

INTRODUCTION:
THE TRANSFORMATION OF VERNACULAR EXPRESSION
IN EARLY MODERN ARTS

Joost Keizer and Todd M. Richardson

The Place of the Vernacular in Early Modern Culture

Painting, Leonardo da Vinci says, ‘needs no interpreters of different languages as letters do’. It is therefore more universal, ‘communicable to all generations of the universe’. Grounded in nature rather than in culture, it is less dependent on the geographical and temporal boundaries of different languages spoken at different times and in different places. Painting easily travels across time and space. Wherever it touches ground – now, then, here or there – it is received directly and spontaneously, without the intervention of translators and commentators. Whoever trusts her or his eye, Leonardo theorizes, can rely on the truth in painting.¹

Pace Leonardo, pictorial realism was not some universal language, understandable for people across space and time. Much like the spoken and written languages to which Leonardo denies universal accessibility, the reality effect of early modern art, too, is a cultural system whose understanding is bound to geography and history.² Take, for example, the words of one of the members of the Greek delegation to the Council of Ferrara (1439), Gregory Melissenus, who complained to his master, the Patriarch of Constantinople, that:

When I enter a Latin church I do not revere any of the [images of] the saints that are there because I do not recognize any of them. At most, I may recognize Christ, but I do not revere him either, since I do not know in what terms he is described. So I make the sign of the cross and I revere this sign that I have made myself, not anything I have seen there.³

¹ Farago C.J. (ed.), *Leonardo da Vinci's "Paragone": A Critical Interpretation With a New Edition of the Text in the "Codex Urbino"* (Leiden: 1992) 185–187.

² Barthes R., “The Reality Effect”, in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: 1986) 141–48.

³ Mango C., *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453* (Inglewood Cliffs, NJ: 1972) 54.

Gregory understands naturalism as a form of visual communication, like language made up of culturally specific signs. For this visitor from Constantinople, naturalism looked like a language that cast the familiar – in this case Christ – in strange terms, as if Christ stood described to him in a language he did not master. What looked ‘natural’ to some looked disfigured to others.

There is a great paradox in Leonardo’s words, for he, too, knew that the visual arts are culturally specific – like language. In another note, also dating to the early 1490s, the artist recounts the history of art. In a few paragraphs, he explains that the universality he could attribute to naturalistic art was in fact bound to a specific time and place. It was a ‘style’, he says, practiced by the Romans (*i romani*); yet in post-Roman Europe that ‘style’ fell into decline – apparently because it was not that universal after all – only to be revived again by the Florentine painter Giotto.⁴ Leonardo’s association of mimetic art with Roman antiquity is a familiar one. Michael Baxandall catalogued a whole array of texts from the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries that also speak of Renaissance naturalism as a culturally specific mode of art-making that writers associated with antique culture; most Renaissance artists were compared to ancient artists, whose names survived in the pages of Pliny’s *Natural History* and other antique texts known to the period. And for Baxandall the reality effect of such painting was only understandable to the select few: to those who could appreciate Ciceronian Latin, not to the crowds Leonardo imagined attending to the lessons of mimetic art.⁵ In fact, Petrarch had already claimed that the artistic achievements of Giotto – whom Leonardo counted among the champions of accessible naturalism – were only understood by a very limited number of art lovers.⁶ Claims like Petrarch’s aligned words with pictures, artistic styles with language.⁷ Giotto’s art, Petrarch implies, is

⁴ Richter J.-P. (ed.), *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci*, 2nd ed., 2 vols (Oxford: 1939) I, 371–72, § 660.

⁵ Baxandall M., *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition, 1350–1450* (Oxford: 1971).

⁶ Mommsen T.E. (ed. and trans.), *Petrarch’s Testament* (Ithaca, NY: 1957) 79–81.

⁷ It might be pointed out here that Baxandall saw Ciceronian Latin as constitutive for the *reception* of contemporary art. He never said that the production of art conformed to the dictates of language. In fact, he suggests that Ciceronian language had a limiting effect on the understanding of painting: because humanists wrote in a language dictated by literary tradition rather than lived experience, they were unable to describe any of the characteristics present in contemporary art that were unaccounted for by that tradition. Baxandall’s thesis rests on a debatable theory of linguistic

entirely *like* the Ciceronian Latin in which he wrote – a cultural system, a language, only accessible to himself and some of his peers.

The Latinized culture of literature and the visual arts epitomized by Petrarch and later European humanists stood in a dialectical relationship with other languages – the vernacular languages spoken by everyone else, such as Tuscan and other regional dialects. For some, those languages were crude and uncultivated: the language of the masses, not the literary few. The English term *vernacular* is derived from the Latin *vernaculus*. The word *verna* was originally used to distinguish the home-born, house-bred slave from the more common *servus*, a slave who could, and often did, originate from faraway lands at the fringe of the Roman Empire.⁸ *Vernacular* was the language of those slaves. The term connotes a rootedness in a tradition and implies a resistance to universals and international currents, which, in the early modern world, basically meant a resistance to Latin language and culture. The vernacular is often cast as an alternative to the official language of the Church and authoritative, classical authors.

In response to the dominance of Latin as the language of literary sophistication, Italian authors began to offer a strong vernacular alternative claiming equal literary sophistication. A tradition of vernacular writing was in place by the early fourteenth century. Dante wrote his *Divina Comedia* entirely in the vernacular – allowing even Vergil to speak Tuscan. And Petrarch, even if he felt a certain disdain for writing in a language accessible to the masses, also believed that the language of love needed the kind of corporeal presence and nearness of lived experience that only the native tongue could offer.⁹ Remarkably enough, the vernacular works of both poets – and of Boccaccio, too – mention artists. The *Comedia* includes a well-known reference to Giotto, whose fame is used as an example of vainglory, and Petrarch's *Canzoniere* boast two poems in which the art of the Sienese painter Simone Martini is mentioned.

relativity; see Nauta L., "Linguistic Relativity and the Humanist Imitation of Classical Latin", in Nauta L. (ed.), *Language and Cultural Change: Aspects of the Study and Use of Language in the Latin Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Leuven: 2006) 173–185.

⁸ Glare P.W.G. (ed.), *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: 1982) s.v. "uerna"; cf. Simpson J.A. – Weiner E.S.C., *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: 1982) s.v. "vernacular".

⁹ See Jean Campbell's discussion in this volume.

The term *vernacular* has also recently been adopted by art historians to describe native artistic practices. For Charles Dempsey, Petrarch's love poetry, with its references to Martini, offered a way out of Baxandall's exclusive insistence on the Latinized culture of Renaissance art.¹⁰ For Dempsey, early Renaissance art was never as exclusively 'classical' as a long and venerable tradition of art historians had suggested – the tradition of idealist interpretations offered by, among others, Erwin Panofsky, André Chastel, and E.H. Gombrich. Panofsky *et alia* argued that Renaissance artists were interested in a revival of the classical past per se, an interest informed by a clear historical perspective through which classical culture was retrieved. We might do better, Dempsey submits, to revisit a famous phrase by Aby Warburg, who wrote in 1898: 'In the fifteenth century the antique as a source of poised and measured beauty – the hallmark of its influence as we have known it since Winckelmann – still counted for comparatively little'.¹¹ Warburg displaced artists' imitation of the classical past as a purely aesthetic interest in classical forms, and instead connected it to an interest in liveliness and animation; artists from Simone Martini to Sandro Botticelli saw ancient forms as personifications of a vivid society less dead, buried, and the object of archaeological and antiquarian inquiry than present in Renaissance life as if the Roman past was happening now. 'The figures of ancient myth', Warburg wrote, 'appeared before Italian society, not as plaster casts, but in person, as figures full of life and color, in the festival pageants through which pagan *joie de vivre* had kept its foothold in popular culture'.¹²

Dempsey argued for the vernacular roots of Simone Martini's – and Sandro Botticelli's – art. Simone's concept of beauty is less marked by 'poised and measured' beauty of antique art than it is informed by the vernacular poetry of Petrarch. A Petrarchan ideal of beauty shifted attention away from the antique, Latinized past towards the present of the painter's world. Dempsey pointed out that the Virgin in Simone Martini's *Maestà* in the Palazzo Comunale in Siena is modeled on a

¹⁰ Dempsey C., *The Portrayal of Love: Botticelli's Primavera and Humanist Culture at the Time of Lorenzo the Magnificent* (Princeton, NJ: 1992). See also his more recent article, "The Importance of Vernacular Style in Renaissance Art: The Invention of Simone Martini's *Maestà* in the Palazzo Comunale [sic] in Siena", in Cropper E. (ed), *Dialogues in Art History, from Mesopotamian to Modern: Readings for a New Century* (Washington: 2009) 189–205.

¹¹ Warburg A., *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance*, ed. K. Forster (Los Angeles: 1999) 157–164.

¹² Warburg, *Renewal of Pagan Antiquity* 161.

concept of beauty grounded in local custom: she unveils her blond hair as if she were not the Virgin but a contemporary, French lady.¹³ Dempsey never goes so far as to say that Simone Martini and Petrarch formulated a distinct vernacular style, a style different from the 'classical' mode associated with Giotto. C. Jean Campbell, in her contribution to this volume and elsewhere, has taken up the challenge.¹⁴ Campbell locates the origins of a Renaissance concept of style not in the fixed product of the artwork but in its sense of becoming – in a poetics of making, with the *stylus* or pen. That sense of becoming aligns the making of art with a process of natural creation, an almost spontaneous imprinting of nature on the *carta* or panel.¹⁵ Such a narrative, Campbell points out, is not incompatible with Petrarch's inclinations as an antiquarian humanist, for, in her apt words, 'Petrarch's engagement with Simone's style is less indicative of an essential aesthetic affinity between the two artists than it is reflective of a new perspective born in the moment when vernacular style (exemplified by the art of Simone Martini) became subject of Petrarch's historicizing, humanist perspective'.¹⁶

Late in his career, in his *Renaissance and Renascences* (1960), Panofsky realized that Warburg was right in claiming the lack of an archaeological perspective in early Renaissance art, tempting him to formulate a model of Italian Renaissance art that radically distinguished between the achievements of the generations of Renaissance artists up to the 1480s and the later generation of Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Raphael.¹⁷ Only by the end of the fifteenth century, Panofsky now argued, did the Renaissance acquire full force, when classical content met classical form. With the generations following Mantegna and Leonardo, a clear historical perspective on the classical past started to produce artworks that circumvent the essentially anachronic aesthetics of lived experience practiced by the earlier generations. Now the

¹³ Dempsey, *Portrayal of Love*; and see Campbell C.J., "The Lady in the Council Chamber: Diplomacy and Poetry in Simone Martini's *Maestà*", *Word and Image* 14 (1998) 371–86.

¹⁴ Besides her contribution here, see "Simone Martini, Petrarch, and the Vernacular Poetics of Early Renaissance Art", in Cropper (ed.) *Dialogues in Art History* 207–221.

¹⁵ See also Alexandra Onuf's contribution to this volume, where she discusses the concept of the vernacular as method rather than style, subject, or iconography, and characterized by its capacity for transparent, immediate communication and inventive self-renewal.

¹⁶ Campbell, "Simone Martini" 212.

¹⁷ Panofsky E., *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (Upsala: 1960).

classical past was not relived in the Renaissance present, it was fixed in time as a stable measure of ideal beauty. If fourteenth- and fifteenth-century naturalism had aimed at closing the gap between art and life, Panofsky allowed later 'classicism' to open the gap again.

In three important essays, however, Elizabeth Cropper argued for a reevaluation of sixteenth-century classicism along the lines proposed by Warburg and Dempsey for fourteenth- and fifteenth-century art.¹⁸ As a strong and convincing alternative to the Neo-Platonic interpretations of beauty offered by Panofsky and others, Cropper instead proposed a model of Petrarchan beauty for sixteenth-century art. Cropper showed that artists like Leonardo and Raphael found beauty not in the matrix of Neo-Platonism, but on earth, in corporeal sensation, like Simone Martini in the fourteenth century. With Panofsky's 'true' Renaissance now also aligned with a Warburgian vernacular, the period as a whole could be understood as an engagement with life, corporeality, and vividness. If the vernacular language of Dante and Petrarch pulled the Latinized world into the experience of daily life, where people speak Tuscan and not Latin, then Renaissance art did the same.

The recent reevaluation of (Italian) Renaissance art on the model of vernacular poetry produces an almost impossible paradox. What was classical for some looked vernacular to others. The 'naturalness', vividness, and animation that Warburg, Dempsey, and Cropper associated with a Petrarchan vernacular, looked antique-like to Leonardo (and to many of Leonardo's contemporaries, predecessors, and successors catalogued by Baxandall). Art and literature that bears the traces of life in the world both constituted the local and particular, *and* the universal and classical. Dante's *Divina Comedia* was a vernacular work posing for a classical piece; Simone Martini's art engaged with a vernacular ideal of beauty that looked antique to others, including Petrarch himself. Petrarch's famous vernacular poem in which Simone Martini is mentioned (*Canzoniere*, 77, analyzed by C. Jean Campbell in this vol-

¹⁸ Cropper E., "The Beauty of Woman: Problems in the Rhetoric of Renaissance Portraiture", in Ferguson M.W. – Quilligan M. – Vickers N.J. (eds.), *Rewriting the Renaissance. The Discourse of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago-London: 1986) 175–190, 355–359; Cropper E., "On Beautiful Women: Parmigianino, Petrarchismo, and the Vernacular Style", *The Art Bulletin* 58 (1976) 374–394; and Cropper E., "The Place of Beauty on the High Renaissance and its Displacement in the History of Art", in Vos A. (ed.), *Place and Displacement in the Renaissance* (Binghamton, NY: 1994) 159–205.

ume) understands a vernacular kind of corporeal presence as an emulation of antique art. The poem's first line mentions the famous Greek sculptor Polyclitus's quest for beauty – 'No matter how hard Polyclitus looked, / like all the others famous for that art, not in a thousand years could they see even a small part of the beauty that has conquered my heart' – a beauty which the rest of the poem makes Simone discover not in antique art, but in a new aesthetics of lived experience. Simone 'saw her' (Laura) in paradise 'to give faithful testimony down here of her beautiful face' (*per far fede qua giù del suo bel viso*). The fourteenth-century painter enters into a dialogue with the classical past by completing the project of searching for beauty on earth, instead of imitating the classical results of that search. Rather than looking at ancient works of art, Renaissance artists – according to the model offered by Petrarch – oriented art on life, just like Polyclitus and his generation, but then with more success.¹⁹ According to this model, antique art itself had already been adopted as part of the vernacular.

Petrarch's poem allows for an anachronic dialogue in art – across time, culture, and space. For the very reason that artworks made by Martini, Leonardo, and Raphael registered the world in which they were made – mapping out the beauty of women as meticulously as they could – they *looked* contemporary. The practice of employing the vernacular, in other words, allowed not so much for a 'revival' of the classical past as it afforded a dialogue *with* the past. That dialogue also aligns the project of Renaissance artists with the project of Renaissance (vernacular) poets. For what else is Dante's *Comedia* than an effort to make the past and present communicate through the model of vernacular poetry? Dante and Vergil share space and time as they traverse in spatial and temporal liminality that is the journey from purgatory to hell.

The Transformation of Vernacular Expression in the Sixteenth Century

The formative role played by Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio in shaping the vernacular as a constitutive force for the retrieval of antique

¹⁹ This creative process is taken up more theoretically by Bart Ramakers in his contribution to this volume, where he discusses the Renaissance concept of the imitation of nature. See also Richardson T.M., *Pieter Bruegel the Elder. Art Discourse in the Sixteenth-Century Netherlands* (Farnham-Burlington, VT: 2011).

culture was capitalized upon in the early sixteenth century. Around 1500, the so-called language question (*questione della lingua*) offered a debate on the relative merits of vernacular languages over Latin that goes far beyond anything envisioned by the fourteenth-century generations of writers. Writing in the vernacular needed defense and theorizing. In his *Prose della volgar lingua* (*On the Vernacular Language*) of 1525, the Venetian poet Pietro Bembo treated the Tuscan language as if it were a classical language, subjecting it to Ciceronian and Quintilian rules of style.²⁰ What is important about Bembo's book, and the potential of the vernacular in shaping Renaissance culture as a whole, is the unprecedented emphasis it places on style, on *how* things are phrased and visualized rather than *what* is represented.²¹ Bembo's interlocutor Carlo claims that writing exists as a split condition: 'The material of subject matter – as we like to say – of that which is written, and the form or appearance that is given to that material, that is to say, writing'.²² Bembo's words mark a departure from earlier concepts of style, formulated according to Aristotelian models that tied style to subject matter. Rather than relying on a model of affective relations propagated by Petrarch, which essentially ties style to subject – beauty to woman, affection and love to naturalism – Bembo forestalls all rules of decorum (the appropriate connection between form and content). Bembo contends that the selection of a mode of expression is dependent on rules of pleasantness (*la piacevolezza*) and literary weight (*la gravità*).²³

Around the time that Bembo was making his argument about the separation of style and content, art theoreticians also began to formulate a concept of style independent from subject matter.²⁴ And that separation, too, clarified the distinction between Latinized, international styles and local modes of representation. In common with the theorists of literature like Bembo, the emancipation of style in the

²⁰ For a recent study of the *questione della lingua*, with bibliography, see Pistolesi E., *Con Dante attraverso il Cinquecento: Il "De Vulgari Eloquentia" e la questione della lingua* (Florence: 2000).

²¹ See Dionisotti C. in Bembo Pietro, *Prose e rime di Pietro Bembo* (Turin, 1971) 52; cited in Reilly P.L., "Raphael's *Fire in the Borgo* and the Italian Pictorial Vernacular", *The Art Bulletin* 92 (2010) 308–25.

²² Bembo, *Prose e rime* 136: 'la materia o soggetto, che dire vogliamo, del quale si scrive, e la forma o apparenza, che a quella materia si dà, e cioè è la scrittura'.

²³ Bembo, *Prose e rime* 137, 146.

²⁴ See Sohm P., *Style in the Art Theory of Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: 2001).

visual arts grew out of discussions about the place of the vernacular in society. A concept of style as an independent representational force was ironed out in Vasari's *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects* (1550 and 1568). For Vasari, like it had been for Bembo, the measure of style was Tuscan art, which he contrasted to other regions on the Italian peninsula and across the Alps: for example, a Greek mode of representation reserved for Byzantine art, and the German manner for certain strains in medieval and contemporary art.²⁵ Free from the constraints of subject matter – religious and classical subjects that remain remarkably consistent throughout Western Europe at the time – style could now start to denote not only a rootedness in a certain period, but also in a region.

Take, for example, the reception of Flemish art in Italy. While fifteenth-century humanists claimed that the art of Flemish painters such as Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden marked the crowning achievement of the mimetic tradition inaugurated by Roman artists – analogues to the model of the temporal and spatial 'dialogue' developed by Dante, Petrarch, and Simone Martini – sixteenth-century theoreticians and artists in Italy emphasized Flemish painting as a regional style, a style lacking the transcultural and transtemporal qualities formerly attributed to naturalism.²⁶ The Portuguese painter and art theoretician Francisco de Holanda associated a certain mode of making with its geographical origins, terming Michelangelo's style the 'Italian style'. According to de Holanda, Michelangelo understood the verism of Flemish oil painting as a culturally specific mode of production that grew out of Flemish soil unmediated by universal rules of style: 'reason', 'art', 'symmetry', 'proportion', 'skillful choice', 'boldness', 'substance', and 'vigor' – all terms similar to the criteria formulated by Bembo for literature around the same time.²⁷ For Michelangelo,

²⁵ For the idea of a period style, see Sohm P., "Ordering History with Style: Giorgio Vasari on the Art of History", in Payne A. – Kuttner A. – Smick R. (eds.) *Antiquity and its Interpreters* (Cambridge: 2000) 40–54; and Pfisterer U., *Donatello und die Entdeckung der Stile* (Munich: 2002).

²⁶ See, for example, the qualification of the fifteenth-century humanist Ciriaco d'Ancona of van Eyck's and van der Weyden's work; Stechow W., *Northern Renaissance Art, 1400–1500: Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: 1966) 8–9. For the original source, see Panofsky E., *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origin and Character* (Cambridge, MA: 1953) 361.

²⁷ De Holanda Francisco, *Da pintura antiga. Introdução e notas de Angel González García* (Lisbon: 1983) 235–36. See also Alexandra Onuf's contribution to this volume for a discussion of these ideas in relation to representations of landscape.

pure naturalism was a nonstyle, a mode of making that registered lived experience unmediated by the artist's hand.

But even within the Italian peninsula, styles developed in different directions and different local schools. Vasari tells an anecdote about the Florentine painter Perino del Vaga, who, after a sojourn of about five years in Rome, returned to Florence in 1521–23. Upon his return, Florentine painting all of a sudden looked remarkably vernacular and local. Perino found a group of his peers gathered in the Brancacci Chapel, where everyone was copying Masaccio's work and praising it for its novelty, as well as that of Giotto. Perino was baffled by the Florentines' interest in the tradition of Giotto and Masaccio, and he proposed to show the 'Roman style' (*questa maniera di Roma*) to his compatriots by painting a fresco on the opposite wall of the chapel in that style.²⁸ A narrative of transformation operates within Vasari's anecdote. Perino's compatriots did not realize that they were working in a provincial mode: their practice was business as usual rather than a mode of resistance. It was only over time, during the first few decades of the sixteenth century, that the formulation of a concept of style as a marker of place was developed and that their practice looked remarkably Florentine – vernacular.

Thanks to increased travel and circulation of reproductive prints, the sixteenth century witnessed a collision of regional practices of art-making. If, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the vernacular served to establish a rhyming between contemporary and antique culture, then for sixteenth-century culture the vernacular offered a starting point for formulating a theory of regional languages and regional styles in the visual arts.

This dialogue with the classical past and defense of the vernacular in both poetic and theoretical terms was also taken up by the Pléiade poets in France. These French poets, including Joachim Du Bellay (1522–60) and Pierre de Ronsard (1524–85), subscribed to the humanist practice of embracing the themes and forms of classical literature, but they rejected the propagation of Latin as the only language for artistic and scholarly expression. They considered it their responsibility to defend the vernacular and to advocate its use by showing that it was just as capable of copious, apt, and ornate expression as were the

²⁸ Vasari Giorgio, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, Bettarini R. – Barocchi P. (eds.), 6 vols. (Florence: 1966–71) V, 125–28.

languages of antiquity.²⁹ Rather than abandoning the natural language of their people (French) for one that is indigenous to other regions (Latin), these poets advocated a higher, better style for the vernacular and campaigned to encourage the translation and imitation of the ancients and Italians, including the subject matter of classical writers, into vernacular tongues. Whereas the vernacular had fallen into disrepute by following everyday usage or custom, classical Latin is systematically regulated by principles of rhetoric and poetry. To further develop the vernacular language, therefore, was a matter of integrating these artistic principles as regulating factors. The ideal was not one of crude imitation of outward appearance, but of a poet so well-versed in the inner principles that had guided the composition of ancient literature that he would be able to imaginatively mediate these forms to restructure the vernacular in new and inventive ways.³⁰

To this end, in his *Deffence et Illustration de la langue françoise* (*Defense and Demonstration of the French Language* [1549]), Du Bellay recommended a rejection of much of the earlier native, rough French formal tradition and advocated vernacular innovation based on Greek and Roman poetic forms, emulation of specific models, and the creation of neologisms based on Greek and Latin: 'si pauvre et nue, qu'elle a besoing des ornementz [...] des plumes d'autrui' ('so poor and naked, it needs ornaments and [...] plumes from others').³¹ Adjectives, comparisons, periphrasis, and other rhetorical devices, as well as the use of myth, were advocated as ways of achieving such enrichment. The changes, argued Du Bellay, incorporate both style and images, and he advocated that poets primarily use odes and sonnets. As Hope Glidden explains, "Through the imposition of formal constraints, the Pléiade elevated speech to become song, all the while creating an effect of naturalness in the most artificial of mediums, lyric poetry".³²

In a famous passage, Du Bellay describes the development of languages as being like the process of grafting and the bearing of fruit. As classical Latin was formed and enriched by the remains of Greek, so French poets should reproduce the efforts of classical and Italian

²⁹ Castor G., *Pléiade Poetics: A Study in Sixteenth-Century Thought and Terminology* (Cambridge: 1964) 8.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Clements R.J., *Critical Theory and Practice of the Pléiade* (London: 1970) 189.

³² Glidden H., *Lyrics of the French Renaissance: Marot, Du Bellay, Ronsard*, trans. Norman R. Shapiro (Chicago: 2002) 19.

writers, germinating the vernacular from seeds sown by both languages. And Pierre de Ronsard uses the same analogy of grafting to describe the interweaving of the Petrarchan intertext into his own work.³³

The Pléiade program was also well known in the Netherlands. For example, the humanists Lucas De Heere and Jan van der Noot, though not members of the group, were prominent advocates of the cause.³⁴ In Dutch literary history, Van der Noot is generally considered to be the first major Dutch Renaissance poet, producing the first collection of lyrical poems of the Renaissance in the vernacular, *Het Bosken* (*The Small Wood*), in Antwerp in 1567. He lived in Antwerp and was a faithful follower of Ronsard.³⁵

The love poetry of *Het Bosken* shares many traits with Pléiade poetry: sonnets and odes composed in a meter previously unknown in Dutch literature, many of them adaptations from Ronsard, some from Jean-Antoine Du Baïf, and others from Petrarch.³⁶ Like the Pléiade, van der Noot believed that other languages should be plundered for the betterment of one's own native tongue: 't was immers reeds mode geworden zijne taal met Italiaansche woorden en spreekwijzen op te sieren, te Italianiseeren of te 'Petrarquiseeren' ('for it had already been in fashion to adorn Flemish with Italian words and phrases, to make it Italianate or "Petrarchan"').³⁷ His fluency was even remarkable for a Fleming, a culture known for its language skills. For example, his *Verscheyden Poetische Werken / Divers Oeuvres Poétiques* (*A Selection of Poetic Work*), published in 1580, includes poems in French and Dutch and commentaries in Italian and Spanish.³⁸ K. ter Laan explains that van der Noot has the merit of representing the Pléiade in the Nether-

³³ Jeanneret, M., *A Feast of Words: Banquets and Table Talk in the Renaissance* (Oxford: 1991) 266.

³⁴ Furthermore, Peter Burke has shown that writers in one country were often inspired to emulate what was going on elsewhere. For example, Du Bellay borrowed from the dialogue on the vernacular by Sperone Speroni (1500–1588) in Italy. See Burke P., *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: 2004) 91.

³⁵ He came in contact with Ronsard during his stay in France while fleeing religious persecution from the Duke of Alba: see Van den Branden F.J. – Frederiks J.G., *Biographisch woordenboek der Noord- en Zuidnederlandsche letterkunde* (Amsterdam: 1888–91) 557.

³⁶ Zaalberg C.A., 'Das Buch Extasis' van Jan van der Noot (Assen: 1954) 252.

³⁷ Knuvelde G.P.M., "Jan van der Noot (ca. 1539–ca. 1600)", *Handboek tot de geschiedenis der Nederlandse letterkunde* (Den Bosch: 1971) II, 115.

³⁸ Forster L.W., *The Poet's Tongues: Multilingualism in Literature* (Cambridge: 1971) 32.

lands and succeeded in translating sonnets and odes (the new poetic form).³⁹ Significantly, Lucas de Heere is the only Dutch poet Van der Noot ever praises by name.

De Heere also greatly valued the Dutch language; the majority of his literary work, including his anthology of poems in *Den hof en boomgaerd der Poë sien* (*The Garden and Orchard of Poetry*), was written in Dutch in 1565. In his anthology, he asserts, 'En bovenal behoren wij onze eigen taal meer te gebruiken om er haar en ons land door te versieren' ('And above all, we ought to use our own language more often, in order to embellish her for our country').⁴⁰ According to Werner Waterschoot, as a rhetorician De Heere felt obligated to embellish his own language with countless borrowed words, as well as to mix the sentence constructions for the sake of his 'reghels mate' ('order').⁴¹ Although *Den hof en boomgaerd* is written in Dutch, the structure of the poems introduce for the first time in the Netherlands what De Heere called 'reghels mate', which is based on French meter.⁴² Like Van der Noot, his goal was to mediate – even translate – style and subject matter from French literature and classical antiquity into his native tongue.⁴³ Regarding the state of the history of the Dutch vernacular tradition, De Heere writes in the dedication of his collection that the 'ouden vlaemschen treyn van dicten zijn in veel zaken te ruut, ongheschickt en rouw' ('old Flemish poems are in many respects uncivilized, unsuitable / unqualified, and bad / rough'). In referring to his own vernacular tradition as 'uncivilized, bad, and rough', De Heere, like Du Bellay in his *Deffence*, sets forth his enterprise of cultivation.⁴⁴ After rejecting old Flemish diction as something to imitate, De Heere does not turn exclusively to Latin as his linguistic medium,

³⁹ Ter Laan K., *Letterkundig woordenboek voor Noord en Zuid* (The Hague: 1952) 375.

⁴⁰ De Heere Lucas, *Den hof en boomgaerd der Poë sien*, ed. W. Waterschoot (Zwolle: 1969), no. IV, lines 44–5.

⁴¹ De Heere *Den hof en boomgaerd der Poë sien*, xxviii. A reaction against this practice developed later in the Netherlands, particularly in the North. Beginning in the late sixteenth century, writers sought to 'purify' the Dutch language; that is, to rid it of all mythology and borrowed words. See Burke, *Languages and Communities* 141.

⁴² De Heere, *Den hof en boomgaerd der poesien* 102.

⁴³ De Heere acquired familiarity with French literature during 1559–60 when he stayed in Paris as an artist in the service of the Queen Mother, Catherine de Medici.

⁴⁴ For a comparison between De Heere's *Den Hof en Boomgaerd* and the work of Ronsard and Du Bellay, see Eringa S., *La Renaissance et Les Rhétoriciens Néerlandais: Matthieu de Casteleyn, Anna Bijns, Luc de Heere* (Amsterdam: 1920).

but rather combines the vernacular with formal elements from what he describes as more cultivated languages, such as French and Latin, in order to enrich and ennoble it. As a result, the poetry in his collection is extremely heterogeneous.⁴⁵

Although it is safe to assume that both De Heere's poems and his agenda for the cultivation of the vernacular language would have been known in his artistic community, the defense for the use of Dutch was echoed in the rhetorician societies (*rederijkerkamers*), a literary community to which De Heere and Van der Noot belonged. In fact, in the introduction to his *Den hof en boomgaerd*, De Heere provides a defense of the chambers of rhetoric, which he sees as institutions for the encouragement of the use of the vernacular, as well as to enrich it through translating ideas or following concepts from classical antiquity or contemporaneous foreign works.⁴⁶ In 1541, Jan Gymnick compared the poor state of the vernacular to Latin and asserted that the only way Latin authors were able to enrich their own language into the elegance of classical Latin was by appropriating 'diverse forms of speaking from other languages [i.e., Greek]'. With equivalent efforts expended to improve Dutch, he saw no reason it should not rise to similar or even greater heights.⁴⁷

But how did poetry and theater actually relate to the visual arts of that time?⁴⁸ Many chambers of rhetoric counted artists among their members; the *Violieren* in Antwerp, for instance, was directly associated with the artists' St. Lucas Guild. These close ties would have provided the occasion to discuss such interdisciplinary theoretical matters and possibly led to mutual influence and an exchange of ideas in respect to themes, subject matter, presentation, and structure. Their interaction is significant not only with respect to individual artists and particular themes, but also for broader contextual research,

⁴⁵ Waterschoot W., "Marot or Ronsard? New French Poetics among Dutch Rhetoricians in the Second Half of the 16th Century", in Koopmans J. (ed.), *Rhetoric-Rhetoriciens-Rederijkers* (Amsterdam: 1995) 146. Not only does De Heere introduce new literary forms from France into the Low Countries, he translates many French poems, sometimes giving them a local twist. For example, the poem "Vanden Hane op den Esel" is partially based on Marot's "Du Coq á l'asne", but alludes to the endemic political situation: see De Heere, *Den hof en boomgaerd der poesien* 90.

⁴⁶ De Heere, *Den hof en boomgaerd der poesien* 3-4.

⁴⁷ Meadow M., "Bruegel's Procession to Calvary: Æmulatio and the Space of Vernacular Style", *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 46 (1996) 199.

⁴⁸ See Bart Ramakers's contribution to this volume where he takes up this question extensively.

such as similarities between artistic topics and cultural development.⁴⁹ Walter Gibson writes that ‘artists and poets drew from a common fund of subject matter [...]. In these chambers, artist and poet could be united in the same individual, and where they were not, they seem to have collaborated on numerous projects’.⁵⁰ In his study on drama and processional culture between the Middle Ages and modern era, Bart Ramakers discusses the interaction of various forms of artistic production – rederijkers, poets, artists – in the implementation of theatrical processions, an event for which the guild that represented these professions was largely responsible.⁵¹ For example, rhetorician Matthijs de Castelein (1485–1550), Ramakers explains, began to incorporate motifs from antique literature into his texts for *omkeringsfeesten*, which were originally manifestations of folk culture and local domain.⁵²

In late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Northern Europe, the distinction of local artistic custom or a visual vernacular was made possible, at least in part, by the influx of a classicist, Italian art into the region; the community became aware of another, radically different, visual language. To paint in a local idiom, then, became a conscious choice; by the mid-sixteenth century, Northern artists were increasingly aware of their own artistic practices as such – Northern – in contrast, sometimes even in opposition, to the styles and/or subjects of art emerging out of Italy.⁵³

Modern art historians have credited this influx of new Italian art into the Netherlands with what they perceive to be a tension between a more ornate, classicizing style of painting and a practice that rejected

⁴⁹ Gibson, “Artists and Rederijkers” 427, 435.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 446. See also Yvette Bruijnen, “De relatie tussen rederijkers en schilders te Leuven in de zestiende eeuw”, in Ramakers, B.A. (ed.), *Conformisten en Rebellen: Rederijkerscultuur in de Nederlanden, 1400–1650* (Amsterdam: 2003) 247–260.

⁵¹ Ramakers B., *Spelen en Figuren: Toneelkunst en processiecultuur in Oudenaarde tussen Middeleeuwen en Moderne Tijd* (Amsterdam: 1996). See also Ramakers, “Bruegel en de rederijkers: Schilderkunst en literatuur in de zestiende eeuw”, *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 47 (1997) 80–105.

⁵² Ramakers, *Spelen en Figuren* 123.

⁵³ In linguistic studies, Mikhail Bakhtin describes this as ‘inter-animation’, the idea that mixing languages encourages language consciousness and so linguistic and literary creativity. This language interaction reached its highest point in the sixteenth century. See Bakhtin M., *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, MA: 1968) 81–82; Bakhtin M., *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981) 41–83.

such models and looked instead to 'local traditions' for its inspiration.⁵⁴ These cultural encounters naturally influenced each other and created conflict and consciousness. Scholars argue that reactions to Italian style from Northern artists seem to be varied: some artists like Frans Floris wholeheartedly incorporated the new style into their work, while others such as Pieter Aertsen attempted to create a hybrid of the two traditions.⁵⁵ Pieter Bruegel the Elder is consistently assigned marquee status for a third category of artists who consciously rejected Italian art altogether and embraced local culture.

However, if the program for the cultivation of the vernacular language, which characterizes both the Pléiade in France and the rhetoricians societies in the Netherlands, is employed as a comparable phenomenon to the visual arts, a model emerges in which both classicist, Italianate forms and subject matters are mediated within a language, and not only does it remain vernacular, it also becomes a more enriched form of expression. Interestingly, this resonates with the model proposed by Dempsey for Martini and Botticelli, according to which the antique can only be imitated *through* the vernacular, and art and literature that bear the traces of life in the world constitute both the local and particular, *and* the universal and classical. Theater and the visual arts in the sixteenth-century Netherlands serve as a useful way to join past and present, Christian and pagan, Latin sources and vernacular usage.

Building on these ideas, more recent art historical studies have revisited the question of what attitudes Dutch artists adopted in this period toward the antique and Italian traditions, on the one hand, and toward native Dutch practices, rooted in the work of the 'Flemish Primitives', on the other.⁵⁶ As Ramakers argues in his contribution to this volume, the art of painting, it turns out, rest neither on pure passion for imitation nor on the persistent rejection of international trends, but was the result of a complex process of adaptation, in which old and new, familiar and foreign, were deliberately combined on various levels and toward multiple ends. Sixteenth-century Netherlandish

⁵⁴ See, for example, Freedberg D., "Allusion and Topicality in the Work of Pieter Bruegel: The Implications of a Forgotten Polemic", in Freedberg D. (ed.), *The Prints of Pieter Bruegel the Elder* (Tokyo: 1989) 53–65.

⁵⁵ Meadow, "Bruegel's Procession to Calvary" 182.

⁵⁶ Richardson T.M., *Pieter Bruegel the Elder*; Weissert C., "Die kunstreichste Kunst der Künste". *Niederländische Malerei im 16. Jahrhundert* (Munich: 2011).

artists sought to harmonize different traditions with regard to time and origins, incidentally without disguising their diversity, or, if one prefers, their contradiction. On the contrary, the more or less recognizable hybridization of subjects, styles, and iconographies served the expression of a regional, cultural, and historical self-awareness.⁵⁷

Finally, to make matters even more complex, by the end of the sixteenth century and especially in the seventeenth century, writers in almost all European regions began to react against this hybridization, or, as Peter Burke calls it, 'language mixing'.⁵⁸ These writers argued that in order to make the vernaculars more uniform and dignified, foreign words and certain forms of syntax and pronunciation must be rejected. Language had to be what might be described today as 'ethnically' pure, employing native expressions in the place of foreign ones. As a result, what some Renaissance writers considered to be an enrichment of the vernacular language was viewed by others as corruption. As Stephanie Porras argues in her recent article on the subject, particularly as it relates to Pieter Bruegel's peasant scenes, some Dutch writers advocated for the increased use and cultivation of their language by eliminating, not integrating, foreign words.⁵⁹ For example, the Antwerp lawyer Jan van de Werve condemned the corruption of Dutch by Romance words in his *Tresoor der Duitsche Tale* (1553), and argued for its increased use by appealing to the historic character of the language. 'Help me', he proclaims, 'to raise up our mother language (which now lies concealed in the earth like gold), so that we may prove how needless it is for us to beg for the assistance of other languages'.⁶⁰ Hendrik Spiegel argued against the use of French expressions such as *bon jour* in Dutch and against words of Latin origin, and suggested that if borrowing words had to take place at all, it should be from Germanic languages such as Danish, Frisian, or English.⁶¹

⁵⁷ For a discussion of the concept of hybridity, see Burke P., *Cultural Hybridity* (Cambridge-Malden, MA: 2009).

⁵⁸ Burke P., *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: 2004), 141.

⁵⁹ Porras S., "Producing the Vernacular: Antwerp, Cultural Archaeology and the Bruegelian Peasant", *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 3, 1 (2011) www.jhna.org (accessed April 9, 2011).

⁶⁰ 'Helpt my ons moeders tal (die ghelijck goudt onder d'eerde leyt verborghen) wederom so brenghen op de beene, dat sy aen andere talen geen onderstant en behoeft te versoecken'. Author's foreword in Jan van der Werve, *Het Tresoor der Duytsscher Talen* (Antwerp: 1553). As cited in Porras, "Producing the Vernacular".

⁶¹ Burke, *Languages and Communities* 148.

Increasingly, as Porras explains, a historical sense of Dutch identity was vested in linguistic and etymological research, as well as in the collection of vernacular cultural traditions.

Building on these complex ideas, our volume examines the conceptualization, strategies, and functions of both the cultivation of the vernacular and cultivation by the vernacular in early modern cultural production. Whether conceived of as a counter-strategy to international movements, as a return to the native past, or as a straightforward continuation and cultivation of vernacular traditions, 'the local' acts as a mark of distinction in the early modern cultural context. We take as a given that vernacular expression in early modern literature and art go beyond showing passive influence from other writers or artists, and have interpretative significance of their own.

The Essays

Contributions to the volume cover four centuries of vernacular expression, from the early fourteenth to the seventeenth century. They do not focus on consistencies, but rather on change, and examine the transformative force of the vernacular over time and over different regions, as well as the way the concept of the vernacular itself shifts depending on the historical context. The essays are divided into three categories – 'Intersections', 'Method', and 'Identities'.

The contributions gathered under "Intersections" study the relationship between the visual arts and other cultures of vernacular expression, such as literary culture and music. Rather than making one form of cultural expression dependent on another, the essays paint a picture of intersections between verbal, tonal and visual language. They argue that the intersections of image, text and music usually happen at the moment when a culture tries to strengthen its basis in lived experience.

Jean Campbell's essay maps out the relationship between the vernacular and political bodies. It focuses on two formative moments in the history of that relationship: its point of origins, early in the fourteenth-century, in the poetic relationship between Simone Martini and Petrarch, and its point of reinvention, in the sixteenth century, with Vasari's 'Life of Simone'. In so doing, Campbell addresses the thorny question of style – of the relation of an artwork to the vernacular world

from which it arose – which she defines not so much as ‘entombed’ in Simone’s work but as a ‘technical engagement with nature’s body as a material medium, an engagement that is properly established not from a historical distance, but rather in the interpreter’s immediate embodied experience of its traces’. Such a lack of engagement with a particular historical moment made Simone’s work belong to a category of images that is better defined as ‘prepolitical’. Simone’s work, Campbell suggests, should be interpreted not so much from a historical distance but as an immediate bodily experience. This, she concludes, is how Vasari saw Simone’s work: as *disegno*, the prerequisite of the artwork rather than its final, historical product.

Jessica Buskirk examines Hans Memling’s *Maarten van Nieuwenhove Diptych* in comparison to works by two of his Bruges compatriots, the poet Anthonis de Roovere and the composer Jacob Obrecht. A close analysis of compositions by all three individuals in three different mediums reveals their similar efforts to intensify the audience’s experience of Marian devotion and self-consciously develop the work of their predecessors by building a bridge from the sacred realm of Latin prayer to the local, here-and-now of the audience. Vernacular language (De Roovere), illusionism (Memling), and references to popular music (Obrecht) are all mechanisms employed to intensify devotional practices by more effectively translating the Latin sources of their works into everyday reality.

Similarly, Lex Hermans defines the vernacular as an engagement with lived experience. Focusing on three different sixteenth-century descriptions of Donatello’s well-known fifteenth-century statue of *St. George*, Hermans shows how the vernacular language not only became a way of appropriating potentially classicizing artworks for an indigenous public, but also that the native tongue manages far better than, for example, Ciceronian Latin, to establish a direct communication between viewer/writer and artwork. In common with Campbell’s assessment of Simone’s art as prepolitical, Hermans, too, shows that statues like Donatello’s never fully register as historical objects belonging to one historical moment. The statue’s naturalism makes it transcend its status as object – as an artwork belonging to a specific moment in time – and enters the realm of life itself, a world in which it speaks and falls in love.

Bart Ramakers’s essay studies the comparison between words and images also taken up by Campbell and Hermans. Yet rather than taking the study of literature as a model to enrich the vernacular in the history

of art, Ramakers employs models developed in art history to elucidate the problem of the vernacular in literature. Literary research on the vernacular, says Ramakers, wrongly assumes the existence in the sixteenth century of a dichotomy between what is called a musical-poetic and a rhetorical-argumentative notion of literature. In art historical scholarship, especially scholarship on the Flemish artist Pieter Bruegel the Elder, on the other hand, such a dichotomy is not projected onto the sixteenth century; instead, art historians have argued for a more playful combination of vernacular and classical components in pictures, a combination that eventually shows an extremely self-reflexive kind of art. Ramakers discovers a similar kind of self-reflexivity in literature of the time. In common with the art of painting, sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Dutch vernacular literature is not so much based on slavish copying or epigonism, but on a complex process of adaptation, in which old and new, familiar and foreign, were deliberately combined. Ramakers's redefinition of the transformation of the vernacular in early modern Dutch literature allows for a hybrid text, in common with Ko's redefinition of Baldwin's *Beware the Cat*. Such a redefinition eventually allows for a reconfiguration of the relation between *ars* and *ingenium*. Whereas traditionally Latin was associated with *ars* – with learning – and *ingenium* with the inborn capacity to create, the vernacular tradition of Dutch literature could maintain that the Latin language, too, was inborn, and that it, like vernacular language, had been subject to change.

David Levine argues that in seventeenth-century Holland, the distinction between text and image was never that strong. The brush strokes of the Dutch painter Frans Hals are irregular, rough and they truncate visual information to an absolute minimum. Such an emphasis on abbreviation and an economic use of expressions, Levine submits, was also central to discussions about Dutch language at the time. Theorists of Dutch language – among them some of Hals's most important patrons – contended that its quick monosyllabic structure allowed for a directness and economy of expression matched by no other language, an argument formulated under the pressure of the Dutch war of independence against the Spanish. In seventeenth-century Holland, Levine concludes, art and literature aligned in order to formulate Dutch identity.

The idea that the vernacular constitutes a language – whether visual, textual or musical – able to ground culture in lived experience also informs the essays gathered under the second rubric, 'Method'. The

essays argue that this language of lived experience was not so much formulated as a style that exists in contrast to the classical idiom, but rather that the vernacular constitutes a method that was able to combine the classical with regional forms of expression as if there never was any difference between them. Whether in text or in image – the vernacular operates as a binder.

Focusing on William Baldwin's *Beware the Cat*, Trudy Ko's contribution studies the transformation of the vernacular through the textualization of the oral medium. Ko shows how, in Baldwin's work, the evocation of the oral tradition draws in regional accounts of history, accounts that lend the text an aura of verification. The vernacular operates here as a means to ground the text in actual lived experience. The world of the novel is one wherein 'regional details are shared through attempts to verify incredible events such as the death of a carnivorous, speaking prince of cats'. At the same time, Ko shows how *Beware the Cat* also explores the transformation of regional languages once these languages are trusted to paper. Rather than saying that the text offers a critique of vernacular modes of expression, as is common in Baldwin scholarship, Ko concludes that *Beware the Cat* is a remarkably self-reflexive text, combining the vernacular with other modes of expression in a surprisingly playful manner.

Alexandra Onuf's essay focuses on two series of prints published by Hieronymus Cock in 1559, now known as the Small Landscapes, in which for the first time humble rural settings were given center stage as the sole focus of printed images intended for a wider audience of art collectors and connoisseurs. As a result, argues Onuf, the prints initiate a new critical category of visual imagery she terms 'vernacular landscape'. In contrast to the universalizing tendencies of a classical idiom, the vernacular is characterized by an inherent instability, flexibility, and capacity for generative self-renewal and innovation. In this context, the Small Landscapes, including their reception and adaptation by later artists and publishers, provide a unique case study in which to reconsider the notion of the vernacular in relation to the visual arts, and redefine it in terms of method rather than style or subject matter.

Within this culture favoring the fluent combination of vernacular and classical forms of expression, the different origins of both were never truly forgotten. Early Modern European culture always remembered that what constituted a style or a method of expression was once born of specific historical and geographical needs. The essays gathered

under the rubric 'Identities' study the awareness of the origins of cultures as a means to fashion individual and geographical identity.

Jamie Smith identifies the vernacular origins of Jan van Eyck's Dutch motto *Als ich can* (as best as I can), which the painter inscribed on his self-portrait (*Man in a Red Turban* [London]) and other works. While art historians have related the phrase to an antique literary expression, *ut potui, non sicut volui* (as I could, not as I wished), Smith argues that van Eyck based his motto directly on a literary convention applied in the prologues of Middle Dutch texts. As a result, the artist aligned himself with the tradition of Flemish authors avowing the validity of their methods and extended vernacular discourse from Dutch literature to oil painting.

James Bloom addresses the false polemic between local and cosmopolitan artistic styles in the sixteenth-century Netherlands, constructed by modern art historians who juxtapose the works of Pieter Bruegel the Elder and Frans Floris. He does so by revisiting the notion of 'vernacularity' in relation to function and utility rather than to style and subject matter. In doing so, the author argues, attention is more productively focused on a process of cultural creation and transmission. Central to Bloom's thesis is the understanding of vernacular function within the spaces the paintings would have been viewed, particularly since the new interest in using paintings to adorn middle-class domestic interiors is itself an appropriation of courtly modes into the articulation of a specific indigenous experience.

Eelco Nagelsmit's contribution brings the question of the vernacular into the realm of architecture, where rules of classical decorum tend to be stricter than in the other plastic arts. Taking the Italian architect Sebastiano Serlio's sixth book on architecture as a case study, Nagelsmit shows how Serlio spent considerable effort to mitigate a classical style of architecture with local customs and ways of living. Interestingly, Nagelsmit not only focuses on Serlio's time in France – where a tension arose between a classical building style Serlio had brought with him from Italy and local, French customs – but also shows that French customs could be introduced into an Italian context as a *style*. In sixteenth-century architecture, style grew out of a local environment as fulfilling basic, local needs (climatic, comfort), and subsequently could be transported to foreign terrain, where it might lose its attachment to those needs and hence begin to operate exclusively as a style.

In her study of Delftware made between 1640–1720, Jing Sun focuses on specific ways artists borrowed from Chinese porcelain motifs and

styles and combined their foreign appearance with native Dutch characteristics and customs. This process transforms majolica, the primary indigenous form of pottery in the Netherlands prior to the arrival of Chinese porcelain, by making changes in materials, design, glazes, and firing process in order to appeal to consumers' attraction to the exotic, yet elegant aesthetic of the porcelain import. The result is the invention of a form of Chinoiserie, which assimilates Western and Oriental patterns to create a unique style specific to the Netherlands and subsequently becomes famous throughout Europe.⁶²

⁶² We would like to thank Sophie van Romburgh for helping us formulate the idea of this book at an early stage, Willemijn Fock for commenting on one of the essays, and Erika Suffern for copy-editing the essays and the introduction.