Autobiographical Reading and Writing: the Diary of David Beck (1624)

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The classical writer Appolodorus once said about his own oeuvre that “if you cut out his borrowings, his paper would remain blank.”¹ Appolodorus recognised a universal truth: writing owes as much to what an author has read, as it does to the author himself. The influence of reading can be very visible in a text. This is the case for example with a quote. If an author quotes lines from a book, says Montaigne, it is obvious that reading has affected writing. But reading can have less visible effects as well. At all levels of a text, what has been written can be an imitation of something read in other texts.

For egodocuments this is just as true as for other genres of writing. As research of, for example, autobiographies has shown, people write about their own lives using models they have encountered in texts.² The history of reading might therefore hold special interest for research on egodocuments. What books did actual historical readers read? What models of self-construction did historical readers read in books? How, where or when were these books read? These are all questions addressed in the ever-growing field of historical reader research. To answer these questions, historians have turned to sources such as inventories, book sale catalogues, and book shop records.³

In turn, the study of egodocuments might hold special interest for the history of reading. Egodocuments can be very fruitful sources for the study of reader behaviour of the past. As has been shown by a number of studies, egodocuments such as diaries can give a good insight in the practise of reading in the past. One can often find clues not only on what books were read, but also on how books were read or in what circumstances they were read.

Using egodocuments as a source for the history of reading leads back again to the relation between reading and writing. Reading has an impact on writing, but the reverse statement is also true: writing has an impact on reading. For instance, when composing a paper on autobiographical reading and writing, one could browse books, say Montaigne, and look for quotes that suit the topic. Writing an egodocument can thus also influence the way books were read. As the Dutch historian José de Kruif has pointed out in her study on book ownership in The Hague in the eighteenth century, to establish the value of egodocuments for historical reader research we need to know more about the rules and conventions of the “genre”.⁴
other words: we need to know how self-writing evolved over the course of the centuries to interpret data on reading from egodocuments. How did writing about one's own life influence reading, or writing about reading?

Here the practice of reading, as recorded in one early seventeenth-century Dutch diary, will be examined. First, the diary as a source for reader-research will be discussed. After that, the relation between reading and the writing of the diary will be considered. This will finally lead back to the topic of egodocuments as a source for the history of reading.

EGODOCUMENTS AND THE HISTORY OF READING

On 1 July 1659, a notary drew up an inventory of Hendrick Beck's house. In the office of this Rotterdam schoolmaster, the notary found among other things "thirteen prints in frames, both round and square; an old little mirror; some carpenter's tools, 7 books in small folio, 17 books in quarto, 26 ditto in octavo, 25 ditto small old ones, bound and unbound, an ice sledge". For historians of material culture, inventories have long been of interest. This specific inventory has also been of importance for art historians, because Hendrick's son was a painter and worked for Queen Christina of Sweden. Hendrick had many of his son's drawings in his house.

More recently book historians have also taken an interest in inventories of this kind. Research in this field has shifted from the production and distribution books, to their consumption: who were the readers of the printed word? Book ownership is one of the ways in which this question can be answered. Beside the books mentioned, Hendrick Beck also owned an old French Bible in folio and a German one, and "a German prayer book, a French book of psalms, a testament with seven locks belonging to the widow, a Bible in folio with locks".

It has been mainly the "who read what" question that has attracted most attention over the past few years. A number of sources has been used in this research, which have proved both useful and methodical. Inventories are one such source. The advantage is that there is a large number of them. But, as can been seen from Hendrick Beck's inventory, if mentioned at all, books are usually not specified, or only if they are valuable. Yet inventories have yielded much information for the history of reading. Other quantitative research has been undertaken by making use of bookseller's sales books. These sources have rarely survived before the late eighteenth century. Further research has been done into private libraries, by means of book sale catalogues. Commercial libraries, book auctions and reading circles have also been studied.

Questions concerning the use of books have been more difficult to answer. The aforementioned sources can be used to connect books with different social groups, but when we want to know just how people read those books, these sources have little to say. We know something, for example, about the books Hendrick Beck owned. But when he read them, when or if he bought them, where he read them or why are questions we cannot answer. This is not the case with his brother David. Al-
though we have no inventory of his possessions, we know for the year 1624 what books he read, when and where, for how long, including books he read but did not own. This is because he has left us his diary for this year, in which he informs us extensively about his reading experience.\textsuperscript{10} It is this experience which has recently attracted the attention of historians.

In the history of reading, egodocuments are slowly being discovered as sources for describing the experience of readers. Robert Darnton for example demonstrated this usefulness in his article on the reading of Jean Ranson.\textsuperscript{11} John Brewer analysed the diaries of Anna Larpent on her reading experience. Recently Robert DeMaria devoted an entire book to the life and reading of Samuel Johnson and Kevin Sharpe wrote an extensive study on the reading of William Drake.\textsuperscript{12} In the Netherlands an article by Arianne Boggeman on the diary of the young Otto van Eck initiated interest in egodocuments as sources for documenting the history of reading.\textsuperscript{13} In England a project has recently been set up to collect as many reading experiences from egodocuments as possible into a database.\textsuperscript{14} These and other studies have shown that diaries, letters, autobiographies and the like are very suitable for studying questions about the reading experience of past readers.

\section*{The Diary of David Beck}

Just like his brother, David Beck was a schoolmaster. Born in Cologne in 1594, he settled in The Hague in 1617. He ran a so-called “French” school, meaning that besides the regular program, he also taught the French language. His younger brother and sister lived with him, his brothers Steven and Hendrick resided in The Hague and Delft respectively. In 1618 David married Roeltje van Belle. Out of this marriage three children were born. Roeltje died in childbirth in 1623. A year afterwards, David moved to Arnhem where he was appointed as the sole French schoolmaster. In 1630 David was married for the second time, to Geertruijt Jansdochter Noot. Another three children were born from this marriage. Early in 1634 David died in Arnhem.

David probably kept diaries for many years, but we only know that for certain for the years 1623 and 1624. Unfortunately we only know of the existence of the 1623 diary because David mentions it in his diary for 1624, the one that has survived. In it, every day is meticulously described. All entries have more or less the same format. They always start with the weather conditions. Then, in chronological order, David noted what he had read or written, whether or not he went out, whom he had met and dined with and at what time he went to bed. April the 19th can serve as an example:

The 19th, weather as the day before. I wrote an ABC-poem before noon. Read in the afternoon after dinner at my office in the works of J. Bertaut the “Poème Timandre” entirely through. Did nothing extraordinary besides that. Walked in the evening 4 or 5 times through The Hague without talking to anyone and came home at 9 o’clock to dinner with sister Dilliane, going to bed at 10 o’clock.
The nature and purpose of the diary is best described by the heading David gave it. He called it a “journal or daily history, containing the description of the year of Our Lord 1624”, in which he described everything remarkable which had occurred during the year, especially in The Hague and especially concerning his own doings and those of his relatives. David concluded by stating that he himself wrote it with special care, to “keep as a sweet memory for my lovely children as a mirror of my life”.

BOOKS READ

What then was Beck’s reading experience? Because he was so accurate in his diary, we can get a very good idea of the books he used. To start with, poetic works played an important part in Beck’s life. Of the 60 titles he mentioned, 38 were works of poetry. These include both worldly and religious poetry, and sometimes both in one,
as for example in *La muse chrétiennne* by Pierre Poupo or in the *Emblèmes ou devises chrétiennes* by Georgette de Montenay. There is therefore no clear line that separates them from the remaining titles, eleven of which are of a religious nature. First and foremost there is the Bible, and beside that Beck read some religious conduct books, for example Martinum Mollerum's *Hant boexcken vande voorbereydinghe ter doodd* (Handbook for the preparation for death). Furthermore, Beck read historical works, which included the newspaper, a German yearbook and a history of the Protestant movement in France. Beck finally mentioned an almanac and two medical works: a book about the plague and a book about herbs.

Beck could easily combine his interest in poetry with his work as a French schoolmaster. More than half of the 69 titles mentioned were in this language. It was
French Renaissance poetry that he read the most: works by Pierre de Ronsard, Estienne Jodelle, Marguerite de Navarre and Clément Marot, to name just a few. Furthermore, Beck also read the Bible in French. Though of German origin, Beck hardly read any works in this language. The Historio Continuatio and a Lutheran book of psalms are the only two mentioned. The remaining titles were mostly in Dutch, with the exception of a Hebrew book of psalms, Mercator's Atlas and a Latin work by George Buchanan. The Hebrew book was bought as a curiosity, since Beck could not read this language. He could not write Latin either, because in one of his poems he described himself as someone who never touched the Greek nor the Latin lyre. Whether or not he could read Latin is unclear, but it is striking that the classical writers were virtually absent from his booklist in 1624. They were not completely missing, but he read them in French translation. The only one he mentioned is Virgil, whose Aeneas he read in Des Masure's translation.

Beck was more of a lover of literature than a lover of books. He never remarked on the shape, size or format of a book. We could of course verify that for ourselves if we checked the works Beck mentioned, but the difficulty is that of many of his books we do not know which edition he had in his hands. Many works were printed more than once, but Beck hardly ever took note of this aspect of his books. The only one for which he did so was the Catechismus (Catechism): "visited by Breckerfelt, with whom I had some discussions about the scriptures and read a while in his confirmation classes on the Heidelberg Catechism printed anno 1621, published by Gellema Bouma". This specificity probably sprung from the fact that no author was mentioned in the Catechism.

Another aspect of Beck's reading experience was formed by hand-written texts. The culture of handwriting is an aspect that has been largely neglected in the history of the book, but, as the Dutch historian Han Brouwer demonstrated, we need to understand this culture to get a clear view of what literacy meant in the early modern world. That there is not a sharp break between the age of the manuscript and the age of print is widely acknowledged. But as Harold Love shows, hand-written books remained an important part of the literate world until well into the seventeenth century. Judging from Stephen Colclough's study of commonplace books, this notion could be extended to the nineteenth century. Even then, hand-written texts were an important part of people's experience of literature.

Beck used scribal publication to circulate his own works. He made a beautifully calligraphed copy of his Thropheen off Zeghe-teeckenen, which he presented to Stadholder Maurits. It was thought that this poem had been lost, but recently the text was found in the archive of the Dutch royal family. Beck presented written copies of his other poems to his friend David de Moor. Beck also copied all of his poetry into a "large book" as he called it. He often read his own poetry, often when other people were around to hear it. In fact, most of Beck's poetry only survived in manuscript. Beck's poems were copied in a written collection now in the Dutch National Library.
Just as Beck sent his poetry to others, so he read other poets’ works in manuscript: “Received a letter from Amsterdam from Christina Poppings (who did not know then of Roeltje’s passing away) with a poem by P. Cornelis Hooft (to my judgement) on the marriage of Mrs Tesselshade Roemers”. Pieter Cornelisz Hooft was a well-known writer whose work appeared in print, but his poems evidently also circulated in manuscript. The reading of manuscript was not confined to poetry alone. Letters formed a large part of Beck’s reading experience. In his diary he mentioned receiving some eighty letters during the year and a large number of these were from his brother Hendrick. They frequently corresponded with each other, and the letters could sometimes turn into literature, as for example the invitation poem Hendrick wrote to invite Beck and other relatives to the Delft fair. The letters they wrote were kept with care and were sometimes read again.

The diary of David Beck thus gives a good insight into his reading. Judging by the titles Beck mentioned, we can conclude first of all that Beck was a fashionable read-
er. We know from studies of Dutch literature from the early seventeenth century that French poetry and pastoral poetry was en vogue. Well-known authors like Roelof Hooft or Constantijn Huygens wrote poetry inspired by many of the same books Beck mentioned. In one of his letters, Hooft apologised to Huygens for returning *Les tragiques* by Théodore Agrippa d’Aubigné so late. He could hardly part with the book, because he so much enjoyed its “tastefully, broad insights.” Paul Smith has documented that Beck was in some respect no extraordinary reader. He studied the reception of some French poets in seventeenth century Holland. He showed that Marot was published many times in Holland. Many Dutch poets translated Marot’s and Ronsard’s poems. One of the first books of Dutch Renaissance poetry, *De Nederlandse Helicon* (1610) contained translations of these and other French poetry. Marot, Ronsard and Montaigne were also present in many Dutch private libraries of the seventeenth century.26

Secondly, from the diary we get an idea of how fashionable poetry was embedded in a wider reading experience. Poetry was intermingled with religious tracts, historical books, newspapers etc. Moreover, hand-written texts were a major part of the reading experience. This wide reading experience offers us, as CoIclough remarked, a possibility “to reconstruct intertextuality as it operates between texts read at or near the same time.”27 For this we have to look at how the books were used.

Thirdly, even in the early seventeenth century, there was no narrow geographical boundary for a reader. Beck did not have to confine himself to Dutch texts, nor to texts published in his hometown, his region or his country. For the developments of literature in Dutch, this is a point worth noting. The Dutch speaking population already being small, Dutch literature not only had to face competition from translated texts but had also to reckon with a large reading public that was able to acquire and read texts in foreign languages.28 The ability to read non-Dutch texts will also be important when we address the influence of books on the writing of Dutch egodocuments. Possible influences did not have to be confined to Dutch texts. People could get books from a wide region. How did they do that? Beck’s diary can tell us more about that.

**THE PRACTICE OF READING: WHAT, WHEN, WHERE**

To get books, Beck first needed money. David Beck’s French school in The Hague was not meant for all and sundry. Few parents could afford his fee of 60 guilders a year. The number of students Beck had is not known, but it varied considerably during the year. On 30 August Beck remarked that because of the plague only some 40 students attended school. Many parents kept their children at home. He therefore must have had more students before the outbreak, but precise numbers are unknown. So we do not know Beck’s exact financial position, but he did not belong to the poor of The Hague. This meant that he had the money to buy the books he wanted. Where did he get them?
To acquire books Beck had a number of opportunities. The first one, of course, would be the bookseller. The Hague had a rather peculiar book market. Being the centre of government of the Dutch Republic, the city was divided into a municipal and a court area. The local magistrate ruled only the municipal districts. Booksellers who wanted to open a shop there had to join the St. Lucas guild. The Hof van Holland ruled the court district, a small part of The Hague where the government was seated. Because the guild had no say there, booksellers from all over the Republic could establish their shops in the Great Hall of the Court.29 When buying books in The Hague, Beck always bought them at this Great Hall on the Binnenhof.

On 5 January his brother Steven brought him the catalogue of a book auction which was to be held a few days later. On the basis of this catalogue, Beck had his brother buy Les muses en deuil (author unknown) and Les tragédies et autres œuvres poétiques by Jean Prévost. Beck did not always know in advance which books to buy, as on January 11: “I was at the Hall at court this afternoon, speculating in the books and bought Buchanan’s “Latin Paraphrases on the 150 psalms of David” there.

Beck went to the bookseller’s as well, though not in The Hague. When visiting relatives in Rotterdam, he stepped into the shop of bookseller Van Waesberghe and “nosed through the French books”. He didn’t find anything to his liking there, but he did at the bookseller Sebastiaansz, where he bought Les diverses poésies by Jean Vaucquelin de la Fresnaye and a book entitled L’uranie ou recueil des chansons chrestiennes.30 When visiting his brother Hendrick in Delft, he bought Mario Equicola’s De la nature de l’amour at a shop near the city hall.31 In both cases, as with the book auction, he bought his books already bound. This could mean that they were second-hand.

Beck did not always buy the books himself. He sent his brother Steven to the auction for example, maybe because he himself had little time. Not all books were available in The Hague, and therefore Beck used his friends or family in other places to acquire certain books. He ordered the French Bible in Delft, through his brother Hendrick.32 And his Amsterdam friend Jacob Hendriksz bought and sent him the Oeuvres of Siméon Guillaume de la Rague.33

Buying books was not the only possibility Beck had. He could borrow them from others, as he did with a work by the Dutch poet Jacob Cats, which he borrowed from his brother Steven.34 Beck read another work by this famous Dutch poet in a copy belonging to his mother-in-law.35 He also lent books to others. His friend Breckerfeldt for example, borrowed his Schilderboeck (Book of Painters) by Van Mander.36 Books finally could also be gifts. David gave Breckerfeldt his copy of Velianus’s Cort onderricht van alle principalen puncten des christen gheлоofs (Short instruction of all principal aspects of the Christian religion) as a present, just as he gave David de Moor the Emblèmes by Georgette de Montenay.37

In his diary, Beck only gives us a glimpse of the way his bookshelves were filled. We only know for the year 1624 how he added items to his stock of books. Many titles he read he had acquired before this year. But we can see what different ways he
had of acquiring books. He could buy them at an auction, but he could also go into a bookstore and buy whatever caught his eye. Other people could be important, either as middlemen in buying books, or as owners who could lend Beck literature. The way Beck acquired books, is further proof for the aforementioned conclusion that geographical borders were not necessarily of importance for a reader, at least not for this reader. Whereas studies of book culture mostly take the city as the unit of analysis, Beck shows that he was not dependent on the book supply on offer in The Hague. He himself and his network of family and friends could get him books from almost any city he wanted.

After buying the books in Rotterdam, Beck glanced through one of them on his way back to The Hague by boat. Later that night he also browsed through the other one.39 The place and time of the reading experience is something the diary reveals. Time of day, as has been shown by Brewer and also by Baggeman, could influence the literature read. Anna Larpent and Otto van Eck both read religious works mainly during morning hours and worldly literature during the rest of the day.39 In an interesting article about two nineteenth-century readers, the Zborays have demonstrated how even the time of year affected the reading experience.40

What did Beck say about his time of reading? Sometimes he was very precise: “I read this evening at least an hour in Van Mander’s book of painters and before I went to bed (at my office till one o’clock at night) in the Tragic Histories, two of them entirely through”.41 In this instance it was Matteo Bandello’s Histoires tragiques that kept Beck up late. But he had a habit of reading till late at night. He regularly spent whole evenings till past midnight in the company of his books, parting from them only for dinner. The images of readers analysed by Fritz Nies show daylight is an important prerequisite for reading. But Beck apparently did not need it. He could read and write by candlelight just as well. His reading was not limited to the evenings though. The afternoon was also a favourite time for Beck. There was only a slight difference between the number of times reading took place in the afternoon and the evening. Only the morning hours were hardly ever used to read a book.

Time of day did influence Beck’s reading, though it had no effect on the sort of books he read. Next to his personal preference, time to read was determined by other activities during the day. In today’s reader research the amount of leisure hours available is regarded as an important factor in determining reading behaviour.43 Though it is questionable whether “leisure” in the modern sense existed in the seventeenth century, the way someone spent his time is a factor that should be considered.44 In Beck’s case, his school took up much of his time. When exactly he received students is not completely clear. Morning classes started at eight o’clock and lasted till about 10.30. Some time later lessons continued, with a break around 12.30, till around 17.00. After that, Beck sometimes held evening school till 18.00.

So school could take up much of Beck’s time and left him only the evenings to do other things, as for example on 19 July: “The 19th. Clear and cool weather. I wasn’t
out, did nothing extraordinary, being busy enough in my school, from the early morning till the evening (...) because my afternoon and evening school was filled with older students at this time.” But school did not always take up all the time. Students regularly had free days or Beck would give them the afternoon off. This gave Beck time to enjoy his books, as on 4 May, when there was no school and he spent the morning reading d’Aubigné’s Tragiques. School was not always busy either. As indicated above, the number of students fluctuated considerably. Many times there were hardly any students, as on 25 September when only seven or eight children were at school. No special attention was needed when this happened, so he could spend this time reading: “I read this afternoon (during schooltime, because very few pupils were present) in the French Bible from the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy to the 28th.”

School influenced Beck’s reading but of course he did not devote his time solely to these two things. For a history of reading it would be very interesting to see in what ways people spent their time. What was the part of reading in people’s lives? For Beck, one of his favourite pastimes was taking a walk. When the weather improved from 10 March on, almost every day he could be found strolling through The Hague and its surroundings. He was not the only one who enjoyed walking that first day: “When I came at home I found brother Steven, with whom I took a walk for a few hours, inside and outside The Hague and in the forest, where there were many people, driven outside by the lovely weather”. The walks were a way to spend time, but also had an important social function. Beck hardly ever wanders around without speaking to one of his relatives or friends. He would always go by several houses to see if anyone was at home, chat for a while, maybe drink a glass of wine or milk before continuing on his way. The way reading and walking filled the day, and the role the weather played in this is nicely illustrated by his entry for 27 April:

The 27th. Before noon rainy and variable, but afternoon lovely weather, with dense fog in the evening. I did nothing extraordinary but before noon read in the Muse christienne of P. Poupo the “éloge myrtine”. Did nothing in the afternoon but walk up and down, through and around The Hague, speaking to Grandmother (who came from Delft), aunt Lijsbeth and our child. Ate and went to bed early in the evening.

Apart from the time of day devoted to reading, what interests historians is the place of reading. Where did people in the past read their books, in which environment and in which posture? Paintings can be a source of answers to these questions. Nies has shown that in most seventeenth-century paintings readers were depicted indoors. In the eighteenth century, reading in the open air was more prominent. Another interesting source, as E. Hanebutt-Benz has demonstrated, is the furniture used. A straight-backed chair was the most common furniture for the seventeenth century. More comfortable chairs came into fashion in the eighteenth century.

We can also use egodocuments when searching for answers to these questions. Just as he was quite accurate about the time of day he read, Beck also made many
remarks about the places where he read. The two most important were his school and his office. This is where he spent most of his time reading, writing or playing the violin. Unfortunately, we can only guess what these places looked like. Beck gives no description and no inventory remains, but what we can say is that Beck usually enjoyed the company of his books in some sort of private space.  

Yet the office was not always a solitary place. Beck often received his friends there, where they enjoyed the books together or, more often, Beck's poetry. In his turn, Beck visited many other people who showed him their office. Other places in the house are rarely mentioned as places where Beck read. Close to the fire was an option that he used now and then, for example when his sister was out and he had to supervise his children. But this happened only rarely. Rare as well are the times Beck read outside his house, but it is interesting to note that this did take place, as on 23 June: "After that took a walk with brother Steven (...) deep into the forest, rested for an hour or so, talking about a number of things and reading a while in Henry Estienne." The *Apologie pour Herodote* by this French author was a book Beck started reading a few days before.

Egodocuments like Beck's diary can give important insights into the when and where of the reading experience. Diaries can reveal many aspects of reading as an activity, because they allow us to compare reading to other pastimes. Research into these aspects is not only meant to map the behaviour of people. Time devoted to reading and the places used for it can also reveal something about personal experiences with books. For instance, when Beck started reading the *Histoires tragiques* and continued till past midnight, it is obvious that in some way he was caught up by the story and could not put the book down. Beck's reading in his office or school gives some clues about private aspects of reading. This is important for the relation between reading and writing as well. The fact that books could be read in private is often regarded as one of the factors in the rise of individualist mentality.

**READING STRATEGIES**

The ways people in the past read their books has long held the interest of historians. Changes in ways of reading were described in terms of extreme polarities: from reading out loud to reading in silence, from reading together to reading alone in private, from intensive to extensive reading. More recently, historians have toned down these descriptions. Research has revealed that diversity was the norm. So, for instance, intensive and extensive reading could take place during the same period or these strategies could be applied by the same person to different books.  

What does Beck's diary tell us about his reading strategies? First of all we can look at the ways he himself described his reading. He used different terms for that, which give some indication of his habits. Most of the time he simply calls it "reading", now and then followed by indications of the amount: "a little", "a long time", "a lot", "an hour or so". This might mean that he gave his attention to the text without
interruption for some time. Other books he would “browse through”, “speculate” or “nose” in. He might read some pieces now and then, or take a quick glance at the text. Poetry, by its nature, allows of piecemeal reading. We see Beck therefore “speculating” in his own poetry, “nosing” in Ronsard or “browsing through” Vauquelin de la Fresnaye. Many other poetic works were, however, also “read” as a whole.

Different books were treated in different ways. A special kind of reading was reserved for the Bible. In the beginning of the year Beck set himself the task of reading it through entirely. He started reading on 21 January and eventually finished it on 17 December. It is highly probable that this was not the first time he read the Scriptures from beginning to end. Beside the Bible, only a few other books received regular attention throughout the year. His own poetry was one of those. During the year he occasionally read his earlier work. Another one was Pierre Poupo’s *Muse chrestienne*, perused on several occasions in January, April, May and again in December.

For most of the time however, Beck read a book for a while and would then lay it aside. Books would be taken up, read for some days and then never referred to again. In June, for example, Henri Estienne was his favourite. He read it on 14, 15, 17 and 23 June. In October Ronsard got most of his attention. On 30 November he began translating his “La Grenouille”, finishing it on the 22nd. The next day he “read an hour or so” in Ronsard’s *Oeuvres*, “read a piece” on the 25th and “read and nosed” in the *Oeuvres* on the 28th, leaving them aside after a final glance on the 29th. Beck could sometimes come under the spell of a work, and read it through at a great rate. This was the case for example with Jacob Cats’s *Selfstrijt, dat is Crachtighe beuweginghe van vlees en gheest* (Private battle, that is powerful motion of the flesh and the mind). On 24 November he read more than half of it late at night, going to bed at one o’clock. The next day he read before noon, and before evening he had finished the poem, which consisted of more than 3000 lines. Only a few days afterwards, the 29th, he asked his brother to lend him another work by Cats, *Maechden-plicht oftte ampt der ionck-vrouwen* (Maiden’s duty or task of young ladies), which he read completely through the next day. Cats was thus read over very fast, which could partly be explained by the style of the poetry. As other Dutch poets of the early seventeenth century, Jacob Cats was a moralist. But as opposed to, for example, his contemporary Huygens, Cats did his best to get the message through as clearly as possible. That is why he wrote very simple, easily understood poems. That Cats’s poems were indeed easy reading is testified by Beck, who read the aforementioned two of Cats’s books in a short a time.

If we define intensive reading as coming back to the same book over and over again, we can say that Beck read only few books intensively. But there are some difficulties in drawing this conclusion. For one thing, the picture is blurred because we have only the diary for one year. We do not know whether the books Beck read in 1624 were works he had never read before or would read again after this year. For some of the books mentioned it is clear he did not read them for the first time in
1624, like the Essais by Montaigne, for instance. Antonio Guevara’s Mespris de la court was also read prior to 1624. Beck had copied out passages from this work, which he translated at the end of March. This translating is another aspect of Beck’s reading that confuses the intensive-extensive opposition. Some books prompted Beck to write. As mentioned above, though he read Ronsard only once, he did translate one of his poems, which is a way of reading that is quite intensive. The same can be said of Clément Marot’s poetry.

So Beck used different strategies for reading his books, and genre did not seem to determine the strategy. The same holds true when we look at the texts he either read alone or with others. He did experience both ways of reading. Newspapers he always read in the company of others, as on 1 August: “and took the road to the Buitenhoef with him [brother Hendrick] for a walk, where we met brother Steven and went straight to the Voorhout, in and around the Plantage, where we rested on a bench, under the cool and pleasant foliage of the green trees for as long it took me to read through the latest printed newspaper”. On 22 January his uncle, from whom he regularly borrowed the newspaper, read Beck the news.

Besides the news, religious books as well as poetry could be read to others. Beck and his friend Breckerfelt for example read Veluanus’ Cort onderricht (Short instruction) together, but they also read Guevara, Antoine Heroet’s La Parfaite Amye and Beck’s own poetry. Mostly, it was Beck who read to Breckerfelt. Books did not even have to be around to be “read” by the two friends. Now and then Breckerfelt would ask Beck to tell him stories he had read in his books: “and went to Breckerfelt at half past seven, staying for dinner there in the company of his brother-in-law Herman, and told them (because of their persistence) the whole story of the knight Mendoza and the duchess of Savoy from Bandello’s Histoires tragiques”. On another occasion, going to Delft by foot, he briefly recounted to Breckerfelt the adventures of the Ethiopian lovers Theagenes and Chariclia, as written by Heliodorus.

It is obvious that when reading to others, Beck read aloud. Whether or not he did this when he was alone is more difficult to establish. From Beck’s entry for November 25 we might conclude that he did read aloud: “Breckerfelt came by before the evening, hearing me read the Selsstrjit for a while, and afterwards had a little talk with me, taking a pot full of our remaining salt”. Did Breckerfelt come in while Beck was reading out loud, or did Beck start reading to Breckerfelt?

There is no possible answer to this question in the diary. What we can conclude is that Beck had a variety of reading strategies that he employed according to the situation, not so much according to the genre of the book he read. This is also an important conclusion with regards to the question of the influence of reading on writing. Even if we know the books an author of an egodocument read, we should be cautious in establishing its impact. A reader such as Beck could read the book in different ways. Does this also hold true for the interpretation?
REASONS FOR READING

As has been argued from different sides, egodocuments are probably the only source available to historians who want to know for what reason people read books. What did they think about their literature, how did it influence their lives? We should question whether definitive answers to these questions about reading in the past can ever be given. Even today, research into the influence of media on everyday life has not led to any definite conclusions. Through egodocuments, however, we can get some idea about the influence of reading on individual lives.

The question of the influence of reading on life is where history of reading and history of self-writing meet. Since we base our knowledge of Beck’s life almost exclusively on his diary, it might be better to pose the question: what was the influence of reading on his life writing? In this way we take into account a central issue in self-writing research of the last decade or so: that the self of the diary is a construction based on other texts.

So how did books influence Beck’s diary? To start with, we can look at what Beck himself wrote about the effects of reading. Unfortunately, there are very few direct clues to what he thought about his books. Only rarely did he give an opinion about his reading. The entry for 12 January is typical: in the Historio continuatio Beck read the “excellent” letter of the king of Bohemia to the elector of Saxony. Short, positive evaluations are the only ones Beck gave. His appreciation should therefore be established through different routes, as mentioned before, for instance, by looking at how many times he read a book or what texts he translated. Pierre Poupo comes to the fore as one of his favourites, which is supported by the fact that Beck called him an “author who I am especially fond of”.

Why exactly Poupo was the love of Beck’s life is hard to understand from the diary alone. We can speculate on some of the attraction by referring to some general characteristics of Poupo’s work. First of all he wrote poetry. This was the genre Beck most appreciated and in which he himself tried to excel. Second, Poupo was a French author. As a French schoolmaster Beck understandably tried to keep up with the literature of this language. But by following these writers, he also moved himself into the forefront of Dutch literature. The so-called rhetoricians had dominated this for a long time, but since the end of the sixteenth-century Renaissance poetry slowly came into fashion. France was the most important example to follow. New genres, new metres, and new subjects were introduced into Holland, following the works of Ronsard among others. One final reason for Beck’s preference for Poupo could have been his Protestantism. Beck was deeply loyal to this religion. He hardly ever missed a service and he fiercely agitated against papism in his poems.

Though the diary offers little evaluation of the reading, there are instances where we can indicate some of the effects reading could have had on Beck’s life writing. It is striking that Beck described many events in terms originating from pastoral discourse. This is the case in his diary, but even more so in the other texts Beck wrote.
The many pastoral poems Beck read were models for writing about problems of life. After the death of his wife Roeltje, Beck started writing an elegy to come to terms with his sorrow about her death. This did not become the highly personal poem we would expect. The sorrow was lifted to a general level, expressed in a pastoral setting by Daphnis and Orlande. Friendship could also be expressed in a pastoral way. On 21 August Beck wrote an anagram on his friend Breckerfelt, calling him “neighbour-shepherd Menalck.” To invite this neighbour to dinner, Beck wrote him a “sweet pastoral letter.” The pastoral discourse was also a perfect way to write about love. In October a woman to whom he had proposed turned Beck down. On the 26th of that month he: “Began writing this evening an Eclogue or shepherd’s lament (on my recent experience), starting; Shepherds, who graze your flock etc, continuing at it till 12 o’clock, remaining in the 72nd verse”. Friends and family supported Beck in this difficult period. His brother, Breckerfelt and his uncle came by the next day for a special meal, where they had a ‘shepherdly’ conversation. The following day there was again a get-together. The four of them had a “shepherd” dinner, and to entertain the company, Beck read “some pastorals from the poets” to them. They drank “again a good shepherd-mug of wine” probably more than one, because Breckerfelt at the end of the evening became ill.

Reading pastoral poetry thus provided Beck with a framework to interpret or write about life’s events. A number of books can be connected to this framework. The Eclogues and the Georgica by Virgil were sources of the pastoral genre. Beck read both books, for example on the 3rd of December. The works of the French poets Beck read contained many poems inspired by the pastoral. Beck for example read the ‘eclogue myrtine’ in Poupo’s collected poetry, or the “Complainte funèbre sur la mort de Calyrime” in Les œuvres poétiques by Jean Bertaut. Sharing themes with the pastoral genre was the book by Antonio Guevara, mentioned by Beck. In Mespris de la court Guevara praised country life and disparaged life at court.

WRITING A DIARY

Beck’s diary itself gave some clues about the influence of reading on writing. To say more about impact, we could also look at similarities between Beck’s and other texts. From where did Beck get the idea of writing in a diurnal form? The title Beck gave his diary gives good clues about possible influences. Beck called his diary: “journal or daily history, containing the description of the year of Our Lord 1624.” This title points to a number of intertexts. To start with, it had a lot in common with chronicles. In Holland for example, in 1622 Claes Wassenaer published the Historisch verhael alder ghedenck-weerdichste geschiedenisse, die hier en daer (...) van den beginne des jaers 1621 tot den herfst toe, voorgevallen syn (Historical narrative of the most memorable histories that occurred here and there from the beginning of the year 1621 till autumn). After this first volume, Wassenaer published new volumes every half year, providing an overview of all kinds of events from all over the
world of the preceding six months. Beck also wrote an overview of events that happened in a year. In fact, the rest of the title of his diary shows remarkable similarity to Wassenaeer’s book. Beck wrote that his journal “contains, in short, everything remarkable that had occurred here and there during the year.” But, as opposed to Wassenaeer, Beck narrows his chronicle down to what had happened: “especially in The Hague and especially concerning my own doings (and those of my relatives) on every day.”

Though there is a similarity between Beck’s diary and Wassenaeer’s *Historisch verhael*, we do not know if Beck really read this book. It is here that the diary itself as a source for reader research comes into play. In his diary Beck mentioned a book similar to Wassenaeer’s, a German chronicle published in Frankfurt by Jacobus Francus: *Historicae Relationis Semestralis Continuatio, Jacobi Franci Historicae Beschreibung aller gedenckwürdigen Historien, so sich hin und wider in Europa, von (...) bis (...) dieses 16(1). Jahr verlaufen, und zugetragen haben ...*. If Beck was influenced by the chronicle-discourse, it must have been this German book that inspired him. This first becomes clear when we compare the German title with Beck’s Dutch title. Beck literally translated some of the words from Francus. The “hin und wider” becomes “heen en weer” in Beck’s diary. In Dutch this actually means “back and forth”, instead of “here and there”, which is what Beck obviously wanted to say. The word “zugetragen” was also literally translated by Beck in “toegedragen”, though this word is less uncommon in Dutch and can be found in other contemporary historical narratives. That the *Historicae Relationis* influenced Beck’s diary is, second, also visible in the diary itself. Beck wrote: “made notes of several things, amongst others in this journal and that of last year some memorable things from the German *Historio Continuatio*.65 Beck thus used this chronicle to incorporate the wider world into his story. Perhaps reading the *Historicae* prompted Beck to close his description of the 29th of February by saying that on this day the Parliament in London was opened.

The title of Beck’s diary also points to other possible intertexts. The words “daily history” can be found in pamphlets or news sheets of the period. So for example the *Journael ofte daggh-register* (Journal or daily history) published in 1622, in which the battle of the city of Bergen-op-Zoom was described.66 Just like Beck’s diary, these kinds of pamphlets gave a description, sometimes in diurnal form, of current events. There is one book Beck read in 1624 that fitted the genre: *Veluws vaste avond-spel* (Shrove Tuesday at Veluwe) described the panic that arose in the east of the Dutch Republic because of a raid by the Spanish army.67

The terms “journal” and “daily history” can also be found in contemporary travel writing. The journey to the East Indies by Jacob van Neck for example, was published under the title *Journael oft daggh-register, inhoudende een waarachtich verhael (...) vande reysse gedaen (...)* (Journal or daily register containing a true account (...) of the journey (...)).68 Travel diaries such as this one were usually printed ship journals. In the first ten years or so of Dutch shipping to the East- and West Indies, vir-
ually every journey was a novelty and therefore worth printing. The ship’s journals were often printed within weeks of the vessel’s return to Holland.\textsuperscript{69} The format of a ship’s journal has a lot in common with Beck’s diary. Just like Beck, journalists on the ships wrote daily reports that started with a note on weather conditions. In his diary, Beck did not mention reading a travel journal, but he was in touch with Dutch shipping. In 1624 a Dutch fleet under admiral Jacob Wilkes conquered the Baya de Todos los Sanctos in Brazil. In August Beck’s uncle read him a report of the siege, printed in \textit{Copie eens briefs, gheschreven yut West-Indien} (Copy of a letter written from the West Indies).\textsuperscript{70} The event was of special interest to Beck because two relatives sailed on the fleet: admiral Wilkes was a cousin of Beck’s mother-in-law, and Beck’s brother-in-law Seger was a clerk on the fleet.

Intertexts of Beck’s diary can finally be found in the world of trade and business. A “journal” was part of a businessman’s account books. Account keeping was done in the so-called Italian manner. The method could be learned from books such as Nicolaus Petri’s \textit{Practique, om te leeren rekenen, cypheren ende boeckhouden} (1583).\textsuperscript{71} A journal was a daily register of revenues and expenditures, in which debtors and creditors were noted. Beck’s journal was also a daily register of whom he “dealt” with. The Dutch historian Luuc Kooijmans sees an even closer analogy between diaries and accounting. According to him, seventeenth century diaries were account books, not of financial but of social capital. People used diaries mainly to note down favours granted and received, thereby making, as it were, a balance sheet of friendship.\textsuperscript{72} Beck’s diary largely fits Kooijmans’s description. Beck did note extensively whom he met, whom he dined with or who invited him for dinner, the gifts he exchanged and so on. Accounting can thus be said to be an influence, but accounting can not explain the entire journal.

Beck “accounted” his social capital, but his finances were also set down on paper. For personal finances he made a “note book of my revenues and outlay” on the first day of 1624. On that same day he also made a “month book (...) for my students.” In it he kept track of the number of times students visited his classes. Once every quarter he then wrote bills for the parents, who did not pay per school term, but paid for the number of classes their children took.

Another intertext from the business world is the almanac. Though not by definition restricted to the world of trade and finance, the titles of almanacs usually made a link to the business world. Many of them were called \textit{Comptoir Almanach} (Office Almanac), thereby referring to the place where financial administration took place. Almanacs of course offered a suitable format for writing daily registers. Dates were placed in the margins of the page and left ample room for notes. For more extensive scribbling, almanacs were interleaved with blank pages. Because of this format, it is no surprise that many “diaries” of the early modern period were written in almanacs. Johan van Sypesteyn, a Haarlem administrator, for example, wrote short notes of places he visited into an almanac of 1595 and 1599.\textsuperscript{73} Willem Frederik van Nassau, Stadtholder of the northern provinces of the Dutch Republic, kept notes in
almanacs from 1643 until 1654. Beck also read an almanac in 1624. On the first of February he read *Den Italiaensche waerzegger ofte almanack (The Italian fortune teller or almanac)* through entirely. That Beck read the almanac, pointed to another tract of this genre of almanac. Almanacs could contain prognostications, medical advice, announcements of markets, time tables of “trekschuiten” and short stories. The *Italiaensche waerzegger* read by Beck was perhaps the one that contained a short novel of the adventures of two lovers. There are thus many texts that can be said to have had an influence on Beck’s diary. Chronicles, newssheets, travel writing and account books could all have affected Beck’s way of keeping a daily register. By looking at his reading we have seen that he actually read books from all of these genres. Writing in diurnal style was a practise fairly common in the culture of the early seventeenth century.

**THE ARTIST KNOWN AS BECK**

So far it has been mainly the form of the diary that has interested us. The presentation of the Self in the text was of course determined by the form of the text took, but just how Beck presented himself has not been touched upon. I now want to look at one striking image presented in the diary, and the reading that can be said to have influenced this self-image.

Again, the title of the diary can be taken as a starting point. The fact that the diary had a title, and such an elaborate one, is rather remarkable. Most diaries from the period simply start in medias res. The diary of Dirck Jansz, a farmer in the north of the Dutch Republic, for example, does not have a title. He just started by writing the first entry. At best, diarists wrote on the cover of their writing books that it was their “journal”, ‘memorial” or something similar, sometimes adding the year. Not only did Beck invent an extensive title for his diary; he also wrote it down on a title page. This title page had a lot in common with title pages in printed books. It took up the entire page, gave a short summary of the contents of the book and mentioned the author of the work. The handwriting itself also took the style of a printed book. Beck used different hands. The word “journal” was written in large Italic. The following “or daily history (…) 1624” was written in a gothic hand. The “d” in “daily” and the “h” in “history”, moreover, are calligraphic letters. In the remainder of the title Beck constantly changed style and size of letters. He ended his elaborate title by stating the designated readers, the objective and the author of the work:

> By my self, (…) written, to keep as a sweet memory for my lovely children as A mirror of my life
> David Beck from Cologne, age Thirty by January 18.
The title page left no question then, that this text was a book by an author, an author called David Beck. To start a work, as Beck did, by writing that it is a book about "myself" by "myself" was not a novelty. It looks a lot like the now famous lines in the introduction of Montaigne's *Essais*. "I am myself the subject of this book." We know from the diary that Beck read the *Essais*. Did it inspire him to write a book about his own life? Judging by the reading Beck described in his diary, the answer must be negative. Beck seems to use Montaigne more as a sort of reference book. While reading Virgil's *Aeneas* in French translation, Beck read the chapter entitled "d'Aucuns vers de Vergile" in Montaigne. In this chapter a few lines of Virgil occasioned Montaigne to write about old age, marriage, love and sex. It seems that Beck was more interested in what Montaigne had to say about Virgil, than to know that Montaigne himself was not so virile anymore.

But even if we have to reject Montaigne as a clear influence, the image of the author writing about himself is important. What becomes clear from the diary is that David considered himself a man of letters or as he called it, a lover of the arts. He himself was a poet first and foremost, but he also made drawings. Not many of his poetic works were ever printed. Only two works of his survive, and it is doubtful if he ever published anything else. More of his work survives in manuscript.

Yet in his diary we see him as a very productive poet. Every little poem he wrote is mentioned in his journal. This goes for example for the ABC-poem mentioned earlier. These poems were used in the school for the students to copy and learn to write. He wrote dozens of these poems. As for other poems, we can deduct from his diary almost down to the verse when he composed them. This is the case for example with his "Daphnis' Lament About the Death of His Orlande", a poem he composed to commemorate the death of his wife in December 1623. He began working on the verses shortly afterwards. On the second of January he "wrote this evening (till 1 o'clock at night) the 2nd lament on the death of my late, sweet housewife, being an answer (of her) to my first lament, starting: If ever a manly heart etc. and the answer: Don't cry my sweet better half etc." Over the following months he regularly wrote more verses until he completed the poem on 14 May.

Another aspect of Beck "the artist" is shown in his contacts with others. David mentioned many friends with whom he shared his love for the arts. They visited each other, talked about the arts, copied each other's poems or "nosed" through each other's libraries. David's brother Hendrick and his friend, the painter Herman Breckerfelt, were among the most regular contacts in this respect. Others include for example David de Moor, an accountant who lived in Amsterdam, the cousin of Bernard Ruijshenbergh, "my old friend and former companion in the arts when I lived in Emmerick". Beck met him for the first time on 27 May, when they talked about literature and the arts. De Moor and his brother visited David again on 30 August, when they "at my office speculated on my writings, drawings and poetry, being witty young men and lovers of the arts". In September Beck returned the visit and spent some time at De Moor's office seeing his poetry and art. Later that year
Beck used a star as a sign of which the meaning remains unclear (enlargement 12 x) (Gemeentearchief, The Hague).

De Moor asked David for some poems and challenged him to make a poem on the subject of the death of Jonathan. More examples of this artistic life could be given. Beck also wrote in his diary about his musical abilities. The point is that Beck presented himself as a poet or artist in his diary. This is, however, not to say that this image is not right. After all, he did write the poetry he mentioned and did meet his friends in the arts.

What was the part reading had in the presentation of Beck, the artist? Is it possible to point texts that might have influenced him? The numerous Oeuvres Poétiques that Beck read could perhaps have inspired him to report about his own oeuvre. Beck read collected poetry by many French poets, for example the Oeuvres by De la Rogue, Du Monin, Jodelle, or Montreux. By writing about the poetry he wrote Beck was making, as it were, a preface to his own collection, providing details on author and origin of the work. Beck indeed made an Oeuvre of his poetry. The verses he composed were all copied out into a “grand book.” Sometimes Beck did this shortly after finishing a poem; sometimes he collected work from a period. He spent the month of August, for example, largely in copying out the poetry he had written during the months before.

To give pride and place to the artist and his work was an idea apparent in another book Beck read: the Schilderboeck by Karel van Mander. The book, published for the first time in 1604, contained an introduction to the art of painting, and biographies of painters. Van Mander composed biographies of ancient painters, contemporary Italians, and contemporary Dutch, Flemish and German painters. Van Mander was of course inspired by Vasari’s Vite of painters, sculptors and architects, and this book was also a major source for his own work. The biographies gave details on birth and apprenticeship of the painter, but mainly focussed on the oeuvre. As far as possible, Van Mander reviewed all drawings, etchings or paintings by the artist. But he also discussed poems a painter made. Van Mander himself was both painter and poet. He had translated, for example, Virgil’s Georgica and Eclogues into Dutch. The way Van Mander wrote about painters might well have influenced
Beck in writing his diary. Beck even was a painter, though he only occasionally made a drawing. Poetry was Beck’s major occupation and the one he, the artist, wrote most about in his diary.

The image of Beck, the author or artist, is one of the most striking features of his diary. By using the diary as a source for the history of reading, it was possible to point to certain texts Beck actually read that might have helped to form this image. History of reading can thus be useful in a study of self-writing. But Beck’s self-writing also makes a point worth noting when using diaries for a history of reading. His reading influenced his writing of the diary, but the writing of the diary also influenced Beck’s (writing about) reading.

For one thing, Beck wrote about his reading. Describing himself as a man of letters, reading to him was obviously a thing worth noting in the diary. There are numerous other egodocuments in which reading is never mentioned; yet this does not mean that the people who wrote them never read. When using egodocuments we are always studying literate persons, and probably the ones who were quite highly literate too. Bernhard de Moor, one of the fellow art lovers mentioned in Beck’s diary, also wrote an egodocument. He was however mainly concerned about family events, and so books formed no part of his text.

Furthermore, Beck was rather specific when writing about his reading. He almost always mentioned author and exact title of the work he had in his hands, and sometimes even a particular passage in it. This was quite unusual. When writing down his daily pursuits he could just as well have written only that the spent time reading. This is what others did, like the aforementioned Willem Frederik of Nassau. He read many times, but only mentioned the time at which he read, sometimes adding that he “read in sacris”. Others in their diaries only alluded to the author, title or the content of the work. That is what Gerard Udinck did, in the diary he kept from 1663 to 1665. The titles of the books he read are given in short, as in “a life of the princes”, and authors are never mentioned. But David Beck, presenting himself as author, gave full credit to his colleagues in the arts, especially the ones he knew only from their printed works.

This author-centred attitude was also visible in other ways Beck wrote about his reading. His reverence for writers went further than mentioning their names. Everything an author had written could be of interest. On 9 March he read a book in which he found three sonnets by Petrarch. He copied them out and “wrote them also in the blank pages of his printed works, where they had been left out on purpose.” The works of Petrarch were thus not complete if everything he had written was not incorporated. Beck was also interested in the lives of the authors whose books he read. To satisfy his curiosity he turned again to reading. The Bibliothèques by Antoine du Verdier (1585) and by François de la Croix du Maine (1584) provided biographical and bibliographical details on authors who had written in French. Beck read these books in the beginning of December, making an extract of all
“learned” women he found in them. For Dutch authors there was no such dictionary, but Beck learned about them in other ways. Beck did not forget to write in his diary that he encountered Constantijn Huygens and Jacob Cats – two famous poets – on one of his walks through The Hague. He was also very keen on receiving news from his Amsterdam acquaintances concerning the marriages of Anna and Maria Roemers, two “learned” ladies.

CONCLUSION

That reading was a major element in the development of egodocuments in the early modern period has been noted in many recent studies of self-writing. The history of reading, a flourishing discipline, might therefore be of special interest to students of egodocuments. Analysing one text in detail demonstrates that egodocuments themselves can be used as a source for a history of reading. As has been shown in other studies, the reading experience of past readers can be uncovered from self-writing.

David Beck’s diary offers a good view on reading experience. As we have seen, poetry and especially French poetry formed the majority of his reading. Being a poet himself, Beck found his inspiration mainly in this genre, thereby aspiring to the highest status in contemporary Dutch literature. His artistic life was shared with many others. Many relatives and friends also had a great interest in the arts. Literature was often a shared experience. Though Beck would read alone in his office many times, this could lead to a poem written down for a friend. So poetry was very important and even daily events could be interpreted in a pastoral, poetic way.

Poetry was the most important, but not the only thing that filled Beck’s life. The diary gives good insight into the way that poetry was enjoyed in relation to other events and activities, ranging from weather conditions to school hours. On fine days Beck could spend his time walking through the city rather than with books, while on busy schooldays reading would be impossible. There were also religious obligations to fulfil, which also involved reading. Besides going to church, Beck seriously read the Bible through during the year.

It is this reading experience embedded in everyday life that makes Beck’s diary so interesting. But it also offered some clues about the relation between reading and the writing of the diary. Using Beck’s diary as a source for reader research, it was possible to point to a number of influential texts. For Beck, the pastoral discourse was an important way to write about his life. Moreover, writing a diary might have been influenced by a number of texts, ranging from chronicles to almanacs. One of the striking features of the diary is the way Beck wrote about himself as an artist. The books he read probably influenced this.

The influence of reading on writing visible, in Beck’s diary, works both ways. The way Beck wrote about himself also styled his writing about reading. That his diary is such a fruitful source for reading history is partly due to the fact that Beck pre-
sent himself as man of letters, showing special care in noting the books and authors he read. Not every diarist of the seventeenth century was so willing to do this. When drawing conclusions about the history of reading, using egodocuments means paying attention to changes in presentation of self in writing.

NOTES
4 José de Kruif, Liefschrijvers en gewoonlezers. Leescultuur in Den Haag in de achttiende eeuw (Zutphen, 1990), 57.
5 Gemeente Archief Rotterdam, Oud Notarисel Archief inv. nr. 682. 35.
6 For this reason Beck's inventory is, so far as the art is concerned, listed in A. Bredius, Künstler-Inventare: Urkunden zur Geschichte der holländische Kunst des XVIIten, XVIIten und XVIIIen Jahrhundert. IV (The Hague, 1917), 1278.
7 See for example: De Kruif, Liefschrijvers en gewoonlezers; Marika Kebulse, Boeken in de hofstad. Haagse boekcultuur in de Gouden Eeuw (Hilversum, 1997), 139-160.
10 David Beck, Spiegel van mijn leven. Haags dagboek 1624 ed. Sr Veldhuijzen (Hilversum, 1993). This diary has been studied by a group of students from the Open Universiteit. Meta Snijders wrote a thesis on the social life of David Beck, Tonneke Vermeer devoted her thesis to Beck's religious life, and Martina Susters studied Beck's poetry for her thesis.
13 Kevin Sharpe, Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England (New Haven, 2000).

The newspaper was the *Contrarie wyts Itallen, Duitschlands &c.*, by Jan van Hilton. The German Yearbook: *Relationis Historiae Semestris Continuatio, Jacobii Franci Historische Beschrijving aller der nekswedigen Historien* (Frankfort am Main, 1623-24). The last book mentioned here is: *Der Francopfen ende haerder naegtheueren Morgbenewecker* (Dordrecht, 1608).

The former is D. Vaentinus, *Tractaat teghen de pestilentie* (Utrecht, 1598), the title of the latter is not known.

See the introduction to the diary, by S.V.E. Veldhuijzen, 11.

7 January. Herman Brekerfelt, mentioned here, was a stained-glass artist and engraver, born in the German city of Danzig in 1595 or 1596. He moved to The Hague in the early 1620s. Judging by the frequent visits described in the diary, Brekerfelt was a close friend of Beck. They both moved to Arnheim in 1625. Brekerfelt died in 1673. On his life and work, see the graduate paper by Renier van't Zelfde, *Herman vanz. Brekerfelt (1595/96-1673): een veelzijdig ambachtsman* (University of Leiden, 1999).


C.G.N. de Voors in published an article about the poem in 1919 ("Een lijfpoet van prins Mauritius", reprinted in: *Idem, verzamelled litterkundige opstellen: nieuwe bundel* (Antwerp, 1947), 72-84). The copy of the poem was then in private hands. Until recently, the whereabouts of the copy was not know (see introduction to the diary by Sven Veldhuijzen, 20). While preparing an exhibition on prince Maurice of Orange, the copy was rediscovered in the Koninklijk Huisarchief. See: Kees Zandvliet, ed., *Maurits, prins van Oranje* exhibition catalogue *Rijksmuseum* (Zwolle, 2000), 285.

Koninklijke Bibliotheek The Hague, manuscript 74 G 12. On Beck's poems in this manuscript: Fr. Kossman, "David Beck: een Haagse dichter onder Mauritius", *Oud Holland* 39 (1921), 76-85. Fritz Naeboult and a group of students from the Open Universiteit (see note 10) are preparing an edition of the poetry.

26 January.


Stephen Golclough, "Recording the Revolution", 50.

Gert-Jan Johannes for example demonstrates the effect of foreign competition for the development of Dutch literature in the eighteenth century. As opposed to, for example, England or Germany, the new genre of magazines hardly gained any ground in the Netherlands. De baronie van de tijdschriften in Nederland 1770-1830* (The Hague, 1995).


3 August.

29 June.

21 January.

7 July.

29 November.

27 September.

12 February.

4 February, 16 December.

3 August.

Brewer, "Cultural Consumption": Baggeman, *Lezen tot de laatste snik*.


29 February.


22 February.

The relatives mentioned were those of his late wife. The child he visited was his youngest one, born in De-
cember 1623, who was taken care of by a wet nurse.

47. Nies, Bahn, Bitt und Bluttendaf.

48. E.M. Hanhui-Berz, ed., Die Kunst des Lebens. Lebensrub und Leerverhaltein von Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart (Frankfurt am Main, 1985). This change in reading posture is also documented in paintings, see Nies, Bahn, Bitt und Bluttendaf.


51. 30 August, 28 October and 3 August respectively.


53. Anthonie van Sritten, Constantijn Huygens, Mengelingh (Phd-thesis Amsterdam, 1990), 13-23. Huygens on the other hand wrote poetry of which he himself said: “I want my reader to give some effort in trying to penetrate my thought, but then to find something which will really surprise him.” Contemporaries considered Cai's poetry easy and Huygens's poetry difficult. Cai himself wrote to Huygens: “What I understood about it [a Huygens poem] was good, what I did not understand will probably be the same.” M.A. Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, ed., Nederlandse literatuur: Een geschiedenis (Amsterdam, 1993), 192-195, 218-224.

54. 4 November.

55. 7 March: Heliodorus Historiae Aethiopicae. Beck had read it in Dutch translation: De beschrijvinge Heliodori vande Moerenlandtse geschiedenissen: versaat in thien boecken: Inhoudende de eerebare, cysche, ende ghezonge liefde van Theagenes van Thessallen, ende Chariclea van Ethiopiën (Amsterdam, 1610).

56. The king of Bohemia was Frederick V, elector of the Palatinate, and one of the leaders of the Protestant Union in Germany. He had lost both Bohemia and the Palatinate in 1620 after a defeat by troops of the Catholic League. The Palatinate fell to Spain and parts of Frederick's Bohemian possessions came in the hands of the elector of Saxony. Frederick himself had sought refuge with his uncle prince Maurice in The Hague.

57. 24 April.


59. See for example his poem on stadtholder Maurice: C.G.N. de Voys, “Een lijpooet van prins Maurit”.

60. Herman Breckerfelt = Buer-Hoder Menalick.

61. 14 November, 31 October.

62. 27 April, 18 January.

63. On the development of diurnal form in English, see Stuart Sherman, Telling Time: Clocks, Diaries, and English Diurnal Form, 1600-1785 (Chicago, 1996).

64. On the similarity between egodocuments and chronicles: Judith Pollmann, Een andere weg naar God. De reformatie van Arnoldius Buchelius (1565-1641) (Amsterdam, 2000), 32.

65. August 15.


67. Willem Baudartius, Veelbo gestelt-avond-spel, ofte Cort verhael van den alarm die op vastel-avond in de Veelao geschweest is (Zutphen, 1624).


71. Reprinted at least five times up to 1635. Translated into English in 1596: The Pathway of Knowledge, Conteyning (…) How to Cast Accomp with Counters (…) And Lastly the Order of Keeping of a Merchants Booke, after the Italian Manner.

72. Luc Kooljans, Vriendschap en de kunst van het overleven in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw (Amsterdam, 1987), 137; See also Dawson, who considers his diary of Samuel Pepys "a narrative of social ac-

73 Gemeente Archief Haarlem, Sypesteyn Family Archive no. 244.


77 For example Meijndert Dircksken, who headed his diary “memorial 1651.” Paige remarks that the autobiograpby of Jean Joseph Surrut, *Science expérimentale de choses de l'autre vie*, written in 1663, is the first autobiographical text in France bearing a title. Paige, *Being Interior*, 194-5.


79 Fr. Kossman, “David Beck”.

80 20 April.

81 (Auto)biographical prefaces in books are considered to be on of the origins of self-writing. Already in Antiquity it was customary to publish a list of the author’s works in posthumously published books. Later, biographical details were incorporated. Petrarch was one of the first to write his own biographical preface. Karl Enenkel, “Modelling the Humanist: Petrarch’s Letter to Postity and Boccaccio’s Biography of the Poet Laureate”, in: Karl Enenkel, Betsy de Jong-Crane and Peter Liebregts, *Modelling the Individual: Biography and Portraits in the Renaissance* (Amsterdam, 1998), 1-49. It is worth mentioning that Beck read Petrarch (9 March). 82 Het schilder-boek van Carol van Mander: het leven der doorluchtige nederlandsche en hoogduitse schilders, ed. A.F. Minande and G.S. Overdiep (Amsterdam, 1936).

83 For example 12 September: “[I] had made a drawing, in the morning between 9 and 9.30, of a rough landscape.” 16 October: “I gilded some of my round landscapes.”

84 Algemeen Rijksarchief The Hague, Aanwinsten no. 812.

85 J. Visser, ed., *Gloria Pareideli*.


87 *La Bibliothèque d’Antoine Du Ventier, seigneur de Vauprivaux, contenant le catalogue de tous ceux qui ont écrit ou traduits en français et autres dialectes de ce royaume...* (Lyon 1585); *Premier volume de la bibliothèque du sieur de la Croix du Maine: Qui est un catalogue general de toutes sortes d'auteurs, qui ont écrit en françois depuis cinq cents ans et plus ...* (Paris, 1584).

88 6 December.

89 7 May.

90 26 January.