

Between Scylla and Charybdis
**The Mediation of Controversial Ideas in the *Boekzaal van Europe*,
1692-1701**



Marijn van Oorsouw

Research Master Thesis

Supervisor/ First assessor: Prof. Leen Spruit, Radboud University

Second assessor: Dr. Jan Brabers, Radboud University

Content

Introduction	3
Literature review	3
Research question and thesis outline	5
Sources	6
1. From Humanism to the Early Enlightenment.....	8
1.1 The Republic of Letters and Rabus' audience.....	8
1.2 New science and philosophy	10
1.3 Conflicts with theology	11
2. Pieter Rabus: Education, Authorship, The <i>Boekzaal</i>	14
2.1 Biographical sketch	14
2.2 Rabus as an author.....	15
2.3 The <i>Vermakelykheden der taalkunde</i>	19
2.4 Partnership with Pieter vander Slaart	21
2.5 The <i>Boekzaal van Europe</i>	23
3 The controversy over Balthasar Bekker: 1662-1694.....	29
3.1 A neutral journal?.....	29
3.2 Defending Bekker.....	31
4 The dowsing rod controversy: 1694-1697.....	37
4.1 Vallemont and Bekker.....	37
4.2 Dowsing exhibitions.....	39
4.3 In defense of dowsing.....	43
5 The final censorship attempts and the aftermath of discussions on superstition (1697-).....	46
5.1 The failing of the preventive censorship	46
5.2 The end of the preventive censorship.....	48
6. Editorial agency and patronage	51
6.1 Establishing political connections	51
6.2 <i>Letterlekkernyen</i> on a personal dish	56
Epilogue	60
Conclusion.....	62
Appendix 1.....	64
Bibliography.....	67
1. Archival sources	67
2. Newspapers	67
3. Primary sources	67

4. Secondary Sources	69
5. Websites	72
6. Database	73
Abstract	74

Source cover image: ‘Pieter Rabus’, Jacob Houbraken (1743) Courtesy of the Rijksmuseum.

Introduction

In the second half of the seventeenth century, the rapid increase of knowledge in Europe required new modes of dissemination.¹ During this period erudite journals were established in order to enhance intellectual communication and evaluate the latest developments in the Republic of Letters. In these learned periodicals the relevant debates, disputes and reception of new ideas were depicted and diffused to an interested audience.² Pieter Rabus (1660-1702) became the first Dutchman who took up this monumental task by founding his learned periodical the *Boekzaal van Europe* in 1692. From the crossroad of Europe's intellectual communication network, he wrote reflections in the vernacular on the latest erudite books. Characterized by a tireless ambition to educate, he tried to achieve the intellectual emancipation of his fellow Dutchmen by propagating a fresh rationalist attitude, criticizing superstitious beliefs, and reporting on scientific achievements.³ Rabus was a heterodox thinker and a polemical author, and as a liberal Christian in a city monitored by the confessionalist Reformed, the expression of his ideas led to hostile counterreactions from various sides. Over the years, with different outcomes, censorship attempts were launched by the Reformed consistory of Rotterdam to silence his journal. And as a self-proclaimed 'hater of superstition', he waged his intellectual credibility and integrity as an author, when he presented dowsing as a groundbreaking science in his journal. By depicting Rabus' propagation of the dowsing rod, his defense of Balthasar Bekker's *De Betoverde Weereld*, and his treatment of influential magistrates, this thesis analyses the numerous ways in which Rabus mediated the controversial content of his periodical to his targeted audience.

Literature review

In his seminal study on the Radical Enlightenment, Jonathan Israel called the newly developing erudite journals of the seventeenth century 'one of the most powerful agents of cultural and intellectual change during the Early Enlightenment era'.⁴ These periodicals provided a new communicational tool to effectively diffuse the novel ideas and scientific news produced in the Republic of Letters.⁵ The *Boekzaal van Europe* was an early exponent of this revolutionary medium, and the journal has been the subject of three academic studies. The periodical was first studied under the editorial

¹ Hans Bots, *De Republiek der Letteren: De Europese intellectuele wereld 1500-1760* (Nijmegen 2018), 169-174.

² Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford 2001) 142.

³ J.J.V.M. de Vet, *Pieter Rabus: een wegbereider van de Noordnederlandse verlichting* (Amsterdam 1980) 445-449.

⁴ Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 155.

⁵ Bots, *Republiek der Letteren*, 195.

supervision of Hans Bots by the Radboud *Instituut voor Intellectuele Betrekkingen*, which resulted in a collection of essays called *Pieter Rabus en de boekzaal van Europe 1692-1702*.⁶ The first part of this study provides biographical information on Rabus's life followed by an external history of the *Boekzaal* and extensive bibliographical documentation. The second part is comprised of a series of thematical studies on the content of the journal. These essays give impressions on Rabus' stance towards various religious denominations, politics, philosophy and science. The book was the result of a student seminar and the authors provided only a reconnaissance of topics; their contributions are of varying length and mixed quality.⁷ Their research successfully uncovered a large quantity of source material, and Rietbergen and Lysen provided a fine outline of Rabus' life and the external history of the *Boekzaal*. But some information in this book has become outdated and due to the varying qualities of the contributions several chapters of this book have to be approached with considerable precaution.

One of the contributors to this collective study of Rabus was J.J.V.M. de Vet, who consequently wrote the monograph *Pieter Rabus: Een wegbereider van de Noordnederlandse Verlichting*. The aim of De Vet's book is to present a picture of Rabus' intellectual characteristics and to demonstrate how the advent of the Enlightenment shows itself in his ideas and values.⁸ According to De Vet, Rabus was an early representative of the Christian Enlightenment and his editorial project was characterized by an idealistic ambition to educate.⁹ In the first part of his study, De Vet analysed several books authored by Rabus in order to portray his social milieu and depict his activities as an author beyond the *Boekzaal*. It is a study of the Dutch Enlightenment as reflected in the character of Rabus, therefore the second, largest part of De Vet's study analyses Rabus' stance towards contemporary early modern thought, especially Cartesianism and the anti-traditional authors Balthasar Bekker (1634-1698), Antoni van Dale (1638-1708) and Pierre Bayle (1647-1706). Rabus supported their struggle against superstitious beliefs and propagated a critical attitude towards both the notions of philosophical authorities and confessionalist theology; he considered his rationalism as an extension of the Reformation.¹⁰ Rabus was a progressive thinker who disliked metaphysical abstractions and the *odium theologicum*, but De Vet also pointed towards several sharp limits of his enlightened character; Rabus disliked the impoverished masses of society, and he vehemently detested Islam and Catholicism.

⁶ Hans Bots, 'Voorwoord' in: Hans Bots eds., *Pieter Rabus en de boekzaal van Europe 1692-1702* (Amsterdam 1974) V-VIII, here V-VIII.

⁷ G.C. Gibbs, 'H. Bots, *Pieter Rabus en de Boekzaal van Europe, 1692-1702*', *BGMN: Low Countries Historical Review* 91:1 (1976) 118-121, here 119-121.

⁸ De Vet, *Pieter Rabus*, 445-449.

⁹ Id., VII-XII.

¹⁰ K. H. D. Haley, 'Pieter Rabus. Een wegbereider van de Noordnederlandse Verlichting by J. J. V. M. de Vet', *The English historical review* 99:1 (1984) 190-191, here 190-191.

Whereas the former two studies analysed the *Boekzaal* and Pieter Rabus, a final study also has direct relevancy to the subject at hand. The book *Rotterdam Bibliopolis*, also supervised by Hans Bots, studied the book trade of Rotterdam in the early modern period. One of the essays in this book contains a biography and a detailed picture of the functioning of Pieter vander Slaart's book shop, the first publisher of the *Boekzaal*.¹¹ It provides useful information on the business activities of Vander Slaart and a bibliographical inventory of the 137 editions printed and issued by his shop.

Research question and thesis outline

The goal of this thesis is to complement to the existing historiography on Pieter Rabus and the *Boekzaal* in various ways. For this purpose, this thesis is structured around the following overarching research question: 'How did Rabus as the author of the *Boekzaal* mediate his controversial theories to his audience?'. The goal is to reconstruct the ideas of Rabus and analyse the strategy he applied to successfully communicate them to his readers. Because Rabus espoused varying heterodox ideas which were not generally accepted, he had to adapt to the restrictions of public discourse, and to mediate his controversial thoughts to his audience in such a way that they were perceived as reasonable and tolerable. In the first place it is therefore essential to reconstruct Rabus' ideas, and to ask how his thought was received by his contemporaries. Subsequently it is then important to analyse the strategy he applied to communicate these ideas in a form which made them accepted by his targeted audience; did he compromise on his ideals, or did he find alternative ways to express himself?

In order to provide a coherent discourse, the chapters are structured chronologically. This enables a revised overview of Rabus' life, with particular attention to thematical elements that portray his agency as an author. The first chapter discusses the societal background and intellectual climate which is necessary to understand Rabus and his journal. The second chapter presents his intellectual biography and a depiction of the content and intent of the *Boekzaal*. Then, three related issues will be tackled, divided into four chronological chapters which enable detailed analyses of Rabus' agency as an author of the *Boekzaal*. This thesis is then finalized by an epilogue on the last phase of Rabus' life, and the conclusion.

Two chapters display Rabus' analysis of the Bekker Affaire in the *Boekzaal* and the strategy he devised to avoid censorship by the Reformed church. These two chapters are thematically related, but they are separated in chapter three and five because of their chronological difference. Chapter three portrays Rabus' role in the Bekker furore

¹¹ P.H.A.M. Abels and A.P.F. Wouters, 'Pieter vander Slaart: Boekdrukker en boekverkoper in Cicero (1691-1702)' in: H. Bots, O.S. Lankhorst and C. Zevenbergen eds., *Rotterdam Bibliopolis: Een rondgang langs boekverkopers uit de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw* (Rotterdam 1997) 327-363, here 327-344.

between 1692 and 1694, when in the end he was successfully censored. Chapter five analyses how Rabus' nonetheless reinitiated his fight against superstition in 1697, which led to new censorship attempts. This controversy is significant because his outspoken support of Bekker caused censorship and officially threatened the survival of his journal.¹² Chapter five analyses the intermediate period between 1694 and 1697, and it focuses on the controversy Rabus caused by extensively arguing for dowsing. This controversy has been chosen because Rabus' heated defence of dowsing spanned several editions of the *Boekzaal*, and it led to a public debate in the Dutch Republic which was remembered long after his death.¹³ In his reconstruction of Rabus' enlightened character, De Vet overlooked Rabus' role as a propagator of the dowsing rod.¹⁴ He thereby omitted the main affair wherein Rabus' limitations and unenlightened characteristics reveal itself. An analysis of Rabus' theories and propagation of dowsing therefore also provides a significant new perspective on the conception of Rabus' as an 'enlightened character'. The third investigation of Rabus' agency as an author, in chapter six, will draw a picture of how he carefully crafted the *Boekzaal* into a journal which tailored to the Rotterdammers in seats of power. This chapter first embeds Rabus within the contemporary political structure and outlines his network of influential contacts and patrons. Then, several examples will demonstrate how Rabus customized the content of his journal to reach out for the support of influential magistrates. Previous scholars have already provided an extensive depiction of Rabus' network, but have overlooked his political associates, his network of patronage and his strategy to customize the *Boekzaal* to their liking. This chapter furnishes a possible explanation of why Rabus was allowed a relative freedom to communicate his subversive thought.

Sources

Considering that De Vet has already given fundamental insight into Rabus' ideas and ideals, this thesis gives preferences to sources which have previously been neglected or were unavailable. In the first place this entails the content in the *Boekzaal* which has never been analysed in any detail, such as Rabus' writings on the dowsing rod and his dedications to the magistrates. Secondly, this includes new source material from contemporary newspapers and the Rotterdam archives. Thirdly, this includes previously unexplored segments of Rabus' literary oeuvre, such as his occasional poetry. And a fourth new source of information is the inventory that has been made of all the book reviews in the *Boekzaal*. In this database every book review by Rabus in the *Boekzaal* is classified according to its main characteristics. The latter include the particular book that is reviewed, the scholarly discipline the book belongs to, the length

¹² De Vet, *Rabus*, 275.

¹³ Abraham Bogaert, *Eerkransen voor de Klerikaansche voorvechteren* (s.l. 1717) 8.

¹⁴ De Vet discussed dowsing twice, see: De Vet, *Rabus*, 25-26 and 219-220.

of the chapter, name and residence of the printer, and more.¹⁵ The development of this database has created a rich source for future analysis. But this enormous source of information was completed in the final stage of the writing process, and the focus of this study is not the quantitative analysis of the *Boekzaal*. Therefore, its purpose in this study is only to provide a few general outlines.¹⁶

¹⁵ This database will be used as a source, but it will not be shared in the public domain. It will be shared by me after personal request.

¹⁶ See appendix 1.

1. From Humanism to the Early Enlightenment

1.1 The Republic of Letters and Rabus' audience

Gelijk we althans een tijd beleven, waar in de wetenschappen en konsten ten hoogsten top schijnen opgevijzelt, alzo heeft men ook bequame hulpmiddelen bedagt, omme lijnregt, buiten vele omwegen, tot navorsing van alles wat gedenkwaardig is, toe te treden.¹

In 1692 Pieter Rabus chose these triumphal words to address his audience in the opening statement of the *Boekzaal*. He was confident that he lived in a period of revolutionary intellectual achievements, which could be spread by new effective means of communication. Rabus correctly observed that the sweeping intellectual changes of the seventeenth century were also accompanied by superior methods of transmission. The Dutch book printing industry was technologically the most innovative and productive of Europe, and it could rely on a large domestic audience. In the Dutch Republic different schools of thought fought intense battles on the interrelated subjects of politics, religion and philosophy; the country was at the vanguard of Europe's intellectual developments.² And during Rabus' lifetime he played his own active part in the flourishing of the new sciences and the Early Enlightenment in the Dutch Republic. Rabus found himself in the midst of long and complex intellectual developments, and he tried to introduce his audience to what he called the international 'Statendom der Letterwijzen'.³

In the sixteenth century the intellectuals of Europe increasingly started to share the notion that they were part of an imagined community for the advancement of knowledge.⁴ They considered themselves part of a 'Respublica Litteraria', an international network of scholars dedicated to the study of 'letters'.⁵ With the exception of artisanal knowledge, in the sixteenth and seventeenth century 'letters' meant the entire body of science and knowledge; from law and rhetoric to medicine and astronomy.⁶ Whilst religious wars were dividing European states, these learned men corresponded as peers to advance their studies. Initially their Republic largely consisted of aristocrats from Western Europe and Italy, but in the seventeenth century their community increasingly involved men from lesser socioeconomic backgrounds and more European states. They corresponded by sending letters, and the circulation of information was also tremendously stimulated by the increasing productivity of the

¹ Pieter Rabus, *Boekzaal van Europe, ontsloten Met de Maanden Julius en Augustus 1692* (Rotterdam 1692) De schrijver Aan den weetgierigen lezer.

² Harold J. Cook, 'Science and Technology', in: Helmer J. Helmers and Geert H. Janssen, *The Dutch Golden Age* (Cambridge 2018) 350-370, here 350-351.

³ Pieter Rabus, *Boekzaal van Europe, Gesticht door P. Rabus. January en February 1700* (Rotterdam 1700) 69.

⁴ Peter Burke, *What is the History of Knowledge?* (Cambridge 2016) 86-88.

⁵ Although sending letters was a vital part of their communication, 'letters' in this sense does not refer to communication via epistles.

⁶ Bots, *Republiek der Letteren*, 14.

printing press. Citizens of the Republic of Letters shared a critical attitude towards tradition, and they intended to avoid the arbitrary rule of authority.⁷ In his influential *Ciceronianos* (1528) Erasmus had argued for an attitude of *imitatio creativa*: recollecting the best of the ancient writers and approaching them with an inventive, critical attitude. This way, modern authors could reach beyond the wisdom of their ancient predecessors, and they could contribute to intellectual progress.⁸ In Erasmus' view the inspiration from established wisdom comes from imitating the spirit, not the letter. Many of the citizens of the Republic of Letters are now characterized as 'polyhistor', they were intellectuals with the ambition to be well-informed in all fields of knowledge.⁹ To the learned men of the sixteenth century, an omniscient overview of scholarly knowledge was attainable to a far extent. And even in the 1690s, Rotterdammers like Rabus and Bayle were still communicating their encyclopaedic form of knowledge to an audience, but the polyhistorical ideal became increasingly hard to realize, due to science's own success.

Sixteenth-century men of letters who followed in the footsteps of Erasmus were mostly concerned with literary knowledge and the interpretation and edition of ancient texts. But by the end of the sixteenth century, the challenges of war and the mercantile ambitions caused new disciplines to obtain societal relevance in the Dutch Republic.¹⁰ Disciplines like navigation, accounting and engineering relied on mathematics to arrive at results which were relevant for the survival of the Dutch Republic. These developments also influenced the newly established universities of the Republic; in the rest of Europe the scholastic speculative Aristotelianism dominated the curricula, in the Dutch Republic there was significantly more attention for fields like botany and anatomy.¹¹ Inspired by the Humanists before them, prominent Dutch scholars tried to overcome the Aristotelian distinction between theoretical and practical knowledge, and in that process also broadened the scope of relevant knowledge by performing external observation and contributing to new technology.¹² They also noticed how foreign lettered men like Vesalius and Copernicus shined light onto the functioning of the natural world by critically examining the ideas of the ancient authorities Galen and Ptolemy. The result was that at the beginning of the seventeenth century, an enormous variety of alternative ideas had been introduced into the Dutch Republic, the contemporary centre of the Republic of Letters.¹³ These ideas showed the

⁷ Id., 42.

⁸ Léon E. Halkin, *Erasmus: A Critical Biography* (Oxford 1998) 218.

⁹ Bots, *Republiek der Letteren*, 48.

¹⁰ Wiep van Bunge, *From Stevin to Spinoza: an Essay on Philosophy in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic* (Leiden; Boston; Köln 2001) 3-9.

¹¹ Bots, *Republiek der Letteren*, 82-83.

¹² Van Bunge, *Stevin to Spinoza*, 25.

¹³ Rienk Vermij, *De wetenschappelijke revolutie* (2th edition; Amsterdam 2004) 66-74.

unsatisfactory nature of the old Aristotelian worldview, but it had not replaced it with a coherent alternative.

1.2 New science and philosophy

Two pioneering methods of studying the natural world were invented in the beginning of the seventeenth century by René Descartes (1596-1650) and Francis Bacon (1561-1621). Bacon published his *Novum Organon* in 1620, it is a book that proposes a complete replacement of the Aristotelean approach to natural philosophy.¹⁴ He created a method of inductive reasoning and stressed the importance of observation and experiments. The scholastic Aristotelians had approached the study of nature like a bookish science; they used deductive reasoning and derived particular instances from universal truths. The Baconian method reverses this direction, and it moves from experiential particulars towards general truths about nature. Bacon's goal was to create a practical philosophy and to give humanity control over nature by means of progress in the study of nature.¹⁵ He was the first to emphasize the importance of systematic empiricism, and he influenced the observational research of the Royal Society and Antoni van Leeuwenhoek (1623-1723).¹⁶ But the most formative figure of the new scientific method was René Descartes. Descartes had observed how Galileo's studies of heliocentrism effectively applied observation and mathematics to dismantle and overcome Aristotelian cosmology. He was not as eager as Galileo to have a struggle with the Church or the political authorities, and so he moved to the relatively tolerant Dutch Republic, where he wrote his chief works between 1629 and 1649.¹⁷ In Cartesian metaphysics, mind and matter are two different and independent substances. Matter, the physical substance, consists in pure extension and therefore follows mechanical laws. Mind, the spiritual substance, is immaterial and exists only in humans who are thereby endowed by God to have self-consciousness, reason and immortality. According to Descartes the two substances coexist only in human nature. Ultimately, our ideas of the world reside in our mind, and from these innate ideas the physical world can be mathematically reconstructed. Cartesian dualism was widely accepted in continental Europe, especially in the Dutch Republic of Rabus' lifetime, and, as we shall see, was appropriated by moderate and radical thinkers, but heavily resisted by orthodox Reformed theologians.¹⁸ Bacon and Descartes were landmark figures who

¹⁴ Peter Dear, *Revolutionizing the Sciences: European Knowledge in Transition, 1500-1700* (3th edition; London 2019) 50-60.

¹⁵ Donald Rutherford, 'Innovation and Orthodoxy' in: Donald Rutherford eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, 11-39, here 23-31.

¹⁶ H.A.M. Snelders, 'Antoni van Leeuwenhoek's mechanistic view of the world', in: L.C. Palm and H.A.M. Snelders eds., *Antoni van Leeuwenhoek 1632-1723* (Amsterdam 1982) 57-78, here 76-77.

¹⁷ Cook, 'Science and Technology', here 357-358.

¹⁸ Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 23-25.

See, in particular: *The Crisis of Causality. Voetius and Descartes on God, Nature and Change* (Leiden 1995).

helped to shift the aim of philosophy away from speculation and bookish wisdom towards an experimental natural philosophy. They were vital in separating philosophy and theology, and in showing new directions of study in the century which historians would later associate with the scientific revolution and Early Enlightenment.

Behind the traditional historiographical narrative of progress, from the supposed ‘dark’ synthesis of Aristotelian philosophy and Christian theology towards the light of critical reason, there lies a tremendously more complex set of events.¹⁹ But this does not alter the fact that when the *Boekzaal* was published, Europe was at the end of a century in which it had drastically reconceptualized and enlarged its intellectual capacities. This was especially the case in the Dutch Republic, as one of the leading intellectual and economic nations of Europe it became a hotbed of the new philosophy and scientific achievements. Those who represented modern thought at the end of the seventeenth century had to critically engage with Cartesianism and empiricism. These new currents for instance influenced the great success of Huygens, who appropriated Cartesian mechanical philosophy and developed the pendulum clock, discovered Titan and the rings of Saturn, whilst also contributing to mathematics and optics.²⁰ The groundbreaking discoveries of Van Leeuwenhoek were the results of his inductive microscopical research and a sceptical attitude towards inherited assertions, but essentially postulated on Cartesian mechanism.²¹ In the blunt words of Rabus, Van Leeuwenhoek’s discoveries on the procreation of fleas put the rotten notions of ancient paganism to shame.²² Moreover, economic incentives also stimulated the development of experimental research in service of practical purposes. This resulted in technical innovations like the street lantern, the pendulum clock, the telescope, microscope and better printing practices.

1.3 Conflicts with theology

Whereas the blossoming of science proved useful and generally caused optimism amongst the learned, great tension overshadowed the intellectual culture of the Dutch Republic. From the 1650s the Dutch universities rapidly started to embrace the Cartesian philosophy.²³ Descartes had separated philosophy and theology with the purpose to protect both disciplines, but his system nonetheless caused religious tension. Cartesian dualism supposes that the study of the material world, based on the

¹⁹ Donald Rutherford, ‘Introduction’ in: Donald Rutherford eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, 1-11, here 6-7.

²⁰ Jonathan I. Israel, *De Republiek: 1477-1806* (5th edition; Franeker 2001) Trans.: Bert Smilde, 998-1000. See also: Rienk Vermij, *Christiaan Huygens: de mathematisering van de werkelijkheid* (Utrecht 2004).

²¹ Snelders, ‘Van Leeuwenhoek’s mechanistic view’, 76.

²² This fragment refers specifically to Aristotle’s theory of spontaneous generation.

Pieter Rabus, *Boekzaal van Europe, Gesticht door P. Rabus. Julius en Augustus 1963* (Rotterdam 1693) 163.

²³ Van Bunge, *Stevin to Spinoza*, 65-67.

mechanical laws of nature, is not subjected to theology. Theology had formerly been the ‘queen of sciences’ and natural philosophy had always been subjugated to religious dogma; Descartes’ philosophy discards the old hierarchy of sciences and severely limits the scope of religious knowledge claims. The Republic was a country of religious plurality, but the public Reformed church regarded this plurality as a threat.²⁴ Since its conception the Dutch Reformed fought a war against Catholicism, and the internal strife against the Remonstrants had almost caused a civil war during the Twelve Years’ Truce. In the 1650s a new internal conflict started amongst the theologians of the public church, when the orthodox felt threatened by novel theological principles that were enforced via the popular Cartesian philosophy.²⁵ The head of theology in Leiden Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669) and his followers were opposed by the strict Calvinist Voetius (1589-1676) and his Orangist followers. Their strife started over the Sunday observance, but the theoretical essence of this longstanding divide revolved around fundamental questions of biblical interpretation. The orthodox Voetius argued for a literal interpretation of Scripture, whereas the followers of Cocceius also attributed figurative meanings to biblical passages. Voetius staunchly defended geocentrism, whereas his opponents espousing heliocentrism asserted that Scripture derived its meaning from textual intent.²⁶

As was the case with heliocentrism, the Cocceians applied rationalism and tried to reconcile the scientific discoveries with Reformed theology, whilst the fundamental Voetians stubbornly insisted on orthodox dogmatics and the singular supreme authority of Scripture. Voetians argued that the principals of revelation should not be subjected to rationalism. In their view Cartesianism was a pathway to atheism, because it maintains that all knowledge is disputable, and it applies sceptical arguments to traditional assumptions.²⁷ Voetius was called the ‘Pope of Utrecht’ because he was the main authority of the largest faction of the Dutch Reformed Church. Their rigorous hermeneutics meant that the orthodox of the public Church remained hostile to the progressive intellectual culture of the second half of the seventeenth century. The Reformed division permeated all aspects of Dutch culture and generated sectarianism in church councils, universities and politics. This religious divide influenced politics because the orthodox aspired theocratic rule and aligned themselves with the House of Orange, whilst the Cocceians and other protestants naturally aligned with the more tolerant and liberal republican regents.

In the Dutch Republic those who aspired to wage ideological warfare, or more modestly, sought to spread ideas and information found themselves in the perfect

²⁴ Israel, *De Republiek*, 732-734.

²⁵ Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 24-28.

²⁶ Rienk Vermij, *The Calvinist Copernicans: The Reception of the new Astronomy in the Dutch Republic, 1575-1750* (Amsterdam 2002) 277-285.

²⁷ Van Bunge, *Stevin to Spinoza*, 39-50.

environment to do so. The Fall of Antwerp in 1585 had caused an exodus of merchants, intellectuals and book printers who would transform the character of the Northern Netherlands.²⁸ Thousands of skilful Calvinists from the Southern Netherlands brought their specialized artisanal and scientific knowledge to the Northern Netherlands. In the seventeenth century the Dutch Republic became a wealthy, densely populated area with the highest literacy rate of Europe, and a printing industry which made it the per capita printing capital of the world.²⁹ Its population of almost two million citizens were steady consumers of all sorts of printed works. Besides sizable books like the Bible, a large share consisted of simple works of print for short term use like almanacs, pamphlets and newspapers. Dutch printers had more liberty than their foreign colleagues due to the relative tolerance.³⁰ But this tolerance also had its limits; in practice much subversive print could be spread due to the fragmented political structure of the Republic. Censorship was predominantly coordinated and enforced from a local level, through complaints by church councils or city magistrates. If an author was banned from a certain province, he could often find a new town to proceed his endeavours. The Republic also was the only European country which did not as a rule apply preventive censorship, it therefore became a natural birthplace for Europe's most notorious literature. Many Dutch printers were encouraged in exporting controversial foreign books because censored books were popular and lucrative. All in all, Dutch printers had a stable domestic audience for their prints and great foreign opportunities for their exports. The Dutch Republic was the printing centre of Europe during the seventeenth century and as a focal point between the Holy Roman Empire, Britain and France it became the mass centre of the Republic of Letters. The ideal place for an author to combine intellectual interests with commercial aspirations.

²⁸ Andrew Pettegree and Arthur der Weduwen, *De boekhandel van de wereld : drukkers, boekverkopers en lezers in de Gouden Eeuw* (Amsterdam 2019) Trans.: Frits van der Waa, 42-45.

²⁹ Pettegree and Der Weduwen, *De boekhandel*, 7-16.

³⁰ Bots, *Republiek der Letteren*, 155-164.

2. Pieter Rabus: Education, Authorship, The *Boekzaal*

2.1 Biographical sketch

Pieter Rabus was born on 12 December 1660 in Rotterdam.¹ Rabus' parents were Mennonites and his family had fled from Flanders to Rotterdam because of Spanish religious persecutions. The date of their migration is unknown but Pieter Jacobszoon Rabus, the grandfather of Pieter Rabus, was already working as a 'kokermaecker' and 'hoornbreecker' in Rotterdam during the year 1635.² According to his lifelong friend and biographer David van Hoogstraten, Pieter Rabus' parents were 'meer met eerlykheit en deugdt, dan met goederen van de fortun gezegent'.³ But extant documentation suggests that Rabus did not grow up in poverty; his father Willem Pieterszoon was an government official and worked as a supervisor of unskilled workers, like clay and sand bearers. The family had to pay taxes over property and therefore were likely part of Rotterdam's lower middleclass.⁴ Since Pieter was an intelligent and highly motivated boy, he received the opportunity to study at Rotterdam's Latin school, where he learned writing and reading Latin. The Latin schools educated the future bureaucratic elites of the Dutch Republic; their schoolboys would become regents, physicians, jurists.⁵ However, his study came to an untimely end in 1672 because of the upheavals during the so-called 'Rampjaar) (Disaster Year), and Rabus became the apprentice of a notary. He passed for the notary exam on the 1th of February 1680, but he did not get permission to start on his own.⁶ Months earlier, the Rotterdam magistrates had stopped allowing new notaries, since there were too many, and Rabus had to find an alternative job.

In 1681 the Rotterdam magistrates appointed Rabus as a preceptor at the Latin school. As to his further studies Rabus was an autodidact; he had developed the philological and linguistic skills that were required to become a Latin teacher. Teaching first and second-year students remained his daytime job until his early death on 13 January 1702. Although Rabus had a great passion for the beauty of languages, he did not like teaching grammar to beginning students, and Van Hoogstraten remarks that 'hy zich naar zyn lastig beroep begaf, dien steen van Sysiphus, gelyk hij zich dikwils uitdrukte, die door zyne eeuwige omwentelingen der meesteren dagen slyt.' The average

¹ David van Hoogstraten, *Groot algemeen historisch, geographisch, genealogisch en oordeelkundig woordenboek: N-R* (Amsterdam; Utrecht; 's Gravenhage 1733) RAB 4-5.

² Stadsarchief Rotterdam – 'Rabus' in notary database,

https://stadsarchief.rotterdam.nl/zoeken/resultaten/?mivast=184&mizig=365&miadt=184&milang=nl&misort=unitdate%7Casc&miview=ldt&mizk_alle=rabus (on 13 March 2021).

³ Van Hoogstraten and Schuer, *Groot Woordenboek N-R*, RAB 4.

⁴ De Vet, *Rabus*, 3.

⁵ Pettegree and Der Weduwen, *De boekhandel*, 16.

⁶ Paul Nève, 'Pieter Rabus, notaris te Rotterdam van 1684 tot 1701', *Fundamina: A Journal of Legal History* 16:1 (2010) 235-243, here 240-242.

household income in the Dutch Republic during this period was 500 guilders, and by teaching Rabus earned 600 to 1000 guilders a month.⁷ His six-hour workday also meant that Rabus had time to pursue other endeavours. His social and financial position was rising swiftly and at the age of 24, on August 1684, he married Elizabeth Ostens (b. 1667), the daughter of a rich merchant.⁸ Their marriage certificate shows that they officially had a civil marriage, which suggests that Pieter and Elizabeth did not marry in the public Reformed church.⁹ In 1684 the Rotterdam magistrates also allowed Rabus to start working as a notary. Rabus now worked as a teacher and notary, an occupational combination which was not unusual at the time.¹⁰ Over a seventeen-year period Rabus signed 540 notary acts, mostly testaments and letters of attorney, and this entails that his output was less than a fifth of Rotterdam's most productive notaries.

2.2 Rabus as an author

Besides his two vocations Rabus worked on his literary career, writing Dutch poetry and translating various Latin and Greek texts. Rabus was fuelled by a boundless diligence for these literary activities. According to Van Hoogstraten, Rabus usually slept early and after a short night's rest he would spend the time before dawn in his study chamber, because at night he felt the most industrious.¹¹ During his youth Rabus had developed his literary interest through his acquaintance with the poet and book printer Francois van Hoogstraten, the father of his friend David. The bookshop of Van Hoogstraten was a meeting point of Rotterdam's poets and Collegiants, a place where theological and philosophical ideas were freely discussed.¹² The Collegiants of

⁷ Peter Rietbergen and Jojet Lysen, 'Pieter Rabus en de Boekzaal van Europe' in: Hans Bots eds., *Pieter Rabus en de Boekzaal van Europe 1692-1702* (Amsterdam 1974) 1-111, here 6; Pettegree and Der Weduwen, *De boekhandel*, 26.

⁸ De Vet claims that Elizabeth died shortly after Rabus, in the 'Oude Vrouwenhuis' of Rotterdam on 18 June 1704. But this is impossible, and her date of death is unknown. The marriage registers of Rotterdam mention that Elizabeth Ostens, formerly married to 'Petrus Rabus', had remarried to Abraham Turrenius on the 12th of December 1706. Their marriage was performed in the Reformed church and Elizabeth probably moved to Leiden where Turrenius was born and worked as a Latinist and rector.

Stadsarchief Rotterdam – 'Elisabeth Ostens' in persons database, <https://stadsarchief.rotterdam.nl/zoek-en-ontdek/stamboom/zoeken-op-personen/?mivast=184&miadt=184&mizig=100&miview=tbl&milang=nl&micols=1&mip1=ostens&mip3=elisabeth> (on 13 March 2012); A.J. van der Aa, *Biographisch woordenboek der Nederlanden: Deel 18* (Haarlem 1874) 195; De Vet, *Rabus*, 3.

⁹ Stadsarchief Rotterdam – 'Elisabeth Ostens' in persons database, <https://stadsarchief.rotterdam.nl/zoek-en-ontdek/stamboom/zoeken-op-personen/?mivast=184&miadt=184&mizig=100&miview=tbl&milang=nl&micols=1&mip1=ostens&mip3=elisabeth> (on 13 March 2012).

¹⁰ G. Chr. Kok, *Rotterdamse Juristen in vijf eeuwen* (Hilversum 2009) 40.

¹¹ Hoogstraten and Schuer, *Groot woordenboek N-R*, RAB 5.

¹² After the Synod of Dordrecht (1618-1619), the Dutch Remonstrants were left without clerical leadership. Some of the Remonstrants continued to meet without preachers to freely discuss ideas by organizing 'Colleges'. Gradually, their colleges attracted more liberal Christians, like Anabaptists, Schweckfelders and

Rotterdam were undogmatic Protestants of different strands, mostly Remonstrants and Mennonites, who gathered frequently to discuss religious issues. They shared a mentality of personal devotion and deplored religious fanaticism. The Collegiants were watched with mistrust by the orthodox faction of Rotterdam's public church. For example, Rabus' uncle in-law Jacob Ostens (c. 1625-1678) had been a well-known collegiant, and was widely despised as an atheist because of his personal acquaintance with Spinoza.¹³ As late as 1717 his bad reputation inspired a satirical attack on Ostens' nephew Jacob and the then deceased Rabus: 'Gelyk uw Oom den Atheist, Waar van uw Zwager Pieter wist zoo meesterlyk te spreken'.¹⁴ His opponents consistently associated and attacked Rabus with the ungodly reputation of his uncle. Another notable Collegiant was the writer Joachim Oudaen (1628-1692).¹⁵ Rabus became his disciple; Oudaen had initiated his passion for Dutch poetry and helped him with his study of Greek and Latin.¹⁶ Oudaen tried to reconcile Scripture with reason, admired Erasmus, Vondel and Hooft, all of which would be very influential on Rabus as well. Men like Van Hoogstraten and Oudaen played a pivotal part in Rotterdam's flourishing literary circle, and they must have greatly enriched the social milieu of Rabus.

For the literati and freethinkers of Rotterdam, 1677 was a year of celebration.¹⁷ Despite firm objections by the orthodox faction of the Reformed church, the copper statue of Erasmus was re-erected and placed on a new pedestal. It was also in these circumstances that the seventeen-year old Rabus made his first traceable steps into the Dutch literary scene. He wrote a celebratory poem on the resurrection of Erasmus' statue, and was part of the commission that decided which poetic submission should be inscribed on the pedestal. The commission chose Rabus' mentor Oudaen as the winner of this poetry contest. Although orthodox vandals tried to eradicate Oudaen's name from the statue, the inscription approved by Rabus persists on the oldest non-religious statue of the Netherlands to this day. From 1677 onwards, Rabus started to publish frequently. With his friend David van Hoogstraten he published his first book called *Rymoeffeningen*, a 175-page collection of their youth poetry. They declared that since early childhood they had enjoyed the 'lekkernijen' of poetry, and that they had made their own modest attempts.¹⁸ Although they were initially not inclined to print

even Socinians. P.G.B. Thissen, 'Frans van Hoogstraten (1632-1696)' in: H. Bots, O.S. Lankhorst and C. Zevenbergen eds., *Rotterdam Bibliopolis: Een rondgang langs boekverkopers uit de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw* (Rotterdam 1997) 177-214, here 180-182; Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House divided: 1490-1700* (London 2003) 697. See, in particular: Andrew C. Fix, *Prophecy and Reason: the Dutch collegiants in the Early Enlightenment, 1650-1700* (Ann Arbor 1984).

¹³ Wiep van Bunge, 'De Rotterdamse collegiant Jacob Ostens (1630-1678)', *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 6:1 (1990) 65-77, here 75-77.

¹⁴ Bogaert, *Eerkransen*, 8.

¹⁵ De Vet, *Rabus*, 176-181.

¹⁶ David van Hoogstraten, *Het leven van Joachim Oudaen* (s.l. 1712) 76.

¹⁷ De Vet, *Rabus*, 6.

¹⁸ Pieter Rabus and David van Hoogstraten *Rijmoeffeningen, bestaende in verscheide stijl en stof van Vaerzen*. (Amsterdam 1678) 3-5.

these poems, they did so because of the encouragement of their friends. The poems of Rabus show a passion for Classic authors like Aesop, Horace and Tacitus, and an admiration for Vondel as the greatest Dutch poet. Above all, these poems are expressions of Rabus' evangelical devotion.¹⁹ They express a deep humility before Christ, and Rabus liked to remind the reader of the fleeting nature of beauty, power and earthly existence. A typical example of this recurrent theme is: 'De deugd alleen blijft ongeschend, En haere glans is sonder end.'²⁰ In these poems Rabus often expressed his heartfelt pious nature, but these lofty phrases are not always in line with the extravagance, ambition and polemical attitude which were also a part of his character. In their introduction Rabus and Van Hoogstraten wrote that poetry is often more beneficial than the 'stellingen van twistende Godgeleerden, en lessen der Filozofen'.²¹ As the author of the *Boekzaal* Rabus tended to avoid theological hair-splitting and philosophical abstractions, and his poetry shows that this was a trait of character which he had developed early in life. Characteristic is also his denouncement of superstition, magic and the earthly power of the devil, which was expressed in a satirical poem. The 'Arme bijgelovigheeden' include witchcraft, demonic possessions, ghosts and speaking in tongues, but apparently not yet, as a different poem makes clear, the believe that comets were signs of God's wrath.²²

The first printed works by Rabus were pieces of minor poetry in the Dutch language. These were odes or small poems written for special occasions such as a marriage or the Peace of Nijmegen in 1678.²³ In the Dutch Republic the majority of these small occasional works and odes were not produced for public sale, and it is likely that only a minor share of Rabus' poetic bibliography, namely the larger works like the *Rymoeffeninge*, were sold in a bookshop to a general audience.²⁴ Rabus' focus as an author shifted in 1682, and he now also began making translations. Several contemporary and modern critics have made harsh remarks about the poor level of Rabus' poetry, but as a philologist and translator he was undeniably skilful.²⁵ Inspired by his work as a teacher he wrote a textbook of Latin grammar in 1682 and a translation of the eight Greek books of Herodian's *Roman History* (1683). Less than nine months after Rabus advertised for his publication of Herodian in the *Oprechte Haerlemsche Courant*, new advertisements appear for the *Samenspraken van Erasmus* (1684); an

¹⁹ De Vet, *Rabus* 10-12.

²⁰ Rabus and Hoogstraten, *Rymoeffeningen*, 6

²¹ Id., Voorreden.

²² Id., 33 and 93-100

²³ Rietbergen and Lysen, *Rabus*, 102-105.

²⁴ Pettegree and Der Weduwen, *De boekhandel*, 31.

²⁵ Anonymous, *Nodige verantwoordinge voor de heer Pieter Rabus, en Juffr. zijn huysvrouw, Tegens de Amsterdammers en Haarlemmers, Niet gelovende de werking der wichelroede* (s.l. 1700) 13; Bots, H., *Pieter Rabus, waardig dienaar van het 'Statendom der letterwijzen' en voorvechter van 'Onze ronde Sprake', het Nederlands* (s.l. 1979) 184-185.

early sign of his tremendous pace as an author.²⁶ That Rabus had chosen Rotterdam's most famous son as the author of his first Latin translation is not surprising. Rabus tried to embody Erasmian ideals and once wrote to Van Hoogstraten 'dat ik ben d'uwe en gy de mijne Erasmusiaan'.²⁷ He claimed his edition was a much needed improvement and laid out his conception of the translator's duty. He was a Dutch language purist, writing: 'Basterdwoorden myde ik als de pest, en alle styve manieren van spreken, daar men na den eis van de Schrijver een loopje kan gebruiken'.²⁸ Rabus also explained why these colloquia were important. He marked that Erasmus had written some of his works to educate his students and could offer them a broad spectrum of insights with 'ernstige zedenlessen, deftige verhandelingen van leerzame geschigten, Natuur- en Wereldskunde, oude, en gedenkwaardige spreuken, en eigenvindingen'.²⁹ Thus, these are the works of a true polyhistor, whose writings combine 'nut met zoet'. Rabus' final motivation is perhaps more contemptuous, but also characteristic.³⁰ In his view, Erasmus often wrote to release people from superstition and spiritual coercion by clergymen. Thus, Rabus concluded, the colloquia were also a critique of the Catholic clergymen who poisoned their ignorant followers. Those were also the people to whom Rabus' religious tolerance did not extend.

Two years later Rabus himself experienced the limits of religious tolerance. In 1686 he was assigned with the task of writing the new year's poem for the orphans of Rotterdam. To the Rotterdam magistrates the young educator who wrote poetry and had a penchant for moralising must have seemed like a fine choice. However, the Reformed consistory regarded Rabus' poem as inappropriate. Certain passages were eliminated, and another part had to be adapted: 'Een oordeel sonder mededoogen sal / Rechtstreeks den onmeedoogenden verdoemen. / En wat sal daar in tegen Christus roemen? / Barmhertigheid, die hoofd-deugd boven al.'³¹ The record in the consistory is obscure. Little is known of its context or how Rabus responded to the complaints. However, the Rotterdam consistory consisted of Voetian members of the Dutch Reformed church. These rigorists were not inclined to think that God has, or they themselves should have, generous compassion with sinners and Bible violators. In this sense the passage might even suggest that the orthodox themselves were risking doom in the view of Rabus. His position can clearly be contrasted with that of the eminent Rotterdam preacher Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711), who wrote in his book *Redelijke godsdienst*: 'Gods rechtvaardigheid laat niet toe dat de zondigheid ongestraft blijft ...

²⁶ 'Nederlanden' *Oprechte Haerlemsche courant* (21 September 1683); 'Nederlanden' *Oprechte Haerlemsche courant* (6 June 1684).

²⁷ Pieter Rabus, *Griekse, Latijnse, en Neêrduitse vermakelykheden der taalkunde* (Rotterdam 1692) 283.

²⁸ Pieter Rabus *Samenspraken van Desiderius Erasmus* (Rotterdam 1684) 7-11.

²⁹ Rabus, *Erasmus*, 12.

³⁰ De Vet, *Rabus*, 60-61.

³¹ Stadsarchief Rotterdam, Archieven van het college van Kerkmeesters, Inv.nr. 1, Resoluties van de kerkmeesters, 1573 Mei 20 – 1691 sep 3, 147.

Daarom heeft een zondaar geen genade en barmhartigheid te hopen'.³² So in 1686 Rabus learned that he could be censored, and he had his first, probably minor, clash with the Rotterdam church council.

Between 1684 and 1688 Rabus' literary output had temporarily decreased. He worked for his two jobs and started a family.³³ Pieter and Elizabeth had four children that survived past childbirth: Willem (1685-1708), Sophia (1688-1690), Pieter (1693-1752) and Sofia (b. 1697).³⁴ Their presence in the baptismal registers are also the best indicators of Rabus' religious denomination, since his children were baptized in the Remonstrant church. Rabus had married a Remonstrant wife and his brother-in-law was a Remonstrant preacher, all strongly suggesting that he was a member of this church. However, between 1680 and 1701 over a hundred individuals applied for voluntary duty at the Remonstrant church of Rotterdam and, in contrast to several of his friends, Rabus is not one of them.³⁵ Despite his many religious poems and the theological reviews in the *Boekzaal*, Rabus never expressed his favour of one religious denomination.³⁶ Both archival research and textual evidence suggest that Rabus was most likely a Remonstrant, but it cannot be excluded that he had remained a Mennonite throughout his life. His parents were Mennonites and, in contrast to his brother, no documents of Rabus' Remonstrant baptism can be found in the Rotterdam city archives. As De Vet argued, it can safely be assumed that the Erasmian ideal of irenic Christianity and tolerance were more important to Rabus than the adherence to an exact doctrine or authority.³⁷

2.3 The *Vermakelykheden der taalkunde*

In 1688 he published the *Griekse, Latijnse, en Neêrduitse vermakelykheden der taalkunde*. The book is a motley collection of translations with Rabus' commentary, and it gives additional insights into Rabus' intellectual outlook. He explains his attitude towards books and labour with a translation of a famous fragment of Erasmus:

³² Wilhelmus à Brakel, *Redelijke godsdienst: een dagboek* (4th edition; Zwolle 2008) 28 februari.

³³ De Vet, *Rabus*, 23-25.

³⁴ Names and birthdates based on: Stadsarchief Rotterdam – 'Pieter Rabus' in persons database, <https://stadsarchief.rotterdam.nl/zoek-en-ontdek/stamboom/zoeken-op-personen/?mivast=184&mizig=100&miadt=184&milang=nl&misort=vn%7Casc&miview=tbl&mip1=rabus&mip3=pieter%20>.

³⁵ Stadsarchief Rotterdam, Archieven van de Remonstrants Gereformeerde Gemeente Rotterdam, Inv. nr. 3, Resoluties en notulen, 1680 jan-1699 dec.

Stadsarchief Rotterdam, Archieven van de Remonstrants Gereformeerde Gemeente Rotterdam, Inv. nr. 4, Resoluties en notulen, 1700 jan -1721 dec.

³⁶ Karel van Herpen and René Kok, 'Pieter Rabus en zijn houding tegenover kerkelijke en godsdienstige stromingen in de 'Boekzaal' in: Hans Bots eds., *Pieter Rabus en de boekzaal van Europe 1692-1702* (Amsterdam 1974) 157-179, here 157-179.

³⁷ De Vet, *Rabus*, 13.

dat wij, die aan de letteren toegewyd zijn, de vermoeidheid onzer zinnen, of quade gesteldheid des lichaams, die men uit zwaarder boekoeffeningen gehaald heeft, met dezelve, maar vermakelijker boekoeffeningen verfrissen. Want die waarlijk boekoeffenaars zijn, doen in hun ganse leven niets anders, zoo lang het hen vry staat.³⁸

The book is written for ‘nut en vermaak’, and it is an attempt to reach out to Dutch wisdom seekers who are unable to read the languages of antiquity.³⁹ Vondel had supposedly proven that the Dutch language was capable of expression in the highest aesthetic form, true to the ancient writers and not inferior to Petrarca or Ronsart. Therefore, the Dutch public deserved more translations of the finest ancient writers and humanist teachers. Rabus anticipated that several chapters might be controversial and lead to condemnation by contemporary observers. But as an educator Rabus did not avoid these topics because he considered them of the highest importance to spiritual life. Several chapters are devoted to explaining the causes, form and spread of superstition.⁴⁰ Rabus tries to show that events which seem supernatural can be explained by natural causes, or else one may discover they are the result of deceit and error. According to Rabus, the wise man guides himself through life by following the lights of revelation and reason. There is also a chapter which depicts Greek *atheoi*.⁴¹ Humans can avoid the Scylla of atheism and the Charybdis of superstition with a rationalistic approach. Inspired by the great philologist Justus Lipsius (1547-1606) he draws out an analogy for his readers. He writes that humans sail their life on an ocean of worldly considerations, and that their souls must navigate between the cliffs of superstition and the disastrous banks of godlessness. Very few can steer without mistakes, his conclusion is derived from Horace: ‘de Zalige behouden ‘t middelpad’.⁴²

The *vermakelykheden* became a success, and in 1692 a second edition was printed. The book must have made Rabus consider the various ways in which he could inform and emancipate Dutch native tongues. But in the years between the *vermakelykheden* and the first publication of the *Boekzaal*, Rabus wrote at least two other works which significantly improved his reputation as an author. In 1689 he wrote an epic poem in celebration of the success of the Glorious Revolution.⁴³ Emulating Vondel’s *Verovering van Grol*, Rabus narrates in over 2000 lines how William III (1650-1702) ascended to the English throne. Rabus describes this event as a heavenly miracle; William had saved Christendom from a Catholic conspiracy by former King James II,

³⁸ Rabus, *vermakelykheden*, Voorreden aan den lezer.

³⁹ Id., Voorreden aan den lezer.

⁴⁰ Jan de Vet, ‘Gedachten uit de vroege verlichting: Pieter Rabus’ *vermakelykheden der taalkunde*, *De Achttiende Eeuw* 32:1 (2000) 77-97, here 90-94.

⁴¹ Rabus, *Vermakelykheden*, 33-39.

⁴² Id., 34.

⁴³ W.A.P. Smit, *Kalliope in de Nederlanden. Het Renaissancistisch-klassicismische epos van 1550 tot 1850: 1^e deel* (Assen 1978) 697-703.

French King Louis XIV, the Jesuits and Beelzebub's council in hell.⁴⁴ Thus the poem is not only an account of historical events but also includes a fictional episode. As the story progresses it develops into an ecstatic song of joy, bespeaking Rabus' fanatic Orangist attitude. As a liberal Christian, Rabus' strong allegiance to the house of Orange was intimately tied to his concerns over the expansion thrust of Louis XIV and his persecution of Protestants. Most of the older Rotterdam poets which Rabus knew, notably Oudaen, had been staunch republicans and had supported the in 1672 murdered brothers De Witt.⁴⁵ But even in those circles William had gained significant support since the 1680s because of his religious tolerance and international politics. Rabus temporarily rejoiced in the major power shift caused by the Glorious Revolution, but in later pamphlets he continued to warn the Dutch for French despotism and the 'boosheid en erfviandschap der Franssen'.⁴⁶ The king's treasurer Willem Schuilenburg personally rewarded the proud Rabus with a golden royal medal for his epos *Verlost Britanje* in 1691.⁴⁷ Later authors have made harsh remarks on the quality of Rabus' poetry. In 1808 the literary scholar Jeronimo de Vries won a prize question by the *Bataafsche Maatschappij van Taal- en Dichtkunde*, with an essay that evaluates the qualitative development of Dutch poetry.⁴⁸ His prime example of the minor poets at the start of the 18th century is Rabus, citing his attempt at heroic poetry *Verlost Britanje* (1691). Rabus had once remarked that he lived in a time that was absent of good poetry, both De Vries and De Vet concluded that Rabus himself is a prime example of this period of poetic poverty. Nonetheless, his large oeuvre and several testimonies attest the appreciation of his contemporary audience, in 1684 the author of *Den Galanten Mercurius* in The Hague wrote about Rabus' verses: 'sulcke krachtige en heerlijcke expressien in de Rijm-konst vertoonen, dat ick niet kan naerlaten de selvige aan uw ... met groote gelegentheyt toe te senden'.⁴⁹

2.4 Partnership with Pieter vander Slaart

In 1691 Rabus met a new book printer with whom his first collaboration became an instant success.⁵⁰ Rabus had previously worked with several publishers in Rotterdam, including at least four times with the Remonstrant printer Barent Bos (1655-1719). But

⁴⁴ Pieter Rabus, *Verlost Britanje door de komst van hare altans regerende majesteiten Koning Wilhelm, en koningin Maria* (Rotterdam 1689) 1 and 18-20.

⁴⁵ Israel, *De Republiek*, 946-947.

⁴⁶ Pieter Rabus, *Rust in onrust, Of antwoord op den brief van zeker Heer, wegens den Staat van ons lieve vaderland* (Rotterdam 1692) a4.

⁴⁷ Pieter Rabus, *Boekzaal van Europe: January en February 1693* (Rotterdam 1693) 3.

⁴⁸ Jeronimo de Vries, *Proeve eener geschiedenis der Nederduitsche dichtkunde: Deel II* (Amsterdam 1810) 69-70.

⁴⁹ Anonymous, *Den Galanten Mercurius, Voort-brengende Wonderlijcke Geschiedenissen, Deftige Staets-Redenen, Aerdige Bejegeningen, Verscheyde Boerterien, Notable Spreucken, Verstandige Brieven, ende Verschiet van Poëzy* (Hage [The Hague] 1684) 4.

⁵⁰ De Vet, *Rabus*, 57-58.

in 1690 Pieter vander Slaart (b. 1668) joined the highly competitive printing industry of Rotterdam and became Rabus' preferred printer. They published a translation of the Latin works by the mysterious poet Beronicus.⁵¹ According to the legend, Beronicus was a drunken virtuoso from Middelburg and capable of spontaneously writing the most genius Greek and Latin verse. The largest part of this book is formed by a burlesque poem, which satirises a failed peasant revolt that took place in Walcheren. Rabus' translation of Beronicus became a bestseller; two editions were sold out before the end of 1693 and in 1728 a fifth edition was printed in Leiden.⁵²

In his shop on the Delftse Vaart, Vander Slaart printed and traded books. The oldest remnant advertisement by Vander Slaart can be found in an edition of the *Oprechte Haerlemsche courant* on 30 October 1690 and mentions a catalogue auction; his shop 'bij de Hoenderbrug' sells the books of a deceased person 'bestaende in alderlei Faculteyten en Talen'.⁵³ The same advertisement also mentions that in his shop, which was also his home, Vander Slaart sells the *De verbetering der gedagten* by Petrus van Balen (1643-1690). This book became the first printed edition by Vander Slaart, and its front cover actually mentions that it is printed in 1691. Thus, the advertisements show two things. First, that Vander Slaart did not start in 1691, as had always been assumed, but that he was already active in 1690. Second, that sometimes the release date on the books are blatantly false. The Dutch book market was competitive and rapidly moving. Old products soon lost appeal; if a book was printed at the end of 1690, then potential buyers might have considered it outdated on January 1691. The *Thesaurus* of Dutch book printers by Gruys and Wolf has recorded 300 printers in Rotterdam between 1630 and 1770, and only 42% of them remained in business for more than 5 years.⁵⁴ Rotterdam had a thriving book market and a large clientele; only Amsterdam, Leiden and Den Haag had more bookshops, but the competitive market was also hard to access for newcomers. New businesses like Vander Slaart's were often started with loans, and the average printer could not afford a slow start; the products had to be sold whilst they were still new. Therefore, advertisements were a valuable marketing tool, and Vander Slaart not only advertised in the newspapers, but he also advertised in his own works of print. In some of his printed works Vander Slaart lists the books for sale in his shop. On June 1692 Vander Slaart published *De historische gedenkschriften van den ridder W. Temple* and he provides a catalogue of the books available in his shop.⁵⁵ On that moment Vander Slaart had less than 30 titles for sale in

⁵¹ Abels and Wouters, 'Pieter vander Slaart', 327-330.

⁵² C.J. Fernand, *Catalogue van eene schoone verzameling van boeken* (Gend 1795) catalogue 11.

⁵³ 'Nederlanden' *Oprechte Haerlemsche courant* (30 November 1690).

⁵⁴ H. Bots, O. O.S. Lankhorst and C. Zevenbergen, 'Inleiding' in: H. Bots, O.S. Lankhorst and C. Zevenbergen eds., *Rotterdam Bibliopolis: Een rondgang langs boekverkopers uit de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw* (Rotterdam 1997) 7-13, here 7-8.

⁵⁵ William Temple, *De historische gedenk-schriften van den Ridder W. Temple in twee deelen, Het eerste vervattende zijne Aanmerkingen over Nederlandsche Provintien* (Rotterdam 1692) Trans.: Pieter Rabus, De drukker aan den Lezer.

his shop, and several books had been printed in London since he had contacts there. That book became the first time Rabus translated an English book, and the second time he collaborated with Vander Slaart.

2.5 The *Boekzaal van Europe*

On 7 august 1692, threequarters of the advertisement space in *de Oprechte Haerlemsche courant* was occupied with the revelation of a forthcoming ‘Boekzael’.⁵⁶ The prominent advertisement is typical of early modern newspaper advertising, in that it does not apply an aggressive selling strategy, and has the same neutral, informing character as the newspaper articles; the text itself indicates newsvalue.⁵⁷ The newspaper printers chose the typography and the advertisers could prescribe the content of their advertisements; thus the text was prescribed by Vander Slaart. The advertisement states that Pieter vander Slaart has received a privilege by de Staten van Holland to print ‘uytdruckselen of extracten’ of all books in the Republic. For fifteen years Vander Slaart was granted the sole privilege to publish extracts from any Dutch, French, Latin, Greek, English, German, Italian or Spanish book. A bimonthly edition of book extracts called the ‘Boekzael van Europe’ would be published on the third day after its release; this entails that the first issue of July-August was available on the third of September at most bookshops in the Republic. Vander Slaart described the *Boekzaal* as a book that publishes or translates ‘extracts’, thus it was framed as a neutral compilation without the subjective discussion by an author. Two similar statements announcing a ‘Boekzaal van Europa’ were printed in the *Amsterdamse courant* on the 19th and 21th of August.⁵⁸ Current scholarship suggest that there were only four newspapers in 1692, but those had readers in all provinces of the Republic.⁵⁹ Likewise the ambitious statement that the *Boekzaal* can be found at most bookshops in the Republic, even if taken with a grain of salt, suggests a larger geographical spread and potential quantity than previously has been assumed. Vander Slaart requests a helping hand by all ‘lovers of Letters’, and asks them to send ‘al, ‘t geene sy souden mogen oordeelen, de Werelt tot enig nut en voordeel te kunnen strecken’.⁶⁰ There is no indication that original authors and printers of these books were financially compensated. But they received a fair share of free publicity and every book reviewed in the *Boekzaal* was sold in Vander Slaart’s shop, so a positive review must have been commercially advantageous. According to the advertisements the unnamed writer of

⁵⁶ ‘Nederlanden’ *Oprechte Haerlemsche courant* (7 August 1692).

⁵⁷ Joost W. Koopmans, *Early Modern Media and the News in Europe* (Leiden; Boston 2018), 116-126.

⁵⁸ The advertisements use alternative orthography; ‘Nederlanden’ *Amsterdamse courant* (19 August 1692); ‘Nederlanden’ *Amsterdamse courant* (21 August 1692).

⁵⁹ For the weeks preceding the first bimonthly edition of the *Boekzaal*, only two out of the four Dutch newspapers could be found on Delpher, thus Vander Slaart might have advertised in all four newspapers.

Joost W. Koopmans, *Early Modern Media*, 136.

⁶⁰ ‘Nederlanden’ *Oprechte Haerlemsche courant* (7 August 1692).

the *Boekzaal* will then make the published extracts suitable for print by making sure it contains no passages which are offensive towards ‘den Staet of Religie des Lants, of iemants Eere in ‘t bysonder’. Thus, the *Boekzaal* was publicly announced as a bimonthly periodical that provides excerpts from a topically undefined range of European books, and only modifies them if the government, religion or individuals are offended.

Several weeks before he started advertising, on 17 July 1692, Vander Slaart had been granted the privilege for the *Boekzaal* by the States of Holland.⁶¹ In the Privilege request Vander Slaart stated that the high costs of the *Boekzaal* and the liability of theft required his intellectual property to be protected from others. Vander Slaart had argued for the relevancy of his novel journal by stating that several ‘Geleerde en verstandige menschen’ had advised him to print extracts in a Dutch language journal. In his request he described the *Boekzaal* as journal similar to ‘Acta Eruditorium, in ‘t Latijn. The works of the Learned, in ‘t Engels en de Bibliotheque universelle met de Histoire des Ouvrages des Savans in ‘t Frans’.⁶² If Vander Slaart succeeded in following the printing schedule announced in the newspapers, the first *Boekzaal* was finished printing, and available in his shop, on the 28th of August 1692, and available in the book stores of the Republic on the 3th of September. His own shop had the benefit of attracting early birds whilst he used the bimonthly distribution of the *Boekzaal* to further promote his products. The advertisements clearly indicate that the *Boekzaal* was the flagship of Vander Slaart’s business and served as a networking vehicle. On several occasions Vander Slaart advertised for a newly printed book, and in those cases he announced that his products would be sent alongside the *Boekzaal*, and arrive on the third.⁶³ On other occasions he advertised for the sale of a deceased persons’ library and in those instances he would send an inventory to the bookstores which sold the *Boekzaal*.⁶⁴ This further exemplifies the large Dutch interests for books, because Vander Slaart would obtain the complete library of a theologian from Zierikzee, and place advertisements for this sale in a newspaper printed in Leiden which was spread throughout the Republic.

On the 28th of August the first edition of a Dutch language erudite journal was ready for sale in Vander Slaart’s shop. Whereas the average edition of the *Boekzaal* contained 150-190 pages, this ambitious first fascicle counted 216 pages and opened with a preface by the editor.⁶⁵ A copy of the *Boekzaal* is measured only fifteen centimeters long and ten centimeters wide. The journal only used black ink and did not display any illustrations, except for the symbol of Vander Slaart’s shop on the front page. One

⁶¹ Rietbergen and Lysen, ‘Rabus’ 109.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ ‘Nederlanden’ *Oprechte Haerlemsche courant* (4 April 1697).

⁶⁴ ‘Nederlanden’ *Oprechte Leydse courant* (10 September 1694).

⁶⁵ De Vet, *Rabus*, 102-104.

edition contained roughly 20 chapters of book reviews and extracts by Rabus. The smaller reviews, the author notifications, letters, remarks and index are included at the end of an edition. However, this is not the case in the first edition which opens with a preface and poem. Rabus was the writer and editor of the *Boekzaal*, but for the first three editions he remained anonymous. He had been hiding behind his artwork like Apelles, in order to hear the judgement of the passing onlookers.⁶⁶ The journal's title was designed to indicate some of the main features of the journal. Rabus avoided bastardized words like the plague, and the term 'Boekzaal' was his translation of the Latin word 'Bibliotheca'.⁶⁷ Behind the reviews we can imagine lying a complete library, a 'boekzaal' which was now open to visitors. This was commercially convenient for Vander Slaart because the discussed books could be bought in his shop; the books in the metaphorical library were in reality also those for sale in his shop. The use of the word Europe in the title indicates the explicit goal of the *Boekzaal*, namely to extend the gaze of its Dutch readers beyond their own borders. Not only did Rabus summarize many books printed in the Northern Netherlands that were written by foreign authors; almost a third of the pages in the *Boekzaal* reflected on books from a foreign-based printer.⁶⁸ Between 1692 and the May-June edition of 1701, Rabus reviewed 135 books from the Holy Roman Empire, 39 books from England and 54 books from France.

The opening edition is preceded by a preface that elaborates on the journal's *raison d'être* and the editor's method. In this preface Rabus explained that he not only aimed to inform the citizens of the Republic of Letters, but that he also wanted to inform the 'platters'; the native speakers of the Dutch Republic. The journal could also provide more publicity to Dutch authors, who were ignored in other journals like the *Biliotheque universelle et historique*, issued by Jean Le Clerc (1657-1736). In his opening statement Rabus praised the Parisian *Journal des Sçavans*, the *Philosophical Transactions* from London and the *Acta Eruditorium* from Leipzig. The *Boekzaal* was indeed the latest newcomer in the current of European learned journals that had begun in 1665 with the *Journal des Sçavans*, a journal which treated a wide range of subjects, and its English counterpart the *Philosophical Transactions*, which mainly reported on subjects of natural philosophy and science.⁶⁹ Those two journals mainly contained vernacular book reviews and reports for a specialized audience, and they informed their audience by providing original scientific contributions. The erudite journals were a result of the great increase of intellectual achievements, which required for new

⁶⁶ Pieter Rabus, *Boekzaal van Europe, gesticht door P. Rabus. Januariis en Februariis 1693* (Rotterdam 1693) Aan den lezer.

⁶⁷ Despite Rabus' rigorous commitment to Dutch words, for over a decade the front page used the Latin names of the month.

⁶⁸ Marijn van Oorsouw, 'Inventory of *Boekzaal* Reviews: 1692-1701' (Unpublished).

⁶⁹ David Banks, 'Starting Science in the Vernacular. Notes on some early Issues of the *Philosophical Transactions* and the *Journal des Scavans*, 1665-1700', *ASp* 55:1 (2009) 5-22, here 12-14.

platforms to monitor and share the growth of information.⁷⁰ Rabus' was a polyhistor and a tireless educator, so he considered himself the appropriate person to take on this informing role. In the preface Rabus mentions another polyhistor, Pierre Bayle, who had successfully performed a similar Herculean task. In his journal Bayle informed his audience on the: 'vele fraaje nieuwicheden en gedenkteeken; waar door den boekoeffenaren ontnomen wierd de langwijlige moeijlijkheid van groote stapels boeken te doorlezen. Een werk, dat het gemeene best der geleerden een ongelooflijken dienst deed'.⁷¹ Bayle's *Nouvelles de La République des Lettres* had been printed in Rotterdam and was the first erudite journal that was written for both the intellectual elite and a larger audience. The earlier erudite journals like the *Philosophical Transactions* aimed to engage an audience of specialists, whilst the *Nouvelles* and the *Boekzaal* contained a diverse range of topics and were more accessible for a broader literate audience.

The thematical range of the *Boekzaal* had no sharp limits, and in the preface Rabus asks all 'liefhebbers van konsten en wetenschappen, Godgeleerdheid, Wiskunst, Wijsbegeerte, Regten, Genees- Natuur- Taal- en Historikunde, voorts van alle brave bespiegelingen' to send any potentially interesting book to Vander Slaart.⁷² Nonetheless, it can be concluded that the journal's largest category consisted of theological treatments. Almost 40 percent of the pages in the *Boekzaal* discussed subjects related to religion.⁷³ In this sense the *Boekzaal* did not deviate much from the general state of the Dutch book market during this period, because the largest share of printed books in the Republic were also religious texts.⁷⁴ The *Boekzaal* combined useful and enjoyable knowledge, mirroring Erasmus' description of the Lettered man who, after a day of serious reading, takes his mind to rest by delighting in readings of light digestion. Most editions therefore also contain a travel report or an anthropological description. And similarly reviews on subjects such as the philosophy of Confucius or on life on the moon functioned as curious and bewildering topics that might entertain and broaden the mind. Rabus vowed to treat all books fairly, to follow the words of the author and abstain from personal judgements if possible. This solemn admission is immediately nuanced by the declaration that he will not follow an author if that author writes untruths. In practice there would prove to be a tension between these two commitments; in this respect Rabus could not draw a clear line and nor did he avoid the occasional joke or sneer. In his treatment of religious books that tension becomes particularly evident. As a liberal Christian, Rabus' own subjective

⁷⁰ De Vet, *Rabus* 105-108.

⁷¹ Pieter Rabus, *Boekzaal Julius en Augustus 1692*, Aan den lezer.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ With 'related to religion' I mean every book that has been categorized with a T; not only theology but also T combined with L or T combined with S&M etc.; Marijn van Oorsouw, 'Inventory of *Boekzaal* Reviews: 1692-1701' (Unpublished).

⁷⁴ Pettegree and Der Weduwen, *De boekhandel*, 496.

assumptions on the relation between *ratio* and *revelatio* would lead him into conflicts with the Reformed church, and continuously motivated him to give his own value judgements on Catholic authors.

As a mediator of knowledge Rabus had to compromise between differing interests and expectations. De Vet points towards the ambivalent character of writing a review for the *Boekzaal*.⁷⁵ Rabus wanted to meet the standards of an erudite journal, but he also had to consider the needs of his audience of non-specialists and ‘platters’. Rabus often referred to himself as a writer of ‘uyttreksels’ and in 1693 he defined his central aim as follows: ‘mijn opzet is, Den Hollanders, voor welken ik schrijve, een kortbondige bezeffing te geven, van meest alles, wat in de nieuwlijks uit te komene boeken vervat word, of derzelve beknopten inhoud’.⁷⁶ He often did so by copying or translating those fragments of a book which he considered most relevant.⁷⁷ He tried to convey a coherent picture of an author’s most important arguments and conclusions. One of his methods for devising a fluent summary was to follow the index of a book and rewrite it into a representative summary. Of some books it was impossible to give a complete summary; they were simply too large to be summarized in the usual one to twenty pages. Similarly, the complex and cohesive argumentation of a philosophical work are often impossible to represent in a summary. Rabus was not an expert on most subjects, which makes it hard to completely grasp a book’s content and accurately distill that into a summary. In those cases, Rabus would only summarize a book’s beginning or focus on significant passages. He provided context by giving information on an author and extra depth by pointing towards interesting details. Rabus also had several ways to create continuity in the *Boekzaal*; by cross referencing texts and authors, or by creating a series on Cromwell or Fontenelle.

Rietbergen estimated that a single edition of the *Boekzaal* amounted to circa 200 copies, he did so, based on Rabus’ remark in the sixteenth edition of the journal that ‘dit werk, nu reeds door ettelijke duizenden van afdruksels kennlijk geworden (is)’.⁷⁸ Rietbergen admitted that this was a conservative estimation. But evidence suggests that the amount of copies per edition must be estimated significantly higher. Vander Slaart proclaimed in the newspapers that his journal was available at most bookshop of the Republic, and Bayle remarked that the *Boekzaal* appeared at a high rate of print.⁷⁹ In 1702 Vander Slaart’s shop was threatened by bankruptcy, and to relieve his debt he sold a stock of products worth 1000 guilders to Jacob van Lansberghe.⁸⁰ The remaining

⁷⁵ De Vet, *Rabus*, 110-111.

⁷⁶ Pieter Rabus, *Boekzaal Julius en Augustus 1663*, Aansprake aan den Lezer.

⁷⁷ De Vet, *Rabus* 116-119.

⁷⁸ Rietbergen and Lysen, ‘Rabus’ 35-36.

⁷⁹ Correspondence of Pierre Bayle – Letter to Vincent Minutoli 8 March 1694,
<http://bayle-correspondance.univ-st-etienne.fr/?Lettre-970-Pierre-Bayle-a-Vincent&lang=fr>.

⁸⁰ Stadsarchief Rotterdam, Archieven van de Notarissen te Rotterdam en daarin opgegane gemeenten, Inv. nr. 1539, Pieter Ousseel 1700 April 2-1702 December 30.

inventory of this sale provides an indication of Vander Slaart's production capacity, because he handed over 720 prints of a book on the history of religion and 700 prints of a single edition by William Temple. Most importantly, Van Lansberghe received 300 prints of the complete 1694 editions of the *Nouveau Journals des Savants* by Chauvin. Vander Slaart had started that French journal in 1694 after the success of the *Boekzaal*, but it was short lived and unsuccessful. That eight years later Vander Slaart still possessed 300 complete editions from 1694 indicates that the amounts of prints made of the *Boekzaal* must have been much higher than the 200 estimated by Rietbergen. The old estimation should at least be doubled, and it can safely be assumed that the *Boekzaal* appeared with at least 400 prints per bimonthly edition.

3 The controversy over Balthasar Bekker: 1662-1694

3.1 A neutral journal?

Rabus had likely made an appropriate choice for the first review in the *Boekzaal*, as he started with a summary of a Dutch translation of William Cave's (1637-1714) *Primitive Christianity*. The book contains an eloquent description of the Christianity of Antiquity, and a second Dutch edition was printed in 1694, so Rabus had chosen a book that could count on the interest of a Dutch audience.¹ The second chapter reviews Rabus' own translation of William Temple, thus the unnamed author promoted his own book. He also agreeably cites his book's opening poem to William III, which signalled to the reader that the *Boekzaal* was fully in support of the House of Orange.² After these two reviews, Rabus started his treatment of the main theme of his first bimonthly edition. He enveloped his journal into the discussion on the works of Balthasar Bekker. Rabus had chosen his title to make clear his *Boekzaal* aspired to reflect a contemporary library. To live up to that expectation, in the Dutch Republic in 1692, meant that Rabus had to engage his journal in the Bekker controversy.

In 1691 the Dutch theologian Balthasar Bekker (1634-1698) had sparked a national polemic with his disputation of the philosophical and theological arguments that underpinned, the ideas and supposed phenomena that he qualified as superstitious. The first two volumes of Bekker's *De Betoverde Weereld* were printed a year before the opening edition of the *Boekzaal*, but the discussion was far from over. Bekker had publicly denounced all kinds of superstitions, such as the belief in witchcraft, sorcery, possessions and the earthly power of the devil. On the basis of Cartesian dualism Bekker had argued that the devil was a spirit, and could not have material influence on earth.³ In his second book Bekker argued that the passages in the Bible where the devil made an appearance should be interpreted as figurative descriptions. Almost 300 responses to Bekker were published between 1691 and 1694, and Jonathan Israel claims that 'measured in terms of publications generated, the Bekker furore was assuredly the biggest intellectual controversy of Early Enlightenment Europe'.⁴ A central goal of the erudite journal was to give its readers insights into the state of the most recent development in the Republic of Letters, in this regard there was no better time or place to start an erudite journal.

¹ William Cave, *De godsdienst der oude Christenen in de eerste eeuwen des Evangeliums* (Amsterdam 1694) Tran.: Salomon Bor, 1.

² Rabus, *Boekzaal Julius Augustus* 1692, 25.

³ W.P.C. Knuttel, *Balthasar Bekker: de bestrijder van het bijgeloof* (2th edition; Groningen 1979) 215.

⁴ Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 382.

Rabus was aware of the controversial nature of Bekker's argument and in the first *Boekzaal* he did not express his support for Bekker's ideas.⁵ Instead he represented Bekker in his own terms and incorporated the theologian's own summary of the *Betoverde Weereld* into the *Boekzaal*. This chapter was over 60 pages long and contained the complete content of Bekker's *Kort begrip*. The *Kort begrip* is a compilation of the chapter titles and the accompanying core arguments in the *Betoverde Weereld*. Thus, Rabus attempted to approach the controversy with complete neutrality and abstained from personal analysis or judgement. After that extensive summary, Rabus reviewed three books against Bekker. The authors which he selected to present the case against Bekker were prominent theologians and represented different perspectives. He summarized the responses by the Voetian professor Leydekker, the Coccejian theologian Groenewegen and the Remonstrant preacher Verrijn. Rabus secretly favoured Bekker's cause, but his representation of the debate on the *Betoverde Weereld* does not reveal this sympathy. The only traceable indication of the author's hidden sympathy emerges from the fact that Rabus dedicated more pages to the *Betoverde Weereld* than to the other three authors combined. But Rabus had also reviewed an older book by Bekker that disputed the popular belief that comets were divine signs.⁶ In this chapter Rabus rewrote the content of Bekker's book into a summary and admitted: 'in't beschrijven van de stralen en bewegingen der staartsterren toont de Schrijver, dat hy in den hemelloop zonderling bedreven is'.⁷ To the inquisitive reader the neutral portrayal of Bekker's ideas could already be wrong, but a slight nod of approval might cause even more hostility.

Two weeks after the first *Boekzaal* had been printed, the Reformed consistory of Rotterdam started their examination of the journal's content. On the 10th of September their acts note the question what they should do about a little book called 'de geopende Boekzael' which had been printed by Vander Slaart 'nademaal men ... heeft bespeurd een seer verkeerden geest tot voortzettinge van allerley opkomende schadelicke dwalingen en, onderdruckinge van de waerheyd en desselfs yverige voorstanderen'.⁸ The 'opkomende schadelicke dwalingen' referred to the ideas of Bekker. The church council of Rotterdam was one of the most influential Voetian churches of the Republic and, together with the church council of Utrecht, had lead the crusade against Bekker.⁹ In 1692 the preacher Gregorius Mees, a prominent member of the Rotterdam church council, was the chairman of the Synod of Holland.¹⁰ In that synod the Rotterdam

⁵ De Vet, *Rabus*, 256-263.

⁶ Rabus, *Boekzaal Julius Augustus* 1692, 34-43.

⁷ Id., 35.

⁸ Stadsarchief Rotterdam, Archieven van het college van Kerkmeesters, Inv.nr. 2, Resoluties van de kerkmeesters, 1692 apr 29 – 1705 apr 7, 392-393.

⁹ Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 153.

¹⁰ W.P.C. Knuttel, *Acta der particuliere synoden van Zuid-Holland: Zesde deel. 1687-1700* ('s Gravenhage 1916) 196 and 205-206.

consistory had presented a letter which argued for the removal of Bekker from his office and had encouraged every consistory in the Dutch Republic to guard against books which ‘op eenigerhande wijze apologien schrijven voor de opgenaemde Becker of sijn boek’. On the 10th of September the vicar Johannes Doesburg proposed that he and four elderlings would extract fragments from the *Boekzaal* to be discussed in the next council. A week later these extracts were investigated by the consistory and a decision was made. If the *Boekzaal* were to continue, its author had to conform to three demands:

I. Dat geen personen of personalia behoorden te worden vermeld: gelijk nu geschied is, wordende genoemd D.D. Koelman, Brink en Alstedius p. 41,42. II. Dat niet alleen moeten worden opgesteld extracten van boeken tegen de waerheyd, maer ook van die voor de waerheyd zijn geschreven. III. Dat men sig in ’t extraheren absoluut vrij moet vertoonen van alles wat na partijschap smaekt, gelijk sulks niet geschied is in ’t extraheren van ’t boek van Becker p. 68 verscheydene brave redenen etc. pag. 69 op de academien word minst gesogt etc. alle vooroordeelen aan een kant en de Schrift etc.¹¹

The individuals named in point I, Koelman and Brink, had been named in a negative context by Rabus, but he had made explicit that he was paraphrasing Bekker. The other person, the Calvinist theologian Alstedius (1588-1638) had jokingly been called ‘Alstelius’ by Bekker. The newspaper advertisements for the *Boekzaal* had announced that the author would remove any fragments which could offend a person’s ‘Eere in ‘t bysonder’. In this respect, Rabus and Vander Slaart had failed. But the consistory was not looking for ordinary personal offenses. In the second edition of the *Boekzaal*, Vander Slaart printed a defaming poem in which he called a Catholic writer a ‘beuzelende grolpaap’, and that led to no complaints.¹² The zealous objections from the consistory arose because Koelman and Brink were important orthodox theologians.¹³ Their second point is baseless since Rabus had also summarized three theologians who disagreed with Bekker. And point III also shows that Rabus had been misinterpreted; those specific fragments were also written by Bekker himself and did not result from Rabus’ partisanship. Thus, point I seems highly critical but holds some merit, while points II and III are simply unfair. An official of the church visited Vander Slaart to make him conform to the demands of the church council, and for a year Rabus withheld himself from discussing Bekker.¹⁴

3.2 Defending Bekker

De Vet claims that Rabus’ treatment of *De Betoverde Weereld* was a ‘tactical mistake’ and that he could have avoided critique by the church council if he had paid less

¹¹ Resoluties 1692-1705, 393.

¹² Pieter Rabus, *Boekzaal van Europe: September en October 1692* (Rotterdam 1692) Bericht van den Drukker.

¹³ Andrew Fix, *Fallen Angels: Balthasar Bekker, Spirit Belief, and Confessionalism in the Seventeenth Century in the Dutch Republic* (Dordrecht; Boston; Leiden 1999) 9.

¹⁴ De Vet, *Rabus*, 250.

attention to Bekker.¹⁵ It is correct that the opening edition, which De Vet called a ‘Bekker-special’ because 45 percent of the content relates to Bekker, instantly aroused the enduring suspicion of the orthodox Reformed church. But months earlier the Rotterdam consistory had already pledged to actively prevent the spread of Bekker’s new ideas.¹⁶ There was no possibility for Rabus to portray Bekker in any reasonable or shorter form and to stay clear of charges. His only alternative was to report on the Bekker controversy without including Bekker himself. De Vet’s characterisation of the first edition also undervalues the idealistic motivation of Rabus, and it ignores the rewards which the *Boekzaal* could reap in regards to publicity and commercial benefits. Rabus had already written against the spiritual danger of superstitious beliefs in the *Rymoeffeninge*; the pious Christian life was described as one between the Scylla of atheism and the Charybdis of superstition. In 1691 he had also written an anonymous ode to a portrait of Bekker: ‘die ‘t bygeloof Den laatsten doodsteek in zijn schriften heeft gegeven. Die Bekker kennen wil leg eerst vooroordeel neer. Gods eer te bouwen, niet des duivels, dat ’s zijn Leer.’¹⁷ According to Bekker the belief that the devil could influence human actions was a denial of God’s omnipotence. Both Rabus and Bekker considered the fight against superstition as a Christian pursuit, and as an author Rabus propagated for the improvement of spiritual life and the greater glory of God. In the poem Rabus called Bekker the author whose writings had terminated unchristian superstition. In this respect, it is hard to overstate the significance which Rabus attributed to Bekker’s core message. And on the other hand, the Bekker furore provided an ideal opportunity to arouse interest into the recently established *Boekzaal* and prove the worth of this novel medium. The polemic was fought mainly amongst theologians, but was followed by an interested audience of jurists, regents, magistrates and other educated men.¹⁸ The Bekker controversy attracted an audience not unlike the *Boekzaal* tried to reach. By providing them with quality insight into the intellectual arena, Rabus could show the unique utility of his erudite journal; it was the only Dutch publication that provided an overview. For this new medium the Bekker controversy was a litmus test; Rabus had picked the most important responses and thereby gave a representative depiction of the general debate. In this regard Rabus had founded his *Boekzaal* in a perilous, but excellent moment.

The church council had sent the vicar Mees to inform Vander Slaart and make him conform to the decisions of the consistory.¹⁹ The result was that Rabus temporarily

¹⁵ Id., 270.

¹⁶ W.P.C. Knuttel, *Acta: Zesde deel*, 196, 205-206.

¹⁷ Pieter Rabus, *Twee-maandelyke uittreksel van P. Rabus January en February 1702* (Rotterdam 1702) 123-124.

¹⁸ Lesley Monfils, ‘Een boek gaat door de wereld. Verspreiding en vroege bezitters van Balthasar Bekkers *De betoverde wereld*’, *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse boekgeschiedenis* 11:1 (2004) 67-82, here 76-77.

¹⁹ Resoluties 1692-1705, 395

avoided books relating to Bekker.²⁰ However, there are some remarks in the second edition, which indicate that he was not intimidated by the church council. In a review of Diogenes Laertius, Rabus ironically remarks about the ancient philosopher Thales: ‘Hy hield staande, dat het water ‘t begin van alles was, daar hy misschien zoo veel reden toe had, als tot zijn ander gevoelen; dat de wereld bezielt, en vol demons was. Een gevoelen, zegge ik, ‘t welk in deze eeuw by velen weinig ingang heeft’.²¹ This slight poke against spirit belief is Rabus first explicit stand in the *Boekzaal* against superstition. Slight as it may be, this indicates that Rabus was not willing to completely comply to the church’s demands. There is another fragment in this edition that indicates the author himself discards the believe in magic: ‘Van *Empedokles*, die Pythagoras gehoord heeft, willen eenige Schrijvers ons doen gelooven, dat hy konde tooveren. Ik geloove ’t ook, mits dat men my vergunne ’t woord *tooveren* na mijn gevoelens uit te leggen’.²² In this statement, a well-informed reader could certainly recognize the support of Bekker. A key argument of Bekker was that those phenomena which are often held to be magical, are actually natural events that humans fail to understand. Rabus supposes that the ancient Greeks described events as magical because of their ignorance of natural phenomena. That is an uncontroversial version of Bekker’s argument, that the authors of the Bible described events in magical terms to accommodate to the limited understanding of their contemporary audience. These fragments indicate, contrary to what De Vet supposes, that there was actual resistance in the second *Boekzaal*, and that Rabus did not limit himself to concise remarks on demonology.²³

At this point Rabus was aware of the attempts of suppression, and he did avoid the direct discussion of Bekker, but nonetheless he slips in his critique of superstition. Within a week after the second *Boekzaal* was printed the consistory had discussed the journal and had found three offensive passages.²⁴ In their objections they had missed the support of Bekker, but they found some other offenses. Rabus had quoted Diogenes the Cynic as saying that preachers were ‘de dienaars van den gemeenen hoop’ and he had also written that ‘the learned’ Poliziano thought of Pindar as a better poet than the prophet David. Mees was assigned with the task of writing a report and collecting all offensive remarks, and present those to the Rotterdam burgomasters. The result of his report to the burgomasters is unclear. It seems evident that the *Boekzaal* had to refrain from publishing any of Bekker’s opinion and negative remarks on preachers, and for a year the *Boekzaal* went without complaints in the consistory’s records.²⁵

²⁰ De Vet, *Rabus*, 270-271.

²¹ Rabus, *Boekzaal September October 1692*, 237

²² Id., 257

²³ De Vet, *Rabus*, 270-271.

²⁴ Resoluties 1692-1705, 399-400.

²⁵ De Vet, *Rabus*, 271.

By the first edition of 1693 Rabus had found the confidence to reveal himself. He was pleased with the overall reception of his journal, although he remarks that ‘t Lot van een boek hangt van ‘t begrip des Lezers af’.²⁶ At this point Rabus had been attacked from at least two different angles; by the Reformed consistory and by a Catholic polemicist named Vander Schuer. Rabus did not have the power to criticize the former, but from Catholic influence he had nothing to fear.²⁷ Rabus was not in the position to respond to the intolerant reactions of the orthodox Reformed he disliked. But he could respond to an intolerant Catholic, and his remarks are equally applicable to the orthodox inquisitors of his journal. Rabus responded to Vander Schuur: ‘hoe goed is’t, dat gy in Holland geen Inquisiteur zijt. Gy en ik zouden elkanderen niet dienen. ‘k Wil zeggen; ik zoude weinig Geloof en Hoope van uw rekkelijkheid, en gy zoud weinig Liefde tot een hater van bygeloof hebben.’²⁸ Rabus aimed to inform educated and pious men; those who approached religious matters by applying reason and Scripture.²⁹ In this respect the rigorous Voetians were possibly even more hostile to Rabus than Catholics. Soon, their inquisitors would reappear, and in the October edition of 1693 Rabus made a choice with dire consequences.

Bekker had released the third and fourth volume of the *Betoverde Weereld*, and Rabus was tempted to treat the subject again. He did so with a sizeable justification, which reads like a disclaimer. Rabus wanted to portray Bekker again in his own words and avoid partisanship, but this time he lacked the availability of the author’s own summary. He admitted: ‘dat ik de wonderen, gemeenlijk den duivel of duivel toegeschreven, zoo weinig geloove als de Heer Bekker die gelooft: zonder nochtans te verklaren, of ik ‘t verder over d’ Engelen, Geesten, en ‘t gene de Heilige Schrift daar van spreekt, met hem eens ben of niet.’³⁰ This is characteristic of Rabus’ theological attitude but also a good assessment of the situation. He genuinely disliked the theological hair-splitting, but he thereby also conveniently refrained from any support of Bekker’s most controversial theory, namely his biblical exegesis sustained by the hermeneutics of accommodation. Modern research has shown that it was this core aspect of Bekker’s biblical exegesis that generated the most controversy.³¹ In his extensive study on this subject, Andrew Fix criticized De Vet for mischaracterising the

²⁶ Pieter Rabus, *De Boekzaal van Europe, gesticht door P. Rabus. Januariis en Februariis 1693* (Rotterdam 1693) Aan den lezer.

²⁷ The *zend-brieven* by Vander Schuer seem to be lost. However, based on the reaction of Rabus and Vander Slaart it is clear that he sent three letters complaining about the mocking of Catholic relics in the *Boekzaal*. To Rabus, Catholicism was the epitome of intolerance and superstition. De Vet, *Rabus*, 76.

²⁸ Rabus, *Boekzaal Januariis Februariis 1693*, 162.

²⁹ Id., Aan den Lezer.

³⁰ Resoluties 1692-1705, 337-338.

³¹ Jan W. Buisman, ‘Bekkers Wraak: Balthasar Bekker (1634-1698), de accommodatietheorie en Nederlandse protestantse theologen, 1750-1800’, *De Achttiende Eeuw* 30:1 (1998) 97-111, here 97-98.

‘controversy around Bekker as primarily a dispute between Cartesians and their conservative Calvinist opponents’.³²

On the 18th of November 1693, Mees moved to the burgomasters to inform them ‘dat dat boek geweert moet worden’.³³ The Rotterdam consistory had been investigating other persons that year, including Bayle, Bekker and Ericus Walten. And it seems that the *Boekzaal* had escaped from their sight, since this latest controversial edition had already been printed three weeks earlier. The following weeks more extracts from the *Boekzaal* were gathered and the consistory was waiting for a decision by the burgomasters. That decision took a half year, but on the 10th of March 1694 the burgomasters informed the consistory that no edition of the *Boekzaal* were to be printed without a preventive examination of anything ‘aenstootelyx’.³⁴ The objectionable passages could be presented to the burgomasters and removed if necessary. They had already gathered two pages from the upcoming March-April edition that had to be changed. On the 21th of March the consistory had discovered new *Boekzaal* sections about magic. Those would be included in the March-April edition that was available in print a week later. These fragments about magic should have been removed, but apparently, they were printed anyhow. Remarkably, the version digitalized by the *Koninklijke Bibliotheek* includes chapters 17 and 18, whilst these chapters are excluded in the version of the Rotterdam archive. Chapter 17 is a review of the book *Daemonolatreiae* by Nicholas Remigius (1530-1616), a French jurist who proudly tortured and sentenced witches.³⁵ The book is a handbook for the recognition and persecution of witches. By adding his own critique to the stories and ideas of Remigius, Rabus purveys to his readers that the laughable, ignorant fantasies of Remigius produce cruel effects: ‘zoo vuil, beestig, en teffens met een kinderlijke plompheid, dat ik ‘er onder ‘t lezen schier van brake’.³⁶ Chapter 18 is a summary of the verdict in a Flemish sorcery trial, and further serves to exemplify the ridiculousness and wicked outcomes of superstitious beliefs.³⁷

These two chapters were certainly amongst the chapters on magic which the consistory had censored during its investigations in March. But apparently, in some prints these chapters have been included. Chapter 17 and 18 were removed from the edition’s register but included or excluded in different editions.³⁸ Whether Vander Slaart discreetly sold editions that included censored chapters to specific clients, or he was able to ignore the censorship of the church council if he sold an edition outside of

³² Fix, *Fallen Angels*, 9.

³³ Resoluties 1692-1705, 448.

³⁴ Id., 457.

³⁵ Pieter Rabus, *Boekzaal van Europe, gesticht door P. Rabus. Maart en April 1694* (Rotterdam 1694) 327-332.

³⁶ Rabus, *Boekzaal Maart April 1694*, 330.

³⁷ Id., 333-337.

³⁸ Id., *Aanwijser der voornaamste stoffen*.

Rotterdam, cannot be determined. But the survival of these two chapters shows that Rabus and Vander Slaart took active risks and partially ignored the consistory, in order to provide their interested audience with topics that were considered ideologically important and commercially beneficial. That Vander Slaart opportunistically tried to avoid some instances of censorship is not only demonstrated by the March-April edition of 1694, but also by a complaint by the consistory on 24 July 1697, when their records note: ‘dat de drukker van de Boeksael, nog voortgaat die perioden, die door de Gecommitt. Deser Vergadering uytgeschrappt waren, te drukken’.³⁹ In those three years the consistory enacted upon their official capacity to remove passages from the bimonthly editions, and the journal had to publicly display itself within an uncontroversial framework. But Rabus and Vander Slaart, in a cautious and perhaps even a clandestine way, sought for options to display their own nonconformist opinion.

³⁹ Resoluties 1692-1705, 585.

4 The dowsing rod controversy: 1694-1697

4.1 Vallemont and Bekker

The second bimonthly edition of 1694 had been Rabus' candid attack on superstition. In the first two years of his journal, Rabus had moved from the neutral portrayal of Bekker to the explicit ridicule and contempt expressed in 1694, resulting in the preventive censorship. But just when Rabus was forced to withdraw himself from the Bekker controversy, he unknowingly started a new Dutch polemic on superstition. From Lyon a sensational story had spread throughout the Republic of Letters about Jacques Aymar, a peasant who had helped to solve a murder case in 1692.¹ With the help of a dowsing rod Aymar had detected a hunchback as the murderer, and for weeks he followed the track of the murderer's accomplices across France. Aymar had to cease his manhunt when he concluded that the accomplices had fled to Genoa, but the story of his spectacular feat quickly became renowned throughout France. Aymar's observers had not been uniformly credulous, and controlled experiments were performed which he completed successfully. Not only had the suspect confessed to his crime, Aymar also managed to find the murder weapon whilst he was blindfolded. His story attracted both popular and scientific curiosity, and all kinds of theories were created to explain the practice of divination. At the onset of the Enlightenment, the proponents of the different philosophies considered these mysterious phenomena as the ideal opportunity to showcase the supremacy of their own school of thought.²

The story had become so well known that by April 1694 Rabus claimed that most Dutch savants had heard about it as well.³ In 1693 *La Physique Occulte* by De Vallemont (1649-1721) had been printed in Amsterdam. *La Physique Occulte* is a treatise that aims to provide a physical explanation of dowsing based on Cartesian principles.⁴ The author therefore argues against the old notion of occult forces and provides an alternative mechanical model. After denouncing the cruelty of witchcraft beliefs in chapter 17 and 18, Rabus summarized De Vallemont's book in chapter 23. According to Rabus the story about Aymar was 'door vliegende gerugten zoo kennelijk, en door versche blijken zoo ontwijfelbaar geworden, dat ze by geen mensch verdagt van valsheid kan zijn.'⁵ It is likely that Rabus had learned about Aymar from reading volume 3 and 4 of the *Betoverde Weereld*, since Bekker had already examined this

¹ Michael R. Lynn, 'Divining the Enlightenment: Public Opinion and Popular Science in Old Regime France', *Isis* 92:1 (2001) 34-54, here 34-41.

² Paul J. Morman, 'Rationalism and the Occult: The 1692 Case of Jacques Aymar, Dowser Par Excellence', *The Journal of Popular Culture* 19:4 (1986) 119-130, here 123.

³Rabus, *Boekzaal Maart April 1694*, 357-358.

⁴ Lynn, 'Divining the Enlightenment', 41.

⁵ Rabus, *Boekzaal Maart April 1694*, 358

story and Rabus had shortly mentioned that in his summary.⁶ De Vallemont, Bekker and Rabus accepted divination as a genuine phenomenon because Aymar had been sufficiently tested by trustworthy men. Subsequently this became a debate on superstition because the notable authors Malebranche and Pierre le Brun argued that divination was caused by diabolical assistance.⁷ Since Bekker argued that demonic interventions on earth were impossible and the physical world abides by mechanical laws, he was compelled to take a stance against Malebranche. But Bekker did not develop his own model of explanation. It was sufficient for him to remove dowsing from the spiritual realm and summarize the theory of De Vallemont in support of his own theological stance, in his chapter title he called divination: ‘Het gene meest na Tovery gelijkt, en echter minst daar aan gemeenschap heeft’.⁸

By the time Rabus reviewed *La Physique Occulte*, most French journals had already discussed treatises and epistles on Aymar by physicians, theologians, natural philosophers and astrologers.⁹ For the second time in a short period, Rabus observed the development of a significant intellectual debate in the public sphere, and in the Dutch Republic he was going to catalyse this dispute. In his ten-page review Rabus approved of De Vallemont’s naturalistic explanation. De Vallemont argued that seemingly occult phenomena, like dowsing, can be explained by a physical theory of matter and are caused by particles in the air.¹⁰ De Vallemont argued that both the corpuscular theory of Descartes and the atomic theory of Gassendi could explain how divination works. Both theories assume that the world consists of material particles, but the atomist assumes these particles are indivisible, whilst a corpuscularist assumes that matter is in principle infinitely divisible. De Vallemont considered the difference irrelevant: ‘want al wat door d’ *ondeelbare deeltjes* [atoms] van Gassendus verklaard word ’t zelve is door de *fijne stoffe* [corpuscles] van Deskartes uit te leggen.¹¹ Rabus’ treatment of De Vallemont’s book is only ten pages long, and does not provide an in-depth analysis of his philosophical argumentation. The point is that the old notions of philosophy, like substantial forms, occult qualities, sympathy, antipathy, and the demonic explanations of ‘het domdriestige grauw’ are inferior to the new philosophies of Descartes and Gassendi. Rabus took several pages to recount the story of Aymar and ridiculed those who believed the dowsing rod can be found in the Bible or Homer.¹² *La Physique Occulte* was almost 500 pages long, so Rabus concluded that the book is

⁶ Rabus, *Boekzaal Julius August 1693*, 353.

⁷ See: Page 44, note 42.

⁸ Balthasar Bekker, *Betoverde Weereld, Het derde boek* (Amsterdam 1693) 196.

⁹ Juliëtte van den Elsen, *Monsters, demonen en occulte krachten: de journalistieke perceptie van magische en wonderbaarlijke verschijnselen in de vroege Verlichting 1684-1727* (Nijmegen 2003), 93-95.

¹⁰ L.C. Palm, ‘Antoni van Leeuwenhoeks reactie op Pieter Rabus’ problemen met de wichelroede’, *Tijdschrift voor de Geschiedenis der Geneeskunde, Natuurwetenschappen, Wiskunde en Techniek* 8:1 (1985) 1-11, here 1-7.

¹¹ Rabus, *Boekzaal Julius August 1693*, 363.

¹² *Id.*, 357-366.

too large to be summarized. Instead, he urged the readers interested into the theoretical explanation of dowsing to read Bekker's chapter on that topic. But from this point onwards Rabus grew enthusiast about dowsing; it seemed like cutting-edge science to him.

4.2 Dowsing exhibitions

In the end of his summary of *La Physique Occulte*, Rabus admitted that his belief in dowsing was not only caused by the convincing stories from France, but that he also personally knew a creditable and distinguished man who had told him about his acts of divination.¹³ That man, it would later become clear, was Cornelis van Beughem (b. 1639), a scholar who is also known as the initiator of modern systematic bibliography.¹⁴ They were acquaintances who could mutually benefit from the other's bibliographical activities, and Van Beughem utilized the *Boekzaal* as a source for his bibliographical books. In the spring of 1696 Van Beughem visited Rabus and gave an exhibition with a divining rod.¹⁵ Rabus was utterly amazed, but it was almost dark and he asked Van Beughem to stay for the night so they could carry out a full day of experimentation. The next day Van Beughem's son handled the rod, because he was even more susceptible to the dowsing rod's movements. In his hands the rod moved so violently that it could harm his skin. He carved out a divining rod from a hazel tree and in front of an audience he succeeded in finding the gold and silver hidden by Rabus for over 25 times. Van Beughem asked the audience if they would like to handle the rod, telling them that although not even one in a hundred was gifted with the capability to handle it, it was worth a try. Members of the audience made their attempts, and the rod remained perfectly still. Until Rabus' wife wielded it in her hands. When she approached gold or silver, the rod started to twist and turn toward those precious objects. At the end of this day, Rabus' beliefs were no longer only affirmed by testimony of credible men, they had also been verified by experimentation. That was even better because he believed 'Zien gaat evenwel voor hooren zeggen'.¹⁶ Those were the events as described by Rabus in a letter to Antoni van Leeuwenhoek. Van Leeuwenhoek was Rabus' most prestigious contact, and Rabus proudly published several of the letters of their correspondence in the *Boekzaal*. Rabus had observed the procreation of fleas under Van Leeuwenhoek's microscope, and now he requested him to study a hazel twig with his microscope.¹⁷ Van Leeuwenhoek was intrigued, and

¹³ Id., 363.

¹⁴ Koen Vermeir, 'Circulating Knowledge or Superstition? The Dutch Debate on Divination.' in: Sven Dúpre and Christophy Lüthy eds., *Silent Messengers. The Circulation of Material Objects of Knowledge in the Early Modern Low Countries* (Berlin 2011) 293-328, here 295-298.

¹⁵ Pieter Rabus, *De Boekzaal van Europe, Gesticht door P. Rabus. Mey en Juny 1696 (Rotterdam 1696)* 495-501.

¹⁶ Rabus, *Boekzaal Mey Juny 1696*, 496

¹⁷ Id., 522-525.

promptly visited Rabus. After Elisabeth had persuasively exhibited her dowsing ability to Van Leeuwenhoek, he started his own enquiries. Van Leeuwenhoek analysed the structure of various twigs under his microscope, and observed the peculiar structure of hazel: ‘dat in het zelve ongemeen veel zeer kleine horisontale vaaten zijn, leggende maar agt a tien in een rechte linie by den anderen’.¹⁸ He assumed, like De Vallemont and Rabus, that divination functioned not unlike magnetism, but he wanted to perform more experiments. These exciting developments in the spring of 1696 inspired Rabus to print his correspondence with Van Leeuwenhoek in the *Boekzaal*, for all his readers to behold.

At the start of the second half year of 1696 the prospects surely looked fine for Rabus and Vander Slaart. Vander Slaart’s printing house had its golden years between 1694 and 1696, producing at least 57 publications.¹⁹ In comparison to other years these also included a relatively large share of precious quarto editions and prints with luxurious portraits. By means of his journal Rabus had become a respected figure in the Republic of Letters. He had contacts with important intellectuals like Van Leeuwenhoek, Bayle, Bekker, Van Dale and Govard Bidloo.²⁰ He received information from the prominent bibliographers Antonio Magliabecchi and Van Beughem, and he corresponded with foreign scholars.²¹ Rabus did not need to defend himself from attacks by antagonistic authors. He had not lived up to the high standards of religious rigorists, which had caused the preventive censorship, but he had been well-received by his target audience of tolerant and curious gentlemen. However, from 1696 onwards the author and printer became increasingly involved in financial troubles and personal grudges. When a group of anonymous authors called Rabus a ‘twistbarend mens’ in 1700, they could muster countless examples from polemics and vendettas that had occurred in the preceding years.²² The series of feuds that overshadowed the last years of Rabus’ life, can be traced back to his joyous announcement of the dowsing exhibitions.

The *Boekzaal* of July-August 1696 contained a new correspondence between Rabus and Van Leeuwenhoek. The microscopist reported on his field research that aimed to find the origin of honeydew.²³ His interests had clearly shifted away from the dowsing rod. After seven pages on honeydew, Van Leeuwenhoek explained in half a page that he had found a local diviner, who had failed on multiple occasions to find the hidden gold and silver. He subsequently ends his letter by asking Rabus: ‘Dewijl UE na alle

¹⁸ Id., 524.

¹⁹ Abels and Wouters, ‘Pieter vander Slaart’, 344-346.

²⁰ De Vet, *Rabus*, 27.

²¹ Rietbergen and Lysen, ‘Boekzaal’, 55-56.

²² Anonymous, *Nieuwe-Jaars groet, Op het ingaan der Agtiende Eeuw, aan den zeer geleerden heer den heere Piet Rab of Rap, die zig zelve gemeenlijk noem, P. Rabus, gewezene Boekzaal-Schrijver. Van de gezamentlijke vrienden van F. V. B. gezegt Montanus* (Middelburg, 1700) 3.

²³ Pieter Rabus, *De Boekzaal van Europe, Gesticht door P. Rabus. Julius en Augustus 1696* (Rotterdam 1696) 144-151.

aparentie, mede wel zal hebben hooren spreken van den Honigdauw, wilde ik gaarne verstaan, of UE eenige opmerkinge daar ontrent heeft gedaan'.²⁴ The contrast of interests is apparent from Rabus' response, as he only spends one page on honeydew and the rest on divination. Rabus praises Van Leeuwenhoek's experimental research by writing a small ode: 'Wech woorden! wech vertellingen! wech boeken! Als 't Waarheid geld. De boodschap is, de dingen 't onderzoeken. Bevinding knelt'.²⁵ Van Leeuwenhoek, or any other critical reader of the *Boekzaal*, might have noted how the content of that small poem ironically contrasts to the subsequent response of Rabus. Rabus reassured Van Leeuwenhoek that his wife still possessed her dowsing abilities and that he had continued his own experimentations. He expressed his hope that they could meet again, and could discuss the dowsing rod. But that letter of the 30th July stands as an abrupt last trace of correspondence between Rabus and Van Leeuwenhoek. Whereas Van Leeuwenhoek characteristically loses his interest after some failed experiments, Rabus was unwilling to let go of the subject.²⁶

Several months later, Rabus was unpleasantly surprised by Vander Slaart. A sceptical man named Ter Kate had been asking Vander Slaart for a public display of Elisabeth's dowsing capacities.²⁷ The two men made a bet, and Vander Slaart guided the unsuspecting Elisabeth and Pieter Rabus into a garden. In that garden, Ten Kate and several members of the Amsterdam Collegiants were awaiting to test Elisabeth. Rabus thought that ambushing a lady in this manner was highly inappropriate, but Elisabeth agreed to look for the hidden gold. Rabus described the ensuing events as follows:

'Ik voele, zegt ze hier op, een en andermaal, hoe langer hoe sterker beweging, die gyl. ziet, en dewijl ik die nergens dan hier gevoelt hebbe, oordeele ik, uit alle proeven, by my voor dezen genomen, dat het goud of zilver in den omtrek van dat klein boomtje ligt, en daar ga ik vast op. 't Was ook zoo. Het beursje met goud lag daar verborgen. Toen eerst zag ik, waar deze fijne mannen de schoen wrong. Zy schreeuwden dat het niet genoeg was, den omtrek van 't boomtje aangewezen te hebben'.²⁸

Vander Slaart wanted his money, Rabus thought that his wife's honour was assaulted, and the Collegiants were utterly unconvinced. One of the Collegiants wrote in an anonymous satire: 'als of 't niet genoeg was sulx op een voet 8 á 10 na geraden te hebben'²⁹ Rabus furiously left the gathering when one of the attendants said 'dat hy de uitwerkselen der Wichelroede niet wilde gelooven, al zag hy die nog tienmaal'.³⁰ According to Rabus this was exemplary of the excessive sceptical character of the Collegiants. Rabus supported progressive ideas, but in his view the Collegiants were

²⁴ Rabus, *Boekzaal Julius Augustus 1696*, 151.

²⁵ Id., 152.

²⁶ L.C. Palm, 'Antoni van Leeuwenhoeks reactie', 12.

²⁷ Pieter Rabus, *De Boekzaal van Europe, Gesticht door P. Rabus. Mey en Juny 1697* (Rotterdam 1697) 389-437.

²⁸ Rabus, *Boekzaal Mey Juny 1697*, 393.

²⁹ Anonymous, *Nodige verantwoordinge*, 4.

³⁰ Rabus, *Boekzaal Mey Juny 1697*, 399.

too dismissive of authority, and they applied free speech to defend their ridiculous and often unchristian ideas.³¹ They trust nobody but want to be believed by everyone, Rabus remarked. He acknowledged that every Christian denomination had its pious and falsely pious members, but because the Collegiants gathered without a preacher and everyone could have their ‘prophetical’ speech, they attracted sophists, hypocrites and fools.

Rabus thus considered himself the victim of a personal attack by disingenuous men. These men were ignorant of the principles of natural philosophy, religion and philosophy.³² But in fact he had engaged in a polemic with two young men that were far from ignorant. Rabus’ two main opponents in this affair were Lambert ten Kate and Jan Trioen.³³ Lambert ten Kate was a prominent polymath who wrote pioneering works of the historical-comparative method in linguistics, and he also played a vital part in introducing Newton to the Dutch scientific scene.³⁴ Ten Kate was backed by Jan Trioen (1657-1721), the dean of the *Collegium Physicum Harlemense*. Rabus mocked both the Collegiants and the Collegium, but the Collegium, a group that performed experiments and discussed natural philosophy, was the unofficial precursor of the modern *Koninklijke Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen*.³⁵ They had already sent a letter in January to invite Rabus for an exhibition of the dowsing rod, but Rabus had ignored them. The Collegium relied on the empirical method, and their sceptical stance in this case resembles falsification. Rabus on the other hand, based his view on trust in reliable witnesses and verification by a share of successful experiments. Ten Kate and Trioen were acquaintances of the Rotterdam Quaker Benjamin Furly, and in a meeting at his house there had been an intense argument on divination. Furly wanted to find out the truth for himself, and he visited Rabus for an exhibition. According to Rabus, Elisabeth successfully passed the tests and Furly was astounded. Two years earlier, Aymar had been publicly exposed as a fraud by the Prince de Condé, but in the Dutch Republic the debate was still vibrant, and numerous demonstrations with the dowsing rod were held in 1697.³⁶

Rabus and the Collegium ultimately decided to settle the matter in Haarlem, at the house of Antoni van Dale. Van Dale’s house was cramped with men who were waiting for Elisabeth to find gold hidden beneath a pillow. She found the gold but was ridiculed because she had walked past a second cushion with a golden watch beneath it. Again,

³¹ Van Herpen and Kok, ‘Rabus houding’, 158-160.

³² Rabus, *Boekzaal Mey Juny 1697*, 396.

³³ Gerrit H. Jongeneelen, *Fonetiek en Verlichting: De Redenering over de talen van Jan Trioen (1692)* (Amsterdam 1994) 11-12.

³⁴ Fokko Jan Dijksterhuis, ‘Low Country Opticks: The optical Pursuits of Lambert ten Kate and Daniel Fahrenheit in early Dutch ‘Newtonianism’ in: Eric Jorink and Ad Maas eds., *Newton and the Netherlands* (Amsterdam 2012) 159-184, here 159.

³⁵ Koen Vermeir, ‘Circulating Knowledge’, 20-21.

³⁶ Elsen, *Monsters demonen*, 99-100.

the situation stalled at a hostile impasse and Rabus left. His several confrontations with the Collegiants and members of the Collegium had been so upsetting that Rabus extensively recounted them in the opening chapter of the *Boekzaal* of May-June 1697. The chapter is 48 pages long and is mainly a ‘history’ of events, however between pages 420 and 423 there are theoretical arguments that aim to explain the functioning of the dowsing rod. In his book reviews, Rabus did not explicitly put forward his own philosophy, so these small fragments give rare insight into the basic assumptions of his natural philosophy.

4.3 In defense of dowsing

The members of the Haarlem collegium had written a text that denied the possibility of divination.³⁷ The explanation of Rabus’ ideas on divination is outlined as a response to this text that is now lost. Rabus explains dowsing as a mechanistic occurrence, that can be explained by a ‘filozofie der lichame’ based on the operation of ‘fijne luchtstoffe’ and ‘uitvloeisel deelen’; the *corpuscula* of Descartes.³⁸ Contrary to Vander Slaart, he did not believe in the existence of sympathetic forces.³⁹ According to Rabus, material objects like gold and the human body continuously release its tiny corpuscles in the air, those effluvia he called ‘uitvloeisels’. And particles of air can move through tiny holes in material objects. His explanation of dowsing is based on the central assumption that:

‘de fijne lugtstoffe, die door de gaten van ‘t goud vloeit, de grover deelen van de lugt, binnen zeker plaatsbestek, van ‘t goud zoude komen wech te stooten; waar door de uitvloeisels van des menschen lichaam, die door ‘t stokje vloeyen, minder tegenstand vinden aan de kant daar de lugt is wechgestooten’⁴⁰

Because of this aura of relatively small particles around gold and the human body, a natural attraction occurs between the two; the dowsing rod serves only as an instrument that channels the movement of human corpuscles towards the gold. The effluvia of the human body moved through the rod, which consequently focuses its point towards the aura of smaller corpuscles around the gold. According to Rabus this attraction is similar to magnetism, and the human body is like a magnet:

want de reden, waarom d’eene Zeilsteen sterker trekt dan d’ander is, dat de zeilsteenige uitvloeisels, met meer of minder kragt en grootte doorgaande, in een sterker Zeilsteen de lugt tussen het yzer en den steen heviger wechstooten, en overzulks het yzer door de lugt van achteren met meer kragt voortdrijven.⁴¹

³⁷ Rabus, *Boekzaal Mey Juny 1697*, 418.

³⁸ Id., 421-423; Silvia Parigi, ‘Effluvia, Action at a Distance, and the Challenge of the Third Causal Model’, *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 29:4 (2015) 351-368, here 358-364.

³⁹ Rabus, *Boekzaal Mey Juny 1697*, 435.

⁴⁰ Id., 423.

⁴¹ Id., 424-425.

This analogy to magnetism is important to Rabus because it also serves to explain why some people are better at dowsing than others. People are like magnets, and the different qualities of each person's effluvia, causes difference in air pressure which explain the different intensity of attractive force amongst individuals. Authors like Malebranche and Le Brun had argued that the random occurrence of the dowsing ability was a sign of its demonic nature.⁴² In France the theologians were especially suspicious because Aymar had tracked a murderer. Rabus also thought that it was possible to find a murderer with a dowsing rod, but in the Dutch discussion he limited his own arguments to finding gold. Rabus argued that everyone possessed the dowsing capability to a certain degree, and thereby avoided a demonological interpretation. Rabus had adopted the analogy of the magnet from De Vallemont. De Vallemont did not pay much attention to mechanistic explanations, instead the persuasiveness of his eclectic argument probably derived from the various analogies he had used.⁴³ Rabus also does not provide a theoretically sound or consistent argument and rather focuses on the magnet analogy to appeal to the imagination. Malebranche had already argued that the contemporary hype to explain natural occurrences as analogous to magnetism was misleading.⁴⁴ And in their satirical reply the members of the Haarlem Collegium pointed out that Rabus failed to explain how corpuscles accelerated or reacted to each other, and that there is no reason to assume that all material objects have an aura of effluvia.⁴⁵

Forced to defend his wife's dowsing capacities, Rabus tended to support his argument by referring to a plethora of credible witnesses. Bekker had initially also accepted the validity of the case of Aymar because of its convincing testimonies. Consequently he, and in his footsteps Rabus, tried to fit theories of dowsing into their fight against superstition. Judging on the validity of these experiments was treated as a social affair. Similar to the experimental method pioneered by Boyle, the tests were performed in the public space and the witnesses assented to confirm what counted as justified knowledge.⁴⁶ Assent had to be produced by a collective of reliable witnesses, those had to be knowledgeable and morally impeccable. In his journal, Rabus did so by attempting to depict a 'true history' and appealing to the credibility and intellectual status of his observers. Those observers of Elisabeth's capabilities included Van Leeuwenhoek, Furlly, Van Dale and several unnamed preachers, doctors and professors.⁴⁷ They were more capable of observing the truth than the members of the

⁴² Lynn, 'Divining the Enlightenment', 41

⁴³ Koen Vermeir, 'The physical Prophet and the powers of the Imagination. Part II: A case-study on dowsing and the naturalisation of the Moral, 1685-1710', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 36:1 (2005), 1-24 here 9-11.

⁴⁴ Elsen, *Monsters demonen*, 96-97.

⁴⁵ Anonymous, *Nodige verantwoordinge*, 17-22; Rabus, *Boekzaal Mey Juny 1697*, 418-419.

⁴⁶ Steven Shapin, 'Pump and Circumstance: Robert Boyle's Literary Technology', *Social Studies of Science* 14:1, 481-520, here 509.

⁴⁷ Rabus, *Boekzaal Mey Juny 1697*, 408-416

Collegium; Rabus portrayed these men as intellectually irrelevant and morally corrupt. What remains of the Collegium's writings on the dowsing rod controversy are also mainly testimonies in the form of satirized descriptions of these events, not substantial arguments. The content of their argumentative first epistle to Rabus has been lost. Initially they had politely asked to test Elisabeth's skill in front of their Collegium, but Rabus had rejected that request on the basis of their slight status.⁴⁸ Rabus' thought that a successful experiment, under the right circumstances and observed by credible men was sufficient. He argued that the failed experiments with the dowsing rod did not prove its falsehood because those experiments were performed in the wrong circumstances; the effluvia of his wife had failed because of the stress inducing conditions, or there were too many golden objects in the room.⁴⁹ Rabus' scientific argumentations reveal some aspects of his worldview, but were ultimately half-hearted attempts, unlikely to convince the readers.⁵⁰ The theoretical speculations are of inferior relevance in comparison to the success of several experimentations, and he attempted to muster as many witnesses as possible in his support. Ultimately, Rabus claimed that his wife had lost her dowsing abilities due to her pregnancy; he did not retract any of his statements on dowsing in the *Boekzaal*. In the September-October edition of 1697 he wrote his farewell poem to Trioen and Ten Kate, called 'Afkeer van een Lasterbende': 'Gedrogt'lijk samenknopsel van Een deel schendzieke duisterlingen, ... Speel vry uw rol op dit tooneel, Maar wagt met een uw wettig deel.'⁵¹

⁴⁸ Id., 412-416.

⁴⁹ Id., 404-406.

⁵⁰ Characteristic of Rabus' halve-hearted attempt to provide a theoretical explanation, and the subject of extensive mockery by the Collegium is this passage:

'Ik hadde nog een tweede betoging van de mogelijkheid der werking, en een onderzoek over den hazelaar hier in gelast, dog neme dien arbeid weer te rug, om dat zeker doorgeleerd Heer, wien ik dezelve, onder het drukken van dit blad, voorlas, zig openhartelijk liet hooren, *dat de Haarlemmers aan my niet verdient hadden, iets van my te lezen, waar uit zy wat konden leeren, en dat hy my ried, alle verdere bewijzen voor de gezeide mogelijkheid, die hem zonneklaarlijk was gebleken, te sparen*. Dezen raad lust my te volgen, en het opgezette *nader stelsel*, 't welk reeds in de handen van den Letterzetter was, nevens alle verdere bespiegelingen, voor my zelve te houden'; Rabus, *Boekzaal Mey Juny 1697*, 431-432.

⁵¹ Pieter Rabus, *De Boekzaal van Europe: September en October 1697* (Rotterdam 1697) 379-380.

5 The final censorship attempts and the aftermath of discussions on superstition (1697-)

5.1 The failing of the preventive censorship

On the 24th of July 1697 the consistory started their second campaign against the *Boekzaal*. Before it had been released, the burgomasters had informed Vander Slaart about the offensive content of the upcoming May-June fascicle. Those passages were marked by the consistory and had to be eliminated. But on the 24th the church council concluded that Rabus continued printing the passages that their visitation committee had proposed to eliminate. Certain controversial passages had been printed in the May-June edition of the *Boekzaal*: ‘sonder agt te geven de ordre door de Hr. Borger. M: voor hen menig tyt, nog bekend gemaakt’.¹ Which passages had been marked is unclear, but there is much in this edition that shows Rabus discarded the theocratic sensibilities of the Voetians. Their outrage may well have started with his opening note; a dedication to Gijsbert Ostens, cousin of the notorious Rotterdam Collegiant Jacob Ostens, and a Remonstrant preacher in Hoorn. The consistory would certainly have objected to Rabus’ short treatment of the witchcraft trials in Loudun.² Rabus’ deep-rooted resentment of superstition had revealed itself again when he concluded that even France had initiated laws in order to restrict witchcraft trials: ‘Is ‘t geen schande voor u, Duitschland, dat Vrankrijk in dit stuk wijzer als gy is!’.³ This extravagant remark reveals Rabus’ assessment of the censoring by the consistory at that moment, especially because of a key passage later in this edition. In the same edition Rabus’ admitted his self-censoring to his audience, when he summarized the content of a treatise on baptism: ‘Ik hebbe t’ zedert eenigen tijd herwaarts op verre na zulk een ruimen veld niet gehad voor een uittreksel dat de Godgeleerheid raakt, als dit jegenwoordige; nogtans zal ik mijn woord houden, en geen bloemen uit het zelve plukken, dewijl ‘er te veel netelen tussen staan.’ Thus, he avoided the thorny disputes that touched on the central tenets of religion, but on the other hand he did not refrain himself from criticising superstitious belief.

The consistory made sure that the burgomasters reprimanded Rabus on the content of his writings. The subsequent bimonthly edition had an uncontroversial outlook and consisted mostly of chapters on historical and theological books. Rabus extensively reviewed, and praised, a book on ethics by Arnold Wesenfelds.⁴ Since the author of

¹ Resoluties 1692-1705, 585.

² Rabus, *Boekzaal Mey Juny 1697*, 509-511.

³ Id., 511.

⁴ Rabus displayed great sympathy for the thought of this philosophy professor from Prussia. According to De Vet, Wesenfeld was ‘het zuivere type van de eclecticus’. He had a certain preference for Cartesian rationalism, but was also faithful to his outspoken dislike of philosophical sectarianism. This eclecticism and dislike of

that book had written a chapter on Bekker, Rabus inaudibly passed by that chapter on the ‘doling van Dr. (c) Bekker.’⁵ But Rabus was not willing to continue his self-censorship.

On the 1st of January 1698, the church council concluded that ‘den drucker van de Boeck-zael wederom heeft laten staen in al d’exemplaren een snood gedigt dat door D. preses was afgekeurt, t welk al meermalen gebeurt zijnde.’⁶ Rabus and Vander Slaart were told ‘onder bedreiging’ that they had to regulate themselves precisely to the demands of the consistory. The poem that had offended the consistory was written by Rabus to defend his friend Van Dale against the criticism of Oudaen.⁷ Oudaen had died on 25 April 1692, and during his funeral Rabus had presented a poem with the line: ‘Schoon wy verschilden van gevoelens hier en daar’.⁸ The poem that was printed in the *Boekzaal* aimed to explain that remark and their disagreement. But the timing is odd; Oudaen had already died five years earlier, and the poem expressed the ideas of Bekker in a period when the *Boekzaal* was under preventive censorship. Rabus did so because he felt the need to explain his remarks at Oudaen’s funeral. In 1683 Van Dale had written *De Oraculis*, a book that argued that the ancient oracles were cunningly designed to influence superstitious men into following the interest of the powerful few.⁹ This contradicted the theories of the Church Fathers that oracles were worked by demons. Van Dale argued that demons and magic had nothing to do with this trickery. In fact, Van Dale believed magic did not exist at all. This was an argument with social implications, because it demonstrated how credulousness had been harnessed by priests and religious sects to manipulate the people. Oudaen thought that his fellow Collegiant Van Dale had written a book with Spinozistic and atheistic tendencies and therefore wrote an acid response. He claimed that Van Dale was attempting to undermine religion by casting doubt on the existence of supernatural powers and beings. Unsurprisingly, Rabus fervently agreed with Van Dale’s erudite attack against the harm of superstition, and he was upset by his former mentor’s vitriolic reaction.

The consistory had correctly observed that the poem against Oudaen contained the ideas of Bekker. The controversial core of Bekker’s theological argument was his theory of biblical accommodation; Rabus was spreading that hermeneutical concept,

philosophical authorities was also characteristic of Rabus, and the Rotterdammer had a strong interest in the subjects of Wesenfeld’s studies, namely ethics and anthropology; De Vet, *Rabus*, 161-165.

⁵ The (c) is a footnote by Rabus. Those interested in Wesenfeld’s thoughts on Bekker could thereby find it by themselves. Even though this was one of the rare occasion in which Rabus had avoided discussing Bekker, he nonetheless pointed his readers to the relevant pages in Wesenfeld’s book; Pieter Rabus, *De Boekzaal van Europe, Gesticht door P. Rabus. Julius en Augustus 1697* (Rotterdam 1696) 58.

⁶ Resoluties 1692-1705, 600.

⁷ Id., 542-549.

⁸ Joachim Oudaen, *Joachim Oudaans Poëzy. Derde deel* (Amsterdam 1712) 76-77.

⁹ Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 365.

in a provocative manner, to his audience when he explained how historical actors had falsely perceived supernatural phenomena:

‘Moet altijd duivelskonst ter baan, En menschenwerk moet hier bezwijken. Ten minsten houd die waan ‘t gemoed Van vele, die geen zaken lezen, Dat dit gewis zoo wezen moet, En dat het vast’lijk word bewezen, Want zie, ze schromen in dat zand Tot aan den kleygrond door te ploegen, ’t is wat te hard voor hun verstand, Een duivel schijnt ‘er best te voegen.’¹⁰

That argument could have passed by unnoticed if Rabus had confined it within its original context of ancient oracles. But he pulled Bekker into this dispute, and it became apparent that Rabus applied the same hermeneutical principle to Scripture:

‘Alwaar men hem [the devil] niet hoeft te vinden, Dewijl een naerstig onderzoek Haast ziende maken kan van blinden, Die krijgt de laster strax na ’t hoofd Dat hy den Bibel houd voor beuzelen, en ’t Evengely niet gelooft ... Neen, bygeloovige, gy dwaalt. Gods woord blijft in zijn glans en eere, En menig Bybeltext vermaalt Uw vergezogte en dwaze leere.’¹¹

The poem was written in response to Oudaen, but every member of the Voetian church council of Rotterdam could observe that this was definitely rejecting the core doctrines of their theology. There were also several references to biblical passages in the poem, for instance to the witch of Endor, that had been analysed by Bekker in *De betoverde Weereld*.¹² The preventive censorship by the church council had failed again, it had been ignored on purpose by Rabus and Vander Slaart, so Vander Slaart received his second rebuke by the burgomasters in a couple of weeks. However, the consistory wanted stricter regulations; they were going to devise a set of rules for the author of the *Boekzaal*.

5.2 The end of the preventive censorship

A week later, on January 15th 1698, the consistory’s scribe noted: ‘De gecommiteerde om een opstel te maecken waer na de Schrijver en de drucker van de boekzael haer soudén hebben te reguleren hebben t volgende voorgelezen’.¹³ But a large blank space follows; their regulations were left out of the records. Nonetheless they had formed a set of regulations which they would communicate to the burgomasters, with an explicit ‘versoeck dat Schrijver en Drucker mogen worden verpligt haer dear nae stiptelick te reguleren’.¹⁴ For three weeks in a row the *Boekzaal* had been discussed by the

¹⁰ Pieter Rabus, *De Boekzaal van Europe, Gesticht door P. Rabus. November en December 1697* (Rotterdam 1697) 545.

¹¹ Resoluties 1692-1705, 545-546.

¹² De Vet, *Rabus*, 274.

¹³ Resoluties 1692-1705, 602.

¹⁴ *Id.*, 602.

consistory, but the burgomasters did not share their sense of urgency.¹⁵ Four months and two bimonthly editions later the consistory had finally received their reply. All these months the consistory had been naming the *Boekzaal* in one breath with the book *Vervolg op 't Leven van Philopater* (1697).¹⁶ The *Philopater* is a Spinozistic novel about a university student that mocks both the Voetian and Cocceian theologians.¹⁷ The *Boekzaal* and *Philopater* form the same paragraph but shared a different fate. The burgomasters had collected all editions of *Philopater* in Rotterdam's book shops, and they had them burned. For the *Boekzaal* however, the preventive censorship had been lifted. Rabus had been summoned to the burgomasters and was told in serious terms to conform to their regulations. Rabus accepted, 'waar op hij ontslagen is van sijne Boekzale verder te moeten laten visiteren van de E. Kerkeraad'.¹⁸ Thus, the preventive censorship was lifted, and for the remainder of his life Rabus was relieved from visitations and objections from the church council.

At least one of the demands by the consistory can be recovered from Rabus' writings. It is the most obvious, and minimal demand that could be expected from the consistory. In the first edition after Rabus had been summoned to the burgomasters, he wrote in a chapter on the theologian Andalus that he would no longer discuss books that relate to the theories of Bekker.¹⁹ And in 1702, a chapter from the first posthumous edition of his journal the *Twee-maandelijke uittreksels* contains a similar remark by Rabus. He had been tempted to discuss Bekker again, and he finished that chapter as follows:

'Wie zou gedagt hebben dat de Uitgever der Poëzy van den Heer K. Brandt (in zijn leven mijn geagte vriend) my door zijn verzuim stoffe zou verschaft hebben om van den Duivel te praten, daar dog het verhandelen van de kijaadjes voor en tegen des Duivels mogendheid, met alles wat daar aan vast kleeft, eens voor al te eeuwigen dage uit mijne tweemaandelijke bladen is uitgebannen?'²⁰

But this chapter itself indicates that Rabus and his publisher did not consider the regulations of the consistory as a serious hazard, because this citation is preceded by five pages on Bekker.²¹ The chapter discussed laudatory poem that Rabus had written for Bekker in 1692, and it is even included into the journal. Rabus had already restarted his steady fight against superstition in 1699; remarks on superstition and demonology can be found scattered all through the *Boekzaal* of that year, and they were even

¹⁵ The limited geographic range of these activities also suggests a lack of a serious response by the burgomasters. Vander Slaart's shop was at the Delftesevaart, and the old townhouse stood at the Hooghstaat. That is a walk of several hundred meters.

¹⁶ De Vet, Rabus, 275.

¹⁷ Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 317.

¹⁸ Resoluties 1692-1705, 612.

¹⁹ Pieter Rabus, *De Boekzaal van Europe, Gesticht door P. Rabus. Julius en Augustus 1698* (Rotterdam 1698) 167.

²⁰ Pieter Rabus, *Twee-maandelyke uittreksel van P. Rabus January en February 1702* (Rotterdam 1702) 125.

²¹ Rabus, *Twee-maandelyke January February 1702*, 121-125.

confidently made visible in some chapter registers.²² He also did not need to discuss Bekker anymore because the theologian's great controversy had ended with his death in 1698. Rabus could move on to similar themes, like he did when he started a series on Fontenelle's History of Oracles, a book inspired by Van Dale that aimed to correct the erroneous idea of the Christian Fathers that ancient auguries and divinations were produced by demonic powers. In one of his reviews of 1699 Rabus applied biblical accommodation to the story of Nebuchadnezzar and concluded that the king had been fooled by his own 'bygeloovigen landaart'.²³ Not much further Rabus wrote: 'Laat ons nu ook uit den achtsten brief iets van der Turken Bygeloovigheid hooren: want deze Pest (die alle Godsdiensten bederft) heeft in alle hunne daden de overhand'.²⁴ Those statements were then followed by an extensive depiction and condemnation of both Turkish and German forms of superstition.

The results of these interactions between Rabus, the burgomasters and the consistory, seems to be a defeat for the consistory. In 1694 they had tried to prohibit the *Boekzaal*, and the result was that they were granted the possibility of preventive censorship. When that preventive censorship was consciously ignored and proved itself inadequate, they demanded binding regulations with an underlying threat of prohibition. In practice the result was that their only tool of control, the preventive censorship, was lifted and Rabus had gotten off with an informal pledge to the burgomasters. Rabus took those threats seriously in 1698. But the following year he resumed his steady fight against superstition, and he seemed to have done so without any intrusive observers

²² Pieter Rabus, *Boekzaal van Europe, Gesticht door P. Rabus. Julius en Augustus 1699* (Rotterdam 1699) Aanwijzer der voornaamste Stoffen.

²³ Rabus, *Boekzaal Julius Augustus 1699*, 110.

²⁴ *Id.*, 147

6. Editorial agency and patronage

6.1 Establishing political connections

The abrupt end to the preventive censorship touching the *Boekzaal* remains a mystery. In the newspaper advertisements of 1692, Vander Slaart had emphasized that his author would remove all passages that could offend the state, the public religion, or any individual's good reputation. Those were the three most common grounds on which publications were being censored in the Dutch Republic.¹ Between 1692 and 1698, the *Boekzaal* contained a host of chapters and passages that could undoubtedly be interpreted as libel, and the journal consistently spread ideas that were diametrically opposed to the theology of the Reformed church. Rabus taking the wrong side in the personal feud on dowsing might have had negative effects on his reputation and credibility as an author, but the theological content of the periodical was the cause of the preventive censorship and official threats of cancellation. Several Dutch authors around 1700 complained about the increasing assistance of magistrates to comply with the theocratic control over the spread of knowledge. Those grievances are not representative of Rabus's case. During the 1690s the Rotterdam consistory wrote more complaints about the *Boekzaal* than any other book or person, but Vander Slaart and Rabus were ultimately handled with a relative laxity.²

In the records of the consistory the *Boekzaal* can often be found in the presence of other 'offenders' like Bekker, Bayle, Ericus Walten, and an unnamed Catholic priest; the consistory had much more success in suppressing these other individuals. Although Bekker was outside of the jurisdiction of Rotterdam, their consistory had propelled the attempts to remove him from his ministry in Amsterdam. Walten had supported Bekker and met his untimely death in prison because he mocked the biblical literalism of the orthodox theologians.³ In 1693 the Orangist burgomasters had removed Bayle from his professorate after an indictment presented by the French and Dutch Reformed consistories.⁴ And after several months of objections by the consistory, an obstinate Catholic preacher was forced to stop his processions and leave his home.⁵ Considering the success of the church council's censorship in other cases, there is no rationale to explain the fact that the *Boekzaal* was left unharmed after six years of continuous agitation. Since the positioning of the *Boekzaal* in religious discourse was so subversive, it is illuminating to place Rabus and Vander Slaart within their contemporary political structure. Not merely because previous historiography on the

¹ Inger Leemans, 'Censuur als onmacht. De omstrede Nederlandse publieke ruimte 1660-1760' in: Marita Mathijssen eds., *Boeken onder druk: Censuur en pers-onvrijheid in Nederland sinds de boekdrukkunst* (Amsterdam 2011) 45-59, here 48-52.

² Ingrid Weekhout, *Boekencensuur in de Noordelijke Nederlanden: de vrijheid van drukpers in de zeventiende eeuw* (Den Haag 1998) 220-221.

³ Fix, *Angels*, 120-124.

⁴ Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 337-338.

⁵ Resoluties 1692-1705, 564 and 614.

Boekzaal did not place the journal within this political context. More importantly, because it can provide additional insights into Rabus' network and agency as an author, and it provides a better understanding of why the *Boekzaal* enjoyed a relative freedom. The ultimate power to censor or cancel the journal was legally in the hands of the 'Heeren van de Weth'; the five burgomasters, the seven Schepens and the Bailiff of Rotterdam.⁶ In their minutes the consistory usually wrote that they handed over their complaints to the burgomasters. These leading magistrates of Rotterdam mediated the relation and communication between the church council and Rabus and Vander Slaart. The fate of the *Boekzaal* depended on the judgement of the 'Heeren van de Weth', Thus, Rabus and Vander Slaart had a second option to ensure their journal's existence; by receiving the approval of the magistrates. The goal of this section is to uncover some of the political connections that Rabus and Vander Slaart had with the ruling elite of Rotterdam, and thereby find out how the *Boekzaal* could have avoided cancellation or censorship.

From the beginning of his literary career Rabus consciously reached out to the regents of Rotterdam for their favours. As an unorthodox Christian, not born into the upper class, powerful benefactors were useful, if not outright necessary for a successful literary career. Already in the first year of his authorship he wrote: 'Gy VAD'REN [the burgomasters of Rotterdam] ... gewaardig u mijn Zang t' omvangen met uw' gunst ... Zoo stookt die gunst mijn yver verder aan, Om namaals meer de hand aen 't werk te slaan'.⁷ Throughout his career Rabus dedicated his books and poetry to the magistrates of Rotterdam with the goal to receive their support. A patron could provide an author with new employment, authority, protection or money.⁸ Since patronage was the result of personal agreements and relations, it leaves behind few, and often inexplicit, evidence. Unfortunately, this is also true in the case of Rabus, but an examination of his literary corpus nonetheless shows that the burgomasters had financed him on several occasions and that he was acquainted with influential politicians that could protect him if necessary. When he started his literary career, he was pleading to the magistrates to support him, and those pleas had success. In a preface of 1681 he wrote:

'zal het des te beter voegen deze mijn uitspanninge aan U Ed: gr: Achtb: [the burgomasters] opgedragen te hebben ... Zoo wanneer volgens mijne hope, deze mijn Dicht-lust door het gunstig ontfangen van Uw' Ed: gr: Achtb: verder aangequeect word; Ik zal den moed nemen van Uw' Ed: gr: Achtb: na dezen gewichter preuven van onze gediensigheid te beloven, gelijk die eerbiediglijk Uw' Ed: groot Achtbaar gezag word aangeboden'.

Rabus always dedicated his pamphlets to the prominent regents of Rotterdam, a tactic which proved to reap rewards for him. In 1691 he wrote: 'Grootachtbre Heeren, [the burgomasters] wilt gy ook met gunstige oogen 't ontleende pronkcieraad van uwen

⁶ E.A. Engelbrecht, *De vroedschap van Rotterdam 1572-1795* (Rotterdam 1973) XXXIII.

⁷ P. Rabus, *Geknevelden oorlogsgod Of vrede*, (Rotterdam 1678) 8.

⁸ P.J. Verkruijsse, 'Het boekenmecenaat in de zeventiende eeuw', *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 6:1 (1990), 137-142, here 137-143.

naam gedoogen Voor deze kleene schets. Der Burgervad'ren gunst Gaf voormaals teekenen van achting voor de kunst.⁹ Especially his repertoire of smaller, celebratory poetry on the successes of William III were likely paid by benefactors.

It is therefore also important to establish that Rabus had been a prominent author for the Orangist cause, which was a significant fact in Rotterdam during the 1690s. Between the rise to power of William III in 1672 and 1692, the Orangist faction of Rotterdam increasingly took control over the political system of Rotterdam.¹⁰ A thorn in the Orangist side was the powerful Republican regent Adriaen Paets (1631-1686), who was sympathetic to the Collegiants and a founder of the Illustrious school of Rotterdam, where he had appointed Bayle as professor. The early intellectual influences of Rabus, the Collegiants and Oudaen, had been Republicans in support of the liberal politics of De Witt. But in contrast to this older generation, Rabus grew up during the reign of William III and became his ardent supporter instead. An Orangist organizer of the continuous attempt to slander the Republicans of Rotterdam was the Burgomaster Herman van Zoelen.¹¹ Rabus dedicated several of his works to Van Zoelen, and it is certain that Van Zoelen facilitated Rabus' literary career. In the intro of his book *Vermakelykeden* Rabus wrote: 'de erinnering van mijn eigen plicht, die my noodzaakte Uw Ed: [Van Zoelen] te verkiezen tot een beschermheer, aan wien ik mocht betuigen erkentnisse van genote weldaden'.¹² A second patron of Rabus' was Jacob Muis de Brauw, a Rotterdam Burgomaster who financed Rabus' translation of Herodianus.¹³ In the Dutch Republic it was common for regents to hire writers in order to enhance their prestige or to propagate a political cause.¹⁴ Skilful poets were payed for occasional poetry, and they wrote odes and occasional poems on their own initiative, with the hopes to be paid afterwards. Rabus also did this with his poetry; his occasional songs of joy are deliberately crafted like poems of 'onbedwongen' enthusiasm, but he ensured that they start and finish with a praise or appeal towards the magistrates of Rotterdam.¹⁵

That Rabus could receive excellent rewards, even after his poetry had been printed, is demonstrated by the precious golden medal he received for writing *Verlost Britanje*. William III deliberately funded political propaganda in the Dutch Republic and he

⁹ P. Rabus, *Op de tocht na Ierland van zijne Majesteit Wilhelm, Door Gods genade Koning van Groot Britanje, Beschermmer des Geloofs, &c. &c. &c.* (Rotterdam 1690) 5.

¹⁰ Arie van der Schoor, *Stad in aanwas: Geschiedenis van Rotterdam tot 1813* (Zwolle 1999) 282-291.

¹¹ Weekhout, *Boekencensuur*, 171.

¹² Rabus, *vermakelykheden*, opdracht.

¹³ Rabus thanks De Brauw for his 'mecenaat'. In the Dutch language there is a distinction between 'patronaat', someone who offers protection, contacts, or lends his reputation to another person, and 'mecenaat' the provision of financial support. This distinction is not made in the English language, and the two Dutch terms are certainly not mutually exclusive; Pieter Rabus, *Herodianus acht boeken Der Roomsche geschiedenissen, uit het grieks verduitscht* (Rotterdam 1683) opdracht.

¹⁴ Pettegree and Der Weduwen, *De boekhandel*, 266-276.

¹⁵ For example, compare the beginning and end of; Rabus, *tocht na Ierland*; Rabus, *Verlost Britanje*.

rewarded successful authors like Rabus that could help spread his support.¹⁶ According to D.P. Snoep, one of the secondants of William, his physician Govert Bidloo (1649-1713) organized the attempts to furnish his political image; Rabus personally talked with Bidloo on his works.¹⁷ Rabus wrote at least eleven pamphlets that relate to political affairs or the House of Orange. For example, a minor poem like *Triomfvaarzen op het bemagtigen van Namen* was specifically written for a day of celebration in Rotterdam, and starts with a dedication to the magistrates and an opening poem in their honour. If a pamphlet or a book had a financier, a genuflection by the author was a ritual component of the texts.¹⁸ The *Boekzaal* did not review political publications, but the authors' notes on historical and geographical books are frequently supplemented with appraisals of William III and the vilification of Louis XIV.¹⁹ Rabus had a reputation as an Orangist and often boasted with his Royal medal.

Rabus did not only write prolific pamphlets and poems for the Orangist cause, he also had active connections with the most powerful Orangist family of Rotterdam. In 1690 a violent revolt arose against the Orangist regent Jacob van Zuylen van Nyevelt.²⁰ He was the unpopular bailiff of Rotterdam and had built a reputation for corruption and fraud. When he sentenced the citizen guard Cornelis Costerman to death for killing a tax collector, the populace of Rotterdam revolted against van Zuylen van Nyevelt. Encouraged by several Republican burgomasters, the rioters plundered his house and the Court of Holland removed him from his office on account of his malversation. But when this news reached William III, he utilized his influence to reinstall van Zuylen van Nyevelt. The Rotterdam city council was purged of its republican members and William's protegee replaced the republicans with his own family members and supporters.²¹ The political power of the Rotterdam republicans had been crushed and through the intervention of William III, it had been made clear that van Zuylen van Nyevelt was the city's most prominent regent. For their censorship requests, the consistory presented their complaints and extracts to the burgomasters. These men were either family members or supporters of van Zuylen van Nyevelt, and when he died in 1695, his influence was passed on to his two sons.²² His son Arnout was granted

¹⁶ D. P. Snoep, 'Haagste triumfalia voor Willem III – Februari 1691', *De Boekenwereld* 5:1 (1988-1989) 35-41, here 35-41.

¹⁷ Rabus, *Boekzaal Julius August 1698*, 87.

¹⁸ J.J.V.M. De Vet, 'Maecenaat in de pruijken tijd', *Handelingen van het Nederlandse Filologencongres* 38:1 (1984) 149-175, here 158-160.

¹⁹ Kees van Oord, 'De politiek in de Boekzaal van Europe' in: Hans Bots eds., *Pieter Rabus en de boekzaal van Europe 1692-1702* (Amsterdam 1974) 383-397, here 389-392.

²⁰ Israel, *De Republiek*, 947-948.

²¹ Schoor, *Stad in aanwas*, 281-282.

²² Engelbrecht, *De vroedschap*, 257 and 275.

his father's vacant position via a personal letter by William III, and his other son Herman, a friend of Rabus, started his 40-year run as a city secretary.²³

Rabus' connection to the van Zuylen van Nyevelt family can be traced back to the dawn of his literary career. In 1681 Rabus wrote *De Kruis-held, ofte het Leven van den Apostel Paulus*. The poem dedicates the special, largest share on top of the page to honour Jacob van Zuylen van Nieuvelt.²⁴ In his intro Rabus writes: 'onder de bescherminge van uw' Ed: gr: Achtb: in 't ligt bragt ; op dat deze weinige bladeren op 't voorhoofd zouden dragen de namen mijner Overheden, en Schuts-heeren, aan wien ik pligtshalven gehouden ben in allen gevalle eerbiedigheid te bewijzen, en onderdanigheid te kennen te geven'.²⁵ It is certain that in 1698, the year that the consistory attempted to cancel the *Boekzaal*, Rabus had a favourable personal relationship with Herman van Zuylen van Nieuvelt. As the city secretary he was responsible for the daily administrative tasks of the city, those included the oversight of notary contracts. As a notary Rabus frequently met Herman, and his name can be found on dozens of Rabus' contracts.²⁶ Rabus dedicated an edition of the *Boekzaal* to Herman; he called him his 'ouden vriend' and a 'voorstander van geleerdheid en wetenschappen'. The city secretary was not only granted a honourable mentioning in the *Boekzaal* as a supporter of the literati of Rotterdam, Rabus also wrote a personalized book review to flatter him.²⁷ He summarized a chronicle in which several progenitors of the van Zuylen van Nyevelt bloodline take part. In this review Rabus' flattery reaches a finely crafted peak when he described Henrik van Zuylen van Nyevelt (1440-1483). Henrik fought against the Bishop of Utrecht, and he had died besieging that city in 1483. Since that history was written by a contemporary Catholic priest, Henrik was the actual antagonist of the original narrative. Instead of summarizing the original chronicle, Rabus intervenes to create a more pleasing narrative, and finally moulds Henrik into the shape of a *Rabian* hero: '[the chronicle shows] dat hy, een doodviand van vele geestelijke, door het geestelijke zwaard van de Paus reeds geslagen, gebannen, en gevloekt was. En dit is by my een bewijs, dat Henrik een onverschrokke voorstander van 's lands wetten, dog een hater van Kerkelijke Kluiswolven, zal geweest zijn'.²⁸

²³ Stadsarchief Rotterdam, Oud Archief van de Stad Rotterdam, Inv.nr. 787, Missiven van de Stadhouders c.q. voor hen handelende gezagsdragers geadresseerd aan de hoofdofficiëren inzake de magistraatsbestelling, 1557-1749, Letter by William III signed August 1695.

²⁴ Pieter Rabus, *De kruis-held, Ofte het Leven van den apostel Paulus; Waar by gevoegt is desselfs Brief, Aan de Galaters* (Enckuysen 1681) 2.

²⁵ Rabus, *De kruis-held*, 3-6.

²⁶ Stadsarchief Rotterdam, Archieven van de Notarissen te Rotterdam en daarin opgegane gemeenten, Inv. nr. 1385, Pieter Rabus 1692 Januari 10-1699 December 9, 124.

²⁷ Pieter Rabus, *De Boekzaal van Europe, Gesticht door P. Rabus. November en December 1698* (Rotterdam 1698) 399-422.

²⁸ Rabus, *Boekzaal November December 1698*, 408.

6.2 *Letterlekkernyen* on a personal dish

In 1698 these chapters were part of a strategy in which Rabus crafted the *Boekzaal* into a journal that was not solely offensive towards the consistory; the magistrates themselves would have a pleasant time reading the journal. In this manner the *Boekzaal* formed a tool which could motivate the magistrates to protect Rabus from the continuous critique of the consistory. The church council might have gasped at the subversive contents of the journal, but the burgomasters were offered personalized literature of a pleasing nature. In January 1698, when the consistory aimed to cancel the *Boekzaal*, Rabus started a streak of 8 bimonthly editions that were dedicated to the highest officials of Rotterdam; its five burgomasters and three secretaries.²⁹ The timing of this decision clearly indicates that Rabus and Vander Slaart thought it wise to capture the benevolence of the highest magistrates of Rotterdam. Montanus, a poet who Rabus had angered by writing a bad review, had noted in 1699 that Rabus was dedicating his journal to the burgomasters and responded:

‘Wie heeft ooid gehoord, dat iemand zijne Overheid Eerbied bewijzt met het Veragten van hunne Plakkaaten? met ’t Overtreeden van hunne Geboden? en met het Bespotten van hunne Bevelen? ... Ja wie heeft ooid gezien, dat iemand zulks doende, den Naam zijner Overheden zelv bestaat te gebruiken tot Schild en Deksel zijner Wetovertreedingen?’³⁰

Montanus provides a contemporary testimony of the amount of controversy Rabus’ authorship had caused, and Rabus’ attempts to please the burgomasters went further than Montanus supposed.

Even though there is few personal information on the magistrates of Rotterdam, it is clear that Rabus went beyond mere dedications, and wrote chapters that were specifically designed to suit their interests. Rabus did not only do this with his chapter on the Van Zuylen van Nyevelt family; another example of the deliberate attempts to please the burgomasters is the July-August edition dedicated to Abraham Elzevier (1654-1707).³¹ Rabus wrote that the burgomaster is a ‘liefhebber van oudheden, historien en geleerde boekoeffeningen’, so he starts this bimonthly edition with a review of 27 pages on several books about emperor Julian the Apostate (313-363).³² The first five chapters, containing more than half of the pages in this bimonthly edition, are all of possible interest to a ‘lover of history’.³³ The sixth chapter is a review of

²⁹ Rietbergen and Lysen, ‘Rabus’, 106-107.

³⁰ Francois van Bergen, *Lof-reden op Piet Rab of Rap, die zig zelve gemeenlijk noemd Pieter Rabus*, (Middelburg 1699) 26.

³¹ P.J. Blok en P.C. Molhuysen, *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek*, vol. 3 (Leiden 1914) 347.

³² Rabus, *Boekzaal Julius Augustus 1698*, 17-43.

³³ Thereby I mean the following chapters; chapter 1: On emperor Julian. Chapter 2: On China (contains various topics placed within a historical perspective and a description of Confucius). Chapter 3: On several books of the Old Testament. Chapter 4: On letters of Christian martyrs. Chapter 5: On the books of Moses; Rabus, *Boekzaal Julius Augustus 1698*, 1-119.

various sermons by Elie Benoit, a prominent theologian of the French Reformed Church. As a member of the French Reformed Church, Elzevier could take interest into that chapter as well. Rabus' overflowed this review with praises of Benoit's eruditeness, and lauds the eloquence of French Reformed sermons in general: 't welk zy rondom bestrooijen met bloemen van welsprekendheid'.³⁴

The January-February edition of the *Boekzaal* was dedicated to Burgomaster Johan van Heel (1671-1701). Information about the interests of the Rotterdam burgomasters is scarce, but in the case of Van Heel, some illuminating information can be subtracted from Rabus' writings. In 1696 Rabus had written the first volume of *Het grote Naamboek*, the first attempt to write a lexicon of historical figures in the Dutch language. Rabus explained that he had several reasons to dedicate that book to Van Heel. On multiple occasions in the past Van Heel had used his influence to support Rabus: 'Voor al raadde my tot dit bestaan UEdts. vriendelijkheid, en beleefdheid, in meer als een geval my gulhartiglijk bewezen. Daar in ben ik gehouden, en om die te vergelden vinde ik my verre ten achteren.'³⁵ Van Heel had been a patron of Rabus; he likely supported the author because he was the type of reader that the *Boekzaal*, with its novel approach, was introducing to the Republic of Letters. Considering how Van Heel as a patron is introduced in the *Naamboek*, we can also clearly perceive the contours of a *Boekzaal* reader:

[Van Heel is] een zeer opmerkend Lezer, en eeniger talen kundig, nogtans geen toegang heeft tot den stapel der oorspronkelijke Grieksche en Roomsche bladen, waar uit verscheide gedenkwaardigste historien van beroemde mannen te halen zijn, en wiens leeslust best genoopt word door beknopte verhandelingen; dewijl zijne menigvuldige bezigheden door geen breeden omslag willen belemmert werden.³⁶

Men like Van Heel greatly benefited from Rabus' attempts to introduce the Dutch *curieux* into the Republic of Letters. By authoring the *Vermakelykheden*, the *Naamboek* and the *Boekzaal*, Rabus had done so in varying innovative ways. Van Heel belonged to the economic and political elite of Rotterdam; as the offspring of a merchant family he cycled through twelve different top positions in the city council.³⁷ In his scarce spare time the bimonthly editions of the *Boekzaal* could provide the regent with 200 pages of 'beknopte verhandelingen' on interesting subjects. He was part of the cultural elite and Rabus called him a 'kundig opmerker van geleerden arbeid'; he had the interests and the means to support the author of the *Boekzaal*.³⁸ Many regents in the Dutch Republic displayed their opulence by creating their own library, and collected precious

³⁴ Id., 120.

³⁵ Pieter Rabus, *Het groote naamboek* (2th edition; Gouda 1703) Opdragt.

³⁶ Rabus, *naamboek*, Opdragt.

³⁷ Engelbrecht, *De vroedschap*, 264-265.

³⁸ Pieter Rabus, *De Boekzaal van Europe, gesticht door P. Rabus. Januariis en Februariis 1698* (Rotterdam 1698) 4.

lexicons and series.³⁹ Those collections were both a physical expression of their genuine curiosity as well as a status symbol of knowledge and wealth. Van Heel was eagerly waiting to assemble the continuing volumes of Rabus' Dutch lexicons.⁴⁰ Hence the *Boekzaal* dedicated to Van Heel in 1698 starts with two chapters on a recently published lexicon, of which Rabus claimed that it had relevancy to the 'weetgierige plat-Hollandsche vernuften'.⁴¹ And Rabus extensively analysed the characteristics of an excellent lexicon; he employed his personal expertise as an author to educate collectors and buyers. With those methods Rabus made certain that the *Boekzaal* was not only enjoyable to the burgomasters; the journal also offered them a variety of content with personal utility.

By exploring the relations and efforts Rabus took to reach out to the hegemonical political class of Rotterdam, it becomes clear that Rabus was deliberately customizing the *Boekzaal* to their personal tastes. In her study of the informal forms of association in Rotterdam during the Golden Age, Jori Zijlmans argued that it is hard to assess the depth and intensity of the personal relations of the Collegiants around Oudaen and Van Hoogstraten.⁴² What is clear is that in those circles, friendships were formed on the basis of mutual personal interest and intellectual reciprocity; the distinctions of socio-economic status were of lesser significance.⁴³ Political, literary and scientific interests created personal ties and solidarity between the regents and the intellectuals of the city. When Rabus opened a *Boekzaal* with a laudatory poem to his 'friend', the schepen Samuel van Laan, he stated: 'Uw rijp vernuft, uw lust tot weten, Die U van jongs af heeft bezeten, Uw hartlijkheid om goed te doen: Die zijn uw konsten van belezen, My op de proef bekend voor dezen'.⁴⁴ This is another sign that those erudite regents were still present in the Rotterdam after Paets, and Rabus had personal connections with them. It is only natural that those erudite regents would flock towards Rabus for discussions and insights into the latest developments of the Republic of Letters. An exciting and relevant debate would naturally include the Bekker furore, and the following verses from the *Boekzaal* jokingly suggests such an important shared curiosity between Vander Laan and Rabus: 'Geeft iemand dan dat geest-veroveren Den regten woordnaam van betooveren, En vraagt men, wie dat magtig zy? Heer vander Lanen, 't zijn uw zeden, Uw eerlijkheid, uw minzaamheden, Uw Hollandsch hart, van

³⁹ Pettegree and Der Weduwen, *De boekhandel*, 386-394.

⁴⁰ Rabus, *Naamboek*, Opdragt.

⁴¹ Rabus, *Boekzaal Januariis Februariis 1698*, 8.

⁴² Jori Zijlmans, *Vriendenkringen in de zeventiende eeuw: verenigingsvormen van het informele culturele leven te Rotterdam* (Den Haag 1999) 159.

⁴³ Zijlmans, *Vriendenkringen*, 156-162.

⁴⁴ Pieter Rabus, *De Boekzaal van Europe, gesticht door P. Rabus. Januariis en Februariis 1697* (Rotterdam 1697) opdracht.

valsheid vry'.⁴⁵ A natural result of their relationship would be a display of solidarity on the regent's part:

'Deez nieuwe vrugt, in winterdagen Geboren, wenscht u te behagen, En kruipt verkleumt ter drukpersse uit, Om by uw zafte vriendschaps-stralen Een luttel koestering te halen, ... Mag ze uw beschermvoogdy genieten, Haar zal de moeite niet verdrieten, U voor dat vriendelijke onthaal, En voor den last, op u geladen, een stapel oude en nieuwe bladen t' Ontvouwen'.⁴⁶

With those influential contacts, Rabus could manoeuvre around the edges of tolerated public discourse with more confidence; as an unorthodox Christian, those edges were where he had naturally manoeuvred all his life. For booksellers and authors, that was also where profits were high.

⁴⁵ Rabus, *Boekzaal Januariis Februariis 1697*, opdracht.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Epilogue

In 1699 Rabus had navigated through several storms and could have faced a bright future with Vander Slaart. But in 1700 their partnership ended; Vander Slaart claimed to have had enough of his slanderous former author, and his *Boekzaal* would now become a journal of impeccable moral standards: ‘Het zwaard rust’ liever in de scheede, De schendpen ook; my lust de vrede.’¹ Rabus launched his own periodical with the printer Barend Bos, called the *Twee-maandelijke Uittreksels*. Rabus and Bos had been working together for several years; since the *Boekzaal* of May-June 1697 Rabus had even reviewed more books by Bos than Vander Slaart.² In the poems and prefaces of their two journals the former partners defamed each other.³ There were many personal grievances, but the underlying cause of their division was financial.⁴ From 1696 onwards the production of books by Vander Slaart’s shop sharply decreased, and several of his products were delayed; Rabus’ *Naamboek* had to appear in 1696 but was only finished in 1698. Rabus had already loaned money to Vander Slaart, but in September 1700 the printer also failed to pay Rabus’ wage. This breach of contractual obligations was the final straw and the two parted their ways. That Vander Slaart attempted to keep to *Boekzaal* going until the very end indicates the success of the format. But the last bimonthly *Boekzaal* of 1701 was also the last printed product by Vander Slaart. Advertisements from this period provide some insight into the unfortunate last months of Vander Slaart’s shop.⁵ Vander Slaart had continued the *Boekzaal* with Joannes Gravenhage, a theologian from Hulst who had already assisted Rabus with books on Hebraica.⁶ But Gravenhage died after authoring the first edition after Rabus’ departure; this means that Vander Slaart, already in a dire situation, was left without an author. His periodical’s September-October and November-December editions of 1701 were not received by his subscribers before February 1702, providing good reasons for his clients to move to the *Twee-Maandelykse Uittreksels*.⁷ On the 26th of October 1701, Vander Slaart encountered Bos in a meeting of the printer’s guild of Rotterdam. According to an attestation written by Rabus, Vander Slaart attacked Bos: ‘hem de knopen van zijn bovenrok greep, en sij vast hield, en bleef omdraijen, zo dat

¹ Anonymous, *Boekzaal van Europe, voor de Maanden Julius en Augustus 1700* (Rotterdam 1700) Voorreden.

² Between the May-June edition of 1697 and the May-June edition of 1700, Rabus reviewed 11 titles printed by Bos in 116 pages. In the same period he reviewed 9 titles printed by Vander Slaart in only 74 pages. This is, in my view, another sign of how much control Rabus had over the content of the *Boekzaal*. The successful author was hardly controlled by the young printer whose business was struggling during this period; Marijn van Oorsouw, ‘Inventory of *Boekzaal* Reviews: 1692-1701’ (Unpublished).

³ For a depiction of the accusations and grievances, see: Rietbergen and Lysen, ‘Rabus’, 61-70.

⁴ Abels and Wouters, ‘Pieter vander Slaart’, 339-346.

⁵ ‘Nederlanden’ *Oprechte Haerlemsche courant* (29 December 1701); ‘Nederlanden’ *Oprechte Haerlemsche courant* (5 April 1701).

⁶ Rietbergen and Lysen, ‘Rabus’, 106.

⁷ ‘Nederlanden’ *Oprechte Leydse courant* (30 January 1702).

hij met een ruk een van deselve knopen, in zijn hand hield, uitroepend lestens, ten aanhore van het gansche geselschap, zie daar de grootste gaauwdief die d'r leeft'.⁸ Vander Slaart felt that Bos had stolen his most precious possession, and his shop succumbed several months later. On the fourth of May 1702, Vander Slaart had to sell his printing press, bringing an end to his turbulent career.⁹

Rabus did not fare any better in this period. He had been granted a Privilege to start the *Twee-maandelyke uittreksel* on 9 December 1700. On February 1701 the first bimonthly edition of his new periodical was ready, but on the 13th of January 1702, in the midst of his series on Fontenelle, Rabus passed away. Tireless to the end, he had left behind enough reviews to fill two more posthumous editions of his periodical.¹⁰ The spirit of Rabus' journal quickly changed; his first successor was William Sewell, a Quaker who had translated an English treatise on the earthly power of the Devil. The following decades the successive authors of the *Boekzaal* and the *Twee-Maandelijkse uittreksels* turned both those journals into religious periodicals of a conservative signature.¹¹ Successors like Sewel vowed to be more objective, less contentious. But Rabus' death was a significant loss for the 'platters' and the learned; at the dawn of the Age of Reason, the Republic lost a public propagator of progressive thought. That Rabus' peculiar style and the heterodox ideas expressed in the *Boekzaal* had been appreciated was best described in 1715 by his fellow Erasmian, David van Hoogstraten:

'De manier en styl, die hy in dit werk gebruikte, vonden om zyne byzondere handeling, levendig gehouden door vremde invallen, door quincslagen, door ernst en boertery, gepast op de stoffe, die hy voorhad, door het tusschenmengen van zyne vaerzen of van die van anderen, zoo geweldigen ingang, dat hy en zyn drukker zyde daar by sponnen.'¹²

⁸ Stadsarchief Rotterdam, Archieven van de Notarissen te Rotterdam en daarin opgegane gemeenten, Inv. nr. 1386, Pieter Rabus 1700 Januari 6-1701 December 28, 3.

⁹ Abels and Wouters, 'Pieter vander Slaart', 343-344.

¹⁰ Pieter Rabus, *Twee-maandelyke uittreksel van P. Rabus Mey en Juny 1702* (Rotterdam 1702) naberigt.

¹¹ Inger Leemans and G.J. Johannes, *Worm en donder : geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur 1700-1800: de Republiek* (Amsterdam 2013) 166-169.

¹² David van Hoogstraten, *Maandelyke uittreksels, of de boekzaal Der Geleerde wereld. Julius 1715*. (Amsterdam 1715) 8-9.

Conclusion

From the founding of the *Boekzaal* onwards, Rabus experienced external pressures to restrain the communication of his most controversial views and ideas. Over the years he sought out various ways to continue his fight against superstition in such a manner that it could reach its idealistic intent, without his journal being censored. This quest was central to his aspirations as an author, but in the Dutch Republic, controversies were often commercial endeavours as well; those who moved at the edges of tolerated discourse could reap great rewards or serious repercussions.¹ Rabus' bold journalism in the *Boekzaal* achieved success in both the idealistic and commercial sense. But this thesis has also shown that during his quest to educate his audience, he had to find a middle road, or occasionally followed the wrong path. Because of his intent to communicate his form of critical Christianity to the public, Rabus was led into conflict with the Voetian church council, and he had to carefully devise his actions. Via his criticism of superstitious beliefs he was directly led into a polemic, during which he sometimes spread misinformation and responded towards criticism with a misplaced display of intellectual superiority. His propagation of dowsing started out as a principled expression of his ideals, but he unintentionally got involved in a quarrel that included personal issues. When necessary, he chose to deflect the consistory's attempts of curbing his expression with displays of deference to those in seats of power; as an author he had a subversive, sometimes even provocative tone, but this was balanced out with a remarkable compliance. A successful editorial strategy, and for Rabus this was undoubtedly the lesser price to pay. He therefore successfully applied his agency to continue communicating the prickly subjects that concerned him the most; he fought against superstition with minimal concessions to the consistory.

Historical research on early modern freedom of expression, authorship and books in the Northern Netherlands could greatly benefit from a study of the patronage of intellectuals and authors. One of the questions that arises from studying the *Boekzaal*, is whether or not Rabus' career was supported by his network; it is certain that he had several financiers and influential acquaintances. There is a large amount of academic research on censorship and clandestine printing, but studies on patronage and book dedications in the early modern Dutch book printing industry are scarce.² In intellectual history, the Dutch Republic of the second half of the seventeenth century is conceived as a period of progressive and radical thought, and it is commonly acknowledged that this related to its political and wider societal structure.³ An analysis of the patronage of

¹ Pettegree and Der Weduwen, *De boekhandel*, 413-414.

² O.S. Lankhorst and P.G. Hoftijzer, *Drukkers, boekverkopers en lezers in Nederland tijdens de Republiek: een historiografische en bibliografische handleiding* (Den Haag 1995) 99-101.

³ Jonathan I. Israel, 'Dutch Golden Age Politics and the Rise of the Radical Enlightenment' in: Sonja Lavaert and Winfried Schröder eds., *The Dutch Legacy: Radical Thinkers of the 17th Century and the Enlightenment* (Leiden; Boston 2017) 35-61, here 38-40.

intellectuals during this period could therefore shed new light on how political or economic influence and the intellectual climate were intertwined in the Dutch Republic. In a modest form, this thesis suggests that patronage could have a decisive impact on the careers of authors and intellectuals. An additional study of the *Boekzaal* can be made by analysing the corpus of almost 1600 book titles that has been produced during this thesis project. In the form of a quantitative analysis, the relations between the different characteristics that have been assigned to each book review could be compared in order to uncover different trends and patterns. For instance, by comparing the frequency and length in which different genres are discussed, or by relating printing places to subjects. Two main approaches can be suggested; the *Boekzaal*'s corpus could be studied for the characteristics of its content, such as the development of genres, certain authors and the length in which those are discussed. The data is also a tremendously rich source for understanding the functioning of early modern book trade; the international network of Vander Slaart's shop can be reconstructed from the origins of his books. The *Boekzaal* can function like a microcosm on such questions, but a comparative approach, incorporating other contemporary erudite journals, promises an even more rewarding study.

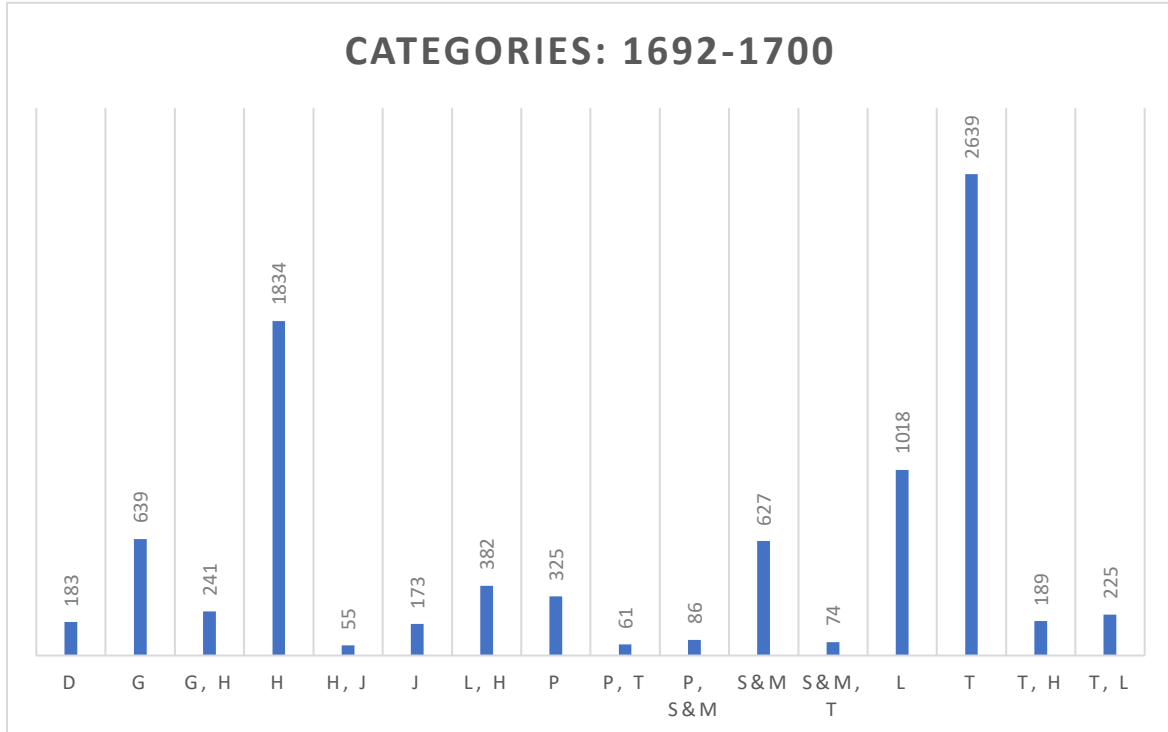
Appendix 1⁴

Picture 1: Categorical spread in pages per year

	D	G	G, H	H	H, J	J	L, H	P	P, T	P, S&M	S&M	S&M, T	L	T	T, H	T, L
1692	18	81	0	119	0	2	0	50	9	15	20	10	16	211	17	0
1693	33	48	8	264	6	31	16	72	3	0	52	11	81	428	52	0
1694	41	52	24	175	0	54	34	27	5	18	111	8	146	218	5	65
1695	24	2	40	331	0	15	77	61	4	24	57	0	116	270	0	20
1696	33	56	73	186	0	18	49	24	0	0	124	0	144	301	22	0
1697	5	117	11	246	0	30	79	36	7	12	129	15	119	233	5	13
1698	2	86	0	64	24	12	15	26	0	0	75	10	194	410	27	41
1699	0	141	72	269	0	8	52	3	0	17	19	20	141	244	8	49
1700	27	56	13	180	25	3	60	26	33	0	40	0	61	324	53	37

Picture 2: Total categorical accumulation 1692-1700

Total counted pages in database: 8751



⁴ The basis of this data has been shared to me via a creative commons project of the Radboud University. The project is called: *Early Enlightenment in a Rotterdam Periodical: 1692-1704*. These statistics however are derived from: Marijn van Oorsouw, 'Inventory of *Boekzaal* Reviews: 1692-1701' (Unpublished).

Each book is provided with a letter signifying the discipline which it belongs to.⁵ As follows:

T theology and religion

(Bible editions, exegesis, Bible geography and archaeology, geographia sacra, apologetics / controversy, dogmatics, christology, theology of morality, liturgy, editions of Fathers of the Church, judaica religiosa / Judaic religious subjects, Talmudic writings, missals / prayer books, psalm-books and song-books with or without music, devotion, sermons, morality / christian ethics, religious pamphlets, devotional stories about saints)

J law

(canonical and civil law, Roman and national law, jurisprudence, natural law, philosophy of law, private law, books of law practitioners, civics, official documents)

G geography

(not ‘geographia sacra’ and ‘geographia antiqua’), journeys / journeys of scholars, ship journals, cartography, town descriptions, land surveying, astronomy, cosmography)

H history, economics, weights and measures

(antiquarian and modern history, church history and profane history, coinage, political pamphlets, memoirs, biographies, antiquities, political affairs, theory of history)

P only real philosophy and history of philosophy

(history of philosophers and history of philosophy, metaphysics / ontology, logic, philosophia naturalis, ethics, theologia naturalis)

S&M science, medicine and engineering

(mathematics, experimental physics, chemistry, alchemy, biology / botany, agricultural and horticultural science, hydrolic engeneering, medical science / pharmaceuticals, building of fortresses, weaponry, military science, real economics of numerals and percentages)

L arts, art

⁵ This description is from the *Early Enlightenment in a Rotterdam Periodical: 1692-1704* project. But it is not a direct copy: some categories had to be modified in order to provide a better overview. I have moved the category ‘pedagogics’ to ‘various subjects’ because it had less than 40 pages. Similarly, books that had been assigned to three categories have been carefully reassigned to two categories; Early Enlightenment in a Rotterdam Periodical – Categories, <https://www.eerp.nl/node/2935>.

(dictionaries, rhetoric, grammar / etymology, antiquarian and modern philology, orationes (Francius), geographia antiqua, literary aesthetics, literatures of the antiquity, modern literature of all languages, art of painting, sculpture, aesthetic architecture, iconology, books like *Les Mots à la Mode* by Callières, bibliographies like those by Van Berghem, Scaligerana and such)

D various subjects, miscellaneous, pedagogics (e.g. Locke) and didactics (e.g. Antonius Schorus)

Sometimes more than one letter is needed.

Bibliography

1. Archival sources

- Stadsarchief Rotterdam, Archieven van de Notarissen te Rotterdam en daarin opgegane gemeenten, Inv. nr. 1385, Pieter Rabus 1692 Januari 10-1699 December 9.
- Stadsarchief Rotterdam, Archieven van de Notarissen te Rotterdam en daarin opgegane gemeenten, Inv. nr. 1386, Pieter Rabus 1700 Januari 6-1701 December 28.
- Stadsarchief Rotterdam, Archieven van de Notarissen te Rotterdam en daarin opgegane gemeenten, Inv. nr. 1539, Pieter Ousseel 1700 April 2-1702 December 30.
- Stadsarchief Rotterdam, Archieven van de Remonstrants Gereformeerde Gemeente Rotterdam, Inv. nr. 3, Resoluties en notulen, 1680 jan-1699 dec.
- Stadsarchief Rotterdam, Archieven van de Remonstrants Gereformeerde Gemeente Rotterdam, Inv. nr. 4, Resoluties en notulen, 1700 jan -1721 dec.
- Stadsarchief Rotterdam, Archieven van het college van Kerkmeesters, Inv.nr. 1, Resoluties van de kerkmeesters, 1573 Mei 20 – 1691 sep 3.
- Stadsarchief Rotterdam, Archieven van het college van Kerkmeesters, Inv.nr. 2, Resoluties van de kerkmeesters, 1692 apr 29 – 1705 apr 7.
- Stadsarchief Rotterdam, Oud Archief van de Stad Rotterdam, Inv.nr. 787, Missiven van de Stadhouders c.q. voor hen handelende gezagsdragers geadresseerd aan de hoofdofficieren inzake de magistraatsbestelling, 1557-1749.

2. Newspapers

- ‘Nederlanden’ *Amsterdamse courant* (21 August 1692).
- ‘Nederlanden’ *Amsterdamse courant* (19 August 1692).
- ‘Nederlanden’ *Oprechte Haerlemsche courant* (29 December 1701).
- ‘Nederlanden’ *Oprechte Haerlemsche courant* (5 April 1701).
- ‘Nederlanden’ *Oprechte Haerlemsche courant* (4 April 1697).
- ‘Nederlanden’ *Oprechte Haerlemsche courant* (7 August 1692).
- ‘Nederlanden’ *Oprechte Haerlemsche courant* (30 November 1690).
- ‘Nederlanden’ *Oprechte Haerlemsche courant* (6 June 1684).
- ‘Nederlanden’ *Oprechte Haerlemsche courant* (21 September 1683).
- ‘Nederlanden’ *Opregte Leydse courant* (30 January 1702).
- ‘Nederlanden’ *Opregte Leydse courant* (10 September 1694).

3. Primary sources

- Anonymous, *Den Galanten Mercurius, Voort-brenghende Wonderlijcke Geschiedenissen, Deftige Staets-Redenen, Aerdige Bejegeningen, Verscheyde Boerteryen, Notable Spreucken, Verstandige Brieven, ende Verschiet van Poëzy* (Hage [The Hague] 1684).
- Anonymous, *De Boekzaal van Europe, voor de Maanden Julius en Augustus 1700* (Rotterdam 1700a).

- Anonymous, *De Boekzaal van Europe, voor de Maanden November en December* (Rotterdam 1700b).
- Anonymous, *Nodige verantwoordinge voor de heer Pieter Rabus, en Juffr. zijn huysvrouw, Tegens de Amsterdammers en Haarlemmers, Niet gelovende de werking der wichelroede* (s.l. 1700).
- Anonymous, *Nieuwe-Jaars groet, Op het ingaan der Agtiende Eeuw, aan den zeer geleerden heer den heere Piet Rab of Rap, die zig zelven gemeenlijk noem, P. Rabus, gewezen Boekzaal-Schrijver. Van de gezamentlijke vrienden van F. V. B. gezegt Montanus* (Middelburg, 1700).
- Bekker, B., *De Betoverde Weereld, Het derde boek* (Amsterdam 1693).
- Bergen, F. van, *Lof-reden op Piet Rab of Rap, die zig zelven gemeenlijk noemd Pieter Rabus*, (Middelburg 1699).
- Bogaert, A., *Eerkransen voor de Klerikaansche voorvechters* (s.l. 1717).
- Brakel, W. à, *Redelijke godsdienst: een dagboek* (4th edition; Zwolle 2008).
- Cave, W., *De godsdienst der oude Christenen in de eerste eeuwen des Evangeliums*, Trans. Salomon Bor (Amsterdam 1694).
- Fernand, C.J., *Catalogue van eene schoone verzameling van boeken* (Gend 1795).
- Hoogstraten, D. van, *Het leven van Joachim Oudaen* (s.l. 1712).
- Hoogstraten, D. van, *Maandelyke uittreksels, of de boekzaal Der Geleerde wereld. Julius 1715* (Amsterdam 1715).
- Hoogstraten, D. van, *Groot algemeen historisch, geographisch, genealogisch en oordeelkundig woordenboek: N-R* (Amsterdam; Utrecht; 's Gravenhage 1733).
- Oudaen, J., *Joachim Oudaans Poëzy. Derde deel* (Amsterdam 1712).
- Rabus, P., and David van Hoogstraten, *Rijmoeffeningen, Bestaende in verscheide stijl en stof van vaerzen*. (Amsterdam 1678a).
- Rabus, P., *Geknevelden oorlogsgod Of vrede*, (Rotterdam 1678b).
- Rabus, P., *De kruis-held, Ofte het Leven van den apostel Paulus; Waar by gevoegt is desselfs Brief, Aan de Galaters* (Enckuysen 1681).
- Rabus, P., *Herodianus acht boeken Der Roomsche geschiedenissen, uit het grieks verduitscht* (Rotterdam 1683).
- Rabus, P., *Samenspraken van Desiderius Erasmus* (Rotterdam 1684).
- Rabus, P., *Verlost Britanje door de komst van hare altans regerende majesteiten Koning Wilhelm, en koningin Maria* (Rotterdam 1689).
- Rabus, P., *Op de tocht na Ierland van zijne Majesteit Wilhelm, Door Gods genade Koning van Groot Britanje, Beschermer des Geloofs, &c. &c. &c.* (Rotterdam 1690).
- Rabus, P., *Griekse, Latijnse, en Neêrduitse vermakelykheden der taalkunde, Bestaende in verscheide Aanmerkingen over gewijde en ongewijde stoffe*, (2th edition; Rotterdam 1692a).
- Rabus, P., *Rust in onrust, Of antwoord op den brief van zeker Heer, wegens den Staat van ons lieve vaderland* (Rotterdam 1692b).
- Rabus, P., *De Boekzaal van Europe, ontsloten Met de Maanden Julius en Augustus 1692* (Rotterdam 1692c).
- Rabus, P., *De Boekzaal van Europe, onstloten Met de Maanden September en October 1692* (Rotterdam 1692d).

- Rabus, P., *De Boekzaal van Europe, gesticht door P. Rabus. Januariis en Februarius 1693* (Rotterdam 1693a).
- Rabus, P., *De Boekzaal van Europe, Gesticht door P. Rabus. Julius en Augustus 1693* (Rotterdam 1693b).
- Rabus, P., *De Boekzaal van Europe, gesticht door P. Rabus. Maart en April 1694* (Rotterdam 1694).
- Rabus, P., *De Boekzaal van Europe, Gesticht door P. Rabus. Mey en Juny 1696* (Rotterdam 1696a).
- Rabus, P., *De Boekzaal van Europe, Gesticht door P. Rabus. Julius en Augustus 1696* (Rotterdam 1696b).
- Rabus, P., *De Boekzaal van Europe, gesticht door P. Rabus. Januariis en Februarius 1697* (Rotterdam 1697a).
- Rabus, P., *De Boekzaal van Europe, Gesticht door P. Rabus. Mey en Juny 1697* (Rotterdam 1697b).
- Rabus, P., *De Boekzaal van Europe, Gesticht door P. Rabus. Julius en Augustus 1697* (Rotterdam 1697c).
- Rabus, P., *De Boekzaal van Europe, Gesticht door P. Rabus. November en December 1697* (Rotterdam 1697d).
- Rabus, P., *De Boekzaal van Europe, gesticht door P. Rabus. Januariis en Februarius 1698* (Rotterdam 1698a).
- Rabus, P., *De Boekzaal van Europe, Gesticht door P. Rabus. Julius en Augustus 1698* (Rotterdam 1698b).
- Rabus, P., *De Boekzaal van Europe, Gesticht door P. Rabus. November en December 1698* (Rotterdam 1698c).
- Rabus, P., *De Boekzaal van Europe, Gesticht door P. Rabus. Julius en Augustus 1699* (Rotterdam 1699).
- Rabus, P., *De Boekzaal van Europe, Gesticht door P. Rabus. January en February. 1700* (Rotterdam 1700).
- Rabus, P., *Twee-maandelyke uittreksel van P. Rabus January en February 1702* (Rotterdam 1702a).
- Rabus, P., *Twee-maandelyke uittreksel van P. Rabus Mey en Juny 1702* (Rotterdam 1702b).
- Rabus, P., *Het groote naamboek*, 2th edition (Gouda 1703).
- Temple, W., *De historische gedenk-schriften van den Ridder W. Temple in twee deelen, Het eerste vervattende zijne Aanmerkingen over Nederlandsche Provintien*, Trans. Pieter Rabus (Rotterdam 1692).
- Vries, J. de, *Proeve eener geschiedenis der Nederduitsche dichtkunde: Deel II* (Amsterdam 1810).

4. Secondary Sources

- Aa, A.J. van der, *Biographisch woordenboek der Nederlanden*, vol. 18 (Haarlem 1874).
- Abels, P.H.A.M., and A.P.F. Wouters, 'Pieter vander Slaart: Boekdrukker en boekverkoper in Cicero (1691-1702)' in: H. Bots, O.S. Lankhorst and C. Zevenbergen eds., *Rotterdam Bibliopolis: Een rondgang langs boekverkopers uit de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw* (Rotterdam 1997) 327-363.
- Banks, D., 'Starting Science in the Vernacular. Notes on some early Issues of the *Philosophical Transactions* and the *Journal des Scavans* 1665-1700', *ASp* 55:1 (2009) 5-22.

- Blok, P.J., and P.C. Molhuysen, *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek*, vol. 3 (Leiden 1914).
- Bots, H., 'Voorwoord' in: H. Bots ed., *Pieter Rabus en de boekzaal van Europe 1692-1702* (Amsterdam 1974) v-viii.
- Bots, H., *Pieter Rabus, waardig dienaar van het 'Statendom der letterwijzen' en voorvechter van 'Onze ronde Sprake', het Nederlands* (1979).
- Bots, H., O.S. Lankhorst and C. Zevenbergen, 'Inleiding' in: H. Bots, O.S. Lankhorst and C. Zevenbergen eds., *Rotterdam Bibliopolis: Een rondgang langs boekverkopers uit de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw* (Rotterdam 1997) 7-13,
- Bots, H., *De Republiek der Letteren: De Europese intellectuele wereld 1500-1760* (Nijmegen 2018).
- Buisman, J.W., 'Bekkers' wraak: Balthasar Bekker (1634-1698), de accommodatietheorie en Nederlandse protestantse theologen, 1750-1800', *De Achttiende Eeuw* 30:1 (1998) 97-111.
- Bunge, W. van, 'De Rotterdamse collegiant Jacob Ostens (1630-1678)', *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 6:1 (1990) 65-77.
- Bunge, W. van, *From Stevin to Spinoza: An Essay on Philosophy in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic* (Leiden; Boston; Köln 2001).
- Bunge, W. van, *From Bayle to the Batavian Revolution: Essays on Philosophy in the Eighteenth-Century Dutch Republic* (Leiden; Boston 2018).
- Burke, P., *What is the History of Knowledge?* (Cambridge 2016).
- Cook, H.J., 'Science and Technology', in: Helmer J. Helmers and Geert H. Janssen, *The Dutch Golden Age* (Cambridge 2018) 350-370.
- Dear, P., *Revolutionizing the Sciences: European Knowledge in Transition, 1500-1700* (3th edition; London 2019).
- Elsen, J. van den, *Monsters, demonen en occulte krachten: de journalistieke perceptie van magische en wonderbaarlijke verschijnselen in de vroege Verlichting 1684-1727* (Nijmegen 2003).
- Engelbrecht, E.A. *De vroedschap van Rotterdam 1572-1795* (Rotterdam 1973).
- Fix, A.C., *Prophecy and Reason: the Dutch collegiants in the Early Enlightenment, 1650-1700* (Ann Arbor 1984).
- Fix, A., *Fallen Angels: Balthasar Bekker, Spirit Belief, and Confessionalism in the Seventeenth Century in the Dutch Republic* (Dordrecht; Boston; Leiden 1999)
- Gibbs, G.C., 'H. Bots, Pieter Rabus en de Boekzaal van Europe, 1692-1702', *BGMN: Low Countries Historical Review* 91:1 (1976) 118-121.
- Haley, K. H. D., 'Pieter Rabus. Een wegbereider van de Noordnederlandse Verlichting by J.J.V.M. de Vet,' in *The English Historical Review*, 99, No. 390 (Jan., 1984) 190-191.
- Halkin, L.E., *Erasmus: A Critical Biography* (Oxford 1998).
- Israel, J.I., *De Republiek: 1477-1806*, Trans.: Bert Smilde (5th edition; Franeker 2001a).
- Israel, J.I., *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford 2001b).
- Israel, J.I., 'Dutch Golden Age Politics and the Rise of the Radical Enlightenment' in: Sonja Lavaert and Winfried Schröder eds., *The Dutch Legacy: Radical Thinkers of the 17th Century and the Enlightenment* (Leiden; Boston 2017) 35-61,

- Jongeneelen, G.H., *Fonetiek en Verlichting: De Redenering over de talen van Jan Trioen (1692)* (Amsterdam 1994).
- Knuttel, W.P.C., *Acta der particuliere synoden van Zuid-Holland: Zesde deel. 1687-1700* ('s Gravenhage 1916).
- Knuttel, W.P.C., *Balthasar Bekker: de bestrijder van het bijgeloof* (2th edition; Groningen 1979).
- Kok, G.C., *Rotterdamse Juristen in vijf eeuwen* (Hilversum 2009).
- Koopmans, J.W., *Early Modern Media and the News in Europe* (Leiden; Boston 2018).
- Lankhorst, O.S., and P.G. Hoftijzer, *Drukkers, boekverkopers en lezers in Nederland tijdens de Republiek: een historiografische en bibliografische handleiding* (Den Haag 1995)
- Leemans, I., 'Censuur als onmacht. De omstreden Nederlandse publieke ruimte 1660-1760' in: Marita Mathijssen eds., *Boeken onder druk: Censuur en pers-onvrijheid in Nederland sinds de boekdrukkunst* (Amsterdam 2011) 45-59.
- Leemans, I., and G.J. Johannes, *Worm en donder: geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur 1700-1800: de Republiek* (Amsterdam 2013).
- Lüthy, C., 'Atomism in the Renaissance', in: Marco Sgarbi eds., *Encyclopedia of Renaissance Philosophy* (https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02848-4_252-1).
- Lynn, M.R., 'Divining the Enlightenment: Public Opinion and popular Science in Old Regime France', *Isis* 92:1 (2001) 34-54.
- MacCulloch, D., *Reformation: Europe's House divided: 1490-1700* (London 2003).
- Monfils, L., 'Een boek gaat door de wereld. Verspreiding en vroege bezitters van Balthasar Bekkers *De betoverde wereld*', *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse boekgeschiedenis* 11:1 (2004) 67-82.
- Morman, P.J., 'Rationalism and the Occult: The 1692 Case of Jacques Aymar, dowser par excellence', *The Journal of Popular Culture* 19:4 (1986) 119-130.
- Nève, P., 'Pieter Rabus, notaris te Rotterdam van 1684 tot 1701', *Fundamina: A Journal of Legal History* 16:1 (2010) 235-243.
- Oord, K. van, 'De politiek in de Boekzaal van Europe' in: Hans Bots eds., *Pieter Rabus en de boekzaal van Europe 1692-1702* (Amsterdam 1974) 383-397.
- Palm, L.C., 'Antoni van Leeuwenhoeks reactie op Pieter Rabus' problemen met de wichelroede', *Tijdschrift voor de Geschiedenis der Geneeskunde, Natuurwetenschappen, Wiskunde en Techniek* 8:1 (1985) 1-11.
- Parigi, S., 'Effluvia, Action at a Distance, and the Challenge of the Third Causal Model', *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 29:4 (2015) 351-368.
- Pettegree, A., and Arthur der Weduwen, *De boekhandel van de wereld: drukkers, boekverkopers en lezers in de Gouden Eeuw*, Transl.: Frits van der Waa (Amsterdam 2019).
- Rietbergen, P. and Jojet Lysen, 'Pieter Rabus en de Boekzaal van Europe' in: Hans Bots ed., *Pieter Rabus en de boekzaal van Europe 1692-1702* (Amsterdam 1974) 1-111.
- Rutherford, D., 'Introduction' in: Donald Rutherford eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, 1-11.
- Schoor, A. van der, *Stad in aanwas: Geschiedenis van Rotterdam tot 1813* (Zwolle 1999).
- Shapin, S. 'Pump and circumstance: Robert Boyle's literary technology', *Social Studies of Science* 14:1, 481-520.

- Smit, W.A.P., *Kalliope in de Nederlanden. Het Renaissancistisch-klassicistische epos van 1550 tot 1850: 1^e deel*. (Assen 1978).
- Snelders, H.A.M., ‘Antoni van Leeuwenhoek’s mechanistic view of the world’, in: L.C. Palm and H.A.M. Snelders eds., *Antoni van Leeuwenhoek 1632-1723* (Amsterdam 1982) 57-78.
- Snoep, D.P., ‘Haagse triumfalia voor Willem III – Februari 1691’, *De Boekenwereld* 5:1 (1988-1989) 35-41.
- Thissen, P.G.B., ‘Frans van Hoogstraten (1632-1696)’ in: H. Bots, O.S. Lankhorst and C. Zevenbergen eds., *Rotterdam Bibliopolis: Een rondgang langs boekverkopers uit de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw* (Rotterdam 1997) 177-214.
- Verkruisje, P.J., ‘Het boekenmecenaat in de zeventiende eeuw’, *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 6:1 (1990), 137-142.
- Vermeir, K., ‘Circulating Knowledge or Superstition? The Dutch debate on Divination,’ in: S. Dúpre and C. Lüthy eds., *Silent Messengers. The Circulation of Material Objects of Knowledge in the Early Modern Low Countries* (Berlin 2011) 293-328.
- Vermeir, K., ‘The physical Prophet and the powers of the Imagination. Part II: A case-study on Dowsing and the naturalisation of the Moral, 1685-1710’, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 36:1 (2005), 1-24.
- Vermij, R., *The Calvinist Copernicans: The Reception of the New Astronomy in the Dutch Republic, 1575-1750* (Amsterdam 2002).
- Vermij, R., *Christiaan Huygens: de mathematisering van de werkelijkheid* (Utrecht 2004a).
- Vermij, R., *De wetenschappelijke revolutie* (2th edition; Amsterdam 2004b).
- Vermij, R., *De geest uit de fles: De Verlichting en het verval van de confessionele samenleving* (Amsterdam 2009).
- Vet, J.J.V.M. de, *Pieter Rabus: een wegbereider van de Noordnederlandse verlichting* (Amsterdam 1980).
- Vet, J.J.V.M. de, ‘Maecenaat in de pruikentijd’, *Handelingen van het Nederlandse Filologencongres* 38:1 (1984) 149-175.
- Vet, J., ‘Gedachten uit de vroege verlichting: Pieter Rabus’ vermakelykheden der taalkunde’, *De Achttiende Eeuw* 32:1 (2000) 77-97.
- Weekhout, I., *Boekencensuur in de Noordelijke Nederlanden: de vrijheid van drukpers in de zeventiende eeuw* (Den Haag 1998).
- Zijlmans, J., *Vriendenkringen in de zeventiende eeuw: verenigingsvormen van het informele culturele leven te Rotterdam* (Den Haag 1999).

5. Websites

Correspondence of Pierre Bayle – Letter to Vincent Minutoli 8 March 1694,

<http://bayle-correspondance.univ-st-etienne.fr/?Lettre-970-Pierre-Bayle-a-Vincent&lang=fr>.

Stadsarchief Rotterdam – ‘Elisabeth Ostens’ in persons database,

<https://stadsarchief.rotterdam.nl/zoek-en-ontdek/stamboom/zoeken-op-personen/?mivast=184&miadt=184&mizig=100&miview=tbl&milang=nl&micols=1&mip1=ostens&mip3=elisabeth> (on 13 March 2012).

Stadsarchief Rotterdam – Information on marriages,

<https://stadsarchief.rotterdam.nl/zoek-en-ontdek/info-doop-trouw-begraaf> (on 14 March 2012).

Stadsarchief Rotterdam – ‘Pieter Rabus’ in persons database,

<https://stadsarchief.rotterdam.nl/zoek-en-ontdek/stamboom/zoeken-op-personen/?mivast=184&mizig=100&miadt=184&milang=nl&misort=vn%7Casc&miview=tbl&mip1=rabus&mip3=pieter%20>.

Stadsarchief Rotterdam – ‘Rabus’ in notary database,

https://stadsarchief.rotterdam.nl/zoeken/resultaten/?mivast=184&mizig=365&miadt=184&milang=nl&misort=unitdate%7Casc&miview=ldt&mizk_alle=rabus (on 13 March 2021).

6. Database

Marijn van Oorsouw, ‘Inventory of *Boekzaal* Reviews: 1692-1701’ (Unpublished).

Abstract

In his erudite periodical Pieter Rabus reflected on the most recent developments in the Republic of Letters. As the author of the *Boekzaal van Europe* between 1692 and 1700, he attempted to convey heterodox ideas and views to his audience, resulting in several controversies. By depicting Rabus' propagation of dowsing, his defense of *De Betoverde Weereld*, and his treatment of influential magistrates, this thesis analyses various ways in which Rabus mediated the controversial content of his periodical to his targeted audience. By supporting the views of Balthasar Bekker, the *Boekzaal* from its conception ran into trouble with the Reformed consistory of Rotterdam. Despite complaints by the city's public church, Rabus repeatedly supported Bekker in his journal, which led to repercussions in 1694. Between 1694 and 1698 his journal was under preventive censorship for explicitly refuting the doctrines of the Reformed consistory in Rotterdam. Nonetheless, Rabus actively sought to further advocate his ideas, he partially ignored the censorship and on other occasions chose to express his controversial thought in a veiled manner. When his journal was faced with the most severe threat of cancellation, Rabus applied his agency as an author to avoid censorship; rather than forfeiting his intellectual integrity to the Reformed authorities, he captured the benevolence of the city magistrates, and the ecclesiastical censorship of his edition was lifted. In historiography, Rabus has been characterised as a communicator of the critical attitude that is characteristic of the Early Enlightenment, but by depicting Rabus as the initiator of a Dutch debate on dowsing, this thesis provides a perspective that nuances that notion. On the one hand Rabus did attempt to reconcile his support of dowsing with contemporary scientific theories, because he provided a mechanistic explanation based on contemporary theories of corpuscularianism. On the other hand, his uncritical attitude towards dowsing experiments and his stubborn, flawed reasoning can hardly be called enlightened.