

Lyric Address in Dutch Literature,
1250-1800

Edited by
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Amsterdam University Press

This publication was made possible through financial support of the FWO-funded research community 'Goliath'.

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Unless indicated otherwise, all poems in this book are translated by Myra Scholz.

Cover image: Simon Vouet, *Parnassus or Apollo and the Muses*, c. 1640, Szépművészeti
Múzeum / Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

Photograph: Dénes Józsa

Cover design: Goórdesign, Leiden

Typesetting: Citis Group, Hulshout

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

Amsterdam University Press English-language titles are distributed in the US and Canada by
the University of Chicago Press.

ISBN 978 94 6298 228 4

e-ISBN 978 90 4853 218 6 (pdf)

DOI 10.5117/9789462982284

NUR 621

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2018

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Lyric Address: By Way of an Introduction

Cornelis van der Haven and Jürgen Pieters

Dear reader,

The title of the book whose introduction you have just begun reading can be seen as an example of what in rhetorical theory is usually called pleonasm or tautology. 'Lyric address': the two words can actually be taken to refer to one and the same thing. After all, in the specific meaning in which we will be using the latter term in this book, 'address' is what in many ways constitutes and defines a lyrical poem. To be sure, not all forms of address are poems, but all poems can be seen as instances of address, special instances even. In other words: poems are all about lyric address and lyric address is what poems are all about. The deeper meaning of that quip is perfectly conveyed by the opening paragraph of the entry on 'address' in the fourth edition of the *Princeton Encyclopedia for Poetry and Poetics*. There, we can read the following:

Under the heading of *address* in poetry come not only the listeners a poem invokes or implies and the inanimate things or dead people to whom it may speak, but the entire communicative context that such a work projects. The contextual embeddedness of address includes its reference to a situation of utterance (called *deixis*) but also the ways in which that situation participates in artistic convention; the poem's own history and fate as a text; and social practices governing literary production and circulation. (Waters, 2012a, p. 6)

The category of address, so we take the above definition to suggest, subsumes almost everything that is of importance in the production and reception of poetical texts. Poems evoke the specific communicative situation in which they function, from the perspective of the author as well as that of the reader. When poets write a poem they address their readers, but not necessarily in a direct way. In most cases, the address of the lyric is a matter of implicitness and indirection. As any handbook of poetry will immediately say, we are not supposed to take 'the poem's voice' as the poet's own voice, even though we are not expected to sever that tie in any absolute way either. Neither are we expected simply to take the 'you' to