'Een Beytie Hollansche'

Dutch Compositions

James Boswell

editie C.C. Barfoot en K.J. Bostoen

bron

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James Boswell, "Een Beytie Hollansche"
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Introduction

Boswell in the Netherlands

Seen off by Dr Johnson, James Boswell, not yet 23, on 6 August 1763 embarked at Harwich on ‘the Prince of Wales packet-boat’ for the Netherlands, where he landed, at Hellevoetsluis, the following day ‘at twelve at noon’. After living for nine exciting months in London, where in a rakish existence he had partly managed to ‘transform himself from a raw and romping boy into a high-bred man of pleasure’, and had become the friend of Samuel Johnson, more than thirty years his senior, in August 1763 Boswell was on his way to Utrecht to continue his law studies, already begun in Scotland. As Pottle says:

The selection of Utrecht as the place for Boswell's legal education had nothing odd or unusual about it. Scots law, a totally different system from the English, makes a great deal of Roman law; and as the Dutch were the great masters of Roman law, it was usual for young men preparing for the Scots bar to complete their education in Holland. Boswell's father and grandfather (also a lawyer) had studied at Leyden; Utrecht had been selected for Boswell on the advice of Sir David Dalrymple, a common friend to Boswell and his father and a mediator of their differences. Though the main objective was the law, it was hoped that he might also improve himself generally in culture and in manners; and for this purpose Utrecht was thought to offer advantages over Leyden. (2-3)

However, it is clear that Boswell himself was not very happy about this decision. For a start he was extremely reluctant to leave London. And the final entry in his London Journal exhibits his general melancholy or depression, from which he habitually suffered, as well as the more specific causes of his gloomy departure:

THURSDAY 4 AUGUST. This is now my last day in London before I set out upon my travels, and makes a very important period in my journal. Let me recollect my life since this journal began. Has it not passed like a dream? Yes, but I have been attaining a knowledge of the world. I came to town to go into

James Boswell, 'Een Beytie Hollansche'
the Guards. How different is my scheme now! I am now upon a less pleasurable but a more rational and lasting plan. Let me pursue it with steadiness and I may be a man of dignity. My mind is strangely agitated. I am happy to think of going upon my travels and seeing the diversity of foreign parts; and yet my feeble mind shrinks somewhat at the idea of leaving Britain in so very short a time from the moment in which I now make this remark. How strange I must feel myself in foreign parts. My mind too is gloomy and dejected at the thought of leaving London, where I am so comfortably situated and where I have enjoyed most happiness. However, I shall be happier for being abroad, as long as I live. Let me be manly. Let me commit myself to the care of my merciful Creator."

With such brave resolution, then, Boswell set off.

However, once in Holland, he did not dispatch himself to Utrecht, but preferred to linger a few days in Rotterdam with Archibald Stewart, a young man of Boswell's own age or younger with whom he had not previously been so well acquainted, and who turned out to be a great support to Boswell when he needed it. From Rotterdam he went onto Leiden, where he passed another couple of days. Then, as Boswell writes to his friend John Johnson (in a letter from Utrecht, dated 23 September 1763):

I began to turn low-spirited, and set out for Utrecht. I travelled between Leyden and Utrecht nine hours in a sluggish trekschuit without any companion, so I brooded over my own dismal imagination. I arrived at Utrecht on a Saturday evening. I went to the Nouveau Château d'Anvers. I was shown up to a high bedroom with old furniture, where I had to sit and be fed by myself. At every hour the bells of the great tower played a dreary psalm tune. A deep melancholy seized upon me. I groaned with the idea of living all winter in so shocking a place. I thought myself old and wretched and forlorn. I was worse and worse next day. All the horrid ideas that you can imagine, recurred upon me....I thought at length the time was come that I should grow mad. I actually believed myself so. I went out to the streets, and even in public could not refrain from groaning and weeping bitterly....Tortured in this manner, I determined to leave Utrecht, and next day returned to Rotterdam in a condition that I shudder to recollect. (5-6)
Boswell told another friend, William Johnson Temple, in a letter from Rotterdam on 16 August 1763, that as a consequence of his initial response to Utrecht, he had taken refuge with Archibald Stewart, whom he describes as ‘a very fine fellow’:

Though volatile, he has good sense and generosity. I told him my miserable situation and begged his assistance as the most unfortunate of mortals. He was very kind, took me to his house, talked with me, endeavoured to amuse me, and contrived schemes for me to follow. (7-8)

For the next month, although he twice returned to Utrecht, he was very restless, spending more time in Leiden and Rotterdam as well as visiting Amsterdam. As he wrote to Temple from Rotterdam on 2 September:

I waver about the place of my residence. At Leyden I shall be within three hours of The Hague. I shall have the youngest Prince of Strelitz, and Mr. Gordon, Lord Aberdeen's brother, for my companions. At Utrecht I hear of no agreeable companion. Count Nassau is a man in years, though very polite. Utrecht has assemblies." But I am told they are most exceedingly dull. Add to this the shocking disgust which I have taken to Utrecht. I would therefore incline for Leyden. But, then, I came over with an intention to stay at Utrecht; and Sir David Dalrymple would not be pleased if I should forsake his favourite place. (16)

So despite the attractions of noble companions in Leiden, and courtly company in The Hague, in the end Boswell was manly enough to grit his teeth, resolve to do his duty, and fulfil the promises and obligations that he had made earlier, and return to Utrecht on 15 September where he stayed for the next three months. Like any good student, or any previously irresolute student who resolves to mend his ways, he was determined to set himself a regular regimen of studies:

SATURDAY 24 SEPTEMBER. This day regular plan. Ovid till breakfast, Tacitus till eleven, dress till twelve, then either Trotz or visits; dine Plaats Royaal....Three to four, French; four to five, Greek; then coffee; then notes of law, and history, and journal, and Erskine's Institutes....Get Corpus Juris. Billiards is the only mala fama here. Make resolve against it. Write Stewart at night. Miss S. is again evaporated. You see how vain a fancy. You must not marry for some years, unless Temple bids. Write...
him on Tuesday, long composed letter, sensible and on a subject of learning mostly. Persist firm and noble. (31)

Rather than wait until Tuesday, in fact Boswell wrote a ‘long composed letter’ to Temple the next day, full of earnest questions and reflections on how he ought to live, including a serious consideration of the moral and economic advantages of marrying Miss Stewart. He also reminded himself and Temple:

I am now at a foreign university, or rather in a foreign city where I have an opportunity of acquiring knowledge. I am at a distance from all my dissipated companions. I may attain habits of thought, study, and propriety of conduct. I am next to travel through Europe. I shall always be on my guard to persist in the proper course, and hope to return to England so confirmed in it that I shall be able to proceed through life with unaffected rectitude. (34)

To this end he continued to record admonitory memoranda for himself:

WEDNESDAY 5 OCTOBER....From this time let plan proceed: seven to eight, Ovid; eight to nine, French version; ten to eleven, Tacitus; three to four, French; four to five, Greek; six to seven, Civil Law; seven to eight, Scots; eight to ten, Voltaire. Then journal, letters, and other books....(38-39)

Apart from the Classics and his Law studies, Boswell began to practise his French writing not long after he had begun to settle down in Utrecht. As he says in his very first French Composition (dated c. 16 September):

In acquiring any language, it helps to write a great deal, because by doing so one learns spelling, without which the knowledge of a language is very imperfect. But, besides, when one writes, one must understand the grammar perfectly or make many absurd mistakes which, although they may pass unnoticed in the rapid flow of conversation, will certainly be discovered at once by the reader. For this reason I have resolved to write a little every day...(22).

In all, during his stay of just over ten months in the Netherlands (about 308 days in all), Boswell wrote 232 quarto pages of French, which
allowing for occasionally lapses during high days and holidays, indicates that most
days he must have written at least one page of French, and sometimes two. As he
himself said in one of his French Compositions on 31 October:

> It is certain that I have the greatest desire to learn French, but I fear that
> I am not learning it quickly. Perhaps my keen desire makes me think myself
> worse in acquiring the language than I am. I certainly take a great deal of
> pains to improve. I write two pages of a theme every morning. I read for
> two hours in the works of Voltaire every evening. When I do not understand
> words perfectly, I look them up in the dictionary, and I write them down
> with their meanings.

He had particular incentives to improve his French, both cultural and social:

> Every Wednesday I have the pleasure of passing the evening in a literary
> society where it is not permitted to speak a word of anything but French;
> and I dine at Mr. Brown's, where there are two ladies who do not speak
> English, and where for that reason it is always necessary to speak French.

(55)

The two ladies referred to are the Swiss wife of the Reverend Robert Brown, a
Scotsman who was minister of the English Presbyterian Church in Utrecht with
whom Boswell dined regularly in order to improve his French, and her sister. After
meeting a friend of theirs, Isabella Agneta Elisabeth van Tuyl van Serooskerken,
for the first time towards the end of October, Boswell had an even greater motivation
for improving both his French conversation skills and his writing. He first refers to
Belle de Zuylen, in a memorandum of Monday 31 October, when he rebukes himself:

> Yesterday you did not at all keep to rules as you ought to do. You had
> sat late up and rose irregular. You went to Guiffardière at eleven and talked
> too foolishly and too freely. At night you were absurdly bashful before
> Miss de Zuylens....You put on foolish airs of a passion for Miss de Zuylens.

(55)

The same day he had written a set of half-a-dozen rhyming couplets expressing
his growing sentiments about his new acquaintance:
And yet just now a Utrecht lady's charms
Make my gay bosom beat with love's alarms.
Who could have thought to see young Cupid fly
Through Belgium's thick and suffocating sky?
But she from whom my heart has caught the flame
Has nothing Dutch about her but the name.
Let not an ear too delicate recoil
And start fastidious when I say ‘De Zoile’;
So mere a trifle I can change with ease:
Your tender niceness will ‘Zelida’ please? (54)\(^{10}\)

Clearly by this time Boswell had indeed settled into Utrecht, and had developed a network of friends and acquaintances who sustained his social, cultural, and intellectual needs as well as his romantic and amorous fantasies.

Christmas and the New Year Boswell enjoyed in The Hague and Rotterdam, with a couple of days in Leiden, where he spent some time with the famous classical scholar and University Librarian, Abraham Gronovius, to whom he had first introduced himself with a letter from his father when he had first visited Leiden in August (24-25). Five months later, clearly more relaxed, Boswell recording his recent visit to Leiden, and his taking leave ‘by a short shake of the hand of Abraham Gronovius’, after which he ‘surveyed Leyden as Father's old town’, boasts (using his customary second person pronoun to address himself), ‘You have really an affection for Holland’. The next day he records:

**TUESDAY 10 JANUARY.** Yesterday you left Leyden early in the morning, dark and solemn, and kept up spirits well in *schuit*, though rainy. Arrived at Rotterdam at half after one; hearty reception by Stewart. Glad to see the house again where you endured so much....(114)

The prospect of this visit to Stewart in Rotterdam from The Hague had inspired what appears to have been Boswell's first attempt, at least his first public attempt, to write Dutch, in a letter addressed to ‘Myn Heer/De Heer Archibald Stewart/op te Schipmaaker's Haaven/Rotterdam/Meteen Degen’:\(^{11}\)

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James Boswell, *Een Beytie Hollansche*
Myn Heer en Vrind,
Ik heb niet mar en cleyn Beytie Hollans, en Ik heb niet een Dictionarrie myn te helpen; mar Ik heb een groot lust in dat taal te schryven en Ik sal het probeeren. Mynheer kaan lauchen als hy beleeft: Waarom niet? Ik lauch ook. Te lauchen is heel goed voor de Gezontheid. Ik ben zeer verplight te mynheer voor zyn degen; en als it niet necessaar is twee degenen te hebben Ik zend it met groot plaissir. Sarah heel Vroolic is te zegen dat ik moet een scheirness hebben, om dat ik heb myn baard gezeepen. Mar Mynheer, it is woorderlyk dat Sarah noch niet van ueu huys vertreken is. Heb Mynheer niet een andere vryster engageerd, Sall Mynheer van Lainshaw een Jong kneght van Schotland niet gezenden? En zoo Mynheer naar Amsterdam te gaan is. Maar hy moet seeker bin Gow rug te komen, voor it sall speyt me seer, him niet te vinden in fyve daagen t'Rotterdam. Mynheer moet myn een brief schryven, maar in Hollans niet. Ik ben Mynheer etc.
Jacobus van Auchinleck
S'Haag's
2 Jan'ry 1764.12.

My dear Sir and Friend,
I have only a little Dutch, and I have no dictionary to help me; but I have a great desire to write in that language and I shall try to do so. You, my dear Sir, can laugh if you wish: and why not? I am also laughing. Laughing is very good for one's health. I am much obliged to you for your sword; and as it is not necessary to have two swords, I return it with great pleasure. Sarah says very merrily that I must have a razor, because I have soaped my beard. But, dear Sir, it is strange that Sarah has not yet left your house. If you have not yet engaged another girl, shall the Laird of Lainshaw13 not send a manservant from Scotland? And so, dear Sir, you are going to Amsterdam. But you must be sure to come back quickly, since I will be very grieved not to find you in Rotterdam in five days time. Dear Sir, you must write me a letter, but not in Dutch. I am Dear Sir, etc.,
Jacobus van Auchinleck
The Hague
2 January 1764.14

James Boswell, 'Een Beytie Hollansche'
Soon after Boswell's return to Utrecht in the middle of January 1764, he obviously began to resolve to write more Dutch. In preparation for this trial of his affection for Holland he had developed other native habits:

> With the same ease that blackguards feed on tripe
> Have I, James Boswell, learnt to smoke a pipe:
> For I am now a very Dutchman grown,
> As all at Utrecht cannot fail to own....(122)

This was written on 21 January, and at the start of the next month he announced his resolution:

> Terwyl ik bin van voomemens om de hollansche taal te leeren, dat is te zeggen: Terwyl ik hebben lust te minsten een beytie te leeren zoo dat ik can met de Hollanders conversatie hebben, zoo heb ik geresolveer'd alle daag een beytie in dat taal te schryven. Als van daag is Het eerst van Februari, ik begin met de grooter plaisir tot te het begin van een maande en ook Het begin van Het voojaar.

> Since I intend to learn Dutch, that is, since I want to learn at least a little, so that I can talk with Dutch people, I have resolved to write a little in that language every day. As today is the 1st February, I am beginning with the greater pleasure, since it is the beginning of the month and also the beginning of spring. 15

Apparently Boswell had made an arrangement with Mr Brown for him to correct his Dutch compositions, although he seems to have been somewhat apprehensive of causing the clergyman too much trouble.

From this first declaration and demonstration of intent on 1 February (at what for some odd reason he identified as the beginning of spring) until about 6 March, Boswell wrote twenty quarto pages of Dutch. Thereafter, until he left for Germany and the beginning of his Grand Tour on 19 June 1764, he seems to have written no more. It is possible that, like Boswell's Dutch Journal itself, the notebook in which he continued to write his Dutch Compositions is lost. It is most probable, though regrettable, that Boswell had lost interest in the exercise. He went on writing his French Compositions and wrote a number of letters in French, particularly to Madame de Spaen, to whom he confessed his ‘French [was] still very imperfect’ (194), presumably because of its
greater usefulness in the social world in which he moved and his anticipation of further travels on the Continent.

About the time that he appears to have stopped writing his Dutch Compositions, he received news of the death of his ten-month-old natural son, Charles, who had been born to a servant shortly after Boswell's departure from Edinburgh in November 1762. As one of his Dutch Compositions tells us (no. 17) he was also troubled at this time with a bad cold. He was clearly once more very unsettled and looking forward to leaving Utrecht, and the Netherlands as a whole for new adventures. As he admitted in a letter to Temple on 23 March:

During our Christmas vacation I went to The Hague, where I passed some weeks in brilliant dissipation. I received great civilities from my Dutch relations and other people of the first distinction. Upon my return to Utrecht I found that my mind had been weakened. I had not the same vigour as before. I took a severe cold, which hurt my spirits, and some posts ago I received accounts of the death of that child of whom you have heard me talk so much....

You see a concurrence of circumstances to bring back my melancholy. You may conceive what dreary thoughts have oppressed me. You may conceive how I have extended the gloomy prospect. I have indeed been so bad as almost to despair. I wrote yesterday a letter to my worthy father and told him my situation....I have told him that I am weary of Utrecht, and that I am anxious to know his scheme for my travels.

However, he admits that already that very day he feels ‘so much better as to see that I must not yield to slight disgust’ and that he ‘must follow out the plan upon which [he] came hither, nor think of stirring till the Civil Law Lectures are ended’. He lists some of the Classical texts he has read, and, weighing up his achievement, claims:

I have advanced very well in French. I am just about finishing Voltaire's *General History*. I have picked up a little Dutch. I have not given such application to the Civil and Scots law as I ought to have done; however, I have done tolerably. (189-90)

Evidently Boswell, involved in an ambiguous complicated relationship with Belle de Zuylen, felt that he was on his way out, and was mentally preparing himself to leave. In these circumstances, he dropped his zeal

*James Boswell, 'Een Beytie Hollansche'
Diederik Jacob van Tuyll van Serooskerken (oil painting by G.J.J. de Spinny, 1756)
Belle de Zuylen (oil painting by J.J. Maurer)
to further his Dutch studies. In his last two months in Holland he travelled to Leiden and then to The Hague, for further dissipation over the Easter vacation, and visited Scheveningen a couple of times. He tried out the practical value of his Dutch in an Amsterdam bawdy-house, for some reason finding that ‘It was truly ludicrous to talk in Dutch to a whore’. But although he ‘danced with a fine lady in laced riding-clothes, a true blackguard minuet’, smoked his pipe, and ‘performed like any common sailor’, nearly quarrelling ‘with one of the musicians’, and ‘spoke plenty of Dutch’, he ‘could find no girl that elicited [his] inclinations’: ‘I was disgusted with this low confusion, came home and slept sound’ (254-55). Whatever he may have learned of value about himself and others during his time in the Netherlands, and however well he had managed to persuade himself that he had overcome his initial depression and had exerted sufficient discipline over himself to use his time productively, it is evident that Boswell was once more very uneasy. It is possible that his time in the Netherlands, especially the two periods of four months that he was fixed in Utrecht, were a necessary shock therapy that projected the irresponsible young man into maturity. As he was to admit to Temple in a letter written from Berlin later that summer:

What a gloomy winter did I pass at Utrecht! Did I not speculate till I was firmly persuaded that all terrestrial occupations and amusements could not compose felicity? Did I not imagine myself doomed to unceasing melancholy?...And yet, my friend, I am now as sound and as happy as a mortal can be. How comes this? Merely because I have had more exercise and variety of conversation....One great lesson to be learned is that man is a practical being. It is hard, but experience proves it to be true that speculation renders us miserable. Life will not bear to be calmly considered. 17

However, earlier in his final letter to Temple from Utrecht on 17 June 1764, a day before he left for Nijmegen, and after that for Germany, Boswell signed off his Dutch adventure with a brief but authoritative and confident set of judgements about what, after ten months (and the consultation of a number of standard sources), he made of the Netherlands and the Dutch:

You have asked me for a letter on the present state of the Dutch, which I can only make out by giving you some detached observations....
The Dutch, like all other republican states, have never continued long in the same situation as to riches and felicity. But, besides the usual disadvantages of having the supreme power in a great many hands, this nation has been remarkably precarious on account of its subsisting entirely by trade, which render it absolutely dependent on foreign states. Formerly their trade was exceedingly extensive. Not only had they the sole market for several sorts of Indian merchandise, but they furnished many of the most necessary manufactures to the greatest part of Europe. Hence was the spirit of industry so universally diffused amongst this people. Hence they became so rich and so powerful. Now the case is very much altered. The English share with them the Indian trade, and the other nations manufacture for themselves. While the Dutch had the universal trade, the States loaded with exorbitant taxes the necessaries of life, knowing that the manufacturers would proportionably heighten the price of their labour, so that the nations who purchased their goods should in reality furnish the public money. When those nations began to work themselves, the States should undoubtedly have lowered their taxes, and by selling at a moderate price have prevented the progress of manufactures in other countries. But the griping disposition of the Batavian government was greater than their wisdom. The taxes continued the same, so that in a little time the other nations, where living was not so dear, were able to undersell the Dutch in some of their principal commodities. Nay, so great is the difference that French, but particularly English, cloth is sold cheaper here than cloth made in the country, although the imposts upon foreign cloth are very high. Several of the Dutch regiments are clothed with English manufacture. In such circumstances this trading nation must be in a very bad way. Most of their principal towns are sadly decayed, and instead of finding every mortal employed, you meet with multitudes of poor creatures who are starving in idleness. Utrecht is remarkably ruined. There are whole lanes of wretches who have no other subsistence than potatoes, gin, and stuff which they call tea and coffee; and what is worst of all, I believe they are so habituated to this life that they would not take work if it should be offered to them. The Hague is a beautiful and elegant place. It is, however, by no means a Dutch town; the simplicity and plain honesty of the old Hollanders has given way to the show and politeness of the French, with this difference, that a Frenchman is [truly at] ease, whereas the Dutchman is [as y]et but a painful imitator. Luxury prevails much both at The

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Hague and among the rich merchants at Amsterdam. You see, then, that things are very different here from what most people in England imagine. Were Sir William Temple to revisit these Provinces, he would scarcely believe the amazing alteration which they have undergone. The universities here are much fallen. In short, the Seven Provinces would require the powers of all the politicians that they ever had to set them right again.  

After this, Boswell was on his way to try to meet Frederick the Great (which he failed to do, despite all his efforts when he was in Berlin and Potsdam in July and September 1764), and more successfully to interview Voltaire and Rousseau. Boswell and Belle de Zuylen continued to correspond with each other for another four years.

**Boswell and Dutch**

Boswell was a man with philological and lexicological interests. For instance, his admiration and respect for Samuel Johnson was inspired by Johnson as the compiler and author of the *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755). Boswell was also interested in foreign languages, and had a talent for acquiring them. In the Netherlands he did his best to master French, which he used daily, and needed to speak and write fluently, since on the Continent French was the lingua franca of the upper classes. Amongst the Dutch aristocracy, without knowledge of French one had no standing; characteristically Boswell sought to enlarge his acquaintance with French by initiating a number of romantic relationships. His command of the language, both written and spoken, must have progressed rapidly in a relatively short space of time. Society appears to have been fond of the young Scot, as he was regularly invited to private balls. A letter of introduction from Sir David Dalrymple had opened up the Utrecht circle around the Count of Nassau La Lecq to Boswell; and it was this gentleman who introduced Boswell at the private ball, which opened the winter season of 1763, held at the residence of his sister-in-law, the Countess Johanna of Nassau-Beverweerd.

For somebody who was above all doing his best to acquire French and who was mainly in the company of the social élite, it was not necessary to learn Dutch. In any event this was not an easy task, since there were no good grammar books, and the available dictionaries were
not suited to everyday conversation. Nor can it have been easy at that time to find a native speaker who was both able and willing to give someone from Britain Dutch lessons. Yet Boswell acquired an elementary command of Dutch, which undoubtedly helped him to master the basics of German, as well.\textsuperscript{22}

As he says in his first Dutch Composition, Boswell wished to learn Dutch primarily to be able to mix and talk with ordinary Dutch people, and not just with the upper classes. Perhaps this aspiration was influenced by the example set by his father, who, during his time as a student in Leiden, had quickly learned to make himself understood in Dutch. Yet Boswell also had to conquer a certain amount of prejudice, since several influential people would have discouraged him from learning Dutch. For example, the Professor of Mathematics in Utrecht, a Florentine nobleman, announced contemptuously, and publicly, that Dutch was a language for horses. This learned man had been employed at the University of Utrecht since 1751, and made this announcement on board the \textit{schuit} to Amsterdam, probably in French. Boswell describes how, had it not been for the presence of "a gentleman who knew him by sight", a strong Dutchman might have thrown the professor overboard, which indicates that such disrespect could even provoke those who knew French.\textsuperscript{23}

This derisive attitude to the native language appears to have been mostly a matter of class and position. Boswell explicitly disassociates himself from such a foolish prejudice, since he is proud of his own Dutch blood, and he calls Dutch an old, rich language that is certainly not inferior to French. Therefore, when speaking Dutch, he is determined to avoid French words, declaring that Dutch people no more require French words than they require French money, since both linguistically and economically they have enough wealth of their own. He also thinks it a profound shame that so much French is used in The Hague, a situation which he considers a sign of decadence. An explanation for this practice is offered him by a sensible upper-class Dutchman: The Hague is the place where foreign diplomats reside and also many French emigrants, who serve the diplomats as wigmakers, dancing masters, fencing instructors and actors. In addition, there is an historical explanation, since Dutch law dates back to the Burgundian era, when French prevailed in the principal institutions of government. Jurists, therefore, use a terminology based on French. Boswell's unknown acquaintance was well informed, since this last point relating to the use of French in

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the law was an old and familiar complaint. As early as 1553 the Antwerp jurist Jan van den Werve, in his *Tresoor der Duytischer Talen*, had given his colleagues an explanation of the bastardizations then in use. That this tract was needed can be seen from the fourteen editions it went through. In the seventeenth century, too, there were continual complaints about the use of language in The Hague; and a century later, because of the status that French had acquired everywhere on the Continent in upper-class society, this situation had changed little.

During his stay in Utrecht the tea-parties and balls of the aristocracy, as well as the law lectures of Professor Trotz, determined Boswell's social course. As far as the lectures are concerned, Boswell does not seem to have followed any other than Trotz's. Indeed he never even registered at the University of Utrecht, for in the *Album Studiosorum* he is not mentioned. In fact, apart from his association with Belle de Zuylen, he did not experience many intellectual pleasures during his stay in Utrecht. Yet there was one exception: the Thursday evening meetings of a philosophical society, which he mentions in Composition 8. The Reverend Mr Brown, who apparently played an important role in this society, intended to read aloud parts from Lambert ten Kate's *Aenleiding* as a prelude to a discussion of ancient history and etymology. After that, on the basis of changes in their pronunciations, the origins of the separate nations were to be discussed. Nothing else is known about the Utrecht philosophical society or its members, who were undoubtedly a small group of learned enthusiasts. Composition 8 shows that it consisted of people from France and Britain, as well as from the Netherlands, and, apart from Reverend Brown and Boswell, included Baron Diederik van Tuyll van Serooskerken (Belle de Zuylen's father) and Professor Gysbert Bonnet. Indeed, it was the theologian Bonnet who first mentioned Ten Kate's work, on an occasion when Boswell was taking tea with the Van Tuylls (where, incidentally, Boswell did his best to speak a little Dutch), as it clearly showed the relationship between Dutch, Old Saxon, Icelandic and Latin. Boswell was immediately interested in the book and the professor promised to lend it to him the next day.

The *Aenleiding tot de Kennisse van het Verhevene Deel der Nederduitsche Sprake* (*Introduction to the Knowledge of the Origins of the Dutch language*) had apparently penetrated to the academic world forty years after its first appearance, despite the fact that it was not written in Latin. Although the great value of this book was immediately recognized, it barely played a role in professional literature abroad, precisely because it had been
Christiaan Hendrik Trotz (oil painting by J.M. Quinkhard, c. 1760)

Gijsbertus Bonnet (oil painting by J.J. Maurer, 1780)

James Boswell, 'Een Beytie Hollanske'
written in Dutch. The brilliant linguist Lambert ten Kate (1674-1731), the founder of comparative historical Germanic linguistics, was an unmarried Amsterdam cereal merchant, who appears to have given private lessons in several different subjects. During his youth he had studied Newton's philosophy, and he was an amateur artist, painter, and singer. It is not clear whether he himself was entirely responsible for his development into a great linguist, but he certainly was original. He believed that the rules of language had to be found empirically within the language itself; and by language, he meant both the written and the spoken forms - another notion that was new. In his Aenleiding he presented his own phonetic script, and the work also includes the first Gothic grammar, the first historical grammar of the Dutch language, and an etymological dictionary. He was also interested in the affinity between the Germanic languages, especially in respect to the vowel changes they share in strong verbs (break, broke, broken) and to the stress which in Germanic tongues always falls on the first syllable of the stem. So it is no wonder that Ten Kate's book became an object of study in the Utrecht philosophical society. Boswell borrowed the book from Bonnet and subsequently showed it to the Reverend Brown, who was so delighted with it that he immediately wished to translate some parts of it into French to read aloud in the philosophical society. Since no one has yet studied the reception of Ten Kate's work, the scanty details that Boswell gives about the response of people in his small circle to it are of great importance and deserve to be widely known.

How are we to judge Boswell's command of Dutch? Composition 11 he claims to have written without the aid of a dictionary, but there his Dutch is neither better nor worse than in his other exercises. Therefore, it is still a matter of debate whether he possessed William Sewel's Dictionary (the fourth enlarged edition from 1749), and actually used it. In any case the Compositions, as we have them, appear in a rough, uncorrected form. If Mr Brown had really corrected them, as Boswell had originally planned, he would have found the job quite a taxing one. Boswell seems to have anticipated this when, in Composition 1, he expresses the hope that the poor corrector will not lose patience with his work. In Composition 12 Boswell calls Mr Brown his 'Dutch master', and devotes a separate essay to him, in which he jokes that only the prospect of paying 'a fine of fifty guilders to the board of the English Church', compels him to make this effort.

Boswell's Dutch is full of anglicisms as far as spelling is concerned

James Boswell, 'Een Beytie Hollansche'
Previous page: *View of Utrecht* (by T. Verrijk, c. 1780)

James Boswell, *Een Beytie Hollansche*
(gersolveer'd, Koopleeder's, gezeen, bevreez'd, franshe, etc.).  
word formations (meer gelukkig als eenig Scotsman),  
word choice (een heel voltooiide vrow, Neen, neen, dat kan niet worden)  
and word order (voor it sall speyt me seer, Ik dogt dat ik zoud niet minder doen als een Bezoek te Mynheer de Professeur te geeven). But even without those anglicisms there remain enough puzzles. For example, what should we make of kribbig Achtbaarheyd and fatzoenlyk gemaklykeyd?  
Or of all those different ways of spelling The Hague (S'Haag's, t' s'aags, t gage)? With the grammar, too, there are, as one would expect, many mistakes. For instance, Boswell had a great deal of difficulty with personal pronouns and with verb forms (Ik weet weel dat voor 't meerderdeel men zyn [...] Professeurs' noemen). Nevertheless these short essays (indeed little more than compositions) make fascinating reading because of their true Boswellian ring, that even in the poor Dutch is still clearly audible. His delicate touch, his self-ridicule, his humorous inward dialogues, his indignation at the injustice done to Dutch - Boswell's light-footedness and choice of themes could have taught several useful lessons to many Dutch authors of the period.

Eindnoten:

1. He was born in Edinburgh on 29 October 1740.
2. Boswell in Holland 1763-1764, ed. Frederick A. Pottle, London, 1952, 4-5: where convenient all page references to this major source will be given after quotations in the text.
5. ‘The usual way of travelling in Holland, and most parts of the United Provinces...is in Trek-scoots, or Draw-boats, which are large covered boats, not unlike the barges of the livery companies of London, drawn by a horse at the rate of three miles an hour; the fare of which does not amount to a penny a mile; and you have the conveniency of carrying a portmanteau, or provisions; so that you need not be at any manner of expence at a public house by the way. The rate of places in these boats...is fixed; wherefore there is no occasion for contending about the price...’ (Thomas Nugent, The Grand Tour, London, 1749, 41).
6. For ‘assemblies’, see Dutch Composition 4, and note.
7. Archibald Stewart's sister, about whom Boswell had written earlier to Temple, that she 'is sensible, amiable, has been several winters in London, is perfectly accomplished. She is not handsome, but is extremely agreeable and what you would call a woman of fashion. She and I were always good friends; and when I was in Scotland, she was the only woman I could think of for a wife. Stewart and I have talked much of her, and I have heard more and more of her good qualities. I begin to think that I should not let such a prize pass without knowing if I might have her' (Boswell in Holland, 28-29).

8. In Boswell in Holland these exercises in French, and later in Dutch, are called 'Themes', presumably following Boswell's own use of the French word 'thème' (see the passage quoted below from his French Composition of 31 October). However, as the OED says, the use in English of the word 'theme' for 'An exercise written on a given subject, esp. a school essay; an exercise in translation...', is 'Now rare', if not entirely archaic. Therefore in this edition the more usual English term, 'composition', for a somewhat rudimentary exercise in essay writing in one's own or in a foreign language is preferred.

9. In respect to Boswell's regularity with his French Compositions, Pottle notes that 'he had started with one [page], and even at this period sometimes managed only one; on other occasions he probably wrote several to make up. But his plan was to write exactly two pages each day, Sundays included' (Boswell in Holland, 55 n.2).

10. For the various forms of Belle de Zuylen's name, and Boswell's use of 'Zelida', see Boswell in Holland, 54 n. 1 (to which one should add that in Dutch van Zuylen is always preferred to de Zuylen).

11. 'Archibald Stewart/at the Shipmaker's Harbour/Rotterdam/With a sword': with this letter Boswell returned a sword he had borrowed from Stewart in August or September. The British in Rotterdam preferred to live on the Nieuwe Haven (the New Harbour) and the Haringvliet, but they also favoured the Scheepmakershaven (the Shipmakers' Harbour). For instance, Benjamin Furry lived on the Scheepmakershaven before 1709. In these districts the important Rotterdam merchants and various members of the ruling class, doctors and lawyers were to be found (see E. Groenenboom-Draai, De Rotterdamsche Woelreus: De 'Rotterdamsche Hermes' [1720-21] van Jacob Campo Weyer-man: Cultuurhistorische verkenningen in een achttiende-eeuwse periodiek, Amsterdam, 1994, 37-38, and 378).

12. MS, Yale (L1187): the letter is reproduced with a slightly different translation in Boswell in Holland, 111-12. For information on the Yale MS, see the 'On the Dutch Text and the English Translation', page xxix above.

13. James Montgomerie of Lainshaw (in Ayrshire) was Boswell's first cousin, and brother of his future wife.

14. Stewart replied to Boswell's letter with one of his own from Rotterdam, a couple of days later: 'Your last letter, My Dear Boswell, cost me more than all the other letters you ever wrote me, as I was obliged to employ a Tovenaar or Sorcier, what the Scotch commonly Call Seco[n]d Sighted people, to Explain it to me, and he assured me it took him all his skill to Decipherit. I need not tell you how extravagant these sort of People are when they know you can't do without them, which was really the present case. I shall be glad to see you 5 days hence, I mean from the date of your last Mistery' (Boswell in Holland, 112-13).


16. See Frederick A. Pottle's Introduction to Boswell in Holland, ix-xi.


22. Boswell spoke German with the popular poet Christian Furchtegott Gellert (1715-1769) on 4 October 1764, because Gellert's French was even worse than his Latin (Boswell on the Grand Tour, 123).

23. See Composition 3.

James Boswell, 'Een Beytie Hollansche'


26. According to De Vooys, Ten Kate had a great aversion for a linguistic system in which people merely quarrel about spelling, and in which the grammatical forms are ordered and manufactured at random. On the other hand, Ten Kate had his eye on the ‘exalted part’ of linguistics, namely the origins of words and forms of language (C.G.N. de Vooys, ‘De taalbeschouwing van Lambert ten Kate’, in *Verzamelde Taalkundige Opstellen*, I [1924, 374-91, esp. 376).


29. See Compositions 1 (for the first) and 9 (for the last); the other three are in Composition 5.

30. See Composition 4.

31. See Compositions 4 and 15.

32. See the letter to Archibald Stewart (page xiii above), and Composition 6.

33. See Composition 5.

34. See the letter to Stewart, and Compositions 2 and 9.

35. See Composition 2.

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James Boswell, 'Een Beytie Hollansche'
A Chronology of Boswell's Movements in the Netherlands

1763

August

Saturday 6: Boswell sets sail from Harwich ‘on board the Prince of Wales packet-boat’ (BH, 36)
Sunday 7: Boswell arrives at Hellevoetsluis ‘at twelve at noon’ and travels to Rotterdam (BH, 5)
Wednesday 10: Goes to Leiden, where he ‘passed some days’ (BH, 5)
Saturday 13: Travels ‘between Leyden and Utrecht nine hours in sluggish trek schuit without any companion’ (BH, 6)
Monday 15: Returns to Rotterdam (BH, 6), and between then and 22 August visits Gouda, Amsterdam and Haarlem (BH, 10)
Monday 22: In Amsterdam
Tuesday 23: Travels to Utrecht
Friday 26: Goes to Leiden

September

Friday 2: In Rotterdam
Monday 5: Travels to Gouda, and then takes a ‘schuit to Utrecht’ (BH, 19)
Sunday 11: Goes to Rotterdam
Thursday 15: Returns to Utrecht

October and November: In Utrecht

December

Monday 19: Travels to Leiden (BH, 93)
Tuesday 20: Goes to The Hague, where he spends Christmas and the New Year (BH, 93-112)

1764

January

Friday 6: Travels to Leiden (BH, 113)
Monday 9: Goes to Rotterdam, arriving ‘at half after one’ (BH, 114)
Monday 16: Visits Gouda, Bodegraven and returns to Utrecht (BH, 116)

February and March: In Utrecht

April

Sunday 8: Makes a trip to Amersfoort
Wednesday 18: Travels to Leiden (BH, 222)
Thursday 19: Goes to The Hague for the Easter vacation (BH, 223)

May

Tuesday 1: Returns to Utrecht (BH, 230)
Saturday 5: Travels to The Hague, and takes a coach to Scheveningen (BH, 233)
Sunday 6: Makes a trip to Delft
Thursday 10: Goes to Scheveningen (BH, 235)
Monday 14: Leaves The Hague, and travels to Leiden; takes night boat back to Utrecht (BH, 238)
Tuesday 15: Arrives in Utrecht
Friday 25: Takes the night boat to Amsterdam (BH, 235)
Monday 27: Takes the night boat back to Utrecht (BH, 255)

June

Friday 1: Takes the night boat to The Hague (arriving at 9 a.m.); ‘at twelve’ travels in a coach by way of Delft to Rotterdam (BH, 258-59)
Saturday 2: Takes a schuit to Delft and then a chariot to The Hague (BH, 260)
Wednesday 6: Takes the schuit to Leiden, and the night boat back to Utrecht (BH, 266)
Monday 18: Travels to Nijmegen ‘in a coach and four’ (BH, 282)
Tuesday 19: Leaves Holland for Germany (Kleve and Wesel)
36. *Boswell in Holland, 4*: where possible page references and occasional quotations are given from this volume (*BH*) to support the details of Boswell's movements in the Netherlands. However, some of his movements are not recorded in that volume, and these are taken from a chronology supplied with the Yale transcript and translation of Boswell's MS (see ‘On the Dutch Text and the English Translation’, page xxix above).
Physically Boswell's Dutch Compositions consist of 20 quarto pages, roughly 8 by 6.25 inches (20.5 by 16 cms). Only the first is dated, internally, ‘Het eerst van Februari’. It was Boswell's plan to write one page every day; he seems to have managed to write 20 pages in about 35 days. In *Boswell in Holland*, the editor, Frederick A. Pottle, includes 12 of the 20 Dutch Compositions in English translation only. With the exception of a few passages, the Dutch text has never been published before, and an English translation only of part. There does exist a typewritten transcript and translation of the text, kindly supplied to us, along with a photocopy of the original manuscript in their possession, by the Editorial Committee of the Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell (with whose permission we have embarked on this book), probably intended for the research edition of the material related to Boswell's stay in the Netherlands, to be edited by the late Robert Warnock. This typescript we have consulted and occasionally made use of.

For this edition the Dutch text has been newly transcribed. Words crossed out have not been recorded; Boswell's use of capitals has been retained, as has his coupling or uncoupling of words; where a self-evident correction has been called for (as in Dutch Composition 6 where ‘hollasche’ stands for ‘hollanske’) the correction has been put between square brackets, in other cases [*sic*] is used; paragraphing has been introduced into the text and modern punctuation has been used.

The English translation has been thoroughly revised. Naturally, it has not always been possible to avoid the translation in the Yale typescript, which curiously enough is not always the same as that found in *Boswell in Holland*. Differences are partly due to the fact that here the Yale transcript of the Dutch text has been revised in several places (where the original appears to have been misread), and partly due to our intention to produce a readable modern English text - the Yale translation on occasions being rather stilted in its attempt either to

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James Boswell, *Een Beytie Hollanske*
translate Boswell as literally as possible or to produce an English text that conforms to Boswell's own eighteenth-century English style. Sometimes the Yale version (either that of *Boswell in Holland* or in the typescript) simply mistranslates the Dutch text.

Notes either on the text or on the people referred to in the text have only been supplied when absolutely necessary.

**Eindnoten:**


38. In the Appendix to ‘Envy, Fear, and Wonder': English Views of Holland and the Dutch’ (242-43: see, n. 18 above), Dutch Composition 3 was published, and extracts from 2 and 17, all with the translations as given by Pottle in *Boswell in Holland*. 

James Boswell, *Een Beytie Hollansche*
James Boswell's Dutch Compositions

James Boswell, *Een Beytie Hollansche*
Composition no. 1: 1 February 1764 (see p. 4)
Journal on The Anvil

Courage

Go on

James Boswell, 'Een Beytie Hollansche'
Terwijl ik bin van voornemens om de hollansche taal te leeren, dat is te zeggen:
Terwyl ik hebben lust te minsten een beytie te leeren zoo dat ik can met de Hollanders
conversatie hebben, zoo heb ik geresolveer'd alle daag een beytie in dat taal te
schryven. Als van daag is Het eerst van Februari, ik begin met de grooter plaisir tot
te het begin van een maande en ook Het begin van Het voojaar.

Des bladyes dat ik sall schryven, sall veel inbeelding hebben, mari ik vreeze dat
zy geen zamenbestaanlykheid sall hebben. De wel geleerd Domine Brown
voornemens is hem te corrigeeren en ik verhoop dat hy sall niet Kwaadaardig worden.
Inderdaad, ik moet beleyden dat myn onderwerpen seer onvolmaakten zyn, zoo wel
door de stoffe als door de manierre. Mar dat is mar te begin, want met praktyk ik sall
als een Hollander selve schryven. Zeg Ik niet weel om myn t'aanmoedigen? De vrught
daar om sal in een cleyn tyd verscheynen. Wel gezeyd, Mynheer, mar ik twyfel er
zeer aan. Jawel, hoe ook Bin u niet angstig, ik sal daarop toesien.

James Boswell, ’Een Beytie Hollansche’
1: 1 February 1764

Since I intend to learn Dutch, that is, since I want to learn at least a little, so that I can talk with Dutch people, I have resolved to write a little in that language every day. As today is the 1st February, I am beginning with the greater pleasure, for it is the beginning of the month and also the beginning of spring.

These pages that I shall write will have a great deal of imagination, but I fear they will have very little coherence. The very learned Reverend Mr Brown plans to correct them, and I hope that he will not be put out. Indeed I must confess my subjects are quite defective, in matter as well as in style. But that is only the beginning, since with practice I shall write like a Dutchman himself. Don't I say a great deal to encourage myself? In a short time the fruits of this shall appear. Well said, Sir, but I very much doubt it. Well, never fear; I shall see to it.

Eindnoten:

1. For an account of the Reverend Robert Brown (1728-1777), see Introduction, above, and Boswell in Holland, 22 n.2, et passim.
2: c. 2 February

De Stad van Utregh is een vry groot Stad. Het is niet heel wyd, maar Het lang is. Het is met Bolwerken vercinge en ik geloof dat Het versterk gewest onder de Spansche regeering. Het is een heel goed plaats om te studeeren; daar heb y verscheiden overtreffelyken Hoogleermesteren. Ik weet veel dat voor ’t meerderdeel men zyn ‘Professeurs’ noemen. Mar dat is een franshe woord t’afborgen en dat ik sal noit doen. Die Hollanders hebben niet meer nood van de franschen worden als van de fransche gelt, en dat ik secker bin. Wy salen niet van de monsieurs neemen. Het hollansche taal is een oude, een sterk en een ryk taal. En als ik roeme dat ik hollanske blood in mynen aderen heb, zoo zeg Ik dat een Hollander zoud de taal van een fransman, wanneer het met zyn eygen vergelyken is, versmaaden. Het myn veer aanprikkelien heeft, so veel van de fransche taal met de Hollanske mengen t’ s’aag’s te hooren. Het is een schandelyke Zaak dat Die frai voolken daar bin verontaardinghen alledaag van de nugteren Kragten van zyn eerbidigheyden voroudes.
2: c. 2 February

Utrecht is quite a large city. It is not very broad, but it is long. It is provided with ramparts, and I believe that it was fortified under Spanish rule. It is a very good place in which to study; there you may find various excellent learned masters. I am well aware that they are usually called ‘Professors’. But that is to borrow a French word, and that I shall never do. The Dutch have no more need of French words than of French money, and of that I am sure. We shall not borrow anything from the Monsieurs. Dutch is an old, strong, and rich language; and if I boast that I have Dutch blood in my veins, so I say that a Dutchman should scorn the language of a Frenchman when it is compared with his own. It has irritated my pen to hear so much French mixed with Dutch in The Hague. It is scandalous that there fine folk daily deteriorate from the sober strength of their worthy ancestors.

Eindnoten:

2. Both James Boswell's mother (Euphemia Erskine) and father (Alexander Boswell) claimed descent from Alexander Bruce, second Earl of Kincardine (he as grandson, she as great-granddaughter) and his Dutch wife, Veronica van Aerssen van Sommelsdijk (see David Daiches, James Boswell and His World, London, 1976, 8; James Boswell, In Search of a Wife 1766-1769, eds F. Brady and F.A. Pottle, New York, 1956, 44 n. 5).
3: c. 3 February

‘Dag Mynheer!’, dat is een reght Hollansche Salutatie en of U sall door die straaten van Utregh waandelen, u sal it en duyzenmaalen tuschens s'morgens en s'avonds hooren. Men zeg ook: ‘Dinar, Heer’, maar met een zoo corte uytspreken dat een freemdeling sal dinken dat it ‘Ja, Mynheer’ is. Waan ik bin eerst te Hollande gekomen, ik bedogt dat Het zoo worden en ik heb allteyd ‘Ja, mynheer’ gezeeyden. Het seecker is dat een heel goed oor can zoo bedriejen weeen om zyn zelven segen, ‘D ja, mynheer’. Het is verwonderlyk dat zoo veel engelshen hebben in Hollande gestudeer'd zonder hebben van de taal daarom geleer'd.

Men zeg dat de hollansche taal is een taal voor den Paarden. Zo zeyd de heer Castilion over dat hy verscheiden Jaaren t Utrecht geleef'd hadden. Hy was in de Amsterdamsche Schuyt terwyl hy heft de bovegemelde gekelyk spreek gemaakt en of een heer dat hen van aanzien kenne, niet dar heft geweest, ik geloove dat een sterk Hollander sou hem te de gracht uytwerpen hebben.
3: c. 3 February

‘Good day, Sir!’, that is a proper Dutch greeting, and walking through the streets of Utrecht, you will hear it a dozen times between morning and evening. They also say, ‘Your servant, Sir!’ but with such a clipped pronunciation that a foreigner will think that it is ‘Yes, Sir!’ When I first arrived in Holland, that is what I thought it was, and always said, ‘Yes, Sir!’ Certainly a very good ear can be so deceived as to find himself saying, ‘Yes, Sir!’ It is amazing that so many Englishmen have studied in Holland without learning any of the language.

People say that Dutch is a language for horses. So said Monsieur Castillon after he had lived in Utrecht for several years. He was on the Amsterdam schuit when he made this foolish remark, and if a gentleman who knew him by sight had not been there, I believe that a strong Dutchman would have thrown him into the canal. 5.

Eindnoten:

3. Giovanni Francesco Salvermini di Castiglione, originally from Florence, was professor of mathematics, philosophy and astronomy in Utrecht, 1759-1763. In 1764 he left Utrecht for Berlin to teach mathematics and philosophy at the Prussian Military Academy, where Boswell met up with him again (see Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland 1764, passim). On 27 July 1764 Belle de Zuylen wrote to Constant d’Hermenches that ‘Monsieur Castillon was the only man she enjoyed discussing metaphysics with’ (Isabelle de Charrière, Une Liaison dangereuse: Correspondance avec Constant d’Hermenches 1760-1776, eds Isabelle and Jean-Louis Vissière, Paris, 1991, 118).

4. See Introduction, n. 5 above.

5. Boswell’s attitude towards Dutch was commended by his father in a letter sent from Auchinleck in December 1763: ‘I applaud you for not condemning the Dutch language; our countrymen commonly do. One good reason for it is that they don’t understand it. It is not a polite language, ’tis true, except in the mouth of a handsome woman. I must make this exception, for I remember well when I have heard a pretty lady saying “O hemel!” I thought it musical’ (Boswell in Holland, 107).
4: c. 6 February

Ik bin heel gelukkig t'Utrecht, meer gelukkig als eenig Scotsman seedert myn eerwaardig Vrind de Heer Dalrymple was hier geweest. Ik heb veel bekenden en allen die volken van uytmunde rang met groot beschaafdhyd myn ontvangen. Goed gedrag is noodzaakelyk in allen laanden, mar boven al in Hollande. Zoo veel vreemden daar comen en zoo veel vreemden die voor quaaden zaagen ontvuluygten hebben, dat men vreeze een gunstig onthaal zyn te geeven. Mar Mynheer Dalrymple heeft myn een Brief van recommendatie te Londen gezenden, welk ik heb hier gebrogt. Dat Brief was te Mynheer de Graaf Frederic van Nassau, de Hooft Officier van deeze Stad. Hy heeft myn ingevoerd te de Assembly, dat voor de eerst maal dit winter naar zyn Schoonzuster, de Gravine van Beverweert is gehouden geweest. Zy is een bevallig en heel voltooide vrou en zy heeft myn te verscheiden anderen personen van aanzien gevoorstellen.
4: c. 6 February

I am very happy in Utrecht, happier than any Scotsman since my worthy friend Mr Dalrymple was here. I have many acquaintances, and all the people of distinction receive me with great politeness. Good behaviour is necessary in all countries, but especially in Holland. So many foreigners come here, and so many foreigners who have fled for sinister reasons, that people are afraid to give them a favourable reception. But Mr Dalrymple sent a letter of recommendation to me in London, which I have brought here. The letter was to Count Frederic of Nassau, the chief magistrate in the city. He presented me at the Ball, which was held for the first time this winter at his sister-in-law’s, the Countess of Beverweert. She is a charming and very accomplished woman, and she has introduced me to various other persons of quality.

Eindnoten:

7. Boswell had a letter of introduction from Sir David Dalrymple for Jan Nicolaas Floris, Count of Nassau La Lecq (see Boswell in Holland, 7). For some reason Boswell gives Nassau the name Frederic, which is either a mistake on Boswell’s part or indeed the name the Count was usually called by his friends and more intimate acquaintances (in Dutch, his roepnaam), possibly in honour of Prince Frederik Hendrik.
8. In 1764 Countess Johanna van Nassau-Beverweerd was 31, and the wife of the 70-year-old Hendrik Karel van Nassau. The ‘Assembly’ which Boswell speaks of in his Dutch Composition was in fact the first of a season of closed Balls, which opened at the house of the Countess and her husband (see Boswell in Holland, 68 n.1; and Une Liaison dangereuse, 80 n. 69).
5: c. 8 February

Laatst Maandag heb ik Thee gedronken naar de Heer van Zuyl. Hy was heel beschaafd. Ja, Hy heeft myn zelfs op een vriindelyke wyze ontvangen. Juvrow zyn doghter seer vermaaklyke was, doch zy heeft myn zeedert gezeyd dat zy niet in goed luyym was. Eeen dat is seeker wonderlyk: hoe een Jufrow kan zoo veel veynzen! Mar inderdaad men zeg dat die Vrown binnen heel loozen en canen die mannen alle dat zy belieften gelooven maaken.

Daar worden ook die twee zoonen van Mynheer, een dat een zee Luytenant in de dienst van hollansche is (dog Hy heb voor dree Jaaren in een engelsche Oorlog Schip geweest), een de ander, een Jong heer dat heb nog niet zyn besteeden verkooren. Het heel moy was te zien de wyze met de welk de Vader en die Zoonen tegens elkander hen zelven gedragen. Ik heb daar niet kribbig Achtbaarheyd noch bevreez'd nederigheyd gezeen, maar een fatzoenlyk gemaklykheyd als zou'd allelyd in een Huygshezin [sic] worden. De heer van Zuyl is een van de oudste Edelen die in die seeven Provincien bin, een hy is heel ryk ook, want he heeft een ammondamange vrow, een Koopleeder's Dogter, met veel gelt, getrouden.
5: c. 8 February

Last Monday I drank tea at Mr van Zuyl's.\(^9\) He was very polite. Yes, he received me in a very friendly manner. His daughter was very pleasant, although she told me later that she was not in a good mood. It is certainly amazing how a young lady can dissemble so well, but indeed they say that women are very sly and can make men believe what they please. The gentleman's two sons were also there,\(^10\) one is a lieutenant in the Dutch navy (although for three years he was on an English warship) and the other a young man who has not yet chosen his profession. It was very agreeable to see the manner in which the father and the sons behaved towards each other. I did not see there either cramped formality or painstaking humility, but a decent easiness as should exist in a family. Mr van Zuyl comes from one of the oldest noble families in the Seven Provinces, and he is also very rich, for he married an Amsterdam lady,\(^11\) a merchant's daughter, with a great deal of money.

Eindnoten:


10. Heer van Zuylen actually had three sons, but Willem (aged twenty-two and the eldest) was not then in Utrecht. Boswell met Diederik, the sailor, then twenty, and Vincent who was seventeen (Boswell in Holland, 134).

11. Madame van Zuylen (whose maiden name was Helena de Vicq) was married at the age of fifteen in 1739; she died as the result of a smallpox inoculation in 1768, aged 44 (Boswell in Holland, 367).
6: c. 9 February

Over dat wy hebben eenig tyd gezatten, daar intreeden Mynheer Bonnett, de Hogleeraar in Theologie. Ik was seer verbaas'd om hem heel leevendig en Blymoedig heer te vinden. Ik heb een beytie hollansche te spreekken getracht een zoo Wy excellente Gezelschap wierden. De Heer van Zuyl heeft myn Scotsche Dictionarie vergemelde en de Professeur gezeyd dat hy heeft een Dictionarie waarin de t'zaamenknooping tuschen de Nederduitsche, de oude Saxsche, de ysandieshe en de Latin Taalen is vertoone. De Auteur is Lambert ten Kate genoom'd en de Boek is in twee deelen. Ik heb myn keurigheid uitgedrught de bovegemelde Boeke te zien en de Professeur zeyd met groot beschaafdheyd: ‘Mynheer, Ik sal it naar u zenden 's anderen daags’. Ik dogt dat ik zoud niet minder doen als een Bezoek te Mynheer de Professeur te geeven. Achtervolgen Ik daar gingen en ik Mynheer te huis gevonden, Wie myn heel well ontvangen. Wy heb beyd Latin een holla[n]she gesprooken en wy hebben verdraagmaken somtyds te t'zamenkomen.
6: c. 9 February

After we had sat there for some time, Mr Bonnett, the Professor of Theology, came in. I was very surprised to find him an extremely lively and cheerful gentleman. I attempted to speak a little Dutch and so we became excellent company. Mr van Zuyl mentioned my Scottish dictionary, and the Professor said that he had a dictionary in which the connection between Dutch, Old Saxon, Icelandic and Latin is shown. The author is Lambert ten Kate, and the book is in two volumes. I expressed my strong desire to see this book, and with great politeness the Professor said, ‘Sir, I shall send it you tomorrow’. I thought that I should do no less than pay the Professor a visit. Consequently, I went there, and I found the gentleman, who received me very well, at home. We spoke both Latin and Dutch, and agreed to meet occasionally.

Eindnoten:

13. Lambert ten Kate (1674-1751) is thought of as the most important Dutch linguist. The work here referred to is Aenleiding tot de Kennisse van het Verhevene Deel der Nederduitsche Sprake: waerin hare zekerste grondslag, edelste kragt, nuttelijkste onderscheiding en geregelde Afleiding overwogen en nagespoort, en tegen het allervoornaemste der verouderde en nog levende Taelverwanten, als ‘t Oude Moeso-Gotisch, Frank-Duitsch, en Angel-Saxisch, beneffens het hedendaegsche Hoogduitsch en Islandsch, vergeleken wordt, Amsterdam, 2 vols, 1723.
7: c. 10 February


James Boswell, 'Een Beytie Hollansche'
7: c. 10 February

This afternoon at six o'clock I sent my servant to the worthy Professor, and he brought the dictionary I mentioned earlier, and truly it is a treasure. It is written in Dutch, which I do not yet know well enough to understand it completely. But the Reverend Mr Brown, His Majesty the King of Great Britain's agent and minister of the Scottish Church in Utrecht, has been to my house and looked at it. After he had read in it for half an hour, he threw up his hands and said in great astonishment: ‘Well, Gentlemen, I have never seen a book that pleased me more. Here you have four languages, and here you have an excellent discussion of language in general. The author shows how all languages originally came from one, and indeed supports his feelings with very strong evidence.’

James Boswell, *Een Beytie Hollansche*
8: c. 13 February

Mynheer Brown voornemens is dit Boek t'over-setten, mar hy heeft zoo veel te doen tegenwoordig dat hy heeft niet ledige týd genóeg. Niet te min, hy sall eenigen stuyen daarom oversetten ondertuschen in de fransche taal, welken hy sal naar onze Donderdag's wysgerig Gezelschap lezen. Dat zall een heel goed onderwe[r]pen van overweekin tot die gelereerden Lidden wierden. Het zall onz inleyden te veel weetgierigen beschowingen. Wy zallen verscheiden spreuken van oude histori aanhaalen en Wy zallen meenigen waarnemingen opzigt te de vorming van taalen geeeven. Wy zallen trachten te vertoonen hoe het menschdom heeft worden veranderen door een cleyn verschil van de uytspraak. Ik verwach niet dat zallen allen overeenkomen, voor de spreekword zeg: Zoo veel menschen, zoo veel zinnen. En daarbeneven Wy binnen van verschilligen Landaarden: francshen [sic], englesh en Duytsch.
8: c. 13 February

Mr Brown intends to translate this book, but at the moment he has so much to do he has not enough spare time. Nevertheless, in the meanwhile, he will translate some parts of it into French, which he will read to our Thursday philosophical society. That will be a very good subject for consideration by our learned members. It will introduce us to many curious reflections. We shall cite various remarks from ancient history and we shall make many observations upon the formation of languages. We shall attempt to demonstrate how mankind has been changed by a small difference in pronunciation. I do not expect that we shall all agree, for as the saying goes: there are as many opinions as there are people.14 And besides we are from different countries: French, English, and Dutch.

Eindnoten:

14. ‘Quot homines tot sententiae’ (Terence, Phormio, III, 3, vs. 454).
9: c. 14 February

Ik heb in een voorige blaadie waargenomé met groot verdriet dat de hollansche taal is seer bedurve ter oorzaake van de groot etale van fransche worden dat daarin Vermengen zyn. Ik heb enige dag op dit zaak gesprooken t een hollansche heer van goed rang, een verstandig man en een waarachtig liefhebber van 't Vaderland.

‘Mynheer’ zeyd hy, ‘dat com voornaamlyk van t gage. Daar is in dat Staad zoo veel vreemden dat franshe spreekhen. Daar zyn Peruykmaakers, dansmeesters, Scheermeesters en Toneelspeelers, om hier niet te melden die buitenlandschen Gezanten, dat inderdaad Men moet zegen dat de haalf van de taal is fransche gemaakt.

Mynheer, u moet daarenboven kennen dat zy hebben veel van de Brabantsche regten tot op dezen dag toe in die hoften van hollandse bewaaren, zoo dat onze raadsheeren sallen veel fransche worden in zynen pleytingen invoeren; en zoo, Mynheer can zien hoe onze taal is bedurve’.

James Boswell, 'Een Beytie Hollansche'
9: c. 14 February

On a previous page I observed with great regret that Dutch is quite spoiled through the great number of French words that are mixed with it. One day I spoke with a Dutch gentleman of good rank, an intelligent man and true lover of his fatherland, on this matter. ‘Sir,’ he said, ‘that comes chiefly from The Hague. In that town there are so many foreigners who speak French. There are wigmakers, dancing masters, fencing instructors, and actors, not to mention foreign envoys, so that indeed half of the language is French. Moreover you must know, Sir, that they have kept to the present day many of the Brabant laws in the Dutch Courts, so that our counsellors introduce many French words into their pleas,' and so, Sir, you can see how our language is corrupted.'

Eindnoten:

15. A note in the Yale typescript refers to J.J. Salverda de Grave's *De Franse Woorden in het Nederlands* (*Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen*, Lit. Div., New Series, vii), 1906, 57-59, which gives a classified list of French words in the legal language of Dutch, pointing out that most of them came in under the rule of the House of Burgundy in Brabant.
10: c. 15 February

Het is derdtig Jaaren zeedert myn vaader te Leyde heeft studeerd. Het hollandsche taal hy met veel benyvering geleer'd en in een cleyd [sic] tyd hy het zoo veel verkreegen dat hy magtig was henzelven voorstaan te doen.

Hy kameren in een hollansche huys genoomen. Zyn Huysvrow was een Weduwe een hat een Zuster dat hy har bleeven. De weduwe was vryen door een Kleermaaker, mar zyn zuster was niet de vrind van de liefhebber, welke de Weduwe grootelyks qalyk noomen. Eeenige morgen te Vier heuren zy heeft myn Vaader in een waanorde verwaken.

‘A Mynheer’ zeyd zy ‘Zuster ’s doode.’

‘Wat zeg u vrow?’ antweerde hy, ‘Bin zy doode?’

‘Ja veel Mynheer’ zeyd de huysvrow, ‘Zy heeft een vlas Brandewyn alle avond in zyn camer houden en ik vreeze dat zy heeft te veel gedronken.’

Myn Vaader opsteenen anstiglyk en beneeden trap gingen, en hy heeft zuster zekerlyk dood gevonden. Maar hy was achterdoghigt dat de Weduwe had har uyt t' waerld gehelpen, als zy de kleermaaker terstond daarnaar getroude heeft.
10: c. 15 February

It is thirty years since my father studied in Leiden. He learned Dutch with great diligence, and in a short while he had acquired it so well that he was able to make himself understood.

He took rooms in a Dutch house. His landlady was a widow and had a sister living with her. The widow was courted by a tailor, but the sister was no friend of the lover, which annoyed the widow. One morning at four o'clock she woke my father in a frenzy.

‘Ah Sir,’ she said, ‘Sister's dead.’

‘What are you saying, woman?’ he replied, ‘Is she dead?’

‘Yes indeed, Sir,’ the landlady said. ‘Every evening she had a bottle of brandy in her room, and I'm afraid she drank too much.’

Anxiously my father got up and went downstairs, and certainly he found the sister dead. But he suspected that the widow had helped her out of the world, as she married the tailor soon afterwards.

Eindnoten:

16. On 29 December 1727 the 21-year-old Alexander Boswell had registered in Leiden as a law student. He lived on the Rapenburg at the house of a widow, Mrs Boen: see Archief van Senaat en Faculteiten: Inschrijvingsregister 14 (1727-1755), 15, no. 273, in Leiden University Library.

17. In the Yale typescript there is a note on this anecdote: ‘The Leiden archives do not support Lord Auchinleck's story. The four sisters Schaaf(sijpen) of Solingen settled in Leiden before 1701: Angenita, who married Jan van Koedijk, sheep-shearer, in 1701 with her sister, Anna Margaretha, as a witness; Anna Maria, who married Cornelis Soetert (d. 1717), widower with three children, in 1712, with Anna Margaretha as a witness, and died in December 1729; Anna Margaretha; and Maria, Lord Auchinleck's landlady, who as the widow of Steven Boen, married Philip Ramack in 1728, with Anna Margaretha as a witness. The presumably murdered sister would seem to have been Angenita, the others being still alive at Maria's marriage with Ramack, but there is no record of her death in Leiden. The Anna Schaap, wife of Dirk Turk, who was coincidentally buried between 18 and 25 September 1728 was unfortunately not a sister.’
11: c. 16 February

Ik sall een maal proberen een half bladie te schryven als Ik spreek. Ik zaal geen Wordenboeken neemen, mar Ik zaal allen die woorden dat in myn hooft comen introduceeren. Ik moet ook franschen woorden meleeren, terwyl ik zyn zoo veel hooren alle dagen in alle Gezelschappen.

Ik heb heel ongelukig wierden ten opzigt van kousen, voor zy binnen niet sterken en zoo can niet laang duuren. Ik heb veel gaaten daarin vonden en dat some tyds wan Het heeft niet meer manqueerd als five minuten van twelve heuren, wan ik zou by de Collegie van Mynheer Trotz op de Romsche regte gaan. Fransche, myn kneght, ken heel veel de gaten te stoopen en dat is seer gemaaklyk.

Myn Schoonen binnen heel goeden. Ik heb geen schoenen gecoften seedert dat Ik heb in Holland geweest. Ik heb sees paaren schoonen met myn uyt Londen gebroght en de grootste deel daarof binnen scotsche schoenen.
11: c. 16 February

For once I shall try to write half a page as I speak. I won't use a dictionary, but I shall introduce only those words which come into my head. I must also intermingle French words, since every day I hear so many in all kinds of company.

I have been very unlucky with stockings, for they are not strong and cannot last long. I have found many holes in them, and that sometimes as late as five minutes to twelve, when I should be on my way to Mr Trotz's lecture on Roman law. Frans, my servant, can darn the holes very well and that is very convenient.

My shoes are fine. I have bought no shoes since I have been in Holland. I brought six pairs of shoes with me from London, and most of them are Scottish.

Eindnoten:

18. See Dutch Composition 18, n.25 below.
12: c. 17 February

Terwyl Mynheer Brown myn meester voor hollansche is, hy zeekerlyk verdient een bladzyde te vullen. Die is een verbeeldig uytdrucking, war ik woude zegen dat ik zall een bladzyde met de bovegemelde heer vullen. En is het niet een zwaar taak dat ik heb myn zelve gezetten? Ja well, dat ik gelooove, mar u moet het voolbrengen; anders moet u een boet van fiftig gulders tot de engelshe kerkenraad betaalen. Weel, eerder als dat doen, ik sall schryven iets dat u belieft.

Mynheer Brown is de Zoon van een Scotshe Domine. Zyn Broeder was Predicant t Utreght voor verscheiden Jaaren. Hy zyn zelve heft daar gestudeer'd en te laats[1]en heeft zyn broeder, We tot St. Andree als een Hoogleerar van kerksche historie vervoerd was, in de Englesche kerk volgen. Hy heeft een Switzer's vrow getrowde, de dogchter van een Scotsche ridder, en hy is in een heel goed gelegenheyd.

James Boswell, 'Een Beytie Hollansche'
12: c. 17 February

Since Mr Brown is my Dutch master, he certainly deserves to fill a page. By this figurative expression I mean that I shall fill a page with the gentleman just mentioned. And is it not a difficult task I have set myself? Indeed, I believe so, but you must accomplish it; otherwise you must pay a fine of fifty guilders to the board of the English Church. Rather than do that, I shall write something that pleases you.

Mr Brown is the son of a Scottish clergyman. His brother was a minister in Utrecht for several years. He himself studied there, and eventually followed his brother, who had been transferred to St Andrews as a professor of church history, into the English church. He married a Swiss woman, the daughter of a Scottish knight, and he is in a very good situation.

Eindnoten:

19. William Brown was registered as a student in Utrecht in 1757 (during the period that Professor Trotz was Rector): see *Album Studiosorum Academiae Rheno-Traiectinae MDCXXXVI-MDCCCLXXXVI, Accedunt Nomina Curatorum et Professorum*, Utrecht, 1886, column 155.
13: c. 20 February

Mynheer Johnson, zoo vermaard ter oorzaak van zyn engelsche wordenboek en anderen werken, onder welken is Rasselas, Prins van Abyssinie, dat in het hollansche taal oversetten is, heeft myn een brief uyt Londen geschryft waarin hy veel keurigheyd uytdrug om de wyzen, hoe die Aarmin in die seeven Provincien onderhouden zyn, te kennen.

Als het zall alltyds myn vermaak en hovaerdy wierden Mynheer Johnson te verpligten, Ik heb verscheyden heeren vraagen zoo dat ik moet een reght kennis van dit Zaak hebben.

Ik Vind dat die Wyzen zyn verschillinden in die verschillenden Provincien, en zelfs in die verschillenden Steeden zoodat Ik moet een Boek in folio hebben, zoud Ik zyn alle te schryven denken. Mar ik sall beeter doen. Eeen van die ouderlingen van Het engelsche kerk in deze Staat heeft veel wegen die aarmins zaagen te doenen. Hy heeft myn belooven een vool verhaal daarof. Ik sall het te Mynheer Johnson zenden, zoo dat hy can die regulatien t’ Utrecht zien en van dezen hy can een bezeffing van die anderen hebben.

Ik verwach dit brief deze week. Het sall in hollansche wierden, mar ik howp dat Ik sall it heel well overzetten in engelsche.
13: c. 20 February

Mr Johnson, so famous on account of his English Dictionary and other works, including *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*, which has been translated into Dutch,20 has written me a letter from London,21 in which he says he would very much like to know how the poor are supported in the Seven Provinces.

As I shall always be pleased and proud to oblige Mr Johnson, I have asked several gentlemen, so that I will have proper knowledge of this matter.

I find that different Provinces, and even different towns, have different ways, so that I would have to take a folio volume were I to write about them all. But I shall do better. One of the elders of the English Church22 in this city has much to do with the affairs of the poor. He has promised me a full account of them. This I shall send to Mr Johnson, so that he can see the Utrecht regulations, from which he will be able to have some idea of the others.

This letter I expect this week. It will be in Dutch, but I hope that I will be able to translate it into English.

Eindnoten:

20. Johnson's *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia* was translated into Dutch by Egbert Buys and published in Amsterdam by Dirk onder de Linden in 1760. The only known copy of this translation is in the USA (in 1963 in a private collection in New Jersey: see the account by L.F. Powell in the Times Literary Supplement, 20 September 1963, 712).

21. See in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, a letter dated 8 December 1763, which ends: ‘It will be a favour if you can get me any books in the Frisick language, and can inquire how the poor are maintained in the Seven Provinces.’ This seems to have triggered off Boswell's French discourse on poverty, the opening of which is given in *Boswell in Holland*, 156-57. However, Boswell adds in the *Life* ‘That I am sorry to observe, that neither in my own minutes, nor in my letters to Johnson which have been preserved by him, can I find any information how the poor are maintained in the Seven Provinces.’

22. According to the Yale typescript, ‘probably Dr Louis Tissot, who was a member of the English Church (‘members of the English church at Utrecht 1763’ in *Bapt. reg. Eng. Ref. Ch.*, Utr. Arch. 434, no p. no.) and director of the Utrecht Dolhuis, or madhouse (J.P.T. van der Lith, *Geschiedenis van het Krankzinnigen-Gesticht te Utrecht*, 1863, p. 54). He later accompanied JB on visits to the madhouse and the orphanage.’
14: c. 21 February

Is het niet moy een bladie op niemendal te schryven? Dat is heel gewoonlyk in fransche, mar ik gelooove dat ik bin de eerst die heeft het in Holland getragt. Op wat dan sall ik schryven? Op wat beeter als op wat voor mynen oogen is.
‘Wat is dat, Mynheer?’
‘Wat is dat! Zie u het niet als weel als ik? Uw oogen zeekerlyk zyn als Jongen as mynen. Zie u niet een kachgel?’
‘Ja weel, Ik zie het, mar wat is dat te zegen? Is het op dat dat u voornemens bin te schryven?’
‘Zoo is het, Broeder. Geloof u myn niet, of moet ik met een eed bevestigen?’
‘Neen, neen, zweer niet, ik verzoek u, mar niettegenstand ik zeer verwonder hoe dat Mynheer can een kachgel niemendaal noemen. Zeekerlyk, u heeft op een misselyk wyze gesprooken.’
‘Ah, Man, u zyn een groot Geck! Weet u niet dat wanneer men zeg dat een onderwerpen is niemendal, dat men cleyn meenen? Waar heb u allen uw daagen geleeven dat u zoo onkundig zyn? Dat u dom van natuur zyn, men can op uw aangezigt leezen!’.
14: c. 21 February

Is it not splendid to write a page about nothing? That is quite common in French, but I believe that I am the first to attempt it in Holland. And what shall I write then? Of what better than of what is in front of my eyes?

‘What is that, Sir?’

‘What is that! Don't you see it as well as I? Your eyes are certainly as young as mine. Don't you see a stove?’

‘Yes, certainly, I see it, but what does that signify? Is that what you wish to write about?’

‘So it is, Brother. Don't you believe me, or must I affirm it with an oath?’

‘No, no, don't swear, I beg you, but nevertheless I very much wonder how you, Sir, could call a stove nothing at all. Surely you have spoken in an incorrect way.’

‘Ah, Man, you are a great fool! Don't you know that when one says that a subject is nothing, that one means small? Where have you lived all your life that you should be so ignorant? One can see by your face that you are naturally stupid.’

Eindnoten:

15: c. 24 February

Zeekerlyk Ik veel doen hollanske te leeren. Hoe veel engelsche Gecken hebben heer' geweest en die hebben noit gedogten van het een word te kennen.

Is hy niet een Geck die can in een land blyven zondert te minst kennis van zyn taal? Is hy niet als een Beest waneer hy met die hollanske menschen is en can hy lang blyven in het Vaderland zondert te zyn dickwyls met haar Zoonen?

Neen, neen, dat can niet worden. Moet hy niet in die Schuyten ryzen? Moet hy niet in hollanschen huyzen en Winkelen worden? En zekerlyk hy moet in die straaten wandelen. Noe, Mynheer, Ik zal 't voorstaan dat hy wie can niet een word van Het land's taal spreekken, can heel versmaadelyk worden of zyn ontweetenheyd ontdekt wierden; en men zoud dinken dat die bewustheyd daarvan zoud hem zyn broek bevuylen maaken.

Maar zoo hebben veel van myn landsluyden t Uytreght zyn zelven ten toon gestellen.

James Boswell, 'Een Beytie Hollanske'
Certainly I am doing well to learn Dutch. How many English fools have been here and they have never thought of knowing a word.

Isn't he a fool who can stay in a country without the least knowledge of its language? Is he not like a beast whenever he is with Dutch people, and can he stay long in the fatherland without being with her sons frequently?

No, no, that cannot be. Must he not travel in the Schuiten? Must he not find himself in Dutch houses and shops? And surely he must walk in the streets? Now, Sir, I shall maintain that he who cannot speak a word of the country's language will not count for much, if his ignorance is discovered, and one would think that the consciousness of it would make him dirty his breeches.

But thus have many of my countrymen exhibited themselves in Utrecht.
16: c. 27 February

Ik gaen all morgen by een Scheermeester. Hy is fier en negintig Jaaren oud. Zyn Vaader heeft Willem die dird, Prins van Oranjie, te schermen geleerd. Hy was een Italsche man. Zyn naam was en die naam van zyn zoon is. Hy heeft met Prins Willem t Engeland en Irland gepasseerd, en zyn zoon ook. Zoo die man can niet minst als negintig Jaaren hebben - die zoon, Ik meen, myn meester, Wae heeft myn verzeekerd dat hy is fier en negintig. Hy heeft in Het vermaard veldslag van de Boyne geweest. Hy heeft ook in Schotland geweest en hy heeft in frankryk, Spanye en Italie geryzen. Het is inderdaad wonderlyk te zien de oud carle. Hy is gezont en leevendig als een Man van dertig Jaaren, en hy can schermen met alle de gaawheid in het weereld. Ik can u verzeeker dat zyn hand is sterker als myne. Wy hebben probeeren en hy heft gewoonen.
16: c. 27 February

Every morning I go to a fencing master. He is ninety-four years old. His father taught William III, Prince of Orange, to fence. He was an Italian. His name was and the name of his son is. With Prince William he crossed to England and Ireland, and his son too. So the man cannot be less than ninety - the son, I mean, my master, who has assured me he is ninety-four. He was at the famous battle of the Boyne. He has also been in Scotland, and he has travelled in France, Spain and Italy. Indeed it is amazing to see the old fellow. He is as fit and as lively as a man of thirty, and he can fence with all the skill in the world. I can assure you that his hand is stronger than mine. We tried it and he won.

Eindnoten:

24. Both names are left blank in the MS: in Boswell in Holland it is suggested that the son's name was Frans Dirxen (155 n.1), although the Yale typescript has inserted the name, Frans Sircksen. It is possible that the original family name was Cirx or Cirkz.
17: c. 28 February

Dit is die slechtste Winter dat men heeft in Holland zeedert verscheiden Jaaren gezien. Wy hebben hadden naawlyks eenige voorst; die is zeekerlyk het best winter weer in dit land. Waneer het vriest hard, zoo als dat die graachten zyn verslooten met good ys, dan zyn die Hollanders vroolik; dan alle die menschen uyt gaan op schaats te ryen. Mar deze Winter wy hebben niemendaal gehad den mar regen en wind, en dicken misten - weer nderdaad zoo ongezont dat en vreem'd can het niet uytstaan.

Als voor myn zelv, Ik heb zeer verkoven gewest voor tien daagen. Ik had een groot peine in myn hoofd. Mar ik bin zoo ordentlyk dat ik heb niet een daag afweezen van myn Collegie geweest.

Mynheer Trotz was ook verkoven. Echter deed hy zyn onderrechtingen geeven. En ik doet dat Het zoud scandylyk weezen of die Student zoud zyn zelve meer toegeeven als die Hooleeraar, die is veel ouder. En zeekerlyk dat is geweldig trow.
17: c. 28 February

This is the worst winter that has been seen in Holland for several years. We have had scarcely any frost, which is certainly the best winter weather in this country. Whenever it freezes hard, so that the canals are covered with good ice, then the Dutch are happy; then everybody goes out to skate. But this winter we have had nothing at all but rain and wind and thick mist - weather indeed so unhealthy that a foreigner cannot bear it.

As for myself, I have had a bad cold for ten days. I had a severe headache. But I am so well-disciplined that I have not missed one lecture.

Mr Trotz also had a cold. Yet he gave his classes; and I thought it would be scandalous if the student succumbed more easily than the professor, who is much older. And surely that is splendidly faithful.
Mynheer Trotz is zeekerlyk een heel Buytengewoon Man. Hy is een Pruysman, mar hy heeft veel Jaaren in die Seeven Provincien geweest, eerst tot Vranyken in Vriezland, en vervolgens t Utrecht, hebbende Hoogleeraar in Regt in beyden Plaatsen geweest. Hy is een Regtsgeleerde excellent, hebbende een diepzinnige kennisse van die Romschen en Hollanske regten, en hebbende ook veel kennisse van het historie en het Philosophie. Hy is zeer leevendig en hy veel vertellingen onderhouden in zyzen lessen vermengen.

Hy heeft een groot lust het engelsche taal te leeren. Hy heeft het begonnen eenigen Jaaren verleeden, mar hy heeft het verzuymen. Hoe ook, hy heeft het nog begonnen. Mynheer Rose is zyn meester en gaan by hem twee maalen in het week, en waraagtig het is wonderlyk te zien met hoe veel attentie en moeds die oude Hoogleeraar can leeezen.

James Boswell, 'Een Beytie Hollanske'
18: c. 2 March

Mr Trotz is certainly a quite extraordinary man. He is a Prussian, but he has been in the Seven Provinces for many years, first at Franeker in Friesland and afterwards in Utrecht, having been a law professor in both places. He is an excellent jurist, having a profound knowledge of Roman and Dutch law and also great knowledge of history and philosophy. He is very lively, and blends many entertaining stories in his lessons.  

He has a great desire to learn English. He began some years ago, but then neglected it. However, he has begun again. His master is Mr Rose, to whom he goes twice a week, and really it is amazing to see with how much attention and spirit the old professor can read.

Eindnoten:


26. According to Pottle, Rose was ‘the most intimate of Boswell's male associates in Utrecht’, but our knowledge of him ‘remains disappointingly vague’ (for what is known of him, see Boswell in Holland, 38).

27. See Boswell in Holland, 167, Trotz to Boswell: ‘MY HONOURED FRIEND, - I am very sick of the kold and my Doctore have counselleth to keep for my these day en morning, because my health; but there is no great danger. Nevertheless i must pardon me this time, we shall bi diligent into the following week. I wish jou heartily a good dinner, being your most faithfull Friend, C.H. TROTZ’ (see also 168-69).
19 & 20: c. 5 & 6 March

Mynheer Rose moet ook een onderwerpen worden. Hy is een Scot[s]che Heer en waraagtig een Hooglander, wae by Inverness geboore geweest en heeft van zyn kindsheyd het regt fairintosh gedronken. Zyn vaader was een Jonger Zoon van het familie van Kilravock, een heel oude familie, waarin daar hebben negenteen Hughes geweesten. Die Groot-Vaader wan onze Helde was lid van het huys van Gemeentens. Ik bin niet seeker of hy heeft gespraakt, dog hy was heel taalvaardig. Na t'eynde van zyn leeven hy heeft t' huys geblyven.

Hy was een groot ongeloovige, mar hy was ongestadig en bevreesd, en woude alle tyds Religie invoeren, welke was een teeken dat hy was daaromtrent zeer ongerustig. Het was heel onbeschaafde en zottelyk te schelden alle daag tegen die Domines. Zyn zoon Lewis, wy had niet maer Religie als een Paerd, zeyd: ‘Als u belieft, Vaader, Bemoei u niet van deze dingen, voor die Domines zallen alletyds zyzen wegen gaan’. En waacachtig Lewis spreekt als een verstandig Carle.

James Boswell, 'Een Beytie Hollanske'
Mr Rose must also become a subject. He is a Scottish gentleman and truly a Highlander, who was born near Inverness and from his childhood has drunk genuine Ferintosh whisky. His father was a younger son of the family of Kilravock, a very old family, in which there were nineteen Hughes. The grandfather of our hero was a member of the House of Commons. I am not sure whether he spoke; but he was very eloquent. Towards the end of his life he remained at home.

He was a great infidel, but he was very unstable and afraid, and always wanted to drag in religion, which was a sign that he was very uneasy about it. He was very rude and unwise to abuse the clergy every day. His son, Lewis, who had no more religion than a horse, said, ‘Please, father, do not trouble yourself about these things, for the clergy will always go their own way.’ And indeed Lewis spoke like a sensible fellow.
Die cousin van onze Mynheer Rose - dat is te zegen, die tegenwoordig heer van Kilravock - is een excellent man. Hy heeft een vriendelyk haart en hy is die Best Hospes in die Waeereld. Maar hy is een beytie onbedagt en te veel gelt uytgeeft zoo dat hy is onder het wanvoeglyk noodzaakelykheid een groot deel van zyn middelen te verkoopen. Hy is inderdaad een aardig Snaak, en hy heeft een overvalling verscheydenheyd van klugtigen vertellingen. Men zeg dat hy sall somtyds waagen te vercieren zyn vertellingen. Zyn zoon is een heel goed Jong Carle. Hy is een Raadsheer t Edinburgh, dog Ik gelooov dat hy heeft niet veel beezigheyd. Hoe ook, hy spult weel om te Viol en hy can zyn glass drinken en laughen heel vroolic’. 

James Boswell, 'Een Beytie Hollansche'
Our Mr Rose's cousin - that it to say, the present Laird of Kilravock - is an excellent man. He has a friendly heart and he is the best host of the world. But he is a little rash and spends too much money, so that he is under the irksome necessity of selling a great deal of his property. Indeed he is a fine wag, and he has an overwhelming variety of funny stories. It is said that he sometimes fabricates his stories. His son is a very good young fellow. He is an advocate in Edinburgh; but I do not believe that he has much business. However, he plays the violin well, and can drink and laugh merrily.

Eindnoten:

28. This is where Dutch Composition no. 20 begins.
30. The Yale typescript notes that 'Neither Burke's Landed Gentry, 1952, nor A Genealogical Deduction of the Family of Rose of Kilravock, 1848, gives Hugh Rose, 15th Laird of Kilravock, a son Lewis, but the Genealogical Deduction, p. 405, does give Hugh, 16th Laird, a son Ludovic'.
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James Boswell, ‘*Een Beytie Hollanske’*


M. van der Wal (with C. van Bree), *Geschiedenis van het Nederlands*, Utrecht, 1992.

James Boswell, *‘Een Beytie Hollansche’*
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