

‘L’anglois a autant de civilité que le hollandois’

Jean Le Clerc, Pieter Burman and the strategic use of stereotypes in the Republic of Letters

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Abstract

Despite a proclaimed internationalism and open-mindedness, prejudices concerning e.g. religion and national background were common in the early modern Republic of Letters. In fact, stereotypes were often used in debates to undermine the position of one’s opponent. In this article, I will look at a polemic between Jean Le Clerc (1657–1736) and Pieter Burman (1668–1741) about the position of classical scholarship and education at the turn of the eighteenth century. I will employ Bourdieu’s theory of practice to demonstrate how the stereotypes these two scholars use served both to blacken each other and to define themselves and the subject of the debate.

Keywords: Jean Le Clerc (1657–1736), Pieter Burman (1668–1741), classical scholarship, stereotypes, Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002), theory of practice

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Introduction

‘L’anglois a autant de civilité que le hollandois’, Jean Le Clerc wrote to one of his correspondents Gisbert Cuper.¹ Early modern scholars very often referred to stereotypes about the character of other groups, even if such groups included members of the Republic of Letters. Adrien Baillet, for example, wrote that one should not look for subtlety, delicacy or other such qualities in German writings,² and that the Italians had unfortunately inherited the arrogant nature of their Roman ancestors.³ Such prejudices were not only common about nationalities; religions and religious orders were also an easy target. A *malhonnête extrait* of a book by Barbeyrac was thus ‘fait à la Jesuite’, and Jean Cornand de La Crose said ‘the character of a Jesuit does not well agree with that of a sincere writer’.⁴ The strategic use of such stereotypes could be very useful in scholarly debates to floor one’s opponent verbally. This aspect of stereotypes, which as will be shown below, can teach us more about how scholars defined each other and implicitly themselves and the subject on which they worked, will be the focus of this article. I will consider it a strategy enabling scholars to show what they think a given discussion or debate is actually about and who was allowed to have a say in it.

* I would like to thank Laurence Brockliss (Magdalen College, Oxford) and Michiel van Groesen (Universiteit van Amsterdam) for checking and correcting my English.

1 J. Le Clerc to G. Cuper, Amsterdam, 20 May 1710, in: J. Le Clerc, *Epistolario*, 4 vols, edited by M.G. Sina and M. Sina, vol. 3, Florence 1994, p. 264 (number 513).

2 A. Baillet, *Jugemens des savans sur les principaux ouvrages des auteurs*, 8 vols, 2nd edition; Paris 1722–25, vol. 1, p. 146: ‘il ne faut point chercher dans les ouvrages de la plus grande partie des Allemans, la gentillesse, la subtilité, le brillant, la vivacité, la délicatesse, la politesse, l’air enjoué, l’ordre, la méthode, & toutes les beautés qui se trouvent dans les Ecrits des Grecs, & des Romains, & l’on ne doit point exiger d’eux autre chose que de la solidité, de l’exactitude, du jugement & de l’érudition.’

3 *Ibidem*, p. 257: ‘Un certain air de cette vanité Romaine qui leur fait mépriser toutes les autres Nations, jusqu’à nous traiter indifferemment de Barbares, comme si les Sciences & la politesse n’avoient jamais passé les Alpes.’

4 A. de la Motte to P. des Maizeaux, Amsterdam, 9 May 1710; quoted in: A. Goldgar, *Impolite Learning. Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters 1680–1750*, New Haven 1995, p. 197.

I will demonstrate this aspect of polemical rhetoric by investigating a debate between Jean Le Clerc (1657–1736) and Pieter Burman (1668–1741). At the turn of the eighteenth century, these two scholars had an intense discussion about the right approach to classical Latin and Greek literature. Was it better to pay more attention to the (moral) contents of a text, even if this meant offering a text in bilingual editions or translations, as Jean Le Clerc argued, or should classicists focus on the formal aspects, including the language of the original, and thus retain them as rhetorical and stylistic examples?

The question about the relevance and usefulness of classical philology and Latin and Greek literature for society at large had become very pressing towards the end of the seventeenth century after the famous *Querelle des anciens et des modernes* had spread across Europe and many intellectuals openly questioned in particular the usefulness of teaching actively spoken Latin at the level of secondary education.⁵ Both Burman and Le Clerc had sympathies for the *anciens*, although the latter, especially, could feel with some of the main arguments of the *modernes*.

As we will see in the specific case of the debate between these two scholars, the use of stereotypes could help the field of classical philology to increase its self-awareness as opposed to other fields, such as theology and journalism. I will show how both Le Clerc and Burman tried to discredit each other as representatives of a larger group. Le Clerc created an image of his opponent as a remnant from a humanist culture whose ideas had become hopelessly obsolete. Burman depicted Le Clerc as the outsider who was not a Dutchman but a Frenchman; not a classicist but a theologian; a journalist but not a scholar. I will analyse the use of these stereotypes with the help of a number of concepts from Pierre Bourdieu's 'theory of practice'. As the ideas of this French sociologist have become well known in our present-day academic community, a brief discussion of the relevant concepts and notions will suffice.

The first of these is the 'field', which could be loosely defined as an arbitrary social organisation of space and time. In the case of our subject, this field could be equated with classical philology. Within a field like classical philology – just as in any other field – social practice is carried out which at the same time shapes and reflects the habitus of the field, which comprises the lifestyle, values, dispositions, and expectations of particular social groups that are acquired through the activities and experiences of everyday life. Individuals, such as 'Le Clerc', and groups, such as 'theologians', are defined by their relative positions in such fields. Merely saying that Le Clerc and Burman debated for ideological reasons would be naive and would oversimplify matters. They also had commercial interests and were concerned about their reputations in the eyes of other scholars. Such motifs and dynamics can very well be described with Bourdieu's concept of capital, which can be divided into material capital (money, property, goods, stocks, profit, etc.), cultural capital (educational qualifications, skills, cultural acquisitions, knowledge) and social capital (an individual's social network and the quality of his relationships). The field is a site of permanent struggle between

⁵ See e.g. C. Fleury, *Traité du choix et de la méthode des études*, Brussels 1706, passim; P. Nicole, *Traité de l'éducation d'un prince*, Paris 1671; I. Carré (ed.), *Les Pédagogues de Port-Royal*, Paris 1887, p. 195.

individuals and social groups, each trying to gain more capital in order to strengthen their position in the field.

A second major element that will be important for my argument is the *doxa* (and the related terms *orthodoxy* and *heterodoxy*). The *doxa* of a field is the ‘undisputed, pre-reflexive, naïve, native compliance with the fundamental presuppositions of the field’.⁶ It is, in other words, the social order of the field in question and is specific to that field. A challenge to the structure of the field in which the new habitus tries to break with the doxic experience constitutes heterodoxy, i.e. it is subversive behaviour. The attempt to restore the old order, to ‘restore the silence of the *doxa*’, is termed orthodoxy.⁷ I will argue that Le Clerc’s behaviour can be described as trying to mark Burman as orthodox (or even ‘the orthodoxy’) in order to convince his readers that such a man can never be expected to come up with fruitful new ideas for the development of the field of classical philology. Conversely, Burman’s was an endeavour to define Le Clerc as ‘the heterodoxy’, someone holding only a marginal position in the same field and who was therefore not to be trusted, both because of his lack of expertise and his suspicious interests.

To fully appreciate Le Clerc’s argumentation and also to give a clearer picture of the philological tradition that preceded these two scholars and shaped their thoughts about philology, I will first discuss two traditional approaches to classical scholarship as practiced in the seventeenth century. Subsequently, I will deal with Le Clerc’s depiction of Burman. In the second half of this article I will look at Burman’s side of the story and will show that this reproach against Le Clerc can be seen in the broader perspective of a strong feeling of scholarly anxiety in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Finally, I will put my findings within a broader theoretical framework and reach a conclusion arguing that both Le Clerc and Burman outline their field and define the other (and thus also themselves) as heterodoxy and orthodoxy. As will become clear, making someone part of a subversive or, on the other hand, outdated group lowers his position in the eyes of the public, which was highly important in an intellectual environment in which the individual scholar as a socially active person was central.

Philological traditions

Seventeenth-century classical scholarship was defined by two opposing yet peacefully coexisting approaches to Greek and Latin texts. The adherents of the first of these, known because of its strong position among scholars in the Low Countries as the *Dutch School of Criticism*, focused primarily on textual problems and usually avoided going into details regarding the historical background and often even any other subject

⁶ P. Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, Stanford (CA) 1990, p. 68.

⁷ P. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power. The Economy of Linguistic Exchanges*, ed. J.B. Thompson, Cambridge 1991, p. 131.

falling outside the scope of textual criticism.⁸ This approach originated in the work of Joseph Scaliger, who as a textual critic had managed to bring together the so-called French and Italian methods. The latter method had its origins in the ideas of Politian and started from the basic assumption that the best way to gain a representation of the earliest phase of a classical text was to carefully study the manuscript of one's chosen author and select the oldest and most independent ones as the basis of one's text. The readings of these manuscripts should be accurately reported and even if these readings made no sense at all, any suggestions with an eye to restoring the text should remain as close to the manuscript tradition as possible.

Scaliger combined this approach with a second one that he had picked up during his education in Paris. Although French scholars were certainly interested in manuscripts they did not publish any systematic collations of codices.⁹ Scaliger combined these two traditions most famously in his 1577 edition of Catullus.¹⁰ After having moved to Leiden in 1593, he spread his ideas among students such as Daniel Heinsius and thus the *Dutch School of Criticism* was born. Like Scaliger, the Dutch critics combined a sparing use of manuscripts with conjectures in order to establish what they considered to be a faithful rendering of the original classical text. They focused on Latin rather than Greek and were particularly interested in poorly transmitted works, such as Catullus' poems (edited by Scaliger in 1577 and again in 1582 and by Isaac Vossius in 1684) and Petronius' *Satyrical* of which Pieter Burman published an edition in 1709. Those adhering to the ideas promoted by Dutch Criticism held giving historical background information in their commentaries on classical texts in very low esteem, and this was exactly what some of their contemporaries did not appreciate. Scaliger's works such as *De emendatione temporum* (1583) and *Thesaurus temporum* (1606) had also created a stronger awareness that Greek and Latin texts should not be seen as self-contained artifacts from antiquity but as pieces of a large chronological framework. This insight had led to large compilations such as the *Conspectus Reipublicae Litterariae* published by Christoph August Heumann in 1718. As becomes obvious from the subtitle of this work, 'a revealed road to the history of literature for the studious youth', this genre provided readers with an image of the 'birth and development of literary studies'.¹¹ It thus promoted a conception of literature as a linear chronological development and anticipated a form of literary history that became dominant in scholarship during the nineteenth century.¹²

8 K.L. Haugen, *Richard Bentley. Poetry and Enlightenment*, Cambridge (MA) 2011, p. 135-6.

9 S. Timpanaro, *The Genesis of Lachmann's Method*, edited and translated by G.W. Most, Chicago 2005, p. 4-7.

10 A.T. Grafton, 'Joseph Scaliger's Edition of Catullus (1577) and the Traditions of Textual Criticism in the Renaissance', in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 38 (1975), p. 155-178.

11 C.A. Heumann, *Conspectus Reipublicae Litterariae sive Via ad Historiam Litterariam iuventuti studiosae aperta*, Hannover 1718, p. 1.

12 G.W. Most, 'Classical Scholarship and literary criticism', in: H.B. Nisbet and C. Rawson (eds), *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 4, Cambridge 1997, p. 749.

As long as the position of the ancient *Belles Lettres* remained relatively uncontested these two methods could exist side by side without any real discussion or awareness as to the opposition of their assumptions. However, towards the end of the seventeenth century the status of classical Latin and Greek literature – and as a consequence the scholarship connected with it – gradually became the target of more criticism due to the *Querelle*. As a consequence, scholars were forced to articulate and defend opinions about the right approach to classical philology. It was under these circumstances that Jean Le Clerc launched a frontal attack on those he called *les humanistes*.

The decadence of the classics and the construction of the humanist

In his approach to editing classical texts, Le Clerc belonged firmly to those who wanted to give their readers more than just text critical information. He agitated against what he called ‘criticism which addresses the purity of the text, but which doesn’t in the slightest open the way that must be followed in order to solve difficulties’, as he wrote to John Locke in July 1693.¹³ Throughout his writings, particularly in a collection of essays entitled the *Parrhasiana* (1699), he painted a picture of the ancient *Belles Lettres* in crisis.

The group that should be blamed for this, according to Le Clerc, consisted of those who as professionals concerned themselves with classical Greek and Latin literature: ‘Those who have turned it into their profession and who are the cause that it is disdained’, who are interchangeably called grammarians and humanists. These scholars had reached a high degree of learnedness themselves but they did not give others the chance to do the same. The public for classical literature had changed and, endowed with the keen observation of a journalist, Le Clerc was clearly aware of this. He argued that a new ‘gentleman culture’ had risen with a key role for professionals who had received a proper classical education but were no specialists in the *Belles Lettres* and needed more help with an edition than the Dutch critics gave to them. In order to ensure that these readers would be able to appreciate the classics they would need two kinds of instruments. First, scholars would need to provide them with text editions with notes that would not only guarantee the correct reading of the text but everything to fully understand the text.¹⁴ Second, there was a strong need for reference works such as dictionaries and encyclopedias. In this context Le Clerc often refers to Henri Estienne’s *Thesaurus graecae linguae* from 1572 and Robert Constantin’s reworking of Guillaume Budé’s Greek–Latin lexicon from 1562 as good examples to follow.

¹³ J. Le Clerc to J. Locke, 7 July 1693, in: Le Clerc, *Epistolario* (n. 1), vol. 3, p. 101–102 (no. 210): ‘... cette Critique, qui regarde la pureté du Texte, mais qui n’ouvre point le chemin qu’il faut tenir, pour trouver la solution des difficultez.’

¹⁴ J. Le Clerc, *Parrhasiana ou Pensées diverses sur des Matières de Critique, d’histoire, de morale et de politique*, Amsterdam 1699, p. 226: ‘tout ce qui est nécessaire, pour le [le texte] rendre plus intelligible.’

Apart from applying a different focus to their scholarly work, the humanists should also improve their social behaviour and try to get rid of some *défauts personnels*. Particularly striking considering Le Clerc's moderate position between *anciens* and *modernes* is his advice to his fellow scholars to restrain their voice when singing the praise of the classics. Having been given such high expectations, the public could only become disappointed when they read the classical Greek and Latin literature themselves, Le Clerc argued. Classical philologists had to accept that their much beloved authors could still be of importance in the modern age, but did not occupy the unassailable position that had been given to them in previous centuries. It was therefore very important for classical philologists to take a more moderate stance both towards their own position and their work, and to get readers and students enthusiastic in an open and frank way. Le Clerc illustrates his point with an anecdote. A rich man is looking for the best possible education for his son. He is convinced by scholars to send his son to an academy to study *Belles Lettres* and joins him to be present at the lessons. He is disappointed, however, by the teachers of his son because they seem to exaggerate the relevance of the classics to serve their own petty concerns and vanity and because they are more interested in quibbling over words than practical knowledge of the world. Disillusioned he decides that his son should gain experience of life through working rather than studying.¹⁵ In this way, Le Clerc develops a picture of the *doxa*, the old situation, which he himself as the heterodox scholar would like to change.

It is interesting to note that Le Clerc did not attack Burman personally in any of his writings from the 1690s, not even in his *Parrhasiana*. Indeed, after Burman had published his *Dialogi inter Spudaeum et Gorallum*, a series of fictional dialogues between himself (*Spudaeus*) and Le Clerc (*Gorallus*), the Amsterdam journalist only responded with a short reaction in the *avertissement* to the second volume of his *Bibliothèque Choisie* in which he did not even mention Burman by name. He only referred to the *Dialogi* as the *Satire* and the *mensonges des grammairiens*. Thus, Le Clerc made his opponent part of a group, a member of the grammarians. This step enabled him not to take Burman's individual considerations into account but rather to use certain prejudices about grammarians and humanists in connection with his opponent. Le Clerc was famous enough to be above suspicion regarding all the accusations that Burman directs at him.¹⁶ We see therefore that making Burman part of a group and at the same time stressing the stereotype of that group is part of a strategy aimed at undermining his position.

This strategy changed only after Burman started attacking Le Clerc concerning his personal contacts with Johannes Graevius. Le Clerc began to mention Burman by name, associating him with the *doxa* as it had been defined in the *Parrhasiana*. The fact that this change of tactics on Burman's side also led to a sudden change of tactics by Le Clerc shows that the latter must have felt deeply offended when his personal dealings with other persons were explicitly questioned. Le Clerc's irritation also demonstrates how important the image of the scholar was as a social figure within the scholarly

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 247.

¹⁶ J. Le Clerc, *Bibliothèque Choisie II*, Amsterdam 1703, vol. 2, fol. A2-3.

community. Nonetheless, he still kept exploiting common ideas about the representatives of Dutch Criticism in order to damage Burman’s reputation.

Le Clerc now linked Burman to the humanist tradition again, but this time explicitly, and did this by stressing two points: first, like other grammarians Burman did not take heed of the moral lessons that the ancients could teach him; second, Burman was a product of the late tradition of humanism and textual criticism, which used to be vigorous but was now in a phase of decadence. The first point is mainly made in connection with Burman’s edition of Petronius’ racy novel, the *Satyrice*. In his review of this publication, Le Clerc devoted fifteen pages to the actual edition and sixty-two pages to refuting earlier attacks and to depicting Burman in particular and the ‘humanists’ in general (read: those belonging to the *Dutch School of Criticism*) as depraved individuals who instead of turning to classical examples of virtue decided to imitate pagan vices:

Instead of profiting from a multitude of excellent examples of morality that can be found in the Greek and Latin authors, they only imitate some ancient pagans in those aspects that are condemnable. They take the most sweeping and the most indecent instances as their models.¹⁷

Regarding the second point, we have already seen that according to Le Clerc the *Dutch School of Criticism* could not keep up with the needs of new readers. In addition, those who carried on the humanist tradition also appeared to be too preoccupied with their own vanity. In close connection with this, Le Clerc did not deny that the humanist tradition had not experienced a golden age but this had passed long before Burman had entered the stage of classical philology. Philologists belonging to earlier generations, such as Casaubon, Saumaise, and Grotius were often mentioned in Le Clerc’s writings as examples of the pinnacle that classical scholars could reach.¹⁸ Le Clerc admired these scholars because they shared their almost universal knowledge of classical antiquity with fellow citizens.¹⁹ They actively participated in the society of their days and could be seen as civil servants helping others by teaching how they could benefit from ancient wisdom. The humanists from Le Clerc’s own generation, however, preferred their isolated positions within the walls of their universities and libraries, and they would pass on their knowledge to a select group of excellent students. It was, therefore, not surprising that the people had turned away from the *Belles Lettres* in general and the humanists in particular. Scholars like Burman were to be blamed for this.²⁰

¹⁷ Le Clerc, *Bibliothèque Choisie XIX*, Amsterdam 1710, vol. 19, p. 366–67: ‘Au lieu de profiter d’une infinité d’excellens endroits de Morale, que l’on trouve dans les Auteurs Grecs & Latins; ils n’imitent quelques anciens Payens, qu’en ce qu’ils ont de condamnable; ils se proposent pour modele les endroits les plus emportez & les plus mal-honêtes.’

¹⁸ See e.g. Le Clerc, *Parrhasiana*, p. 223–4.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 225–6; 249–50.

²⁰ For the sake of completeness, it should be added that Le Clerc also criticises ‘those who should favour the Belles Lettres and don’t do that anymore’ (*ceux qui devoient favoriser les Belles Lettres & qui ne le font plus*). He argues that in the fifteenth and sixteenth century it was very fashionable for princes and the aristocracy

Jean Le Clerc as an outsider to the world of scholarship and classical philology

Such feelings of public resentment towards scholars caused many savants of the days of Le Clerc and Burman to believe that the position of learning was in peril. Scholarly correspondence was full of complaints and mutual commiserations about the state of scholarship. Some wrote that there was ‘little esteem for men of letters’,²¹ others noted that learning was ‘truly in agony’²² and that for years ‘the sciences had been in decline continually’.²³ The public was to be blamed in the first place, since it could only appreciate rubbish, but in addition, there were many categories of people that could easily be targeted as scapegoats. It is precisely this mechanism that we find at work between Le Clerc and Burman. As we have seen, Le Clerc pointed to some of the habits of an ‘inner circle’ of scholars and humanists. Considering this strategy of his opponent, Burman’s reaction to banish Le Clerc to the realm of the outsiders seems only natural. I will discuss the categories that Burman used against Le Clerc one by one and show how they made Le Clerc seem like a marginal heterodox element in the world of scholarship and classical philology. At the same time, they teach us at least as much about Burman’s own concerns as a scholar as they do about the way his opponent functioned within the Republic of Letters.

Le Clerc as a journalist

In the spring of 1710 Burman published *Le gazetier menteur*, a work that was translated into Dutch by the poet Abraham Bogaert in 1713 as *De logenkramer*. Both titles had strong connotations for readers. A *gazetier* was someone who wrote short pieces of news and got paid per ‘item.’ He therefore functioned as a salesman of information who was stimulated to sell as many bits of news as possible, as Burman explained in his pamphlet.²⁴ What he did not write but strongly implied was that the quick and ephemeral approach to information like the gathering and collection of news was exactly opposite to the goal of the serious scholar who tried to discover enduring truths and strove after the acquisition of knowledge. Within the Republic of Letters, Burman argued, Le Clerc had a commercial and not a scholarly interest. What he said should not be trusted. He would even resort to lying just to make a profit and could therefore rightly be called a *menteur*. This is also an aspect that Bogaert stressed in the title of his translation. *Logenkramer* (‘seller of lies’) is a pun on the word *tydingkramer* (‘seller of news’), which was a disdainful word for journalists because of their allegedly commercial approach to information.

to support scholars but that this habit had grown out of fashion. He thus leaves scholars at least some room for complaints.

²¹ G. Cuper to M. La Croze, Deventer, 8 December 1710; printed in: J. de Beyer, *Lettres de critique, d’histoire, de littérature, etc. écrites à divers savans de l’Europe par feu monsieur G. Cuper*, Amsterdam 1742, p. 83.

²² S. Pelloutier to P. Marchand, Berlin, 1 May 1745; quoted in: Goldgar, *Impolite Learning* (n. 4), p. 228–9.

²³ P.D. Huet to E. Morin, Paris, 9 November 1686; quoted in: *ibidem*, p. 229.

²⁴ P. Burman, *Le gazetier menteur, ou Mr. Le Clerc convaincu de mensonge et calomnie*, Utrecht 1710, passim.

In Burman’s view, these sellers of information worked together with other groups who had comparable interests. In the first part of his *Dialogi inter Spudaeum et Gorallum* he let his opponent Le Clerc (*Gorallus*) say that most of his efforts were aimed at recruiting others who could gather and compile news for him: ‘To make sure that I can safely look down from above on the savants of the major nations, I turn them into my mob and win them over for my cause as hired compilers of ephemeral facts’ (*mercenarios Ephemeridum compilatores*).²⁵ The highest ranks were taken by the ‘profit-seeking nation of the booksellers’, to whom the journalists pay their tribute.²⁶

A final aspect of journalism and the literary journal was that both enhanced a cult of superficiality. Burman idealised the old-fashioned scholar who, alone in his study, read through every book he could find and knew the complete canon of classical literature by heart. The reviews and summaries that were published in literary journals encouraged readers to read only the abridged versions of scholarly publications, which would turn them into degenerated *demi-savants*.²⁷

The word *journalist* in Burman’s vocabulary, therefore, did not only denote a profession. Rather it was a way of dealing with information, a preference of news over knowledge that was very threatening to the order and the ideals of the Republic of Letters because it could commercialise it. Many of Burman’s fellow-scholars shared these feelings towards the rise of journalism; particularly the fear of superficiality was strong. In a letter to a friend, dating from 1698, Pierre-Daniel Huet, Bishop of Soissons, expressed his grave concerns about contemporary developments in the publishing world. He even feared for the survival of civilisation:

You would be appalled if you knew what decadence letters have fallen into in France, I received a letter two days ago from one of the principal Libraires of Paris. He told me, that if you took a Latin book to be printed in the rue St. Jacques, people would laugh in your face, [...] since I have been alive, I have seen the sciences declining continually. I don’t see they are managing any better in Holland, England is the place defending itself the best. In the Preface of the little treatise I wrote, I could not help but speak against the barbarousness of this century, of which all these Abridgements of books people are publishing in Paris, in Rotterdam, in Leipzig, are the indubitable proofs [...]

With a great sense of drama he concluded: ‘When in Rome people made Abridgements of the great Latin works, and at Constantinople of the great Greek works, barbarity followed close behind.’²⁸

Journals held a very ambiguous position within the Republic of Letters. They facilitated and speeded up scholarly communication by synthesising information and news.

²⁵ P. Burman, *Dialogi I-III inter Spudaeum et Gorallum*, s.l. ca. 1703, p. 5.

²⁶ Ibidem: ‘Stipendiaria, si nescis, librariis haec est natio.’

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 3-4.

²⁸ Huet to Morin, Avranches, 28 January 1698; quoted and translated in: Goldgar, *Impolite Learning*, p. 54. (The treatise Huet mentioned, *Commentarium de Navigationibus Salomonis*, was published in John Pearson (ed.), *Criticorum Sacrorum*, vol. VIII, Utrecht: Van de Water, and Amsterdam: Boom, 1698). Baillet made a similar comparison to the abridgements of earlier times, referring in his summary of criticisms of such works to Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (905-959), known for his sponsorship of encyclopedias which excerpted ancient and later authors. See Baillet, *Jugemens des Savans* (n. 2), vol. 1, p. 243.

However, this seemingly positive role of making scholarship easier and quicker, was often considered to be yet another minus, since to hardworking plodders this appeared to open the world of scholarship to lesser gods. In reality the journalists and their journals represented a new and different way of conducting business in the Republic of Letters. Not unlike the introduction of the printed book in the fifteenth century, the appearance of journals enhanced the circulation of information and thanks to the book reviews, which often constituted the lion's share of these volumes, they created a huge potential for scholars to increase their knowledge about what was going on in their field. In spite of these possibilities and despite the fact that many individuals involved in editing the journals combined their editorial work with scholarly activities, for a long time the *gazettier* would remain a mistrusted inhabitant of the Republic of Letters whose interests and goals were under suspicion.²⁹

Burman's portrait of Le Clerc as a journalist goes back to this broadly shared anxiety. Journalism was seen as both an instrument and symptom of a new order within intellectual life. It was therefore very natural to Burman to highlight and parody his opponent's activities as the editor of a literary journal. At the same time the category of the journalist, combined with its connotations of non-scholarly interests, was an ideal means to marginalise Le Clerc as heterodox.

Le Clerc as a Frenchman

Even though the members of the Republic of Letters did their best to present themselves as a group of cosmopolitan savants, learning was nonetheless often broken down nationally, as the existence of so many national journals, such as the *Bibliothèque angloise*, the *Bibliothèque germanique* or the *Bibliothèque italique* makes plain.³⁰ Le Clerc, a French-speaking foreigner in the Dutch Republic was an easy target for Burman when he resorted to the use of all kinds of stereotypes about the French. The fact that Le Clerc was not of French but Swiss descent was not even important.

During the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries many French and French-speaking intellectuals moved or fled to the Netherlands. Here they found the relative religious tolerance and freedom of print that they had missed at home. Partly thanks to the rise of French as a *lingua franca* in the intellectual world and the fact they still had many contacts in their countries of origin, these émigrés quickly managed to play a key role in scholarly life not just within the Dutch Republic but also the Republic of Letters. This position also had negative effects on the way these French-speaking expatriates were seen. Many believed that the French had come to consider themselves as superior to other nations, since the Republic of Letters relied on the international scholarly networks that they had established. In his polemic with Le Clerc Burman took advantage of this sentiment.

²⁹ For more on the history of newspapers and journals see e.g. the essays in H. Bots (ed.), *La Diffusion et la lecture des journaux de langue française sous l'Ancien Régime, Actes du Colloque International, Nijmegen, 3-5 June 1987*, Amsterdam, Maarssen 1988.

³⁰ On this subject see H. Bots, *Republiek der letteren. Ideaal en werkelijkheid*, Amsterdam 1977, p. 18-20.

The central word in Burman’s vocabulary concerning Le Clerc’s descent is *Gallulus* (‘little Frenchman’). In his *Logenkramer* he explained why this nickname was so suitable for his opponent:

It occurred that some little schoolmasters, pedantic and built like our *gazettiers* and mercenaries of the booksellers, having arrived in Rome from everywhere, not just Greece, but from all places where people spoke Greek, glided into the houses of the Romans to teach their children and play the pedagogue. These braggarts pretended to be men of importance and wanted to be considered experts in all fields of knowledge, judging and reproaching the whole world.³¹

The Romans would refer to these hypocritical teachers with a diminutive as *Graeculi* and Burman now jeered at Le Clerc in a similar way. It is interesting and clarifying to take a closer look at what is actually said about these ‘little Greeks’, since this as Burman implies can also be applied to the *Galluli* in general and Le Clerc in particular. First, they are called ‘schoolmasters’ (*maîtres*, in Abraham Bogaert’s Dutch translation: *meestertjes, schoolwyzen*), who wanted to teach the youth.³² This must clearly be linked to Burman’s view of Le Clerc as someone who patronised others because he told philologists what would be good for them. The comparison does indeed apply as Le Clerc with his reform agenda often spoke about the youth that needed to be educated in order to guarantee a good position for the classics in a new generation. Second, both the *Graeculi* and the *Galluli* were migrants not from the home country of the languages they used – Greek and French respectively – but from a periphery in which the language was spoken. Burman thus parries Le Clerc’s repeated argument that he was from Switzerland and therefore not a Frenchman. Finally, without any scruples both groups wanted to be considered authorities in every field regardless of their actual competences. Burman’s criticism could count on sympathy. From Berlin Veyssière La Croze wrote that he had read the *Gazettier Menteur* with approval:

I have just read a book by *monsieur* Burman against *monsieur* Le Clerc. This morning I got hold of it. *Monsieur* Burman renders the public a service by denouncing those whom he calls *Gallules*. Although I may be French, I think he is right. Is it not a shame that these persons like *messieurs* Bernard, Beauval, Basnage etcetera fancy that they can make the ultimate judgment about things they cannot understand and which they have never studied. Of these *Gallules*, *monsieur* Le Clerc is the most able, but still he, too, is a *Gallule*.³³

31 Burman, *Le gazettier menteur* (n. 24), p. 125: ‘Il arriva, que quelques petits maîtres, pedans & bâtis, comme nos Gazettiers & mercenaires des Libraires, étant venus à Rome de toutes parts, non justement de la Grece, mais de tous les endroits, où on parloit Grec, se glisserent dans les maisons des Romains, pour enseigner les enfans & faire les Pedagogues. Que meme ces fanfarons faisoient les hommes d’importance, & vouloient passer pour universels, censurant & medisant de tout le monde.’

32 The Dutch translation is A. Bogaert, *De logenkramer, of Jan de Klerk van leugenen en lasteringen overtuigt*, Amsterdam 1713.

33 M. Veyssière La Croze to Cuper, Berlin, 12 May 1710 (Koninklijke Bibliotheek, call number KB 72. H. 18): ‘Je viens de lire un livre de Mr. Burman contre Mr. Le Clerc. Il m’est tombé ce matin entre les mains [...] Mr. Burman rend service au public en déclamant contre ceux qu’il appelle *Gallules*. Tout François que je suis je conviens qu’il a raison. N’est-ce pas une honte que des gens comme Mr. Bernard, Beauval, Basnage &c. se donnent des airs de juger en dernier resort de choses qu’ils ne peuvent pas

This corresponds exactly with a stereotype about the French, namely that they had no respect for scholars from other nations; Père Le Courayer, writing from England, said that a project by Prévost was thought ‘quite *French*, that is boastful. For in this country vain and French are two synonyms used to honour our nation’.³⁴ It is, therefore, clear that the Utrecht professor of eloquence had hit upon another widely felt anxiety, which he tried to turn to his advantage in defining Le Clerc as the outsider or heterodoxy.

As I noted above, Le Clerc often referred to a set group of seemingly canonised scholars (in particular Scaliger and Saumaise). Ironically, Burman used these very same scholars against Le Clerc, but from a different perspective. In his edition of Petronius published in 1709 he wrote about François Nodot who in 1693 had published a complete edition of this author’s *Satyrica*. With an eye to this edition, Burman with an obvious reference to Le Clerc declared that the muses must have left France. The country that had given birth to such brilliant scholars like Scaliger and Saumaise now produced men who could not even tell Petronius’ novel apart from this obvious forgery as well as pedants who kept interfering in other people’s business.³⁵ Whereas Le Clerc had taken a tradition and approach that his opponent shared with predecessors as his point of departure, Burman used Le Clerc’s allegedly common descent. In both cases the goal was to show that the other was a member of a group that may have been vigorous once but had now reached a state of decadence. Burman’s point was that French scholars had made an important contribution to scholarship in the past – although in order to do that many had had to move to the more liberal Dutch Republic – they were now worthless wiseacres. Le Clerc argued that the humanist approach had certainly brought the study of classical literature further. Its supporters, however, should now adapt to a new intellectual order. Thus, scholars from earlier generations such as Scaliger and Saumaise were used by Le Clerc to support his ideas and speak ill of his rival while Burman did the very same and often used the same scholars to buttress his opinion and slacken Le Clerc.

Le Clerc as a theologian

The final major category that Burman used against Le Clerc is that of the theologian. His main concern was to make his opponent appear to be a tyrannical moralist. Le Clerc had a strongly moralistic agenda and believed that the main reason for reading the classics was to learn from moral examples. Burman took this up to paint a picture of him as a pedantic theologian who tried to impose his will and would even go so

entendre & qu’ils n’ont jamais étudiées. De ces *Gallules* Mr. Le Clerc est le plus habile; mais pourtant il est lui aussi *Gallule*?

³⁴ P. le Courayer to De la Motte, England, not dated [1731]; quoted in: *Journal littéraire de la Haye* 3. 1 (1714), p. 184, article XII. In the same article, the editors of this journal, though written mainly by French refugees, admitted to the prejudices of its nation, although they went on to say that ‘il est très-naturel que la Poésie Hollandoise soit inférieure à la Française’, (p. 186).

³⁵ P. Burman, *Petronii Satiricon*, Utrecht 1709, p. xxxiv.

far as to forbid others to work on certain texts. The Dutch critics with their interest in corrupt texts, regardless of their moral contents, felt this as a possible threat to freely work on and publish whatever they wanted. For our purpose here it is important to know that, again, Burman’s categorisations expressed more widely felt emotions, this time among classicists towards theologians.

This aspect in Burman’s image of Le Clerc is particularly clear in his *Gazettier menteur*, where the words ‘theologian’ and ‘theology’ are consistently mentioned with overtones of sarcasm and indignation. It is also striking that, in this work, Burman always refers to his colleague from Amsterdam as ‘theologian’ and not a *Professeur aux Belles Lettres*, which would not have been inappropriate for someone teaching classics and Hebrew. This is a deliberate strategy as Burman expresses the view that Le Clerc in spite of his condescending comments on humanists and grammarians would actually want nothing more than to be one himself. According to Burman, Le Clerc used his review to attack those ‘who had the courage not to recognise monsieur Le Clerc as a learned grammarian’.³⁶ What haunted Burman’s mind most, however, was the thought that Le Clerc the theologian would prescribe philologists what to do. In this respect, he repeatedly calls his opponent a *censeur* or more specifically a *censeur des Professeurs aux Belles Lettres*.³⁷ In Burman’s opinion, Le Clerc exercised his censorship in two aspects of scholarship. In the first place, he told other scholars how to conduct their research and arrange the contents of their publications:

Shower with extraordinary generousness your proofreader of copies and proofs, your giver of opinions, your draughtsman of plans, who has shown you by secret inspiration two great mysteries: namely, to make one’s paragraphs and to distinguish by means of different typefaces the citations from the words of the author.³⁸

Even more worrying must have been the idea that Le Clerc and his fellow theologians would interfere in the books that could be published and the texts that could be treated. It was impossible to please this man

if one does not compile books, in which *monsieur* Le Clerc finds some thoughts that correspond to his own. That’s the rule for good and bad books in his *Bibliothèque critique* [sic]; those who support the views of the author, or favour his sentiments [...] are excellent; all the rest is not worth much.³⁹

³⁶ Burman, *Le gazetier menteur*, p. 18: ‘[I] compose la chronique scandaleuse des gens doctes, qui ont l’audace de ne pas reconnoître Mr. le Clerc pour sçavant Grammairien.’

³⁷ Ibidem, preface.

³⁸ Ibidem, p. 142-43: ‘comblez d’une liberalité extraordinaire vôtre reviseur de copies & d’épreuves, vôtre donneur d’avis, vôtre dresseur de plans, qui [...] vous a montré par une inspiration secrette deux grands mysteres [...]; sçavoir, de faire ses à linea, & de distinguer par divers caracteres les citations d’avec les paroles de l’Auteur.’

³⁹ Ibidem, p. 11-12: ‘on ne peut pas plaire [...] sinon qu’on fasse des livres, dans lesquels Mr. le Clerc trouve quelques pensées conformes aux siennes. C’est là la regle des bons & des mauvais livres dans sa Bibliothèque critique; tous ceux qui servent aux vûes de l’auteur, ou qui favorisent ses sentimens [...] sont excellens; tout le reste ne vaut pas grand’ chose.’

Burman had very good personal reasons to have mixed feelings towards theologians. The University of Utrecht had been the stage for theological disputes between those who favoured the views of the orthodox and anti-Cartesian Gisbertus Voetius and those who were open to Cartesian influence and followed the liberal Johannes Coccejus. Pieter's father, Franciscus Burman, who was a professor of theology in Utrecht between 1662 and 1679, belonged to the second category. During the 1660s, the more liberal Cartesian party was dominant in the governing bodies both of the city of Utrecht and of the university, but the situation changed when the year 1672 brought disaster to the Dutch Republic and Utrecht was occupied by French forces. 'Is het niet op het seggen van dien ouden man uytgevallen?' ('Haven't the old man's words come true?'), wrote a pamphleteer referring to Voetius who had warned that comets observed in 1664 and 1665 predicted change and catastrophe for Utrecht and the Republic.⁴⁰ After the retreat of the French troops in November 1673 and the entry of William III into Utrecht in April 1674, many of those who had governed the city and university were replaced by rulers with more austere, Voetian sympathies. For Cartesian scholars like Franciscus Burman the circumstances in which he had to work were becoming increasingly difficult as he was attacked by rigid theologians who accused him of Spinozist and Socinian sympathies. His son Pieter believed that these attacks had caused so much stress to his father that Franciscus' life was shortened as a consequence.⁴¹ Pieter was subsequently educated by Johannes Graevius, who was also a Cartesian, and he remained hostile to theologians – both liberal and orthodox – for the rest of his life.⁴² Although the remonstrants with their liberal and rational approach to religion might have had his sympathy, Burman could not forgive them because Philip van Limborgh, professor at the remonstrant seminary in Amsterdam, had accused his father of Spinozism.⁴³

A further aspect that is important for the interpretation of Burman's attacks on Le Clerc as a theologian is the broader context of contemporary tensions between religion and theology on the one hand and classical philology on the other hand. Starting at Italian universities in the Middle Ages, the humanist movement had in many ways been a project to secularise classical philology.⁴⁴ Even as late as the seventeenth century, however, classical scholarship and education as well as academic life in general had retained a theological flavour and in this respect, too, we find an

40 G.W. Kernkamp, *Pieter Burman, van 1696 tot 1715 hoogleeraar te Utrecht*, Utrecht 1933, p. 87.

41 P. Burman (ed.), *Titi Petronii Arbitri Satyricon quae supersunt: cum integris doctorum virorum commentariis; & notis Nicolai Heinsii & Guilielmi Goesii nunc primum editis*, Utrecht 1709, preface.

42 See for example his *Oratio de artibus liberalibus* from 1712 in which he says that 'even though to no other class of people a desire for power has been more forbidden, they claim that right after God most obedience should be shown to them' and in which he calls theologians the most 'bothersome [people] to those who cultivate the humanities' (N. Bondt (ed.), *Petri Burmanni orationes*, The Hague 1759, p. 245-47). The theologians responded by remaining absent from Burman's speeches (ibidem, p. 250).

43 Kernkamp, *Pieter Burman*, p. 104.

44 See Ch. Nauert, *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe*, 2nd edition; Cambridge 2008, p. 28-30.

opposition between Le Clerc and Burman. Le Clerc himself received his salary as a professor from the Remonstrant Brotherhood; Burman’s university in Utrecht, on the other hand, had been founded by the government and was officially independent from the church. Particularly in England the whole university system was simply dominated by the church hierarchy. Here William Sancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury, and John Fell, Bishop of Oxford, left a powerful mark on the work of the scholarly clergymen that populated the universities of Cambridge and Oxford.⁴⁵ Only figures like Isaac Vossius with his enormous international reputation could afford themselves the intellectual freedom to edit an author like Catullus. It was not before the last decade of the seventeenth century that the church began to lose its hold on the classical authors that scholars would work on. After the death of John Fell (1686) and the deprivation of Sancroft in 1690 scholars began to shift their shape. They were now able to work on pagan authors, even if they did not have any direct link to the interests of the church and even if they were controversial. This meant that the *Dutch School of Criticism* was now able to flourish among these English scholars. The best-known example of those who took advantage of this development and embraced the Dutch style was Richard Bentley. Some, however, like William Lloyd worked within the historical tradition. Lloyd had written a ponderous series of anti-Romanist tracts and a tendentious history of Christianity in Britain. Now, however, he began to publish on ancient historical chronology.⁴⁶ Joshua Barnes, Regius Professor of Greek and Fellow of Emmanuel College in Cambridge, was the author of religious poetry, but now devoted his time to the publication of editions of Euripides (1694), Anacreon (1705), and Homer (1711). Richard Bentley, younger than both of these, began to publish only in the 1690s and was lucky enough to work in this new intellectual climate from the very beginning of his career.⁴⁷ Burman referred to the situation in England to raise awareness among his readers how precarious the study of classical literature in its own right still was.⁴⁸ It is therefore not surprising that amateurs of classical literature in general and philologists in particular would see in clergymen and theologians such as Le Clerc a possible threat to their work on and appreciation of classical literature in its own right. At the same time, Burman’s comments are a proud and self-conscious declaration of independence on behalf of classical scholarship as an intellectual discipline that could do without the interference of obtrusive theologians. We can thus see that the polemic between Le Clerc and Burman not only helped its participants to define each other’s roles within the field of classical scholarship, but also to demarcate this field as opposed to others, such as theology.

⁴⁵ Haugen, *Richard Bentley* (n. 8), p. 60.

⁴⁶ W. Lloyd, *An Exposition of the Prophecy of Seventy Weeks, which God Sent to Daniel by the Angel Gabriel*. Dan. ix. 24-27, s.l. 1690(?).

⁴⁷ Haugen, *Richard Bentley*, p. 60.

⁴⁸ Burman, *Dialogi inter Spudaeum et Gorallum* (n. 25) II, passim.

Conclusion: marking orthodoxy and heterodoxy as a means of definition and demarcation in scholarly debate

I hope to have made clear that the polemic between Burman and Le Clerc, with the help of concepts from Bourdieu's theory of practice, can teach us a lot about polemic in the Republic of Letters. Throughout his writings, but most clearly in his *Parrhasiana*, Le Clerc tried to sketch a negative picture of the tradition of humanism and Dutch Criticism in the field of the *Belles Lettres*. He argued that Burman, by trying to defend the old order, was part of an obsolete tradition, and did not know how to deal with the challenges that the new age offered. In other words, Le Clerc both presented the *doxa* as old-fashioned and his opponent as orthodox, implying that innovation within classical scholarship should not be expected either from him or from those who sympathised with him.

Conversely, Burman tried to push Le Clerc out of the field of philology by considering him an outsider, based on his occupation as a journalist and theologian, and his Francophone origins. Burman thus situated him in the very margins of the field and tried to make sure that his readers would treat Le Clerc's heterodox ideas with as much distrust as possible. In the meantime, both men had also done themselves, fellow scholars, and readers a great service. By marking each other as heterodox or orthodox, Le Clerc and Burman defined and demarcated the field they were working in. It helped them to think fruitfully about classical philology as a subject and field in its own right as opposed to other fields. This debate, later taken up by other scholars, thus laid the foundations for further thinking about the position of classical scholarship at the turn of the eighteenth century.