University of Groningen

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Published in:
A History of the Girl

DOI:
[10.1007/978-3-319-69278-4_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-69278-4_3)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2018

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

van Tilburg, M. (2018). From 'Young Women' to 'Female Adolescents': Dutch Advice Literature during the Long Nineteenth Century. In M. O'Dowd, & J. Purvis (Eds.), *A History of the Girl: Formation, Education and Identity* (pp. 33-52). Palgrave MacMillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-69278-4_3

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CHAPTER 3

From ‘Young Women’ to ‘Female Adolescents’: Dutch Advice Literature during the Long Nineteenth Century

Marja van Tilburg

INTRODUCTION

Establishing the format for conduct books specifically directed at young adult women proved to be a long, circuitous process. The first examples of this type of advice literature were published in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Given that the genre of the conduct book is as old as the printing press, this was rather late. Authors also held varying views concerning the content of such books. Some addressed girls just old enough to go out and meet with young people outside the familial circle. Not surprisingly, these writers prioritised the young woman’s behaviour toward young men. Others wrote for more mature readers. They offered guidelines for selecting a partner for life and establishing a close relationship with him. The authors of such texts also presented their advice in different ways. Most opted for moralistic stories, following the long-standing tradition of edifying literature for women. Others offered fictitious biographies, presenting the female protagonist as an example to emulate. A small group of writers discussed actual situations and offered practical guidance,

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M. O’Dowd, J. Purvis (eds.), *A History of the Girl*,

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-69278-4_3

following the structure of contemporary conduct books for young adult males. The varying content and the different styles of presentation suggest that the authors had difficulty developing guides for young adult women.¹

This is surprising as modern sexual identities were well established by 1800. These ascribed different but complementary natures to men and women—offering a new rationale for the traditional division of tasks and responsibilities. The middle class turned theory into practice by distinguishing between the public and the private spheres. Women were expected to apply their specific talents to the private sphere of the family. They were not merely to nurture their husband and children, but they were to transform the house into a new cultural space, the home.² The evidence suggests that women seized this opportunity. From the early nineteenth century, women tried to create havens in a heartless world.³ With women's gender role clearly defined, the question is why authors of advice literature had such difficulty guiding young women to adulthood.

To answer this question, we have to take a closer look at the variety within the genre. The differences in content and presentation are intertwined with various notions about what is considered an appropriate education. Some publications prescribed simple guidelines—similar to rules of etiquette. Clearly, these publications expected the young woman to follow the rules. Other texts presented the advice with elaborate explanations—making an effort to convince readers of its rationale. These volumes addressed the young woman as having a mind of her own. These various ways of approaching the readership suggest that the authors had differing views concerning the young woman's personal space. These views, in turn, implied questions about the young woman's individual preference and the extent to which she was allowed autonomy.

These were precisely the questions that dominated the advice literature for young adult men of the period. Every conduct book directed at young adult males explained how to balance personal preferences and societal requirements. The advice focused in particular on choosing a career and a partner. If the young man chose well, he would have no difficulty working hard and providing for his family. Conduct books offered precise guidance to help a young man help himself. In this context, the reader was confronted with the specific problems of being young and was offered rules of conduct to cope with youthful impulses. The reader was thus taught to take responsibility for his life. This approach, developed by Enlightenment pedagogues, remained in place throughout the long nineteenth century.⁴

Viewed from this comparative perspective, the development of the advice literature for young adult women appeared to touch upon the question of adolescence. Initially, the concept of 'adolescence' was gender specific. The term was introduced by Rousseau in his pedagogical novel *Émile, ou l'éducation* (1762), to describe the coming of age of the protagonist.⁵ Whereas Émile matured in harmony with nature, contemporary young men, according to Rousseau, were driven by competition and sexual desire. Modern scholars disagree on whether or not the term 'adolescence' was used only in relation to the male sex throughout the nineteenth century. Some argue that western women were never treated as adolescents: because of their subjugated position, they were denied space for experimentation.⁶ Others disagree and discern aspects of Rousseau's concept in literature on female youth.⁷ Or, alternatively, they notice distinct varieties of adolescence in the female sex. Historian Sheila Rowbotham, for example, has documented the different ways in which female adolescents were represented in Victorian fiction⁸ while literary critic John Neubauer has pointed to specific representations of young women in literary and scientific accounts at the end of the nineteenth century.⁹ More recently, Sarah Bilston has argued for the increased awareness of the 'awkward age' in women's popular fiction after 1850.¹⁰ Such differences in scholarly opinion focus mainly on the nineteenth century. Representations of young women tend to converge from the *fin de siècle* onward. Generally speaking, by that time, educationalists and pedagogues agreed on a new concept of adolescence. This view was best expressed by the American psychologist G. Stanley Hall.¹¹ He argued that young adults go through a phase of great change which allows them to develop their personality. Their creative potential is at its highest which enables them to influence society. Hall's extensive treatise *Adolescence* (1904) framed the discussion on young adults for much of the twentieth century.¹²

This chapter analyses the advice literature for young women from the perspective of adolescence with a particular focus on personal space and individual autonomy, which are implied in the concept of adolescence. Prioritising these two characteristics has the advantage of allowing for comparisons over longer periods of time.¹³ First, the chapter explores the content of selected conduct books for young women: which themes are discussed and in what depth. Second, the chapter examines the manner in which the advice was presented: were the readers provided with straightforward rules of conduct, or were they given options or problems to discuss and resolve? Finally, the chapter pays some attention to the youthful

age of the intended readership: were young women approached as young women or as adolescents?

The advice literature for young adults discussed in this chapter was published in the Netherlands from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century? About two-thirds of the 151 titles examined were destined for young men; only 46 were specifically directed at young women.¹⁴ Almost 72 publications could be traced in public libraries, but copies of many conduct books seem not to have survived. Many books were translated from French, English, and German; this is especially true of the guides for young women. A systematic comparison between the translations and the original texts indicates that most translations were accurate and closely followed the original version. The existence of Dutch translations of books first published elsewhere also emphasises the popularity and transnational dimension of advice literature.

The conduct books have been analysed in two distinct ways. First, the *content* of the advice is discussed, following the approach of Norbert Elias's *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* [On the Process of Civilization] (1969) with its focus on the range of topics and the level of detail of the rules of conduct.¹⁵ Second, poststructuralist textual analysis is applied to the *phrasing* of the advice.¹⁶ How is the guidance worded? Does the phrasing indicate a specific method of addressing the reader? Is this, in turn, indicative of a specific perception of young women? This twofold analysis allows for a distinction to be made between rules of conduct, on the one hand, and styles of persuasion, on the other. It also reveals nineteenth-century pedagogical strategies, which incorporate more intricate patterns of gender and adolescence than research has demonstrated so far.

ENLIGHTENMENT STIRRINGS

Advice literature proliferated in Enlightenment Europe, and more conduct books were published than ever before. The philosophers modernised this long-standing genre by adapting the guidance offered and by experimenting with writing styles. Their efforts testified to the core Enlightenment belief in the perfectibility of man.¹⁷ Nevertheless, developing a format specifically for young adult women proved challenging. As already indicated, the early publications appeared in a great variety of formats—from presenting rules of etiquette to telling stories of exemplary women. A comparable lack of direction can also be found in the ordering

of the advice. Most conduct books did not present their guidance systematically. For instance, the English guide *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* (1774) did not distinguish between work and leisure. It discussed all sorts of activities in the same chapter.¹⁸ Only a small number of conduct books for young women drew on the new Enlightenment approach to advice literature. This format presented the reader with a range of options. Although the text indicated the best and worst choices, the reader was, nonetheless, free to choose. The German philosopher J. H. Campe applied this approach in his *Väterlicher Rat für meine Tochter* [Fatherly Advice for My daughter] published in 1789.¹⁹ The variety of formats utilised for advice books for young women indicates not only a lack of consensus among the authors but also a lack of vision about what the education of young women should involve.

Much of the advice literature was dominated by one topic: a young adult woman's relationships with young men. Most publications prioritised the young woman's participation in public gatherings. However, the authors did not tell the reader how to behave. They expected her to be familiar with social etiquette and act accordingly. Instead, the publications focused on the young woman's attitude. Their advice can be summarised as: join the general merriment but be on your guard for attention-seeking young men. Young women should not mistake a young man's gallant behaviour as an indication of a genuine interest in her. They should be aware that this type of behaviour was required by the rules of sociability in the public sphere. Some authors conveyed this message by contrasting public sociability and family life. They placed the public sphere on a par with the theatre. In public venues, men and women played various roles, but marriage and family provided the setting for real life. Even the most gallant male behaved differently at home. Such guidance was aimed at instilling a specific *habitus*: the young woman should be aware of her surroundings and act accordingly.²⁰

Many authors addressed premarital sexual activity in this context. They communicated concern for their readers' responsiveness towards smooth-talking young men and sought to make them aware that the men had usually no intention of marrying them. Every young girl should be prepared for this type of obtrusive and seductive behaviour. To bring the message home, the authors accompanied this rule of conduct with rhetorical fireworks. Mostly, they chose references to the Christian concept of sin. For instance, they described premarital intercourse as the 'fall'—a reference

to the biblical story of the Garden of Eden. Or they presented analogies to the snake that talked Eve into defying God's will. Authors used these references to persuade their readers to adhere to their advice.²¹ Again, the advice was aimed at instilling a specific attitude. Young women should be aware and be prepared to cope with these social situations.

A minority of mainly Dutch conduct books extended the advice on readers' attitudes toward young men to include their choice of partner. Usually the authors began with an account of the obligations of the married couple, in line with the average marriage manual. The emphasis was on shared responsibility for the household. The couple should work together as partners, and, therefore, they should also aim to get on well together. Having sketched the ideal marital relationship, the guidebooks elaborated on the qualities required in a husband. The most important were a strong sense of duty, a friendly demeanour, and a willingness to treat a wife with respect. Instead of merely listing these qualities, the Dutch minister Greuve offered a sketch of the ideal husband in his conduct book *Wilhelmina* (1808). The volume took the form of a fictitious biography of a young woman from the lower middle class. The protagonist meets several different suitors, and the plot verges on the rather plain but dutiful Goedhart [Goodheart]. The story presented many contrasts between the latter and less well-suited young men. Through this analysis the reader could identify the characteristics to look for in a husband.²²

This group of authors also tended to address sexual attraction. Greuve, for instance, acknowledged Wilhelmina's desire for a husband: 'which young girl ... should not desire a husband? Otherwise it would be shameful to desire something, which is ordained by God and nature?'²³ This paragraph finished with Wilhelmina consenting to Goedhart's proposal. Not only did the couple share similar aspirations in life, but they also had a strong mutual affection for one another. Describing Wilhelmina's thoughts on the proposal, the minister created a contrast between 'pure love' and 'blind love'.²⁴ A close reading of the text reveals sexual attraction to be part of true love, as long as the choice of partner was made responsibly.

Only one author addressed the topic of sexual desire directly. The German philosopher Campe described how the 'Great Lawmaker' installed mutual sexual attraction in the first couple. The aim was to entice them to procreate, and people the earth:

[The Creator] accompanied intimate marital activity...with attractive sensual pleasure, both for the male as the female, and created a natural drive towards this, strong enough to overcome aversion to the consequences of this activity.²⁵

A few sentences later sexual desire is defined as the urge to love and be united by the bonds of marriage. This conduct book thus presented mutual sexual attraction as a function of marriage. Campe agreed with Greuve and other authors that sexual desire should be sublimated to marital love.

As already noted, about half of the conduct books examined presented stories of young women as examples to emulate. These protagonists can be read as representations of the young woman, and from this perspective, we should note that many early conduct books depicted the young woman as a rather flat character. Only a few portrayed young women in a lifelike manner as enthusiastic and curious people who looked forward to going out and making friends and who radiated self-confidence.

The question is, of course, whether authors really perceived female youth as unproblematic or whether they were representing the young woman in this way for specific purposes. The latter may very well be the case. This representation fits two narrative strategies. The first is to discuss sexual desire metonymically—as the longing for a husband. As already indicated, authors addressing this topic linked it to the young woman's desire to marry. The second strategy is to present marriage as a woman's destiny. All the authors presented marriage as a woman's only option in life. Together these strategies suggested to the young woman reader that she had to accept society's gender regime. Clearly, this lesson was prioritised over teaching her to manage her desire responsibly.

All in all, the first conduct books for young adult women taught their readers how to navigate the public sphere. Women needed to be able to take care of themselves at public gatherings in order to remedy a possible lack of parental control. Authors prioritised the reader's *habitus* toward young men. While enjoying the pleasures of life, she should focus on marriage. If she took the authors' advice to heart, she would draw the attention of a suitable man. At first glance, this message seemed reassuring. Closer inspection reveals that the advice only scratched the surface. Sexual maturation is discussed only with reference to marriage. Personal preference and individual space were hardly given any attention.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS

During the nineteenth century, the publication of conduct books for young adult women declined. Authors preferred to write advice literature for the female sex as a whole. However, the small number of conduct books that were published for young women reveal important changes in terms of both the content and the style in which they were formulated. Most authors opted to present rules of conduct with explanatory accounts written in a more pedagogical manner than their eighteenth-century predecessors. The later volumes also distinguished more clearly between schoolgirls and older girls. They also specifically addressed young women concerning their marital responsibilities, a topic traditionally reserved for the marriage manual.²⁶ Taken together, these authors conveyed a more complex understanding of young women's lives.²⁷

The new approach to female youth can be traced in two mid-nineteenth-century guides, written by an English and a Dutch author: Sarah Stickney Ellis and Barbara van Meerten-Schilperoort respectively. Both women published books while they were married and managing a household. Both also had established schools for middle-class girls, and it is likely that the pedagogical approach of their books was inspired by their teaching. Despite these similarities, the two authors wrote very different conduct books. Ellis followed the long-standing tradition of edifying literature that sought to admonish its readership to live virtuously. Ellis did not explicitly offer actual rules of conduct but left it to her readers to absorb them through her account of the virtues of the ideal English woman. Van Meerten-Schilperoort specialised in didactic and educational writing. She wrote her conduct book in the form of a long, explanatory letter from a mother to her daughter. The motherly approach was intended to veil the book's disciplinary message.

Both women authors prioritised personal growth. In *The Women of England: Their Social Duties and Domestic Habits* Ellis wrote that the young woman should develop her talent, perfect her *habitus*, and refine her character to become the best version of herself. Moreover, she should consider herself a human being first and foremost. As an individual, she has no limitations. Only the assigned location of her activity—the home—is limited. In *Woorden van moederlijke liefde aan mijne dochter Mathilda* [Words of Motherly Love to My Daughter Mathilda], Van Meerten-Schilperoort argued in favour of personal growth in a more conventional sense. She admonished her reader to develop a real interest in the world, reading books on nature and history rather than romantic novels. She should develop her intellectual capacity, exchanging views with people at

social gatherings. Finally, she should apply herself to developing whatever artistic talent she might have. Thus each author encouraged her readers to improve themselves in a specific manner.

Not surprisingly, both authors addressed young women's relationships with young men, acknowledging in different ways their readers' longing for love. This approach was indicative of their shared aim to make their readers consider their emotions critically. Ellis presented an *exposé* on love in which she drew a contrast between the fashionable perception of love and the traditional one. The first centered on the notion of 'falling in love'. Ellis described this with reference to passion and surrender. At first reading, she seems to admonish the reader to control what she perceived as wrongful desire. However, a closer reading of the text suggests that the reader was provided with different perceptions on love and life. Basically, Ellis presented her female readers with the choices that they had in life. In doing so, she tried to assist young women with managing their emotions and taking control of their lives.

Van Meerten-Schilperoort, following the Dutch Enlightenment tradition, addressed the topic more directly. She warned readers against being led by emotions because in doing so they risked making a poor choice of partner and ending up in unhappy marriages. The best way to prevent this from happening was to exercise control. Should a man arouse special feelings, a young woman should ask herself: 'Am I drawn to this man because of his heart and mind? Do his religious inclinations and his virtue make him worthy of my interest?'²⁸ If a reader could give a positive answer to these questions, she might consider the man a suitable partner for life. If, however, she was drawn to the man for other reasons, such as his wit and charm, Van Meerten-Schilperoort's advice was clear: 'O my child! tear, tear out the still fragile seed from your heart. This may hurt, but not as much as the bleeding wound which would follow if you let the seed take root'.²⁹ In other words, the author was advising young women to control desire by acknowledging it. Thus Van Meerten-Schilperoort was aiming to help young women to help themselves.

The two authors also addressed the future responsibilities of their readers as wives and mothers. Most important, both created connections to a woman's sexual identity. Ellis drew on her literary skill to create an analogy between domestic duties and feminine nature. In *The Women of England*, she presents a contrast between 'flowers, which already catch the eye and amaze us by the splendour of their beauty' and the inconspicuous little ones, 'which energise the walker by the sweet scent they diffuse'. The accidental passerby wants to know which flower smells so deliciously:

He finds it embedded amongst green leaves; it may be less lovely than he had anticipated, in its form and colour, but, oh! how welcome is the memory of that flower, when the evening breeze is again made fragrant with its perfume.

It is thus that the unpretending virtues of the female character force themselves upon our regard, so that the woman *herself* is nothing in comparison with her attributes; and we remember less the celebrated belle, than her who made us happy.³⁰

In this passage, housekeeping is likened to flowers. The attraction of the flower lies in its sweet scent. Its appeal is recognised only in hindsight. The analogy suggests that even though domestic work goes unnoticed, it is beneficial all the same. In the same way a person who takes care of a family may be overlooked, but the good she has done will be remembered. So far, Ellis presented a narrative strategy that was often used in advice literature for women. Ellis's innovation of this topos came to the fore in the very last sentence. Here she contrasted 'the female character' with the 'woman herself'. The contrast here is between the ideal and reality. The 'female character' is something a woman has to aspire to; it was not something she already possesses.

In her book, Van Meerten-Schilperoort also connected women's responsibilities to feminine nature. She did this in a seemingly realistic account of the household. The woman paid attention to every person in the house. She established harmonious relationships with all the inhabitants. In other words, housekeeping was simply another way of looking after the family. Van Meerten-Schilperoort assured her readers that their male relatives would be grateful for her attentiveness 'because their shirts are more shiny white and neater than those of other men', and she herself would be rewarded by 'a loving look'.³¹ As already indicated, Van Meerten-Schilperoort's book is in the form of a long letter from a fictitious mother to her daughter. The advice incorporated in the volume is presented as the mother passing on to her daughter her own personal experience. This narrative strategy presents mother and daughter as living in a separated gendered world. The mother wants to raise her daughter according to the regulations of the female sphere. In this indirect way, Van Meerten-Schilperoort established a connection with women's sexual identity. Taken together, the advice and the presentation foreshadow Virginia Woolf's iconic 'angel in the house'.³²

In general, the mid-nineteenth-century advice literature presented young women as more rounded personalities than earlier conduct books. The writers acknowledged that there was more to a woman's life than simply finding a husband. Sarah Stickney Ellis and Barbara van Meerten-Schilperoort went further: they identified with their readers as women. For example, they both addressed the extent to which women's work was taken for granted. They also alluded to the way in which a woman's happiness depended on her husband. Moreover, they situated women in society at large and admonished their readers to take an interest in the world and to seek to improve themselves. Their ideal young woman was appreciative of the fact that true friendship is rare, but she tried to get along with everybody in her life. She hoped to find a husband, but in the meantime she would treat the other members of her family well. Her greatest aspiration in life was to spread happiness. These two authors elaborated on this advice in some detail so that the reader might solve her own problems. For instance, Ellis offered a strategy for coping with the general lack of regard for housekeeping. Van Meerten-Schilperoort discussed the choice of partner, advising her readers to take personal responsibility in making their selection. In different ways, Ellis and Van Meerten-Schilperoort prepared young women for their future lives while respecting the limitations imposed on them by the social order. The advice literature of the nineteenth century thus tried to guide young women to adulthood.

In summary, the conduct books of the mid-nineteenth century extended the range of topics to be considered. The authors offered advice that enabled the reader to influence her situation. The new advice pertained particularly to issues of love and desire. These topics were presented indirectly, namely as the young woman's longing for love. Thus, the nineteenth-century advice literature allowed for more personal preference and individual agency than its predecessors.

FIN-DE-SIÈCLE APPROACHES

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, advice literature for young adult women once again became a popular genre as social commentators, psychologists, and pedagogues developed a new interest in adolescence. Writers and artists represented youth as the most creative phase of life. Among these were women who developed their own youthful experiences into a specific feminine variety of adolescence.³³ Scientists followed suit, with the burgeoning social sciences identifying youth as an important

topic of research. In this context, the American psychologist G. Stanley Hall argued for a new approach to male and female adolescents in which they should be free to develop their personalities. If their creative powers were given free rein, society would flourish. This view had striking similarities with the account of youth that Rousseau had incorporated into his writings. In his early career, Hall had visited Germany and had clearly learned a respect for Rousseau's views on youth from German pedagogues.³⁴ Hall's account of adolescence published in two volumes in 1904 was hugely influential. These new ways of thinking about adolescence encouraged authors of advice literature for young adult women to experiment with new pedagogical strategies.

The general interest in the education of young adult women should also be viewed in the context of women's greater visibility in the public world in the early twentieth century. Young women no longer spent most of the day at home. Teenage girls remained at school longer with female attendance at secondary schools growing rapidly. For young people in their early twenties, urban expansion opened up new types of public venues, such as shopping arcades and tearooms. Following the model of associations founded for male youth, new clubs and societies were established for girls and young women. Scholars have interpreted the proliferation of youth organisations in the early twentieth century as indicative of the emergence of a separate sphere for youth.³⁵ It is important to note, however, that these societies followed the rules and conventions of adult sociability. Young women also looked for guidance and inspiration to the campaigns for women's rights that gathered pace in the first decades of the twentieth century. The demands for better education for women and for better job opportunities also helped to open up a wider world for middle-class girls and young women.

The innovations in conduct books for young women are most evident in the authors' attention to the process of sexual maturation. Many writers began to connect every part of a young woman's life to the progression of sexual development and awareness. The advice extended to all aspects of life, including questions of health and hygiene that had not been discussed in earlier forms of the genre. Furthermore, the conduct books offered rules for behaviour that were no longer hidden discretely in fiction. Finally, and most significantly, the guidance for young women focused on the individual. The social environment—the public sphere as well as the home—was marginalised. This trend is consistent with the tendency in European culture to discipline the person in ever greater detail.³⁶ At last,

the format of the conduct book for the young adult woman began to resemble the advice literature for adolescent males.

This new approach to the young woman is evident in every *fin-de-siècle* conduct book directed at young women examined for this study. An example can be found in an anonymous German conduct book that presented rules of etiquette for specific social settings, starting with public functions and continuing into family life. The introductory chapter opened with an account of the process of maturation:

A mysterious premonition of the woman's real destiny titillates the youthful breast, an inexplicable something dominates feeling [...]. The different emotions are not without danger for the young girl. [...] She does not yet know how to manage this abundance of feeling.³⁷

Thus, this presumably woman author began her text with an explanation of pubescence. Later in the same section, she sketched out the main physical and emotional changes that the adolescent would experience. To explain these changes, she drew a comparison to a rose. The girl did not reach adulthood in a short period, just as a rosebud did not come to full bloom at once. The repeated references to nature suggested that these developments were unavoidable. The tenor of the advice was the necessity to monitor carefully the maturation process.

Comparison with earlier advice literature for young adult women can offer further insight into this new approach. Like authors of earlier conduct books for young women, the anonymous late nineteenth-century author expected her reader to meet her future husband at a public venue. She did not, however, offer guidance on how to select the right kind of man—the actual choice of partner. Instead, she elaborated on the image that the young woman might have of her future husband. She should not look for someone who matched her ideal because her imagination would present the young man as more talented and more attractive than he actually was. Moreover, a man who treated her gallantly in public might behave differently after marriage and even prove to be a wolf in sheep's clothing. Clearly, this conduct book stated that the young woman could not see the world as it is. To solve this problem, she should seek advice from her parents. At best, this advice would make the reader insecure in her choice of partner and unable to trust her own inclinations.

This new approach dominated the two guides prepared by the American physician Lyman B. Sperry, one for young adult men and one for young

adult women. These guides discussed in detail the physiological and psychological aspects of sexual maturation. The author organised his rules of conduct on the former in a chapter called 'procreation' and on the latter in one called 'subjective symptoms of adolescence'. The advice is arranged in this way because:

This is the most important and also the most dangerous phase in the life of the girl, because in these years the all-important question will be answered if she will become a beautiful, alluring, useful and happy woman or not. One year can determine whether her life will be a success or a failure.³⁸

The influence of the new approach is clear in Sperry's discussion of the young woman's sexual desire. Sperry stressed that nature should be allowed to lead the way. However, the young woman's interest in the other sex should not be stimulated. Sperry translates this advice into practical rules of conduct. While a woman is still in her teens, she should not venture into the public world. The excitement of meeting men could hamper the maturation process. She should avoid reading romantic novels at every age, as her imagination should not be allowed to get the better of her. In this context, the author also warned strongly against masturbation. Sperry was one of the very few authors who addressed this topic.³⁹ On the whole, he admonished the reader to restrain herself both in her curiosity to meet new people and in her desire to experience new emotions.

The *fin-de-siècle* advice literature represented the young adult woman as going through a complex and dangerous process that engendered many different and at times conflicting emotions. She might be overwhelmed by the changes she experiences. The only way to cope was to be aware of her feelings and to be truthful about them. She should correct herself immediately should she stray from the straight and narrow path leading to marriage. The tone of the advice literature did not convey confidence in the young woman. In emphasising the urgency of the advice, the authors may have heightened their readers' feelings of insecurity.

In sum, the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century advice literature for young women suggested that sexual maturation was difficult and dangerous for the individual. To live happily, this process should be monitored carefully. Sexual maturation affected every aspect of a woman's life, and, consequently, she should select with care those whom she could trust. More than ever, the authors conveyed the idea that the young woman would be going through a difficult phase in her life.

CONCLUSION

The social and cultural settings in which young adults lived their lives began to change dramatically in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The predominantly familial circle gave way to new venues that offered opportunities for enjoying the pleasures of consumer society. Pedagogues and parents acknowledged the need to prepare youth for the allure of the expanding public sphere and developed different strategies for each sex. Young adult males were taught to balance personal preference and social responsibility. They practised the art of managing themselves in the various kinds of clubs established for male youths. However, the advice literature for young adults suggests that authors had difficulty establishing a pedagogical strategy for young women. Whereas the advice for young men was clearly formulated, the guidance for young women was varied and vaguely phrased.

The late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century conduct books for young adult women had only a few things in common. Most focused on the reader's behaviour at public gatherings in order to compensate for the lack of parental oversight. About half acknowledged that the public sphere functioned as a marriage market. These publications addressed the choice of partner and stressed the need for dedication and decency in a husband. Later in the nineteenth century, the advice literature for young women conveyed a more uniform message. Authors elaborated on the meaning of women's contributions to society and motivated their readers to identify with the role of wife and mother. Women authors stressed that the reader's future happiness depended to a large extent on her husband. They advised her to choose her partner carefully, bearing society's gendered requirements in mind. A woman in her early twenties should acknowledge her desire and act responsibly, conducting herself with style and grace. Above all, they urged the reader to acquire self-knowledge and develop character. The themes of individual preference and personal autonomy were thus addressed. However, when authors began to adopt the concept of adolescence at the turn of the 1900s, they started to focus almost exclusively on sexual maturation. From their perspective, this process implied approval of the socially accepted concept of woman.

A key question that arises from this discussion is how the changing format of the conduct books for young adult women reflected on the individuality and autonomy of young women. The analysis undertaken here of 72 conduct books indicates that the situation changed from an emphasis on a relatively small number of rules in a clearly structured, patriarchal society to a large number of rules in more diffuse and complex social settings. Throughout the nineteenth century, the advice prioritised

the young woman's *habitus* in life. Over time, it also began to address her future happiness as a wife and mother. Authors advised young adult women to accept the contemporary concept of womanhood. With the introduction of the concept of adolescence, the framework of the advice narrowed. Authors emphasised that the *fin-de-siècle* young woman should concentrate on sexual maturation and consequently on social adjustment. Thus a girl's sexual identity was prioritised. At the same time, her personal preference and individual space were ignored. In short, the introduction of the concept of 'adolescence' into the advice literature at the turn of the twentieth century did not bring young adult women the freedom and autonomy that it had brought young men a century earlier.

NOTES

1. Marja van Tilburg, *Hoe hoorde het? Seksualiteit en partnerkeuze in de Nederlandse adviesliteratuur, 1780–1890* (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1998), 44–46, 83–95.
2. Karen O'Brien, 'Sexual distinctions and prescriptions' in Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor (eds), *Women, Gender and Enlightenment* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 3–7; Mary Catherine Moran, 'Between the Savage and the Civil: Dr. John Gregory's Natural History of Femininity,' in *ibid.*, 9–10.
3. See for example Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009); the phrase is borrowed from Christopher Lasch's *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).
4. Van Tilburg, *Hoe hoorde het?*, 40–44, 46–52, 80–81.
5. J. J. Rousseau, *Oeuvres complètes*. Edited by Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), iv, 502.
6. Carol Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (London: Routledge, 1981).
7. Katherine Dalsimer, *Female Adolescence: Psychoanalytic Reflections on Works of Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).
8. Sheila Rowbotham, *Good Girls Make Good Wives: Guidance for Girls in Victorian Fiction* (Oxford University Press, 1989).
9. John Neubauer, *The Fin-de-Siècle Culture of Adolescence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).
10. Sarah Bilston, *The Awkward Age in Women's Popular Fiction, 1850–1900: Girls and the Transition to Womanhood* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004).
11. G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and its relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education* (2 vols., London and New York: Appleton and Co., 1904).

12. Nancy Lesko, *Act Your Age!: A Cultural Construction of Adolescence* (New York and London: Routledge Falmer, 2001).
13. Compare Dena Goodman, *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 63–67, 251–273.
14. Young women could choose between conduct books for women, young adults, and young adult women. This variety is evidence of the flourishing of the genre of advice literature from the Enlightenment onwards. See Tilburg, *Hoe hoorde het?* for a full list of the publications analysed for this chapter.
15. Norbert Elias, *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation: soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen* 2nd ed. (2 vols, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980).
16. Mieke Bal and Christine van Boheemen, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of the Narrative*, 3rd ed. (Toronto University Press, 2009).
17. Anthony Pagden, *The Enlightenment and Why It Still Matters* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 5–7, 16–18.
18. John Gregory, *Het vaderlijk legaat zijn zijne dochters*. Transl. from: *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* (Dordrecht: van Houtrijve en Bredius, 1841). A revised edition was published in Schoonhoven by S. E. van Nooten in 1848.
19. J. H. Campe, *Vaderlijke raad aan mijne dochter, in den smaak van Theobron. Aan de huwbaare jufferschap gewijd*. Transl. from: *Väterlicher Rat für meine Tochter. Ein Gegenstück zum Theophron. Der erwachsenern weibliche Jugend gewidmet* (Amsterdam: Wed. J. Doll, 1790).
20. The notion *habitus* pertains to the combination of mentality and behavior. See Elias, *Über den Prozess*, I, vii–x, lxxi–lxxxii.
21. This type of analogy reinforces the message embedded in the text. In many analyses of conduct books, the distinction between actual content and stylistic devices is not made. See Marja van Tilburg, 'Pedagogy as the Third Partner in Marriage: Educating Young Adults Towards Partnership in the Netherlands, 1780–1890' in Bruno W. F. Wanrooij (ed.), *La Mediazione Matriomoniale: Il terzo (in)comodo in Europa fra Otto e Novecento*. Biblioteca di Storia Sociale 32 (Fiesole and Rome: Georgetown University and Edizione di Storia e Letteratura, 2004), 175–182.
22. G. C. de Greuve, *Wilhelmina, of handboek voor het vrouwelijk geslacht*. Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen-Series XIII (Amsterdam: C. de Vries, H. van Munster en J. van der Hey, 1808), 109–124.
23. *Ibid.*, 114–115.
24. *Ibid.*, 114–116.
25. Campe, *Vaderlijke raad*, 200.
26. The genre of the marriage manual proliferated in the long nineteenth century: 67 different titles were published in the Netherlands. All discuss the choice of partner. See Tilburg, *Hoe hoorde het?*, 19–37.

27. A. B. van Meerten-Schilperoort, *Woorden van moederlijke liefde aan mijne dochter Mathilda*. Adapted from: *Worte mütterlicher Liebe an meine Tochter. Eine Gabe für Christliche Jungfrauen. Aus den Nachlasse der seelicher Freifrau Wilhelmina von Dehnhausen zu Grevenburg. geb. von Mengersen* (Amsterdam: P.N. van Kampen, 1844); Mrs Ellis [S. Ellis-Stickney], *The Women of England: Their Social Duties and Domestic Habits*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Fisher, 1839).
28. *Ibid.*, 203.
29. *Ibid.*
30. Ellis, *The Women of England*, 29–30. Italics by Ellis.
31. Meerten-Schilperoort, *Woorden*, 130.
32. Phyllis Rose, *A Woman of Letters: A Life of Virginia Woolf* (London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 156–158.
33. Neubauer, *Fin-de-Siècle Culture*, 82–86, 133–140, 157–159.
34. Lesko, *Act Your Age!*, 51–54.
35. See, for instance, Joseph F. Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America 1790 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1977); John Springhall, *Coming of Age: Adolescence in Britain 1860–1960* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1986).
36. Michel Foucault has demonstrated this trend in his various analyses of modern western culture. See, for example, his *Histoire de la Sexualité* (3 vols, Paris: Gallimard, 1976–1984).
37. Mevrouw [Mrs.] J, *De verloofde*. Transl. from the German (Haarlem: Coebergh, 1896), 2–3.
38. Lyman Beecher Sperry, *Een boek voor jonge vrouwen*. Transl. from: Confidential Talks with Young Women (Groningen: A.J. Vredevoogd, 1900), 15–16.
39. See also Campe, *Vaderlijk raad*, 210 for an earlier discussion of masturbation.

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