

An anthology of 19th-century French women poets

The publication of an anthology of female poetry may, in France, seem a bit of a gamble, even a challenge. In the first place, because of French poetical production itself: although the 19th century is probably the most fruitful and inventive period for poetry in French literary history, in general only a few names of women poets are noted (at most, those of Marceline Desbordes-Valmore and Anna de Noailles). Secondly, because of the French literary critical tradition: as one may know, feminist criticism is less well developed in France than in other western countries, and it is primarily interested in genres other than poetry. Although an entire tradition of commentaries and publications on women poets has been in existence since the 19th century, these texts are characteristically written in a flowery and depreciatory register. This is shown, for example, by the title of the anthology published in 1948 by Yves-Gérard Le Dantec, *La guirlande des Muses françaises de Marceline Valmore à Marie Noël*. Even if the need for a book such as the one we have just published seems beyond dispute, in so far as it is difficult, or even impossible, to read in a current edition most of the women poets cited and studied,¹ its composition and publication faced a strong, double prejudice. Objections can be made on aesthetic grounds – it is not good poetry –, and on ideological grounds – they are not feminist texts, nor even always critical of the social order which tries to keep women in their place. A certain obstinacy and a clearly defined point of view were therefore needed to bring the production and publication of this anthology to a satisfactory conclusion.

The academic and scientific context

Femmes poètes du XIXe siècle. Une anthologie has, under my supervision, been collectively realized by a research group within the 'Littérature and idéologies au XIXe siècle' team of the UMR LIRE CNRS-Lyon 2. For this 'équipe mixte',² the study of the position of women in the literary institution and of the representations of sexual difference has constituted, for several years, an axis of study but not the principal

¹ Only selections of poems by Desbordes-Valmore are currently available (Desbordes-Valmore 1983 and Noailles 1991). The complete poetical works of Desbordes-Valmore (Desbordes-Valmore 1978) are no longer in stock neither, those of Renée Vivien (Vivien 1986), as well as the following anthologies (Séché 1909, Moulin 1963, Moulin 1966, Moulin 1975).

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common goal. In accordance with my own research, the study of women poets can be seen within the framework of an investigation into the literary genres, in so far as they are affected by the difference between the sexes. This has led me to consider, at the two extremities of the hierarchy of genres, on the one hand, the production of (real or fictional) epistolary writing, traditionally considered as a *feminine* genre, and of which the literary status is problematic; and, on the other hand, poetry, which is, on the contrary, placed at the summit of the hierarchy of genres. The composition of poetry is the creative act par excellence (according to the root *poiein*), and reputed to be difficult and even impossible for women.



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For the team which carried out the project, the habit of considering, firstly, the relation between literature and ideology, and, secondly, literary production that is generally deemed marginal or not legitimate (at the same time, we also collaborated in producing a book on French popular poetry in the 19th century), constituted a framework favouring an approach free from *a priori* and value judgements traditionally applied to what is called 'poésie féminine'. The publication of our anthology was intended to accompany a colloquium entitled *Masculin/féminin dans la poésie et les poétiques du XIXe siècle*,³ which allowed us to discuss the women poets not as a separate entity but as situated in a common historical, poetical and symbolical context, showing how the poetry of women *and* men was marked by sexual difference. The collaboration of the research team (which was almost completely female) could have been problematical, as the members of the team had very different previous experience in connection with the study of women's writing. But this finally turned out to

³ Colloquium held in Lyons in June 1998. Proceedings to be published in 2000.

be an advantage, in that no presupposition could *a priori* be held to be valid, so that we were obliged to define a very precise working protocol. I shall briefly emphasize here some of the methodological problems that we encountered. What criteria should one adopt in selecting both women poets and texts? How should one compose the anthology? How should one approach the question of a possible specificity of women's poetry?

Selection criteria

In spite of what is commonly thought, any serious research on the French 19th century can easily find women poets, even when the survey is limited to published poetry. In producing the anthology of 19th-century French women poets our principal aim was not that of making an exhaustive study or displaying a scholarly precision, but to produce a sizeable work at a reasonable price which would be easily accessible to a readership of men and women students, teachers and researchers. This objective imposed a severe limitation on the selection, for which we have had to try and define the criteria.

The selection of women poets

At the end of our book, a repertory is given of women poets whose work has *not* been studied, so that one can measure the importance and scope of the selection made and, possibly, of analyses and research which can be pursued. Our complete list contains 70 names; 19 women have an article dedicated to them, that is a little more than a fifth of the women poets mentioned in total. We have retained those women who seemed important to us because of their work, but also the ones through whom a quite complete and meaningful *encompassing vision* could be suggested. We have decided to favour the lesser known women poets, in particular from the beginning of the 19th century. In doing so, we have paid less attention to women writing at the end of the century, who had already been studied a little more frequently than earlier writers. The *length* of the different chapters is therefore not proportional to the production of each period: we have been more selective for the chapters dedicated to Romanticism and, especially, to the end of the 19th century (the richness of the production in the 1900s would require a complete book to give an exact idea of the poetic activity of women at that moment).

We have strictly adhered to the *generic definition* of poetry, in contrast to numerous anthologies of women poets in which the criterion of femininity seems to largely prevail at the expense of that of poetry, as if in the world of women artistic and formal questions were in fact secondary: if a woman is known and has written, that justifies her being mentioned. Authors of compilations apparently find it difficult to leave out famous names like those of Germaine de Staël, George Sand or Colette, at the risk of citing very minor texts, even cutting 'poems' out of their prose texts for the purpose of inclusion in the anthology. We have only retained authors of poetical

works which are explicitly stated to be – that is to say in most cases, but not in all – works in verse; some prose poems (those of Marguerite Burnat-Provins) show that, for women too, but certainly to a lesser degree, the definition of poetry has been progressively dissociated from the use of verse in the course of the century.

Despite the limited number of women poets presented, we have tried to suggest the *diversity* of positions and poetical practices, against the idea of a presupposed unity of women's writing. The major, but not exclusive, criteria have been *poetical interest* and *originality*. One could object that this refers to the disputable category of *value*, but it seems to me that indeed this question cannot be avoided. Certainly, one may readily criticize the belief in an atemporal and universal Beauty, and show that in every culture the idea of Beauty is culturally conditioned in accordance with the interests of a particular dominant category at a given moment (and from which women have usually been excluded). And it must be observed that when critical studies of poetry omit any discussion on value in order to devote more attention to historical and formal questions, they tend to mention women poets more often. Thus, Martinon's book⁴ on stanza forms mentions little known names such as Malvina Blanchecotte or Hermance Lesguillon;⁵ and a recent study by Jean-Michel Gouvard on the evolution of the French alexandrine⁶ mentions Louisa Siefert. Several women poets figure in the *corpus* studied by Lieven D'Hulst in *L'évolution de la poésie en France (1780-1830)*,⁷ and in that of Graham Robb for *La poésie de Baudelaire et la poésie française (1838-1852)*.⁸

This does not, however, allow us to reject any idea of poetical or aesthetical value, which would imply that all texts are of equal worth, or that texts by women are worthy of interest because they are by women. To retain poems for this sole reason would be to treat them as documents, and in doing so, inflict yet again on women poets a denial of individuality and true creativity, reproducing under the guise of a historical and sociological curiosity a traditional misogynous disdain. Taking seriously their project to produce a poetical oeuvre, we therefore agreed that certain poems by women writers are more beautiful, more moving, more innovative than others, and that these are not necessarily the most outspokenly feminist poems. Our choice does not therefore systematically ignore established values, and makes enough room for well-known poems by Marceline Desbordes-Valmore or Renée Vivien, but it also goes against traditional hierarchies by, for example, dedicating an article to Louise Colet, who is often ignored by anthologies or solely discussed as the mistress of Flaubert, or to Malvina Blanchecotte, a practically unknown 'popular poet'.

The reputation of women who have made a mark on their era has also been taken into account, either because they incarnated a feminine ideal at a given moment, or because of their links with the literary world. Thus, one can read certain texts by

⁴ Martinon 1912.

⁵ Hermance Lesguillon (1812-1882) has published in every genre. Her poems principally belong to the Romantic era: *Rêveuse* (1833), *Rosées* (1836), *Rayons d'Amour* (1840).

⁶ Gouvard 1993.

⁷ D'Hulst 1987; the bibliography comprises Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, Adélaïde Dufrénoy, Amable Tastu.

⁸ Robb 1993; it comprises Claudia Bachi, Louise Bertin, Louise Colet, Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, Delphine Gay-de Girardin, Hermance Lesguillon, Elisa Mercoeur, Anaïs Ségalas, Mélanie Waldor.

Anais Ségalas, who during the Romantic era embodied a kind of edifying ideal of 'women's poetry', allowing the reader to appreciate more, by way of contrast, the originality and subversive force of certain of her contemporaries. But celebrity has not constituted a systematic criterion, and we have not retained women poets who have been principally known on account of their relations with great men, such as Mélanie Waldor⁹ or Louise Bertin.¹⁰

The selection of poems

Wanting a sufficiently wide choice of poems to suggest the diversity of the works, we deliberately reduced the length of introductory articles to make more space for texts. Their selection has been guided by the same poetical principles as applied for the poets, and by thematic considerations. In particular, we have tried to reproduce texts which deal with the position of women and/or which developed a discourse on poetry, and we have tried to show the role of poetical affiliations as well as that of innovations. But the practice of selection varies in each particular case. The application of thematic criteria to Marceline Desbordes-Valmore would, for example, have meant leaving out the most deservedly well-known poems; such criteria have therefore been used only marginally. Certain contributors wanted to demonstrate the coherence of a body of work (as is the case for the philosophical poetry of Louise Ackermann), others, on the contrary, have wanted to suggest the thematic or prosodic diversity in one and the same woman poet (for example, in Louisa Siefert's work). Generally speaking, the application of collectively defined criteria has left a lot of space for special interests, one's own sensibility and the judgement of each woman participating in the project. For this reason, the names are given of the individuals who composed the articles and the selections. If the plurality of assessments which they represent is inevitably seen as problematical, or even as a source of contradictions, it has, in any case, allowed us to avoid the temptation of the edifying choice, of systematic rehabilitation, and the dogmatism of any poetical or political correctness.

A particular problem was posed by long poems and the way to present them, especially in the work of women poets from the beginning of the century. There was the problem of their place within the whole, but also of their readability for our era, which on the whole tends to valorize short forms. In order not to have to completely reject texts which constitute an important part of the poetical production of the period, we have had to make some cuts, a challengeable practice, but one which is preferable to complete silence. As a general rule, and when access to that state of the text was possible, the given version is the last one published during the life of the author. We only mention in exceptional cases variants, and the spelling has been modernized.

⁹ Mélanie Waldor (1796-1871), Alexandre Dumas' mistress, and authoress of *Poésies du coeur* (1833).

¹⁰ Louise Bertin (1805-1877), daughter of the director of the *Journal des Débats*; a musician friend of Victor Hugo, she wrote for him the libretto for *Esmeralda*, and also wrote poetry: *Glanes* (1842), *Nouvelles glanes* (1876).

The composition of the book and its periodization

The book encompasses a 'long' 19th century (1789-1914) in order to grasp also the period of transition from the 18th to the 19th century, preceding the birth of French Romanticism, and that of the 19th to the 20th century, with the prolific production, which, since Maurras, has often been labelled 'Romantisme féminin'. To allow women poets to be placed within a common history, they are presented *chronologically* and not alphabetically. In four large chapters, *Entre deux siècles*, *Romantismes*, *Modernités*, and *Saphos fin de siècle*, women poets are presented in an order which is not dictated by their *date of birth* but by that of their *first publication*, literally and historically more meaningful than the simple observance of registration which prevails elsewhere.

The chronological plan shows the necessarily arbitrary nature of periodizations and categories in usage. The American historian Joan Kelly once asked whether women had had a Renaissance.¹¹ One might just as well ask oneself whether the French Revolution ever signified progress or liberation¹² for them. We know that from the French Revolution on, women's right of access to the political forum was challenged, and that the Napoleonic Code would then consecrate the regression of women's status in society by making them *minors*, always under the authority of the father or the husband, while throughout the 19th century, with the development of a system of public education, the compulsory education of girls would lag behind that of boys.

Now, what is true of political and social history is also true of literary history, where sometimes one certainly finds coincidences between feminine and masculine temporalities – the golden age of Romantic poetry is also, relatively speaking, that of women poets – but also important discrepancies. This is demonstrated by the chronology given at the end of the volume in the form of a table, showing in two columns what was essential in the production of women and men. Thus, at the beginning, in the first two decades, a rather obscure moment for French poetry between Chénier and Lamartine, women poets played a role which was not negligible, especially in the domains of the elegy and the idyll, where one can surmise the first signs of the Romantic renewal of lyric poetry.

But although they prefigured Romanticism, women did not then occupy a central position after its triumph. Those women who had conceived their hour of glory in the last years of the 18th century and under the First Empire always resisted the idea of a literary revolution, and the rise of Romanticism quickly accelerated their going out of fashion. But even in the following generations, and although Romanticism can appear as a relatively favourable moment in time for women authors, the work of women writers still hardly made any impression. Without going so far as to consider along with Yves Bonnefoy that French Romanticism is 'the greatest example of profoundly masculine poetry',¹³ one must underline that in spite of, or because of, the

¹¹ Kelly-Gadol 1977.

¹² Cf. Fraisse/Perrot 1991, p.23: 'The rupture which took effect at the turn of the century is also the act which brought about the exclusion of women from life in the city, an exclusion which, in a different way, was more radical than that of feudalism'.

¹³In Desbordes-Valmore 1983, p.31 (text also included in Bonnefoy 1988).

exaltation of women and of love which is often considered to be one of its major characteristics, Romanticism does not encourage in France the recognition of a *poetical language enounced by women*.

It is in the following period, and in the context of a hostile reaction, that Romanticism was to be declared *feminine*. The *l'art pour l'art* movement and the poetics which exalt formal perfection view the poet's work through metaphors of the sculptor's work and the struggle to master the material, which implies culturally masculine models such as Michelangelo, and supposedly virile values. Quite soon, and especially under the Second Empire, the tears and sighs through which nascent Romanticism is then summed up seem only good enough to make an Emma Bovary weep in her provincial convent – and the men whom they have also secretly made dreamers, will henceforth, like Baudelaire, take care to display a certain distance, through violence or derision, from these symptoms of effeminacy. This context, to which one must add the proliferation of literary evocations of seductive and castrating women, proves to be not very favourable for the flowering of new work by women poets, and at first sight, the period of poetical modernity, from Baudelaire to Mallarmé, manifests itself as a world uninhabited by women. Their absence at this significant moment in the history of French poetry certainly offers a partial explanation for the assumption that in France there are no women poets worthy of interest. Those whose poems are included in the third chapter of our anthology can only strike one by the heterogeneity of their poetical production, and by the discrepancy that they show when compared to the masculine production of the period – their references are largely drawn from a former period, Lamartine and Hugo (without the most innovative aspects of Hugo's verse). If one could ask oneself whether there was such a thing as a feminine Romanticism, one can definitely not find anything of a feminine poetical modernity at that period, whatever the interest, courage or audacity of the works Louise Michel and Louise Ackermann offered to the reading public. Only Marie Krysinska, who claims the invention of free verse against Gustave Kahn, can be placed in the category of *modernity*.

In contrast, the turn of the century sees a flowering of poetical works by women which create vivid interest. These poems should be read against a background of ideological preoccupations of this period, relating to the evolution of the female condition and the upheaval of relations between the sexes. Meeting the aspiration of a section of the critics and the public towards a more immediately intelligible and 'popular' poetry than Symbolist poetry, the movement which Charles Maurras would soon label as 'feminine Romanticism' and which other critics prefer to call 'fin-de-siècle Sappho', appears as a true literary movement, the development of which is facilitated by the reputation in society and in the literary world of some of its members (Anna de Noailles, Madame Gérard d'Houville, Lucie Delarue-Mardrus). For the first time in French literary history, women's poetry, far from constituting just an anecdotal oddity or marginal footnote to artistic life, turns out to be one of the important meeting points where something is happening in poetry. The phenomenon is seductive but also irritating: perceived by some as a sign of decadence and of disorder, it would not outlive the First World War.

The unity of women's poetry?

Is there some kind of unity to this poetical production, which justifies collecting the texts under the category of the feminine – at the risk of depreciating the best known and strongest of them (one could say that Marceline Desbordes-Valmore has little to gain from such an enterprise although she would certainly not have rejected it), – and authorizing the idea of a specificity of women's poetry? The simple and rapid chronological itinerary we have just made enables us to say *no*: there is no connection, from the point of view of poetical writing, between Constance de Salm, Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, Louise Michel and Anna de Noailles... And one should be prepared to admit that a book of this kind represents a makeshift solution, I would say a necessary step: it is better that these poems can be read in the context of an anthology than that they cannot be read at all. It is a step towards a better knowledge at one and the same time of the poetical tradition and the place of women within that tradition, and a way of taking the debate on women poets away from the realm of pure prejudice which will remain for as long as one cannot read what they have written. But there is a theoretical risk which one has to make explicit and deal with, one through which women poets, who have managed to overcome the numerous barriers, the taboos and omissions of literary history, see themselves relegated to the obligatory question of femininity, as a unifying glaze covering the diversity of voices, poetics and works. Nevertheless, if there is no unity of feminine poetical *production*, there is certainly evidence of uniformity in the *reception* given to women's poetry, where defiance, irony, gallantry and derision intersect. Now, this common treatment calls forth common reactions, analogous discourses and strategies of self-justification from women poets, who may have conferred on their poems certain features, which readers have taken note of and have wanted to take as proof of an eternal femininity. The continuity of the anthology can help to grasp the effect of context and reception, and thus help towards the intelligibility of the poems, while at the same time deconstructing the illusion of an atemporal *femininity*.

The book has been principally conceived as a working tool, open to critical suggestions, to additions and dialogue. A first teaching experience at one of my lectures, which brought the men and women students to use it within the framework of a facultative programme of the third year on 'Women in the French poetical tradition', shows that it prompts both a desire to know more about the traditional invisibility of women in poetry, and very fruitful questions on the categories and hierarchies through which literary history is written – which was certainly one of its objectives.

Translation Roy Bicknell.

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Betje Wolff (1738-1804)
Aagje Deken (1741-1804)



[...] Waarlyk, Broër lief, er is voor een gevoelig man, niets zo treffent, dan het zagt gesprek eener deugdzaame Vrouw, die ongelukkig is. Ik verzogt om de eer te hebben van haar een paar oogenblikken te spreken. [...] Stel u myne verlegenheid voor! Hoe moest ik over geld met een kiesche Vrouw spreken...? ik moest echter. 'Mevrouw, zeide ik, alle menschen zyn niet billyk; zeker Vrek valt u lastig om een beuzeling, dat spyt my; wy kooplieden horen niet dan van geld. Ik ken dien man. Maak my zo gelukkig van deeze honderd ducaten, die ik niet beter weet uit te zetten, van myn aantenemen; en ontsla u van zo eenen knaap. Ik heb thans geen tyd om het contract te schryven; myn naam is Edeling'. Ik lag het geld in haren schoot. Zy was zo aangedaan, dat zy weinig zeggen kon, maar hare schone oogen spraken de eenvoudige taal der erkenntisse. [...]

Zo als zy my in de Eetkamer leidde, zag ik eene Juffer, die my, op dat zelfde oogenblik, geheel en al, en voor altoos overmeesterde. Ik stond een oogenblik als een beeld, maar herstelde my in zo verre, dat ik het gezelschap konde groeten. Waarlyk, myne kniën knikten onder my; 't was, op myn woord, juist of ik een electriche, ik mag zeggen Musschenbroeksche, schok door myne ziel voelde heen horten. Ik zag niemand dan deeze Bevalligheid. Zy zat, huisselyk gekleed, en drok bezig met het knopen van manchetten. Hemel... en zy heeft geen Broër. Voor wien maakt zy die dan? Myn jonge Vriend gaf haar gelegenheid om haar vernuft te tonen; 't was stekelachtig, doch zo een prikje doet geen zeer. Zy houdt hem voor haar Bagatelle; dat zag ik klaar. De Weduw gaf vervolgens oorzaak om haar lieve kind, zo als zy deeze Engel noemde, beter vertoning te doen maken. Ik zag, dat zy een gevoelig hart en gezont oordeel hadt: hoewel zy de fraaiste zaken met de bekoorlykste losheid en onbedwongenheid voortpraatte.

Broer lief, deeze Vrouw, of geen Vrouw! Gy weet myne sentimenten op dat stuk. Nu heeft myn hart dat gevonden, daar het dus lange naar zocht. Het lieve Meisje is de Dochter van den Heer Burgerhart: zy is ouderloos. De achtingwaarde Weduw heeft zig genoodzaakt gezien Juffrouwen te logeeren; myne Beminde is eene derzelve. Het begon te regenen, en wy bleven zo al, onvermerkt, tot dat de bescheidenheid ons geboodt te vertrekken. Dat afscheid! och, die niet verliefd is, kan het niet bezeffen. Ik kan haar niet meer van my afgezondert beschouwen. Maar voor wien zyn toch die manchetten?

[...] Rien au monde, mon cher frere, n'est plus touchant pour une ame sensible que la conversation d'une femme vertueuse dans le malheur. Je lui demandai la permission de l'entretenir quelques instans en particulier. [...] Imaginez-vous quel dut être mon embarras? Comment m'y prendre pour parler d'argent à une femme qui pense avec tant de délicatesse! Il fallut pourtant prendre mon parti, je pris courage & lui dis: 'Madame, il n'est malheureusement que trop de gens durs & injustes, je sais qu'un créancier de ce caractere vous tourmente pour une bagatelle, j'en suis vraiment touché. Faites-moi la grace de prendre de moi ces cent ducats que je ne saurois mieux placer, & permettez que je vous débarrasse par ce moyen des persecutions de cet homme. Je n'ai pas actuellement le tems d'en dresser l'obligation, je m'appelle Edeling.' Je mis aussitôt après la somme sur ses genoux. Elle fut si touchée de mon procédé qu'elle n'eut pas la force de me témoigner tout ce qu'elle sentoit. Ses beaux yeux se firent assez entendre & exprimerent bien toute la reconnoissance dont elle étoit pénétrée. [...]

Une jeune demoiselle me frappa en entrant dans la salle à manger. La voir & l'aimer ne furent qu'une même chose, & je sentis dès ce moment que je lui étois absolument & pour toujours attaché. Je restai quelque tems immobile, je me remis cependant peu à peu de ma première surprise, & assez bien pour pouvoir saluer la compagnie. Je tremblois à la vérité de tous mes membres, & je ne crains pas de dire que j'étois comme pétrifié. Je ne voyois que cette charmante personne. Son deshabillé étoit simple & point recherché. Elle brodoit des manchettes. Ciel!... & elle n'a point de frere. A qui les destinerait-elle donc? Mon jeune ami lui fournit l'occasion de faire briller son esprit; elle le plaisanta, mais ses plaisanteries étoient sans amertume, & il étoit impossible de s'en fâcher. Je vis fort bien qu'elle s'en amusoit. La veuve fournit ensuite à sa chere fille, c'est le nom qu'elle donnoit à cet ange, les moyens de se montrer sous un jour encore plus avantageux. Je vis qu'elle possédoit un coeur sensible, beaucoup de bon sens, & sans paroître en tirer avantage elle ne laissa pas de dire, du ton le plus léger & sans la moindre affectation, les choses les plus spirituelles. Mon cher frere, elle sera ma femme, ou je ne me marierai jamais. Vous connoissez ma façon de penser à cet égard. Mon coeur vient enfin de rencontrer l'objet qu'il cherchoit depuis si longtems. Cette charmante personne est la fille de feu monsieur Burgerhart; elle est orpheline. La digne & respectable veuve s'est trouvée forcée par ses malheureuses circonstances à prendre de jeunes demoiselles en pension, & elle est du nombre de celles qui logent actuellement chez elle. Il commençoit à pleuvoir, & nous restames sans nous en appercevoir jusqu'au moment où la bienséance exigeoit que nous pensassions à nous retirer. Cet adieu!.... Oh il n'y a que ceus qui savent aimer qui soient capables d'imaginer ce qu'il me fit éprouver. Je ne saurois plus penser à m'éloigner d'elle. Mais encore une fois, à qui destine-t-elle ces manchettes?

t'Huis komende ging ik, welhaast halven, aan tafel; maar, ik had geen honger. Ik draaide het zo behendig, dat ik op het artikel van de Thee kwam en sprak van, op speculatie, te kopen. 'Is er niet een koopman in Thee geweest, die Burgerhart heette, Vader? Ja Hendrik, dat was een braaf man, ik heb hem veelmaal op de Beurs gesproken; zy zeggen, dat zyne Dochter, een losse wilde meid, hare Tante, een zotte kwezel, daar zy by inwoonde, ontlopen is, en nu ergens, wat weet ik het, inwoont, by lieden daar veel losse knapen invliegen; zo zy 't verbruidt, zal 't my spyten, om hare brave ouders, en om de kleuter ook: ik heb ook nog groen koorn op 't veld'. [...]

Ik vrees alles. Ik vrees, dat zy in zulk een man, als ik ben, geen smaak zal hebben. Ik vrees, dat haar hart niet meer vry is. Ik vrees, met één woord, voor alles wat my dit Juweel zoude kunnen ontroven! Troost, raad, help my. Komen daar veele jonge Heren!.... ô Liefde, ô Liefde! hoe duur staat my myne voorleden koelheid; en echter zou ik myne rust te rug nemen voor deeze martelingen? om geen duizend Waerelden. Ik ben geheel de hare, doch altoos de broederlyke vriend van mynen besten Broeder. Schryf spoedig.

H. Edeling

Betje Wolff and Aagje Deken, *Historie van Mejuffrouw Sara Burgerhart* (1782), Edited by P.J. Buijnsters. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980, vol. 1, p.204-206.

De retour à la maison, je me mis à table par contenance, n'ayant aucune envie de manger. Je fis tomber assez adroitement la conversation sur le commerce du thé; je demandai sans affectations s'il ne seroit pas avantageux d'en acheter par spéculation, & j'ajoutai: n'auriez-vous point connu autrefois, mon cher pere, un gros marchand de thé, qui se nommoit Burgerhart? – Oui mon fils, c'étoit un très-honnête homme, je lui ai parlé plusieurs fois à la Bourse. On dit que sa fille est une jeune étourdie qui demeurait chez une tante, vieille & sottie bigotte, de la maison de laquelle elle s'est enfuie, & qu'elle loge actuellement chez une veuve, dont la maison est fréquentée par de jeunes étourdis. Je serois fâché, & par l'estime que j'ai conservée pour la mémoire de ses respectables parens, & pour elle-même, qu'elle se tournât au mal, car je suis pere & j'ai aussi des enfans. [...]

Je crains tout, je tremble qu'un homme comme moi ne puisse lui plaire; je redoute qu'elle n'ait déjà disposé de son coeur. Je redoute en un mot tout ce qui pourroit m'enlever un bien si précieux. Donnez-moi des consolations, des conseils & des secours. *Sa maison est fréquentée par de jeunes étourdis.....* Amour! amour! que mon indifférence va me coûter cher, & combien mon repos seroit préférable à ce nouveau martyre! Je serois cependant bien fâché d'y renoncer, rien au monde ne sauroit en tenir lieu. Je suis entièrement à elle, ce qui n'empêche pas que je ne sois toujours l'ami du meilleur des freres. Répondez-moi promptement.

H. Edeling

Translation by Henri Rieu: *Histoire de Mademoiselle Sara Burgerhart*, Lausanne: François Grasset, 1787, vol. I. p.226-232.

