

FIRST CITIZEN

And to that end, God's Mercy we implore.

SECOND CITIZEN

He who prays, the Lord says, will be supplied.  
(Unto him shall all be given, without a doubt.)

FIRST CITIZEN

(To the one who knocks, the doors are opened wide.)

SECOND CITIZEN

(He who prays, the Lord says, will be supplied.)

FIRST CITIZEN

He'll be heard and delivered, not denied.  
He who calls upon the Lord, finds him about.

SECOND CITIZEN

He who prays, the Lord says, will be supplied.  
Unto him shall all be given, without a doubt.

FIRST CITIZEN

Our eternity is God's, as I make out.  
Grant that to us, abundant Lord, who would  
As it says, 'Try it all, keep what is good.'

*Finis*

Note: Passages in round brackets were omitted in the Cambridge production; stage directions in square brackets are not found in the original text.

## ***the beginnings of dutch studies***

### ***in the university of london***

My recollections go back to 1931, when I was appointed Lecturer in Dutch at University College and Bedford College.<sup>1</sup> But I must briefly mention the origins of Dutch Studies in London before I was there.

Non-academic study of Dutch, literature at any rate, in England began nearly a century earlier. In 1824 in fact, when Sir John Bowring published his *Batavian Anthology*. It is a remarkable book. The choice of poems, English only, shows considerable knowledge of the seventeenth-century poetry of Holland and the translations, naturally in the style of the time, are good and sound in metre and rhyme. Then, in 1879, Sir Edmund Gosse gave his *Studies in the Literature of Northern Europe*, some of which deal with Dutch poets. Moreover, he read Dutch poets of the 1880's, the moderns of his day. And he corresponded about them with Frederik van Eeden. That correspondence is still in manuscript but Paul Vincent discussed it in detail in a scholarly study in 1971, and we hope he will presently do more.

Bowring and Gosse were amateurs who did valuable but not strictly scholarly work. The first scholarly survey in English was contained in *The First Half of the 17th Century* (1906) by Sir Herbert Grierson. It appeared as part of the 'Periods of European Literature' series edited by George Saintsbury. The first two chapters survey Dutch literature of the late sixteenth and seventeenth century up to 1667, the year when Vondel's last tragedy *Noah* appeared. This book, as well as Grierson's fine verse translations, together with his later versions of poems by Boutens and Leopold, must have prepared the ground for the academic study of Dutch literature. This began in 1919 when, under the auspices of the Netherlands Embassy, then occupied by Jonkheer de Marees van Swinderen, the first chair of Dutch was founded at University College London. The first Professor of Dutch was the distinguished historian Pieter Geyl, who taught in London from 1919 till 1935, when he was appointed to the Chair of History in the University of Utrecht. I regret I cannot discuss the development of the London Chair of Dutch

History in detail after 1935 because, for reasons outside our scope tonight, there was only slight contact between the teachers of Dutch History and Dutch Language and Literature. Suffice it to say that Geyl and his successors Renier, Kossmann and Swart had a number of gifted students, of whom Bindoff, the translator of Geyl's *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Stam*, was appointed to the Chair of History at Queen Mary College, which he held with distinction. I had the privilege of teaching him more Dutch than he already knew for one year. Geyl developed the work with great enthusiasm and in many directions. Entirely unaided for four years, he lectured not only on Dutch history but on Dutch literature as well. But this gigantic task proved beyond even Geyl, gifted as he was. In 1923 a Reader in Dutch Language and Literature was appointed, Pieter Harting, the later Professor of English at Groningen and subsequently at Amsterdam. He too was a gifted scholar and teacher. But soon a clash seems to have developed between these two strong personalities. The conflict led to the division of Dutch Studies into two departments in 1924. Dutch History, henceforth part of the wider Department of History at University College, continued as the original Chair of Dutch, and Dutch Language and Literature became a new readership at Bedford College, but with the continuation of evening classes in the language only at University College. This was the state of affairs which I found on my appointment in 1931.

As I now, after more than 50 years, look back on those beginnings, I can see that the split was in several respects regrettable, and I am glad that the two disciplines, now both established at University College, are drawing nearer once more to each other. But at that early date the study of Dutch language and literature needed the independence and the support which it enjoyed at Bedford College. We have cause to be grateful to this College, where Dutch was championed and strongly supported by the then Principal Miss G.E.M. Jebb and by the great scholar of German J.G. Robertson.

I have personally an added reason to be attached to this College, since it was here that I found my wife, who is with us here today, and I recall the musical practice we had in the Music Room in this College. I also gratefully remember the very great scholar and poet Lascelles Abercrombie, who so graciously introduced me at my first public lecture in 1931. He showed an interest in my thesis on Coornhert's *Odyssee* and in my early study of Boutens and he equally graciously permitted me to attend his series of lectures 'Principles of Criticism', masterly lectures which I have recalled gratefully ever since. He was indeed a great scholar and a great poet and one of the few scholars who, speaking as a poet, wrote valuable books on

poetry. I mention his *Theory of Poetry* and his book *The Idea of Great Poetry*.

The work which I found to do and which demanded all my energy and inventiveness for most of the duration of my teaching was essentially pioneering work. Everything had to be built up from ground level. When I had been appointed I saw Harting, as you know the first Reader in Dutch Language and Literature, who was by then my Professor of English in Groningen. He showed me the Departmental prospectus. It listed a complete course in the language and the literature of all periods. I was impressed and a little frightened. "I shall have to teach a lot," I said. The cool answer was: "All window-dressing, my dear sir," and so it was. Everything had to be improvised. And then there was the problem of finding students. This proved a tough proposition. I can safely say that, also through the complete stagnation of the work during most of the Second World War, it took some twenty years to begin to solve that problem, until it was finally, and radically done away with by the creation of the two-subject degree. But that was in 1967, four years before I retired.

Ways had to be found of reaching and interesting students in related subjects, especially students of German. There were the students of Dutch history, of course, but teaching them was a wholly selfless occupation, because they had no interest in the literature. There was an Honours course in Dutch, it is true. But for many years we had on an average just one Honours student per session. However, those who chose Honours Dutch were adventurous spirits, and they often were gifted and inclined to pursue their studies further. I can think of several instances. Theses were written by Peter K. King (*Grotius' 'Adamus Exul' and Vondel's 'Adam in ballingschap'*), Tanis M. Guest (*Some Aspects of Hadewych's Poetic Form in the 'Strophische Gedichten'*) Brenda M. Wolvekamp, née Baxter (*The Life and Work of Alex Gutteling*), and those since written by William Woods and John Gledhill were in course of preparation when I retired. Apart from them, we had a modest number of those whose Dutch was one of the three subjects for the BA General degree or subsidiary to German, or (rarely) to French Honours. They, too, were enterprising in choosing such a little-known language and often very good at pronouncing its weird sounds. By the way, in my first term I started with immense effort by giving my lectures and classes in English. I remember being dead tired every evening at the end of the day. I had two students in all, one Honours Dutch, the other subsidiary to German. They had been taught the year before by our friend Robson-Scott, who was the Temporary Lecturer for Dutch for one year (1930-31). This subsidiary student was a plucky girl. One day she surprised me

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by saying: "We would like you to lecture in Dutch, sir. We should learn to speak it then". I did, and I have done so ever since. Now, you may well think this unwise, but bear in mind that I had no staff whatever until 1948, so even counting out the war years that was some twelve years. My Dutch was the only Dutch the students heard. After 1948, the custom was so well-established that I just went on. The students were thrown into the water and they jolly well had to swim, and they mostly did. I must say, occasionally there were complaints. Students would come to me and say "I am sorry, sir, I can't follow you." So I said, "Well, speak to the student assistant, and she will help you." But I didn't give way, right or wrong.

But now about these means of interesting students of other subjects. By 1931 a tradition had already been established that the Reader in Dutch was to give an annual public lecture, in English of course. I took the preparation of those lectures seriously and this led to research and publication. Thus I came to study the influence of the Dutch poets of the seventeenth century, Heinsius, Hooft and especially Vondel, on the poets of the German Baroque, notably Opitz and Gryphius. And then in 1938 I gave a memorial lecture on Albert Verwey, my distinguished professor in Leiden, who had died in the previous year. That was the beginning of what I now consider to have been my life's work.

Audiences at those lectures were usually quite satisfactory. But it was rather a case like St. Antony's preaching to the fishes in Goethe's poem: 'Die Predigt hat g'fallen: Sie bleiben wie allen.' They went home contented and bothered no more about Dutch. So this was a flop. I then launched another pioneering campaign: intercollegiate lectures on the importance of the Dutch language as a link between English and High German (the Inguaeonic aspect) on the one hand and, in the literary field, similar lectures, say three or four in a session, on the importance of Dutch literature as a transmitter of Romance influences, both Provençal and Old French, to the Medieval poets of Germany, the key figure being of course Hendrik van Veldeke. And then, in the later period, the Dutch influences on the poets of the German Baroque, on which I had already done some work. These were given within the framework of Inter-collegiate lectures under the auspices of the Board of Germanic Languages. It was that Board, especially through the energetic support of Edna Purdie and of my friend Reginald McClean of Birkbeck College, which became the springboard for Dutch Studies. McClean invited us, me and my staff by then, to give lectures at Birkbeck College and for a number of years our best students came from there. We gave a number of classes at Birkbeck. No sinecure, as some of the staff still remember.

For by then we had gradually increased the staff to three lecturers and a student-assistant.

I have now come to the last five years of my teaching, those in which, thanks to the institution of the two-subject degree in 1967, I had the pleasure of teaching many of you who are now here.<sup>2</sup> What your interest and no less your essays for our seminar gave me, is incalculably great. Many of my studies of aspects of Verwey's poetry, of Nijhoff, of Adriaan Roland Holst, were the outcome of the give and take that arises spontaneously between a teacher and his students. They owe much of their inspiration to that *wisselwerking*. This survey must end with the year 1971, when I handed on the torch to another pioneer, because in my successor I greeted a pioneer who had similarly struggled with early difficulties in Australia: Rein Meijer, under whom the Department, not without fierce fighting on his part, I know, has attained a size and an established position that were denied to me. My own work has continued, still retaining the impetuous impulse that was engendered by our joint enthusiasm. I have completed my English book *Vision and Form*, the anthology with verse renderings from Verwey's poetry, and I can now tell you that thanks to the generous financial support of a friend and admirer of Verwey, who wishes to remain unknown, the book will appear with the Athlone Press early in 1986. *Ik heb gezegd*.

T. Weevers

Harpenden

1. This is the amended text of a talk given to the Annual Reunion of Bedford Old Dutch Students (BODS) on 2 February 1985. A fuller account will be found in my article 'Studie van het Nederlands aan Britse universiteiten', in W.Thys/J.M.Jalink (eds), *De nederlandistiek in het buitenland* (Hague, 1967), pp. 64-71.
2. The number of students had suddenly increased in that year; the numbers trebled, and the influx was maintained.