

# Jan Hendrickz Glasemaker: The Addressee of Letter 84?

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Letter 84 (according to the usual numbering in recent editions) was not contained in the original publication of Spinoza's correspondence in the *Opera Posrhuma* (1677) but only used by its editors to preface in this book the unfinished *Tractatus politicus*. Carl Gebhardt (IV 374-376) discusses the possibility that an anonymous "Rector im Haag," mentioned by Rieuwertz junior to the German travelers Stolle and Hallmann, might have been its receiver.<sup>1</sup> An exception among modern editors/translators of the correspondence, Atilano Domínguez pays some attention to the question and seems to support the Gebhardt's suggestion.<sup>2</sup> But he, at least, sees a difficulty: why should Spinoza write a letter to a good friend [26] living nearby in the same small city? His hypothetical explanation of the hypothetical ascription is that Spinoza might have done so for being sick or having fear of being discovered in visiting his friend.<sup>3</sup> But would the dispatch of a letter with the announcement of a book on politics and its eventual discovery not have been much more risky than a casual visit? And weak health cannot be a plausible reason either since the contents and tone of the letter show much energy and include plans for the near future. In the case of sickness, one might have expected an allusion to it.

In this note, I will point to Glasemaker as the foremost candidate for having been the receiver of the letter on account of a couple of arguments, that each by itself is surely not strong enough though together they collectively may have some weight. A first thing to focus on is the *form of address* of this letter: *amice dilecte* (dear/beloved friend). This form betrays familiarity. Spinoza was always very concerned in choosing accurately the appropriate form of address for his letters. He also mostly keeps to his choice once he has made it. Oldenburgh was first addressed as *Vir clarissime*, later as *nobilissime et clarissime domine*. Simon de Vries, the young and gifted student, read *amice colende* on the letters from his friend Spinoza. The learned and highly respected Lodewijk Meijer, who much cooperated with Spinoza in his work, was called *amice singularis*. Pieter Baling, the rich merchant who supported him but was also his intimate, enjoyed the title *dilecte amice*, as did the addressee of letter 84. Blijenbergh was first *amice ignote* for Spinoza and became later *mi domine et amice*. Hudde, the burgomaster of Amsterdam, was correctly approached as *amplissime vir*, just like the pensionary H. Boxel. Another political authority, Van der Meer, was comparably approached as *ornatissime vir*. Bouwmeester, partner of Meijer in science and arts, has the same prerogative: *doctissime vir, amice singularis*. The old and very modest comrade Jelles is four times kindly treated as *humanissime vir*. Naturally Leibnitz has

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<sup>1</sup> J. Freudenthal. *Die Lebensgeschichte Spinoza's aus Quellenschriften*, Leipzig, 1899, 224. This person, who also died in The Hague would have been a close friend (*gutter Freund*) and a protector.

<sup>2</sup> Spinoza, *Correspondencia, Introducción, traducción, notas e índices de A. Domínguez*, Madrid, Bolsillo, 1988, 413

<sup>3</sup> . "Por estar ya enfermo o por temor [...]. Spinoza le habría escrito, en vez de visitarle, pese a vivir en la misma ciudad" (*ibid.*)

a high score, although with a certain distance: *eruditissime nobilissimeque domine*. The learned baron Tschirnhaus was greeted as *nobilissime vir*, his assistant Schuller as *expertissime vir*. Velthuysen was finally addressed as *praestantissime clarissimeque domine*.

It will be clear from the above list that the title Spinoza gave to his correspondents was certainly not without a meaning. Can we, therefore, draw a conclusion about the profile of the addressee of Letter 84. Yes. [27] He must have belonged to the circle of Spinoza's *close* and confidential friends with whom he was on an equal footing for quite some time. Simon de Vries, Adriaan Koerbagh, and Pieter Balling had died. Jarig Jelles had already been denoted by his initials "I.I." and, moreover, he did not know Latin. The "special" friends Meijer and Bouwmeester were both too busy with theatrical work in the art society *Nil volentibus arduum*. They had likewise already been identified by their initials. Schuller was not really a friend, and Van Gent (Dr. Petrus van), mentioned by Spinoza in Letter 63, was more of a learned relation, belonging to the intimates of Tschirnhaus as did Schuller himself!<sup>4</sup> Who remains? We have to search in Amsterdam, because this city, the place of Spinoza's birth, youth, education, and philosophical development, functioned also as the matrix of his lifelong friendships. The *summus amicus* of his latter days in The Hague, Abraham Cuffeler, cannot be considered precisely for this reason and also because he was above all a learned admirer on a high social level. The same must be remarked about Burchard de Volder, professor at the university of Leiden, who in his correspondence with Leibnitz denied to be a Spinozist (like Peter denied to be a friend of Christ).

Why should we not consider as a candidate his publisher, Jan Rieuwertz? We do know that he belonged to the category of Spinoza's intimates. Not only does he denote himself as a participant of this group by naming as friends Balling, Spinoza, and Jelles in his publication of the latter's 1684 *Belijdenisse*,<sup>5</sup> but Spinoza, in his turn, also called him "our friend J. R." in letter 58 to Schuller who had sent him a letter indirectly via Rieuwertz. He is greeted in the name of Rieuwertz by this same Schuller in letter 63. It is also known that he had *intellectual* communication with Spinoza. This is demonstrated by Spinoza's declaration in 1674 to Schuller that he formerly (*olim*) sent a paper of his with a logical/epistemological content to his friend Rieuwertz. Discussing an objection of Tschirnhaus against the freedom of the will he writes, "This is true if he means that the two men, while using the same words, nevertheless have different things in mind. I once sent some examples of this to our friend J. R., and I am now writing to him to let you have them."<sup>6</sup> This seems to prove that Rieuwertz was himself a philosopher [28] who asked Spinoza questions and that he was not only interested in his contributions in his role as a publisher.

Yet also Rieuwertz has to be excluded as a possible addressee of letter 84 for the simple reason that he did not know Latin (just like Jarig Jelles). This information is given in an important passage of Stolle's and Hallmann's reports about their meetings with Spinoza that was not printed and divulged by J. Freudenthal. Apart from its pivotal summary of a certain

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<sup>4</sup> Details about these people were first published in Klever, "La clé d'un nom: Petrus van Gent (et Schuller) à partir d'une correspondance," *Cahiers Spinoza* 6 (1991), 169-203 and reappear in P. Steenbakkers, *Spinoza's Ethica from Manuscript to Print*, Assen: Van Gorcum, 1994.

<sup>5</sup> See Klever, *Mannen rond Spinoza*. Hilversum, 1997, 14. See also for the background of this essay S. Nadler, *Spinoza. A Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

<sup>6</sup> All quotations from Spinoza's correspondence are from *The Letters*, trs. S. Shirley, Introduction and notes by S. Barbone, L. Rice and J. Adler, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1995

Dutch manuscript in Rieuwertz' possession which throws new light on Spinoza's relation to Bouwmeester and his own philosophy,<sup>7</sup> one also finds in the left out fragment of the manuscript the confession of Rieuwertz junior, "daß sein Vater noch weniger Latein als Er verstanden" (that his father was even less capable of reading Latin than he himself). The argument that maybe the letter was written by Spinoza in Dutch and afterwards translated into Latin in order to insert it in the *Opera Posthuma* cannot survive criticism. Its style betrays Spinoza's pen in the last years of his writing. This is marvelously substantiated by Omero Proietti in a contribution about classical crypto citations (from Petronius, Horace and Vergilius) in the letters 76 (to Albert Burgh, 1675) and our letter 84.<sup>8</sup>

Who else, then, might be the "dear friend"? The Amsterdam network partly originating from Van den Enden — becoming a non-conformist reading and discussion group in the sixties and then also strongly activated by many vital contacts in Rieuwertz' unorthodox publishing shop — also counted, certainly from the beginning, the "professional" translator Glasemaker among its participants. This is indisputable since I discovered the famous passage in Borch's journal in which he reports about the circle. "Here are atheists, mainly Cartesians like Van den Enden, Glasemaker etc. who teach their ideas to others. They do not profess openly their atheism — they often speak about god — but by God they understand nothing else than this whole universe. This is also clearly confirmed by a certain artificially and recently composed Dutch writing whose author is kept secret."<sup>9</sup> The educated Glasemaker (1620-1682) was [29] the lifelong "scientific" partner and colleague of Jan Rieuwertz who translated for his publishing house all the works of Descartes, Spinoza and many other controversial books and pamphlets.<sup>10</sup> Glasemaker also must have been an intimate and old friend of Spinoza, a candidate to address with *amice dilecte*.

Are there other arguments for the hypothesis that Glasemaker was the receiver of Letter 84? Yes. First of all, as a kind of co-director in the enterprises of Rieuwertz, who did not know Latin and yet published the most important and subversive Latin texts of the age, *he must always have been involved in planning activities*, the negotiations with authors and the preparation of manuscripts for the press. Rieuwertz was not only a man who brought to light the output of authors, he was also "a great organizer of books,"<sup>11</sup> inventive in stimulating and funding new productions. When we did not already realize this on account of his publishers list, it becomes now evident in a recently discovered letter, which was published by Piet Visser. In the letter, dating from 1 April 1672 and directed to the Haarlem collegiant Anthony van Dale, Rieuwertz asks him for his cooperation in writing part of a political treatise. He tells him that they are preparing a treatise about the "Triple Alliantie"

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<sup>7</sup> See the chapter entitled "Arcana Philosophiae. Tension in the Amsterdam Circle between Van den Enden/Bouwmeester and Spinoza" in W. N. A. Klever, *The Sphinx. Spinoza Reconsidered in Three Essays*, Vrijstad, 2000, 121-180.

<sup>8</sup> "Il Satyricon di Petronio et la datazione della *Grammatica Ebraica Spinoziana*." *Studio Spinozana* 5 (1989), 253-272.

<sup>9</sup> See W. N. A. Klever, "Spinoza and Van den Enden in Borch's diary in 1661 and 1662," *Studio Spinozana* 5 (1989), 311-327.

<sup>10</sup> See *Glasemaker 1682-1982. Catalogus bij een tentoonstelling over de vertaler J. H. Glasemaker in de Universiteitsbibliotheek van Amsterdam [by M. Keyser]*, 1982. Glasemaker started his translating work for Rieuwertz in 1651 and continued it until his death. He also translated from French into Dutch. See also J. Kingma and A. K. Offenbergh, *Bibliography of Spinoza's Works up to 1800*, Amsterdam University Library, 1977 and C. L. Thijssen-Schoute, *Nederlands Cartesianisme*. Utrecht: H&S, 1989.

<sup>11</sup> Piet Visser, *Godtslasterlijck ende Pernicieus I. Rede*, 1995, 16.

(the well known pact between France, England and The Republic). "Glasemaker has already extracted materials from Aitsema,<sup>12</sup> has ordered them and formed to a logical whole [...]. But since Aitsema does not write further than 1668, Glasemaker is not able to continue and to connect the subject with our time in order to publish the work as a complete history [...]. You are a good friend of Abraham Casteleijn; he might know something, that could serve our purpose."<sup>13</sup> One year later, Glasemaker's work appeared anonymously on the market under the title "Story of State Affairs, showing the Formation of the Triple Alliantie."<sup>14</sup> [30]

Apart from Glasemaker's deep involvement in the enlightening activities of Rieuwertz, the discovered letter demonstrates a second point, namely his *strong political motivation and activity as a writer*. How could it be different in a philosophical comrade of the "*doctor politicus*" Van den Enden<sup>15</sup> and the translator of his friend's TTP? This, in fact, provides us with a third reason to consider Glasemaker the happy receiver of Spinoza's communication. Spinoza proudly reports in the letter the great things he has recently perpetrated in writing a political treatise *te auctore* (on your advice and stimulation). The word "*auctor*" seems to include a bit more than advice. An active pushing of Spinoza in this direction in the year 1675 fits well in the context of the Rieuwertz enterprise. In that year, Spinoza had arrived at a deadlock. Warned by his friends not to publish the *Ethica* on account of the many rumors about his atheism and the real danger of forfeiting his life in case it would become available, he wrote that he was afraid and uncertain. "The situation seems to worsen day by day, and I am not sure what to do."<sup>16</sup> The great thing (the *Ethica*) was finished, but its possible influence blocked. What now? There was a plan, probably also stimulated by Rieuwertz and Glasemaker, to prepare a new edition of the TTP and add to it many annotations, elucidations, and answers on accusations and refutations. Letter 69 to his former detractor Lambert van Velthuysen amply testifies to this.

Let us now read the opening sentences of Letter 84:

Dear friend. Your welcome letter yesterday was delivered to me yesterday. I thank you most sincerely for the considerable trouble you take on my behalf. I should not let pass this opportunity [*hanc occasionem*], etc., if I were not engaged in a certain matter which I believe to be more important, and which I think will be more to your liking, namely, in composing a Political Treatise, which I began some time ago at your suggestion.

What is to be guessed about the word "*occasio*"? In my view, this half sentence must have contained some kind of a concrete proposal for the execution of Spinoza's own plan for an extended and improved publication of the TTP, for which he had already prepared materials and about [31] which he had already corresponded with Van Velthuysen. But now was not the right moment. The energy was spent, and indeed his own hand was already at work full speed at another project which was rapidly approaching the finishing line. This

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<sup>12</sup> Who composed a history on *Saken van Staet en Oorlogh* (things of state and war).

<sup>13</sup> O.c. p. 16. The letter is to find in the manuscript department of the University Library of Amsterdam (under the signature I 48). Further in the letter, Rieuwertz writes that he will also defray the costs in case Van Dale can acquire the information elsewhere against money.

<sup>14</sup> O. c. p. 17. The Dutch title is *Verhael van Staet-saken. vertonende d'oprechtingh van de Triple Alliantie*.

<sup>15</sup> See W. N. A. Klever, *Franciscus Van den Enden: Vrije politieke stellingen. Met een inleiding van W. Klever* Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 1992. Van den Enden also refers to Aitzema.

<sup>16</sup> Ep68.

project, he felt, was most urgent, more urgent at least than adding clarifications to a work that was already clear enough and was, moreover, completely rejected by the learned world and those who were in power. In so far he had last year made the impression on his good friend to feel something for the TTP project, he had now changed his mind. It was high time, he now thought, to lay his cards on the table and to analyze political life to its bones and so to show its irresistible mechanisms. This was not in order to sit down in depression but in order to profit from this knowledge for the architectural construction of the best possible forms of every kind of political system: monarchy, aristocracy, democracy.

It would have been a tricky thing to write so openly about his political work to persons outside the circle of his intimates. The detailed information about the titles and contents of various chapters is precisely the thing an author is inclined to reveal confidentially to his prospected editors who are for so many years already on the same dangerous tract with the author and cultivate parallel plans for the future. No wonder that the addressee is concerned for the well-being of his friend (*curam quam pro me geris*).

When Spinoza's death came, some months later, not quite unexpected, his manuscripts were already for a great part in the safe of the publishing house, and what was still in The Hague was rapidly brought to the city. Letter 84 was already there too and could easily be included in the "*opera*," prepared already during a long period. Everything put together and reckoned onto one account, I think that this is the best possible solution of our riddle.

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