

Intellectual emancipation during the Early Enlightenment: the ambitions of a pioneering periodical from Rotterdam¹

Introduction

Rotterdam was one of the cities of the Republic of the Seven United Provinces and in those days already a major seaport and trading centre. From July 1692 till the end of 1704 this city witnessed the birth of a Dutch-language periodical that played a major and invaluable role in spreading scientific news among a new readership. The pages of this periodical were teeming with the ideas of the greatest minds of those days – John Locke, Robert Boyle, Christiaan Huygens, Fénelon, Balthasar Bekker, Antoni van Leeuwenhoek, Richard Simon – and their innovative way of thinking. The intention was not only to promote these ideas among an intellectual elite, but also to disseminate them among a much wider circle of interested people that had hitherto been denied access to the cultural and spiritual life in Europe. The periodical in question was designed as a non-specialist medium, but was nevertheless of sufficient scientific caliber to be properly considered as a variant of the then already existing scientific press *pur sang*.

The seventeenth century had been an era of uniformly accelerated scientific activity, accompanied by a comparable growth in book production with a marked tendency towards specialization. The means of communication, in particular correspondence, in use by scholars and lettered men, members of the international *Respublica Litteraria* or the *République des Lettres*, to make themselves heard across all national borders, had begun to fall short of its purpose. Books were piling up and specialization produced a staggering diversity of subjects. A solution was offered by means of periodicals that summarized important publications and supplied information on leading men of science and major initiatives. They were periodicals of a general scientific nature, not specialized or scholarly journals. Last mentioned journals were founded as well, but their high level of specialization made them inaccessible for outsiders, no matter what degree of learnedness they boasted in their own fields. The general scientific journal was more or less free of such disadvantages. From 1665 onwards the *Journal des Sçavans* appeared in Paris, soon followed by an English-language scholarly periodical and, much later, by a comparable journal in Latin. The formula proved to be a clear success. Remarkably enough it took quite a while for the United Provinces to produce a similar periodical. After all, a considerable share of the European book production originated from the province of Holland, and Dutch booksellers sold their products to customers far beyond the limits of their small country. The Republic has been described as the intellectual warehouse of its time, considering the fact that virtually every book was available there as a result of the relatively tolerant governmental climate that permitted much that was prohibited elsewhere. What an attractive perspective for a journalist to have such a wealth to write about! Huguenot and exile Pierre Bayle, professor in Rotterdam, was astounded to find the Republic lagging behind in this respect and improved the situation by founding the *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* in 1684. It was to be the first of a long series of French-language intellectual journals from Dutch soil. After Bayle's initiative no less than seven years had to pass before the Republic could welcome the arrival of a similar journal in Dutch.

Periodicals like these were born under a lucky star. The intellectual life about which their readership had to be informed, was in great turmoil. There was no lack of subjects to write about. Cultural historian Paul Hazard has characterized this period in history as an era in which European intellectual life was subjected to a deep crisis. There was no escape from this crisis: theology, philosophy, art and literature were all seriously affected and the transformations in science and mathematics were unprecedented. The traditional deductive method of approaching reality was superseded by an inductive approach and the transition was made of a rationalistic paradigm, based on Descartes, towards the empiricism of Locke and Newton.

¹ This essay is primarily based on Hans Bots (ed.), *Pieter Rabus en de 'Boekzaal van Europe', 1692-1702 [...]*, Amsterdam 1974; J.J.V.M. de Vet, *Pieter Rabus. Een wegbereider van de Noordnederlandse Verlichting*, Amsterdam & Maarssen 1980; H. Bots, O.S. Lankhorst, C. Zevenbergen, *Rotterdam Bibliopolis. Een rondgang langs boekverkopers uit de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw*, Rotterdam 1997.

A revealing title

The Dutch journal that appeared in print for the first time in the summer of 1692 in Rotterdam bore the title *De Boekzaal van Europe*. It was in more than one sense a revealing title. The noun *Boekzaal* may be considered as a purist counterpart of the word *bibliotheek* with its Greek derivation. Such a dutchification on the title page of the new journal was a clear signal: the newborn journal meant to address a Dutch readership by reviewing a great many books (and did so in fact for a long time) and would in the process show itself meticulously precise and purist in using the language of its readers. The word *Boekzaal* from the title was destined to have a bright future. It became the denominating noun for periodicals that were written more or less along the same lines as the 1692 journal from Rotterdam. It was common usage in the eighteenth century to say that you had read something in some *boekzaal* or other and the plural *boekzalen* was also in use. The resilience of the word has undoubtedly been enhanced by the fact that a periodical with the word *Boekzaal* in its title (but altogether of a different character) was published in Amsterdam and lasted until 1864. Some hundred and seventy years divide the demise of this descendant from what began in Rotterdam in 1692.

For contemporary readers the word *boekzaal* from the title must unquestionably have brought another association to mind. From 1686 onwards the learned periodical *Bibliothèque Universelle et Historique* had appeared in Amsterdam, under the editorship of the famous Jean le Clerc. Choosing a title word with an identical meaning was a clear indication that the newcomer was eager to join the already well-established tradition of learned publications, of which Le Clerc's periodical was such respectable example.

The second half of the title of the new journal, too, contained a message for contemporaries. The intended readership may have been virtually limited to those who spoke Dutch, but there was no intention whatsoever to restrict the reviewing to Dutch books or Dutch learned ideas. On the contrary, it was emphatically not to be a periodical *for* the Dutch *about* the Dutch. No matter where in the old Europe (apparently little was expected from other parts of the world) important intellectual ideas would arise, Rotterdam and its journal were ready to make them known to the Dutch reader.

A preceptor-journalist and his publisher

De Boekzaal van Europe was written by Pieter Rabus (1660-1702) from Rotterdam and published by his fellow townsman Pieter vander Slaart (1668-after 1710). Which one of them took the initiative of founding the *Boekzaal* is difficult to say.

Pieter Rabus was an autodidact who with the help of his boundless zeal and several learned fellow townsmen had become an educated man. From May 1681 onwards he held a position at the Erasmian School in his home town as a preceptor for the lowest level, but was soon promoted to the second level. In 1684 he was appointed notary, and was addressed as 'Notaris op de Delfse vaert te Rotterdam'. When he was still relatively young, in 1678, he had made his debut as a poet, and he had produced a translation of the Greek author Herodian and published an edition of Erasmus' *Colloquia*. Whenever confronted with intolerance, he showed himself an ardent follower of Erasmus.

In his articles in the *Boekzaal* he repeatedly stressed that the traditional Aristotelian world picture, the philosophia aristotelio-scholastica, was no longer his and that the Cartesian system, too, was in his view showing its weak spots. He welcomed the new empiricist thinking and was an admirer of Locke. He supported, not without personal danger, Balthasar Bekker in his struggle against the belief in witches and other superstitions, and made his readers aware of the historical-philological arguments of his friend Antoni van Dale against a number of mystifications that Christians traditionally had used as their apologetic weaponry. The achievements of the empiricist Robert Boyle served Rabus as proof of the fact that an eminent scientist could also be an eminent Christian, and he translated one of the works of this 'Christian virtuoso'. This meant that he was active on two fronts at the same time: against the orthodox who rejected the new learning because it was supposed to be harmful to the soul, and against scholars whose liberal ideas brought the same learning in disrepute. Rabus must therefore be considered as a prominent representative of early moderate, or Christian,

Enlightenment in the Republic. Rabus never showed any sympathy for the radical movement of the Enlightenment. On the contrary, he was strongly opposed to the monism of Spinoza.

Pieter vander Slaart came from a family of preachers. Late in 1690 he settled in Rotterdam and began, at the age of 22, his career as a bookseller and publisher with his own printing press. He conducted his business from the westside of the Delftsevaart near the residence of the local civic militia. At the beginning of 1702 he was forced to close his printing office and in all probability his shop as well, apparently as a result of problems of liquidity. His days as an active bookseller were markedly less in number than his average Rotterdam colleague. The first publications by Vander Slaart date from 1691. Rabus was among the authors: He translated a part of the oeuvre by P.J. Beronicius and wrote the introduction, containing a number of biographical facts concerning this remarkable Neo-Latin author of burlesque poetry. This meant that Rabus and Vander Slaart knew each other as early as 1691. The publisher's list of Vander Slaart contains at least 137 editions, which appeared between 1691 and 1701. Among the publications were occasional poetry and pamphlets. If we ignore the *Boekzaal*-issues, the name of Pieter Rabus is present on the title pages of ten of Vander Slaart's publications. The most successful period for this publisher was 1694-1696, after which there was a decline in the number of titles on his list. There is no way of telling if his bookselling business was also affected. Around 1700 some thirty booksellers were registered in Rotterdam. Some eighty percent of them were also active as publishers and as such competitors for Vander Slaart. We know that Vander Slaart employed at least one assistant, but since further information is lacking we cannot possibly determine the full extent of his business. Furthermore, there is no indication that his bookshop 'in Cicero' played an important part as a meeting place of intellectuals and lettered men, as was the case for other bookshops in Rotterdam. For that matter, the name of the shop is a clear indication of what Vander Slaart's professional views were: 'Cicero' suggests a business in the service of an intellectually active clientele, after the example of Cicero, but a 'cicero' is also a particular font and symbolizes the professional typographical skills of Vander Slaart's business.

As publisher of the *Boekzaal* Vander Slaart's relationship with Rabus was purely professional and he paid him his wages for writing book summaries. Vander Slaart also held the copyright ('regt van copie en privilegie') of the journal, which had been granted to him by the States of Holland and West Friesland on 17 July 1692 for the duration of 15 years. Apart from the revenues of selling the *Boekzaal* itself, Vander Slaart's commercial interests were furthered by frequent advertisements in the pages of the journal, pointing out that all books, summarized in its pages, were available from Vander Slaart's bookshop. This double income must undoubtedly have incited Vander Slaart to publish a second journal, entitled *Nouveau Journal des Sçavans*, and written by the learned refugee Etienne Chauvin who (like Bayle) held a position at the Rotterdam Illustrious School. The journal was short-lived in Rotterdam. Only six issues saw publication by Vander Slaart in 1694, as a result of Chauvin's decision to move to Berlin where subsequent issues of his *Journal* were published. The ten or so catalogues of bookshop 'in Cicero' that survive give us an rough impression of what was offered for sale. The books on offer strongly resemble what was reviewed in the *Boekzaal*: the difference lies in the fact that there is a larger number of belles-lettres titles. A remarkable fact is that Vander Slaart had enduring relations with at least two English booksellers. In that respect he was ahead of his times, compared to other continental booksellers. There were also relations with the German-speaking world.

The journal presents itself

The first issue of the *Boekzaal van Europe* announces on the title page that the journal will be 'ontsloten' (literally 'unlocked') with the months July and August 1692. The word 'ontsloten' is an allusion to the double meaning of the word *boekzaal*: literally a room for books or a library, figuratively a learned periodical. The issue opens with a preface in which the author, Rabus, addresses the 'inquisitive reader' ('weetgierige lezer'), thus indicating clearly what he expects the readership of his journal to be in intellectual respect: his readers are those who want to evolve and develop their minds.

It is noteworthy that the author who addresses his future readers thus, does not make himself known and signs the preface merely as 'de schrijver' ('the author'). It is not until the fourth issue of the *Boekzaal* (January-February 1693) that the title page mentions 'gesticht door P. Rabus' ('founded by P. Rabus'). He wanted to await the first reactions of his readers, before giving up the anonymity, not unlike Apelles who is said to have hid himself behind his paintings to overhear the verdict of the viewers. Later in life Rabus confessed that in the beginning he had been very insecure about the future of his journal.

The preface from the issue for July-August 1692 is, for more than one reason, an important text. Rabus explains what a learned journal is and how the necessity arose for their existence. He goes on by giving two subsequent reasons for the fact that he felt it necessary to edit a Dutch-speaking version of a learned journal and then clarifies how he will try and make the journal a success. According to Rabus the learned journal is an inevitable product of the present scientifically and scholarly prosperous times. Science and academic learning have risen to their highest level, which means that scientists and scholars alike are facing the time-consuming task of scrutinizing a plethora of books, most of which contain nothing useful for them personally. The learned journal with its book surveys and reviews had put an end to this problem by making an overview possible again. To illustrate this Rabus pointed out the success of the *Journal des Sçavans* from Paris and the *Philosophical Transactions* that had made its first appearance shortly afterwards in London. Leipzig had its *Acta Eruditorum* and the Italians had their *Giornale de' Letterati*. The Republic could pride itself in having the *Histoire des Ouvrages des Sçavans* in the *Bibliothèque Universelle et Historique*, but only after Pierre Bayle had convincingly shown the viability of such a journal in our region with his *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*. Rabus was personally acquainted with his famous townsman and had a high regard for his *Nouvelles*.

All these journals spread the news of the latest intellectual developments, but had one thing in common: they were inaccessible to a certain category of Rabus' countrymen. In the *Boekzaal* Rabus repeatedly refers to them as 'platter(d)s', a Dutch word with several meanings, but the reference in this case is to people who do not have enough schooling to be familiar with Latin or modern foreign languages. Later in life, when the suspicion had arisen that Rabus looked down on 'platters', he declared emphatically that whoever was not well versed in languages ('taal-rijk') could still be rich in intellect ('vernunft-rijk'). Frenchmen who only spoke French did well to be modest about it; they were 'platters' as well, in Rabus' view, no matter the status of their language. By founding the *Boekzaal* Rabus hoped to put an end to the intellectual isolation of this group of fellow countrymen. He wanted to be their intermediary, and no one was better equipped for the job than he. His knowledge of Greek, Latin, French, German, English, Italian and probably even Spanish made him a true polyglot among his contemporaries. But there was a second motive for the foundation of his journal. Dutch-language books were barely noticed in the international learned periodicals. In the *Boekzaal* they would receive fair treatment. By doing so Rabus sought to defend the interests of the Dutch language of culture in the direction of both its readers and its authors.

The new journal was thus intended for readers who only commanded the 'round' Dutch language ('slechts onze ronde sprake machtig') and for authors who published in Dutch, but commanded more than one language (a writer's universe can hardly consist of 'platters' only). In the preface the journal is compared to a condensed library, containing every important book 'that will be published in Christendom' ('in 't christendom uitkomende'), i.e. in that part of the world that at that time was considered by Europeans to be civilized. The word 'uitkomende' makes clear that Rabus had a preference for new and forthcoming titles, a preference that would prove – for those who knew of these matters, rather predictably - difficult to maintain. Rabus also promises to be objective in his approach. The authors in question will all be 'followed in their wake' ('in hun zog navolgen'), i.e. he will say what they say. However, this aim for impartiality does not mean that Rabus will avoid critical evaluation. Flaws, failures or disappointments will not go unnoticed: black will not be called white, in Rabus' own words. It goes without saying that in this critical element lies the origin of a quarrel with his publisher Vander Slaart, who, as a bookseller, had announced that all book publications mentioned in the *Boekzaal* would be for sale in his bookshop. Although this promise may have been impossible

for Vander Slaart to keep, any book that met with heavy criticism from Rabus – who could be scathing in his judgment – ran the risk of remaining on the shelves for ever.

As a critical author, Rabus' special goal was to attack superstition in any form. In that respect he closed ranks with the preacher Balthasar Bekker and followed the example of the much admired 'philosophe de Rotterdam', Pierre Bayle. He aimed his critical arrows especially against the claims of the pope of Rome. Whereas Bayle's journal preferred a more sophisticated approach, the *Boekzaal* made it clear from the beginning that it was of a markedly anti-papist persuasion. Rabus himself stated that he was a member of the Reformed Church, although the records of the Rotterdam archives show that he had a Baptist background. He was a member of the so-called public church, the only institution that was recognized and supported by the government without ever having become the established church. Rabus never had much patience with the intolerant, ultra-orthodox wing of that institution.

Towards the end of his preface Rabus addressed professionals and amateurs ('liefhebbers') of a considerable number of scientific and academic disciplines, a category of readers that contained, in all likelihood, very few 'platters'. He asks for their help: those among them that have any information concerning important discoveries and developments in the field of theology, mathematics, philosophy, law, physics, linguistics and history are kindly requested to send word to the editor. It is quite a broad range, but suitable enough for a true learned journal. Booksellers and publishers are asked to keep their colleague Vander Slaart posted when new publications are produced. It will be of advantage to them and it will provide Rabus with new material to write about ('schrijfstoffe').

Frequency and arrangement of the journal

The preface to the first issue of the *Boekzaal* mentions that the journal will appear every two months, a common frequency if compared to the French-language journals that appeared in the Republic every month or every two months. The journal was published in octavo, the pages measure ten by fifteen centimeters and the title page bears the printer's mark of Vander Slaart. Fifty-seven issues appeared from July-August 1692 till November-December 1701. The *Boekzaal* appeared anonymously in 1692, as mentioned above, and again from July-August 1700 till November-December 1701, as a result of the quarrel between publisher and editor which will be described in more detail later. The addition 'founded by P. Rabus', on the title page from January-February 1693 onwards, is absent from the anonymous issues of 1700 and 1701. The extant issues of the journal are invariably in the shape of booklets, containing the three issues of half a year. Every issue has an index, which contains summaries of each article or 'Hoofddeel' (chapter), and varies in length from 150 to 190 pages. The page numbering is continuous for three issues (or half a year).

The preliminary pages in each issue are variable in content: sometimes there is a preface – in particular in the period 1692 to 1694 – and often a dedication, either to a friend of Rabus, or to a scholar in whose radiant fame the journal would gladly bask itself, or to a magistrate who could offer political protection for the *Boekzaal*. The preliminary pages could also contain literary exercises, especially poetry. For example, the preliminary pages of the issue of January-February 1694 begin with a preface ('Voorreden'), in which the author stresses, among many other things, how hard it is to summarize the great number of books, written in widely differing styles, in a uniformly fashioned Dutch. The importance of knowledge is emphasized: it instills the love for virtue in people. The preface also mentions triumphantly that the editors of the Leipzig *Acta Eruditorum* have written appraisingly about the *Boekzaal*, much to Rabus' delight. After this preface the issue of January-February 1694 continues with a literary gift in prose and poetry for the Amsterdam patrician and regent Hendrik Mierinck. There is no dedication in the proper sense, but in the issue for May-June 1694 Rabus reinstated that feature.

The preliminary pages of the issue of January-February 1694 are followed by 26 chapters ("Hoofddelen"), considerably differing in length from sixteen pages to less than two. The issue concludes with an index, in which the content of each chapter is summarized in order of appearance. This must have been a welcome service to the reader of the journal. At the end of the issue of May-June 1694 – and this is a good example of the general practice – Rabus offers his readers even an alphabetical survey of all the subjects that were treated in the previous half year.

The chapters in Rabus' journal are numbered and deal in most cases with a book publication. Each chapter begins with a number and the full title of the book in question. If the title is in a foreign language, the words 'that is' ('dat is') are inserted after the title and are followed by a puristic Dutch translation. If a title is extremely long, Rabus apologizes for giving only a partial translation. After the number, the title and its translation Rabus adds (if available) the place of publication, the name of the publisher(s), the year of publication, the format and the number of sheets. Sometimes he has to resort to educated guesses or inside information to counterweigh the missing or downright misleading data.

Not every chapter deals with a book publication. In the issue of January-February 1694, for example, the chapter contains a poem, celebrating the new year and dedicated to a friend, information on recently published books, partly under the heading 'New Books from England' ('Boek-nieuws uit Engeland') and a number of extracts from letters to the editor. These extracts are used by Rabus to show off his acquaintance with famous contemporaries: it meant good advertisement for his journal and it flattered his vanity. However, the section of letters to the editor in the *Boekzaal* was limited, both in scale and frequency, and differed in that respect considerably from the section 'Extraits de diverses lettres' in French-language journals of the time. For Rabus the main activity of the *Boekzaal* was to provide extracts of books ('uittrekselwerk'), of which he occasionally reminded his readers by writing 'that I have promised to provide extracts of books, not of letters'. He welcomed letters containing intellectual news and was more than willing to publish extracts in his journal, if he deemed the contents significant enough, but it remained a matter of secondary importance. Books were the main subject of his 'extracting business'. Obituaries of eminent men of learning, too, were printed in the *Boekzaal*, but on a more modest scale than in the *Journal des Sçavans*.

Book supplies, date of publication, price and circulation

How was the supply of books, suitable for extracting, organized by the journal? Could Rabus count on a regular supply of information for his book news-section at the end of the issues? The journal itself and Rabus' correspondence give us some clues, but not the whole picture. The journal contained frequent appeals for books, for example in the very first issue. Authors could react by sending their own publications to have them reviewed and extracted, publishers could do so by sending their latest publications and, for the book news-section, by handing in a survey of forthcoming titles. Remarkably enough, after only a few issues these kind of appeals disappeared from the journal: the *Boekzaal* had apparently gained enough of a reputation to do without further appeals. Both authors and publishers had come to appreciate the advantages of cooperation with the Rotterdam journal.

Books that were received, went to Vander Slaart and were then handed over to the editor by a servant of the publisher, according to a description in one of the issues of the journal, with the possible exception of books that were sent to Rabus as a personal gift. We know for certain that Vander Slaart, in his quality as bookseller, imported English books, and that those automatically qualified for being reviewed in the *Boekzaal*: this shows that the journal was indeed a vehicle for high-quality advertisement. Rabus himself had excellent connections with the Rotterdam publishers of his own writings, for example Reinier Leers, who printed his editions of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Erasmus' *Colloquia*. In the *Boekzaal* eight titles, published by Leers, are summarized. Even more revealing is the case of François Halma, a friend of Rabus and publisher in subsequently Utrecht, Amsterdam and Franeker. No less than 47 books with his name on the title page received attention in the Rotterdam journal. Learned friends of Rabus, too, did everything in their power to persuade publishers to supply the Rotterdam journalist with books. One of them was the famous bibliographer Cornelis van Beughem, who was employed in the Amsterdam publishing house Van Waesbergens. At least 16 titles of this firm were reviewed in the *Boekzaal*. Apart from this, Rabus dedicated five articles to books by Van Beughem: one of these books he had received as a token of their friendship. Johann Ludwig Hanneman, a professor in Kiel, was another cooperative acquaintance of Rabus, who send him his own publications and those of others.

The sources which provided Rabus with information for the new books-section of his journal, are only partly traceable. The copious information about books published in the Republic, that was to be found in the last chapter ('Hoofddeel') of issues of the *Boekzaal*, could have been gathered by

Rabus from a wide variety of sources, such as advertisements from newspapers, personal correspondence with active scholars and learned amateurs ('liefhebbers'), and – of course – his frequent contacts with booksellers and publishers. Every now and then English-language titles made their appearance in the new-books-section. Information about these books may have been the result of Vander Slaart's contacts with English publishers, for example Samuel Olivier from Norwich. But knowledge about new books also came from London, as is apparent from a translated fragment of a letter in the *Boekzaal*. In the issue of January-February 1694, a subsection 'Book news from England' ('Boek-nieuws uit Engeland') from the main section 'Titles, latest reports etc.' mentions that Newton is preparing a new edition of his *Principia*. Rumors to this effect were widespread, but the publication of a second, revised edition did not take place until 1713. This may serve as only one of the many examples that there certainly were limitations to the value of the new books-section. Another remarkable source for English book titles was 'a certain gentleman from The Hague'. Rabus was unaware of the identity of this informant. He even published an extract of this gentleman's essay on onomastics, without the slightest effort to reveal a name. The subsection 'New Books from Italy' appears ten times in the pages of the *Boekzaal* and is of great interest. Rabus got his information from the correspondence between his friend Antoni van Leeuwenhoek and Antonio Magliabecchi, chief librarian to the grand duke of Tuscany. Rabus was also allowed to browse through the letters, addressed to the microscopist from Delft, from other Italian sources than Magliabecchi. In 1693 Rabus made use of the publication list of Frambotti publishers from Padua. Communication with French publishers was severely hindered as a result of the war, but nevertheless the subsection 'New books printed in Paris' (a great many French-language books were printed outside the kingdom, in the Republic and elsewhere) made a rare appearance in the pages of the journal. Occasionally a subsection on German books was printed, containing reviews of books not only in High German, but also in Latin. Latin-language books were not uncommon in the foreign book-sections. Sometimes the new book-section was used to announce book titles that would be reviewed in the next issue. Perhaps needless to say, but not every title in the new-book-section would result in a review and extract: it may very well be that a number of titles never actually were in Rabus' possession and that he considered others not to be interesting enough.

When the two months, mentioned on the title page of each issue of the *Boekzaal*, had passed, a new issue was published at the beginning of the next month. There are several indications for this, such as a poetical new year's greeting in the first issue of 1694, an issue that has made its appearance previously in this essay. Such a gesture would have seemed rather odd in March. 'At the beginning of next month' as indication for the moment of publication must in all likelihood be taken very literally. For example, in the issue for January-February 1694 an extract of letter, dated 14 February 1694, is printed, which refers to events to come. It would not do for the *Boekzaal* as a medium for current affairs if the information were outdated by the facts. Furthermore, there is an extant archive of a bookseller in Leiden that has several entries referring to Rabus' journal, from which we can conclude that it was published very soon after the two-month period mentioned on the title page. The bookseller, the firm of Luchtmans, acted in those days as a central depot. Publishers supplied Luchtmans with their publications for resale.

By this policy of taking care of a regular supply of *Boekzaal*-issues Vander Slaart must have gained the confidence of his readership, but his editor showed less discipline and frequently postdated the titles under review. He may have done so to give the impression that the *Boekzaal* was only considering the very latest publications. Being up to date was essential for these journals, as is apparent from the statement of the editors of the *Acta Eruditorum*, even before the first issue had appeared, that every book in their journal was reviewed within its first year of publication. Rabus' postdating reminds us somewhat of the habit of contemporary publishers to give books that had been published near the end of the year, the date of the next year. But this does hardly explain the large quantity of postdated books in the pages of Rabus' journal, that is, books of which no copies are extant with the date mentioned in the *Boekzaal*, and for which no publisher's archive or other source mentioned something of a reprint. The matter is complicated even further by the fact that Rabus occasionally reviewed books that were old enough to have become rare, such as Tieleman Janszoon

van Braght's *Martelaers Spiegel der Doops-gesinde of Weerlose Christenen* from 1685. Another explanation could be that Rabus' postdating is due to his erratic transcriptions of book titles: spelling, capital letters and punctuation marks were treated with great liberty. For example, the title of an essay that was translated by Rabus himself and summarized for the *Boekzaal* contained no less than nine dissimilarities with the original and this is not even the worse example. But in this he does not differ from his contemporaries, who were equally unconcerned with exact reproduction. Tampering with the date of a book is quite another matter: a potential buyer of a book cannot be certain of the freshness of his buy.

The price for one issue of the *Boekzaal* was ten 'stuivers' (five-cent pieces), as recent research of the accounts of the Leyden firm of booksellers Luchtmans has revealed. Compared to the prices that had to be paid for any one of the French-language journals in the Republic or for the Leipzig *Acta Eruditorum*, this means that the *Boekzaal* was twice as expensive. The reason for this is rather obvious, if we take the remarks of Jaques Bernard in the 'Préface' to the resuscitated *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* in 1699 seriously. This well-informed journalist writes about the *Boekzaal* (among other periodicals) 'qu'on lit [ce journal] avec tant de plaisir', but also that 'le journal Flamand n'était presque entendu que dans ces Provinces'. The *Boekzaal* was expensive because it had a relatively small readership. Exactly how many copies of each issue were printed is hard to establish, but a few hundred seems likely.

The author of the Boekzaal at work

It didn't take Rabus very long to find out how difficult a task he had in providing his readers with high quality extracts of important books. In a number of interesting prefaces his readers were informed about his struggles, for example in the summer of 1693 when he stated that it was a perilous undertaking to 'read through a whole army of authors and summarize them'. He aimed to do so in a diverting manner and to offer his readers 'the pleasant and the useful' in equal measures, as Horace had prescribed (*simul et iucunda et idonea dicere*). A more contemporary advisor for Rabus in these matters was the much admired Pierre Bayle, who was of the opinion that a text for readers 'qui ont de l'esprit sans être savans', had to be seasoned with witty remarks ('petites railleries'). These non-academic readers of Bayle were more or less identical with Rabus' audience. The difference between Rabus and his famous fellow townsman was that Bayle tried to stay away from the controversial minefield of theology as much as he could, whereas Rabus wanted to incite enthusiasm in his readers for dealing with books on religious topics in a way that left 'Scripture and reason' intact.

In order to make his excerpts, Rabus developed a wide range of techniques. Sometimes he made use of the title page of a publication to give a quick impression of what kind of book the reader would be dealing with. This was a useful service for the readers of the journal, since they had to prepare themselves for a different subject in each chapter. The preliminary pages, too, were carefully read by Rabus. In his own words: 'it is my habit rarely if ever to omit reading the prefaces' ('het [is] mijne manier, de voorredenen der boeken zelden of nooit voorby te gaan.'). If the publication under review contained more than one independent item – which was often the case with books on theological and philosophical subjects – Rabus showed his pragmatic side by making a choice. A chapter on such a book would then begin with a justification for his decision. At the beginning of a review the reader is, in many cases, provided with biographical and bibliographical information concerning the publication at hand and the author(s). Rabus will often have used the journals of his fellow learned journalists as a source for this information. From the *Boekzaal* it is evident that he read (or at least glanced over) the *Histoire des ouvrages des Sçavans* of Basnage de Beauval and Leclerc's *Bibliothèque universelle et historique*. The Rotterdam journal also mentions Bacchini's *Giornale de' Letterati*, printed in Modena, *The Gentlemen's Journal or the monthly miscellany*, Cornand de la Crose's *Memoirs for the ingenious* and the *Acta Eruditorum* of Otto Mencke in Leipzig. That Rabus used these sources becomes clear, when he apologizes to his readers for the briefness of his review: after all, the work in question has been extensively reviewed in the journal of, for example, Basnage. Whenever Rabus encountered a book that resisted easy summarizing, he could resort to a number of techniques. One of his favorites was to reshape the table of contents into a continuous text.

He also often reverted to paragraph, chapter and page headings or to comments in the margins of the main text, which could be copious in those days. He had the ability of making a continuous story out of these elements. Another technique that Rabus preferred was to quote from passages in the book under review that he found interesting. These quotations were invariably translated into Dutch, sometimes without giving the original text. More often than not he mentioned the page number of the quotation. Rabus knew exactly when an author or subject had previously appeared in the *Boekzaal*, as if he had a card index, and referred the reader to these pages. This saved him the trouble of repetition and gave his readers the required information, assuming they had access to the previous issues in question. If that was not the case, the reference could be seen as a silent hint to buy the issues and to take care never to miss another issue of the *Boekzaal* in future.

Rabus sometimes dismissed in only a few words a book that failed to arouse his interest, but the opposite also occurred. Thus he devoted four articles (in three issues of the journal) to the *Opera Omnia* of the important theologian Samuel Bochart and no less than ten articles to Gregorio Leti's biography of Cromwell. In the latter case he had every reason to assume that his ample treatment would be much appreciated by history lovers ('Historyminnaars'). They wouldn't want to miss any of the ten articles, and this can be seen as a certain guarantee in terms of customer relations. It was profitable for the publisher and improved the internal coherence of the journal. Rabus' aspiration to interconnect various articles in the *Boekzaal* sometimes gave his readers insight in the ongoing academic debate, e.g. when he wrote about a proposition of the theologian Richard Simon: 'but we have recently seen, that Mr. Bochart has provided proof to the contrary.' This was a remark that stimulated a critical attitude among his readers and it was only one of many such remarks in the *Boekzaal*. Here we see Rabus leading the way for his readers. Another example is when he had discovered that the theologian Johannes van Marck had made use of a publication by Antonius Bynaeus without saying so. The passage in question was 'cited covertly ... which I found out after research of my own.' This must have incited the curious reader to find out if Bynaeus had made his appearance in previous issues of the *Boekzaal*. Phrases like 'as we have observed of late...' recur frequently in the journal's pages, giving the journal a unified character and make it almost look like a correspondence course. Rabus remained the preceptor that he was. His short and skillfully written interludes between chapters also helped to create unity within the journal.

In order to be of good service to its readers the journal could not confine itself to supplying extracts of the works under review, but also had to inform them about the practical user friendliness of the books. Rabus' editorial policy is clearly aimed at this. For example: his review of a book on one of the apostolic letters concludes with stating that the work contains 'three useful indices', giving the words and expressions in Hebrew and Greek and a large number of biblical references. Also 'a table of contents concerning the most important words and subjects.' Readers intending to use this book would certainly benefit from such information about the accessibility. Another service to the public was that Rabus, beginning with the summer-issue of 1698, added an asterisk to book titles in the section 'New Books', thus indicating book titles that would be summarized in the next issue of the *Boekzaal*. This was useful both for readers with specific interests and for future authors who were writing about a specific subject. Writing for the *Boekzaal* was no easy task for Rabus, certainly not in the beginning when he had to learn the trade, and he made no mystery of his difficulties. He spoke to his readers of 'very laborious work', that 'often seems to exceed his powers' and of 'labour without end' that was the source of 'sweat and toil'. It was a particularly heavy burden, because it had to be done under pressure of time, as is often the case with journalistic labour. At the printing press of Vander Slaart the common usage with every new issue was for the assistants ('knechts') 'to compose from the first page onwards', which meant that Rabus, when an issue began to reach its maximum pages, had to hurry to have an extract of a book that was of interest to him, inserted on time. The speed with which he had to work often resulted in the omission of important matters. He made up for that at the end of such an article, excusing himself for the fact by stating that 'he had forgotten to mention...'. Rabus was repeatedly forced to declare that, in spite of the complete summaries that were ready for publication, he had to 'save them up ... till the next journey' ('sparen ... tot de volgende reize'). Under these hectic circumstances Rabus wrote several thousands of pages for the *Boekzaal*. The question arises: was this the work of one man only, i.e. Rabus? When Rabus had come into conflict with Vander Slaart, the

publisher informed the readers that others supplied the editor with extracts to have them 'fashioned after his own style'. That may well have been true and it was the common journalistic practice of those days: Bayle used the very same method. But the articles in the *Boekzaal* contain such an abundance of personal remarks that can be ascribed to one person only, Rabus, that there is no doubt that, considering both style and content, the great majority of articles is his. There is also no doubt that he had learned counsellors in whom he could confide when faced with insuperable problems. He made no mystery of that either. He wrote that if he needed help or advice in 'hidden knowledge' ('verborgene kennis'), he was so lucky as to have experts who could come to his aid. Thus, he could rely 'in matters of learnedness' on the helping hand of his friend Pieter Deinoot, a man of great learning and owner of a large library. In case of Hebrew matters he was fortunate enough to be able to consult a clergyman in State Flanders who had a 'thorough knowledge of rabbinical and other exalted doctrines'. This clergyman may very well have been the reverend Johannes 's-Gravenhage. Rabus' longlasting contact with Antoni van Leeuwenhoek, too, must have been a great help.

Readership

Were the 'platters' lining up in Vander Slaart's shop to buy a copy of the latest issue of the *Boekzaal*? Or did Rabus' call to buy the journal and be educated fall on deaf ears? Since we do not have any data, the questions must remain unanswered. Nothing can be determined as to the social profile of the average 'platter' and objections to a quantitative estimate of the group as a whole are easily found. It is tempting to take Gerrit van Spaan, baker in Rotterdam, as a model: van Spaan was a protégé of Rabus and under his direction he strove to become a writer. What we know of him is that he only began his editorial work on his *Gedenkwaardige geschiedenissen* ... after careful study of a number of *Boekzaal*-issues ('een party Boekzaalen van Pieter Rabus'). But this example is perhaps too ideal; it certainly does not reflect the average situation and we cannot even be certain that Van Spaan was a full proof 'platter'. Research has been done after the owners of extant *Boekzaal* series. They were the owners of libraries, of which those series formed a part. Being the owner of a library was typical for intellectuals and did not usually apply to others outside that category. 'Platters', if they read the *Boekzaal* at all, were unlikely to have kept the issues. Journals had an ephemeral character and copies did not have a long life, due to the fact, among other things, that they were read by a number of people. If there are no surviving *Boekzaal* series or even separate issues in circles of 'Platters', that will not necessarily mean that they did not read the journal. Furthermore, there is the fact that Rabus repeatedly mentions that he is actually, but not exclusively, writing for 'Platters'.

This explains why Rabus, concerning the translation of Hebrew word in a review of a work by Samuel Bochart, thought it necessary to say in advance 'that I also write for "platters"'. The word 'also' says it all. In an article on a work by Pierre Daniel Huet Rabus clearly indicates where he draws the line by saying that 'the ingenuities and embellishments that characterize Latin poetry (...) cannot be shown to "platters" ('aan platters niet vertoonelijk zyn'). On another occasion he printed a letter in Latin in his journal for those who understand the language, adding that for others the letter's contents are not important ('andere behoeven het niet te weten'). Rabus was well aware of the fact that not every text is suitable for translation, for example the *Epistolae itinerariae* by Jacobus Tollius. Its many notes and supplements ('Aantekeningen en vulsels') made it unsuitable to be dressed up in Dutch clothes ('om in 't Nederlandsch gekleed te werden'). 'Platters' were apparently lacking in erudition in these matters. He had no intention of making a translation, Rabus told the publisher Halma in one of his letters. He did, however, write a review of the work for the *Boekzaal*. Furthermore, it is remarkable that Rabus translated almost everything for his 'platters', with the occasional exception of parts of the long titles of publications in foreign languages. By presenting learned subjects to a learned community, and at the same time raising 'platters' and women to a certain position in the République des lettres, or the State of lettered men ('Statendom der letterwijzen') as he translated the term puristically, Rabus tried to realize a compromise that was unique in its time.

In order to have at least some notion of the identity of *Boekzaal*-readers a specific segment of the contemporary readership was scrutinized: the owners of libraries. It is impossible to determine what proportion this segment bears to the total. About a quarter of a relevant number of auction catalogues

from the period 1698-1750 offered complete or near complete series of the *Boekzaal* on sale. Again, the question remains unanswered whether these series were added to the libraries in question in the years that Rabus' journal was published, or that they were added later when their value as a work of reference had become a fact. What is clear, however, is that the owners were active academic professionals, like Cornelis van Bijnckershoek en Theodorus Janssonius van Almelooven, both professors, or clergymen and members of municipal or provincial councils. The learned Benjamin Furly, leader of the Rotterdam Quakers, was also the owner of a *Boekzaal* series. In any case, the owners belonged to an elite that could afford to buy the relatively expensive *Boekzaal* series.

Censorship

Freedom of the press was a prominent feature of the Republic in those days, especially when compared to Catholic countries like France. This also applied to the printing business. Quite a number of titles that were banned elsewhere, were allowed to be printed in the Republic. The result of this was that many foreign authors offered their manuscripts to Dutch printing presses. The large measure of freedom that publishers enjoyed in the Republic also explains the fact that this material could be printed in Amsterdam, to be subsequently smuggled across the border with the name Paris or Cologne in the imprint. A lack of cohesion in the governmental structure of the Republic was one of the reasons that this freedom could exist. If a publisher could not realise the publication in one town, he simply went to another where he met with less obstacles. Another cause for the relative freedom of the press in the Republic was that there was no established church. What did exist was a so called public church, the 'Nederduitsch Gereformeerde Kerk', which was the only one supported by the authorities. Many of its clergymen (but not all of them) did their utmost to limit the freedom of the press, where titles were concerned that were not in accordance with the principles of rigid orthodoxy. They were frequently opposed by members of the municipal government and other magistrates who were of the opinion that a more liberal climate was more profitable for the community, especially for the tradesmen, than a society with theocratic features. There was a constant tension between the representatives of both sides, which in times of crisis could rise to considerable heights, as was the case in Rotterdam in the years that Rabus was editing his *Boekzaal*, a journal that tried to invoke a critical attitude among its readers. The journal had to be navigated with great care in order to avoid being crushed by the repression of an intolerant church council on the one hand and to stay in favour with a small and tolerant elite on the other hand. The latitude of manoeuvring for the editor of the *Boekzaal* was in the end defined by the city council, the town's magistrates. For a period of at least four years the *Boekzaal* was the subject of censorship. Freedom of the press in the Republic was considerable, but not boundless.

The church council of Rotterdam was anything but liberal. In 1692 the council wrote a '*Circulaire brief...*' and in it made a stand against Balthasar Bekkers' *Betoverde Weereld* (*The World Bewitched*), a text that had been favourably received by other church councils. Bekker's book contained a rationalistic daemonology, did not deny the existence of the devil, but used philosophical and exegetical arguments to refute the superstitious conviction that evil spirits could cause harm to men, animals and inanimate objects. The work is nowadays considered to be one of the most important books of the early Christian Enlightenment, and exercised its influence until the late eighteenth century, especially in the German countries. It *un-bewitched* the world. The Acta of 10 September 1692 of the Rotterdam church council produce the evidence that the *Boekzaal* was immediately distrusted. The first issue of July-August was said to testify of a 'very wrong spirit' ('seer verkeerden geest'), to contain 'divers recently appeared harmful deviations' ('allerley opkomende schadelicke dwalingen') and to be aimed at obstructing 'the truth and its diligent champions' ('de waerheyd en desselfs yverige voorstanders'). A committee of four members was charged with making 'summaries' ('extracten') from the *Boekzaal*-issue in question. Their – unfavourable – conclusions were presented on 17 September. Especially where Bekker's book was concerned the committee uttered complaints, such as that of 'partijchap', a lack of objectivity. The fact is that the reporters regretted that they did not find extracts of 'books written in defence of the truth' ('boeken die voor de waerheyd zijn geschreven') and had found only works written in opposition to the truth. It was an

unjust accusation: one of the authors whose work had been extracted by Rabus, university professor Melchior Leidekker, was an ultraorthodox follower of Voetius. Furthermore, the *Boekzaal* journalist had expressly tried to avoid partiality: he nowhere mentions Bekker directly, but makes an extract of an already existing 'Kort Begrip' (summary) of Book I and II of the *Betoverde Weereld*. By making an extract of an extract made by others, Rabus had hoped to avoid becoming involved in the controversy. He failed. However, what can be held against him is a certain naivety. The first issue of the *Boekzaal* was no less than a special issue on Bekker. Some 45 percent of the issue is, in one way or another, devoted to this rationalistic theologian.

For the time being Rabus did not discuss any book that mentioned Bekker, or he trivialized such publications. We can deduce the cause for this abstinence from the *Acta* of the church council for 24 September 1692. One of the members of that council had visited publisher Vander Slaart in order to make him adapt himself to 'the intentions of the council' ('de intentie der vergaderinge'). In spite of this, the council discovered 'once again extremely offensive matters' ('wederom seer aanstotelike dingen') in the second issue of the *Boekzaal* of September-October. A committee was assigned to collect these matters and present them to the city council. A report of this mission was produced by this committee and was presented to the church council on 5 November. The report made clear that the clergymen were offended by utterances in a new edition of Diogenes Laertius, that were summarized by Rabus in such a slightly anachronistical manner, that readers could get the impression that the text was aimed at – among others – clergymen. The result was that a delegation from the church council went to the town hall, demanding to suppress publication of the *Boekzaal*. On 25 November and 2 December 1693 the *Acta* of the church council reported that the process of making extracts from Rabus' journal would be continued with unflagging zeal.

Only on 10 March 1694 the city magistrates stooped to answer the church council. A ban on the *Boekzaal* was out of the question, but in future the journal would only be permitted to appear, if 'each sheet' ('yder Bladt') was 'surveyed' ('gevisiteert') by the praeses of the church council, who had to determine whether it contained 'something offensive' ('yets aenstotelix'). From 10 March 1694 on the *Boekzaal* was virtually subjected to censorship. The church council immediately enforced this preventive censorship: in a meeting of this college two sheets of the issue of March-April of the journal were presented, showing alterations in the text. The *praeses* and the *scriba* of the church council were assigned as the regular *visitatores*, and the publisher would steadily provide them with 'printer's proofs' ('gedruckte proeven'). The *Acta* of the church council for 21 April 1694 show that the preventive censorship that this body sought to realize, was indeed effective: an article on sorcery was banned by the city council.

A few years later, however, the church council complained that censored copy for the *Boekzaal* had nevertheless appeared in print. Rabus knew influential people and with their help the *visitatores* may very well have been sent on a wild goose chase, every now and then. Extant copies of issues of the *Boekzaal* for March-April 1694 make a reconstruction of such a case possible. In all the extant copies the titles of chapters 17 and 18 have been left out of the index of this issue. The index was the part of the journal that was printed last. In some of the copies the chapters 17 and 18 have been cut away, save the beginning and end, in other copies the chapters have remained intact. During the printing process Vander Slaart will probably have been ordered by the judicial authorities to remove the chapters in question from the journal. This he did, but not in all cases. A number of copies were distributed uncensored.

A few years later the minutes of the church council meetings show that there is great dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of supervising the *Boekzaal*. On 24 July 1697 it is concluded that Vander Slaart still continues 'to print those passages that the members of this council had removed' ('die perioden, die door de Gecommitt. deser Vergadering uytgeschraapt waren, te drukken'). On 1 January 1698 the same annoyance is noted. The publisher of the *Boekzaal* has been summoned twice before the town council to be informed of the complaints. The church council has reached the conclusion by now that the existing regulation of supervising was insufficient to act preventively and has drawn up new regulations to which Rabus would have to submit himself. The town council consented to this and summoned Rabus before the town council in order to command him in a very serious manner ('in seer serieuze termen') to conform to these regulations. At the same time he was

relieved of his duty to have his copy supervised by the church council. Thus he got himself rid of his annoyingly prying supervisors. On 13 March 1698 the decision by the town council was reported in a meeting of the church council. Remarkably enough, all the issues of the *Boekzaal* for that crucial year 1698 have been dedicated to members of the same town council. Obviously Rabus was looking for their support. That this was a necessary step is confirmed by the fact that in that very same year 1698 a Spinozist book was, by order of the town magistrates ('op last van de Heren van de Wet'), removed from the Rotterdam book stores to be burnt in the council chamber. Freedom of the press was by no means unlimited. But things could have been much worse for the *Boekzaal*.

Changing the guard: Barend Bos replaces Vander Slaart as publisher

In the summer of 1700 the cooperation of Rabus and his publisher came to an abrupt end. There had been differences of opinion for some time. Their relationship had seen better times: Rabus used to refer to Vander Slaart's firm as to 'our printing firm' ('onze drukkerij'). In the issues of the *Boekzaal* preceding the end of the cooperation, there is no indication of any smouldering conflict. After the rupture between editor and publisher had become a fact and after their previously good relationship had changed into enmity, Rabus revealed, however, that he had foreseen this end ('stremming') of his cooperation with Vander Slaart for some years ('reeds eenige jaren [had] voorzien'). The readers may have had an inkling of the troubles from the fact that the issue for July-August of the *Boekzaal* was postponed to December 1700, when the issue appeared in print without the indication 'Founded by P. Rabus' ('Gesticht door P. Rabus') on the title page.

Vander Slaart announced in a 'To the Reader' ('Aan den Lezer') in this postponed issue that 'mr P. Rabus has devoted himself to other tasks' ('de Hr. P. Rabus zig zelven tot andere bezigheden heeft overgegeven'). Rabus, however, was 'in excellent high spirits' ('lustig in mijn schik zijnde') very busy making new summaries and offered these no longer to Vander Slaart, but to the Rotterdam bookseller and publisher Barend Bos, who had begun a brand-new journal, entitled *Twee-maandelijke Uittreksels van P. Rabus*. After 48 issues of the old *Boekzaal* this periodical offered Rabus a new platform for his extracts. This meant that in the second half of the year 1700 Rabus had been without a proper vehicle for his productions. Vander Slaart succeeded to produce, autonomously and with the aid of anonymous writers, not only the July-August issue, but two more issues for 1700 as well, and he managed to continue publication of the *Boekzaal* in 1701 with the help of (once again anonymous) 'champion writers' ('letterhelden'). And thus in 1701 Rotterdam saw the publication of two journals: Vander Slaart's *Boekzaal* without Rabus and Bos' *Twee-maandelijke Uittreksels* with Rabus' name on the title page.

The prefaces in both the *Boekzaal* issues for July-August 1700, September-October 1700 and January-February 1701, and the *Twee-maandelijke Uittreksels* issues for January-February 1701 give us some, obviously subjective, insight in the causes for the rupture between Rabus and Vander Slaart. Rabus wrote that Vander Slaart owed him his writer's fee for 'several Boekzaal-months' ('ettelyke Boekzaalmaanden') and had shown himself until a short while ago unwilling to pay back a considerable amount of lent money. It had taken a verdict of the bench of aldermen to make him repay the money. Vander Slaart had also been remiss in printing the extracts, handed in by Rabus, within a reasonable amount of time. That their cooperation had ended so sadly had been no fault of Rabus. If there had been a profit to be gained, had he not shown himself willing to execute 'other and more demanding tasks' ('andere en zwaardere bezigheden') for the benefit of the house Vander Slaart, apart from his writing for the *Boekzaal*? Vander Slaart was allowed to continue printing the *Boekzaal*, but without using the writer's name according to the privilege 'in my [Rabus'] possession' ('onder mij [Rabus] berustende'). What Rabus meant by that last remark remains uncertain. Vander Slaart reproached his opponent for his 'stirring things up, scolding and slandering' ('Steken, Schelden en Lasteren') – Rabus was indeed known for his razor-sharp judgements in some of his book reviews – and wrote that this had cost his firm money. That was the reason he had dismissed Rabus and 'taken him away of the *Boekzaal*' ('hem van de *Boekzaal* [...] afgezet'). Another reproach was that Rabus made use of other publishers for publication of his work, 'sidelines' ('bywerk'), for which action

Rabus thought he was entirely within his right. Rabus' bibliography does indeed mention a whole string of other publishers, next to Vander Slaart.

Barend Bos (1655-1719), who replaced Vander Slaart as publisher of Rabus' summaries, had been a Rotterdam bookseller from 1680 onwards. His firm was older than that of Vander Slaart and survived the latter by many years. Rabus must have known Bos at least as far back as 1680, in which year he wrote a contribution to a collection of wedding poetry, published by Bos, and had published occasional poetry by this firm no less than five times, before he went to Vander Slaart for his edition of Beronicius in 1691. An old relationship indeed and one that consolidated itself with the publication of the *Twee-maandelijke Uittreksels* and another five publications, such as a voluminous translation of Sulpicius Severus.

When Bos went into business he was about 25 years old, slightly older than Vander Slaart. His main business was bookselling. His achievements as a publisher are modest. He produced a large quantity of personal announcements in print, organized book auctions (which were very profitable), was a collector at lotteries (no less profitable), took care of the distribution of newspapers and journals and sold stationeries. He contracted printers for his publications and one can even doubt if he had his own printing presses. He may have owned a small press to produce invitations for funerals and the like. Bos was held in some regard by his colleagues in Rotterdam. In 1699 he was the first chairman ('hoofdman') of the Rotterdam guild of booksellers, from the moment it had become autonomous.

The main activity of the firm of Bos, selling books, presupposed a large supply of book titles in stock. In order to properly meet the demands of his customers, Bos had business relationships with some sixty booksellers and publishers throughout the Republic. Assortment catalogues of his firm have not survived, but there are lists of books in stock printed in the back of titles published by Bos. Many of these titles are theological publications, especially of a Remonstrant and Pietistic inclination. Bos moved in Remonstrant circles. Among his clientele were some forty clergymen.

The list of publications that was produced by Bos over a period of 39 years runs up to 203 items. In the years of Vander Slaart's activities as publisher the number dropped considerably below the amount of this competitor: 49 against 81 titles by Vander Slaart. The publisher's list of the firm of Bos contains relatively few names, in most cases those of his townsmen, often distant relations of each other and in majority belonging to Remonstrant and Collegiant circles. Bos' publishing house flourished around 1701-1704, the very period in which his *Twee-maandelijke Uittreksels* appeared. It was also the period that an important publication, parts 3 and 4 of Gerard Brandt's *Historie der reformatie*, was produced by Bos. Unlike Vander Slaart Bos consented (twice!) to publish a voluminous polemic against Balthasar Bekker, the clergyman who had been promoted – not without risk – by Pieter Rabus. Rabus has been of great importance for the firm of Bos, to begin with as a translator. In the years 1698-1700 it was Rabus who took it on him to provide a Dutch clothing for the work of Robert Boyle, Christiaan Huygens and of the anti-Cartesians Gabriel Daniel S.J. and Pierre Daniel Huet (both together in one single volume) for publication at the firm of Bos. Those were exactly the authors one could expect to attract the attention of a wide audience, because of their fame and position in the public debate of that time. From the point of view of Bos, these were publications that promised a good deal of profit. Of even greater importance for the publisher was the fact that Rabus enabled him to begin a journal consisting of summaries and reviews. The *Twee-maandelijke Uittreksels van P. Rabus* appeared, as usual, in octavo and served the publishing house of Bos exceedingly well in terms of marketing. In the short period that the journal was published by Bos, two thirds of the book titles that were offered on sale by the publisher were reviewed, or at least announced, in the journal's pages. No wonder that Bos had been swifter than lightning to procure a privilege for fifteen years. The duped Vander Slaart felt robbed by Bos and there is a colourful incident to bear witness. During a meeting of booksellers Vander Slaart tore off a button from Bos' coat and cried out: 'Lo and behold the greatest pickpocket in the world' ('Zie daar de grootste gaauwdief die d'r leeft'). A number of pamphlets from that period do indeed portray Bos as a ruthless business man.

The final years: Pieter Rabus, his son Wilhem, and Willem Séwel

Pieter Rabus died, unexpectedly, on 13 January 1702. Supposedly, his weak constitution was no match for his hectic way of living and the few hours of sleep that he allowed himself to have. An afterword ('Naberigt') in the issue of January-February 1702 of the *Twee-maandelijke Uittreksels* reports that Rabus had made a supply of extracts ('by voorraad') and that he had been able to 'view and correct' the first quire ('eerste blad') before his death. This posthumous material was to be published 'at the same regular interval as usual' ('telkens op haren gewonen tijd') by the publisher. In this way three issues of the journal could be completed. The 'Naberigt' informs us furthermore that a 'learned and competent person' has been found willing to take the task of Pieter Rabus upon him. The States of Holland and West-Vriesland issued a new privilege for this very purpose. It was Pieter's son, Wilhem, who supervised the publication of his father's last summaries. That it was he who occupied himself with the journal in the period at hand, can be concluded from the fact that the dedication to the Rotterdam professor and reformed clergyman Nicolaas Grebber in the issue of March-April has been signed by Wilhem Rabus.

Pieter Rabus' eldest son Wilhem (1685-1708) was educated at the Erasmian School, where, at the age of ten, he held an 'oratiuncula', a brief oration for practising purposes, for which he received the designation 'summa cum laude'. In 1693 his father dedicated his edition of *Erasmus' Colloquia* to him, in 1700 the first issue of the *Boekzaal* of that year. In 1699 Wilhem described himself in a notarial deed of his father as a law student ('der regten studiosus'). In that period he attended lectures at the Rotterdam Illustre School, but in 1701 he began attending private lectures with the Utrecht professor Cornelis van Eck, a close friend of his father's. Wilhem, however, made very little progress, probably because he mainly devoted himself to classical literature for which he had developed a passion, neglecting his law studies. Shortly after 1 December 1701 Wilhem had returned to Rotterdam. In view of how his professional life developed it is likely that he devoted himself in the first half of 1702 once again to his studies, at the same holding a temporary position as assistant-editor for the *Twee-maandelijke Uittreksels*. Eager to follow in the footsteps of his father in every aspect, he was looking forward to an appointment as preceptor at the Erasmian School, but it was only on 5 February 1703 that a position became available, after two classes had been 'combined' ('gesupprimeerd'). Wilhem was at that time still without a degree. On 28 March 1703 he enrolled at the Leiden University, where he attained his doctor's degree on 31 March. There was nothing exceptional about that: often the study itself was done at one of the 'Illustre Scholen', the university serving only as a means to take a degree. On the title page of the *Poemata* by Janus Doussa filius, edited by Wilhem Rabus in 1704, is printed 'Edente Guilielmo Rabo J.U.D.' ('edited by Wilhem Rabus, doctor in both laws'). His own poetry appeared in 1707 in Rotterdam under the title *Carminum Liber Primus*. Wilhem died at a young age and was buried in the Rotterdam Lawrence Church on 23 March 1708.

The learned and competent person that had been found willing to take charge of the journal and was referred to by Bos in the issue of January-February 1702, was Willem Séwel or William Sewel (Amsterdam 1654-Amsterdam/Buiksloot 1720). Séwel was an important Dutch linguist, who also became famous as a historian, and he was a prominent member of the 'Society of Friends' ('Genootschap der Vrienden'), as the Quakers were known in those days. He came from English descent and his predecessors had come to the Republic at the beginning of the seventeenth century together with other Bruynists. Willem made Dutch translations of publications in several languages, designed English-Dutch dictionaries and in 1702 he published a *Nederduytsche Spraakkonst*. His most widespread publication is a history of the Quaker movement (1717), which was translated later into English.

Rotterdam was an important stronghold of the Quakers. The leader of the Rotterdam Friends was a learned Englishman, Benjamin Furly, a personal friend of Bayle. Furly translated pamphlets from English, and also produced them himself. In this capacity he cooperated with Willem Séwel and Stephen Crisp. As a translator into Dutch of English, French, German, Italian and Latin texts Séwel's name must have been a familiar one with the readers of the journal: his name appeared many times in the title descriptions that preceded the extracts of books by authors like William Dampier, Stephen Crisp and Gregorio Leti. And now Séwel's name appeared on the title page of the journal that, in its issue of July-August 1702, bore the title *Twee-maandelijke uyttreksels van alle eerst uytkomende*

boeken door W. Séwel. The journal even looked a bit more elegant, now that it had an engraved title vignette and a title page that was printed in black and red. On 21 January 1702 Bos procured a privilege for fifteen years for this sequel to the journal. Those who had expected a word of appreciation of the new editor for his predecessor, the founding father of the *Boekzaal*, Pieter Rabus, were disappointed. On the contrary, in a 'From the author to the reader' ('De Schryver aan den lezer') he treated the anonymity which Rabus in 1692 had chosen in order to await the verdict of the reading public over the journal with heavy irony and said that he was not going to hide himself 'as another Apelles behind the picture' ('als een andere Apelles achter de schildery'). He was indifferent to what the readers had to say about the new journal. And why? Because he had nothing to fear: he was not going to cause any offence ('eenigen aanstoot'), he was not going to pose as an 'judicious expert' ('Oordeelkundige') and was certainly not going to be a 'meddling commentator' ('bediller') on the work of others. Those were the three qualifications that Vander Slaart had used to reproach Rabus, when the latter had left as an editor in 1700. Séwel promised his readers to go about the business of summarizing books 'without bias' ('zonder eenzydigheid'), no matter if he agreed or disagreed with the author in question. He would praise whoever deserved to be praised. Books that served the general interest in a remarkable way, contributed considerably to the progress of any science, or displayed exceptional scholarly qualities, could count on his particular appreciation, without flattery ('zonder te vleien'). This was no offence against objectivity, but something that was dictated by mere politeness. To do otherwise would seem to stem from envy. In some cases, however, it might seem fit for Séwel to express his personal opinion, which was to say: to contradict the author. But always 'in a modest way' ('een zeedige wyze'), avoiding 'sharpness or scorn' ('scherpheyd óf verachting') and 'without insult to a person and aggrieving his efforts' ('buyten beleediging van iemants persoon en zonder benadeling van zynen arbeyd'). That was precisely what Rabus had promised his readers in 1692 and shortly thereafter had sometimes failed to do, by equating the summarizing business from time to time with relentless judgment. Once again Séwel's preface echoes the criticisms of Vander Slaart, this time to further the financial interests of Bos.

Séwel's decision to devote himself to editing extracts had not been inspired by Rabus' *Boekzaal*, but by the *Bibliothèque Universelle et Historique*, edited by Jean Leclerc, as he made known at the beginning of 1703. Notwithstanding this illustrious example, Séwel was obliged to defend himself against criticism from his readers, and did so in the preface to the issue for January-February of that year. He was reproached for not fulfilling the promises he had made when he had begun as an editor. Séwel defended himself against his critics, somewhat arrogantly, by saying: 'Ne sutor ultra crepidam', a cobbler should stick to his last. What his readers had disapproved of in his work, had been orally praised by 'people with knowledge and learning' ('luyden van kennis en geleerdheid'), and expressing their direct personal encouragement to continue in the same manner. That brings to mind the appeal that Rabus had made, in 1694, on 'the true acknowledgement and noble encouragement of those with a rightful judgment' ('de heusche erkenenis en edelaardige aanmoediging van rechte waardeerders'). In 1703 Séwel was reproached for his all too serious style of writing, being the opposite of Rabus' inclination to light-heartedness in his treatment of 'laugh-invoking matter' ('lach-rijke stoffe'), which had displeased some of Rabus' readers in 1693. Séwel's answer to this criticism of being all too serious was that there was only a very small number of critical readers that had expressed this objection. He was not incapable of treating 'a farcical subject' ('een kluchtig geval') with less seriousness, but this certainly was not what he aimed for. What he, as summarizer, wanted to get from the books was whatever was most 'noteworthy' ('aanmerkelyk') or important in them and what was most 'educating' ('stichtend') or fortifying. Of course, there were also 'untidy' ('slordige') books, carelessly written texts, but they will be completely ignored by Séwel. Latin poets posed a problem for him. They are in a class of their own: because they were heathens, their work was filled with a heathen spirit. They are, however, essential for a proper study of Latin. Séwel promises to treat them, but he will conceal certain passages from youthful readers and, in general, will avoid offence to chaste ears.

In the issue for March-April 1704 Séwel mentioned the aversion he had noticed among a certain number of his readers where theological subjects were concerned. This was an important matter because a considerable number of books, produced in that period, were theological works. But

even if it was only a 'minority of readers' ('de minste Leezers') of Séwel's journal who enjoyed theological subjects ('Theologische stoffe'), it was impossible for the editor to completely ignore them: it was part of his duty as a maker of extracts. And neither could publisher Bos. Extant lists of book titles that were available from his book store suggest that theological works formed a majority. In the same address to the reader Séwel mentioned some other principles that guided him as a writer. For example, he also considered it incompatible with his duty to 'mix farcical and serious matters' ('boert onder 't ernstige [te] mengen'), regardless of the fact whether it was something jocular of his own invention or made up by some poet. Imagine God letting him die while he was writing 'kortswijl', something in jest! To a Quaker like Séwel this was no doubt a terrifying thought. Returning to the matter of how to deal with theological publications, he stated that he did not want to bother his readers with "tedious stuff" ('talmeryen'). He had little stomach for that himself. Theological texts would be selected by him according to the criterion whether they were spirited enough (containing 'het meeste pit'). An autonomous point of view indeed: his preference was what counted. Had he decided otherwise, how much more reason for his readers to complain about the tediousness of the subject matter' ('om over de verdrietelykheid der stoffe te klaagen'). This implies that there *were* complaints, one of them being that his extracts were too short. There were certain – theological? – books that might have been treated more extensively. But Séwel refused to change anything. The majority of his readers did not read his summaries to be 'educated', to progress spiritually. They just wanted to satisfy their curiosity, which was a legitimate way of spending their time.

One of the more serious accusations directed at Séwel was that he composed his extracts only from what he read in prefaces and tables of contents. He reacted irritably and stated in his 'The author to the reader' in the issue for January-February 1704 that no reader would derive pleasure from such a 'meagre hotchpotch' ('schraal tzamenraapsel'). Had the accusation been true, his days as an editor would long ago have been numbered. But he knew for certain that 'people with knowledge and understanding' ('luyden van kennisse en verstand') held his products in high esteem. It was the same line of defence as a year ago and it had been used previously by his predecessor Rabus. Encouraged by this consent of experts whose identity Séwel was careful not to disclose, he had the preface followed by an example of his preference and his particular competence, Dutch linguistics. Time and again Séwel told his readers that making extracts was a difficult trade, more difficult than outsiders often – and wrongly – think. Moreover, it is an unpleasant task, if the subject is an unsympathetic one to the extractor. And he doesn't hide the fact that it is not exactly a source of richness. These are undoubtedly the drawbacks of the trade, but there is recompense in the moments that Séwel had something special to report. For example in March-April 1703, when he could, for the first time since the beginning of the Rotterdam journal in the summer of 1692, present an extract of a publication from the New World. It was an abbreviated version of 'The laws made by William Penn', the famous founder of the Quaker Movement, who had created a refuge for his persecuted fellow believers in Pennsylvania in 1682, a refuge now known as the city of Philadelphia. The book was published in 1701 in that very town by Reynier Jansen, a 'printer, well known by me' (een 'Drukker, my wel bekend'), who 'only recently had send the book hither' ('onlangs herwaards overgezonden heeft'). Do we perceive something of an international Quaker network here? If so, Séwel's participation in this network must be seen as a remarkable aspect of his hereditary relationship with the Anglo-Saxon world. We also know that he kept abreast of English newspapers, as can be deduced from remarks in his journal like the following: 'It is only a few weeks ago, that a certain well-known journalist from London wrote...' (''t Is nóg maar weynige weeken geleeden, dat zeker bekend Nieuwsschryver uyt Londen schreef...').

At the end of 1704 the 'extracting business' ('uyttrekselwerk') in Rotterdam, that had begun in the summer of 1692 by Rabus, came to a halt, a sudden halt, certainly for the readers. In retrospect one could have had an inkling of this ending from the issue for July-August 1704. The publisher then had to report that, regretfully, due to 'a series of multiple activities' ('een reeks van veelvoudige bezigheden'), he had been unable to publish the *Twee-maandelijke uyttreksels* in time ('op hunne tyd te doen uytkomen'). What follows, however, casts doubt on the truth of this statement. Was this accumulated workload the – only – cause of delay? According to Bos, some people suspected that he intended to 'put a halt to this work' ('dit werk te doen stille staan'), that he wanted to discontinue the

journal, but this was emphatically denied by the publisher. He was more actively engaged than ever in continuing the journal, an engagement that would prove the more fruitful if his fellow publishers were willing to send their new publications to be summarized to both him and the 'author ('den Schryver') – that is, also to Séwel – of his journal, and without delay. But Séwel had a change of address printed in the last issue of that year of the journal, which must have made many of his readers wonder.

This communication of a change of address was part of an anonymous statement on the first pages of the issue for November-December 1704. However, there can be no doubt that publisher Bos was the author. The statement can be divided in three sections. In the first section the readers are promised a considerably improved journal: richer in content, notably an increase in foreign books, and published strictly on time ('beter op zyne tijd'). In the second section one of the promises in the first section is contradicted by announcing that the next issue of the journal will probably be delayed, due to the fact that 'the writer of this issue is about to change addresses' ('de Schryver van dit werk op 't verhuizen staat'). The last section says that, whoever wants to send that writer something, another address has to be used: 'aan Willem Séwel, t'Amsterdam, op de Cingel, aan de Oostzyde, by de Lynbaan-steeg, naast het hoekhuys'. Those readers who recalled the appeal by Bos in the summer of 1704 to send review copies to both him and the writer of the journal, may have been surprised at reading that now there were *two* postal addresses, one in Rotterdam and the other in Amsterdam, which clearly must have been a nuisance. They may even have become angered, when, in the last issue of 1704, a promise was made that was never fulfilled. In that issue Séwel concluded his extract of the first part of François-Jacques' *Beschryving van oud en nieuw Rome* with the promise to deal with Part II and III 'at the beginning of next year' ('met den aanvang van 't aanstaande jaar'). But no further extracts from his hand would be published in Rotterdam. Séwel had offered his services to François Halma, a close friend of Rabus during his life. Halma had been publisher in Utrecht, but had moved to Amsterdam. From 1705 onwards he published *De Boekzaal der Geleerde Wereld. Ontslotten [...]* Door W. Séwel. It is remarkable that the title word *Boekzaal* was used: after all, it referred back to first journal of this kind in Dutch, initiated by Pieter Rabus. In Rotterdam Barend Bos stood empty-handed. Without Séwel he was unable to produce a journal.

A remarkable afterlife

After 1705 the journal by Rabus and Séwel was by no means forgotten. The attention could be positive, but also less appraisingly. Of course, there was no denying that the Rotterdam journal had been the first of its kind in the Dutch language and that it had set the tone for a new way of communicating about scientific subjects. Sometimes the more demanding among the critics reproached the journal for being too shallow. They insisted on nothing less than profound reviewing, which was something entirely different from what Rabus and Séwel in their time had wanted to offer. Another matter that people in the eighteenth century could not appreciate in Rabus, was that his journal had allowed space for several articles about something called sympathetic treatment, a rather fantastical therapy invented by the Englishman Kenelm Digby. The articles in question, however, do not endorse the treatment and it is an undeniable fact that Rabus successfully did his utmost to stay away from the controversy on the subject that held Rotterdam and its vicinity in its grip. As a writer for the *Boekzaal* Rabus had been less successful to remain impartial in a paper warfare about the possibility of divining metal and water by means of a dowsing rod, and the reproaches in this direction during his life and after his death certainly have a sounder basis. Rabus' wife was said to be endowed with this divining gift. In the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth century the journal of Rabus and Séwel received only occasional and in most cases scant attention in print. A systematical approach only began in 1974, when the first of a series of publications on the subject was produced by the former Pierre Bayle Institute, associated with what is now known as the Radboud University Nijmegen.

The journal had a very remarkable afterlife when in the eighteenth century it began to be used as a work of reference and that for quite some time. The *Boekzaal* was originally intended as a source of information about the content of mainly new and recently appeared books, even if from time to time summaries appeared of older work, especially when reprinted. Now the reverse usage became a fact. For eighteenth-century readers the long series of journal issues – in the past filled with the very latest

information by Rabus and Séwel – served the purpose of informing them of the contents of books that had been published long, in some cases very long, ago. The journal of Rabus and Séwel was granted an occasional second life, as a result of the need of later generations to use it as a general work of reference, but it was by no means the only one: journals in other languages also survived in this manner. And so in 1714 the *Histoire Critique de la République des Lettres* saw no objection in using the *Journal des Sçavans* from 1665 to gain information. In order to meet the demands of ‘researchers’ (‘opzoekers’) reprints were made of issues of journals that were discontinued, according to the journalist Jaques Bernard in 1699. The accuracy of the extracts in the *Bibliothèque Universelle et Historique*, which had ceased to appear in 1693, was so great ‘qu’on en reimprime tous les jours quelques volumes’. Johan van Gaveren, who had succeeded Séwel as editor of *De Boekzaal der Geleerde Wereld*, appears to have had Rabus’ journal within reach when he was writing a summary in 1707: concerning some matters under discussion he twice used a footnote to inform the reader of what a particular summary of Rabus (‘zeker uittreksel van Rabus’) had to say about this. J. (Isaïc) Le Long made an index of the *Boekzaalen* or *Twee-maandelyke Uittreksels* over the period of 1692-1708 (the project was announced in 1716 and realized in 1722), and recommended his work by assuring the readers that it would give access to ‘an abridged Library of more than 1500 books’ (‘eene beknopte Bibliotheek van meer dan 1500 boeken’). That articles from older journals were popular as a source of information for later generations becomes abundantly clear from the fact that in Venice between 1740 and 1746 a reprint was published in six volumes of all medical, mathematical and scientific contributions to the *Acta Eruditorum*. A striking example of the confidence that people from the eighteenth century had in old journals as a source of information is offered by the long-lasting involvement with this kind of literature by Prosper Marchand, a refugee who had spent the last decades of his life as a publisher, bookseller and journalist in The Hague, where he died in 1756. Marchand’s design was to create a *Dictionnaire Bibliographique Periodique Universel...*, that would list of all summaries and book announcements in journals from the period 1665-1700. On his list of journals to be analyzed was the *Boekzaal*. The utopian project was never realized. Marchand made clippings from the bibliographies that had been composed by the afore-mentioned Cornelis van Beughem. Van Beughem’s bibliographies of historical, juridical, mathematical and medical works contained the exact locations in journals where these publications were reviewed, and these were the references that were gathered by Marchand. For example: the reference to a work of Theodorus van Toll, together with a mention of a summary in the *Boekzaal* of 1695, and the mentioning of a collection of hymns by Carolus Tuijnman with a reference to a review by Rabus from 1699. Marchand’s main work, the famous *Dictionnaire Historique*, abounds with references to old journals, for example in volume II from 1759, where articles are mentioned in the *Boekzaal* from 1700 and 1701 about the Dutch translation of David Martius’ history of the Old and New Testament.

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