovid, Terence, Vergil, Boethius (1557), Cicero's *De officiis* (1561), Seneca's *De beneficiis* (1562), the famous »Beatus ille« epode by Horace, and Lucian, a rhetorician and satirist who originally wrote in the Greek language.¹⁴

Bredero attached great importance to classical knowledge, which is evident

13 GERBRAND ADRIAENSZ BREDERO: *Moortje*, ed. P. MINDERAA, C.A. ZAALBERG and BOUDEWIJN CORNELIS DAMSTEEGT, Leiden 1984, p. 114 (preface): »een slechte Amstelredammer (die maar een weynich kints-School-frans in't hooft rammelde) ...«.

14 Several reprints of the translation by Van Ghistele (Vergil, Ovid and Horace) were published in cities like Rotterdam and Leiden. MIREILLE VINCK-VAN CAEKENBERGHE: *Een onderzoek naar het leven, het werk en de literaire opvattingen van Cornelis van Ghistele (1510/11–1573). Rederijker en humanist*, Gent 1996, p. 262; cf. also A.A. KEERSMAEKERS: Bredero en de Zuidelijke Nederlanden, in: GARMT STUIVELING et al., *Rondom Bredero. Een viertal verkenningen*, Culemborg 1970, pp. 41–69, esp. p. 55. GARMT STUIVELING, in: GERBRAND ADRIAENSZ BREDERO: *Boertigh, Amoreus, en Aendachtigh Groot Lied-boeck*, ed. G. STUIVELING et al., 3 vols., Culemborg/Leiden/The Hague 1975–1983, vols. 2, p. 83; E.K. GROOTES, in: GERBRAND ADRIAENSZ BREDERO: *Moortje en Spaanschen Brabander*, ed. E.K. GROOTES, Amsterdam 1999, p. 381. The dialogues by Lucian were translated (from the Latin by Erasmus) by Andreas van Oosterbeeck and published in 1613.

from the lyrics and tragedies he mixed with features from mythology and classical history. From the huge amount of texts by Bredero with references to ancient literature, history and philosophy, I will choose the letter he wrote to his friend Carel Quina (1586 – 1649) on 23 March 1611.¹⁵ Quina, born in Antwerp, came as a child to Amsterdam and became a member of the Brabant Chamber of rhetoric *'t Wit Lavendel*.¹⁶ He wrote several liminary poems to Bredero's verses. The letter that Bredero wrote to him must be seen as a strong confirmation of a staunch friendship,¹⁷ but apparently also as a playful demonstration of his faculty to create invention by means of a commonplace book.¹⁸ The letter strikes us by its many quotes from ancient writers and philosophers.¹⁹ In fact, the letter has a cornucopian character, being a gathering of implemented *topoi*. The general theme of his letter is the *friendship* that arises from the *heart*, in a natural way, and leads to mutual *benefactions*. These are the three core values. In the first part of the letter the word »heart« is the linking term. The word returns in eight quotations of the bible,²⁰ for which Bredero must have used one of the many »concordances« *in voce* »heart«, to rapidly gather this material. Then the letter contains quotes from ancient writers, among them Thales of Miletus, Bias of Priene, Cicero, Martialis, Seneca, Plato, and the church father Hieronymus. The

15 Bredero's letter to Carel Quina was published for the first time posthumously by the Amsterdam book seller Cornelis Lodewijckszoon vander Plasse, in: GERBRAND ADRIAENSZ BREDERO: *Nederduytsche Poëmata*, Amsterdam 1638 (University Library Amsterdam O 63 – 9041). The letter is published as well (with slight alterations in spelling compared to the edition 1638) in: GERBRAND ADRIAENSZ BREDERO: *Memoriaal van Bredero. Documentaire van een dichterleven*, ed. GARMT STUIVELING, Culemborg 1970, pp. 109 – 111. Recently the letter has been included in: GERBRAND ADRIAENSZ BREDERO: *Proza*, ed. JEROEN JANSEN, Hilversum 2011, pp. 102 – 113.

16 GERBRAND ADRIAENSZ BREDERO: *Verspreid werk*, eds. GARMT STUIVELING and BOUDEWIJN CORNELIS DAMSTEEGT, Leiden 1986, p. 85; BREDERO (Memoriaal, see n. 15), p. 105, 109, 239.

17 J.B. SCHEPERS: Bredero en de klassieken, in: *Levende talen* 71 (1932), pp. 208 – 222, esp. p. 218, 220, assumed that with this letter Bredero had tried to prevent an impending rift in the friendship between him and Quina.

18 Cf. SCHEPERS (see n. 17), p. 212, pp. 218 – 219: »It goes without saying that Bredero hadn't learned them [the quotes] by head. In that case he would have been an Erasmus or Vossius. But most probably Quina had such a collection as well, and in this way they could get closer to each other best, when both of them casted their mind back to the time of classical quotations.« (»Het sprak wel van zelf, dat Bredero ze niet in 't hoofd had: dan had hij een Erasmus of Vossius moeten zijn. Maar Quina had allicht ook zo'n verzameling en ze konden elkander zo het best nader komen, als zij zich beiden terugdachten in de tijd der klassieke aanhalingen«).

19 MARIA A. SCHENKEVELD-VAN DER DUSSEN: Portret van Bredero, in: *Ons erfdeel* 28 (1985), 5, pp. 642 – 649, esp. p. 646; cf. J.A.N. KNUTTEL: *Bredero. Poëet en Amsterdammer*, Amsterdam ²1968 [1949], p. 175. Knuttel characterizes the letter as »curious, but unattractive, not without snobbishness« (»curieus, maar onaantrekkelijk, niet vrij van snobisme«).

20 Cf. BOUDEWIJN CORNELIS DAMSTEEGT: Het proza van Gerbrand Adriaensz. Bredero, in: idem, *Van Spiegel tot Leeuwenhoek. Syntaktische en stilistische verschijnselen in 17e-eeuwse teksten*, Leiden 1981, pp. 23 – 48, esp. p. 29.

following are some statements by Thales, Solon, Periander, and Pittacus. Finally Cleobulus, Plautus and Marcus Aurelius are quoted for the theme of »benefaction«.²¹ To every citation Bredero adds the original author. This results for example in the following phrases:

Den alder wel sprekenste *Cicero* seyt van alle dingen die door de wijsheyt gegeven zyn om wel te leven, geene is grooter, schoonder noch blijder dan de vrientschap. *Martiales* schrijft, de volmaackte vrientschap is tusschen de goede en ghelijcke in deucht, gelijk *Seneca* bevesticht, en seyt, gelijkheyt van zeeden, maackt en bindt de vrientschap, het welcke *Plato* betuycht met dit vaersgen. De vrientschap is een eerelijcke vereeninge van eeuwighe wille. De vrientschap (so sinte *Ieronimus* seyt) die sich eyndigen mach, en was noyt warachtig...²²

3 Bredero's »commonplace book«

If we want to know how Bredero coped with his inability to read so many important and authoritative texts in their original language or via a Latin intermediate source, we have to look at what he did read. This kind of research may gain much by the locating and analyzing of sixteenth century popular printed matter, from *florilegia* and collections of maxims, to books with anecdotes and school books, all in Dutch. Of course, Bredero will have read the earlier mentioned translations that were available in Amsterdam at that time. The Dutch translations of Cicero's *De officiis* and Seneca's *De beneficiis* were helpful in this respect. However, where Bredero quotes six of the Seven Sages of Greece (7–6th centuries B.C.), we have to look elsewhere. Which texts did Bredero use in this field? In his dissertation (1987), the literary book historian Bert van Selm writes about Dutch book sales catalogues in the Dutch Republic at the beginning of the seventeenth century. He states:

Being historical sources of fundamental interest school books from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries must be systematically traced and described as soon as possible.²³

21 BREDERO (Memoriaal, see n. 15), pp. 109–111; cf. DAMSTEEGT (see n. 20), pp. 29–30.

22 »The most eloquent *Cicero* says that from all things given by wisdom to live virtuous, there isn't anything bigger, more beautiful or joyful than friendship. *Martialis* writes that the perfect friendship between the good and their equals consists in virtuousness, as *Seneca* confirms, who states that equality of morals will make and bind friendship. This is testified by *Plato* with the following utterance: friendship is the honorable joining of eternal wishes. The friendship (like the holy *Hieronimus* says) that might end, was never a true friendship ...«.

23 BERT VAN SELM: »Een menighe treffelijcke Boecken«. *Nederlandse boekhandelscatalogi in het begin van de zeventiende eeuw*, Utrecht 1987 (thesis): »Als historische bronnen van primair belang dienen schoolboekjes uit de zestiende en de zeventiende eeuw zo snel mogelijk systematisch opgespoord en beschreven te worden«.

The importance of school books has been trivialized for a long time, although the notion that a primary education was the beginning of a long path leading a man to moral perfection was a prevalent cliché in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, whose principal propagandists were the schoolmasters themselves.²⁴ These booklets contain valuable information about the knowledge youngsters learned at their mother's knee. This knowledge educated them right from the beginning. But the content of these books is also of interest for the manner in which they dealt with cultural inheritance. Van Selm has elucidated the connection between the work by Bredero and the stock of Cornelis Claesz, an important Amsterdam bookseller who was running a book shop with an international outlook and publishing house on the Damrak, in the centre of the city. We know what this bookseller had in stock, because we still possess his auction catalogue (1610). A lot of the sources of which we are sure that Bredero must have read them, were available in this very bookshop. This concerns for example the Dutch translation of the Spanish *Lazarillo de Tormes*, which Bredero used for his famous stage play *Spaanschen Brabander* (1618).²⁵

Because it is quite obvious that Bredero must have used one or more commonplace books to be able to write his letter to Quina, one has searched for such a booklet during a long time. But it is rather incomprehensible that this search was aimed at intermediate texts in Latin language, like the *thesauri* by Johannes Sartorius, Aldus Manutius, Josephus Langius and Desiderius Erasmus.²⁶ It is rather eye-catching that Bredero cites six of the seven famous Sages of Greece (Thales, Bias, Solon, Periander, Pittacus and Cleobulus). Recently, I have demonstrated that the French author and bookseller Gilles Corrozet (1510–1568) was partly responsible for the erudition Bredero gives vent upon his petitioner.²⁷ In 1545 Corrozet published *Le conseil des sept sages de Grece*,²⁸ a little book that consists in some biographic information about the Seven Sages, proverbs in

24 BOUZA (see n. 3), p. 58.

25 VAN SELM (see n. 23), p. 178, 245.

26 Like SCHEPERS (see n. 17), p. 212, pp. 218–219, and DAMSTEEGT (see n. 20), pp. 30–31, and pp. 46–47, note 12, *did.*

27 JEROEN JANSEN: Bredero onder de Wijzen. Geleende geleerdheid in de brief (1611) aan Carel Quina, in: *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse taal en letterkunde* 126 (2010), pp. 347–372. The following paragraph is to a large extent based on this article.

28 *Le conseil des sept sages de Grece, mis en Francois: avec une brieve & familiere exposition sur chascune autorité & sentence...* Parijs, Gilles Corrozet, 1545 (Bibliothèque National de France, Rés. Z-39572). There were several reprints of this edition (see JANSEN [see n. 27]). Corrozet was the collector as well of *Les divers propos memorables des Nobles & illustres hommes de la Chrestienté* (Antwerp, Chr. Plantin, 1557), a collection of about 400 apothegms, memorable conceits of divers noble and famous persons (popes, emperors, kings, etc.) since the beginning of Christianity. Cf. LOUIS LOBBES: Les recueils de citations au XVI^e siècle: inventaire, in: MARIE ROIG MIRANDA (ed.): *La transmission du savoir dans l'Europe des XVI^e et XVII^e siècles*. Paris 2000, pp. 127–137, esp. pp. 134–135.

Latin taken from the Sages, a translation of their sayings in two verses, and comments by Corrozet (in French), explaining the meaning of their statements and giving more examples, as well as statements by other authorities and quotations from the bible. This booklet, in octavo form, must have been both affordable and accessible to a wide variety of readers.

Has Bredero read this French booklet? He could have done so probably, utilizing his little knowledge of the language. But this possibility is becoming less plausible considering that a Dutch translation (1552) was published a few years later, as a school book. The translator remains unknown, but its publisher was the famous Antwerp printer Hans van Liesvelt. According to the subtitle, this was a school book indeed, »very useful for the young pupils in the school«.²⁹ Besides, between 1562 and 1588, three bilingual editions of this book appeared, in French and Dutch.³⁰ These were school books as well, not only teaching some wisdom about ancient *dicta* and sixteenth century moral interpretation, but also a practical workbook for Dutch students who wanted to learn French or (less likely) the other way round. So the function of this school book is probably not only to explain classical knowledge, the *sapientia* of Greek philosophers, embedded in sixteenth century moral philosophy by Corrozet, but also to learn French, which was stimulated by the editor by putting the two languages, French and Dutch, together on one page. On the basis of textual resemblances it has been demonstrated that Bredero used one of these bilingual school books.³¹ He applied it as a commonplace book. Indeed, it seems that Bredero must have had a substantial glance through this book and selected some passages on friendship, maybe on the basis of the proverbs and their translation into verses. Then he took the explanation of the sayings, not the *dicta* themselves, as the foundation of what he selected and quoted. In all there are nine passages where Bredero fell back on this source. One of them is the following passage, which clearly illustrates how Bredero has used the information he found in the Dutch translation. I will first present the text of Bredero's letter, then the French by Corrozet and finally the Dutch translation in the school book of 1588. In this example Corrozet is explaining the saying »Amicis succurre« (»come to the rescue of your friends«).

29 The title reads: *Den raet, onderwijs ende leere der seven wijsen van Grieken, seer nut ende profijtelijck voor allen menschen: Ende principelijck voordien iongers inder scholen, om die van ioncx op in zedelijcke ende duechdelijcke manieren tonderwijsen ende te leeren. Getranslateert wten fransoyse in nederlantsce tale ...*, Antwerpen, bij Hans van Liesvelt, 1552.

30 JANSEN (see n. 27), p. 359 ff.

31 JANSEN (see n. 27), p. 365.

Bredero (*Nederduytsche Poëmata*, see note 15), fol. F2^v:

Dit selfde gevoelen heeft de hoog-prijselfijcke Philosoph *Sollon Sollinnus* mede en seyt, een warachtigh vrient verlaat sijn vrient nimmermeer inden last, alsoo dat den daat van den eenen is het selfde werck van den anderen: om dieswille dat alle dingen, gemeen zijn onder vrienden, Voorts so beschrijft hy (ô wel geliefde Charle,) een vrient aldus, en seyd, een vrient is een welbegeerde Naam, een mensch diemen luttel vindt, een toevlucht inden noot, een ghevonden vryheyt (door grooten arbeyt) een versekerde ruste, een wel beminde geluckigheyt, een koffer der verborgheden ...³²

Corrozet (see note 28), fol. 7^r:

(Solon Athenien) Le vray amy ne delaisse iamais son amy au besoing: tellement que le faict de l'un c'est le propre faict de l'autre: pource qu'entre les amys toutes choses doibvent estre communes. Amy est un nom bien désiré, homme qui ne se trouve gueres, refuge de necessité, possession trouvée en grande peine, le cabinet des secretz, repos assuré, & felicité bien aymée.

ed. 1588 (see note 33), fol. A6^v:

Een waerachtich vriende en verlaat nimmermeer synen vrient in der noot: Alzoo dat de daet vanden eenen, is de eyghen daet vanden anderen, om dieswille dat alle dinghen ghemeyn behooren te zijn onder de vrienden. Vriendt is eenen naem wel begheert, eenen mensche diemen luttel vindt, toevlucht inder noot, een ghevonden possessie deur grooten arbeyt, kofferken der secreten, verzekerde ruste, ende wel beminde gheluckicheyt.

The textual resemblance between Bredero and the edition of the school book in the 1588 edition is striking. Bredero sums up all elements of the definition of a friend he found in his source text (by Corrozet), albeit some slightly altered. Notable is also that Bredero, in this example as well, explicitly mentions the author of the ideas, being in his view Solon. He calls him »Sollon Sollinus«, because he had read in the biographical information in the same book that Solon »took refuge to Egypt, afterwards to Sicily, where he founded a city that he named after his own name«.³³ However, the information that Bredero copied here, did *not* originate from Solon's words, which was only responsible for the

32 »The same feelings has the unsurpassed philosopher *Solon of Solon* as well, who says that a true friend never leaves his friend in trouble, because the deed of the one is the work of the other as well, by which everything is common between friends. Further he defines (oh very beloved Charles) a friend as follows, and says that a friend is a very desired name, a human being that one finds not a lot, a refuge in trouble, a founded freedom (by great effort), an assured rest, a very beloved happiness, a storage for intimacies.«

33 *Le Conseil, sentences et bons enseignemens [...] Den Raedt, Sententien ende goede leeringen der seven Wijsen van Grieken [...]*. Antwerpen, bij Iean Waesbergue, 1588 (University Library Gent, sign.: Acc 9945), fol. A5^r: »... daer na [...] vloot hy [Solon] in Egypten. Daer na treckende na Sicilien, stichte daer een stadt, die hy noemde na synen naem«. Cf. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* I.51.

Greek version of the saying »Amicis succurre«. Bredero must have realized this, because in other parts of the explanation by Corrozet he found quotations by later Roman writers (like Plautus) and biblical passages. As he probably used one of the bilingual editions, Bredero hadn't the faintest idea who the intermediary author must have been, as these editions were anonymously published. Apparently he did not boggle when naming of the wrong author, perhaps being aware of the huge authority of the Greek philosophers. That he didn't name his intermediary sources was as logic as usual.

Indeed, Bredero must have used the bilingual version of Corrozet's edition, which is even more probable, as it is on the 1610 auction catalogue of Cornelis Claesz, namely in the section »School ware in French and Dutch«, that contains 73 books for education on the so called »French schools« (»Franse« scholen), i. e. schools where the students were taught some French.³⁴

4 Rodd'rick ende Alphonsus

This article could have ended here. However, as it is not only about using classical knowledge, but also about reusing it, we will look at some learnedness in a tragedy by Bredero. The letter to Quina is dated 23rd March 1611. In the same year Bredero wrote his first play *Rodd'rick ende Alphonsus*. He must have completed this tragedy in a few months, as it was played in the Amsterdam Chamber of rhetoric the same year (1611), according to the title page of the first edition (1616).

This was an ambitious play with, at that time, modern-fashionable subjects, plenty of intrigues, offering as leading themes the inconstancy of fortune and the conflict between love and friendship.³⁵ As this drama is also about friendship, it is not surprising that Bredero has reused some of the information he took down in the letter to Quina. The proverb on which this tragedy was based is printed on the title page in the edition of 1616: »De Vrunden moghen kyven; / Maar moeten Vrunden blyven« (»The friends may be quarreling, but they must stay friends«). With that the whole piece can be seen as a »mirror of friendship«.³⁶ The drama is

34 *Catalogus vant gheene tot Amsterdam by groote menichten vercocht sal worden, uyt de Winckel van Saligher Cornelis Claesz. Boeck-vercooper, op den 10 Mey, 1610*. Amsterdam, bij de weduwe van Cornelis Claesz., 1610 (in: BERT VAN SELM and J.A. GRUYS [eds.]: *Book Sales Catalogues of the Dutch Republic, 1599–1800 on microfiche*, Leiden 1990 ff., nr 2009/3294. On Cornelis Claesz cf. ERNST WILHELM MOES and COMBERTUS PIETER BURGER: *De Amsterdamsche boekdrukkers en uitgevers in de zestiende eeuw*, vols. 2, Amsterdam 1907, pp. 27–209; and especially VAN SELM [see n. 23], pp. 174–333, esp. pp. 225–242, 235).

35 SCHENKEVELD-VAN DER DUSSEN (see n. 19), p. 646.

36 SONJA FORTUNETTE WITSTEIN: *Bredero's ridder Rodderick*, Groningen 1975, p. 2.

enacted at the court of the Spanish king Ferdinand and the antagonists are two friendly noblemen, Rodderick and Alphonsus, who court Elisabeth, the niece of the king. I will sketch the first act briefly, as the content of it is important for the passage I will discuss later. The play starts with a monologue in which Alphonsus declares his love for the beautiful maid Elisabeth. His friend Rodderick is in love with her as well, but Alphonsus knows for sure that Rodderick will give up a possible relationship with this girl, for the sake of friendship with him. In the following scene the friendship is glorified in terms of love (verses 94–100). Then Elisabeth enters, singing a song in which she declares her love for Rodderick. He joyfully reacts. A monologue by Alphonsus follows. He has tried to come in contact with Elisabeth via her chambermaid, but understands that she is already expecting a visitor. As he makes some noise, Elisabeth notices him, asking what is going on. She sends him away. Next Bredero has inserted a comic scene with a servant and a maid: the theme is here either chances on a marriage as well. When they have said their piece, we have passed verse 500, but are still in the first act. The spectator sees Rodderick strolling in the countryside at sunrise. He exchanges greetings in a friendly manner with Alphonsus. Their discussion is once again about friendship. Alphonsus asks Rodderick what friendship is (verses 532–533). Rodderick answers (verses 534–538):

Vrunt is een lieve Naam // een Mensche seer seltsaam.
 Een Koffer der verborgen // heymelijcke sorghen.
 Een toevlucht inder noot. Een tróóster inde doodt.
 Een swaar ghevonden vryheyt. Een duur-ghekochte blyheyt.
 Een versekerde rust // van al ons liefd' en lust.³⁷

Almost all elements Bredero has assigned to Solon in his letter to Quina are present here, some of them slightly altered due to rhyme and metre, others more thoroughly changed. An example of the latter is »Een wel beminde geluckigheyt« (»a very beloved happiness«), that probably, with a strong parallelism of sound (with verse 537a) became »een duur-ghekochte blyheyt« (»a hard won happiness«), in verse 537b. Because Bredero had already used the French »possession« as »vryheyt« in his letter, we may assume that not this word in verse 537, but the word »blyheyt« (»happiness«) was chosen due to poetic necessity. Striking is the element »troosten« (»to comfort«) in »Een tróóster inde doodt« (»a comforter in cases of death«) that we also encounter in the letter to Quina, not belonging to

37 »A friend is a desired name, for a human being very uncommon.

A storage for hidden, secret troubles.

A refuge in trouble. A comforter in cases of death.

A founded freedom by great effort. A hard to get happiness.

An assured rest of all our love and lust.«

the utterances of Solon, but to those by another Sage of Greece, Thales of Miletus, who has said (in Greek): »Amicos probate« (»test your friends«):

Bredero (*Nederduytsche Poëmata*, see note 15), fol. F2^v:

...want soo 't onghetwijfelt is, als den voorgemelden *Thales* seyt, het is van noode te kennen, eermen bemint, en niet te beminnen eermen kent. Voorts seyt hij noch den waaren vriend heelt het secrete van synen vriend, en troost hem inden noot, hy eert hem in syn tegenwoordigheyt, en prijst hem in syn afwesen.³⁸

It looks like Bredero in writing this discussion in *Rodd'rick ende Alphonsus* went back to almost all the material of the Greek Sages he had gathered and noted in his letter. For when Alphonsus takes his part in the description, the definition by Rodderick completing (verses 543 – 544):

Den heelen Vrunt verdraaght verduldigh tot den endt,
De onvolmaacktheyt die hy in zijn Vrunt bekendt,³⁹

we recognize in this utterance the explanation by Corrozet of a *dictum* by the Greek philosopher Pittacus (»A familiaribus in minutis rebus laesus, feras« – i.e. »When you are offended in small things by friends, you must bear this«), that Bredero had used in his letter to Quina:

Bredero (*Nederduytsche Poëmata*, see note 15), fol. (F3r):

...daer zyn lieden, die om de minste beusseling vande werelt haer niet en schamen te breecken een langhe en groote vrientschap: maer (seyt hy [Pittacus]⁴⁰), sy en zyn geen rechte vrienden, want den waaren vriend verdraecht de onvolmaactheydt van syn vriendt, tot den eynde toe.⁴¹

38 »As it is without doubt, as the forenamed Thales says, that it is important to know someone before one starts a friendship and not to do so before one get to know him. Further he [Thales] says that the true friend hides the secret of his friend, comforts him in times of trouble, does him honour when the latter is present, and praises him when he is absent.«; cf. the edition 1588 (see n. 33), fol. A2^v-3^r: »Tis dan van noode te kennen eermen bemint, ende niet te beminnen eermen kent. Den waerachtighen vriend heelt het secrete van synen vriend, hem hulpe ghevende inden noot: hy eert hem in syn tegenwoordicheyt, ende prijst hem in syn afwesen.«

39 »The perfect friend patiently bears till the end,
The imperfection that he recognizes in his friend«.

40 Here Bredero is »wrong« again. As only the *dictum* is from Pittacus, this statement is made by Gilles Corrozet, explaining the Greek philosopher. As I said before, Bredero was not aware of what was exactly belonging to Greek wisdom and what was interpretation by a later intermediate.

41 »There are some people, that, due to the slightest gossip, don't feel ashamed of breaking off a long and strong friendship. But (he says) they are not real friends, because the true friend bears the imperfection of his friend till the end.«; cf. ed. 1588 (see n. 33), fol. C2^v: »Daer zyn lieden die om de minste beuselinghe vander werelt haer niet en schamen te breken een groote ende lange vrientschap: maer sy en zyn geen perfecte vrienden, want een waerachtich vriend verdraecht de onvolmaectheydt van synen vriend, ende verdraecht die totten eynde toe.«

The reaction of Rodderick on the addition, reading (verse 546):

Ghy hebt mijn trouw gheproeft in veel verscheyen lasten,⁴²

strongly reminds us of Corrozet's explanation of Solon's proverb »Amicis succurre« again: »a true friend never leaves his friend in trouble« (»een warachtigh vrient verlaat sijn vrient nimmermeer inden last«).

5 Conclusion

This article on the reading and writing of classical philosophy in a particular case, from its original form in a school book to the selection and re-creation of it in a personal letter and tragedy, reflects the continuing and unpredictable process of knowledge transmission in early modern Europe. The main conclusions that can be drawn on the ground of Bredero's using and reusing of classical material are:

1. For a rather crucial passage in his first drama, namely a passage in which the term »friendship« is defined, Bredero used a French-Dutch school book.
2. Bredero did not know the author(s) of the learned knowledge that he used in this dialogue, although we may assume that he thought is originated from Greek philosophers.
3. It was more or less the same material that he used earlier that year in a playful letter to Quina.
4. Bredero did not know the author(s) of the learned knowledge that he used in this letter. He awarded the explanatory ideas (by Corrozet) to the Greek philosophers. He did so, although he must have realized that these ideas could not have derived from the Greek authors themselves (as they mention Latin and biblical sources).
5. For both texts (letter and drama) it is evident that Bredero could not have foreseen in 1611 that they were to be published.

These conclusions require some explanation. The learned ideas on friendship and benefaction started in Greek (and Latin), were transferred into Latin and French, then into French and Dutch, and ended (for the moment) in the Dutch vernacular, both in prose and verses, in a letter as well as in a tragedy. It illustrates the intermediary function of an educational book, and it demonstrates how such a book especially and explicitly designed to be applied as a didactic instrument is used as a didactic tool, but foremost as a practical tool in a literary

42 »You have tested my faith in many different troubles«

situation.⁴³ Was it important for Bredero that the school book used did not cite the authorship of the compiler and translator? In fact, Bredero read this school book as an anonymous commonplace book, a collection of ideas on special subjects, in this case on friendship and benefaction. The school book offered him authorized knowledge, in vernacular, ready-made for his literary texts and for the recycling of knowledge. Although he must have known that there was someone who had interpreted, illustrated and explained the classical sayings, in his letter he obviously assigned authority to the seven Sages in such a way that he considered the explanatory ideas belonging to the stock of ideas by the Greek philosophers. That this was historically a false representation of circumstance is a matter of minor significance, in any case for him.⁴⁴ Here he connected knowledge with authority. That is all. This concerns his letter to Quina.

Where he reused the material from his own letter for applicable knowledge of his tragedy, the authorship question seems to be forgotten, or at least, was totally irrelevant. Authority was assigned to his own account, to the letter to Quina with all its learned material. Actually, for its part this letter was going to function as a commonplace »book« itself, a storeroom full of ideas on friendship that he could plunder to put appropriate words into Rodderick's and Alphonsus's mouths. As the letter was not intended to be published, Bredero could easily do so, divulging material by way of public performances that was collected for a private letter. The classical knowledge was rewritten into a discussion between two noble men, who possessed not much authority as it is. But the authority is now generated by the text itself. By the content and the learned appearance the words possess a certain authoritative power. This procedure is characteristic for drama. After all, it is not proper for such drama characters to refer in their argument to Greek learnedness, if not the author aimed at a special effect.⁴⁵ But at the same time the characters convey this learnedness to the spectators as their own ideas on friendship. In this way they take over the authority of the Greek philosophers. The readers and spectators of this play won't have been informed about the

43 Cf. ALAIN CHOPPIN: L'Histoire des manuels scolaires: une approche globale, in: *Histoire de l'éducation* 9 (1980), pp. 1–25.

44 Bredero is to be situated in a tradition to which Coornhert, Bredero's main example, belonged as well (see JEROEN JANSEN, »Sincere simplicity«. Admiration and Imitation in Gerbrand Bredero, in: G.J. RUTTEN and P. SWIGGERS [eds.], *The Dutch Language, 1500–1800: New Perspectives*, Leuven 2012). As Julie Rogiest shows in this volume, Coornhert rarely if ever draws explicitly on classical *auctoritates*, probably following Boethius' *De consolatione philosophiae* (I.5), that he translated in Dutch (*Van de vertróosting der wysheyd*). Here Boethius presented Lady Philosophy who stated that the ideas (*sententiae*) in themselves were more important than the ones who had written them (*libri*).

45 Bredero had explicitly criticized authors who let their (lower) characters talk about this kind of learnedness, in: GERBRAND ADRIANZ BREDERO: *Griane*, ed. F. VEENSTRA, Culemborg 1973, p. 112. See also: JEROEN JANSEN: *Decorum. Observaties over de literaire gepastheid in de renaissancepoëtica*, Hilversum 2001, pp. 234–236.

origin of these ideas. Neither did Bredero himself really know who the author of these ideas was; it is most likely he will never have heard the name of Gilles Corrozet. As far as the Greek (and Latin) sayings are concerned: as an illiterate author Bredero could not track this kind of erudite routes back to the source of the quotations.⁴⁶

The main profit of this kind of research is to demonstrate that there is, in this respect, no need to make a real difference between literate and illiterate authors as both made use of comparable literary aids. Bredero's method of finding, using and reusing material via an intermediary source of information, in this case a school book, can be compared with a literate author making use of a Latin commonplace book. In this way, vernacular literature was asserting its independence and its equality with the élite culture of the Latin speech community, although it acquired its legitimacy by conforming to the regulating norms of knowledge organisation and discourse production inherited from the commonplace book.⁴⁷ The incorporation of knowledge into a literary text, here into Bredero's drama, does not show any intention of displaying himself as a learned writer. As I stated earlier, the spectator and reader of *Rodderick and Alphonsus* were treated to semi-classical knowledge, namely philosophical ideas dating from the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. in an interpretation of Corrozet, probably without realizing this. Corrozet had recovered and reused this knowledge for a new public of texts that once belonged entirely to an elite culture. Bredero reused this »popular« knowledge in appropriated sections and remade it into something different.⁴⁸ As he wrote his tragedy in the same period in which he wrote his letter to Quina, in 1611, we may assume that the subject »friendship« exerted a special attraction on him at that time. In this way the reworking process started nearly simultaneously and may have shaped and created parts of the drama, maybe even selected for him the subject matter to be treated in a play. In any case, he could use the material he had gathered in his letter for the dialogue between the title characters in his first tragedy.

School books play a central role where pedagogy is transferred »from the periphery to the centre«.⁴⁹ In recent years a considerable number of school books and commonplace books have appeared on the Web, and in the next years

46 Cf. Moss (see n. 4), p. 47.

47 Cf. Moss (see n. 4), pp. 47–48.

48 Cf. ROGER CHARTIER: Culture as Appropriation. Popular Cultural Uses in Early Modern France, in: STEVEN L. KAPLAN (ed.), *Understanding Popular Culture. Europe from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century*, Berlin/New York/Amsterdam 1984, pp. 229–253 (on the French situation).

49 DANIEL KAISER: Introduction. Moving Pedagogy from the Periphery to the Center, in: idem (ed.), *Pedagogy and the Practice of Science. Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Cambridge/Mass./London 2005, p. 6.

there will be a lot more to come. This will surely broaden us for what had become once a largely private activity.⁵⁰ In the early modern period, urban schools took shape and became the foundations of all written accounts, be they literary or theological, theoretical or practical. In this way knowledge was spread over early modern Europe. Yet, as we have seen, this kind of *translatio studii* is not easy to trace. We have some general knowledge about where textbooks should fit in the analysis of educational practices, and of the content of the scholarly curriculum. But in some cases it is rather difficult to decide which of the books written in a certain period were actually text books,⁵¹ let alone the question of how the knowledge in these books was memorized, used in literary practice or even reused as a form of creative imitation.

In any case, for an inquiry into knowledge transfer of illiterate authors like Bredero, this kind of »simple« sources, school books, translations and other popular printed matter must be taken seriously. Digitalizing of these sources, which were considered less important for a long time, can help us to get a better idea of how the transformation of knowledge has taken place in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

50 RICHARD KATZEV: *In the Country of Books. Commonplace Books and Other Readings*, Leicester 2009, p. 40.

51 GRAFTON (see n. 2), pp. 12–16.

Band 19

Wissenstransfer und Auctoritas in der frühneuzeitlichen niederländischsprachigen Literatur

Herausgegeben vom

Vorstand des Interdisziplinären Zentrums

Mittelalter – Renaissance – Frühe Neuzeit

mit der Redaktion des Interdisziplinären Zentrums

Mittelalter – Renaissance – Frühe Neuzeit, Berlin

Mit 29 Abbildungen



BERLINER MITTELALTER- &
FRÜHNEUZEITFORSCHUNG

V&R unipress

Inhalt

Danksagung	7
Bettina Noak	
Einleitung	9
 1 Wissenstransfer und der Umgang mit Autoritäten in der außereuropäischen Begegnung	
Christina Brauner	
Das Verschwinden des Augenzeugen. Transformationen von Text und Autorschaftskonzeption in der deutschen Übersetzung des Guinea-Reiseberichts von Pieter de Marees (1602) und seiner Rezeption	19
Siegfried Huigen	
François Valentyns Beschreibung einer Meerjungfrau in <i>Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën</i> und die Konstruktion von Wissen	61
Maria-Theresia Leuker	
Wissenstransfer und Dritter Raum. Auctoritas, Empirie und <i>local knowledge</i> in den naturkundlichen Schriften des Georg Everhard Rumphius (1627–1702)	73
 2 Spiel und Spiritualismus als Felder des Wissenstransfers	
Arjan van Dixhoorn	
Nature, Play and the Middle Dutch Knowledge Community of Brussels in the late Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries	99
Julie Rogiest	
Knowledge and Auctoritas in Coornhert's <i>Zedekunst</i>	123

Esteban Law	
<i>Hermeti rechte meeningh</i> . Zum Hermetismus des Abraham Willemsz van Beyerland	147

3 Wissenstransfer in Translation und Poetologie

Marco Prandoni	
Vive la France, À bas la France! Contradictory Attitude Toward the Appropriation of French Cultural Elements in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century: the Forewords of »Modern« Poetry Collections	179

Francesca Terrenato	
Translation, Imitation and Criticism: Vasari's <i>Lives</i> and Machiavelli's <i>Prince</i> in the Early Seventeenth-century Dutch Republic	195

Jeroen Jansen	
Gerbrand Bredero's handling of Antiquity. Transfer of classical knowledge into seventeenth century vernacular culture	211

Christian Sinn	
Embleme der Konversion. Religiöse <i>auctoritas</i> als Legitimation frühneuzeitlicher Poetologie: Hermann Hugo und Jacob Cats	227

4 Die Konstruktion politischer Autoritäten

Rita Schlusemann	
Politik und Religion: Niederländisch-deutscher Wissenstransfer im 16. Jahrhundert	251

Mike Keirsbilck	
The tongue, the mouth and safeguard of freedom: Towards a governmental reading of Vondel's <i>Palamedes</i> (1625)	277

Kurzbiographien der Autorinnen und Autoren	297
--	-----