

12. Becoming a Woman in the Dutch Republic

Advice Literature for Young Adult Women of the
Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

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Abstract

In the Dutch Republic, female youths could turn to advice literature for help. These conduct books focused on young women's behaviour towards the other sex. A close reading of two widely distributed works reveals continuity: both Jacob Cats in the seventeenth century and Adriaan Loosjes in the eighteenth try to instil a specific habitus in the reader rather than instruct her on what (not) to do. Yet the analysis also highlights change. Cats admonishes attractive but vulnerable female readers to exercise restraint in their dealings with men, while the Enlightenment *philosophe* Loosjes instead emphasizes young women's freedom, urging his readers to live up to an ideal notion of femininity. Not the guidelines themselves, but the authors' perceptions of the young woman changed.

Keywords: advice literature; gender; young adulthood; bourgeois culture; Enlightenment

This essay explores how female youth was represented in early modern Dutch advice literature written by men. This type of writing intended to offer guidance to young women in the phase of life between childhood and adulthood, with the second stage closely associated with marriage.¹ This

¹ In the Dutch Republic youth started at the age of twelve to fourteen; Groenendijk, 'Jeugd en deugd', 101. In the early Republic female youth was considered nubile at twelve. See Sneller and Thijs, 'Nawoord', 144.

essay analyses two influential conduct books, one composed by Jacob Cats in the seventeenth-century heyday of the Republic when Dutch bourgeois culture developed, and the other written by Adriaan Loosjes during the Republic's decline and showing the influence of Enlightenment thinking on female youth. Both manuals present models of femininity to young women connected to specific cultural currents in Dutch and in wider European culture. Furthermore, textual approaches to the readership reflect Enlightenment concerns with personal freedom and societal responsibility. Although the advice offered to young women remained focused on marriage and motherhood, a comparative close reading of these texts shows both continuity and change. By the late eighteenth century, guidelines left more room for individual dreams of love and even sexual desire.

Advice literature proliferated across Europe from the fifteenth century onwards, both in Latin and in several vernaculars. Most were destined for boys and men, such as Erasmus's widely distributed *De civilitate morum puerilium* (1530), which taught rules of etiquette to young men. A smaller body of advice literature for and about women also began to emerge. Erasmus's friend Juan Luis Vives, who attended the Habsburg court in Brussels, wrote *De institutione feminae christianae* (1523) for Mary Tudor. Several female authors joined the discussion, and the Flemish nun Anna Bijns in particular gained recognition for her *refereinen* ('refrains').² On the whole, women's writings were more edifying than pragmatic. These examples show that authors in the Low Countries were part of a wider European culture.

After the secession from Habsburg rule in 1568, authors from the northern provinces shifted direction and addressed women as members of a family as part of a strategy for developing a distinct Protestant culture.³ Consequently, writers offered their advice to young women within the context of the marriage manual.⁴ Only towards the end of the eighteenth century did Dutch advice literature diversify. Then, new formats were developed, intended for specific groups, occupations, or purposes. In this context, manuals were published destined for women in general or for young women in particular. Half of these books were written by Dutch authors inspired by the Enlightenment, and the other half were translated from German,

2 Bijns' writings circulated in print and manuscript from 1528. See Pleij, *Anna Bijns*.

3 See Price, *Dutch Culture*, 143–44; Dekker, 'Moral Literacy', 140–44; Sneller, 'Reading Jacob Cats', 30–31; and Schama, *Embarrassment of Riches*, 7–8.

4 Tilburg, *Hoe hoorde het*, 13–17.

French, or English.⁵ Dutch advice literature had once more become oriented towards general European trends.⁶

Intended to further specific developments within Dutch culture, the two conduct books discussed here were written by widely read authors who held prominent social positions in Dutch society. Jacob Cats (1577–1660) hoped to establish unity among the culturally and religiously diverse inhabitants of the new state.⁷ Following the truce negotiated between the United Provinces and the House of Habsburg in 1609, the Dutch elite focused on overcoming the divide between federalists and particularists. The political strife was fuelled by different economic interests that pitted trade-oriented Holland and Zeeland on the one hand, against the agricultural provinces on the other. Cats's extensive marriage manual, *Houwelick* ('Marriage'), published in 1625, presents a civic ethic that could be practised alongside various religious doctrines.⁸ Adriaan Loosjes (1761–1818) sought to mitigate the economic crisis of his age. He considered traditional Dutch family values instrumental in solving the problems of the middle and lower classes. His conduct book *De vrouw in de vier tijdperken haars levens* ('The Woman in the Four Phases of her Life'), published in 1809, elaborated these values from an Enlightenment perspective. He hoped to revive the age of Cats – the Dutch Golden Age.

Even though the two authors had distinct aims in mind, both their writings participated in general European literary trends. While following the rules of established formats, they apply well-known and much-loved literary devices to enhance the appeal of their conduct books. Cats, for instance, presents his guidelines in verse and adapts the Renaissance emblem to suit his didactic purposes. Loosjes, for his part, opts for a fictitious biography of an exemplary woman. Every time her life takes a turn, she receives advice from her fictive mother. Each author's literary skill is particularly apparent in the ordering of the text. Both arrange the guidelines according to a popular representation of the life cycle, the *Lebenstreppe* (literally, 'steps of life'), in which the illustrations show the stages of life from childhood to old age. Often, the life phases are arranged in pyramid form with mature adulthood on top. At other times they are ordered in a circle following the example of the medieval wheel of fortune. Each phase has its own symbol, usually

5 New Dutch advice literature of Protestant or Catholic persuasion was not published until the mid-nineteenth century, following the emancipation of the orthodox Protestant and Catholic lower middle classes. See Tilburg, *Hoe hoorde het*, 31–37.

6 Tilburg, *Hoe hoorde het*, 13–17, 18–22, 40–46, and 83–90.

7 Sneller and Thijs, 'Nawoord', 137–42.

8 Schama, *Embarrassment of Riches*, 7–8 and 567–69.

a reference to flora and fauna, such as a pair of doves.⁹ Cats adapts this predominantly pictorial genre to structure his marriage manual. Offering another example of the strategy to develop a Protestant imagery, his illustrator, Adriaen van de Venne, chose to represent social functions.¹⁰ Although this idea was copied by other Dutch illustrators and publishers, Loosjes is the only author to have followed Cats's example. His conduct book includes distinctive illustrations communicating a new concept of femininity. The combination of text and image of the *Lebenstreppe* thus enhanced the communicative quality and resulted in larger audiences for both publications.¹¹

Seventeenth-Century Guidelines: Jacob Cats

Jacob Cats was one of the most influential people in the early Dutch Republic: as *Raadspensionaris* ('Grand Pensionary') he held a central position in government, and he was a well-known poet. Although these two occupations were very different, for Cats they were connected: in the first capacity he furthered political unity among the seven provinces, and in the latter he exhorted the inhabitants to consider the societal requirements of the new state. This merging of political interest and literary aspiration is evident in the widely read *Houwelick*. Here he presented a distinct civic perspective on marriage in order to go beyond different religious teachings.¹² Even though Cats was a devout Christian, he tried first and foremost to serve the *res publica*.

As an author, Cats emulated traditions in both classical and Renaissance literature. The classical tradition suited his purposes because it pairs eloquence with morality. His first publications were in Latin, following the tradition of the Dutch elite. His first book in Dutch, *Sinne- en Minnebeelden* ('Images of Love', 1618), was a collection of emblems on love and marriage. Here he presented contrasts between 'true love' and popular notions of love that centred on the societal requirements of the marital relationship. Encouraged by the public response, he ventured into writing edifying stories for young women. *Maechden-plicht* ('Virgin's Duty', 1618) discusses young

9 Joerissen, 'Lebenstreppe', 30–34; and Schenda, 'Alterstreppe', 16–24.

10 Cole, *Journey of Life*, 3–31.

11 Price, *Dutch Culture*, 135.

12 The term 'civic' is to be distinguished from 'secular'. Cats had been engaged with the *Nadere Reformatie*, a Pietist current within Dutch Calvinism.

women's attitude towards men from the same vantage point. When this book proved a bestseller, he decided to write his marriage manual.¹³ Only after this tour de force did he start exploring other themes. Most popular among his later publications was *Spiegel van den Ouden en Nieuwen Tyt* ('Of the Old Times and the New', 1632), a eulogy on traditional Dutch culture. This critique of the many changes brought about by recently acquired wealth struck a chord with the general public. In addition to broadening the themes of his writing, he diversified his style; for instance, he retold traditional Dutch tales and wrote adaptations of contemporary foreign novels. Because Cats's writings remained popular, his publisher decided to issue a folio edition of his collected works in 1655. This was reprinted twice, shortly before and again shortly after Cats's death in 1660.

When composing *Houwelick*, Cats followed the established format of the *Lebenstreppe*. In representing the female life cycle, Cats distinguishes seven phases, dedicating a chapter to each.¹⁴ These chapters are organized into four parts, addressing the young woman, wife, mother, and elderly woman respectively. Cats starts each part as well as each chapter with an emblem, adapting the format to fit his requirements. Whereas an emblem's *pictura* usually presents an allegorical image, Cats's version shows scenes of everyday life similar to those painted by contemporary genre-painters. Instead of the customary single *subscriptio* or explanatory comment, this text offers several, presenting each topic from different angles. These verses often refer to different aspects of life, differentiating between a personal perspective, societal requirements, and religious musings.¹⁵ These innovations contributed to the success of the manual: the layering of explanatory verses enhanced the didactic effect, while the illustrations appealed to the lower social strata. Cats could thus convey the message without becoming overtly preachy.

Over time, *Houwelick* became, after the Bible, the most widely distributed book in Dutch society. This success is due in part to Cats's civic approach as well as to the rise in literacy. The book was read among all religious groups in the Republic, and sold especially well from the 1640s onwards.¹⁶ By 1655 it had sold 50,000 copies, and by 1700, one quarter of the Dutch people

13 Frijhoff and Spies, 1650, 228.

14 Although only six life stages are named on the title page, Cats also discusses childhood in an extended verse on the games boys and girls play to prepare themselves for adult life. Compare these seven stages to those depicted in Hans Baldung Grien's *The Seven Ages of Woman*, 1544–1545, reproduced as Figure 1.1 in this book's Introduction.

15 Prak, *Gouden Eeuw*, 248–49.

16 Frijhoff and Spies, 1650, 228.

who owned books possessed a copy. These middle classes made up half of the total population.¹⁷ Publishers also contributed to the success of *Houwelick* by producing several cheap editions for the lower social strata.¹⁸ This publication set the standard for marriage manuals until well into the eighteenth century.

In *Houwelick*, female youth is addressed from three perspectives in the first section of the book in chapters entitled *Maeght* ('Virgin'), *Vrijster* ('Spinster'), and *Bruyt* ('Bride'). These titles present young women primarily in terms of their relationships to men. While the manual aims to change women's role in the family, it targets young women's attitudes towards the opposite sex.¹⁹ The first chapter on the 'Virgin' focuses on socializing with young men; the next, 'Spinster', discusses strategies for finding a husband; and the third, 'Bride', offers advice for the bride-to-be. With each chapter, the author's commentary moves a bit closer to marriage; yet this order also suggests a connection to age so that the chapters address pubescence, young adulthood, and betrothal respectively. However, the verses make no reference to physical growth or personal development. Furthermore, there are hardly any references to aspects of youth or the characteristics of young people. When youth is mentioned, the reference is general, not to females specifically. Therefore, the distinctions do not seem particularly meaningful in terms of maturation or education.²⁰

The first chapter on the 'Virgin' opens with an emblem presenting its theme: the *pictura* shows a coat of arms depicting a tulip in bud encircled by bees (Figure 12.1). The accompanying *motto* reads '*Maeghde-wapen*' ('Virgin's arms') and the *subscriptio* starts with a short eulogy on young women's power to conquer men without weaponry. The verses continue with the young woman's need for protection: she should have a '*wapen*', denoting both a coat of arms and arms in the sense of weaponry. The rest of the poem warns the addressee that at this tender age she should consider herself under threat. In keeping with classical motifs, the danger is conveyed in the analogy of the flower and the bee. The bee may seem harmless just sucking honey from the flower; however, it should be kept at a distance for now. In this indirect way, the female youth is taught to gird herself against the advances of men.

17 Prak, *Gouden Eeuw*, 248–49.

18 Kloek, 'Burgerdeugd of burgermansdeugd', 103–04; Schenkeveld, *Dutch Literature*, 31; and Schama, *Embarrassment of Riches*, 4–6.

19 Tilburg, 'Where has "the Wise, Old Woman" gone?', 151–54.

20 Groenendijk, 'Jeugd en deugd'.

Figure 12.1 The Virgin's Arms (*Maeghde-wapen*) from Jacob Cats, *Houwelick*, 1625.



Cats elaborates this theme in a drawn-out dialogue between two fictitious young women, Anna and Phyllis. Anna tries to convince the carefree Phyllis of the need for certain rules of conduct. They discuss going out and dallying with young men, with Anna arguing that the best pastimes are at home. When they speak of showing interest in a particular man, Anna cautions that doing so can affect one's reputation. She adds that if her friend has special feelings for a man, she should talk to her mother. Finally, in line with established practice, Anna reminds her friend to trust her father with

the choice of her partner.²¹ Furthermore, Anna argues that these rules of conduct will have the opposite effect to what Phyllis expects: keeping aloof in the company of men does not put them off – on the contrary! Towards the end of the chapter and this fictitious conversation, Anna explains that the rules are strict to help Phyllis stand firm. These verses have a double meaning: firstly, the author applies the stylistic device of irony, pointing out the opposite of the intended goal. Secondly, he plays with the young reader's apprehensions in order to make her comply. Clearly, the emblem and dialogue aim to persuade young women to keep young men at bay by restraining themselves.

The second chapter, 'Spinster', elaborates on this advice in the context of romance, and addresses young men as well as young women. The emblem conveys the overall message straight away: the *pictura* bears a coat of arms showing a bunch of grapes lifted from a plate by a firm hand (Figure 12.2). The accompanying verse explains the analogy between the young woman and the grapes; it stresses the delicacy of the grapes by pointing out the blush of dew covering the tempting fruit. Other lines suggest a further analogy between the hand and marriage. The author first admonishes the young male reader to have marriage in mind when approaching a young woman. Then, he reminds the female reader that the grapes should be grasped by the stalk only. With a shift in style, Cats addresses young males in a different tone, and his words denoting the young man suggest boldness and lust. Again, Cats sends a dual message: at first glance he appears to be warning young men, but a closer look shows him shaping female readers' perceptions of young men as seeking sexual encounters first and foremost. This narrative strategy not only explains the picture, but also enhances its didactic effect.

This chapter continues with another dialogue between two fictitious friends, the newlywed Sibille and her unmarried friend Rosette. These protagonists discuss strategies to attract the attention of suitable men. According to the married woman, there is only one way: prepare for marriage, act accordingly, and you will be noticed. Sibille draws a comparison to a woman crossing a river by boat: while rowing, she has her back to the other side. On the bank is a man, watching her. The single woman is not convinced: Rosette questions the wisdom of keeping young men at a distance, and suggests several other strategies, such as wearing fashionable clothes, adopting a sophisticated lifestyle, or using love potions.²² Each

21 See Haks, *Huwelijk en gezin*, 105–09.

22 The author may have discussed this last strategy because belief in magic was still common among the less-educated lower strata. See Price, *Dutch Culture*, 58–60.

Figure 12.2 The Spinster's Arms (*Vrijster-wapen*) from Jacob Cats, *Houwelick*, 1625.



suggestion is met with a specific answer, but together the answers come down to a simple response: take marriage seriously and behave decently. Cats continues to teach the readership to have marriage on their minds in their dealings with young men.

The third chapter on the 'Bride' is very different from the others in that from the start Cats addresses both sexes. The opening verses sketch the ideal couple: the husband governs the household and provides for his family, while the wife adjusts her behaviour to his wishes in order to ensure harmony in

the house. Next, Cats turns to the choice of partner. Here, once again, he assumes difference between the sexes; he reminds the male reader of the traditional rules regarding marriage such as parity of religion, class, and age, but tells the female reader that her happiness depends on her ability to adjust to the new situation. The chapter finishes with a short warning: in the new state, common law marriages are no longer valid. Here, Cats reasons not only as a moralist but also as a statesman. This chapter also focuses to a large extent on premarital sexual activities. Time and again the readership is admonished to wait until after the wedding ceremony. To drive the message home, the author contrasts fleeting pleasure and lasting happiness. These verses centre on lust and gratification, and one has a reference to youth:

Listen, young people, listen; if you wish,
To meet requirements, to balance demands;
Learn first and foremost to be virtuous,
Learn to be wise and sober, also in loose youth.²³

In the last line, the noun 'youth' is paired with the adjective 'loose', with its connotations of carelessness and irresponsibility. The combination fits the early modern perception of youth as lacking control over their impulses.²⁴ Youth of both sexes share this feature. This is the only time Cats mentions the traditional perception of youth in general. Warning both sexes to control their impulses fits with the rest of this chapter. Here, Cats addresses both men and women on their future responsibilities as husband and wife.

In sum, *Houwelick* addresses the young woman's attitudes towards the opposite sex. The advice admonishes the readership to attune their relationships with young men to marriage. The actual rules of conduct prescribe keeping a distance at social gatherings and controlling emotions if one has feelings for someone. Thus, this manual tries to impose self-control. The text represents female youth as attractive to young men as well as vulnerable to their advances. It presents young men as a threat because of their carefree and irresponsible attitudes. The placing of these representations in the text suggests these remarks are made for didactic reasons, to stress the need for female youths to guard themselves.

23 Cats, *Houwelick*, I, Section III, 5a. All translations are by this essay's author.

24 Groenendijk, 'Jeugd en deugd', 103–06.

Enlightenment Perspectives: Adriaan Loosjes

Adriaan Loosjes can be said to have followed Cats's example by combining Enlightenment activism with writing widely read books. He became a member of several Enlightenment societies, the most influential being the *Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen* ('Society of the Common Good'). This society hoped to alleviate the poverty of the lower social strata by furthering education; it published educational treatises and schoolbooks and established schools and public libraries.²⁵ Loosjes also joined the political movement trying to transform the Republic into a constitutional state. In this context he was appointed to the government of the County of Holland, and represented this body in the legislative assembly that discussed the constitution of a unitary state in 1797.²⁶ From this perspective, he contributed in important ways to improving Dutch society.

Loosjes' latter concern is evident in his work as an author and publisher in Enlightenment circles. His writing career took off when he entered a literary society competition at the age of eighteen. His treatise praised the new genre of the novel as a means of unravelling the complexity of human beings.²⁷ His writings had educational aspirations as much as literary ones, as seen in his choice of protagonists, with Dutch burghers offering examples of traditional values. The novel *Het leven van Maurits Lijnslager* ('The Life of Maurits Lijnslager', 1814) was the first Dutch historical novel situated in Cats's age,²⁸ and the novel *Historie van mejufvrouw Susanna Bronkhorst* ('The History of Miss Suzanna Bronkhorst', 1807) praised the women of that time. The same effort to revive the past is also evident in the many biographies of important seventeenth-century Dutchmen: the painter Frans Hals (1789), the lawyer Hugo de Groot (1794, and again in 1808), and the statesman Johan de Wit (1805). This interest saw Loosjes also contribute to ethnographic descriptions of the late eighteenth-century Republic by tracing Dutch values in contemporary society.²⁹ Many historical writings were reprinted until the mid-nineteenth century, their subject matter influencing Dutch authors of the Romantic Movement. Loosjes' influence on Dutch culture thus reached well beyond his lifetime.

His literary skill can also be seen in the two conduct books, both published in 1809: *De man in de vier tijdperken zijn levens* ('The Man in the Four Phases

25 See Mijnhardt, 'Dutch Enlightenment'. This society still exists today. See Mijnhardt and Wichers, *Om het algemeen volksgeluk*, 7–19.

26 Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 486.

27 Kloek and Mijnhardt, 1800, 454.

28 Kloek and Mijnhardt, 1800, 213 and 458.

29 Kloek and Mijnhardt, 1800, 409 and 458–60.

of his Life') and *De vrouw in de vier tijdperken haars levens*. These books are arranged according to the *Lebenstreppe*, and discuss childhood, youth, adulthood, and seniority through fictional biographies of a man and woman. Every time these protagonists arrive at crucial moments in their lives, the author offers advice, not by telling the man and woman what to do, but by offering options. Using stylistic devices, the narrator indicates which choice will bring happiness and which will result in misery. These discussions present the author with the opportunity to explain a topic in great detail, as, for instance, by showing what partnership in marriage looks like. The *Lebenstreppe* framework allows him to illustrate how choices made in youth bear upon later phases of life. In this indirect way the author admonishes the readership to comply with the rules of conduct. Both books were well received in Enlightenment circles and were reprinted in one volume in 1809 and again in 1816.

Loosjes opted to write these conduct books in order to adjust the rules of conduct to current notions of sexual identity that ascribe different but complementary natures to men and women. This aspiration is apparent throughout the texts: the fictive male spends his time at the workplace and at home, using settings familiar to readers. He makes decisions autonomously, already as a young adult. More importantly, he rarely has difficulty making up his mind; he simply wants the best for everybody. The fictive female, talking all the time, is situated in a web of familial relationships. At every turn in her life, even as a married woman, she turns to her mother for advice. The happiness of her extended family is her first and foremost concern. This approach is also evident in the frontispieces illustrating the sections: the conduct book for men depicts a male person engaged in an activity specific to his phase of life. Next to the scene is a tree that, as the protagonist makes his journey through life, becomes larger. Thus, the life of the male is represented with reference to society and nature. The conduct book for women depicts females carrying various objects that refer to the passing of time and eternity, as in the image of a woman with an hourglass. The women are dressed in tunics or wear veils, resembling ancient mythological figures. Clearly, the conduct books present the sexes differently: they depict the man taking on distinct social roles at each new phase of life, and the woman as living in a separate sphere and within a feminine tradition.

The conduct book for females has only one chapter on youth, entitled *De Maagd* ('The Virgin'). Loosjes made this choice for an obvious reason: he connects the difference between the sexes to reproductive physiology.³⁰

30 O'Brien, 'Sexual Distinctions', 3 and 5.

Thus, youth starts for the female sex at menarche, and ends with marriage and motherhood. The author goes to great lengths to communicate this relatively new perception of femininity to readers. The chapter presents a dialogue between the young protagonist and her mother. Here, the mother explains the meaning of the protagonist's first menstruation, namely that 'the secrets of nature [reveal] the true aim of her destiny'.³¹ She should 'remember this moment as the most solemn in [her] life' (90). This short dialogue is embedded in a long exposé on virginity. Here, the author speaks systematically of 'The Virgin', invoking an abstract concept rather than a phase of life. He refers to 'The Virgin' as 'the purest being in all Creation' (83). This ideal young woman knows intuitively how to behave in the company of young men. She has a clear sense of socializing with the opposite sex without being coquettish. In this representation, the young woman's disposition follows from her being a virgin. Not stopping at sociability, the author continues his description with beauty and chastity as well as virtue and vulnerability. He compares 'the idea of the Virgin', for instance, to 'the tender blush covering grapes in soft dew' (83). This phrase is, of course, a reference to Cats's emblem of youth, testifying to that author's enduring influence on Dutch culture. At the same time, this phrase illustrates the extent to which Loosjes sketches an ideal. From the perspective of the readership, growing up female may have seemed a precarious process.

Loosjes manages to intersperse this exposition with actual rules of conduct. At first glance, these differ only from Cats's rules of conduct in their attention to detail. In discussing socializing with young men, for instance, the golden rule is to be prepared: the young woman should expect to attract the attention of young men. She should enquire in advance as to which men tend to misbehave in public. Of course, she should try to avoid these individuals or, should she come across them, keep her distance. But she should treat other young men in a respectful and friendly manner. Furthermore, she should be tolerant of small mistakes. A young man who makes a risqué remark is not necessarily bad. Such behaviour can result from a poor upbringing; his parents may have failed him. A young man should be avoided only if he does not change his behaviour. The young woman can check this by

[C]onvey(ing) her displeasure clearly, all the while sparing him the humiliation of being corrected in public; from that instance on, she is to avoid him, as much as possible, within the rules of etiquette, in order

31 Loosjes, *De vrouw*, 89.

to convince him of the earnestness of her judgement – and she should accept the excuses, which he probably will offer, only on the condition that he will change his ways, and a repetition of the same liberty should make her avoid him. (143–44)

This passage shows how the reader is being prepared for socializing with young men. The advice seems to refer to women's role in Enlightenment circles and a culture of sociability. The rules offer some space for agency: the young woman is entitled to decide on a young man's propriety, although she is admonished to do so carefully.³² Clearly, Loosjes' advice shows the dual character of Enlightenment education, pointing out distinct occasions for making individual choices on the one hand, while disciplining people in greater detail than ever before on the other.

In addition to these familiar themes, Loosjes discusses a few new topics in the chapter on youth that pertain to the Dutch Enlightenment view of marriage. Authors of newly published marriage manuals argue that married couples should meet specific societal requirements, such as prioritizing the children's education and managing the household carefully. To make the family a cornerstone of society, the couple should share responsibility. To work as partners, they must support one another, and they can do so only if they love each other. For these reasons, Dutch *philosophes* argued for the free choice of partner for both parties.³³ Loosjes tries to prepare the young woman accordingly. For instance, he lists specific requirements of a husband to use in judging suitors. More importantly, he admonishes the young woman to monitor her own feelings closely and ask herself if she can get along with her suitor. He explains that the marital relationship will turn sour if she cannot control her irritation.³⁴ Loosjes thus tries to prepare young women to cope with their new responsibility.

Enlightenment advice literature destined for young Dutch adults assumes any marriage starts with mutual sexual attraction. These authors think it wise to address this aspect of the choice of partner.³⁵ Loosjes agrees; he presents guidelines on meeting men and getting acquainted with someone special. These teach the female reader to monitor her emotions carefully for two reasons. First, to live happily ever after in marriage, her desire should

32 Goodman, *The Republic*, 8–11; Steinbrügge, *The Moral Sex*, 18–20 and 30–34.

33 Tilburg, *Hoe hoorde het*, 22–31.

34 Loosjes also addresses this issue more explicitly in the chapter on the married woman. See *De vrouw*, 186–88.

35 Tilburg, *Hoe hoorde het*, 97–132.

blend with true appreciation of the partner's personality; sexual attraction is not enough to marry. Second, in establishing a close relationship with her suitor, she should monitor her feelings in order to prevent any premarital sexual activity:

[T]he Virgin may give her trust to the young man more easily than is wise, and retire with him to a lonely spot. Surely, the natural tendency of the sexes to each other, even in a civilised society that has changed relationships and masked initial drives, is too strong not to enlighten the hearts of people of both sexes and further this behaviour. (146)

Note how this passage builds upon the contrast between correct and incorrect behaviour. Clearly, the author places sexual attraction within the realm of correct behaviour, and we can infer that he has no problem with sexual attraction in female youth. In accordance with the Dutch Enlightenment approach, Loosjes' text acknowledges sexual desire in young women as well as in young men. The conduct books for young adults teach both sexes to monitor their emotions in order to control them better. They admonish both to behave responsibly, although they warn young women more explicitly about the consequences.

Loosjes finishes this chapter in the same vein as he started: he paints an idealistic picture of the bride. Here, he repeats the garland of abstractions of the opening paragraphs. This becomes apparent in the very last paragraphs, which describe the young woman leaving home, or rather leaving her mother. The protagonist starts weeping at the thought, and turns to her mother for comfort. The latter reveals she felt the same way on the eve of her wedding. She advises her daughter to do as she did, to put her trust in the Supreme Being (157). Here, the author repeats the narrative strategy of having the young woman turn to her mother. Furthermore, he underlines that the two women respond in the same way to a given situation. The author thus suggests the existence of a distinct, feminine nature. As he did earlier in the chapter, he provides the outlines of a separate sphere for women.

All in all, Loosjes' advice aims at instilling a specific *habitus* in female youth linked to the general role of woman in family and society. It offers many guidelines to prepare his readers to function within the context of Enlightenment sociability, coping with the attention of members of the other sex, and choosing a partner for life. The advice presents the late Enlightenment perception of femininity by connecting women's role to reproductive physiology. It reveals the influence of the Enlightenment

concern with education, especially in its elaborate exposés and its detailed advice. Throughout the chapter, Loosjes presents the young woman as an icon of beauty and purity. Due to her feminine nature, she has the potential to develop into an inspiration for others.

Conclusion

In the early Dutch Republic educational literature for and about female youth was limited to edifying writings. Young women looking for explicit rules of conduct had to turn to marriage manuals. Only towards the end of the eighteenth century did conduct books for young women become available. The genre of advice literature diversified because of the Enlightenment concern with education.

A comparison of two influential conduct books of the Dutch Republic evidences continuity. Both books aim to instil a specific *habitus* in young women regarding their relationships with the other sex and recommend that they should have marriage in mind in their dealings with young men. From the perspective of both authors, this *habitus* is intended to shape the young woman's relationships so that she will never engage in mere pleasure-seeking, and will remain aloof from attention-seeking young men. More importantly, this attitude will draw the attention of young men who are looking for a wife.

The comparison also shows change. Cats focuses on the *habitus* of the young woman to the extent that he offers only a few guidelines. Throughout the text he stresses her vulnerability to young men's devious ways. She should therefore not only keep young men at bay but also restrain her own impulses to behave light-heartedly. To enhance the message, he connects youthful looseness to the male sex. This author expects young women to behave decently in youth.

Loosjes also tries to promote this *habitus*, but he combines exposés on men and marriage with detailed rules of conduct to help readers consider choices carefully and behave responsibly. Like other Dutch Enlightenment authors, he is convinced that some personal freedom will enhance people's compliance. More specifically, if a couple marries for love, the spouses will try their utmost to make their marriage a success. In his advice to young women on their choice of partner, he addresses the role of mutual sexual attraction in the budding relationship. Sexual desire is thus represented as being as natural in young women as in young men. This author expects young women to long for love.

Finally, this comparison points out two distinct representations of female youth. Cats depicts the young woman as attractive and vulnerable. She has to restrain herself in order to avoid the attentions of carefree young men. If she complies with the rules and prepares for marriage, she will find a decent husband. Loosjes pictures her as a lively and outgoing person in need of guidance. In this context the *philosophe* stresses women's specific social role and presents the reader with an ideal, that of 'The Virgin'. All the while, he contends that failure to live up to this ideal would call her femininity into question and, consequently, diminish her chance of happiness. More than the guidelines themselves, shifting concepts of female youth testify to a change in ideas about gender in the Dutch Republic.

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