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A life of books: Katharina Lescaillje

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Publication date

2010

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Women's writing from the Low Countries 1200-1875: a bilingual anthology

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

van Gemert, L. (2010). A life of books: Katharina Lescaillje. In L. van Gemert, H. Joldersma, O. van Marion, D. van der Poel, & R. Schenkeveld-Van der Dussen (Eds.), *Women's writing from the Low Countries 1200-1875: a bilingual anthology* (pp. 308-315). Amsterdam University Press.

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Women's Writing
from the Low Countries
1200-1875
A Bilingual Anthology

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AMSTERDAM ANTHOLOGIES
AMSTERDAM UNIVERSITY PRESS

AMSTERDAM ANTHOLOGIES

Schrijvende vrouwen. Een kleine literatuurgeschiedenis van de Lage Landen (1880-2010)

Eds. Jacqueline Bel and Thomas Vaessens

ISBN 978 90 8964 216 5

Women's Writing from the Low Countries 1200-1875. A Bilingual Anthology

Chief ed. Lia van Gemert

ISBN 978 90 8964 129 8

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This publication has been made possible with a grant from the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds.

Cover: Johannes Vermeer, *A Lady Writing* (c. 1665-66), oil on canvas.

The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC

Cover design: Kok Korpershoek [ko]

Book design: Kok Korpershoek and Femke Lust [ko]

ISBN 978 90 8964 129 8

e-ISBN 978 90 4851 053 5

NUR 621

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Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen / Amsterdam University Press, 2010

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A Life of Books

Katharina Lescailje

AMSTERDAM, 26 SEPTEMBER 1649 – AMSTERDAM, 8 JUNE 1711

LIA VAN GEMERT

TRANSL. BRENDA MUDDE

KATHARINA LESCAILJE FROM AMSTERDAM was already famous during her lifetime and would remain so until far into the eighteenth century. Her father owned a printing and publishing firm in the heart of Amsterdam (on what is now Dam Square), so Katharina grew up among books. The entire family worked in the firm, and family members married other printers. Katharina, however, remained unmarried, and after her father's death in 1679 she and one of her sisters continued the business, which held the monopoly on printing work for the city theatre as well as being a favourite meeting place for art lovers.

Lescailje started writing poetry as a child, and according to the preface to her collected works one of her dearest wishes came true when, at age ten or eleven, she was given the opportunity to meet Amsterdam's most famous poet, Joost van den Vondel, sixty years her senior. He embraced her tenderly and encouraged her to keep practising. That she followed his advice is clear from her three volumes of plays and mixed poetry (*Tooneel- en mengelpoëzy* 1731). They contain eight translations of French tragedies; some 300 poems on occasions such as weddings, deaths, excursions, portraits or book publications; and about twenty political and ten religious poems. Poetically speaking, Lescailje's occasional verse was far from remarkable: technically average, it dealt with subjects popular with Amsterdam's social elite, and did not contain strong political or religious views. How, then, do we explain her lasting fame?

Lescailje's social skills provide the most important explanation. She used her occasional poetry to support her business network: not only did she write for a wide circle of fellow townspeople, she also freely contributed poems to anthologies; her translated plays were staged, and she published a number of political verse pamphlets (e.g. *Daphnis' Pastoral Song to Peace* (*Daphnis harderszang op de vrede*, 1697)). In this way, she 'raised brand awareness' and made sure her name was widely known. The second explanation for her lasting fame is of particular importance to literary historians. Although far inferior in talent, Lescailje was wont to imitate Vondel, and in the small circle of his epigones (Vondel himself had completely withdrawn from the literary scene), being a woman made her exceptional. This, and the fact that she herself had been a publisher, made her live on in literary history.

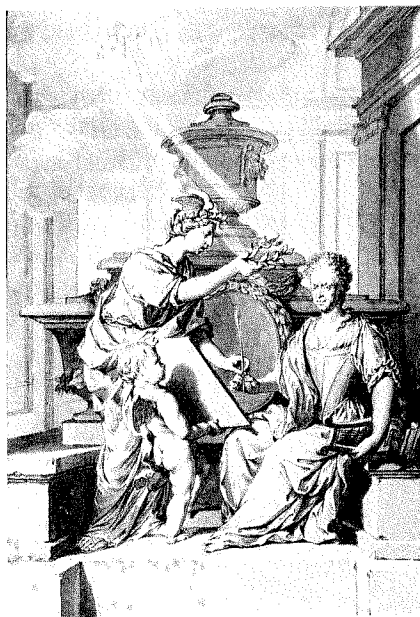
Although she was paid substantial costs and twenty years after the monopoly on printing that, on his death, she was making a profit on the

Her collection of these poems full of mous gentlemen – (a game? That is very poems from 1675 that may have been a work fact is that another Veer, was jealous of expected. Yet it is clear to Lescailje that the Whatever her feelings status gave her, and

30. Lescailje's
lyre falling c

Although she was perfectly placed to publish her own collected works, she never did: the substantial costs and the effort involved likely prevented such an initiative. They did appear twenty years after her death, however, in a vain attempt by her relatives to retain their monopoly on printing the city theatre's repertoire. The family firm's last owner stipulated that, on his death, all unsold copies were to be destroyed in order to prevent others from making a profit on them.

Her collected works include some curious love complaints in the Petrarchan style. These poems full of unrequited love were written to beloved women on behalf of anonymous gentlemen – or so Lescailje claimed. Was all this yearning for the beloved really just a game? That is very much the question, and further questions are thrown up by some poems from 1675 that lack the suggestion of a male author but do indicate that the beloved may have been a woman, the Amsterdam poet Sara de Canjoncle. A further noteworthy fact is that another woman friend and fellow author from Amsterdam, Cornelia van der Veer, was jealous of De Canjoncle. There is no hard evidence of tribadism, nor is any to be expected. Yet it is certain that the authors knew the concept: Van der Veer wrote in a letter to Lescailje that they should not jeopardise their honour for the 'unchaste sodomitic fruit'. Whatever her feelings may have been, Lescailje highly valued the freedom her unmarried status gave her, and it is certain that she put her financial interests first.



30. Lescailje receiving a quill and laurel wreath from the Muse, a beam of light from a celestial lyre falling on her face. The allegorical setting brings out the author's seemingly lifelike face.
Drawing by Nicolaes Verkolje, pen and grey ink over charcoal

NE 1711

VAN GEMERT
BRENDA MUDDÉ

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n literary history.

Aan Galathé

Ha wrede Galathé! zal ik dan nooit verwerven
uw trouwe wedermin? En wil uw killig hart
mijn boezem pijnigen met nieuwe minnesmart?
Zult gij mij duizend doôn om uw vermaak doen sterven?

5 En moet ik de opkomst van uw lieflijk leven derven,
dat, vers ontloken, zelfs Aurora's glansen tart?
Zo blijft mijn ziel, in 't net van uwe min, verward,
en ik zal eeuwig in een zee van liefde zwerven.

10 Want schoon de nachtgordijn het helder licht bedekt,
zij dekt geenszins mijn kwaal: maar als Diane wekt
de blozende uchtendzon, komt zij mijn rampen wekken:

die plagen 't kwijnend hert, al op eenzelfde wijs:
en gij, die vlammen sticht, blijft zelf zo koud als ijs.
Toch lij ik willig, mocht ik eens uw weêrmin trekken!

*To Galatea. The
from his love f
return his lov
Ovid's Metam*

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Ah, c
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My b
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5 Must
And f
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To Galatea. The cyclops Polyphemus, one-eyed and ugly, suffers in true Petrarchan fashion from his love for the beautiful but ice-cold nymph Galatea. The hope that she will someday return his love makes him willing to endure more of this pain. The motif is taken from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Bk XIII, 740-869).

To Galatea

Ah, cruel Galaté! Will I then never gain
Your true love in return? Must your cold heart torment
My bosom yet again with games of love, and let
Me die a thousand deaths to keep you entertained?

5 Must I forgo the daybreak of your life, so free
And fresh it rivals even famed Aurora's* glow?
Entangled in your net, my soul is doomed to roam
A troubled sea of love to all eternity.

10 For though night's dusky curtain hides the light of day,
It can't blot out my grief. But when Diana* wakes
The blushing morning sun, she rouses my woes, too.

They torture my poor heart with unrelenting force,
While you, who kindle flames, remain as cold as ice.
Yet gladly I'll bear pain, if it sparks love in you.

6 the goddess of dawn

10 the goddess of the moon

Anders. Aan de liefde

O zoete stoorder van mijn slaap, en zachte rust!
O lieve vijand! die mij al te vroeg voor 't dagen*,
zo onmeêdogende bestrijdt met minlijk plagen,
eer Venus aan 't gestarnt' haar Mars ontvonkt met lust.

5 Waar 't niet genoeg dat gij uw vlammen had geblust
aan mijne kuise borst? En daar uit weggedragen
mijn hart, wanneer uw oog het mijne kon behagen,
en mij verrukt had als uw mond mij had gekust?

10 't Schijnt neen: de liefde brengt uw beeld in mijn gedachten,
daar gij, tot and'rer spijt, gedurig komt vernachten,
en maakt u dichte bij, hoe ver ge van mij zweeft.

Helaas! wat doe ik dan om slaap en rust te rapen?
Doch zijn die nooit op aard voor 't minnend oog geschapen,
zo heb ik in de min, hoe kort, te lang geleefd.

2 the text gives *dragen*, an error for *dagen*

*On a Different I
of a person des
was apparently
Tormenting me
experience of lo
feelings or takir*

On a

*O sweet
O dear
Me ter
Desire*

5 *Could
To que
My he
And ki*

10 *But nc
Thoug
Love k*

*Alas! I
A pair
Then :*

On a Different Note: To Love. In a variation on the theme of love, we hear the ponderings of a person desperately in love and unable to sleep. The object of this unrequited love was apparently not satisfied with chaste kisses or even with stealing the speaker's heart. Tormenting memories return every night, causing the 'I' to regret the brief but indelible experience of love. The occasion for this poem is unclear: Is Lescaijle here voicing personal feelings or taking part in a Petrarchan game?

On a Different Note: To Love

O sweet intruder in my sleep and gentle rest!
O dearest foe! who at this early hour torments
Me tenderly, before coy Venus sets her Mars'
Desire ablaze among the panoply of stars.

5 Could you, then, not be satisfied with my chaste breast
To quench your flames? Or with the way you stole from me
My heart, when your eyes made mine glow with happiness
And kisses from your lips filled me with ecstasy?

10 But no; love brings you to my mind so vividly:
Though others disapprove, you spend each night with me.
Love keeps you at my side no matter where you roam.

Alas! If kindly sleep was never made to bless
A pair of loving eyes, how will I find some rest?
Then my brief life in love was nonetheless too long.

TRANSL. MYRA HEERSPINK SCHOLZ

Aan jongkvrouwe Sara de Canjoncle

<p>Aardig Saartje beste kaartje; uit dit dicht kunt gij licht 5 zien en weten, hoe vergeten ik alleen zit en steen bij mijn Zuster; 10 te ongeruster, omdat gij, zo nabij mij uw wezen, waard geprezen, 15 mijn gezicht, met het licht van uw ogen, onmeêdogen, dus onthoudt. 20 Ach! verkoudt al uw liefde, die mij griefde met een wond op één stond? 25 Ik kom klagen,</p>	<p>om te vragen of 't u lust om mijn rust, hier te komen, 30 om de schromen met de smart van mijn hart weg te jagen. Wilt niet tragen: 35 'k zit alleen hier en steen. 'k Weet in boeken niet te zoeken een vriendinne, 40 die mijn zinnen met haar kout onderhoudt, in het lezen, als voor dezen: 45 en de vriend*, die mij dient, is op heden uit dees stede; die de min 50 uit mijn* zin,</p>	<p>met zijn zingen licht laat springen. 't Afzijn slijt, met den tijd, 55 zulke vlagen met haar plagen. Doch ik lach al den dag met die grillen, 60 is 't uw wille maar te zijn bij Katrijn.</p>
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45 it is not clear who this friend is

50 the text gives 'his' ('zijn') heartache; probably an error for 'my' ('mijn')

To Lady Sara de Canjoncle
(last line) begs the question of the
characteristics of 17th-century
century adaptations

To Lady Sara de Canjoncle

Sweetest Sarie,
Friend so carin
From this rhyme
Know that I'm
5 Sad and lonely
I can only
Mope and moan
Here alone
With my sister
10 How I've missed
Your Company.
Can't you see
It's upsetting -
You forgetting -
15 That I'm here?
You're so near
Yet unkindly
You deny me
All the bright
20 Cheering light
Your eyes offend
Ah, can all your
Love have cooled
My love-wound
25 Still is aching

Sources: LESCAILLE 1731
Literature: Grabowsky

To Lady Sara de Canjoncle. In this playful Petrarchan complaint, Lescailje (Kate, in the last line) begs the writer Sara de Canjoncle to join her. This poem, especially in its formal characteristics of rhythm, rhyme and use of diminutives, served as a model for eighteenth-century adaptations by writers like Maria Bosch and Aagje Deken.

To Lady Sara de Canjoncle

et zijn zingen
 et laat springen.
 fzijn slijt,
 et den tijd,
 ke vlagen
 et haar plagen.
 ch ik lach
 len dag
 et die grillen,
 t uw wille
 ar te zijn
 Katrijn.

	Sweetest Sarie, Friend so caring, From this rhyme Know that I'm		So I'm making This my plea: Visit me; Do come, hurry,		People say; Pain today's Gone tomorrow, All this sorrow
5	Sad and lonely; I can only Mope and moan Here alone With my sister.	30	Then my worried Heart will rest. Loneliness Keeps me grieving; All my reading	55	Will be soothed. Yet in truth I will relish Fits of anguish, Laugh and smile
10	How I've missed your Company. Can't you see It's upsetting – You forgetting	35	In the end Yields no friend Chatting gaily As we daily Used to do,	60	All the while, If you're minded To be kind and Hurry straight To your Kate.
15	That I'm here? You're so near Yet unkindly You deny me All the bright	40	Just us two, Sitting with our Books together. And the friend Who can mend		
20	Cheering light Your eyes offer. Ah, can all your Love have cooled? My love-wound	45	My deep heartache Just by starting Up a song Has left town. Time brings healing		
25	Still is aching,	50	For these feelings,		

TRANSL. MYRA HEERSPINK SCHOLZ

Sources: LESCAILJE 1731: I, 276, 279, 353-354.

Literature: Grabowsky 2009; Hoftijzer 2001; Lescailje 2009; Spies 1993; Van Gemert 1995/2001 and 1997b.