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ROLF H. BREMMER JR

**THE CORRESPONDENCE OF JOHANNES DE LAET
(1581-1649)**

AS A MIRROR OF HIS LIFE

Taking the correspondence of Johannes de Laet (1581-1649) as a mirror of his life produces a rather incomplete image.¹ The reasons for this imperfection are various. For example, no letters have been preserved of him to his relatives or members of his family, or vice versa, from his relatives to him. His correspondence therefore hardly provides us with any immediate insights into his role as a husband and father, and consequently of De Laet's family life. This situation is to be regretted, as we are rather poorly informed about this intimate side of De Laet, and we must remain dependent on the scattered remarks he makes about his family in letters to others. There is a further reason why his correspondence yields an imperfect picture of his life. It appears that the correspondence inasmuch as it has survived or can be reconstructed falls into certain periods, of which especially the first thirty years of his adult life are poorly covered. There is a batch of letters which dates from the period between 1603 and 1607, a handful of letters from the period 1611 to 1616, some scattered letters from the 1620s, and then, finally, from the early 1630s we witness a dramatic increase. All in all, I have been able to recover some twenty of his correspondents, their letters together amounting to about 350.² Unfortunately, relatively few mutual letters between De Laet and his correspondents have been preserved, so that we must frequently make do with a one-sided correspondence which sometimes leaves much to be guessed at. We may conclude therefore that De Laet was somewhat negligent when it came to filing the letters he received and the minutes of letters he dispatched, or, and this is more probable, that his children (and heirs) have badly settled his epistolary inheritance.

Considered as such, neither the number of De Laet's correspondents nor the size of his epistolary exchanges is impressive compared with that of many other scholars of his time. Nonetheless, we have to be satisfied with what we do have. Some of his correspondence already appeared in print in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, while only the letters from the London antiquarian John Morris to De Laet

1) I would like to thank Christine Kooi (Baton Rouge), Kees Dekker, Sophie van Romburgh, Henk Jan de Jonge, and Kees Zandwijk for their help in various ways.

2) They are listed in the Appendix.

have received a modern, annotated edition.³ In this respect, things are not made easy for the investigator. On the other hand, there is the challenge to be creative.

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It is 11 December 1649, a nippy day, when the Leiden based French scholar Claude Saumaise alias Claudius Salmasius is passing the Elzevier printing shop in the court-yard of the Academy building on the Rapenburg. Louis is standing on the doorstep and raises his hand to his hat to greet him, without Saumaise taking notice of it. Whereupon the publisher addresses him: 'What's the matter with you that you don't return the greetings of one of your best friends?' 'Ah', Saumaise replies, 'how can I raise my hat to anyone today? Don't you know that by losing De Laet, I have lost my right hand?'⁴ Whatever its reliability, this anecdote aptly illustrates the nature of the relation between De Laet and Saumaise.⁵ The latter had succeeded Joseph Scaliger, after a long vacancy, as the professor of history and *decus academiae* at Leiden in 1632, enjoying the same privileges as Scaliger had had. The two seem to have entered a friendly relationship fairly soon after Saumaise's arrival in Leiden. Even in the Spring of 1634, the French scholar Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc wrote to Saumaise in answer to a query on behalf of De Laet on gems and stones 'pour l'amour de vostre M^r Laet, de qui j'honore infiniment la vertu de longue main, et que je serois trez ayse de servir'.⁶

De Laet often rendered Saumaise what we would now call editorial assistance. He figured as a mediator between Saumaise and his publishers and like no other was able to decipher his miserable handwriting. He also assisted Saumaise in correcting galley-proofs. Notably, the task of seeing Saumaise's *De primatu papae* through the press was left in the able hands of De Laet when Saumaise had to leave Leiden in 1640 for France in order to settle a litigation in connection with his paternal inheritance. Very confident of the matter, Saumaise wrote to André Rivet, chaplain

7) Pierre Leroy and Hans Bots, with Els Peters, eds., *Claude Saumaise & André Rivet, Correspondance échangé entre 1632 et 1648* (Amsterdam & Maarssen, 1987), no. 85 (20 May 1640).

8) Leroy and Bots, *Correspondance Saumaise/Rivet*, no. 139 and note 6.

9) Hans Bots and Pierre Leroy, eds., *Correspondance integrale d'André Rivet et de Claude Sarrau*, 3 vols (Amsterdam, 1982) II, no. 168 (14 August 1643).

10) The correspondence between Saumaise and De Laet has not been published, but is deserving of an integral edition, according to the judgement of Leroy, *Le dernier voyage*, 220. Only De Laet's end of the correspondence has been preserved, mainly in Bibliothèque Nationale, Manuscripts latins, no. 8598, amounting to 64 letters of which 52 pertain to the period of Saumaise's stay in France. See further Appendix.

11) Leroy and Bots, *Correspondance Rivet/Sarrau*, II, no. 202, p. 155 (18 December 1643): 'Monsieur de Laët son bon ami ne met jamais pour suscription a celles qu'il luy escrit que: "A Monsieur. Monsieur de Saumaise"', et il ne le trouve pas mauvais. Lui mesme dans tous ses escrits se contente de son nom de Baptesme et decelui de sa famille.' Cf. Peter T. van Rooden, *Theology, Biblical Scholarship and the Rabbinical Studies in the Seventeenth Century* (Leiden, New York and Cologne, 1989), 206-07.

12) Claudius Salmasius, *De Hellenistica commentarius, controversiam de lingua Hellenistica decedens et plenissime pertractans origines et dialectos Graecae* (Leiden, 1643). The letter dedicatory is paginated independently from the main text, 3-54. This book may have been of particular interest to De Laet because of Saumaise's discussion of the origin of Greek and its related European languages. Occasionally, Saumaise included Old English in his discussions, the knowledge of which he will have obtained from De Laet; cf. Kees Dekker, *The Origins of Old Germanic Studies in the Low Countries*. Brill's Studies in the History of Ideas 92 (Leiden, New York and Cologne, 1999), 228-30. For De Laet's study of Old English, see below.

3) J. A. F. Bekkers, *Correspondence of John Morris with Johannes de Laet (1634-1649)* (Assen, 1970). This study also provides by far the best biographical information on De Laet, which has often to be culled from the footnotes, however. For older, often incomplete and partly erroneous accounts, see J.P. de Bie, ed., *Biografisch Woordenboek van Protestantsche Godgeleerden* (The Hague, 1943) 5, 475-79; *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek* 8 (1930), 991-92; A. J. van der Aa, *Biographisch Woordenboek der Nederlanden* (Haarlem, n.y.) 11, 26-28; *Biographie Nationale ... de Belgique* (Brussels, 1876) 15, 273-77; *Biographie universelle, Ancien et Moderne* (Paris, 1819) 23, 106-08.

4) J. P. Nicéron, 'Jean de Laet', *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des hommes illustres dans la république des lettres avec un catalogue raisonné de leurs ouvrages* (Paris, 1737), XXXVIII, 339-46, at 340.

5) On the intimate friendship between Saumaise and De Laet, see succinctly Pierre E. R. Leroy, *Le dernier voyage à Paris et en Bourgogne (1640-1643) du réformé Claude Saumaise. Libre érudition et contrainte politique sous Richelieu* (Amsterdam & Maarsen, 1983), 219-20.

6) Agnes Bresson, ed., *Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc. Lettres à Claude Saumaise et à son entourage (1620-1637)* (Florence, 1992), nr. 6, at 74-75, Peiresc to Saumaise (4 April 1634). Peiresc also seems to have directly corresponded with De Laet, cf. nr. 10, post-script (p. 133), Peiresc to Saumaise (22 September 1634). De Laet's interest in stones was long-lasting, as also appears from his correspondence with John Morris and Ole Worm (see below), and finally resulted in his *De gemmis et lapidibus, libri duo* (Leiden: Jan le Maire, 1647).

Laet.¹³ De Laet's service for the scholarly work of Saumaise is not just an expression of the friendship between the two, but also a sign of confidence on Saumaise's part in De Laet's intellectual and managing skills. De Laet was not a scholar *pur sang*, as we will see, but well-versed in classical philology, with a keen interest in contemporary political events, eager to exchange information on a wide variety of scholarly topics, a mediator in book-collecting, amiable, and, when necessary, a man who stood up for his religious principles no less than for his economical interests.

In what follows I will sketch with broad strokes the career of this Leiden scholar with the help of his correspondence as well as occasionally of that between others in which he is mentioned. Archives of churches and towns have provided external data to help fill in some lacunas in De Laet's biography.

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Johannes de Laet was born in Antwerp in 1581¹⁴, and, as is most likely, was taken by his parents to the North after mutinous soldiers of the Spanish army had wrought havoc in Antwerp in 1585. Calvinist Flemings fled by thousands to the young Dutch Republic which had declared itself independent from Spain in 1581, and settled mainly in the towns of Holland, notably in Leiden, Haarlem, and Amsterdam. In September 1597, at the age of fifteen, De Laet matriculated at Leiden as a student of philosophy¹⁵, which really meant that he was to receive a solid grounding in the Classics. As was the custom at the time, young students from outside Leiden often found a boarding-house with one of the professors, and De Laet moved in with no one less than the *rector* of the University, Franciscus Gomarus,¹⁶ probably through the Flemish connection, as Gomarus was also a refugee from Flanders. The Leiden Academy was experiencing its first heyday with such eminent professors as the Grecian Bonaventura Vulcanius, the historian Josephus Justus Scaliger, and the theologian Franciscus Junius the Elder. Especially Scaliger was an international star, who had been contracted in 1592 to supply particular splendour to Leiden. Exempted from giving lectures, Scaliger was able to devote himself entirely to research and writing books, yet he did not want to do completely without the personal transfer of knowledge. Hence, he was willing to give tutorials to students in whom he had confidence. Students who were so fortunate to belong to this 'coterie of brilliant young men' included such future celebrities as Prince Frederick Henry, Hugo Grotius, Daniel Heinsius¹⁷, and, as we will see, the promising Jan de Laet.

13) *De Hellenistica*, dedicatory letter, 3: '... eruditio tua singularis, iudicium limatum, morum sinceritas praecipua, aequitas summa in dijudicando. His accedit amicitia quae inter nos intercedit non nupera, sed ab eo tempora nata & inita ex quo Bataviam vestram felici aspicio attigi.'

14) Not in 1582, a date often found in encyclopedias and biographical handbooks, as pointed out by Bekkers, *Correspondence*, xv, n. 1. For a brief outline of De Laet's life, see also Bekkers, *op. cit.*, xv-xvii.

15) *Album studiosorum Academiae Lugduno Batavae* (Leiden, 1875), 49. Cf. Bekkers, *Correspondence*, xv and n. 1.

16) This piece of information, *apud Mag. Rectorem D. Gomarum*, is taken from *Album studiosorum*, Leiden Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS Archief Senaat no. 7, p. 111. The printed edition of 1875 lists only the names of the students, not the addresses often added in the original album.

17) H. J. de Jonge, 'Josephus Scaliger in Leiden', *Jaarboekje voor geschiedenis en oudheidkunde van Leiden en omstreken* 71 (1979), 71-95, at 72 and note 7; Paul R. Sellin, *Daniel Heinsius and Stuart England* (Leiden and London, 1968), 14.

Two years after he had enrolled, De Laet already seized the opportunity to round off the first phase of his studies with the public defence of *Theses logicae de ordine et methodo*.¹⁸ This booklet of no more than four pages filled with theses, is dedicated to his father (and namesake), who was still alive at the time, as well as to the *rector* and *conrector* of the Amsterdam Latin School. De Laet cordially thanked his father for his inspiring example, and his teachers for the education he was privileged to have received from them.¹⁹ At the same time, the slim book provides us with a clue as to where De Laet's parents had settled after their arrival in Holland. This piece of information has been left unmentioned in the literature, not wholly surprisingly, since the *Album Studiosorum* of the Leiden Academy, which lists De Laet twice, gives Antwerp as his place of origin. Apparently, De Laet remained proud of his Flemish roots, for we also often find him mentioned as such on the title-pages of many of the books he has put to his name. However, the dedication in the *Theses* suggest that his parents first found a new home in Amsterdam. Had they lived in Leiden, he would have attended the Latin School there. A good two years after his *Theses logicae*, on 30 January 1602, he publicly defended a thesis on prayer, *De oratione*, under the presidency of Franciscus Junius the Elder.²⁰ With this feat he had completed his studies at Leiden, and, like so many graduates, set out on a tour abroad.

In the summer of 1603, as we learn from his correspondence with Scaliger²¹, he sojourned in London. What he was doing there exactly is not clear, but in view of his later career as a merchant, it seems likely that he wanted to gain experience in the world of international trade. In any case, he had not yet turned his back on matters intellectual. He stayed in touch with Scaliger, or maybe rather the other way around²², and Scaliger was the one who was interested in maintaining the link with his former student because he found it useful to have a friend in London who could purchase all kinds of books for him, or borrow them as the case may be. Scaliger appeared to be particularly interested in getting hold of a copy of the Bible, or in any

18) (Leiden, 1599). The defence was presided over by Professor Anthonius Trutius.

19) The *Theses* are preceded by the following dedication: 'Pietate virtute eximijis viris./ D. Ioanni de Laet, Patri meo, mihi summa/ observantia colendo./ Et/ D. Petro Vekemanno Scholae Amster-/ damensis Rectori vigilantis- simo ac indefesso./ D. Huberto Salingio ejusdem Scholae/ Conrectori doctissimo./ Praeceptoribus de me studijsque meis optime semper meritis/ Has/ De Methodo Positiones/ Logicas, in/ Gratae memoriae Symbolum/ L. M. Q. D. respondens/ Ioannes de Laet Antwerp.'

20) Disputation no. 16 in *Disputationes theologicae XXIV, sub praesidio Franc. Junii, Luc. Trelicatii et Fra. Gomari in Academia Lugd. Batava defensae* (Leiden: Joannes Patius, 1601-1602) [Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, shelf-number 450 B 12]. Bekkers, *Correspondence*, Appendix V 2 B, misquotes the title and obviously did not see a copy of it. De Laet's dedication is another indication of his early Amsterdam links: 'Pietate & Eruditione Spectatissimo Viro. D. Joanni Halsbergio, Verbum divini apud Amsterdamsens ministro fidelissimo, Amico optime de me merito & merenti, in gratitudine & observantiae symbolum hanc de Oratione disputationem, consecro. Joannes de Laet Antwerpius.'

21) Scaliger to De Laet, London, British Library, MS Add. 4160, fol. 237, 2 July 1603. Unpublished; cf. Bekkers, *Correspondence*, xvi, n. 4.

22) Eleven letters written by Scaliger to De Laet, 1604-1607, have been printed in *Illustriss. viri Josephi Scaligeri, ... Epistolae omnes quae reperiri potuerunt ...*, ed. Daniel Heinsius (Leiden, 1627), nos 437-46, 449. The last letter of these is printed without an addressee ('N.N.'), but is identified, according to a marginal annotation by Dionysius Vossius in one of the copies held at Leiden University Library (call-number 765 F 22), as De Laet.

case of the New Testament, in Irish. As is known, the polyglot Scaliger was also familiar with the Celtic languages.²³ It was not an easy task for De Laet to obtain the desired book. Time and again, Scaliger returned to the subject.²⁴

Not long after his arrival in England, De Laet moved on to France. He took up his abode in Paris, and spent his days there with the buying of books, amongst other things. The precise year of his stay in France has been a matter of some uncertainty until now, whether this should be 1604 or 1605.²⁵ The first time we learn of his provisional plans is in a letter from Scaliger to De Laet of 28 February 1604. Scaliger had apparently given some books to De Laet which the latter should have forwarded to Isaac Casaubon, but had failed to do so – much to Scaliger's chagrin. 'So either send them, or, if you prepare a visit to France, deliver them to him in person.'²⁶ This suggestion must have been music to De Laet's ears: a visit to the great scholar Isaac Casaubon! Scaliger also advised him to consult Casaubon on certain books De Laet should buy in Paris, for he was the right man, and would readily offer De Laet assistance. And indeed, his plans for the trip to France materialized. On 29 April 1604, Petrus Labbaeus (Pierre Labbé) mentioned De Laet's presence and activities in Paris in a letter to Scaliger:²⁷ 'Mr. de Laet, who arrived here a month ago, has bought many books, which you will see within a few months' time, as I hope, because he has sent them directly to England.' His meeting with Casaubon must have deeply impressed De Laet. When almost 35 years later Johannes Gronovius was collecting material for an edition of the correspondence of Casaubon, he also sent a request for letters to De Laet. 'I am eagerly looking forward to the edition you are preparing', De Laet wrote back. 'I knew that incomparable man quite intimately when I was in Paris, but I never received any letters from him; otherwise I had willingly shared them with you.'²⁸

23) See M. Schneiders and K. Veclenturf, *Celtic Studies in the Netherlands. A Bibliography* (Dublin, 1992), ix-x and nos 398-400. Scaliger possessed an unbound Welsh version of the Bible, see H. J. de Jonge, ed., *The Auction Catalogue of the Library of J. J. Scaliger* (Utrecht, 1977), 50, first item. De Laet himself would also acquire a good working knowledge of Celtic which he brought to bear in his dispute with Grotius in 1643, cf. *ibid.*, x and no. 317; Th. M. Chotzen, *Primitieve keltistiek in de Nederlanden* (The Hague, 1931), 27-30, 49, 54-58; George J. Metcalf, 'A Linguistic Clash in the Seventeenth Century', *German Life and Letters* 23 (1969), 31-38.

24) See Scaliger, *Epistolae*, no. 437 (Scaliger to De Laet, 28 February 1604), no. 438 (Scaliger to De Laet, 8 June 1604), no. 439 (Scaliger to De Laet, 15 November 1605).

25) Cf. Bekkers, *Correspondence*, xvi: '1604 or 1605'.

26) Scaliger, *Epistolae*, no. 437. Scaliger responded to an unretrieved letter from De Laet he had received on 30 January: '... Quas tibi dederam ad Casaubonum, ipse nullas accepisse se conqueritur. Aut igitur illas ei mitte; aut, si in Galliam profectionem paras, ipse deferito.' ... 'De libris quos Lutetiae parare decrevistis, non possum melius dare consilium, quam quod tu a Casaubono ipso sperare potes, qui, qua humanitate est, in ea re operam suam libenter tibi pollicebitur.'

27) Labbaeus to Scaliger, P. Burmannus, *Sylloges epistolarum a viris illustribus scriptarum*, 5 vols (Leiden, 1727), II, no. 109: 'Dominus De Laet, qui ante mensem huc pervenit, multos libros comparavit, quos intra paucos menses, uti spero, videre poteris, eos siquidem recta in Angliam misit.'

28) Munich, Universitätsbibliothek, MS 617, fol. 105, 6 September 1637: 'Editionem quam molires Epistolarum Clariss. Casauboni, avidissime expecto: fuit mihi cum illo incomparabili viro Parisiis consuetudo, sed nullas unquam ab ipso litteras accepi, alioquin lubens impartirer.' The edition De Laet refers to is Joannes Fredericus Gronovius, *Isaacii Casauboni epistolae, quotquot reperiri poterunt* (The Hague: Dirk Maire, 1638). On Gronovius, see *NNBW* 1, 989-92.

However much he was enjoying this springtime in Paris, by June of that same year De Laet had returned to London, for Scaliger then informed Carolus Labbaeus in Paris that all the books which the latter had asked him for, were with De Laet in London. In addition, Scaliger had some hot news for Labbaeus: De Laet was going to be married in London, and had also had his father come over to England for the happy event. Scaliger expected De Laet to return to Leiden newly wedded, but – first things first! – hoped that the books would be there even earlier.²⁹ It would seem that De Laet's father – perhaps a widower by then, for Scaliger does not make mention of De Laet's mother coming to the wedding ceremony – had meanwhile moved from Amsterdam to Leiden, for more than once Scaliger wrote to De Laet that he had handed over to him the money for books De Laet had purchased for him.³⁰

It was not an average girl De Laet, who was twenty-two at the time, was going to marry. His eye had fallen on Jacob-myntgen (or Jacquemine) van Loor³¹, sweet seventeen and the eldest daughter of the merchant Pieter van Loor, a prominent member of the Dutch Reformed congregation in London – *een man van middelen ende van courage* –³², which he was also to serve as an elder.³³ The wedding ceremony took place in Austin Friars, the church of the Dutch Reformed congregation in London, on 3 July 1604.³⁴ The van Loor family had been living in London for over twenty years by then. Pieter van Loor, originally from Utrecht, had served in England as a soldier in a Dutch Regiment under the command of Sir Francis Drake in 1589³⁵, and had made a speedy career in London, not only materially as a merchant but also socially.³⁶ Through the marriages of his daughters – he had eight daughters and one son³⁷ – van Loor became affiliated with the aristocracy of London, and by joining this family, De Laet became brother-in-law to, amongst others, Sir Edward Powell, Sir Charles Caesar, Sir Thomas Glemham and Walter de Raedt, all of them serving in the middle and upper regions of the government.³⁸ This

29) Scaliger to Carolus Labbaeus, *Epistolae*, no. 331 (20 June 1604): 'Puto, omnes libros, quos ad me misisse scribis, apud Latium in Anglia esse. Is uxorem ibi ducit atque ea gratia pater ejus in Angliam trajecit. Eum novum sponsum hic expecto, neque ante illos libros me accepturum spero.' On Charles Labbé de Monvèron (1582-1657), a French philologist and jurist, and brother of the earlier mentioned Pierre, see e.g., *Biographie universelle, ancienne et moderne* (Paris, 1819) XXIII, 15-16.

30) For example, Scaliger to De Laet, *Epistolae*, no. 444 (21 July 1606): 'Ego Patri tuo, postquam significaveris quanti idcaus fuerit, statim precium refunderam.'

31) Baptized 5 February, 1587, see W. J. C. Moens, *The Marriage, Baptismal and Burial Registers 1571-1874 and Monumental Inscriptions of the Dutch Reformed Church at Austin Friars, London* (Lymington, 1884), 47.

32) 'A man of means and courage', J. H. Hessels, *Ecclesiae Londino-Batavae archivum*, 4 vols (Cambridge, 1897) II, i, item 1710 (13 August 1610). Further references to van Loor in items 1708-1713, 1721, 1722, 1750.

33) Moens, *Registers*, 209.

35) Hessels, *Ecclesiae Londino-Batavae archivum*, III, i, item 1142.

36) He was created a baronet in 1628, see John Burke and John Bernard Burke, *The Extinct and Dormant Baronetcies of England* (London, 1838), 343.

37) Moens, *Registers*, 46-47.

38) Edward Powell was one of the Masters of Request, and had married Maria van Loor (Bekkers, *Correspondence*, no. 8 and n.13, was ignorant of this); Walter/Gualter de Raedt, of The Hague, was knighted in 1660. On these two men, see Burke and Burke, *Extinct Baronetcies*, 424 and 158, respectively.

34) *Ibidem*, 119.

position must have given De Laet a good entrance in those circles, especially after he had acquired the denizenship of London on 16 August of that year. To all intents and purposes, De Laet was determined to settle down in London. On that account, it is somewhat curious that he once more matriculated at Leiden on 10 January 1605, this time as a student of theology.³⁹ How he would have been able to pursue his studies in Leiden is not quite clear, for he remained living in England, even though in the original *Album studiosorum* his parents are given as his address, implying that he lived in Leiden.⁴⁰

His marriage with Jacob-myntgen was to last only about two years. In the summer of 1606, she died. On hearing this sad piece of news, Scaliger wrote him a moving letter of comfort⁴¹:

If your wife's death has overwhelmed you, know that I am no less overwhelmed by your grief. But whatever comfort you have found in your wisdom, that I will also apply in imitation of you. And therefore we placidly bear everything that happens, because we know that nothing happens except at God's command. But I praise your decision to leave England. As for me, I'd like nothing better than seeing you here – which must actually be done to your convenience. Yes, without feigning anything, I'd rather you be here than there. For I do not want to leave you ignorant of the fact that since you have left, no happy day has dawned for me. I think and hope that all happiness will be restored to me with your return.

Even if we detract the formalities from Scaliger's kind and consoling words, they will still have encouraged De Laet to pack his trunks, and return to Leiden where he knew Scaliger to be waiting for his company and conversation. As if to indicate that life went on as usual, Scaliger concluded his letter with some matters of business and requests. De Laet, though, did not leave straight away, and apparently completed his year of mourning in London. In June of 1607, he was still in the metropolis, for Scaliger expressed his annoyance with De Laet's still not having seen William Camden to greet him on his behalf.⁴² He would especially like to be kept informed of the progress of the new edition of Camden's *Britannia*.⁴³ It is the

Charles Caesar was Master of the Rolls (*DNB* VIII, 202), Thomas Glemham's relation to De Laet must be through a second marriage, for I have also found him as husband of Anne Sackville, daughter of Thomas Sackville, Earl of Dorset (London, BL, MS Add. 12506-07). Cf. Bekkers, *Correspondence*, xvi and n. 12.

39) *Album studiosorum*, 77.

40) Leiden, UB, MS Archief Senaat no. 7, p. 205: 'apud parentes'.

41) Scaliger, *Epistolae*, no. 444 (13 July 1606): 'Si te uxoris funus consternavit, scito me non minus dolore tuo consternatum fuisse. Sed quam tibi consolationem a sapientia tua petiveris, ea ego ex imitatione tui utar. Quare aequo animo feramus quicquid accidit, cum sciamus nihil nisi jussu dei fieri. de relinquenda vero Anglia consilium tuum laudo. Mihi, quod quidem commodo tuo fiat, nihil carius est, quam te hic videre: imo, nequid dissimulem, malo, hic, quam istic te esse. Nolo enim ignorare te, postquam discussisti, nullum mihi jucundum diem illuxisse. Reitu tuo, puto, ac spero, omnes laetitias mihi restitutum iri.'

42) Scaliger, *Epistolae*, no. 446 (23 June 1607): 'Camdenum, optimum & doctissimum virum, nondum vidisse te, ut illum meo salutare nomine, dolorem, nisi quum haec scriberem, te id fecisse crederem.'

43) This was a completely revised and expanded version of the book which had appeared in 1586 for the first time, and was to become one of the monuments of scholarship in Elizabethan England. Scaliger possessed at least two books by Camden, which may have been sent to him from London by De Laet, see de

last letter from Scaliger to De Laet we have, because later that summer the young widower returned to Leiden, where they preferred oral over written communication.

From the letters exchanged between the great scholar and his former student, it appears that De Laet had a warm spot in Scaliger's heart. It is probably not a matter of coincidence, therefore, that Franciscus Gomarus, one of the Leiden professors of theology, dedicated his edition of Scaliger's lecture on chronology to De Laet, *amico singulari*, his 'special friend'. In his dedicatory letter of 10 January 1607 – so still during Scaliger's lifetime and De Laet's stay in London – Gomarus expounded which three traits of character are to be admired in Scaliger: *pietas, doctrina, candor*⁴⁴, virtues that De Laet would certainly emulate in his life. Gomarus, an established scholar both at Leiden and in the ecclesiastical Netherlands, could very well have chosen another, more important person than the young De Laet to whom to dedicate this book. He significantly selected De Laet who had not published anything substantial as yet and who had neither academic nor ecclesiastical nor secular status. What Gomarus must have recognized – besides De Laet's place in Scaliger's orbit – was a promising future for his former lodger in one of these three domains.

Two years after the publication of the *Elenchus*, 'the eagle in the sky', 'the prince of scholars' – to give but two of Scaliger's many contemporary epithets – died. Having remained a bachelor all his life, Scaliger had bequeathed a part of his library, his oriental manuscripts and books, as well as his Latin and Greek manuscripts, to the Leiden Academy in his last will, where they are being kept up to the present day. But before the rest of his library was sold at an auction, a number of intimate friends, amongst whom De Laet, were allowed to select a few books from the shelves as a personal remembrance of their friend and teacher.⁴⁶ De Laet did not miss that opportunity. When many years later – we then write the year 1631 – the Leiden professor of theology and Hebrew, Constantine L'Empereur, was preparing a new edition of a twelfth-century Hebrew text in which the Spanish rabbi Benjamin of Tudela gives a detailed account of his journey from Spain to Baghdad by way of Jerusalem, he gratefully used the annotations Scaliger had scribbled in the margin of an earlier edition, and which had been kindly put at his disposal by De Laet.⁴⁷

Jonge, *Auction Catalogue*, 17, item 8, and 19, last item. Scaliger's interest in Anglo-Saxon England also appears from his possession of two books by Matthew Parker, *De antiquitate Britannicae ecclesiae* (1605) and *Aelfredi regis res gestae* (1574), see *Auction Catalogue*, 17, item 11, and 18, item 7, respectively.

44) Josephus Scaliger, *Elenchus utriusque orationis Chronologicae*, ed. F. Gomarus (Leiden: Hendrik Lodewijks van Haestens/Lodewijk Elzevier, 1607), 3.

45) At this auction, De Laet bought at least some ten books, see Paul Holtijzer's contribution to this issue.

46) See the long letter of 28 March 1609 from Daniel Heinsius to Isaac Casaubon reporting on Scaliger's death in Scaliger, *Epistolae*, no. 453, at p. 835. However, Scaliger's testament does not mention De Laet, cf; H. J. de Jonge, 'The Latin Testament of Joseph Scaliger. 1607', *Lias* 2 (1975), 249-63; idem, 'How did Gomarus Acquire the Copy of Flavius Josephus in Greek from Scaliger's Library?', *Dutch Review of Church History* 77 (1977), 258-66, at 264-66. I assume that De Laet was included among the 'autres miens amis' whom Scaliger did not mention by name in the French version of his will, but who were specified in a 'codicille' appended to his will in 1608, and now lost.

47) See van Rooden, *Theology, Biblical Scholarship and the Rabbinical Studies*, 153-54. Almost ten years later, De Laet once more helped L'Empereur by introducing him to Johann Rittangel, the German

In 1609, the year of Scaliger's death, De Laet became involved in the ongoing controversy between the Jesuits and his admired Leiden teacher. A pamphlet, containing a *Nieu Mey-Liedeken* ('New May Song') written *per unum scholarem de Leyde* ('by a scholar from Leiden'), and edited by a certain Gelasius ('Joker'), has convincingly been attributed by Anna Simoni, both on internal and external evidence, to De Laet as the most important author. The publication of this poem, which bears the signs of a student-like joke all over it – the title-page with fake names and a spurious publisher as well as the scatological poem itself are written in a mixture of Latin, Greek and Dutch – seemed to Simoni the work of a 'a clique of bright young men with a good deal of leisure on their hands'. To the arguments that Simoni has adduced to establish De Laet's prominent share, one might add De Laet's close ties of friendship with Scaliger.⁴⁸

What purpose De Laet had in mind when he enrolled for the study of theology of 1605 remains unclear for the time being. I do not know whether it was customary in those days to take up the study of theology without the intention of a future pastoral career – I doubt it. Nor is there any indication that De Laet ever finished it. In any case, the mere study itself served him well. In a letter to Sibrandus Lubbertus, professor of theology at the University of Franeker in Friesland, De Laet praised the *claritas et simplicitas* in Lubbertus' recent treatise *Theses de praedestinatione*, a hot item in those days. These virtues De Laet appreciated in Lubbertus, as opposed to the *obscuritas* and sometimes curious points of debate found in the Church Fathers, and the *maleferiata subtilitas* ('idle subtlety') which was so typical of the later medieval theological treatises, from which people were now liberated owing to the Reformation.⁴⁹

De Laet clearly felt confident to impart his frank opinion of Lubbertus' treatise, and showed himself able to base his judgement on his acquaintance with the writings of both the early and medieval theologians.

The doctrine of predestination or election had increasingly become a shibboleth of orthodoxy in the period of the Twelve Years' Truce (1609-1621), due to the disputes in the Dutch Reformed Church which had begun as an academic debate between the Leiden professors Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) and Franciscus Gomarus (1563-1641), but was gradually shaking the Republic on its foundations.

Orientalist and expert on contemporary Jewish matters, see Ernestine G. E. van der Wall, 'Johann Stephan Rittangel's Stay in the Dutch Republic (1641-42)', in J. van den Berg and E. G. E. van der Wall, eds., *Jewish-Christian Relations in the Seventeenth Century. Studies and Documents* (Dordrecht, Boston and London, 1988), 119-34, at 122.

48) Anna E. C. Simoni, 'The Twofold Laughter of Gelasius', *Quaerendo* 22 (1992), 3-19, who provides a full description of the pamphlet's intricate title-page. For a discussion of the polemic to which the *Nieu Mey-Liedeken* contributed, see R. Crahay, 'La mobilisation confessionnelle des élèves dans un collège des jésuites au début du XVII^e siècle', in Jean Préaux, ed., *Église et enseignement. Actes du Colloque du Xe anniversaire de l'Institut d'Histoire de Christianisme de l'Université Libre de Bruxelles* (Brussels, 1977), 57-78; De Laet, at 73, is said to be the author of several anti-Catholic satires. I have found no evidence of these, apart from the *Mey-Liedeken*.

49) London, British Library, MS Add. 22961, fol. 151 (original); Provinsjale Biblioteek Fryslân, Archief Gabbema, Cod. I, no. 33 (copy); cf. C. van der Woude, *Sibrandus Lubbertus. Leven en werken, in het bijzonder naar zijn correspondentie* (Kampen, 1963), 376. The letter is undated, but was probably written around 1610, according to van der Woude.

De Laet did not conceal his position in this controversy, and sided with the Gomarist faction against the Arminians. In 1617, he published an anthology of patristic writings, *De Pelagianis et Semi-Pelagianis commentariorum ex veteris Patris scriptis, libri duo*, in which the problems figured that occupied the centre of attention: hereditary sin, man's free will to choose for God, and God's grace to elect people. In the letter in which he dedicated the book to the Leiden professor Anthonius Thysius, De Laet confessed not to have been particularly taken in with the trouble of compiling such an anthology, but the insistence of many friends, Thysius in particular, had given him the energy to bring the book to completion.⁵⁰

De Laet's book on Pelagianism no doubt will have contributed to his being delegated as elder to the National Synod of Dort which had been convened in 1618 to settle the doctrinal disputes. De Laet had become one of the experts in the field. In Dordrecht, he became acquainted with one of the several delegates of the Churches of England and Scotland⁵¹, Dr Samuel Ward, at the time Master of Sydney-Sussex College, Cambridge, and shortly afterwards Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at that university.⁵² Four letters from De Laet to Ward, written between 1619 and 1628, have been preserved, dealing with ecclesiastical and theological matters.⁵³ At the Synod, Ward counted as an ardent adherent of Gomarus, and in his later career he was a defender of puritan theology.

The period between De Laet's return from London to Leiden in 1607 and his membership of the Synod of Dort is largely filled with blanks where his daily activities are concerned. Fairly soon after he had settled in Leiden, he remarried with Maria Boudewijns van Berlicum, daughter of a merchant who lived on the Rapenburg. Unlike his first marriage, this one was blessed with children, about a dozen of them.⁵⁴ His biographers remain silent on his profession, but in all likelihood he was already earning a more than decent living as a merchant in overseas trading and as an investor in the reclamation of land from the many lakes in Holland.⁵⁵ Even in 1610, before he was thirty years old, he was able to purchase a stately house on the Rapenburg – one the nicest canals in Leiden and much in

50) See Henk Florijn's contribution on De Laet's role in matters ecclesiastical elsewhere in this issue.

51) Cf. Sellin, *Heinsius*, 88-99.

52) *DNB* LIX, 335.

53) See Appendix.

54) Bekkers, *Correspondence*, Appendix III 'De Laet's Pedigree'; Th. H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, C. Willemijn Fock and A. J. van Dissel, *Het Rapenburg. Geschiedenis van een gracht*, 5 vols. IIIa: *Meyenborch* (Leiden, 1988), 202, 215.

55) De Laet, for example, was involved in the reclamation of the Zoetermeerse Meer between Leiden and Zoetermeer in 1614. The accounts of the Zoetermeer polder mention him as one of the four *hoofdingelanden* ('chief landholders'), Leiden, Hoogheemraadschap Rijnland, Oud-Archief, nr. 8586, fol. 1, left column. Also other documents mention his involvement in this private enterprise, e.g. nr. 8598 ('Copie uyt Copie'). I would like to thank Henk Folkerts (Zoetermeer) for drawing my attention to these documents. Further documents pertaining his share in the Zoetermeer polder can be found in Zoetermeer, Gemeente Archief, Rechterlijk Archief 42, fols 204-16 (5 June 1620), RA 44, fol. 174 (13 August 1625), RA 49, fols 50-51 (21 April 1649) and RA 49, fols 153v-55r (8 April 1650). The final document settles the inheritance of his parcels amongst his children and grandchildren. On De Laet's parcels, see briefly P. van Waaij, 'Droogmaking Zoetermeerse Meer IV', *'t Seghen-Waart* 9, nr. 4 (1990), 18-23. I have made no further researches into this side of De Laet's activities, but they certainly reward more study.

demand with the aristocracy, old and new – for the goodly sum of 7,600 florins from no one less than his friend, Franciscus Gomarus.⁵⁶

The experience and fortunes De Laet had gained in these branches of Holland's booming economy must have merited the trust of the Leiden magistrates when they appointed him in 1619 to cooperate in the foundation of the Dutch West Indies Company (WIC). He was given a spacious room in the Leiden town hall from where to direct the fund-raising necessary for Leiden's participation in the Amsterdam based enterprise. When the Company was officially launched in 1621, Leiden's brought-in capital amounted to 275,000 guilders. With this sum, Leiden ranked as the second investor, after Amsterdam, with 10% of the shares in the Chamber of Amsterdam, one of the five constituent chambers of the Company.⁵⁷ It was only a matter of decency that De Laet was appointed as one of the Company's first directors in the Board of the Lords Nineteen who were to manage the Company's affairs.

His work for the Company must initially have absorbed much of his energy and attention, at least judging by the paucity of letters from the 1620s. Apart from a few letters to the aforementioned Samuel Ward, no correspondence survives, which need not imply that he did not write or receive any letters. As part of the efforts of the WIC to establish a colony along the Delaware and Hudson rivers, De Laet drew up a *Provisionele Ordere*, in which the rights and obligations of colonists were laid down in 1624.⁵⁸ The autumn of the same year he sent a lengthy manuscript to the printer, which appeared in 1625 as *Nieuwe Wereldt ofte Beschrijvinghe van West-Indiën*.⁵⁹ It was the first, extensive description in Dutch of the New World, and the result of a long-term project, as De Laet explained in his dedicatory letter to the States General.⁶⁰ Based on published sources in various languages⁶¹, log-books and

56) Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Rapenburg*, IIIa. 201. On the Rapenburg, see also C. Willemijn Fock, 'Culture of Living on the Canals in a Dutch Town in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: The Rapenburg in Leiden', in Roderick H. Blackburn and Nancy A. Kelly, eds., *New World Dutch Studies. Dutch Arts and Culture in Colonial America 1609-1776* (Albany/NY, 1987), 131-42, at 139-42. Other evidence of De Laet's association with Gomarus appears from the latter's correspondence with Gerard Joannes Vossius. In 1609, Gomarus wrote a letter to Vossius on the progress of the studies of his nephew – and Vossius' brother-in-law – Franciscus Junius the Younger at Leiden. Gomarus, like Vossius one of Junius' guardians, also mentions the efforts he and De Laet were making to obtain a stipend for Junius in Amsterdam: 'Quam ad rem adiumento me fore pro coniunctiones affinitates, officio tutoris et commendatione apud Amsterdamsens, qui mea et D. Latii gratia illum alumnus suscepit ea conditione us si officium non faceret refunderetur expensa pecunia.' Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Letters 79, fol. 27, printed in G. P. van Isterzon, *Franciscus Gomarus* (The Hague, 1930), Appendix 21; cf. C. S. M. Rademaker, 'Young Franciscus Junius: 1591-1621', in Rolf H. Bremmer Jr, ed., *Franciscus Junius F. F. and His Circle* (Amsterdam & Atlanta/GA, 1998), 1-17, at 7-8.

57) Leiden, Gemeente Archief, Sec. Arch. Gerichtsboek 186, fol. 22, res. 22 July 1621; cf. Jonathan I. Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585-1740* (Oxford, 1989), 158-59.

58) Van Cleef Bachman, *Peltries or Plantations. The Economic Policies of the Dutch West India Company in New Netherland 1623-1639* (Baltimore and London, 1969), 77-81.

59) *Nieuwe Wereldt ofte Beschrijvinghe van West-Indien, wt veelderhande Schriften ende Aenteekeninghen van verscheyden Natien by een versammelt, ende met noodighe Kaerten en Tafels voorsien* (Leiden: Isaack Elzevier).
60) *Nieuwe Wereldt*, p. *2v.

61) In his address to the reader, De Laet apologized for the absence of a *curieusen ende eenparigen Nederdytschen stijl* ('careful and uniform Dutch style') because he had compiled the book mainly from

personal interviews with sailors who had visited those distant shores, the book provided extensive information on the natural resources of the New World, where to find fresh water, the flora and fauna, safe harbours and roadsteads, and strategic strong points from where to proceed. For investors it presented the possibilities of economic gain, and the maps and illustrations afforded captains support in their voyages. The book proved a great success, both in the Netherlands and abroad.⁶² As a matter of fact, very few letters indeed survive from De Laet in his quality as one of the directors of the WIC, no doubt mainly because the archives of the WIC were neglected and finally dissolved in the early years of the nineteenth century. All we have are two more or less identical letters, which De Laet wrote to the Lords Nineteen to accompany copies of his detailed account of the activities of the WIC during the first fifteen years of its existence, called *Iaerlijck Verhael*, still the major source for our knowledge of its early activities.⁶³ Incidentally, these two books are the only ones he wrote in Dutch, an indication that the reading public he intended, and consequently their contents, differed from the many he wrote in Latin – mercantile rather than intellectual. His only other work originating from his involvement in the WIC belongs to the latter category again. It is his edition of *Historia naturalis Brasiliensis*, a lavishly illustrated compilation in folio format of the natural conditions of the Dutch colony in Brasil, and as such a fine specimen of the high level of Dutch book-production at the time.⁶⁴

Italian, Spanish, French, and English sources, and in his own translations had followed the idiom of these languages more than some would approve of; *Nieuwe Wereldt*, p. *4r.

62) In 1630, a second enlarged Dutch edition appeared, in 1633 a Latin version, *Novus Orbis seu Descriptiones Indiae Occidentalis, libri XVIII*, and in 1640 a French edition, *L'Histoire du Nouveau Monde*, translated, like the Latin version, by De Laet himself, with a Latin liminary poem by Daniel Heinsius. The book was translated from the French version into Spanish by Marisa Vannini de Gerulewicz, *Mundo nuevo o descripcion de las Indias Occidentales, escrita en 18 libros* (Caracas, 1988). De Laet must have foreseen the book's potential, for in July 1624 upon his request the States General had granted him a twelve years' patent for printing and publishing it in various languages, see *Nieuwe Wereldt*, p. *3v. Actually, the States General bestowed detailed attention to the contents of the book lest it offered occasion to England and France for claiming rights to certain colonies, but apart from some cavils they found nothing but praise, cf. J. Roelevink, ed., *Resolutiën der Staten-Generaal*. VI: 2 januari 1623-30 juni 1624 (The Hague, 1989), nos 1267 (23 June 1623) and 1535 (29 July 1623). Upon the publication of the *Nieuwe Wereldt*, the States General honoured De Laet with a medal worth 100 guilders, and decided to buy 20 copies of the book, cf. J. Roelevink, ed., *Resolutiën der Staten-Generaal*. VII: 1 juli 1624-31 december 1625 (The Hague, 1994), nr. 1225 (3 January 1625).

63) Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Pap 2, November 1644). It concerns *Historie ofte Iaerlijck Verhael van de verrichtinghen der Geotroyeerde West-Indische Compagnie, zedert haer begin, tot het eynde van 't jaer seshien-hondert ses-en-dertich; begrepen in derthien boecken, ende met verscheyden koperen platen verciert* (Leiden: Bonaventuer ende Abraham Elzevier, 1644), 'one of the most prestigious publications of the Elzevier company', according to Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Rapenburg*, Va, 58. The book was translated into Portuguese by José H. Duarte and Pedro Souto Maior, *História ou annaes dos feitos da Companhia privilegiada das Índias Occidentales*, 3 vols (Rio de Janeiro, 1916-25). A modern, annotated edition of the *Iaerlijck Verhael* was provided by S. P. L'Honoré Nabor, *Werken Linschooten-Vereeniging*, vols 34, 35, 37, 40 (The Hague, 1931-37). Incidentally, both De Laet's *Nieuwe Wereldt* and his *Iaerlijck Verhael* also opened up an exotic new world of Dutch vocabulary, cf. J. van Donselaar, 'Vroege vindplaatsen van woorden (1624-1644) in de boeken van Johannes De Laet', *De woordenaar*. Nieuwsbrief Matthias de Vries Genootschap 1 (1997), 9-10.

64) *Historia naturalis Brasiliae ... : In qua non tantum plantae et animalia, sed et indigenarum morbi, ingenia et mores describuntur et iconibus supra quingentas illustrantur* (Leiden: Franciscus Hackius, and

Unlike the scarcity of letters in his capacity as a Director of the WIC, things are different when it comes to De Laet's activities as an investor in the development of New Netherland. In 1630, Kiliaen van Rensselaer, together with Samuel Godijn, Albert Coenraets Burgh, and Samuel Blommaert – all of them directors of the WIC – took the initiative of starting a colony on either side of the North River (now Hudson) near Fort Orange (now Albany, NY), under the aegis of the WIC.⁶⁵ As Coenraets Burgh had meanwhile left for Russia when the contract had to be signed, De Laet took over his share on the understanding that, if Coenraets Burgh returned and demanded his share after all, he would willingly cede it. Since Coenraets Burgh never did claim his share⁶⁶, De Laet effectively became a shareholder for one-tenth, while Van Rensselaer became the most important investor with three-fifths, and it was he who became the *patroon*, in charge of the administration of the colony. The correspondence between van Rensselaer and De Laet reflects the changing fortunes of their colonies, appropriately called 'Rensselaerswyck' and 'Laetsburgh' by van Rensselaer.⁶⁷ The latter settlement consisted of three farms on the west bank opposite of Fort Orange, and a grist-mill. Van Rensselaer's extensive reports about the affairs, the costs and the profits, and the disputes over precedence in ownership in the course of the next ten years are very detailed, so much so that De Laet complained of his prolixity.⁶⁸

The major difficulty in getting the colony off the ground was the availability of people in Holland who were willing to start a new life in America. It also proved difficult to ship sufficient supplies to the tiny population that had settled there. In 1634, negotiations were started to transfer the authority over New Netherland, which was actually a private enterprise, to the federal government in The Hague. Van Rensselaer estimated the value of his part – Rensselaerswijk – to be 6,000 Flemish pounds, certainly no small amount, 'and I would not readily sell it for less, since I have been reported that our part is doing beautifully'⁶⁹, he informed De Laet. The same letter also reveals that De Laet was not particularly diligent in

settling his financial liabilities. Van Rensselaer had to remind him for the second time that De Laet still owed him 300 guilders, an amount that would have been much higher had it not been that van Rensselaer had received 'a good sum for the peltry come over with the most recent voyage.'⁷⁰ The joint venture, though, soon began to show signs of friction. Van Rensselaer, who undoubtedly shouldered the greatest part of running the colony, both financially and administratively, assumed more rights and privileges than De Laet and the other shareholders were willing to grant him. Matters ran to a head when not long after van Rensselaer's death in 1643, the guardians of his children started a litigation with the De Laet *cum suis*, which was eventually brought for mediation to the States General in The Hague. The case was dealt with in 1648 and 1649. A few weeks before his sudden death, on 5 November 1649, De Laet was summoned by the States to furnish within a fortnight the relevant documents proving his rights in the colony to a committee of deputies enabling them to make their final judgement.⁷¹ It may very well have been that De Laet's stroke was caused by his aggravation over the whole affair when he was in The Hague on 5/6 December. In the end, the case was decided in favour of the defendants.⁷²

Perhaps out of a moral duty as one of the directors of the WIC, but more likely following his own interests, De Laet participated in an ambitious project staged by the prestigious publisher/printer Elsevier in Leiden to publish a series of books in pocket format with descriptions of all the then known countries of the world. As Elsevier was aiming for the international market, this so-called *Respublica* series were written in Latin, and De Laet took care of the publication of at least eleven volumes of the total of 48 that appeared.⁷³ It is especially these books that earned him a name as a prominent seventeenth-century geographer.⁷⁴ The dedicatory letters which he included in the prefatory matter of the *Respublica* volumes afford us an impression of his social network, or at least, the people he wanted to be associated with in public. Thus, the books on Spain and France, which both

Amsterdam: Louis Elzevier, 1648). Vol. 1: Guilielmus Piso, *De medicina Brasiliensi libri quatuor. I. De aere, aquis, & locis. II. De morbis endemiis. III. De venenatis & antidotis. IV. De facultatibus simplicium*. Vol. 2: Georg Maregraf, *Historiae rerum naturalium Brasiliae, libri octo: quorum tres priores agunt de plantis. Quartus de piscibus. Quintus de avibus. Sextus de quadrupedibus & serpentibus. Septimus de insectis. Octavus de ipsa regione, & illius incolis. Cum appendice de Tapuyis, et Chilensibus. Ioannes de Laet ... in ordinem digessit & annotationes addidit, & varia ab auctore omissa supplevit & illustravit*.

65) A. J. F. van Laer, ed. and transl., *Van Rensselaer Bowier Manuscripts. Being the Letters of Kiliaen van Rensselaer, 1630-1643, and Other Documents Relating to the Colony of Rensselaerswyck ...* (Albany, 1908), 171-74. Henceforth *VRBM*. All the correspondence in *VRBM* was translated from Dutch into English. The originals are privately owned by Van Rensselaer's descendants in the United States.

66) Johannes de Laet and Samuel Blommaert to Albert Coenraets Burgh, with reply (4 August 1647); *VRBM*, 724-25.

67) Van Rensselaer to De Laet (27 June 1632); *VRBM*, 196-201, at 198.

68) Van Rensselaer to Toussaint Mussart (25 March 1641); *VRBM*, 543-44.

69) Van Rensselaer to De Laet (21 July 1634): '... en soude het niet geerne voor minder doen, also ick advies hebbe ons stuck heel schoon staat.' The full letter is printed in Nicolaas de Roever, 'Kiliaen van Rensselaer en zijne kolonie Rensselaerswyck', *Oud Holland* 8 (1890), 29-74, 241-96, Appendix F. On De Laet's commercial activities in New Netherland, see further Van Cleaf Bachman, *Peltries or Plantations*, passim.

70) De Roever, Appendix F: 'een goede somme ... van de peltterijen de laetste reyse overgekoomen.'

71) *VRBM*, 725-30.

72) De Laet's children inherited his share in the colony, see Lunsingh Scheurleer, *et al.*, *Rapenburg*, IIIa, 218-19. De Laet's daughter Johanna, with her husband Johan de Hulter, who had bought out his brothers-in-law, settled in New Amsterdam (now New York) in 1653, remarried Jeronimus Ebbingh in 1658, after her first husband's death and lived there until 1676. The dispute between the De Laets and the van Rensselaers was settled definitively only in 1674; see William J. Hoffmann, 'An Armory of American Families of Dutch Descent. De Hulter-De Laet-Ebbingh', *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* 69 (1938), 338-46; 70 (1939), 55-60.

73) They are: *Respublica sive Status Regni Scotiae et Hiberniae* (1627); *Hispania* (1629); *Gallia* (1629); *Belgii Confoederati Respublica* (1630; Dutch version Amsterdam, 1652); *Angliae chorographica descriptio* (1630); *Turcici Imperii Status* (1630; 1633); *De Imperio Magni Mogolis sive India* (1631; cf. E. Lethbridge, transl. and ed., *The Toponomy of the Mogul Empire, as Known to the Dutch in 1631* [Calcutta, 1871] and J. S. Hoyland, transl., *The Empire of the Great Mogul: A Translation of De Laet's 'Description of India and Fragments of Indian History'* [Bombay, 1928; rpt. 1974]); *De Principatibus Italiae* (1631); *Persia* (1633; 2nd rev. edn. 1647); *Respublica Poloniae, Lithuaniae, Prussiae et Livoniae* (1642); *Portugallia* (1642).

74) Cf. Kees Zandvliet, *Mapping for Money. Maps, Plans and Topographic Paintings and Their Role in Dutch Overseas Expansion During the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Amsterdam, 1998), passim.

appeared in 1629, were dedicated to two brothers-in-law. They were, respectively, Sir Edward Powell (through his first marriage), meanwhile Masters of the Requests⁷⁵, and Jacob Boudewijns van Berlicum (through his second marriage), a licentiate in both laws. The volume on India from 1631 was dedicated to Daniel Heinsius, the one on Persia from 1633 to the English ambassador in The Hague, Sir William Boswell.⁷⁶

De Laet had started to correspond with Boswell in 1632, and continued to do so until his sudden death in 1649. Boswell is a very interesting person, and it is amazing to find that until the present day no monograph study has been devoted to this key-figure in the Anglo-Dutch relations in the seventeenth century. A scholar of standing, Boswell started his diplomatic career as the secretary of his predecessor in The Hague, Sir Dudley Carleton. As for his religious position, Boswell was in line with the Counter-Remonstrants, and therefore with De Laet. Their considerable correspondence⁷⁷, which has not been published yet, is characterized by exchanges of political, scholarly and religious subjects, of which I will highlight one – their mutual interest in the language of the Anglo-Saxons, Old English. Curiosity in the oldest phase of English may not be surprising for the Englishman that Boswell was; for a Dutchman, this was quite exceptional.

Even early in his career, De Laet appeared to be interested in Old Germanic languages in general – an interest that may have been inspired by Scaliger⁷⁸ –, and Old English in particular. In order to familiarize himself with Old English, he had borrowed one of the first printed texts, the Anglo-Saxon Gospels⁷⁹, from no one less than the famous William Camden. Camden himself, a prominent member of the group of London Antiquarians⁸⁰, had spent considerable attention to the earliest phases of the English language in his monumental *Britannia*. In April 1616, De Laet finally returned to Camden the book he seems to have been hanging on to for

75) Cf. note 38, above.

76) Quite remarkably, De Laet seems to have preferred to dedicate his books – not all of them include a dedication, though – to people that belonged more or less to his own social class. He rarely dedicated his books to monarchs or princess. This seems to indicate to me that he was not trying to be a social 'climber', but rather points to a consciously marking his position among the new class of wealthy, intellectual, civil servants. His *Compendium historiae universalis* (Leiden, 1643), for example is dedicated to Andreas Rey, a Pole from Naglowice, whom he brands as *patroni generosissimo*. All I have found about this man is, that he matriculated at Leiden in 1600 at the age of 16, and his *Theses politicae de optima republica* (Leiden, 1602) – he was apparently a contemporary of De Laet. His edition of Pliny's *Historiae naturales libri XXXVII* (Leiden: Elzevier, 1635), made at the behest of Elzevier himself, was dedicated to Jérôme Bignon (1589-1656), at the time the king's representative in the French parliament, on whom see *Dictionnaire de biographie française* 16 (1954), 438-49. For only two books De Laet aimed higher: *De gemmis et lapidibus* (Leiden: Elzevier, 1647) was dedicated to Elisabeth Stuart, wife of Frederick of Bohemia (the 'Winter King'), and hence niece of Prince Frederick Henry, while his *Vitruvius* edition of 1649 was devoted to Queen Christina of Sweden, something quite fashionable amongst Dutch scholars at the time.

77) London, British Library, MS Add. 6395. See Appendix.

78) Cf. Rolf H. Bremmer Jr, 'Joseph Justus Scaliger', in Harro Stammerjohann, ed., *Lexicon Grammaticorum. Who's Who in the History of World Linguistics* (Tübingen, 1996), 828-29.

79) John Foxe, *The Gospels of the fower Euangelists translated in the olde Saxons tyme out of Latin in to the vulgar tongue of the Saxons ...* (London, 1571).

80) Graham Parry, *The Trophies of Time: English Antiquarians of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford and New York, 1995).

too long. Together with Foxe's edition of the Gospels he sent Camden a number of books, including Johannes Meursius' influential *De populis Atticae*, and informs Camden about the movements of a Spanish army of 5,000 footmen and 1,000 horsemen who had recently crossed the Rhine near Wesel, just across the border of the Dutch Republic. The threat of an impending breach of the truce with Spain is almost tangible in this letter which ends with a conventional prayer to God to keep Camden safe and sound for the Republic of Letters for a long time.⁸¹

A few months later that year, De Laet once more took up his pen to thank Sibrandus Lubbertus in Franeker for the kind gesture he had made upon his request for information on the Frisian language. Much to his joy, Lubbertus had surprised him with a Frisian book. Small wonder that De Laet showed his enthusiasm⁸²:

I have received the book written in the Frisian language, for which I cordially thank you. Whenever I take a break from my serious studies, I have the habit to indulge in investigating the antiquities of our language [i.e. Dutch] which are especially provided by the Frisian language. I observed this from an old book which was printed long ago without title or epilogue in the very ancient Frisian language.

The 'serious studies' De Laet is referring to were no doubt the preparatory researches for his book on the Pelagians, that appeared in 1617. It was a small step for him to switch from early Christian theology and church-history to the exploration of early medieval vernacular languages and legal institutions, for the old book he describes here regards the incunable edition of the Old Frisian *Londriucht* ('Land-law'), a collection of medieval Frisian law texts, from ca. 1477.⁸³

More than twenty years De Laet remained silent on his pursuit for the roots of Dutch and kindred languages, but perhaps encouraged by Boswell, he resumed his old interest. Boswell himself was involved in the study of the Old English language, and compiled two Old English glossaries. His long stay in Holland had familiarized himself with the Dutch language and he was struck by the many similarities between Dutch and Old English. In 1637, De Laet had made such a progress in his Anglo-Saxon studies, that he decided to visit England to get hold of manuscripts written in that language in order to compile an Old English dictionary. Boswell was kind enough to write letters of introduction for De Laet to facilitate his getting into touch with English scholars who were active in the field, notably William L'Isle and Sir Henry Spelman. In 1623, L'Isle (1579?-1637) had published an Old English treatise by Ælfric (fl. 1000), the first edition of an Old

81) *Gulielmi Camdeni, et illustrium virorum as G. Camdenum epistolae ...* (London, 1691), no. 122: '... sed finem faciens, Deum precor, ut te Reipub. literariae diu incolumen servet.'

82) London, British Library, MS Add. 22961, fol. 161 (original); Provijsjale Biblioteek Fryslân, Archief Gabbema, Cod. I. no. 34 (copy): 'Accepi simul librum scriptum lingua Frisica, pro quo gratias ago [...] Interdum cum animum a seriis studiis remitto, soleo otium in lingua nostratis antiquitatibus indagandis fallere; eas vel maxime lingua Frisica suppediat, quod deprehendi ex libro veteri characteres sine Titulo et Epilogo, jam dudum impresso lingua Frisica vetustissima.' Cf. van der Woude, *Sibrandus Lubbertus*, 572, who dates the letter erroneously to 1611 instead of 1616; Bekkers, *Correspondence*, 175, note 5.

83) Much later, De Laet also occupied himself with the laws of the Anglo-Saxons, cf. Bekkers, *Correspondence*, xxv-xxvii.

English text in the seventeenth century, and the lengthy introduction to this text revealed L'Isle to be an expert in the field.⁸⁴ To him Boswell wrote about De Laet's study of: '... our old Saxon tongue, whereof hee hath some MSS here in Leyden (where he lives in very great credit) ... and by the affinity of it with the High and Low Dutch mother Tongue, hath made many remarkable observations.'⁸⁵ To Spelman he imparted that De Laet 'loves that manyfold ... knowledge of Antiquities ioyned with all good learning.'⁸⁶ In January 1638, De Laet left for England and stayed with his brother-in-law, Edward Powell. L'Isle had died in the meantime, but his acquaintance with Sir Henry Spelman was marked by a cordial atmosphere. De Laet was also introduced to Patrick Young, the king's librarian, and a great scholar. Provided with a number of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts De Laet returned home better equipped for his enterprise than ever.

From the period of this visit dates a curious letter in folio format, hitherto unnoticed, written by Abraham Wheelock, librarian of the Cambridge University Library from 1629-53, addressed 'In gratiam Doctissimi, præstantissimique Domini mei germani', without providing the name of the addressee. It lists five Anglo-Saxon manuscripts present in the 'publica Bibliotheca Cantabrigia', providing the incipits in an imitation insular hand and furnished with interlinear Latin glosses or transcriptions of the insular forms. Beside these five numbered manuscripts, Wheelock also mentions an Anglo-Saxon Psalter, which John Spelman, Sir Henry's son, is about to publish, – as this would be in 1640, this year provides a *terminus ante quem* for Wheelock's letter – and a 'splendid manuscript' with the four Gospels in Old English. He concludes the letter with information on how Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, had donated these, and many more manuscripts to the library of Corpus Christi College. The letter can hardly have been directed to anyone else but De Laet, the only man actively engaged in the study of Old English in the Netherlands in the late 1630s.⁸⁷ The only other Dutchman to become deeply involved in Anglo-Saxon studies, Franciscus Junius, was in England at the time, and, moreover, demonstrably took up his interest in Old Germanic studies only around 1645.⁸⁸

84) *A Saxon Treatise Concerning the Old and New Testament ...* (London, 1623); cf. Phillip Pulsiano, 'William L'Isle and the Editing of Old English', in Timothy Graham, ed., *The Recovery of Old English: Anglo-Saxon Studies in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Kalamazoo, 1999), forthcoming.

85) London, British Library, MS Add. 6395, fol. 20 (9/14 December 1637); cf. Benno J. Timmer, ed., *The Later Genesis*, revised edn. (Oxford, 1954), 6.

86) London, British Library, MS Add. 34600, fol. 101, Boswell to Spelman (4/14 December 1637).

87) Lccuwardon, Provinsjale Biblioteek fan Fryslân, 149 Hs, fol. 9 (donated to this library by the 19th-century Frisian scholar Joost Halbertsma). Wheelock's hand was kindly identified for me by Professor Ray Page (Corpus Christi College, Cambridge). Contrary to what Bekker, *Correspondence*, xx and 176 note 23, claims, viz. that De Laet borrowed manuscripts from the College library, De Laet only received transcripts of the first pages of Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MSS 190 and 466; see Timothy Graham, 'Abraham Wheelock's Use of CCCC MS 41 (Old English Bede) and the Borrowing of Manuscripts from the Library of Corpus Christi College', *Cambridge Bibliographical Society Newsletter*, Summer 1997 (Cambridge, 1997), 10-16, at 15-16.

88) See Ph. H. Breuker, 'On the Course of Franciscus Junius' Germanic Studies, with Special Reference to Frisian', in Rolf H. Bremmer Jr, ed., *Franciscus Junius F. F. and His Circle* (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA, 1998), 129-57, at 139-40.

After his return from England, De Laet devoted much time to the compilation of his Old English dictionary, which not only provided translations of words but also gave words in their context and indicated the source in which they were to be found. In addition, Dutch cognates, when available, completed the entries. Before long, he had written some thousands of lemmata, and their number was growing daily.⁸⁹ The frequency of exchange of letters increased dramatically between De Laet and Spelman, De Laet and Young and other players in the field such as Sir Simonds D'Ewes and Abraham Wheelock. All of a sudden, people seemed to wake up in England. Was a Dutchman going to achieve what was only right for an Englishman to do, the completion of the first Old English dictionary?

Henry Spelman, who had established a lectureship in Anglo-Saxon studies at Cambridge, for which he had appointed his protégé Abraham Wheelock, wanted Wheelock to perform that task. In September 1638, he wrote to Wheelock that 'he was not willing that it should be done by a stranger and we here (to whom it more particularly belongeth) be pretermitted.'⁹⁰ Thereupon he wrote to De Laet that he had better abandon his work on the dictionary, because it was already being done in England. Sir Henry was alluding to Simonds D'Ewes, who was engaged in a similar project. About the same time Sir Henry sent a discouraging letter to D'Ewes telling him to discontinue his endeavours, because De Laet had made such progress. '[De Laet] is the best man for that purpose that we can lite on both for his knowledge and great travell in the Saxon tongue and also for the proximate which his own language and the Frisian have to the auncient Saxon above our English.'⁹¹ In this way, Sir Henry tried to play off De Laet against D'Ewes in favour of Wheelock.⁹²

De Laet proved not an easy man to deter, however, and steadily continued his labour, managing meanwhile to tap still more sources to enlarge his knowledge of Old English. In the summer of 1641 he paid another visit to London, for several purposes this time, parental, diplomatic as well as scholarly. One of his concerns was to help obtain the status of English citizenship for his son Samuel, who had married a daughter of the London based Dutch merchant Thomas Cruzo, but the attempt proved to be of no avail.⁹³ Nonetheless, he was held in high esteem, for the King honoured him by charging him to write a genealogy of the young Prince William (II) of Orange who had recently married Mary Stuart. In order to requite himself of this task De Laet wrote to Constantine Huygens, Prince Frederick Henry's secretary, for additional information.⁹⁴

89) London, British Library, MS Add. 26053, fol. 7, De Laet to Spelman (15 August 1638).

90) British Museum, MS Harley 7041, fol. 78, Spelman to Wheelock (28 September 1638).

91) London, British Library, MS Add. 34601, fol. 6, Spelman to D'Ewes (17 April 1640).

92) On this episode, see more extensively my 'Late Medieval and Early Modern Opinions on the Affinity between English and Frisian: The Growth of a Common-Place', *Folia Linguistica Historica* 9 (1989), 167-91, at 176-79, with further references.

93) Bekkers, *Correspondence*, xvi.

94) Cf. J. A. Worp, *De briefwisseling van Constantijn Huygens 1608-1687* (The Hague, 1914), III, no. 2823 (Huygens to Johannes Polyander van Kerckhoven Jr, 18 August 1641): 'J'ai reçu une lettre de Mons^r De Laet et une memoire de S^r William le Neve Clarencaux, laquelle je vous enverray par le premier. Il m'escrit que le Roy luy a commandé de mettre au premier en lumiere le mariage de la Princesse Marie avec S. S. le Prince Guillaume d'Orenge, et qu'y luy m'en donnerait advis, pour luy envoyer plusieurs choses

De Laet had also been invited by the English Parliament to advise them on the possibilities for starting a West Indies Company.⁹⁵ Advocates of this policy included Sir Simonds D'Ewes, who may well have been instrumental in honouring De Laet with such a task. That the invitation was seen as an honour in the Netherlands appears from the correspondence between Nicolaes van Reigersberch and his brother-in-law, Hugo Grotius. Van Reigersberch also knew why, for De Laet was *reribus Indicarum peritus* ('an expert in Indian matters').⁹⁶ Little was Grotius to know that De Laet's expertise in this field would soon play him such bad tricks! Notwithstanding De Laet's address to the English members of Parliament, the majority proved against an English counter-part of the Dutch West Indies Company.

In addition to these activities in London that summer, De Laet also took care of his scholarly pursuits. Through Patrick Young, whom he had come to know during his previous trip to England in 1638, De Laet borrowed two Anglo-Saxon manuscripts with Latin texts provided with interlinear glosses from the Royal Library. He also borrowed an Anglo-Saxon medical manuscript through Young, and from the well-stocked library of Sir Robert Cotton, an Old English manuscript on plants.⁹⁷ De Laet's interest in medical treatises is striking, but especially the interpretation of Old English names for plants which were prescribed for certain medicinal recipes proved to be difficult. Somehow or other, the name of Olaus Wormius must have crossed his mind.

Ole Worm, by far the most learned man in Denmark at the time, occupied the chair of medicine at the University of Copenhagen, and was the king's personal physician, but had also made a name for himself through his various studies on the Old Norse language, literature and laws.⁹⁸ In 1642, de Laet wrote a long letter to Worm, which is interesting because it illuminates how De Laet proceeded in his Anglo-Saxon studies. Without ado, he plunged right into his subject. 'A few years ago, I have been seized by a wish to clarify the Anglo-Saxon language, which the English usually neglect today, a few excepted.' He continued by telling how he had browsed through a number of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts when he was in England two years ago, and had become especially interested in medical treatises in that language, notably the *Herbarium* by (Pseudo-)Apuleius. In this work he had encountered many names of plants he was unable to identify, although there were some that could be clarified with the help of Dutch cognates.⁹⁹ Having said that, he

gradually disclosed the reason for writing this letter. He knew that the Danes had invaded England and had brought their language along, so that it occurred to him that some people in Denmark might better understand Old English than the people who were living in England now or close to it, and who were speaking a language that was less corrupted than what was spoken in England today. Knowing, too, that Worm had written quite a few books on and was familiar with the Northern languages, he proposed to start a correspondence and together study those plant-names he was unable to explain. To this long letter, De Laet added a long list of ninety plant-names by way of an appendix.

Worm must have been quite surprised to receive a letter from a scholar whose name, status – he addressed his reply to 'Societatis Indiae Occidentalis Praesidi Eminentissimo' – and scholarly work were as familiar to him as his own had been to De Laet. Six years earlier, he had acquired a copy of De Laet's *Novus Orbis*, an extensive account of the American continents, peoples, flora and fauna.¹⁰⁰ Quite delighted and flattered perhaps, too, to be approached by De Laet as an authority, he replied that he would only be too pleased to be of help. To show that he was not wholly ignorant of the state-of-the-art in Anglo-Saxon studies, he mentioned that he was informed of the works of Henry and John Spelman, William Lambarde and John Selden.¹⁰¹ Plant-names were a tricky problem, Worm realized, because people in Denmark gave different names to plants depending on the region where they live, so that sometimes there are ten different names for the same plant.¹⁰² Nonetheless,

2 vols (Copenhagen, 1751) II, no. 781 (4 April 1642): 'Cepit me ab aliquot annis desiderium linguam Anglo-Saxonicam illustrandi, quam Angli fere hodie negligunt, paucis exceptis. Percurri anno superiori, cum in Anglia essem, multos Codices illius linguae manu scriptos; inter alios librum quendam Medicum auctoris anonymi, uti & *Apuleji Herbarium* eadem lingua exaratum: Inveni in illis multa herbarum nomina, e quibus me expedire non possum, quia nusquam explicatur quales sint, neque ex collatione cum nostra dialecto Belgicae linguae quicquam certi potui colligere. Quia autem scio Anglo-Saxones illos e parte Daniae in Angliam venisse, eoque linguam importasse, venit in mentem, non posse me auxilium melius expectare, quam ab iis qui illas partes aut saltem illis vicinas incolunt, e quibus illi primum venerunt, quique ad huc eadem lingua incorruptius, quam hodie Angli utuntur: imprimis autem T. A. siquidem jam editis libris doctissimis, toti orbi palam fecisti, quantum polleas in cognitione linguae illius & omnium antiquitatum septentrionalis illius tractus. quare te obsecro atque obtestor, per communia studia, ut mihi digneris explicare quae vobis sint illae herbae, quarum nomina e Medico illo MS. accepta in indiculo adjuncto mitto; nisi fore & apud vos ea vocabula jam usum amiserunt, quod non opinor. Cacterum optarem cum T. A. interdum de illa lingua, eaque, quam tam docte atque industrie illustrasti, per literas conferre, & doceri a te quae ignoro. Atque in eo voto finem facio, Deum ante precatus, ut T. A. quam diutissime incolumem & florentem conservet. [...].

Tradet tibi haec filius *Elzvirii* nostri, cui si responsum reddere digneris, commodissime ad me poteris mitti, aut ipso redeunte afferri.' The Appendix is headed 'HERBARUM NOMINA IN MEDICO SAXONICO ms.'

100) Worm, *Epistolae*, I, no. 541, sent to him from Leiden by Henricus Fuiren (10 September 1636): 'Ex libris, quos desiderati, nunc mitto De Laet Descriptionem novi orbis ...' On Fuiren, see *Dansk Biografisk Leksikon* 5 (Copenhagen, 1980), 46-47.

101) Worm, *Epistolae*, II, no. 782 (26 April 1642): 'tum quod doctissimorum Virorum in iis regibus, *Spelmanni*, *Patris & Filii*, *Lambardi*, *Seldeni* aliorumque me nunquam in hisce assequi posse industriam viderim.' Actually, Worm had regularly corresponded with Henry Spelman, cf. *Epistolae*, I, nos 425-441 (1629-1640).

102) *Ibid.*: 'Plantarum nomina apud nos sunt incerta, ut vix decem invenias, quae eodem nomine ab omnibus appellentur. Plantam si sumpseris, ac de ejus nomine inquisiveris uno in loco, alio appellabunt

lesquelles yl me dit luy manquer.' De Laet's letter to Huygens is unretrieved, nor have I found any trace of De Laet's account of William's genealogy.

95) Cf. Bekkers, *Correspondence*, xvi and n. 23.

96) H. C. Rogge, *Brieven van Nicolaes van Reigersberch aan Hugo de Groot*. Werken Historisch Genootschap 3e serie, no. 15 (Amsterdam, 1901), nr. 262 (22 September 1641). On the renewed efforts to found a West India Company in 1641, and the Dutch involvement, see, succinctly, Antony Fletcher, *The Outbreak of the English Civil War* (London, 1981), 64; J. S. Kepler, *The Exchange of Christendom. The International Entrepôt at Dover 1622-1651* (Leicester, 1976), 86.

97) Bekkers, *Correspondence*, xix-xxi.

98) Einar Hovsen, *Lægen Ole Worm (1588-1654). En medicinhistorisk undersøgelse og vurdering* (Aarhus, 1989); *Dansk Biografisk Leksikon* 16 (Copenhagen, 1984), 45-51.

99) *Olai Wormii et ad eum Doctorum virorum Epistolae, medici, anatomici, botanici, physici & historici argumenti: Rem vero Literariam, Linguasque & Antiquitates Boreales potissimum illustrantes,*

as a token of his willingness, he added a first commentary on the names De Laet had sent him, but the question marks after many of his suggestions indicate that Worm was frequently baffled by them. The two men exchanged a number of letters on this topic in a fairly short time, in one of which Worm taught De Laet the principles of the runic alphabet.¹⁰³ In his turn, De Laet sent Worm a rather long passage from an Old English poem – a novelty to Worm who was ignorant of the existence of poetry in that language.¹⁰⁴ By the by, however, their attention shifted from Old English and Old Norse to other matters. In 1643, De Laet appeared to be interested in Greenland.¹⁰⁵ Was it still inhabited, and if so, were the people there Christians? And why had the population there almost become extinct? I suppose that these questions had to do with De Laet's controversy with Hugo Grotius at the time over the origin and language of the American Indians.¹⁰⁶ However that may be, Worm was embarrassed to confess that he knew precious little about Greenland. In former centuries there used to be a lively trade between Greenland and Scandinavia, but in 1320 the plague had carried off most of its inhabitants. Moreover, today the land was almost entirely covered by ice unlike in former times. Whether the Greenlanders, in as many as were left of them, were Christians was something he could not say.¹⁰⁷ On his part, Worm was eager to obtain all kinds of *exotica*, of which he suspected that De Laet through his connections with the WIC could easily supply him with. Worm had a museum with a wide variety of curiosities, and had published a catalogue of them in 1642, of which he had given a copy to the young Elzevier in Copenhagen to be presented De Laet.¹⁰⁸ In the following years the two men regularly exchanged exotic objects: stones, ores, bones, seeds, and the like. Worm's museum catalogue, another copy of which had been given to him through Worm's fellow countryman, Thomas Bartholin¹⁰⁹, proved the guide by which De Laet went. Among the things De Laet sent to Copenhagen we find some extraordinary items¹¹⁰:

Meanwhile I have put some things in a little box which I missed in your catalogue, and which I will give along to mr. Bartholin so that it may reach you the more safely. Amongst the things which I think will be welcome to you are a skeleton of a hand and some ribs of a mermaid, which is found in the sea off the

nomine, quam vicini reliqui; quod ipse expertus sum, quotquot possem, colligere ante annos aliquot, & vernaculas earum appellationes, ut Vocabulariis vulgaribus & Pharmacopolarum Taxae, ut vocant, insererem.'

103) Worm, *Epistolae*, II, no. 783, Worm to De Laet (27 May 1642); no. 784, De Laet to Worm (8 September 1642); no. 785, Worm to De Laet (November 1642). In no. 785, Worm deals with runes.

104) Worm, *Epistolae*, no. 786 (4 March 1643). Not quite surprisingly, because De Laet seems to have been the first Anglo-Saxonist to have recognized it as such. He quoted a passage from *Genesis*, a metrical paraphrase, now preserved in Bodleian Library as MS Junius 11, but then in the possession of Archbishop Ussher who had lent the manuscript to De Laet.

105) Worm, *Epistolae*, II, no. 788 (5 July 1643).

106) See Benjamin Schmidt's contribution elsewhere in this issue.

107) Worm, *Epistolae*, II, no. 789 (22 July 1643).

108) *Ibidem*, no. 784 (8 September 1642); De Laet acknowledged this present.

109) On him, see *Dansk Biografisk Leksikon* I (Copenhagen, 1979), 476-80.

110) Worm, *Epistolae*, no. 790 (1 July 1646): 'Interea quaedam, quorum in Catalogo tuo nomina non inveni, in capsulam conjeci, quam D. Bartholino tradam, ut tutius ad te possit pervenire. inter quae, opinor tibi non ingrata fore sceleton manus & costam monstri marini, frequentis in mare ad oram Africae, prope

coast of Africa, near Angola. The Portuguese call her in their language *Perxe de Moliher*, which is the same as 'siren'. And the balls which are turned from her ribs are widely praised as an excellent means against haemorrhages, as I have heard from a Portuguese scholar. I hope I will soon set my eyes on a picture of a live one.

Whether Worm believed that these were really bones of a mermaid we will never know, but he did include them in his collection, and they are also described in detail, along with other reports about mermaids, in his *Museum Wormianum* which was published in Amsterdam in 1655.¹¹¹

Another curiosity which De Laet had shipped to Worm was a box which contained the brains of the *canis carcharia* or *lamia*, which, as he wrote in the accompanying letter, 'our sailors call *haye* (Du. 'shark'). 'Its most prominent application', he continued¹¹²

is for pulverizing and expelling kidney-stones. It is brittle, like powder, and yet has nothing stony to it. I used to have lots of it, when my wife, who was vexed by this ailment, was still alive. After her death I forgot about it, but I never tried it out on her in any case, because she had a rather narrow urethra, and this medicament expels rather heavily and must be applied with the utmost care.

Worm duly included the powder in his museum, and reported De Laet's explanation almost verbatim.¹¹³

Worm was never to get an answer to the letter he wrote in December 1649, for early January 1650 he received news from his pupil Erasmus Bartholinus¹¹⁴, informing him in the briefest of words of the sad news that De Laet had incurred a cerebral haemorrhage in December when he was in The Hague, and had afterwards been buried in Leiden.¹¹⁵

What had become of De Laet's Old English dictionary? Various indications make clear that he had completed its compilation in the months before his death, and it was not only Worm who showed a keen interest in it. In Uppsala, the

Angolam: Lusitani suo idiomate vocant *Perxe de Moliher*, quasi Syrenem dicas: globulos autem e costis tornatos singulare remedium praedicant adversus haemorrhoidas, uti a Lusitano viro docto, qui crebro opem illorum erat expertus, dedici. Spero autem me brevi iconem animantis accepturum.'

111) *Museum Wormianum seu Historiae rerum rariorum ...* (Amsterdam: Elzevier, 1655), 276-77. This book was typographically modelled on De Laet's *Historia naturalis Brasiliae* (Leiden and Amsterdam, 1648), see H. D. Schepelern, *Museum Wormianum: dets forudsætninger og tilblivelse* (Aarhus, 1971), 208-12.

112) Worm, *Epistolae*, II, no. 790 (1 July 1646): 'Invenies in pixide *Cerebellum Canis Carchariae* sive *lamiae*, quem piscem nautae nostrates vocant *Haye*, cujus insignis usus est ad frangendum & dijiendum calculum. Perperam autem a Scriptoribus appellatur alpis; friabilis enim est, instra pollinis, neque quicquam habet lapidei. Habui aliquando magnam illius copiam, cum conjux viveret, quae istis morbo erat obnoxia; illa defuncta, neglexi; Veruntamen in ipsa nunquam ausus fui experiri, quia ureteres habebat angustiores, & hoc medicamentum valide admodum dejicit & cum summa cautione est usurpandum.' De Laet's second wife had died three years before.

113) *Museum Wormianum*, 272.

114) A brother of the earlier mentioned Thomas, see *Dansk Biografisk Leksikon* I (1979), 475-76.

115) Worm, *Epistolae*, II, no. 922 (6 January 1650): 'Doleo, quod debeam tibi salutem, quam Dn. de Laet misisti, sine foenore remittere, cum nuper diem obierit suum, Hagae comitis apoplexia subito ereptus, sed hic Leidae sepultus.' De Laet's remains were placed into his family-vault in the Pieterskerk in Leiden, see Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Rapenburg*, IIIa, 219.

philologist Georg Stiernhelm was also eagerly awaiting its appearance and encouraged Swedish residents in Leiden to make inquiries. In July 1649 he was informed by Johan Risingh that Elzevier had told him that not yet a letter had been set up for De Laet's dictionary.¹¹⁶ In the autumn of that year, Stiernhelm seems to have prodded his son Johannes into action, who was actually given access to the manuscript, either by the Leiden professor of history, Marcus Zuerius Boxhorn, who also was using the dictionary for his own studies¹¹⁷, or by De Laet himself. Johannes Stiernhelm was kindly allowed to copy the entries for the letter 'M' from the dictionary, which his father needed for an etymological treatise.¹¹⁸ A few months after De Laet's death, the Dane Erasmus Johannes Brochmand reported to Worm that the dictionary was ready for the press in De Laet's own neat hand-writing. De Laet's children had handed it over to professor Boxhorn to see it through the press.¹¹⁹ Boxhorn, undoubtedly the most capable man in Leiden at that time to deal with the matter, for one reason or another, failed to do so in the three years he was allowed to live after De Laet. Instead, he lent the book to another Danish student, Peter Resenius, who took it with him to Copenhagen. Resen quoted some information from it in his – the first – edition of the Icelandic *Edda*, in 1665, and bequeathed it to the Royal Library in Copenhagen. There it remained until it miserably perished in a fire caused by the English when they bombarded Copenhagen in 1728.¹²⁰

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Overlooking De Laet's correspondence we have to conclude that it is rather lapidary, unfortunately. Notwithstanding, from what is left of it, we can see a man who was indefatigably active in scholarly matters, and this for the greater part besides his daily occupations as a director of the WIC, in which capacity he had to travel regularly to The Hague and Amsterdam. What is known from his publications also appears from his correspondence: De Laet's intellectual scope was very wide indeed, and included classical philology, geography, biology, medicine, theology, history, contemporary politics, and, not to forget, Germanic and comparative philology – all of these subjects enjoyed his warm interest. In addition, he was a versatile polyglot, who seemingly without effort translated from Dutch into Latin or French, from English to Latin, besides from various classical and modern languages into Dutch. For his scholarly pursuits he always managed to find the

116) Per Wieselgren, ed., *Brev till Georg Stiernhelm*. Publications of the New Society of Letters at Lund 60 (Lund, 1968), no. 105 (31 July 1649): 'De Laets Diction: Vetus Britann. sager han [i.e. Elzevier] icke ähn een bookstaff wara satt up.'

117) Cf. Dekker, *Old Germanic Studies* (note 12, above), 216-17.

118) Wieselgren, *Brev*, no. 118 (6 November 1649): 'Voces incipientes e litera M. e lexico Boxhornij Cambro-britannico et dictionario Joh: De Laet saxo-britannico exscribuntur, exscriptasque patri quam primum transmittam.' On Stiernhelm's treatise, see Wieselgren's note 3. I have not been able to find out whether Johannes' excerpts are still preserved in the Stiernhelm archives in Uppsala.

119) *Epistolae*, II, no. 1000 (28 June 1650): 'Quia cum defuncto b.m. Dn. de Laet amicitiam te coluisse scio, nolo de eo te nescire, quod ille, adhuc vivus, *Lexicon Anglo Saxonicum* conscripserit & absolutum suaque manu nitide exscriptum ad praelos paraverit; eujus edendi curam ipsius haeredes non ita dudum Clariss. Dn. M. Z. Boxhornio commiserunt, quem illarum antiquitatum, per inde ut nostrarum Septentrionalium, studiosum esse non ignorabant.' On Brochmand, see *DBL* 2 (1979), 359.

120) Benno J. Timmer, 'De Laet's Anglo-Saxon Dictionary', *Neophilologus* 41 (1957), 199-202.

right persons, whether they lived in England, France or Denmark, or, nearby, in the Netherlands.¹²¹ Many letters must have disappeared in the course of time, but plenty have survived that have neither been studied nor published. As for this lacuna, De Laet deserves a better treatment, and it is encouraging to see this merchant-scholar back in the floodlights. Hopefully, the essays in this issue will lead to a renewed interest in this somewhat neglected Leiden polymath.

APPENDIX

Concise survey of De Laet's correspondents, alphabetically arranged. I do not claim to be exhaustive, but this survey much advances on what was presented by Bekkers in 1970. Only for correspondents who have not been mentioned in this article, some bibliographical references are supplied to facilitate a first orientation.

BL British Library,
 BN Bibliothèque nationale,
 UBL Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden,
 UBU Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht.

- De Laet to anonymus: Amsterdam, Universiteitsbibliotheek H 81 b (Leiden, 1629). Unpublished.
- De Laet to Sir William Boswell (d. 1649; scholar and diplomat): BL, MS Add. 6395 (1632-1649). Over 60 letters. Unpublished.
- De Laet to Arnoldus Buchelius (1565-1641; lawyer and antiquarian): UBL, BPL 246, one letter (1629). Buchelius to De Laet, introducing Buchelius' description of Utrecht: UBU, Hs. 1053 (5 H 10), fols 125-133v (c.1629/30).¹²² Personal part of letter unpublished.
- De Laet to Albert Coenraets Burgh (fl. 1620-1650; alderman and burgomaster of Amsterdam, Director of the WIC, merchant): Private collection, one letter (1647). Published in Van Laer, *VRBD*, 724-25.
- De Laet to William Camden (1551-1623; antiquarian and historian): BL, MS Cotton Julius C 5, fol. 164 and Camden to De Laet: BL, MS Add. 36294, fol. 68, both letters from 1616. Published in *Camdeni ... Epistolae* (London, 1691).
- De Laet to Sir Simonds D'Ewes (1602-1650; antiquarian, politician): BL, MS Harley 374, 21 letters between 24 August 1640 and 3 July 1645; BL, Harley 376, 4 letters between 16 January and 30 December 1645. D'Ewes to De Laet, Harley 377, 14 letters (drafts); Harley 378, 11 letters (drafts). All of them unpublished.
- De Laet to Johannes F. Gronovius (1611-1671; scholar): Munich, Universitätsbibliothek, MS 617, 2 letters (1637 and 1639). Unpublished.

121) A point in case is the Utrecht antiquarian Arnoldus Buchelius (Aernout van Buchell), who provided a description of Utrecht which De Laet inserted in his *Belgii Confoederati Respublica* (1630). De Laet was a good acquaintance of Buchelius, and a welcome visitor in Utrecht for the news he brought, see G. Brom and L. A. van Langeraad, eds., *Diarum van Arend [sic] van Buchell*. Werken Historisch Genootschap 3e serie, nr. 21 (Amsterdam, 1907) and J. W. C. van Campen, ed., *Notae Quotidianae van Aernout van Buchell*. Werken Historisch Genootschap 3e serie, nr. 70 (Utrecht, 1940), index s.v. De Laet (Latus), respectively.

122) See previous note.

- De Laet to Lucas Holstenius (1596-1661; librarian of the Barberini Library and the Vatican Library, respectively; *Neue deutsche Biographie* IX, 548?50): UBL, BPL 1830, one letter (18 October 1636; copy, cf. Bekkers, *Correspondence*, xvii and note 36). Unpublished.
- De Laet to Sibrandus Lubbertus (c. 1556-1625, theologian): BL, MS Add. 22961, fols 151, 155, 161; contemporary copies of first and last letter in Provinsjale Biblioteek Fryslân, Archief Gabbema Cod I, 33-34), 3 letters. Unpublished.
- De Laet to John Morris (c. 1590-1658; Master of the London Watermills, antiquarian): Oxford, Queen's College, MS 284, fol. 20, 1 letter (25 June 1643), and John Morris to De Laet, UBU, MS 986, fols 284-409: 100 letters between 12 April 1634 and 6 November 1649. Published in Bekkers, *Correspondence*.
- Kilaen van Rensselaer (1580-1645; merchant) to De Laet: Private collection, seven letters between 1632 and 1641. Published in translation in van Laer, *VRBM*, 196-201, 312-13, 333-36, 339-41, 516-18, 528-34, 539-43, respectively.
- Sir Thomas Roe (1581?-1644; diplomat) to De Laet: UBU, MS 986, fol. 411, one letter (1640). Published in Bekkers, *Correspondence*, 63.
- De Laet to Claude Saumaise (1588-1653; scholar): BN, Mss latins, no. 8598, 64 letters of which 52 between 1640 and 1643; De Laet to Saumaise, UBL, PAP 7, five letters from 1642 and 1643; Saumaise to De Laet: UBL, Ms. Gro 11, one letter, c.1648. Unpublished.
- Josephus Justus Scaliger (1540-1609; scholar) to De Laet: BL, MS Add. 4160, fol. 237 (1603) unpublished; Scaliger, *Epistolae*, nos 437-446, 449, 11 letters between 1603 and 1607.
- Anna Maria van Schurman (1607-1678; scholar, poetess, paintress) to De Laet: one letter (1640). Published in A. M. van Schurman, *Opuscula Hebraica, Graeca, Latina, Gallica, Prosaica et Metrica* (Leiden, 1650), 194-95.
- Sir Henry Spelman (1563/4-1644; historian and antiquarian) to De Laet and De Laet to Spelman: BL, MS Add. 26053, fol. 7; 34,600, fols 118, 121, 126, 171, 190; BL, MS Add. 34601, fols 14, 38, eight letters between 1 August 1638 and 21 December 1640. Unpublished.
- James Ussher (1581-1656; Archbishop of Armagh, scholar) to De Laet: BL, MS Add. 6395, fol. 146, one letter (1641). Unpublished.
- De Laet to Samuel Ward (d. 1643; theologian): Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Smith 72, 73, 75, 76, four letters between 1619 and 1627. Unpublished.
- Georg Rudolph Weckherlin (1584-1653; English Undersecretary of State): UBU, MS 986, fols 410-12, two letters (1641). Unpublished. There are further letters to him, see Bekkers, *Correspondence*, no. 18, note 4.
- Abraham Wheelock (1593-1653; Professor of Arabic and Lecturer of Anglo-Saxon at Cambridge) to De Laet: Leeuwarden, Provinsjale Biblioteek fan Fryslân, 149 Hs, fol. 9. Unpublished.
- De Laet to Ole Worm (1588-1654; professor of medicine, antiquarian): 18 letters between 1642 and 1649. Published in *Wormii Epistolae*.
- De Laet to Directors of West India Company: UBL, PAP 2, November 1644. Two almost identical letters. Unpublished.
- De Laet to Patrick Young (1584-1652; theologian and Royal Librarian) and Young to De Laet: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Smith 75 and 76. Seven letters between 1638 and 1641. Published or summarized in J. Kemke, *Patricius Junius* (Leipzig, 1898).