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KORT BEGRYP
DES LEVENS
ENDE
DER DEVGHDEN
VANDE WEERDIGHE
JOANNA
VAN
RANDENRAEDT,
GEESTELYCKE DOCHTER

Onder de Bestieringhe der Societeyt Iesu
Door eenen Priester der selve Societeyt.

*Bibliotheque
Subserj:*



Augustin:

T'ANTWERPEN,
By AUGUSTINUS GRAET, woonende op de groote
Merckt, in S. Augustinus, 1690.



LEVEN
ENDE DEUGHDEN
VANDE
VVEERDIGHE
AGNES
VAN HEILSBACH
GHEESTELYCKE DOCHTER

Onder de bestieringhe der Societeyt IESU
Door eenen Priester der selve Societeyt.



T'ANTWERPEN,
By Michiel Knobbaert, by het Professen-huys der Societeyt Iesu,
in S. Paeter 1691.
Permissu Superiorum.

du convent des carmelites deschausses d'ijpre

Daniël Huysmans S.J.,
Kort begryp (1690) and Leven ende deughden (1691)

Kort begryp des levens ende der devghden vande weerdighe Joanna van Randenraedt, geestelycke dochter onder de bestieringhe der Societeyt Iesu door eenen priester der selve Societeyt. T'Antwerpen: by Augustinus Graet, 1690. π4, A-G8, H-Nn4, Oo4+1; [8], 351, [3] p. // 8° [20 × 12,7].

Provenance: [...] Cornelia Vervoort gebortig van Merxplas [...] 1787 [...]; P. Verschueren onderp. Mei 1879; Bibliotheca Augustin. Antverp., ad usum fratris Nicolai L [...] (crossed out) (ms); Major Seminary Mechelen. Binding: contemporary, calfskin. 2-001550/B

Leven ende deughden van de vveerdighe Agnes van Heilsbagh gheestelycke dochter onder de bestieringhe der Societeyt Iesu door eenen priester der selve Societeyt. T'Antwerpen: by Michiel Knobbaert, 1691. A-2V4; 336, [8] p.: front. // 4° [19 × 15].

Provenance: Ce livre appartient au conuent des carmelites dijpre; du conuent des carmelites deschausses d'ijpre (ms); Bibl. Dom. Prob. Prov. Neerl. S.J. (bookplate); SJ Bibliotheek Berchmanianum Nijmegen (stamp). Binding: decorated paper. 2-008729/B

DANIËL Huysmans (Antwerpen 1643 – Mechelen 1704) entered the Jesuit novitiate in 1661 and was ordained in 1673. Pieces of biographical data are scarce but testify to him being stationed in Louvain (1672), Lier (1678), and Roermond (1685). In Roermond, he got acquainted with Lucia de Werimont, a so-called '*klopje*' – a spiritual virgin – under the direction of the Jesuits. Spiritual virgins were unmarried women who had devoted themselves to God but opted for an uncloistered religious life. Roermond, a town just outside the territory of the Dutch Republic, where Catholicism was officially banned, fell institutionally under the Southern or Spanish Netherlands, which were Catholic. Women like De Werimont, daughter of one of the counsellors to the Guelders Court whose families represented the local elite, had every opportunity to enter one of the convents in or outside of Roermond. De Werimont chose to become a '*klopje*' (see pp. 64-66) instead, a mode of existence which was not canonically recognized. The Dutch term '*klop*' or '*klopjes*' probably refers to the chaste state in life; the verb '*kloppen*' is connected to castration, perhaps alluding to spiritual castration described in Matthew 19:12: "and there will be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." Whereas Protestants had a preference for the term '*klop*' or '*klopsuster*', the clergy preferred the Latin: *filia devota* or *filia spiritualis*.

In 1689, Huysmans engaged in a correspondence with Lucia de Werimont, with regard to the legacy of Joanna van Randenraedt (1610-1684). She had also been a spiritual virgin under the direction of the Jesuits, and they decided to put her in charge of the small group of like-minded women. As a 'spiritual mother', she served as an intermediary between the Jesuit spiritual directors and this group of spiritual virgins. Locally, but also among spiritual virgins in Antwerp, Louvain, and Aalst, Van Randenraedt had risen to prominence, chiefly because of divine revelations transmitted by dreams, visions and voices. Reports of these extraordinary occurrences were noted by her personally in lengthy accounts of conscience and a life history, intended for her confessor. Huysmans collected the written legacy of Van Randenraedt and transformed it into a *vita* which

was published in 1690 as *Kort begryp des levens ende der deughden vande weerdighe Joanna van Randenraedt, geestelycke dochter onder de bestieringhe der Societeit Iesu* (“Summary of the life and virtues of the respectable Joanna van Randenraedt, spiritual daughter under the supervision of the Society of Jesus”). A year later, he published a similar book on the life of Agnes van Heilsbach (1597-1640), spiritual mother of, among others, Van Randenraedt and De Werimont, entitled *Leven ende deughden van de weerdighe Agnes van Heilsbach gheestelycke dochter onder de bestieringhe der Societeit Iesu* (“Life and virtues of the respectable Agnes van Heilsbach, spiritual daughter under the supervision of the Society of Jesus”). She too had been ordered by her Jesuit confessors to write accounts of conscience, as well as the story of her life and her spiritual development.

In particular, the life histories written by these women provided the basis for Huysmans’s monumental *vitae*. Both books were published anonymously, but are rightly attributed to this Jesuit. It is important to note that Van Heilsbach and Van Randenraedt – who had prepared the transcripts of the hardly legible handwriting of her spiritual mother – had already burnished their accounts of conscience in their personal life histories, presenting their lives as a spiritual struggle for virtuousness in order to deserve God’s love. Huysmans further accentuated their virtuous subservience to the Church and its clerical representatives, whereas the original writings testify to the spiritual, sometimes even clerical, ambitions of both women. What Huysmans mostly left unaccounted for was that both women used their writings, which were originally intended to be instruments of control by their confessors, to negotiate their own position, status, tasks, and authority. By willingly submitting themselves to the control of respective Jesuits, they assured the religious character of their daily life as well as its honourable character. Moreover, they found in some – not all – of the local Jesuits allies who were willing to interpret the extraordinary spiritual favours bestowed upon the authors benevolently.

Both books represent the small sample of books that appeared in or were translated into Dutch between 1570 and 1730, and specifically dealt with spiritual virgins and their life style. Apparently, Huysmans wanted to cater to this group, as well as to the regular and secular priests who served as spiritual directors. His project proved to be successful – if we are to believe what the author writes in the introduction to the *vita* of Van Heilsbach, where he explains that the positive reception of Van Randenraedt’s life story prompted him to publish that of her spiritual mother. The provenances of the copies of both lives illustrate that besides spiritual virgins themselves, as perhaps Cornelia Vervoort was, also cloistered nuns – like the Discalced Carmelites of Ieper or their rectors, like P. Verschueren, assistant pastor in 1879 – took an interest in women who were in their own time regarded as living saints.

Pious books intended for spiritual virgins and their confessors represent a specific genre in devotional literature that can best be characterized as an *apologia* for the state in life of spiritual virgins. Two subgenres can be discerned. On the one hand, there were the actual prescriptive books of conduct, centred on the guidelines for daily life and religious practice, and interspersed with various *exempla* from the Church Fathers as well as from medieval hagiography. On the other hand, there were the *vitae*, dedicated to the lives of women living outside of a convent. Huysmans’s books belong to the latter subgenre. Whereas neither Van Heilsbach nor Van Randenraedt were officially canonized, he nevertheless portrayed them as living saints and convincing examples of a rather unpretentious sainthood. In the context of the Counter-Reformation’s revival of hagiography as a genre, which had been under attack during the era of Reformation, such *vitae*

not only encouraged readers to make a confessional choice for what was depicted as the true religion, but also a social choice for a chaste life devoted to God. Virginity and celibacy had been attacked by the reformers as much as the veneration of saints. The *vitae* of women like Van Heilsbach and Van Randenraedt, who remained true to their faith and chose the virginal state in life, also served a purpose in the confessional polemic with Protestantism.

In an attempt to revive the mostly local devotion to Van Randenraedt, Huysmans's *vita* was re-issued in 1857 by publisher Henri Casterman in Tournai, in a modernized spelling under a new title, *Stichtende leven en deugden van de waardige Joanna van Randenraedt. Geestelijke dochter onder de Bestiering van het genootschap van Jesus door eenen priester van hetzelfde genootschap* ("Edifying life and virtues of the respectable Joanna van Randenraedt, spiritual daughter under the supervision of the Society of Jesus"). This new edition specifically served the Marian devotion in the Kapel in 't Zand in Roermond and can, as such, be interpreted as part and parcel of Catholic strategies of confessionalization in the Netherlands since the mid-nineteenth century.

Marit Monteiro

Lit.: Sommervogel IV, 542; *PIBA* I, 475; *BCNI* 15074 (1691); Marit Monteiro, *Geestelijke maagden: Leven tussen klooster en wereld in Noord-Nederland gedurende de zeventiende eeuw* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1996), esp. chapter IV; Gerrit Vanden Bosch, "Pionnen op een schaakbord?: De rol van kloppes in de belangenstrijd tussen jezuites en seculiere priesters in de Republiek omstreeks 1609-1610," *Trajecta* 9 (2000): 252-283; Marit Monteiro, "Paragons of Piety: Spiritual Virgins and their Private Devotion in the Northern Netherlands during the Seventeenth Century," in *Gebetsliteratur der frühen Neuzeit als Hausfrömmigkeit: Funktionen und Formen in Deutschland und den Niederlanden*, ed. Ferdinand von Ingen and Claudia Niekus Moore, *Wolfenbütteler Forschungen*, 92 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2001), 93-112.