

# THE ALBATROS IN FERDINAND BOLSTRAAT

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*Editor's Note: The following story, the second chapter of De Logologische Ruimte (Meulenhoff, 1984), exhibits the odd juxtapositions that result from transaddition (adding letters to a word and rearranging to form another word). Willard Espy did the same thing in An Almanac of Words at Play (June 22):*

*I was recently told by a GIRL in ALGERIA  
There was PEACE in HEPATICA, WAR in WISTERIA.  
I put HER in HALTER, that GIRL in ALGERIA:  
She wasn't insane, but SHE was in HYSTERIA.*

*George Levenbach has kindly provided the English translation.*

Shortly after midnight we passed the house where James lived. A light was still on. James was at the radio listening to a baritone who sang "Bye Bye Blackbird" with the sad respect which this song deserves. The front door was not locked and we tumbled inside.

James did not seem to be very pleased to see us. "It is really late," he said. "Alice is already asleep."

"Sleeping!" cried R. "On a night of great marvels!" He walked toward the liquor cabinet and selected a bottle.

"We discovered the hidden meaning of things," explained S. as we filled our glasses. "A new terrible beauty."

"Do not just stand there," said R. to James. "Join us and get yourself a glass too."

"He lives here," said H.

"I was on my way to bed," James said. "I was just going to turn off the lights."

"Watch out," R. said, "suppress that impulse. Take your dirty hand away from that SCHAKELAAR [light switch]."

"There is HAAR [hair] there and KAAS [cheese]," S. said.

"What?" asked James. "What are you talking about?"

"He does not understand," said R. "Shall we explain it to him? Come on, S., explain it to him."

"RACHEL and SARAH," said S. "ASLA [ash drawer] and KACHEL [stove]."

"What is wrong with you?" James asked, "what on earth are you

talking about?"

"In SCHAKELAAR," H. said.

"It is unbelievably how much is contained in it," continued S. "LAARS [boot], RAAK [hit the mark] and KAAL [bald], KAARS [candle], LASER and SCHRAAL [lean], KRAAL [bead], HAAK [hook], SCHAAR [scissors], KRACH [crash] and HEL [hell], LACHERS [laughers], HELAAS [alas], ACH [ah] and RAASKAL [rascal]. It is full of violence and tumult."

"You forgot SCHAR [dabfish] and AAL [eel]," said H.

"You are KACHEL [drunk] indeed," James said. "That much is certain."

"SCHAR or ALL," mused R., helping himself to more liquor. "In the WAAL but nowhere else. Not in the RIJN [Rhine], not in the MAAS [Meuse], nor in the SCHELDE, IJSSEL, LEK, MERWEDE [all Dutch rivers] - sterile water. The SINTJOSEFSVAART [Saint Joseph canal], what did you say again was in the SINTJOZEFVAART?"

"ANSJOVIS [anchovy]," said S.

James said nothing. He sat down and looked at the ceiling. Maybe he hoped that we would clear out again.

"He cannot follow it," said R. "We are sitting too high, we started too high."

"Where do you people come from?" James asked.

"From a new dimension," said R., "a parallel world. Everything is different. The KOE [cow] does not give MELK [milk], only the KAMEEL [camel]. In the DIERENRIEM [zodiac] are only a MIER [ant] and a RENDIER [reindeer]. In all of NEDERLAND [Netherlands] is not a single KONIJN [rabbit]. There is a HOND [dog] in HOLLAND and an EZEL [donkey] in ZEELAND, an UIL [owl] in LIMBURG, a REU [male dog] in UTRECHT, a GNOE [gnu] and a ROG [thornback] in GRONINGEN [all provinces in the Netherlands]. In LAAG-DRACHTEN [town] is a NACHTEGAAL [nightingale] and in DE VELUWE [section of Gelderland province] a LEEUW [lion]. Even the Belgians have a VEULEN [foal] in LEUVEN [Liege] and a WOELRAT [mole] in WAT-ERLOO. But nowhere a KONIJN. Do you know of a KONIJN somewhere?" "There is almost a KONIJN in NOORDWIJK [a seaside resort]," said H.

"If you start that way you are lost," said S. while she refilled her glass. "There is almost a VLEERMUIS [bat] in HILVERSUM [a town], almost a STEKELBAARS [stickleback] in AARTSBISSCHOPPELIJK [archbishopry], and almost a STRUISVOGEL [ostrich] in GEMOEDS-RUST [peace of mind]. But if you allow that there is no end to it. That is the snake in Paradise."

"There is no SLAG [snake] in PARADIJS [Paradise]," said H., only a DAS [badger] and a PAARD [horse]."

"There is also one in a KRAAKPAND [house taken over by squatters]," said R.

"And in AARDAPPEL [potato]," added S. "A PAARD in an AARDAPPEL baffles the mind, but still it is true."

James at last filled a glass. "Is that now the new dimension?" he asked. "KAT [cat] in TAK [branch], POES [pussycat] in SOEP [soup]?"

"He does not read us," said R. "He only sees the outside. Did I not say that he only would see the outside?"

"Yet that is also very deep," S. said dreamily, "POES in SOEP. It expresses something that exceeds all understanding. Lovely SOEP, lovely lovely SOEP."

"Tell him about the ZEESLEEPBOOT [seagoing tugboat]," said R. "Let us see what he says about the ZEESLEEPBOOT, and about the BANKETLETTERS [pastry in letterform]."

S. stared in her glass. "There is a POEZEBEEST [pussycat] in a ZEESLEEPBOOT and a KATTEBEEST [cat] in BANKETLETTERS," she said finally. "He is sitting there with an ETENSBAK [food tray] and a BAKSTEEN [brick]."

R. got up and took a new bottle from the liquor cabinet. While he refilled his glass he said "Reality is - well, how should I say it? - layered. The lower layers are the important ones. Those you have to have. Take the SALAMANDER. Do you know where you can find one? Tell him about the places to find SALAMANDER, S. Careful, one by one."

"SINAASAPPELMARMELADE [orange marmelade]," said S. "MAANDVERSLAG [monthly report], MAKELAARSDINER [brokers' dinner], MAANLANDERS [moon landers]. NAAMRAADSEL [name riddle], MOESAARDAPPELEN..."

"What are MOESAARDAPPELEN?" James interrupted.

"Simple, AARDAPPELEN [potatoes] used for MOES [mash]," said R. "The marvels are all around us, but you have to want to see them. A ZEBRA in BEENZWART [bone-black], an OTTER in a TORENTJE [little tower], a MARMOT [guinea pig] in a STOOMTRAM [steam streetcar]."

"It is not only fairy-like," S. said, "but it also means something. The HAGEDIS [lizard] in GEDACHTENIS [memory]..."

"What does that mean?" James asked.

"We are working on that," said S. "We have not fathomed that completely, but it unveils something. The KIKVORS [frog] in VOLKSREPUBLIEK [People's Republic], de NEUSHOORN [rhino]..."

"Calm down," said R., "small doses, not too much at once."

"The NEUSHOORN in DOUANEVOORSCHRIFTEN [customs regulations]. The OLIFANT [elephant] in FATSOENLIJK [decent]."

"You gain insight into the words," R. said.

"In some there are two," said S. "A KREEFT [lobster] and a MEERKAT [guenon] in EFFECTENMARKT [stock market]. An OESTER

[oyster] and a STEREO in INTROSPECTIE [introspection]..."

"You are going too fast," said R. "He cannot cope with that. Too much light at once is blinding."

"A STEKELVARKEN [porcupine] in a NAVELK1JKSTER [female observer of a navel]," said H. "Oh, no, we just missed. Why cannot we get that one?"

"There will be a time when we will understand it," said R. "At present we are not far enough."

"Even though one would expect it, there is just no TERMIET [termite] in a MIERENETER [anteater]," said H.

"But there is a RAT in KATER [tomcat] and a GEIT [goat] in TIJGER [tiger]," said S.

"And an EMU in MEEUW [gull]," added H.

"One has to become accustomed to that," said R., "but a NIJL-PAARD [hippo] in a PIJLSTAARTVLINDER [a tropical butterfly] is a great marvel. H., you are a mathematician, you tell them about the IJSVOGEL [kingfisher] in the PARADIJSVOGEL [bird of paradise]. Those diagrams of what's his name, you know which, that fit together."

"Forget it," said H. "What R. is referring to are boxes that slide into each other. Thus there is MELK [milk] in a KAMEEL [camel], but the KAMEEL itself is inside CHOCOLADEMELK [chocolate milk]. There is of course something missing, but probably that has disappeared. From the series IJS [ice] through IJSVOGEL to PARADIJSVOGEL one might conclude that at one time a RADIJSVOGEL [radish bird] existed."

"Actually one cannot comprehend it," said R., "it is too big. Do you think he is ready for the AAP [monkey]? Tell him carefully about the AAP."

"There is an AAP in SCHAAP [sheep]," said H., "but there are SCHAPEN in a CHIMPANSEE and the CHIMPANSEE itself is inside a SCHEEPSTIMMERMAN [ship's carpenter]."

"It boggles the mind," said James, "but now I am going to bed. It is almost three o'clock."

We emptied our glasses. James accompanied us to the car. "Take care," he said when we drove off. "There is an ALBATROS in FERDINAND BOLSTRAAT [a major street in the 19th-century part of Amsterdam]."