

De verschijning van Jan Bloemendals editie van de *Poetica* van Vossius (ism Edwin Rabbie) was zulk een bijzondere gebeurtenis dat de redactie van de *Neolatinisten Nieuwsbrief* graag onderstaande artikel afdruckt.

G.J. Vossius on imitation: reading the new edition of Vossius's *Poetics*¹

Jeroen Jansen

Gerardus Joannes Vossius, *Poeticarum Institutionum libri tres* (1647), edited by Jan Bloemendal, in collaboration with Edwin Rabbie, 2 vols, Leiden and Boston (Brill), 2010 (henceforth: Vossius, *Poetica*).

Introduction

Some ten years ago, the Benelux department of the International Society of the History of Rhetoric (ISHR) organized a two-day conference in Amsterdam on *Landmarks in the history of rhetoric, from the classical era into the 21st century*. I recall the discussions during a meeting of the organizing committee. Everybody had to bring in ideas on possible topics: Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, Ramus, Toulmin, Perelman. I suggested somewhat reluctantly that it might be a good idea to talk about at least one Dutchman on rhetoric during those two days. For a short while silence reigned in the room; everybody looked at me in utter amazement, hoping for further information. ‘What Dutchman?’ Audaciously, I promoted Gerardus Joannes Vossius, knowing that the *Institutiones oratoriae* (1606), his rhetorical handbook, had been published and republished several times during the first half of the seventeenth century, and bringing to my fellow organizers’ notice that an abstract of this handbook, the *Rhetorices contractae* (1621), as well as the concise *Elementa rhetorica* (1626), remained popular as schoolbooks up to the nineteenth century.² Looks of amazement again. Vossius as a landmark? That was

¹ This article is a reworking of the paper I presented in Amsterdam on 30 June 2010 at the symposium on the occasion of the presentation of the edition of G.J. Vossius, *Poeticarum Institutionum libri tres* (1647) by Jan Bloemendal (in collaboration with Edwin Rabbie).

² Cf. E.J. Kuiper, *De Hollandse ‘Schoolordre’ van 1625. Een studie over het onderwijs op de Latijnse scholen in Nederland in de 17de en 18de eeuw*, diss. Amsterdam (UvA), Groningen, 1958, pp. 166, 202-204. On these works, see C.S.M. Rademaker. *Life and work of Gerardus Joannes Vossius (1577-1649)*, Assen, 1981, pp. 177-178, 185-186; Id., ‘De Latijnse schoolgrammatica van Gerardus Joannes Vossius’, *Gramma* 8 (1984), pp. 195-223 (208-212). See on the reprints of these works: C.S.M. Rademaker. *Leven en werk van Gerardus Joannes Vossius (1577-1649)*, Hilversum, 1999, p. 275, sub 19. In England the schoolbooks by Vossius had a huge reputation. ‘It was the standard short book of rhetoric for the schools in England and abroad in the middle of the 17th century’ (Foster Watson, *The English Grammar Schools to 1600: their Curriculum and Practice*, Cambridge, 1908, pp. 444-445). Heinrich Plett, *Rhetorik der Affekte. Englische Wirkungsästhetik im Zeitalter der Renaissance*, diss. Bonn 1969, Tübingen, 1975, pp. 29-30. In Germany the *Elementa Rhetorica* and *Rhetorices contractae* were successful as well. Protestant Latin schools in Germany, not holding with the Ramist rhetoric, used the rhetoric by Melanchthon in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, which were soon replaced by Vossius’s work, which is mentioned in almost all German educational programs and curricula (Dilwyn Knox, ‘Order, reason and oratory: rhetoric in protestant Latin schools’, in: Peter Mack, ed., *Renaissance rhetoric*, New York, 1994, pp. 63-80 (72). W. Barner, *Barockrhetorik. Untersuchungen zu ihren geschichtlichen Grundlagen*, Tübingen, 1970, p. 266: ‘Dass Vossius ‘in nahezu allen Schulen regiert’, wird

not a good idea, but nevertheless, if I insisted and if it would be me who was going to discuss this subject... I presented a paper on Vossius and tried to explain his importance for rhetoric in Western Europe during quite a long time. In his introductory remarks, added to the *acta*,³ the editor-in-chief could not suppress his feelings that Vossius had been a good choice for the conference but still, he was certainly no landmark in this rhetorical landscape.⁴

Perhaps he was right. Indeed, as we now know due to the publications by Cor Rademaker, Vossius was not so much an innovator as a collector of ideas on all kinds of subjects, a *homo universalis*, with knowledge in various fields of learning.⁵ He was collecting what other scholars had written and tried to systematize the material he had gathered. This method does not only apply to his handbook on rhetoric, but also to his works on history, grammar and poetics. In the *Poeticarum Institutionum libri tres* (1647) he preferred to bring together all the information available in the Latin Republic of Letters, especially from ancient authors. He did so, presumably, to offer his fellow humanist scholars a compendium of poetics in Antiquity. In concentrating on the Ancients, he ‘neglected’ ongoing discussions and descriptions of contemporary approaches.⁶ When Vossius in the second book of his *Poetics* discusses topics such as scenic representation, the design of the stage, the ornamentation of characters, theatrical shows, stage-building (II.10) etc., it is a shame for the literary historian interested in seventeenth-century drama that he pays attention to the Greek and Latin situation of two thousand years before. How interesting would it have been if he had said a word or two on contemporary practices, e.g. about the stage of the Amsterdam theatre in 1647!⁷

In this paper I will discuss Vossius as a poetical ‘landmark’ in the field of imitation. How does he treat the different subjects on poetics? What are his advices to the young students? How does he reach them? And is he a true milestone? In the ‘Introductory Essay’ by Jan Bloemendal to the new edition of the *Institutes of Poetics*, the reader is struck by the editor’s positive remarks on Vossius’s systematic approach in this handbook, the perspicuous and concise way he addressed the youth, the ‘very lucid and plain style’, the ‘cohesion and unity’ of the poetical system presented, and the ‘unity by means of his divisions and subdivisions’ (Vossius, *Poetica*, pp. 18-19, 34, 37-38). This sounds as if Vossius presented his own ideas and those of others in a very friendly, didactic way, an arrangement of the material adapted for young students and interested *literati* to get insight into the poetical material in a conveniently arranged, orderly way.

z. T. durch gedruckte Schulordnungen bestätigt, die seinen Namen ausdrücklich nennen’ (Barner names examples in note 39).

³ Jeroen Jansen, ‘De *Institutiones oratoriae* van G.J. Vossius (1577-1649)’, *Lampas* 34 (2001), pp. 373-390.

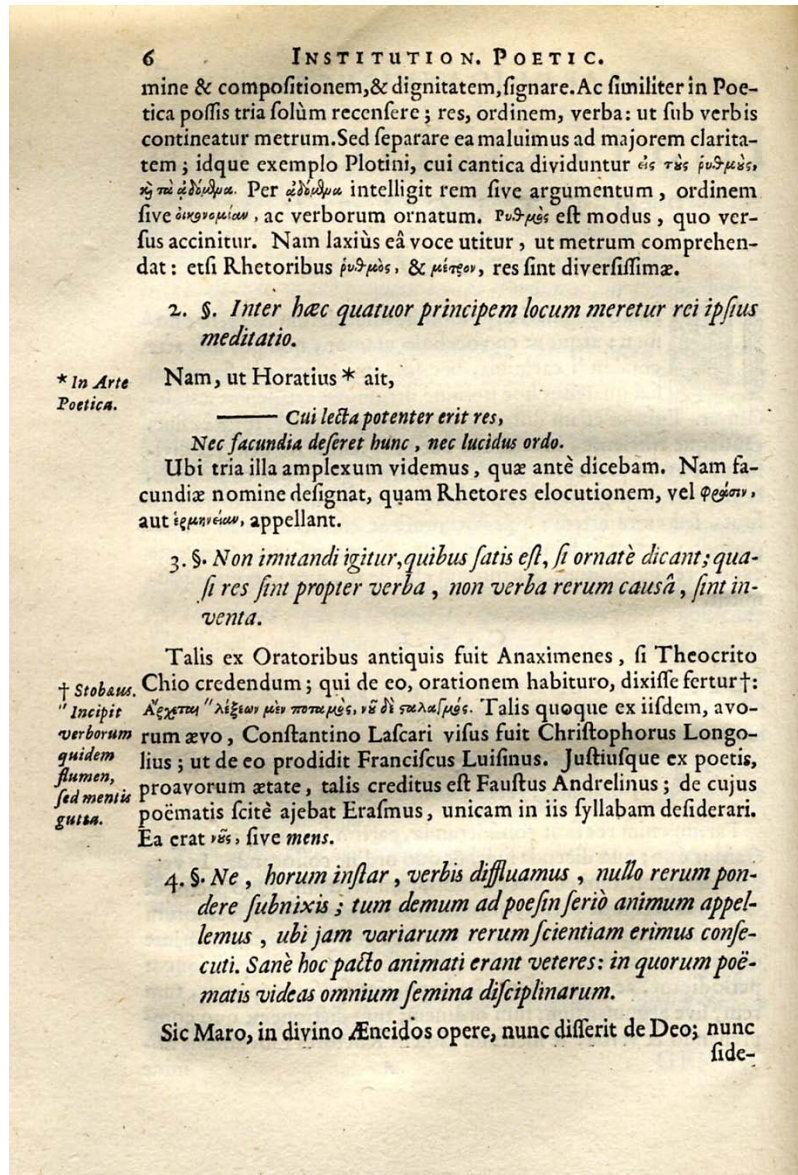
⁴ Antoine Braet, ‘De geschiedenis van de retorica: een never ending story’, *Lampas* 34 (2001), pp. 266-269 (268).

⁵ Rademaker, *Vossius*, passim; Jeroen Jansen, ‘Een Neolatinse encyclopedie en een voorrede in de moedertaal. Twee opvattingen over *perspicuitas* in 1616’, in: C. van Eck, M. Spies en T. Streng, eds, *Een kwestie van stijl. Opvattingen over stijl in kunst en literatuur*, Amsterdam, 1997, pp. 79-95., 80-83; Vossius, *Poetica*, p. 6.

⁶ Jan Bloemendal, ‘Introductory essay’, in: Vossius, *Poetica*, p. 19.

⁷ This theater was built in 1637, by Jacob van Campen, and opened on January 3th, in the next year, with a production of *Gijsbrecht van Aemstel*, a famous play specially written for this occasion by the equally famous Dutch playwright Joost van den Vondel.

In other words, it should have been an easy-reference manual in all respects. However, in one way or the other this would contradict Vossius's habit of gathering ideas and texts, his frantic collector's mania, his supposed obsession for completeness, and his polymathy. Indeed, the nature of his work on poetics is encyclopedic.⁸ Scholars like Rademaker and Bloemendal conceded that Vossius preferred to combine and heap up everything, rather than to differentiate and leave things out. Let us have a closer look whether his procedure in his works on poetics is slightly paradoxical, or even contradictory to the didactical intention.



Axioms and comments

As Vossius states in his dedication to the reader introducing the *Poeticæ institutiones*, he arranged his book in aphorisms, because long experience had taught him that it was

⁸ Rademaker, *Leven en werk*, p. 67; Vossius, *Poetica*, pp. 7, 18-20; Plett, *Rhetorik*, p. 32 uses the term 'enzyklopädische Universalrhetorik' (encyclopedic, universal rhetoric), describing the method Vossius used in his rhetoric. Cf. Jansen, 'De Institutiones oratoriae van Vossius', p. 375.

more profitable to young people if they first learned summarily what was later further reinforced and illustrated. In other words, Vossius's students began with reading a general statement, which subsequently was illustrated and substantiated in detail.⁹ In this way, Vossius wanted 'to serve the interests of the schools, which are the nursery of the state'.¹⁰ This must have been a remarkable difference with other poetics, for example with J.C. Scaliger's *Poetices libri septem* (1561), where subjects are discussed in (sometimes very long) chapters without any helpful lay-out or a well-ordered arrangement. Even indentation or a division into paragraphs is lacking here.¹¹ Thus, Vossius worked by means of axioms, aphorisms, and short judgments which were typographically marked as section headings, set off in italics.

Such statements are formulated in a rather lucid and plain style, while the sections in between teem with comments, quotations from ancient authors, further illustrations and elaborations, almost all classical material. In his dedication to the reader he explained that he wanted to substantiate everything with ancient authors, because he thought that they were in all matters the wisest of all.¹² According to Bloemendal (Vossius, *Poetica*, p. 18) 'dividing the subject matter into axioms enables him to survey all the observations known to him, weigh one against the other and then present his own opinion'. The latter is true, of course, but only for the axioms and general statements (the text in italics). We note but few concluding remarks in the comments, that is to say, concluding remarks that are relevant for the topic in the axioms concerned. The texts in between consist to a large extent of quotations and references, in many cases without any clear conclusion by Vossius. Therefore, when Edith Kern stated in her famous study on *The influence of Heinsius and Vossius upon French dramatic theory* (1949) that Vossius arranged his material so that the reader could derive the greatest benefit from it,¹³ this may be true for the axioms, but not, in my view, for the contents of the work in its entirety. Young students eager for practical advices and the opinion of the great master on all these subjects, must have been disappointed time and again. Of course, this method of Vossius can be assessed in a more positive and negative way. On the one hand, Vossius tried to achieve unity in his treatise by using a systematic approach and lucid division. For him this was also a didactic appliance that consisted of a double reading: for the sake of young scholars, as Vossius (*Poetica*, p. 97) states in his dedication, he had aimed at conciseness as much as possible, preferring to teach rather than to use bombast ('docere tamen malui quam rhetoricari'). As I said before, the purpose behind this didactics of double reading was that the students began with learning summarily the axioms printed in italics. At a later stage they were to read the comments in between, as illustrations and examples of what was stated in the heading of

⁹ Vossius, *Poetica*, pp. 96-97: 'Totam vero artem per aphorismos digessi, quia longo usu didici magis esse ex bono iuventutis, si prius summatim cognoscat quae deinde pluribus firmantur et illustrantur'; Vossius, *Poetica*, p. 18.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 96-97: '... nobis [...] pulcrum videtur scholis consulere, quae seminarium sunt reipublicae'.

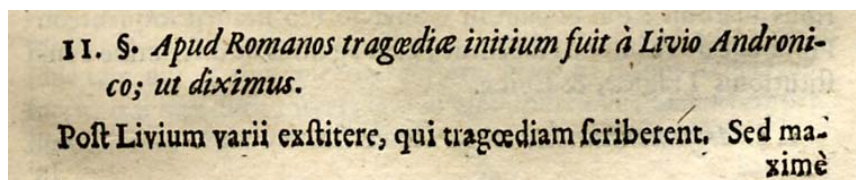
¹¹ Julius Caesar Scaliger, *Poetices libri septem*, Lyon, 1561 (reprint (ed. A. Buck), Stuttgart etc. 1964). The only helpful means for ease of application are the chapter headings and separate words in italics, put scantily in the margins.

¹² Vossius, *Poetica*, p. 95: '... sic ut omnia adstrueremus scriptoribus antiquis. Quos in his et aliis inprimis sapuisse arbitror....'

¹³ Edith G. Kern, *The Influence of Heinsius and Vossius upon French Dramatic Theory*, Baltimore, 1949, p. 104.

each paragraph (Vossius, *Poetica*, p. 97). On the other hand, Vossius is not very consistent in the way he completed these sections: sometimes the heading is a summary of what he shows in the section itself, whereas on other occasions the heading gives the first sentence, while his exposition continues into the section.¹⁴ Sometimes axiom and comment have largely different topics. Kern has noticed that ‘although such divisions give to a work the outward appearance of clarity, they seem at times so forced that the author appears to be motivated by other desires than that of presenting matters in the most comprehensible way’.¹⁵ This is also true for the comment sections, as they quite often contain fragmented and irrelevant information. As an example I take a major issue in seventeenth-century drama theory: must drama be based on the ideas of Aristotle or on the practice of Seneca?

One might expect Vossius, in explaining his preference for Aristotle, to be quite consistent and profuse in rejecting Seneca as a major example for tragedy. However, in the second book of the *Poetics*, devoted to drama theory, Vossius deals with this matter only in a short, final section (II.12.11). Here he summarily discusses Roman drama, drawing attention to the ‘highlights’ Livius Andronicus and Seneca, and leaving aside the lesser gods.¹⁶ Notice the oppositions in his text, displayed by me in bold type, which make the whole section quite confusing (Vossius, *Poetica*, p. 485).



The heading goes: ‘In Rome tragedy started with Livius Andronicus, as we have said’:

After Livius there were various authors of tragedies. **But** the plays that are usually recommended most are Varius’ *Thyestes* and Ovid’s *Medea*; **but** these are lost.¹⁷

Vossius continues with a kind of agreement: his main reason to reject Seneca is the fact that the famous *sententiae*, the sayings in Seneca’s pieces, would destroy the force of the emotions.

Seneca is **indeed** grand and full of memorable sayings, **but** these destroy the force of the emotions. He did follow Euripides in this respect, something which **not all** approve of. **However**, he did **not** reach Euripides’ excellence. For he generally lags far behind the Greeks.¹⁸

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁵ Kern, *Influence of Heinsius and Vossius*, p. 110.

¹⁶ Bloemendal, in: Vossius, *Poetica*, p. 1383.

¹⁷ Vossius, *Poetica*, pp. 484-485: ‘Apud Romanos tragoediae initium fuit à Livio Andronico, ut diximus. [II.2.5] Post Livium varii exstiterent, qui tragoediam scriberent. Sed maximè commendari solent Varii Thyestes, et Ovidii Medea: verùm periere.’

¹⁸ Ibid.: ‘Seneca gravis quidem, et sententiis creber; sed quae affectuum vim elidunt. Sane id in Euripide secutus, quod non ab omnibus probatur. Nec tamen ad Euripidis laudem pervenit. Omnino enim longissime cessit Graecis’.

In addition, Vossius quotes in approval the rhetorician Antonius Lullus in his censure of the inelegant Seneca, who thought the sayings of Seneca were worth reading:

... although grand to me [i.e. to Lullus], he [Seneca] certainly seems so inelegant that apart from his *sententiae* he has nothing worth reading.¹⁹

While Vossius rejected Seneca's sayings, Lullus by contrast praises them as worth reading. This must have been rather confusing for the reader, especially when Vossius contends to support the statement of Lullus with the following reason: 'I would not have endorsed this judgment, had it not been that of a Spaniard on a fellow-Spaniard'.²⁰ Vossius is quite serious here: he shows that chauvinism was such a strong element in this kind of judgments that the statement of Lullus must have been true.

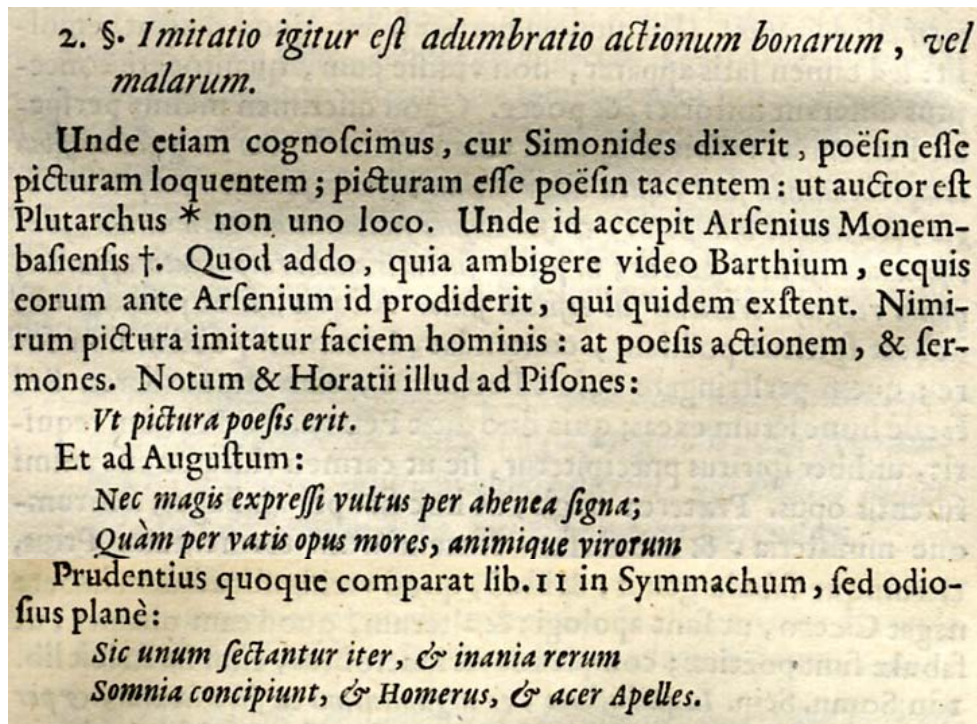
In the remaining part of this paragraph, Vossius brings up a completely different subject: the distinction between the two Seneca's, the rhetorician and the philosopher. The reader must have been quite bewildered by this accumulation of illustrations with no apparent hierarchy to them, and lacking a clear indication of Vossius's own opinion. With no real conclusion in the end, the structure of this comment section is quite disorderly.

Knowledge versus pedantry

When we examine in more detail the topics Vossius deals with in the lines between the utterances in italics, we often come across elaborations and excursions on fields that deviate from the subject in question. Worse, ever so often these elaborations appear not to have any direct connection to the topic in the axiom. In fact, sometimes they just look like scholarly profundities, a supposed ostentation of underlying and vaguely related ideas, in a network of associative facts and details. In such cases, one can safely assume that Vossius consistently wanted to add something to the axiom for the mere sake of expansion. Deviations must have come into being either because the axiom was in itself already clear enough, and there was no proper material to illustrate it, or Vossius could not add any explanation or direct illustration to the axiom involved.

¹⁹. Ibid.: '... mihi etsi gravis, at certe adeo inelegans videtur ut praeter sententias nihil habeat lectione dignum' (A. Lullus Balearis, *De oratione* 7.5).

²⁰. Ibid.: 'Quod iudicium non adscripsissem, nisi de Hispano ab Hispano esset profectum'.



To illustrate this point, we will look at a paragraph right at the beginning of the first book, where Vossius treats poetic fiction, and especially ‘representation’ (*imitatio*) (I.2.2). Vossius states at the opening of this chapter that the principal task of the poet is to represent and to invent, and that representation deals with that task ‘according to which we do something’.²¹ The next axiom (II.2.2) runs as follows: ‘Representation, therefore, is a sketch of good or evil actions’.²² The reader who is eager to learn more about Vossius’s explanation on the relation between ‘imitatio’ and ‘actiones’ or on the question which actions are good and which ones bad, is led down. At first, Vossius adds something, but something different: ‘From this we **also** learn why Simonides said that poetry is a speaking painting, and painting silent poetry, as Plutarch testifies at several places’.²³ Probably Vossius’s idea is here that Simonides, a Greek lyric poet from Ceos (6th c. BC), meant that poetry and painting represent something and are, therefore, representations of good or evil actions. In any case, Vossius immediately brings forward another subject, namely dating and chronology: ‘Arsenius of Monembasia took it from this author [Plutarch]. I add this because I notice that Barthius is in doubt whether anyone before Arsenius – at least as far as they have been preserved – had recorded it’.²⁴ Here, Vossius quotes Barthius’s giant volume of *Adversaria commentaria* (1624).²⁵ Then, back to the subject, a general remark: ‘While painting represents the face of a man, poetry represents his actions and speech’.²⁶ In the same line he continues with

²¹ Vossius, *Poetica*, pp. 116-117 (*Inst. poet.* I.2.1): ‘Praecipuum poetae officium est imitari ac fingere; [...] imitatio attendit illud secundum quod facimus aliquid...’.

²² Ibid.: ‘Imitatio igitur est adumbratio actionum bonarum vel malarum’.

²³ Ibid.: ‘Unde etiam cognoscimus, cur Simonides dixerit poësin esse picturam loquentem, picturam esse poësin tacentem, ut auctor est Plutarchus non uno loco’.

²⁴ Ibid.: ‘Unde id accepit Arsenius Monembasiensis. Quod addo, quia ambigere video Barthium ecquis eorum ante Arsenium id prodiderit, qui quidem existit’.

²⁵ Bloemendal, in Vossius, *Poetica*, pp. 116, 1237.

²⁶ Ibid.: ‘Nimirum pictura imitatur faciem hominis, at poësis actionem et sermones’.

another quote: ‘Well known, too, are Horace’s words in the *Epistle to the Pisones*: ‘A poem is like a picture’,²⁷ followed by a quote directed to Augustus, and finally the remark: ‘Prudentius, too, compares them [painting and poetry] in the second Book to Symmachus, but rather negatively’, followed by another quote, in which Homer and Apelles are named.²⁸ Vossius illustrates the axiom that *representation is a sketch of good or evil actions* by testimonies of Simonides, Plutarch, the humanist Arsenius, a bishop of Monembasia on the Peloponnesus (16th century), the German classical scholar Casparus Barthius (17th century), Horace, and Prudentius. But their utterances mostly concern a related topic (the status of painting in comparison with poetry), including some philological knowledge (Barthius). After all these testimonies, what does the young reader learned about the subject (the relation between *imitatio* and the *actiones*) or about the difference between good and evil actions?

It is quite obvious that there is a huge difference between style and contents of, on the one hand, the general outline in axioms, and on the other hand the text printed in between. In my opinion, this structure not only had a didactic purpose (the double reading), but also suited Vossius’s own way of working. He could easily add new information when he had read commentaries or ‘glosses’ on the classical authors, lexica, grammars, translations, ‘various readings’ by intermediate authors etc. While reading, he must have made notes in his manuscript on the appropriate places. Thus, he was able to increase and elaborate the remarks in a later stage. The comment section developed into a data base.

As we have no manuscript of the poetics, we cannot prove this. But the construction of some of the mostly longer comment sections may suggest this, for example where he continues his exposition with words as ‘Q is of this opinion too’, ‘there is also a memorable passage in V...’, ‘In addition W...’, ‘To this category belongs X...’, ‘We should not agree with Y...’, ‘It seems to be a similar instance when Z...’²⁹ The suggestion that he elaborated these explanations at various times, is reinforced if compared with the way Vossius expanded his rhetorical handbook *Institutiones oratoriae*. The first edition of 1606 constituted but a small booklet. The second edition, published three years later, is much thicker, but the axioms, the aphorisms in italics, remained more or less the same. The third edition developed into a book of more than a thousand pages, as Vossius added a lot of material to the comment sections.³⁰ Perhaps, if Vossius had lived a few years longer, we could have seen the same phenomenon at work in a second edition of his *Poetics*. We never know, of course.

But still, there was time enough to enlarge his poetical work in progress. After all, already in 1632 Vossius wrote to Johannes Meursius that ‘he had finished three books on poetics’ (‘Habeo et paratos libros tres de arte Poetica’; Vossius, *Poetica*, pp. 10-11). It is likely therefore that he will have added and changed information in the period between 1632 and 1647, while the whole structure of the book, the axiom section in

²⁷ Ibid: ‘Notum et Horatii illud ad Pisones [361]: ‘Ut pictura poesis erit’.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 118-119: ‘Prudentius quoque comparat libro II in Symmachum, sed odiosius plane: ‘Sic unum sectantur iter et inania rerum / Somnia concipiunt et Homerus et acer Apelles’ (‘In this way Homer and bold Apelles follow the same path / and conceive baseless visions’).

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 131, 133, 137, 155, 179, 193.

³⁰ Jansen, ‘De *Institutiones oratoriae* van Vossius’, pp. 376, 382-383.

italics, remained more or less the same, although he may have inserted one or more sections (cf. Vossius, *Poetica*, pp. 11-12).

De imitatione

Now that we have seen how Vossius filled in some parts of the comment in his *Poetics*, I will focus on the contents of his separate volume *De imitatione*. The central question once again is: is Vossius a landmark in the way he approaches the subject? Is he offering a systematic handbook on the subject, in a lucid and plain style, intending to inform the youth on this elementary topic in poetics?³¹

This booklet has a twofold title: ‘De imitatione’ and ‘De recitatione’: on imitation and on recitation in Antiquity.³² By ‘recitation’ Vossius means the recitation of classical texts by the ancients themselves, the way in which texts were read in Antiquity, or, as he puts it himself, ‘where the ancients learnt the judgment of others’.³³ According to the subtitle, the part on imitation concerns ‘imitation both in oratory and especially in poetry’. Poetry and rhetoric are related. In Vossius’s view, poetry was a cocktail of disciplines, just as logic, philosophy and eloquence. His books on poetics have many cross references to his rhetorical handbook and other works of his hand. Poetry was an assemblage of ideas borrowed from other disciplines.³⁴ Why had Vossius chosen for publishing these ideas on imitation in a separate volume? The answer is obvious. In the *Poeticae institutiones* the word ‘imitatio’ is defined as a representation of morally good or evil actions, as *mimesis*. His starting point was Aristotle. From him Vossius borrowed the mimetic concept of poetry: poetry as a representation of reality. But Vossius must have realized that he had to say something about *imitatio auctorum*, the imitation of the great prose and poet writers, the imitation of exemplary models.

The basis of *De imitatione* is the tenth book of the *Institutio oratoria* by Quintilian and the *Ars poetica* by Horace. They were at the foundation of this rhetorical and poetical handbook. In other words, while the *Poeticae institutiones* may be seen as a combination of Aristotelian and Horatian poetical concepts, Vossius’s book on imitation was more a fusion of Horatian and Quintilian ideas.

The crux is of course in what way Vossius made use of the rhetorical component in describing a subject which was meant to be poetical. For whom did he write this booklet? And was it successful?

³¹ See Jeroen Jansen, *Imitatio. Literaire navolging (imitatio auctorum) in de Europese letterkunde van de renaissance (1500-1700)*, Hilversum, 2008.

³² *Gerardi Ioannis Vossii De imitatione cum oratoria tum praecipue poetica deque recitatione veterum liber*: ‘Gerardus Ioannes Vossius, Book on imitation, both in oratory and especially in poetry, and recitation in Antiquity’.

³³ Vossius, *Poetica*, pp. 1954-1955 (preface to the reader): ‘... de recitatione qua veteres alienum iudicium cognoscebant’.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

GERARDI JOANNIS VOSSII
D E
I M I T A T I O N E
cum Oratoriâ, tum præcipuè Poeticâ;
D E Q V E
R E C I T A T I O N E
V E T E R U M,
L I B E R.



AMSTELODAMI,
Apud Ludovicum Elzevirium,
c1313cxlvi

De imitatione - Contents**Preliminaria:**

- To Jacob Cats
 - To the reader
1. CAP. I. Argumentum operis: quid sit imitatio, et an ea sit necessaria. (p. 1)
 2. CAP. II. Ad imitandum legi oportere eminentissimum, et aliquamdiu solum; postea simillimum quemque; tandem etiam dissimiles, sed laude aliquâ conspicuos. Nec semper in se optimum nobis deligendum ducem; sed aliquando inferiorem, attamen ingenio nostro magis convenientem. (p. 5)
 3. CAP. III. Quo pacto sint legendi, quos volumus imitari. (p. 10)
 4. CAP. IV. De modo imitandi alios. (p. 14)
 5. CAP. V. De meditatione futuri operis, antequam scribere aggrediamur; inque scribendo curâ, atque industriâ. (p. 23)
 6. CAP. VI. De emendatione. (p. 26)
 7. CAP. VII. De recitatione. (p. 31)
 8. CAP. VIII. Quo pacto, qui recitent, cognoscerent iudicium auditorum. (p. 39)
 9. CAP. IX. De discernendis auditorum iudiciis. (p. 45)
 10. CAP. X. De iudicio populari. (p. 48)
 11. CAP. XI. De iudicibus recitationi praefectis. (p. 50)
 - p. 57-63: Addenda
 - p. 64-69: Index
 - p. 70: Errata

The booklet contains 78 pages in quarto, of which eight preliminary ones with a dedication to Jacob Cats, one of the most popular Dutch poets of that time and Grand Pensionary of Holland. There are eleven chapters, six on imitation and five on recitation. In the first few chapters, Vossius provides a number of hints for a proper choice of what one must take as a model and for the way in which those models must be read, studied and followed. In chapter 5, Vossius treats the ‘*meditatio futuri operis*’, that is the manner in which a writer or orator must prepare himself for the actual work: invention, the writing of a play, a poem or an oration. After some brief remarks about the attitude which an author must have with respect to his work, Vossius extensively discusses the ‘*emendatio*’ in chapter 6, advancing a large number of quotations from classical writers to make clear how important and difficult it is to revise a text once it has been written. The section on recitation starts in chapter 7 with some preliminary remarks. In the eighth chapter Vossius speaks about the three sorts of reactions of the public. The public can be silent and that can mean disapproval as well as an intense appreciation. The public can also break out in cheering or demonstrate loudly its rejection. In the third place, the public can give expression of its approval or disapproval through gestures. Here again, Vossius gives numerous examples from classical literature, just as in the last three chapters where he discusses with examples how an orator or poet should take the reactions of the public, again making a distinction between the judgement of ordinary listeners and the specialized technical judgements of jury members.

De imitatione – Contents 1-6

CAP. I. Argumentum operis: quid sit imitatio, et an ea sit necessaria. (p. 1)	1. Subject of the book; what is imitation and whether imitation is necessary.
CAP. II. Ad imitandum legi oportere eminentissimum, et aliquamdiu solum; postea simillimum quemque; tandem etiam dissimiles, sed laude aliqua conspicuos. Nec semper in se optimum nobis deligendum ducem; sed aliquando inferiorem, attamen ingenio nostro magis convenientem. (p. 5)	2. Which authors should be imitated.
CAP. III. Quo pacto sint legendi, quos volumus imitari. (p. 10)	3. How to read the authors to be imitated.
CAP. IV. De modo imitandi alios. (p. 14)	4. How to imitate others.
CAP. V. De meditatione futuri operis, antequam scribere aggrediamur; inque scribendo cura, atque industria. (p. 23)	5. Invention.
CAP. VI. De emendatione. (p. 26)	6. Emendation.

In the part on imitation Vossius rehearses some general, well-known and rather elementary rules and ideas which he provides with a lot of comments. In fact, only the first four chapters are really dedicated to the *imitatio veterum*. In the first one he suggests a definition of imitation ('to conform ourselves to another's example in order to become like him') and underlines the necessity of imitation, in the second he emphasizes the reading of the best authors and argues that the good imitator must not imitate his model in a slavish way, but in such a way that the new text will be his own. The third chapter is about how to read the authors we want to imitate: according to Vossius, the reading must be serious and attentive. In the fourth chapter he shifts the emphasis from reading to writing. It is headed 'De modo imitandi alios' ('how to imitate others') and this may be the most important section on imitation itself. In Vossius's view, which reaches back to ancient rhetoric, the young poet or orator at first had to concentrate on one excellent example and to analyze this model thoroughly. In a later stage he could make himself familiar with other writers, but preferably only with those writers who corresponded in opinion and style with this first model.³⁵ Vossius

³⁵ Vossius, *Poetica*, pp. 1972, 1966, 1994: 'Consequitur igitur ut vel unus sit imitandus vel perpauci [...]. Primo enim deligendus est unus ipseque optimus et eminentissimus. Ubi vero aliquamdiu eum versavimus, alios etiam reddemus nobis perfamiliares, sed conceptibus ac dictione quam simillimos, et sic ut non eo principem illum deponamus de manibus, sed pergamus eum vertere in sanguinem et succum'; 'Ad imitandum legi oportere eminentissimum et aliquamdiu solum, postea simillimum quemque, tandem etiam dissimiles, sed laude aliqua conspicuos'; 'Facilius proinde ex alienis nostra faciemus, si non unum sequimur sed plures'.

mentions different kinds of imitation, a childish one and a more mature, grown up imitation.³⁶ This ‘imitatio adulta’ consists of an ‘imitatio servilis’, an anxious, slavish imitation,³⁷ and an ‘imitatio ingenua’ a more free imitation, in which the author had to master elements from his model by fitting them into his own work in a natural way.³⁸ Final remarks in this chapter are made on the avoidance of errors like obscenities, curses, blasphemy, archaisms and bad affectation.

In the preface to the reader Vossius speaks out what he intends with the booklet. After listing the most important writers (*praecipui*) on the subject, such as Poliziano, Cortese, Pico della Mirandola, Bembo, Ricci, Camerarius and Sturmius, one may indeed ask what Vossius should add to all these discussions on imitation. He gives an answer himself: he wanted to give his opinion on imitation, as many people asked him to do so, because they thought he could treat this matter more briefly and shed some new light on it.³⁹ Here the reader gets the impression that Vossius wanted to make a concise, easy-reference manual on imitation. Vossius explains the conciseness of this booklet in the preface to the reader by pointing at his own age, at his busy life,⁴⁰ and, in his dedication to Jacob Cats, at the juvenile target group: ‘... I thought it would be enough if I gave my opinion in a few words, since the rest could be read elsewhere – not to mention that, because it is fruitful for the youth to know this, I would like to be read especially by them’. He had to be brief, because the nature of youngsters, as he says, was inclined to leisure and laziness and was averse to long and difficult words.⁴¹

³⁶ Ibid., p. 1990 (‘De modo imitandi alios’): ‘Modus imitationis est duplex: puerilis et virilis. Priori solum proponimus nobis exemplum in verbis sive simplicibus sive conjunctis’ (There are two ways of imitation: boyish and manly. In the first we set before our eyes the example merely in words, simple or compound). The same twofold division in a adult and a boyish imitation we encounter earlier in Andreas Schottus, *Tullianarum quaestionum de instauranda Ciceronis imitatione libri IV* (1610), vol. I, cap. X (‘De perfecta imitandi ratione’), pp. 28-29.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 1990: ‘Praeterea imitandi modus alius est servilis, alius vero ingenuus. Servilis ille anxius et morosus, cum quasi superstitione quadam ab eo quem imitandum nobis proposuimus, ne transversum quidem digitum discedere audemus’ (Moreover, one way of imitation is slavish, another free-born. The slavish one is fearful and peevish, since we so to speak superstitiously do not dare to deviate an inch from him whom we propose to imitate).

³⁸ Ibid., p. 1992: ‘Ingenuam imitationem appello, quando non verbum verbo reddimus [cf. Horatius, *Ars poetica* 133-134]; sed sic aliena tractamus ut non in alterius possessionem irruius, sed iure nostro venisse credamur, quaeque aliena sunt ob dissimilem faciem non pro alienis habeantur, sed agnoscantur pro nostris’ (I call free-born imitation when we not only render word by word, but treat the works of others as if we are believed not to have rushed into another’s possession, but have come on our own, and that the works of others are not, because of their different appearance, considered to be of someone else, but are acknowledged as our own). On ‘tractare’, see Alexandru N. Cizek, *Imitatio et tractatio: die literarisch-rhetorischen Grundlagen der Nachahmung in Antike und Mittelalter*, Tübingen, 1994, pp. 50ff. Cf. Quintilian, *Inst. orat.* X.2.4.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 1952-1953: ‘Post operam tamen tam multorum quique in literis nostris nomen decusque non leve gesserunt, rogatus sum a pluribus ut ipse etiam hac de re exponerem sententiam meam. Sive vero hoc egerint quia necdum in eos incidissent scriptores quos antea laudavimus, sive quia et brevius hanc materiam constringi et aliquid etiam novae lucis affundi a me posse arbitrarentur, equidem parui iis...’

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 1952-1953: ‘Praeterea ut facilius in isto morem gererem amicis illud fecit, quod dicerent se scire et aetatem et occupationes meas ac propterea nihil aliud petere quam paucarum pagellarum operam eamque minime operosam’.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 1948-1949: ‘Quod autem in ipso opusculo brevior fuerim ex eo est quod sufficere putarem, si paucis mentem meam exponerem, quia caetera aliunde peti possent. Ut praeteream quod, cum haec

Now, in view of these preliminary words we may expect ‘some new light’ (‘aliquid novae lucis’) on imitation. On the other hand we must not look for too many original ideas in *De imitatione*: it was merely a compendium of in fact well known ideas on the subject, intended as a kind of schoolbook. The prayer of his friends to write this compendium ‘seemed to me honest, since I myself too preferred to get beautiful sayings from others, because I had nothing less in mind than to smash the writing of the most learned men from the hands of the youth’.⁴²

Colette Nativel, in her article on the theory of imitation in seventeenth-century rhetoric and painting, concluded that Vossius’s *De imitatione* is in fact a schoolbook, where the moderate ideas of Cicero shine through a Quintilian filter. According to her, Vossius addressed average talents, that is to say: his readers were especially common school-children with a limited talent.⁴³ With the benefit of material taken from Quintilian, he showed how students should follow the ancients and which ones. A good illustration of this orientation is Vossius’s advice in chapter 2 to choose not always the best author as a guide, but an inferior one that is more suited to the talent of the pupil.⁴⁴ We must first look at where our talent leads us (‘primo videndum quo ingenium trahat vel ducat’). To become familiar with an author and to observe closely his virtues one has to select an exemplary author, and read and follow many, as there will be the danger of imitating nobody in the end.⁴⁵

In fact these ideas are widespread, rooted in a long-standing tradition.⁴⁶ Even in Antiquity students were discouraged from reaching too high. The verses of Horace on what the shoulders of the future author could bear (*Ars poetica* vss. 38-41: ‘quid valeant umeri’), must have sounded reassuring. Pliny was of the opinion that it would be something in between crime and sheer madness to challenge an oration by Demosthenes,⁴⁷ due to the talent of the average student.⁴⁸

nosse intersit iuventutis, ab ea inprimis legi vellem, illa vero natura sit proclivis ad otium et desidiam nec aliud aequae aversetur quam quos vocare solet longos logos’.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 1952-1955: ‘Honestam mihi eorum visa est oratio, quandoquidem et ipse innumera bene dicta ex aliis peti mallet, ut qui nihil minus in animo haberem quam ut doctissimorum hominum scripta excuterem de manibus iuventutis’.

⁴³ Colette Nativel, ‘La théorie de l’imitation au XVII^e siècle en rhétorique et en peinture’, *Revue Dix-septième siècle* 175 (1992), pp. 157-168 (166): ‘Le *De imitatione* que Vossius présente comme le couronnement de son enseignement rhétorique et poétique est avant tout un manuel scolaire où se déploie un cicéronianisme modéré, passé au filtre de Quintilien. Il s’adresse à un talent médiocre dont il est sûr *a priori* qu’il ne pourra jamais atteindre la perfection antique. Au nom de prepon, il préfère à l’aléatoire imitation des grands maîtres une médiocrité accomplie. [...] Enfin, s’il rappelle les réserves de Quintilien à l’égard de l’imitation, il ne montre pas comment la dépasser. Toute son oeuvre porte la marque de cette doctrine’.

⁴⁴ Vossius, *Poetica*, pp. 1966-1967: ‘... aliquando inferiorem [ducem], attamen ingenio nostro magis convenientem’.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 1970-1971 (II.3): ‘A multis exordium capere velle (ac magis permultis vel omnibus) certa est omnis eloquentiae pestis. Hoc enim pacto manifestum incurrimus periculum exprimendi neminem, quando vaga illa et instabilis multorum lectio non sinit nos scriptorem quemquam reddere nobis familiarem eiusque virtutes penitus introspicere’.

⁴⁶ Cf. JoAnn DellaNeva. ‘Reflecting lesser lights: the imitation of minor writers in the Renaissance’, *Renaissance Quarterly* 42.3 (1989), pp. 449-479 (452-453).

⁴⁷ Pliny, *Ep.* VII.30.4-5: ‘non ut [Demosthenem] aemularer (improbum enim ac paene furiosum), sed tamen imitarer et sequer...’

Restraints on this kind of attempts one can read time and again, in all kinds of didactic discussions. Johannes Sturm argued, in the ‘Scholae’ on his *De imitatione* (1574):

It is a royal aim: imagine, to surpass Cicero, Demosthenes, Virgil and Pindar! But if you cannot exceed them, acquiesce. If you are unable to equal them, be second to them. After all, it is amply sufficient to belong to the second rank, according to Horace’s advice: ‘Quisquis vult, etc’ [‘Pindarum quisquis studet aemulari’ *Carmina* 4.2, vss. 1-4]. Horace does not forbid to imitate Pindar, but he vituperates the contention [*aemulatio*], because he [Pindar] cannot be drawn up to and outrun. If you cannot be an eloquent orator, it is sufficient to be a mediocre one.⁴⁹

Within this didactic programme an alternative was found in the imitation of less authoritative authors. JoAnn DellaNeva has discussed the Renaissance discourse in which future poets were advised to leave every desire to surpass great authors and to content oneself with following them, no more than that. These beginners should conform to more manageable examples, the ‘lesser Lights’, that could be easily equalled or even excelled.⁵⁰

After all, in imitating the most eminent authors, students ran the risk of missing the virtues of example and to jump over to vice. It is not without reason that Bulephorus, in Erasmus’s *Ciceronianus* (1528), advises to follow minor writers, because their positive qualities stand out and do not appear all at once.⁵¹ Vossius’s advices for the future author to avoid all monstrosities that emanated from the discrepancy between the nature of the exemplary author and the follower, by not staking to high and by choosing mediocre examples, suited to the talent of the imitator.⁵²

⁴⁸. Cf. Quintilian, *Inst. orat.* X.2.19: ‘Nam quaedam sunt imitabilia, quibus aut infirmitas naturae non sufficiat aut diversitas repugnet’; ‘quantum aut diversitas ingeniorum, maximi et minimi, aut dissimilitudo pateretur’.

⁴⁹. Joannes Sturm, *De imitatione* (1574), ‘Scholae in lib. I.2’, fol. A4^v (to ‘Ut si non superare’, namely to sig. B2^f: ‘Natura se est ipsa contenta: sese amans: neque plus potest, quam id, quod potest: Imitatio ingenium ultra naturae ducit terminos: ut se amare desinat: & meliores admirari incipiat: & sese illis conetur adaequare, si superare non queat’): ‘Causa finalis ipsius definitionis. Est unus finis regius, scilicet superare Ciceronem, Demosthenem, Virgilium, Pindarum. Sed si superare non potes, acquiescas: si non potes esse par: sis secundus: plane enim satis si possis in secundis consistere, secutus Horatij consilium. Quisquis vult, &c. Non vetat Horatius imitationem Pindari, sed vituperat aemulationem, in non adipiscendo, & assequendo. si non potes esse orator grandiloquus, satis est, si evadas mediocris: si non mediocris, satis est si evadas subtilis’.

⁵⁰. DellaNeva, ‘Reflecting lesser lights’, pp. 467, 473.

⁵¹. D. Erasmus, *Ciceronianus sive de optimo genere dicendi*, ed. Theresia Payr, Darmstadt, 1972. pp. 116ff. Cf. DellaNeva, ‘Reflecting lesser lights’, p. 472.

⁵². Vossius, *Poetica*, pp. 1966-1967 (*De imitatione*, cap. 2): ‘Nec semper in se optimum nobis deligendum ducem, sed aliquando inferiorem, attamen ingenio nostro magis convenientem’ (We should not always choose the best author as a guide, but sometimes an inferior one, yet more suited to our own talent); cf. 1996-1997: ‘Interim non omnia in summis etiam poetis aemulari oportet. Quemadmodum enim Orator nunquam fuit, vel erit; quin perfectius aliquid animo concipi possit, ita nec Poeta ullus exstitit, qui non humanitus aliquid patiatur’ (In the meantime we must not emulate everything even in the best poets. For just as there never was or will be an orator who would not be able to conceive something more perfect, so there has been no poet who did not suffer something human...). Vossius concludes here

Most of Vossius's notions and comments in this book are taken from Cicero, the letters by Seneca and, in particular, Quintilian. We encounter the idea on different stages in imitation – the childish one and a more adult imitation and another one in between – also in sixteenth-century schoolbooks on the subject – books for starting poets – like those by Bartholomaeus Riccius and Johannes Sturm.⁵³ The conception of making the model its own, that is to change the example into a new product by a creative means of imitation, has earlier been formulated by Quintilian, and in the sixteenth century also by Riccius and Sturm, in the first decade of the seventeenth century by Andreas Schottus.⁵⁴ That Vossius used all these guides was not a secret, for he mentioned them among others in his preface 'To the reader'. But other names are still lacking, as for example Lipsius, who discussed different forms of imitation in his treatise on letter-writing (*Epistolica institutio*) and Gasparus Scioppius, who in my opinion has invented the term 'imitatio adulta' – a grown up imitation.⁵⁵ Therefore, Vossius's ideas on imitation are current and well known in this period, most of them taken from Quintilian, some of them from the sources he mentions so faithfully in his preface. As these ideas are quite basic, they are perfectly fitted for the novice poet or interested student, but the mostly erudite illustrations – some of them in Greek – are surely addressed to learned men, not only to those who want to read further but also to those who want to check Vossius's erudition and scholarship, and to schoolmasters.

Concluding remarks

The combination of axioms and comments, of the easy going remarks in italics and the learned illustrations in between, is a typical feature of Vossius. There is an obvious positive, didactic side to this approach: reading the axioms will inform students on important poetical issues easily and concisely. However, in the comment sections Vossius gives the impression that he wanted to add additional remarks or observations, apparently aimed at a different reader. These comments constitute the vast majority of the text, which leads to the conclusion that Vossius's manuals as a whole are not so much suitable for young students, but rather for schoolmasters and teachers who could illustrate the general remarks and rules with a selection of examples offered. Obviously, that was his way of 'serving the interests of the schools' ('scholis consulere').

In fact, *De imitatione* is not so much a booklet on imitation as well as a description of the process of reading, writing and performing texts, and in that way it broadly outlined book 10 of Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*. After all, it is an elementary survey on the rhetorical aspects of the triangle Author-Text-Reader. In eleven chapters Vossius

that one has to imitate only those things that are praised by the most eminent men ('Quare ea solùm imitari oportet, quae à praestantissimis hominibus laudi ducuntur'), the advice of Quintilian (X.2). Cf. Nativel. 'La théorie de l'imitation', p. 160.

⁵³ See Jansen, *Imitatio*, pp. 56-59.

⁵⁴ Andreas Schottus, *Tullianarum quaestionum de instauranda Ciceronis imitatione libri IV* (1610), bk I, cap. X ('De perfecta imitandi ratione'), pp. 28-29.

⁵⁵ Scioppius, *De rhetoricarum exercitationum generibus praecipuè de recta Ciceronis imitatione* (1666; ¹1628), p. 5 (on the difference between *imitatio puerilis* and *imitatio virilis*). This classification into an 'imitatio puerilis' and 'virilis (seu mascula)' met the traditional dichotomy of slavish and free imitation, and this division remained accepted till far into the eighteenth century (e.g. see the *Fundamenta stili cultioris* (¹⁴1773), pp. 271ff. by the German jurist Johann Gottlieb Heineccius (1681-1741)).

discusses a number of universal subjects concerning the rhetorical process of reading, writing and listening to a text.⁵⁶ His starting point is how to write a text, beginning with how to read and imitate, and then discussing aspects like invention, thinking and rethinking the subject before writing something down; next how to emend it, how to make a recitation, and finally the judgements of the public, that is to say the responses to a speech, which audiences could be distinguished and which opinions they could foster.

In chapter 6 Vossius talks about the continuing emendation of one's own work, while with approval quoting Quintilian's qualification of the *emendatio* in the *Institutio oratoria* (X.4.1), being by far the most useful part of oratorical study ('pars studiorum longe utilissima'). There, in the explanatory section, Vossius mentions Horace's recommendation to delete while writing and afterwards, and to pay attention to the final strokes (cf. *Sat.* 1,4 and 1,10).⁵⁷ All in all, Vossius's discourse resembles a 'fusion' (Herrick) of a rhetoric-biased didactics ('How to write a successful work') and a classical poetics, which becomes clear from the subtitle of the book.

That Vossius wrote this booklet to create perfect poetry, might – after the first chapters – be inferred from the final paragraph (11.10). With three passages derived from Horace, Vossius demonstrates once again that the perfect mastery of the *ars* is absolutely necessary, and that the poet must strive for the top. Here the underlying thought is that an average performing by physicians, lawyers, and architects is permissible as far as their particular *ars* is concerned, but for poetry this does not apply at all, because everybody can take up the pen to express his feelings in prose.⁵⁸

Can young students readily deduce from this treatise how to attain excellence? Assuming that their road is paved with general knowledge of all kinds of poetical rules, students should rather fall back on Vossius's *Institutiones poeticae*, dating from the same year. Here young poets get far more detailed poetical advice, that could function as

⁵⁶ Vossius, *Poetica*, respectively 'Quo pacto sint legendi, quos volumus imitari' (cap. 3), 'De modo imitandi alios' (cap. 4), '(prae)meditatio' (cap. 5), 'emendatio' (cap. 6), 'recitatio' (cap. 7), and the 'iudicium auditorum' (cap. 8-11).

⁵⁷ Cf. J.H. Brouwers, 'Horatius als voorbeeld en inspiratiebron in Vossius' *De imitatione*', in: E. Ruijsendaal, G. Rutten, F. Vonk, eds, *Bon jours Neef, ghoden dagh Cozyn!, Opstellen aangeboden aan Geert Dibbets...*, Münster, 2003, pp. 43-54, 48. Apart from that, Brouwers rightly observes that the illustrations and examples Vossius used here (i.c. Horace) have not been chosen happily in all cases when it comes to the relevance of them for the immediate context (p. 49). In other words: some (classical) quotes by Vossius have little relation with the subject in concern, which according to Brouwers has been caused by the sometimes highly associative quality of these comments, while Vossius lavishly (and abundantly) illustrates obvious observations (p. 52).

⁵⁸ Vossius, *Poetica*, pp. 2104-2105: 'Qui vero natura ad poetice factus non est, rectius abstinet a versibus, non recitandis modo, sed etiam faciendis. Neque enim similis est poetarum ratio atque aliorum. Nam medicis, iurisconsultis, architectis et similibus carere non possumus, eoque etiam laudantur, qui mediocriter in arte sua sunt versati. At nemo cogitur ut carmen scribat, cum liceat cuique sensa sua effari prosa. Propterea nec laudem meretur poeta nisi qui excellit' (But who is not made for poetry by nature, could better restrain from verses, not only from reading them, but also from making them. Moreover, it is not the same thing with poets as with others. For we cannot do without physicians, lawyers, architects, etcetera, and therefore even they who have a mediocre knowledge of the art are praised. But no one is forced to write a verse, since everybody is allowed to express his feelings in prose. Therefore, only the poet who excels, deserves praise. Cf. Brouwers, 'Horatius als voorbeeld', p. 53, who has pointed out a few references to Horace in this paragraph, for example *Ars poetica* 372-373: 'mediocribus esse poetis, / Non homines, non Di, non concessere columnae' (But that poets be of middling rank, / Neither men nor gods nor booksellers ever brooked).

a poetics, especially when they were not distracted by the mostly complex erudition in the comment sections. But if they wanted to learn to imitate successfully, these young students may have found little concrete, practical material in *De imitatione*. However, it would have impossible for Vossius to give practical advice of that sort, because things partly depended on the individual disposition and nature of individual students. The supervising teacher must have played an important role here.

All quotations, elaborations and digressions of Vossius, all intermediate sources and references to late Classical and Medieval scientists are uncovered and revealed now by Jan Bloemendal, in his new edition to Vossius's *Poetics*. It learns us much more about Vossius's didactics and about the way in which he overwhelmed his readers with his erudite knowledge.