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## Of Wedding and War

Henricus Selyns' *Bridal Torch* (1663), with an edition and translation of the Dutch poem

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In 1655 the Dutch writer Adriaen van der Donck published his well known book *Description of New Netherland*.<sup>1</sup> Clearly, this was not an unprejudiced observation of the colony. Perhaps, it is best to qualify the work as a strong public relations campaign, meant to inform the common man back in the Netherlands about the colony's geography, flora and fauna, natural riches and potentials. Those who were perhaps thinking of emigration, could find in this predominantly panegyric description convincing arguments to make the step to the New World. The climate was good, there were abundant natural resources for building, the rivers had crystal clear waters and were full of fish, the vast forests and woods had various kinds of game and the soil was even more fertile than the Dutch polders.

Apart from the description of the land and its potentials, there was also an interesting chapter on the American Indians in New Netherland. Of course, it would have been strange *not* to describe them in a full account of the colony. On the other hand, though, there were enough propaganda texts, like for instance the *Spurring Verses* of Jacob Steendam, that purposely omitted the original inhabitants, for the simple reason that they were not really a selling point. Nonetheless, the *Description of New Netherland* has a fine ethnography in which the natives were described along traditional categories of ethnic observations: how they looked, what they ate, how they built their houses and villages, what kind of social structures they had, whether they believed in a God etc. Furthermore, they were depicted in their methods of warfare. In this category, readers might undoubtedly have found reasons for *not* crossing the ocean. The Indians were furious warriors, cruel, full of revenge and relentless in victory, killing the men, and taking the women and children as their property. Above all, their war tactics were a nightmare for the colonists. They did not engage in open battle, in the field, but mostly attacked as guerrilla forces, in ambush, and always by surprise.

One of the many colonists to witness the fierce atrocities in the Indian-Dutch encounters was the preacher and poet Henricus Selyns (1636-1701).<sup>2</sup> In 1660, at the age of 24 years, he was asked by the West Indian Company to become pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church in the

community of Breukelen (now Brooklyn), on Long Island. He passed the exams for the Classis of Amsterdam, and was soon sent out for a term of four years. At the same time, Peter Stuyvesant requested him to preach at his Bouwerij (Bowery), for the private circle of the Governor-Director.<sup>3</sup> Selyns was one of the few persons in the colony, who really had a good background and thorough education. He had studied Theology at the renowned Protestant University of Leiden. And like most of his fellow students, he knew the mainstream classical poets like Virgil, Horace and Ovid. Accordingly, again as most academics in those days, he wrote poetry himself, in Latin when it concerned occasions for fellow students, but even more poems in the Dutch vernacular language. After graduating, his religious activities would never prevent him from composing elegant verses, not even in New Netherland.

During Selyns' four years term in the colony, there were several major hostilities between the Dutch colonists and the Indians. Already upon arriving in New Amsterdam, in July 1660, Selyns was confronted with war. Governor Stuyvesant, who by virtue of his position, should have welcomed the new minister, was not there. He was at Wiltwijck (or Esopus, today's Kingston), far up the Hudson river, to negotiate a peace with the Indians in the so called First Esopus War. Selyns had to meet him there, and started his work in Breukelen only after two months, in September 1660.

The second clash between the natives and Dutch colonists took place in the third year of Selyns' term. Again it happened at Wiltwijck, culminating in the infamous Esopus Massacre of 1663.<sup>4</sup> According to their regular tactics, the Indians raided the colonist village completely by surprise. They had come up to Wiltwijck with seemingly friendly intentions. On entering, however, they had opened fire. Since no one had expected the assault, the loss of lives and materials was unprecedented. Men working in the fields got killed before they could even reach their arms. Men staying in the village at the time of the raid, were butchered. Houses were burnt. Women, some even pregnant, were killed or burnt alive. Also, approximately fifty persons were taken away as hostages. Among them, there were thirteen women and thirty children. The massacre, in June 1663, started a war that went on for over half a year. Continuously, Dutch forces set out for terrible retaliations. They searched for relatives, friends and children who had been taken prisoners, finding most of them back, and in the meantime destroying several Indian settlements.

The preacher

The massacre caused great consternation throughout the colony, from New Amsterdam itself to the tiny Dutch villages on Long Island. In Breukelen, Reverend Selyns received direct orders from the Governor, to have a special Day of Prayers. Accordingly, the minister published an Ordinance to his community, announcing the prayers in order ‘to induce the Almighty to pity and mercy, and New Netherland to penitence and repentance’.<sup>5</sup> Apart from the religious dimensions, there were two more points of interest. Firstly, the Ordinance underlined that there were good reasons for this tragic event. The massacre of Esopus was God’s punishment over the colony’s many sins: lack of divine worship, blasphemy, drunkenness, lasciviousness, fornication, adultery, hatred, envy, lying and deceiving, pomp and luxury:<sup>6</sup>

We are now seeing the Lord’s wrath burning severely against us, with his hand raised, not only threatening us with a war that will ruin the country, but also making us already feel the consequences of such a war – namely the capture, murder, and burning of our friends, fellow-countrymen, and co-inhabitants by the cruel and ferocious barbarians at Esopus, all of this being a righteous retaliation and visitation by our God for the horrible sins by which we irritate Him and for our all too great lack of gratitude for the many blessings and benefits received.

The other point of interest in the Ordinance is that God’s warnings should have been noticed over the past few months. Two other disasters had preceded. Had the people paid more attention to these portents, they might have corrected their way of living sooner. First there had been a rather unique, and thus portentous natural phenomenon. The Ordinance referred to it in a fitting Bible quotation: ‘He stretched his hand out against his people, and He struck them, so that the mountains trembled’.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, contemporary sources confirm the occurrence of a heavy earthquake with lightening skies in 1663.<sup>8</sup> The second warning had been the devastating epidemic outbreak of smallpox, killing lots of people:<sup>9</sup>

A few months ago, God Almighty, the righteous judge of heaven and earth, thundered over this country and people, through the voice of His righteous judgments, visiting every corner of the country with the very contagious disease smallpox, by which many people, regardless of age and in greater number than ever before, were torn away from the lands of the living.

Thus, the Ordinance of 1663 reveals a year of extreme crisis in the colony. Firstly, the earthquake brought destruction and fear, then there was the outbreak of smallpox on an unprecedented scale. And on top of that came the Esopus Massacre, stirring up the war with the Indians, causing a great loss of people, houses, land and crops, as well as a serious set back in trade and economic activity. Especially the current war was a great threat to the welfare of the colony, and had to be averted by all possible means. Therefore, the Day of Prayers was planned and prescribed in the Ordinance. Furthermore, in order to intensify the bidding for peace, the holy ceremony was to be repeated on every first Wednesday of the following months.

The poet

In addition to the Ordinance in Selyns' church records of Breukelen, more indications about the crisis of 1663 can be found in his private poetry. The manuscript volume, which is now kept by the New York Historical Society, contains some two hundred poems in his elegant handwriting.<sup>10</sup> Some are in Latin, most in Dutch. They are primarily occasional compositions, written for friends or family on major events, such as the birth of a child, the academic graduation of a colleague, a birthday, or the death of a person. This feature allows roughly dating: in chronology the poems cover a period of almost 30 years. Only a few date from Selyns' four years term in New Netherland.

One of these, however, is the masterpiece *Bridal Torch*, which has been edited with a translation in the appendix to this article.<sup>11</sup> The poem is unique in various ways. Firstly, it is the most extensive piece of poetry ever composed by Selyns, comprising 104 lines, on six pages of the manuscript.<sup>12</sup> Secondly, it has a fine structure. The separate lines are built up in the iambic six feet metre, or alexandrines. The rimes at the end of the verses reveal complexity. Instead of common pairs (AA BB), this poem alternates rime, showing a correspondence between every first and third line on the one hand, and every second and fourth (ABAB) on the other. In order to stress this alternation, the odd lines have masculine rime (one last syllable riming), whereas the even lines are feminine, with their last two syllables riming. So, the poem is carefully built up from four line subdivisions, or quatrains. Of all the poetry in the Selyns volume, the *Bridal Torch* is the most elaborate one in structure.

According to its subtitle, the poem was composed for the wedding of a respectable friend and colleague in the colony, Aegidius Luyck. He had come over from Holland only one year ago, in 1662, for the purpose of instructing the Governor's sons. Hence, Selyns and

Luyck were well acquainted, as Stuyvesant's private preacher and private teacher. Furthermore, Luyck was in charge of the highest public educational institute of New Amsterdam, the respectable Latin School. The bride in this wedding was Judith van Isendoorn. Of her, not much is known, except that she was a member of the Stuyvesant family, and therefore in the highest social circle of the colony. When her first child, Catharijntje, was baptized, both governor Stuyvesant himself and his wife Judith Bayard were witnesses at the ceremony.

The wedding of Aegidius Luyck and Judith van Isendoorn was quite a special occasion for Selyns. Not only were they good friends, they lived in the highest social circuit in the colony, they were *protégés* of the Director-Governor and they were lovers of the literature and art. These are the reasons why the *Bridal Torch* is more than just a wedding poem.

[illustration: Henricus Selyns *Bridal Torch*. First page of the poem in his manuscript book, coll. of New York Historical Society]

### The *Bridal Torch*

The poem is a baroque narrative, featuring Cupid, the winged god, whose arrows make people fall in love. However, the poem depicts the boy in sorrow. He is on the run for Mars, the dreadful god of war. In the third quatrain, Cupid witnesses the horrors of war. He sees an attack of Indian warriors, who by surprise raid a Dutch village. They burn houses, kill the men, and roast the children and women, some even pregnant. Other people flee from the village, and also Cupid takes refuge in the mountains. But, in the panic of being on the run, he forgets his bow and arrows, which the Indians immediately take as appropriate spoil.

In the second part of the poem, Cupid, after his flight, sits all alone in the Catskill mountains, weeping over his fate. 'Why', he asks, 'should *I* be victim of Mars' warfare? I didn't do anything wrong. The love I stand for, is pure. And the noble purpose of my love is holy matrimony.' In contrast, a punishment would be just for those who sinned in the carnal type of love (lust and lasciviousness), or those who lived their lives in drunkenness, in pomp and luxury.

The next quatrain brings back to memory the portentous warnings that had preceded the Esopus war. 'Remember the earth', says Cupid, 'how it was shaken, how fires fell from

the sky, and smallpox scourged the land. By these disasters the colony was severely damaged, trade fell back. And now, with the war, it seems we have come to the end of all.'

The third part depicts the sad crisis for Cupid himself: even though he flies over the city and villages again, the god of love is powerless, now that his bow and arrows have been taken as spoils of war. Once in a while he may find an Indian arrow, dropped in the way. But these arrows are so unlike his own ones. Even though he tries, they are not effective. People just don't fall in love anymore, and weddings are hard to find.

But in the fourth part the tide is turning. People, it seems, have suffered long enough. Now and then, prisoners that were taken away by the Indians, return from captivity. The Indians themselves, forced by Dutch retaliation, are now ready to come to peace terms. As soon as Cupid hears of this, he goes straight to the Indians, and demands back his attributes. Angry and self confident he addresses the warriors: 'Who has my bow, where are my arrows? You bastards! Why did you take *my* things away? My shooting was innocent, I just want people to fall in love.' The Indians don't really get it, they find him a strange boy. But in order to calm his temper, do not hesitate to return his arms.

Now, at the happy end of the story, Cupid is back in business. He goes out looking for new victims. In New Amsterdam he finds, of course, the couple of Aegidius Luyck and Judith Isendoorn. With two arrows their marriage is arranged. All over the colony people are rejoicing. Everyone is blessing the young couple. In conclusion, the poet wishes them peace, salvation, and the fruits of marriage.

The *Bridal Torch* is a most intriguing poem not only for its elaborate rime scheme and metre. Also, the interpretation has different layers. At its basic level, it is indeed a poem composed for the occasion of a wedding. That is shown by the plot end: Aegidius Luyck and Judith van Isendoorn fall in love by Cupid's arrows, get married and are congratulated by the community and by the author of the poem. This ending, however, could have been the *whole* poem, for here are all the topics required in 17th century wedding poetry: the falling in love, the wedding and the message of congratulation. But before reaching this point, the poem has already been underway for eighty lines. For a three quarters length, the *Bridal Torch* is not concerned with the bride and groom at all. Clearly the poem has a deeper message.

The large part preceding the actual wedding scene, is a most fascinating baroque invention. On the one hand there is the classical tradition, featuring the mythological god Cupid, but on the other hand there are many elements completely modern, and unknown to the ancient world. The setting is not an Arcadian landscape, but Cupid is transferred into a

most concrete and recognizable world: the settlement from which he fled, the Catskill mountains where he sat and wept over his fate, the city and villages where he dwelled without powers, and finally the Fort where his two victims got hit. Furthermore, the events in the story plot are highly unconventional. It is a remarkable thing for Cupid to be a victim of war, or to lose his powers. And it is completely unprecedented that the ones laying their hands on his bow and arrows, were American Indians. Classical antiquity couldn't ever have thought of Cupid furiously demanding his attributes back from the Indians in New Netherland.

So, the invention of the poem is partly classical and partly actual. But why did the poet, on the occasion of a marriage, build up that whole baroque plot around the Esopus Massacre? Why did he want his Cupid to make a connection between the actual wedding and the Indian war? The key to the answer lies in the motives. Throughout the poem Cupid is depicted as pure and innocent. The two things he desires, are just love and peace. Also, he is a vulnerable child, who runs from fighting. In war he is completely lost and powerless. That is most elegantly pointed out when the Indians take his bow and arrows. Cupid, in this poem, is the opposite of war. The *Bridal Torch*, therefore, apart from being an occasional wedding poem, is an allegory on the blessings of peace. Opposed to the horrors of war, as shown in the description of the Esopus Massacre, the great losses and the languishing colony, are the benefits of peace, as shown in the icon of harmony, prosperity and fertility: marriage.

### Rubens' *Peace and War*

Selyns' allegorical poem of 1663 has a parallel in the visual arts. Some thirty years earlier, Peter Paul Rubens had created his famous 'Peace and War'.<sup>13</sup> This painting, now in the London National Gallery, was executed in the context of the 17<sup>th</sup> century European wars that exhausted the continent. Its painter was from Antwerp, the city that perhaps suffered most of all in the conflict. Once populous, vibrant and prosperous in commerce, it went through a deep crisis during the war. Trade, art and cultural life never fully recovered. Rubens, in his service as a diplomat of the Catholic King of Spain, was sent out to negotiate peace with England. In the process, he presented this magnificent, meaningful painting to King Charles I. It illustrated Rubens' hopes for the peace he was trying to conclude.

[illustration: Peter Paul Rubens, *Peace and War*. Oil on canvas  
203.5 x 298 cm. National Gallery, London]

The central figure represents Pax (Peace) in the person of Ceres, goddess of the earth, sharing her bounty with the group of figures in the foreground. To the right of Pax is Minerva, goddess of wisdom. She drives away Mars and Alecto, the gods of war who have the colour of death. In opposition to the horrors of war, the blessings of Peace are on the left side. Two nymphs bring in riches and arts (the tambourine). Above the head of Pax is a little *putto*, with Mercury's staff in his hand, the symbol of trade. A satyr is at her feet, as a symbol of fertility, holding a Cornucopia or Horn of Plenty. Well balanced on the other side of the middle is a different kind of fertility. Here is Cupid, seen on the back with his wings. He leads three innocent children towards to riches of peace. The love god is not alone in leading the children. There is another little boy, whose attribute is a torch. This mythological figure is Hymen, the personification of marriage. In his hand is the bridal torch. The children are the fruits of marriage. With all the elements identified, Rubens' baroque painting shows a strong opposition between the horrors of war and the blessings of peace, both in its invention, and in the rhetorical positioning of the elements in the painting. Love and marriage are depicted as two major effects of peace, highlighted in the middle foreground.

## Conclusion

Rubens' allegorical painting 'War and Peace' may be regarded as the final spark to light the *Bridal Torch*. It shows that the elaborate poem exceeded the occasional moment of the wedding, and commented, with universal motives from European anti-war art, on the actual 1663 crisis in New Netherland. In his Ordinance, minister Henricus Selyns straightforwardly urged moral values upon his community. All the disasters were, in that perspective, punishments of God. As a poet, however, he refrains from moralizing thunders. By refined artistry he gets his message across in an excellent poem, which surely must have charmed his audience, as it still charms now.

## Appendix

BRUYDLOFS-TOORTS voor  
D. AEGIDIUS LUYCK,  
Rector der Latynsche Schole tot Nieuw-Amsterdam, en  
JUDITH VAN ISENDOORN.  
Opgestoocken kort na d'Esopische Moordt, gepleegt te Wiltwyck door de Wilden, in Nieuw-Nederlandt, A°. 1663

Hoe ras wordt 't Minnevyer door 't Oorlogs-vyer geblust;  
Want Mars comt qualyck om d'onnoselheyt te tergen,  
Oft 't lust Cupido niet, die Vreede en liefde lust,  
En denckt sig selven voor de wapens te verbergen.

Hy merckt dan 't onverwacht en voorbedacht verraet,  
En seyde: Is dit recht, so steelgewys te komen?  
Men heeft een vyandts-hert en vriendelyck gelaet,  
Maer 't past voor Absaloms en Joabs-list te schroomen.

Syn woordt en is niet koudt, en vindt hy op syn woordt  
Helaes! niet huys op huys van Wildt gedrocht beladen?  
Niet kindt op kindt gerooft? niet man op man vermoordt?  
Niet schuur op schuur verbrandt en swang're vrouw gebraden?

Men wyckt dan, daer men wyckt, uyt Wiltwyck zy myn wyck,  
En neeme, spreekt dit wicht, myn cours na bosch en bergen.  
Voorts soeckt hy pyl en boog, maer waren te gelyck  
Tot buyt der Wilden, die se hier en daer verbergen.

Die sig tot Paeren quyt, is syn gereedschap quyt,  
Maer so hy niet by tyts gepast hadt op syn vlercken,  
Sy hadden hem gedoot, gequest of weggeleyt  
Om voor de wilden oft aen 't wilden Fort te wercken.

Nu sat hy dickwils op 't gebergte van Kats-kil,  
En claegde, Wie gy zyt, en vloect geen kuysche Minnen,  
Tot Hymen streckt myn lust, en Echte Staat myn wil.  
Maer vloect, wiens sinnen zyn, vervloecte en wulpsche sinnen.

Oncuysheyt, dronckenschap en snode hovaerdy  
Zyn oorsaeck van dit werck, drye schryende landtsonden,  
En jagen heyl en vrêe uw land en rêe verby.  
Door ongebondentheyt wordt sulcke straf ontbonden.

Die lang gewaerschout is, wort selden seer beclaegt.  
Hy seydt dan: Siet te rug, en siet de aerde beeven,  
Hoe 't vyer daelt uyt de lucht, en 't landt van 't pockiens waegt;  
Oft vraegt, die leeven, wie berooft zyn van het leeven.

Allengskens gaet de lust en coopmanschap te niet  
En 't daegelyksche quaet baert daegelycke quaelen.  
Hoe, sprack hy, was dit windt? 't zyn boode van 't verdriet,  
En spoore tot berouw, oft 't laest moet 't al betaelen.

Met dit en dat beclag verslyt het wicht syn tijdt;  
Dan vloog hy wederom, en vloog na stadt en dorpen,  
Maer waer hy vloog, hy is syn boog en pylen quyt,  
En hadt syn Ambacht haest door moeylyckheyt verworpen.

Dit luckt hem by geval. hy vindt somwyls een pyl,  
Gevallen op de weg, ontvallen van de Wilden.  
Hy neemt geen lang beraet, maer scherptse met ter yl.  
't Schynt, dat sy eenigsins syn lust en onlust stilden.

Maer laesten zyn te seer van d'eersten ongelyck:  
Wie wordt door Min verruckt? Wie moet van Min versmachten?  
En wat het zy, het set geen sooden aan de dyck.  
Syn cracht is cleynder, en syn pyls van cleynder crachten.

Oft dit is oorsaeck, datter weyniger getrouwt,  
En meerder zyn verreyt heeft groot'lycks syn bedencken.  
Ten zy dan, dat men 't wyt den Hoop, die trots en stout  
Ten onrecht hoopte 't Recht van eygendom te krencken.

Gewelt omtrent gewelt, en dorst na Christen bloet,  
(Daer dienstig was gedult) en past geen Christi schapen;  
Ofschoon 't onnosel wicht, noch winst noch voordeel doet  
'tIs beter, dat men laet onguure kinders slapen.

Die wacht bequaemer tydt, spilt, wat hy spilt, geen tydt,  
En waerom al te laet, en niet by tydts te laeten.  
Maer dat bevestigt werd', na 's landts geleegentheyt,  
Het Recht van Hooger Recht, en Staet van Hooger Staten.

Eij treedt niet van het wicht en rechte oogmerck af,  
Ten laesten, schynt ons quaet en landtstraf te vermind'ren.  
Dan rysen nu en dan gevangens uyt het graf,  
Dan sneuvelt 't wildt gedrocht, dan vluchten vrouw en kind'ren,

Dan wort 't Majies verwoest, en Wilden-fort verbrant,  
Dan crygtmen roers ten roof, dan brengtmen Seewant binnen,  
Dan vliegtmen door het Bosch, en looptmen door het lant,  
Maer sien geen Vluchtelings, noch kans om eer te winnen.

Hoe dingt 't Barbarisch volck door meenig Tolck na peys,  
En tracht met cracht de ree van Vreede te beseylen,  
Maer als 't Cupido hoort, hy comt en maeckt syn eisch;  
Of vraegt, Wie heeft myn boog? En klaegt, Waer zyn myn pylen?'

Booswichten, spreeckt dit Wicht, wat boosheyt moet dit zyn.  
Heb ick dan iets gedaen? Moet gy 't dan my vergelden?  
Ten ware, dat myn Boog ontstack verliefde pyn,  
Ick schoot u nae den maet, als gy Cupido stelde.

Sy geeven geen bescheyt, maer geeven pyl en boog,  
En soecken syn gemoedt met 't eygen goedt te stillen.  
Hy neemt se metter haest, en licht syn Boog om hoog,  
En scheen iets sonderlings met 't wapentuig te willen.

In 't \*fort staet ieder, en beseft dit Crygs-gebruyck. \*N.Amsterd.  
LUYCK siet te venster uyt, en JUDITH staet beneden;  
Maer eermen 't siet oft denckt, hy schiet en trefte LUYCK;  
Noch syn Verbondt-lust is met d'eerste schoot te vreden.

Waer schiet hy, (vraegt het Volck) waer was 'et, daer hy schiet?  
LUYCK spreeckt niet, want hy voelt iets vreemt syn hert doorbooren.  
Terwylmen siet na LUYCK, en JUDITH opwaerts siet,  
Hy schiet ten tweden mael en trefte ISENDOREN.

Dit maect dan veel gewoels, en baerde groot geluyt  
Van glam en weêrglam: want sy spreecken niet, sy schreeuwen  
Door t gantsche landt: Geluck den Bruydegom en Bruydt,  
Geluck dat Echte Paer, geluck voor veele Eeuwen,

Geluck. en wat men roept, zy duysent mael geluck,  
Na ziel en lichaem, en so hier, als na dit leeven.  
Van binnen zy geluck, en buytens huys geen druck  
En die ons geeft geluck, is machtig 't haer te geeven.

Maer wy, die by dit Wicht, verstaen noch kindt van Mars,  
Noch Soon van Venus, noch d'onreynicheyt der Menschen,  
Maer 't geen ons dryft ten echt, en maect van onecht dwars,  
Ten besten van Vermeêrt, en wast te samen, wenschen.

Dat voor dit nieuwe paer zy Vrede en Salicheyt,  
Dat LUYCKS ontloocken Heyl, en ISENDOORENS seden  
Ontluycken meer en meer, en groeyen metter tydt,  
En datse stervende beseulen 's Heemels reede.

BRIDAL TORCH for  
D. AEGIDIUS LUYCK,  
Rector of the Latin Latin School at New Amsterdam, and  
JUDITH VAN ISENDOORN,  
Lighted shortly after the Esopus Massacre committed at Wiltwyck by the Indians, in New  
Netherland, in the year 1663

How soon the flame of War destroys the flame of Love;  
For as soon as Mars comes wickedly to hurt the innocent,  
Cupid is displeased, who likes Peace and Love,  
He wants to hide from weapons.

He sees the unforeseen and treacherous plan  
And says: Can this be right, to come so stealthily?  
They show a friendly face, but cloak a hostile mind,  
'Tis well to fear for Absalom's and Joab's cunning.

His words are yet still warm, and does he not behold,  
Alas! house after house posted with Indian monsters?  
Child upon child taken away? Man upon man killed  
Barn upon barn consumed. And pregnant women roasted?

People flee, wherever they can. From Wiltwyck I too flee,  
And take refuge, so this boy says, in the woods and hills.  
He seeks his bow and arrows, but they have both become  
The Indian's spoil, hiding them here and there.

The god who joins people, has lost his tools now,  
And had he not betimes looked after his wings,  
They surely had killed or wounded him, or taken hostage,  
To serve the Indians, or build their forts.

Then, he often sat high up in the Catskill mountains,  
Weeping thus: Whoever you are, don't curse my chaste love,  
To Hymen leads my love, to wedlock leads my will.  
But curse those whose thoughts are cursed and impure.

Lasciviousness, drunkenness and evil arrogance,  
This land's three deplorable sins, have effected this ruin,  
They drive peace and prosperity away from our land and harbour.  
Loose moral unloosened this punishment over us.

Those who have been warned since long, rarely need to be pitied.  
He says: Look back and remember the earth, how it was shaken  
How fire came from the sky, how the land witnessed small-pox  
Or ask those who live, whose lives have been taken.

Now, pleasures and trading are vanishing  
Each and every day troubles cause daily pains  
Do you think, he says, this was just wind? They are portents of sorrow,  
Spurs for repentance, or else all will be lost in the end.

With this and like complaining the boy spent his time.  
Then he flew up again, and flew over town and villages;  
But wherever he went, he had nor bow nor arrows,  
And in frustration he had almost given up his work.

Sometimes he 's lucky; for now and then he finds an arrow,  
Dropped in the way, just where the Indians left it.

He doesn't hesitate, but sharpens it as quickly as he can,  
And this, it seems, eased for a while his passion and his grief.

But the arrows were quite unlike his owns,  
Who is struck by love? Who dies of passion?  
Whatever love it is, it puts no sods to the dyke,  
His powers are less and the arrows have less power.

Whether this is the reason, that fewer people marry,  
And more people leave, is worthy of reflection,  
Unless one blames the Hope of boldly and unjustly  
Abusing the rights of property.

Violence in times of violence, and thirst for Christian blood  
(Where endurance was needed), does not fit the Christian flock.  
Although the innocent boy does not bring any gain or profit  
It's better to let savage children sleep.

Those who bide their time, do not, whatever they spill, spill time,  
And why too late, and not in time hold back?  
But let us uphold, according to our lands traditions,  
The Right of Higher Rights, and the State of Higher States.

Ay, let us never go astray from this boy and his just aims.  
Finally, it seems, our misery and punishment diminish,  
The captives, now and then, return as from their graves,  
The savage monster is slain, his wife and children flee.

His maize is all destroyed, his forts are burnt down,  
His guns are taken for booty, just like his seewan  
Men run through the woods, all over the land,  
But they see no fugitives, nor a chance for glory.

The savages, through many interpreters, seek peace  
And try hard to sail into peace's harbour.  
But, on hearing this, Cupid shows up with his terms,  
He asks, Who has my bow? And complains, Where are my arrows?

You evil men, says the boys, what kind of evil is this?  
What did I do wrong? Why should I be punished?  
Unless my bow caused pains of love,  
When I hit you just as Cupid was supposed to do.

They do not answer, but return his bow and arrows  
And try to ease his mind by giving back what is his.  
He quickly seizes them, and lifts his bow high up,  
Having, it seemed, something special in mind.

In the Fort New Amsterdam, everyone watches this war action.  
While LUYCK looks from the window, and JUDITH stands beneath,  
And before anyone sees or notices it, he hits LUYCK.  
But this first shot has not satisfied his lust for coupling.

Where was the shot (ask the people) and where is he shooting now?  
LUYCK doesn't answer, he feels something going through his heart.  
While the people still watch, and JUDITH looks at him,  
He shoots a second time, and now ISENDOREN is hit.

This of course stirs great commotion, and caused wide and far  
Re-echoing of joy. They do not speak, they cry out  
All over the country: Joy to the Groom and Bride,  
Joy to this married couple, joy for many centuries.

Blessings, let them wish a thousand blessings  
For body and soul, now and hereafter,  
Let happiness fill your home, and no sorrow press on it.  
Who gives us happiness, can bestow it on them as well.

Now we, who by this boy do not understand Mars' offspring,  
Nor the son of Venus, nor any mortal impurity,  
But the driving force towards wedlock, that makes the looseness tight,  
We wish you all the best and say: Multiply in sacred bond.

May this new married couple know peace and salvation,  
May LUYCK'S budding fortune, and ISENDOREN'S fine conduct  
Develop more and more, and thus grow in time,  
So that, at their final hour, they may enter Heaven's harbour.

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<sup>1</sup> Adriaen vander Donck *Beschrijvinge van Nieuw-Nederlant*. T'Aemsteldam: by Evert Nieuwenhof, 1655. A copy of this rare first edition is in the New York State Library (Albany). The second edition (Amsterdam, 1656) is more frequent. An English translation was made by Jeremiah Johnson: *Description of the New Netherlands* (New York, 1968). A web edition at <http://stuyvesant.library.uu.nl/>. Both Van der Donck and his famous book were recently discussed at length in R. Shorto, *The Island at the centre of the World* (London [etc], 2004), translated in Dutch as *Nieuw Amsterdam: eiland in het hart van de wereld* (Amsterdam, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> See the bio-bibliographical study by Jos van der Linde, 'Henricus Selijns (1636-1701): dominee, dichter en historicus in Nieuw-Nederland en de Republiek', in *Geen schepsel wordt vergeten: liber amicorum voor Jan Willem Schulte Nordholt ter gelegenheid van zijn vijfenzestigste verjaardag*, ed. by J.F. Heijbroek (Amsterdam, 1985) p. 37-60

<sup>3</sup> After completing his four years term Seljns returned to *patria* in 1664. However, in 1682 he accepted a call from the First Reformed Dutch church of New York City, of which he was pastor until his death in 1701.

<sup>4</sup> For a general description of the Esopus wars, see Fried, M.B., *The Early History of Kingston and Ulster County* (Marbletown, Kingston, New York, 1975). A most valuable study of the impact of the wars on the early settlements is Brink A., *Invading Paradise, Esopus Settlers at War with Natives, 1659, 1663* ([s.l.]: Xlibris corporation, 2003). A detailed contemporary report can be found in the Military Journal of Capt. Martin Cregier, describing the massacre and the hunting down of the Indians from July 1663 to January 1664, edited and translated from the Dutch by E.B.O'Callaghan. In: *Doc. Hist. State New York IV* (1851) p. 33-62, online: <http://www.hudsonrivervalley.net/colonialAmericaLesson/esopusjournal1863.php>. See also the recent book by Merwick, D., *The Shame and the Sorrow. Dutch-Amerindian Encounters in New Netherland*. Philadelphia, 2006.

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<sup>5</sup> ‘Om den Almachtigen te bewegen tot ontferminge en barmhertigheyt, en N.Nederlant tot boetvaardigheyt en bekeeringe’. This and following quotations have been taken from the Ordinance edition and translation by Linde, J. van der (ed.), *Old first dutch reformed church of Brooklyn, New York: first book of records, 1660-1752*, with an introd. by H.G. Hageman (Baltimore, 1983) p. 68-71

<sup>6</sup> Linde (see note 5), p. 70-71: ‘Ende alsoo wy nu wederomme de Toorne des Heeren swaerlyck tegens ons brandende sien met syn opgeheeven hant, niet alleen dreygende een Lantverdervende Oorlog, maer ons reeds doende gevoelen de daedelycke Vruchten des selfs in ’t gevangen neemen, moorden, en branden van onse Vrunden, Lantsgenooten, en meede ingeseetenen door de Cruellen en wreede Barbaren in de Esopus. Alle ’t welcke dan sijnde een Rechtveerdige Vergeldinge en huysbesoeking van onse God over onse gruwelycke en Godtergende Sonden en al te grote ondancckaerheijt voor veele genooten seegeningen en weldaeden.’

<sup>7</sup> Linde (see note 5), p. 70-71 ‘Hij heeft tegens het selve [zijn volk] syne hant uytgestreckt, ende hy heeft het geslagen, so dat de Bergen hebben gebeeft’ (quotation from Jesaya 5:25).

<sup>8</sup> Contemporary sources from Canada and New England about the earthquake, quoted in Murphy, H.C., *Anthology of New Netherland* (New York, 1865; reissued Amsterdam, 1966) p. 174-178.

<sup>9</sup> Linde (see note 5), p. 68-71: ‘Den Almachtigen Godt, den Rechtveerdigen Richter des Heemels ende der aerden, weijnig maenden geleeden over dit lant en volck heeft gedondert, door de stemme van syn Rechtveerdige Oordeelen, het selve rontom besoeckende met de seer besmettelycke Sieckte der kinderpocken, waerdoor veele sonder onderscheyt van jaeren in een meerder getal dan oyt voordesen uyt de landen der leevendige syn weg geruckt’.

<sup>10</sup> The 180 pages manuscript, entitled Henricus Selyns *Poems*, is in the collection of the New York Historical Society, location: NYHS NYHistSoc MssColl; call nr. BV Selyns.

<sup>11</sup> The *Bridal Torch* was published for the first and last time, unfortunately not without errors in transcription or translation and with a major misprint in the Dutch fourth quatrain, by Murphy, H.C., *Anthology of New Netherland* (New York, 1865; reissued Amsterdam, 1966) p. 136-147.

<sup>12</sup> Selyns *Poems* (see n. 10), fol. 113-118.

<sup>13</sup> See Downes, K., ‘Rubens’ “Peace and war” at the National Gallery’, in *Burlington Magazine London*, vol. 121 (1979) no. 915, p. 397-398.