

UPPERLANDS IN THE NETHERLANDS

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I first heard of Dutch logology in the summer of 1979, when Martin Gardner forwarded to me an article on Dutch palindromes that was sent to him by Hugo Brandt Corstius, then a professor of linguistics at the Institute of General Linguistics at the University of Amsterdam. (This article, "Nepapen", was translated by George Levenbach and appeared in the November 1979 Word Ways.) He is the author of two brilliant books on linguistics which are models of lucid exposition, *Algebraische Taalkunde* (1974) and *Rekenen op Taal* (1983). He has also had a career as a journalist and writer; according to Nicholaas Matsier, he is the author of "among other things, criticisms, essays, science fiction stories, fairy tales, travel journals, lampoons, calls for rebellion, swindles, world peace plans, riddles, computations, game rules, programmes, lists and collections."

He might with justice be called the Dmitri Borgmann of Dutch logology. Like Borgmann, he has assumed a number of pseudonyms: Raoul Chapkis, Piet Grijs, Victor Baarn, Jan Eter, drs. G. Van Buren, Stoker, Dolf Cohen, and Battus. (The last pseudonym was the name of the Greek founder of Cyrene in Libya who, like Hugo Brandt Corstius, suffered from a stutter.) And also like Borgmann, he left at least one Dutch logologist with the impression of being "a bit of a difficult case: opinionated, brilliant, unpredictable, sneering. The same logologist added that he had written him several letters "full of new logological material in Dutch" but never received an answer. Yet when they met in person, he found him to be a charming and entertaining man!

I have been very little luckier. On Aug 5 1979 he wrote me "...I am very honored to appear in Word Ways of which I once saw one copy...I am presently writing a book on wordplay in Dutch, and perhaps I could send you more articles...I hope we will develop into a fruitful cooperation". Though I promptly sent him a copy of the current issue, I never heard from him again.

Hugo Brandt Corstius's logological career parallels Borgmann's in an important way: writing under the pseudonym Battus, he published in 1981 *Oppeerlandse Taal- & Letterkunde*, a landmark book comparable to *Language on Vacation* sixteen years earlier. It was a popular book in the Netherlands, going into a fifth printing by 1984.

The following paragraphs reproduce part of the opening chapter, and were kindly translated by Lee Sallows during a Morristown visit in March. It gives a flavor of the book:

WHAT IS UPPERLANDS?

Upperlands is Dutch on holiday. Upperlands is Dutch without that nasty usefulness that normally clings to that language. Upperlands words and Upperlands sentences at first sight look just like Dutch words and sentences, but Upperlands is also intended for second sight.

The Upperlander looks at Dutch words and sentences not to become wiser from them but to enjoy them. On seeing a word, the Dutchman is immediately distracted by its meaning. The Upperlander is not troubled by its meaning. For him, the word is just like a chestnut tree, the sense like music.

Upperlands lies between sport and art.

Upperlands is sport. He who sees how a jumper after years of training, diet and sacrifice can make a jump of seven meters over a sand-pit can of course ask himself: Wouldn't it be better to walk the seven meters? The jumper doesn't understand such a question, the Upperlander even less.

Sport is body movement with random self-imposed absurd handicaps. Why would anybody who is trying to get a ball in a goal use only his legs, or only a hockey-stick? Why would anybody write a story in which every word begins with the letter that ended the previous word?

To do it better than another is one possible answer, but here Upperlands wins over sport. In sport the achievement is an ephemeral event, of which only a photo can be made. He who jumps less far than another is unsatisfied. Sports characterizes itself by many losers but few winners. In Upperlands every Upperlander is a winner; the achievement endures thanks to the written word. Anonymous achievements are frequently the most beautiful. Those who did not attain the record are also happy because of other attributes of the Upperlands product.

Upperlands is ours. It is good for nothing. You do it because a secret voice--one that you often swear at!--calls you to do it. The painter uses paint because paint is for sale, but he is not interested in the paint. The Upperlander uses Dutch because he knows the language, but he is not interested in Dutch.

In some of the arts, performing artists are needed to bring the finished work of art to life. Upperlands art can be brought to life by everyone who can read; there need only be light to read it.

In art, the artist is often interested in something else, something deeper, something beneath the surface of his work. In Upperlands it is only Upperlands that counts: the surface, what you can see.

Upperlands frees one from the tyranny of radio, the babble of others, the writings in newspapers. Upperlands linguistics is dream-linguistics: if something is clever, then it is good. What is clever everyone can decide for himself.

The Upperlands constitution goes: what is possible is allowable; what is not possible is completely illegal.

WHAT IS NOT UPPERLANDS?

That which cannot be written on a typewriter is not Upperlands. A rebus in the form of a deer pulling a bus is not Upperlands. The rebus KzK pk [large cheese turnover for the small canape] is Upperlands. A text that requires letters ten centimeters high or curved letters is not Upperlands. The sheet of paper may not be turned while you type!

What goes on in another language than Dutch is not Upperlands. That may seem self-evident, but it isn't. People continually offer me foreign examples for Upperlands. Such examples can be beautiful, but you don't eat loempia [an Indonesian dish] in an Italian restaurant.

The Upperlander looks at international recreational linguistics but is proud enough to want to do in his own language what he sees there. He parrots? Yes--but all culture is parroting.

Other things that I don't define as Upperlands: riddles, charades, games, cryptograms, crossword puzzles, Scrabble, calligraphy, graphology, typography, concrete poetry--even if they include Upperlands ideas, elements and inspirations.

As an aside, but I emphasize it: punning does not belong to Upperlands. Punning only works in a particular situation, preferably spoken by an individual. Certainly punning goes back to a few Upperlands principles. According to Hanke Schultink, there is punning if speakers and writers consciously make use of the fact that in language a semantic difference can be linked to a formal identity.

Poetry is not Upperlands, even if the boundary is often vague.

Roughly put: in the context of this book, I prefer some authors to others: Trijntje Pop, John O'Mill, and Zonderland (alias Kees Stip, J. van der Meulen and D. van der Vat) over K. Schippers, Remco Campert and Leo Vroman, however Upperlandish the latter three sometimes are. As far as prose is concerned, I express similar preferences: Jan Hanlo and Harry Mulisch are both crazy about words, but Hanlo is the pure Upperlander while Mulisch (alas!) always wants to create the impression that he is busy with deeper matters. When it comes to the Hermans, I cite Toon as appreciatively as Willem Frederik [the first a comic, the second a serious writer].

In view of the Upperlands constitution, all these restrictions are of course nonsense--but I want to make clear what you don't have to expect in this book.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY OF UPPERLANDS

The most recent flowering [of Dutch logology] began with an Upperlands column in the NRC Handelsblad of 27 Aug 1976, for which I and a few friends made a contribution. The following year Vrij Nederland played host, and in 1978 Onze Taal devoted its entire summer number to Upperlands, while in 1979 Margriet played host. 1978 was a banner year for Upperlands: Kousbroek published his translation of Queneau's *Exercises in Style*, a-lipograms, e-lipograms and o-lipograms were reprinted, the total number of palindromes was increased from less than 100 to more than 500 by Andijk, Inez van Eijk published a gigantic collection of "Dooddoeners", and G. van Buren started her column in NRC Handelsblad.

What is the meaning of this flowering? Is Upperlands clever? Or is Upperlands nothing but exaggerated dullness, a sign of language-fatigue, decadence, meaningless time-wasting, superficial japes, wasted time and effort? I don't know. These are the wrong questions. I don't claim that all Upperlands is clever, but I maintain that everything in this book is. I just wanted to bring it together in one book. Why? Read the following paragraph.

WHY THIS BOOK, AND HOW?

I wrote this book to counter the criticism above--and because nobody else would do it. It is terrible to spend nights seeking for reversible words such as petstep or nedertreden. In this book all 2x303 of them can be found. I find it time-wasting to continually have to go looking for that piece of paper on which the shortest sentence with all 26 letters of the alphabet is written. In this book it can be found. It irritates me that a professor of literature calls every kind of Upperlands "anagrams". It also irritates me that I cannot communicate clearly with fellow-Upperlanders because we are lacking a well-defined terminology. In this book the terminology can be found.

I've left nothing out, even when the genre or the available examples were not to my liking.

The intention behind the appearance of the four Upperlands columns [in the newspapers] was to wake up the unsuspecting reader and force him to open his eyes. In this book, too, it was a great temptation to include only Upperlands linguistics. That would have resulted in a mish-mash. Some kind of organization was needed: a theory of Upperlands that would bring together diverse cases under one denominator and that would distinguish apparently-similar ones. Unavoidably, the organization turns out to be a parody of academic linguistics--but that's just something the reader will have to live with!

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It is now time to examine Battus's masterwork in detail, showing what parts of logology it does (and does not!) cover. Following the introduction (summarized in part above), the book consists of nine chapters, each titled with a word ending in -gram--almost always a neologism coined by Battus. The first chapter, Lipogram, emphasizes e-less text but exhibits many other letter-omissions; it also features univocalics (A-spraak, E-legende, I-dicht, O-sprook, U-klucht, IJ-rijm). There's a clever e-less parody of Willem Kloos's famous poem *De Zee*, Rudy Kousbroek's ode *Plas* [a puddle]. One text (Rus Popov stopt ponyrijdsport) confines itself to the letters N through Z. Another section looks at the alphabet divided into groups of letters: typewriter words, or words readable by turning a hand-calculator upside-down. One essay contrasts the masculine nature of P with the feminine one of M, as in *mooier* [more beautiful] versus *pooier* [pimp]. Yet another section classifies letters by the presence or absence of ascenders or descenders, and by their horizontal and vertical symmetry (CHOICE, AUTOMAT). The chapter discusses acrostics which Battus calls *beginrijm* (beginning-rhyme). A noteworthy example celebrates 17 different automobile models, from Aartsvader Abraham's aquamarine Audi and Brigitte Bardot's blue Bentley to William Wouter's white Wolseley. There's a type-collection of 666 different one-syllable rhyme words, reminiscent of Henry Moser's *One-Syllable Words* (Charles Merrill, 1969). The chapter concludes with isograms, pangrams and their relationship to each other. Some of the more fantastic isogram coinages are translated in "Splendid Symbolism" in the February 1996 *Word Ways*. Pangrams are represented by sentences such as the 36-letter "In Zweden vocht groepje quakers bij sexfilm" [in Sweden a little Quaker group fought at a sex film]. There's a word-isogram much longer than the one in the February 1995 *Word Ways*, and a pangrammatic window (from the NRC Handelsblad of January 23 1978) of an unremarkable 139 letters.

The second chapter is titled *Palingram*. Battus uses this term for single-word palindromes, reserving the latter for palindromic phrases or sentences. He starts off with a collection of 303 "splendid" palindromic words and follows these with 303 more of "household quality". (The fraction of words of length n or length $n+1$ that are palindromes is reasonably well-predicted by the Battus-devised empirical formula $1/(\pi n)^2$. For example, the fraction of the 4800 words of 3 or 4 letters in the Dutch dictionary of Van Dale that should be palindromes is $1/88.74 = 0.013$, leading to 54 palindromes, in good agreement with the 63 "splendid" ones previously reported.) Then there are the Borgmannesque coinages such as the ones given in "Nepapen" in the November 1979 *Word Ways*. Passing mention is given to word-reversals like *door/rood*; more attention is given to syllabic reversals such as *aardbei/beiaard* [strawberry/carillon]. There are many examples of palindromic sentences, including families based on "Mooie z..." *zei oom* ["Beautiful z..." says Uncle] and "Regent...t neger" [Governor...t negro]. There is a Dutch

version of the well-known collection of given names illustrated in English by Dennis, Edna and many others who sinned. There are even a handful of word palindromes. At the end of the chapter the palindromic aspects of word shape are explored: BID is horizontally reflective while bid is vertically reflective, and NON remains the same when turned 180 degrees.

The third chapter, Dubblegram, reflects a duality Battus sees in a word: a collection of letters that can be rearranged (an anagram) and a collection of shorter words which together equal the original (a homogram, but which is known as a charade by the National Puzzlers' League). Battus gives a small collection of anagrams up to 15 letters in length, although some of them seem contrived: marionettenspel [play with puppets] = parlementsnotie [parliamentary notion]. Two words, andere and stapel, have ten anagrams apiece. Kloos's De Zee encores as an "anacleft" (its words rearranged to form a new poem). From literal anagrams Battus segues to syllabic anagrams as represented by Spoonerisms: a four-way example is herenboekje [book of peerages], berenhoekje [a corner where bears hang out], boerenhekje [a farmer's fence] and hoerenbekje [a whore's mouth]. Similar to this is word-changes: (an English example is What's the difference between a rooster and a lawyer? One clucks defiance, the other...). Battus is especially charmed by homograms with startling components such as Dol-Fijn [dolphin] = wild, fine, or waard-oor [through which] = landlord, ear. From homograms it is a short step to homosentences, known in English as charade sentences: Neem en jet / Nee, meen je 't?, or Deze geniet de zege niet. The final section abandons letterplay for wordplay, the relation between homonyms and synonyms. Examples include curse-words starting with S and hundreds of ways of saying Yes. Readers will also be familiar with point-of-view comparatives such as "I am diplomatic, you fib, he lies" or "My daughter's inviting, your daughter's a flirt, his daughter's a whore".

The fourth chapter, Hypergram (repetition of letters or classes of letters such as vowels), brings together diverse threads of letterplay, some of which appeared in "Dutch Crow-Eggs" in the May 1985 Word Ways. What is the longest set of consecutive vowels or consecutive consonants in a Dutch word (papagaaieieren and angstschreeuw)? Or the longest internal tautonym (lekkerkerkerkerkerkerkerkerkerker)? There are numerous sentences containing word-repetitions or sound-repetitions. English analogues can be found in Word Ways articles in 1996 "A Soup Can Can Can-Can; Can You?", "When There's a Will" and "T-T-T-That's All, Folks!". There are stutter sentences like the one beginning "Dat 'dat was' was in in onze Onze Taal-taal...". One section, clumsily titled "Vowel Varieties Between Fixed Consonants" or more succinctly "De Wet [law] van Wit [white] en Wat [what]" looks at series like tan-ten-tin-ton-tun. Three brief sections trace connections between hypergrams and palingrams, anagrams and homograms; the latter is illustrated by sentences like "Is pa gek op je pagekopje" [is Father mad about your pageboy hairdo?].

The fifth chapter, titled N-Gram, starts with statistics of the length distribution of Dutch words in the Van Dale dictionary and in running text, plus frequencies of individual letters, spaces and punctuation in running text. Interestingly, E occurs almost once in every five letters in Dutch, making e-univocalics easier to construct than in English but e-lipograms harder. There are lists of all 100 two-letter words and a few of the 713 three-letter words in Van Dale. Three-letter words are the excuse for a passing reference to word squares: there are 20 3x3 squares clued by (1) article of clothing, (2) family member, (3) mammal. The three three-letter number names (1,5,11) can be connected by word golf: EEN-ven-vel-vijl-VIJF-lijf-lef-les-zes-zet-eet-EEK-elk-ELF. The section on tetragrams wanders into a discussion of non-self-descriptive words like lang (which isn't long), palingram (not a palingram) or Engels (not English). If such words are called "verkeerd" (wrong), is verkeerd verkeerd? (Dave Silverman called this the autological-heterological problem in the August 1969 Word Ways.) The section on pentagrams lists famous people like Sammy Davis or Woody Allen, and also discusses in detail the word game in which two players call out letters in turn and each decides where to place the letters in his own 5x5 grid. (The object is to form as many vertical and horizontal words as possible.) The section entitled variograms gives an example of a trans-deletion pyramid: e,en,een,Deen,reden,eender,bereden,boerende,toerbende,ontbeerden,onbestreden,onbedrevenst,ondersteboven. It also notes that the name Mariëse contains Maries,Marie,Arie,Rie, and comments on words that form pictures such as a flask (in Alice in Wonderland, a mousetail). Determining the longest Dutch word is just as much a subjective exercise as it is in English. The longest in Van Dale, wapenstilstandsonderhandelingen [cease-fire negotiations], has 31 letters, but Battus cites various hapax legomena in printed works which extend the record to 55 letters: kindercarnavalsoptochtvoorbereidingswerkzaamhedendrukke [the excitement accompanying today's preparation for the activity named 'children's carnival procession']. Truly a Borgmannesque achievement, but Battus adds four Upperlands jawbreakers up to 84 letters. This heterogeneous chapter winds down with diverse topics. The longest one-syllable words are schreeuwt, schrielst, schraalst, schreepst; there is a ten-letter syllable in geschroefd. Battus gives three texts of one-syllable words in the spirit of *Whales for the Welsh*. He cites a table previously generated by himself that suggests a million Dutch words (five times the words in Van Dale) exist, if neologisms, variant forms, etc. are counted. Finally, he gives a mnemonic for the digits of pi (Wie u kent, o getal...) and takes up word golf again (WARM-worm-word-woud-KOUD).

The sixth chapter, titled Ongram, is largely concerned with the meaning of words rather than their letters. As Battus says, language is not logical, a fact frequently observed with feelings of "fury, joy, wonder or resignation". The first four sections explore oddities of diminutives (by adding -je), plurals (adding -en), comparatives and superlatives (adding -er, -ste) and feminization (adding -in). Kain is Abel's brother, so should he be called Ka? What is a kindergart? "Hoe de HOEDER HOEST, hij blijft verkouden" [How the guardian coughs! He

has a cold]. After a passing nod to syllepsis (he lost his coat and his temper), Battus discusses the Combinatiegram (blendwords like brunch) and introduces his own sardonic ones (dronkensap = alcohol). The chapter ends with examples of fractured proverbs such as -"Noch kip noch ei" [neither chicken nor egg] and "Kind met de doofpot weggooien" [throw out the child with the fire-extinguisher], and with pleonasms (round circle, white mold).

The seventh chapter, Miragram, is a potpourri of logological curiosities. Battus begins by listing several "unclassifiable" varieties: (1) walkabouts or cyclograms such as AMsterdAM (called heads 'n' tails words in English), (2) inside words such as maJESTy, (3) abc-grams (words with letters in consecutive order) such as liMNOPhil, (4) topwords, which are (I think) refractory rhymes in English, and (5) klinkklank words, or second-order reduplications such as zigzag. (First-order reduplications such as willy-nilly are called inner rhyme.) Words that contain charadic opposites, such as bas-alt [low-high] or vol-ledig [full-empty] are chronicled in detail; these could well be called oxymoronic words. A double example in Dutch is zeemeermin which contains zee-meer [sea-lake] and meer-min ['min of meer' means more or less].. Passing note is taken of eponymous personages such as the Earl of Sandwich or Lord Nelson [a half-nelson]. Collective nouns of venery are described in some detail, including the jocular examples featured in *An Exaltation of Larks* (a coffin of gravediggers, a lump of camels). Paragrams are words that can be transmuted to other words by letter-switch, deletion, insertion, or letter-change. Illustrations include well-known personages like Frank Sumatra or Heetboven. Parallelograms are acrostic texts altered to other acrostic texts by initial letter-change, such as "So She Sent To The Tent". One can also interchange words to create parallel texts: two points define a line and three points not on one line define a triangle; two lines define a point and three lines not through a point define a triangle. The chapter concludes with ladies names ("if Bette Midler wed Sammy Davis she'd be Bette Davis") and coined compounds creating long sequences of the same letter: shampoo-oog, sneeuw-wolken, orthodox-xenofobe, jazz-zangeres.

The eighth chapter, Xenogram, examines foreign words that sound or look Dutch (and vice versa): "Dutchmen call it 'water' and Frenchmen say 'l'eau', but Belgians know both versions--they speak of Waterloo".. Dutch-English Anguish Languish is exhibited in a Willum Clowes sonnet beginning "Queen numb blue men in dank nob, her broken..." in the spirit of the fake-French Mother Goose rhymes of Luis Antin van Rooten or Ormonde de Kay. Battus cites a Martin Gardner listing of French words that look English, and quotes humorous mistranslations from school examination papers. The flavor of this chapter can be appreciated by reading Lederer's "A Bilingual Pun is Twice the Fun" in the August 1996 *Word Ways*. Secret Languages and Writing describes both chronograms and Pig-Latin and its Dutch relatives. Another section is devoted to baby-talk among lovers, to vassals or people on a sickbed, and there is a note on shibboleths.

The ninth and final chapter, Epigram, has nothing to do with its title. It begins with some miscellaneous wordplay that Battus apparently couldn't fit in elsewhere. Alphabetic sequences, touched in Chapter 7, are more fully illustrated by acrostics ("Aangezien beider chanson de eerste Februari.."), by words beginning with alphabetic letter-sounds such as J zus [Jesus] and Q biek [cubic], and a story in which the letters A through Q appear in order ("Als boven ABCDE, F.G., HIJ KLM N.O.P.-Quadranten..." translated in the August 1985 Word Ways). The letter-rebus is briefly discussed (BB80 = beestachtig [beastly] = B's achtig). In Uppermostlands Battus decides not to relax logological standards by allowing near-misses such as Grebbeberg. Battus notes that the discovery of Upperlands examples in Dutch has been "shamefully neglected" in his book; it is "fearsomely difficult" to find these. But what can one expect when Princess Beatrix doesn't even know what a palindrome is? Finally, he makes three wishes for Upperlands: (1) more work on parallelograms (see Chapter 7), (2) new wordplay such as ritsgrams (series grams, called alternades in English), and (3) a series of Upperlands publications. Alternades can occur in letter-units as in g0eD, eEf OvErReEd EeN aDdEr... which splits into "0, de oereenden..." and "Geef vrede-adres...", in word-units, or in phrases or sentences, called Equivoque by Bombaugh in *Oddities and Curiosities of Words and Literature* (Dover, 1961). What books would Battus like? First, an *Oppeerlands Woordenboek* in which one can look up what is odd about the word bijzonder [odd], including any definite ones discovered in an earlier era. The present work has discussed over two thousand such words; ultimately such a work could exceed Van Dale in magnitude. [This echoes Borgmann's assertion in "The Keystone of Logology" in the February 1977 Word Ways that all words are logologically interesting.] A second book would contain sentence-palindromes in all languages, with a discussion on what characteristics of a word determine its suitability for sentence palindromes. Are some languages easier to construct palindromes in? Can palindromes be successfully translated? Are there generally-recognized techniques for composing them? [The beginning of such a comprehensive collection has been assembled by the International Palindrome Club in Barcelona.] A third project would be Van Dale shuffled through a computer so that one could easily identify anagrams, palingrams, homograms and heterograms. This would surely reveal words not found for the present book. [The OED is on CD-ROM for instant location of any word, but it does not have the capability for logological processing that Battus desires.]

To summarize: Dutch logology has two strengths and two gaps. The twin pillars on which it rests are constrained writing and word-classification; its notable omissions are word-squares (more generally, logological structures involving the interplay of word-groups) and the relation between logology and number play (from numerical tautonyms and difference words, to subtleties like rearranging the alphabet to create more self-referential number-names). Even conceding these omissions, Battus has documented a remarkable flowering of logology in a small country: all hail to the Dutch Upperlanders!