
Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

Beverland, Hadriaan

(1650–1716)

Karen Hollewand

<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/101156>

Published online: 12 April 2018

Beverland, Hadriaan (1650–1716), humanist scholar, was born between 20 September and 14 December 1650 in Middelburg, in the Dutch republic, the third son of Johannes Beverland (*d.* 1654) and Catarina van Deijnse (*d.* 1665). After the death of his father his mother married Sir Bernard de Gomme (1620–1685), a military engineer for the English royalist army. The couple moved to England about 1660 and in February 1661 de Gomme was appointed engineer with responsibility for Charles II's English and Welsh castles and fortifications. Hadriaan Beverland lodged with different families during his education at the Latin school of Middelburg. When his mother died in 1665, he was placed in the custody of guardians.

In 1669 Beverland began his academic career as a student *philosophiae et litterarum*. In the decade that followed he laid the foundations for a life of scholarship, as he studied at the universities of Franeker, Leiden, and Utrecht and resided in Oxford in 1672 to study at the Bodleian Library. In 1676 he received his inheritance and started to assemble an extensive library and art collection, spending large sums on manuscripts, prints, and artefacts. During his studies he befriended a number of Dutch scholars, including Nicolaas Heinsius (1621–1681), Isaac Vossius (1618–1689), and Jacobus Gronovius (1645–1716).

In 1677 Beverland was awarded a doctorate in law from the University of Utrecht. However, in his philological studies he concentrated primarily on ancient history and classical literature. Above all, he was fascinated by sex and studied all he could on the subject. In the early 1670s Beverland began work on his three-volume 'De prostibulis veterum' ('On the prostitution of the classics') in which he discussed sexuality in different historical, literary, religious, and cultural contexts. Beverland offered a first glimpse of his argument in 1678: in *De peccato originale* ('On original sin'), published in Leiden, he argued that sexual lust was the original sin and explained how sexual desire had become a universal and dominant characteristic of human nature after the fall of man. The work was widely criticized and denounced during a provincial meeting of the Dutch Reformed church as 'filthy' and 'blasphemous' (W. P. C. Knuttel, *Acta der particuliere synoden*, 1915, 5.283). Beverland printed a second, allegedly 'chastitized' edition of the work in 1679 (letter from Beverland to Nicolaas Heinsius, 8 July

1679, University of Leiden), yet the *De peccato originale*, which can be found in many European archives today, presented the same argument. Beverland compounded his infamy by publishing *De Stolatae Virginitatis Iure* ('On the law on draped virginity'), a treatise on the sexual lust of women, in the same year.

In response the Synod of the Reformed Church of South Holland sent a request to the states of Holland, which on 12 September 1679 discussed Beverland's blasphemous interpretation of biblical passages and the dangerous, lascivious character of his works. Members of the Dutch Reformed church and the states of Holland were of the opinion that Beverland's works misrepresented the true meaning of the Bible and promoted debauchery to young people. The states concluded that the student court of the University of Leiden, where Beverland was then enrolled as a student, should consider the case. He was arrested on 26 October 1679. At his trial the following month he was convicted of writing godless, profane, and perverse works. In addition to a series of minor punishments—he had, for instance, to reimburse the costs of the trial, pay a fine, and ask God for forgiveness—Beverland was ordered to hand over the 'De prostibulis veterum', was expelled from the University of Leiden, and banished from the provinces of Holland, Zeeland, and West Friesland. It is unclear if Beverland, who published from prison a third edition of his work on sex and sin titled *Poma amoris* ('The fruits of love'), accepted his sentence voluntarily or lost an appeal: the records of his trial present only a written statement, in which he accepted his punishment. Following his release, on 4 December 1679, he briefly resided in Utrecht, but as the city became increasingly dangerous for him—due to his own unruly behaviour, the gossip of his critics, and the publication of a refutation of the *De peccato originale* by theologian Leonard van Ryssen—he left the Dutch republic for England in spring 1680.

Prior to his move across the channel Beverland had sent copies of the first volume and the manuscripts of the second and third volumes of 'De prostibulis veterum' to England. He continued to work on his master thesis during the first years of his exile. Eventually, however, he abandoned the work and it was never published. He did continue to study classical literature, and wrote commentaries on the works of, among other authors, Martial, Horace, and Lucretius. He also composed essays on philological, religious, and historical subjects: in for instance the 'Otia Oxoniensia Batavi in Britannia' (a copy of which is now Bodl. Oxf., MS Bodl. 404), Beverland collected thirty of his own essays that focused on literature, language, and religion in the classical period. He also took on the roles of secretary and librarian in the service of noted scholars and collectors, including Isaac Vossius, John Vaughan, third earl of Carbery, and Hans Sloane. Away from his work he maintained his former pleasures and frequented London's taverns and brothels. After the deaths of his stepfather, Sir Bernard de Gomme, in 1685, and his patron, Isaac Vossius, in 1689 Beverland sought to return to the Dutch republic. After various attempts it was his important role in the sale of Vossius's library that secured his acquittal by the University of Leiden. Beverland ensured that his former patron's

collection was granted not to the University of Oxford but to Leiden. In return he received a pardon, which was signed by William III in 1693.

However, notwithstanding his acquittal and royal pardon, Beverland believed Dutch opinion was still too hostile to himself and his works—even after his publication, in London in 1697 and 1698, of an apologetic treatise, the *De fornicatione cavenda admonitio* ('Warning about fornication which should be avoided'). In truth, the tone in this work was too satirical to convince many of the sincerity of any apology for his earlier works. Beverland chose to remain in exile and spent the rest of his life in south-east England, residing at Windsor, Richmond, Brentford, and Ealing with his maid and partner, Rebecca (or Rebekah) Tibbith (*d.* 1739), whom he had met shortly after his arrival in England in 1680. Few details survive of their relationship, though they are known to have had two daughters: Catherin (*b.* 1685), who died in infancy, and Anna (also later referred to as Anne or Ann), who was baptized on 28 September 1687 at St Dunstan and All Saints, Stepney, Middlesex. From the mid-1690s onwards Beverland's financial and mental state deteriorated. He was forced to sell many items of his beloved collection and he became convinced that friends as well as enemies were plotting against him. These plots were described in his 'Perin del Vago' correspondence—an imaginary exchange between Beverland and (the fictitious) del Vago—published in London in nine works between 1702 and 1711.

By the end of his life Beverland was a broken man. In the eighteenth century his work on original sin became a popular treatise that was adapted and translated into French and German editions, first published in 1714 and 1747 respectively. However, Beverland did not live to see this. He died in destitution at Henrietta Street, London, on 14 December 1716 and was buried four days later, at St Paul's churchyard, Covent Garden. In his last preserved will of 1704 (Lantsheer and Nagtglas, 1.36–8), Beverland appointed his niece Catharina, daughter of his brother Christoffel, as his principal heir. In his paranoid state, he had accused Rebecca Tibbith of being unfaithful to him and concluded that Anna was not his child. To his partner and child he therefore left almost nothing; nevertheless, both women used his surname for the remainder of their lives. Rebecca died in 1739 and was buried on 11 August of that year at St Lawrence's, Brentford. Their daughter Anna married, first, James Bagley on 9 December 1713 at St Luke's, Chelsea, and second Charles Bennett, a Spitalfields weaver, on 25 April 1753, at the Fleet prison. Hadriaan Beverland's will of 1704 also stated that testamentary executors, the scholar and non juror Thomas Smith and Hans Sloane, were to print the following inscription on a lavish marble stone, to be placed above his final resting place:

That in death at last I may rest in a quiet place.
Hadriaan Beverland
Not just any sinner
Here I lie, where you who reads this
Would not want to lie. Yet you would want to,
If with the whispers of Beverland you would know
To delight the shades of Vossius and Heinsius.

BL, Sloane MS 1985, 64No trace of a headstone remains however and there is no evidence that one was erected to mark Beverland's burial place.

Sources

K. E. Hollewand, 'The banishment of Beverland: sex, scripture and scholarship in the seventeenth-century Dutch republic', DPhil diss., U. Oxf., 2016

R. de Smet and T. Wauters, 'Two last wills of Hadriaan Beverland (1650-1716) a comparative study', *Lias*, 36 (2009), 17-28

T. Wauters, 'De onuitgegeven Latijnse correspondentie van Hadriaan Beverland met Nicolaas Heinsius en Iacobus Gronovius in de universiteitsbibliotheken van Leiden en München', MA diss., Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 2000

R. de Smet, 'Hadrian Beverland's *De fornicatione cavenda*: an adhortatio ad pudicitiam or an ad impudicitiam?', *Eros et Priapus: erotisme et obscénité dans la littérature néo-latine*, ed. I. de Smet and P. Ford (1997), 113-39

R. de Smet, 'Traces of Hadriaan Beverland', *Lias*, 19 (1992), 73-91

R. de Smet, 'Hadriani Beverlandi epistolae XII: edition critique et commentaire', *Studio varia Bruxellensia ad orbem Graeco-Latinum pertinentia*, ed. R. de Smet, H. Melaerts, and C. Saerens, 2 (1990), 29-56

R. de Smet, 'Epistolae Tullianae: brieven van Hadriaan Beverland', *De Gulden Passer*, 64 (1986), 83-124; 65 (1987), 70-101; 68 (1990), 139-67

R. de Smet, *Hadrianus Beverlandus (1650-1716): non unus e multis peccator: studie over het leven en werk van Hadriaan Beverland* (1988)

E. J. Dingwall, *Very peculiar people: portrait studies in the queer, the abnormal and the uncanny* (1950), 145-68

parish registers, St Dunstan and All Saints, Stepney [baptism of Anne Beverland]

P. Boyd, *Index to burials in the London area, 1538-1835* (1934)

parish registers, St Lawrence, Brentford [burial of Rebecca Beverland]

M. F. Lantsheer and F. Nagtglas, *Levensberichten van Zeeuwen*, 2 vols. (1888-1993), 1.36-8 [original version of Beverland's will, since lost]

J. F. Bernard, *Histoire de l'etat de l'homme dans le péché original* (1714) [French edition of *De peccato originale*; six editions published between 1714 and 1868]

P. E. Bertram, *Philosophische untersuchung von dem zustand des menschen in der erbsünde* (1746) [German edition of *De peccato originale*, two editions published in 1746 and 1747]

E. Fielding, *Der baum der erkenntnis des guten und bösen*, 2nd edn (1760) [second German edition of *De peccato originale*; three editions published in 1747, 1760–61]

Archives

BL, Add MS 61661, fols. 77r–116v

BL, biographical note, Add MS 4221, fol. 26r

BL, papers, incl. 'Testament of H. Beverland', 1703, Sloane MSS 1985 and 3395; Sloane MS 1985, fol. 64r–v

Bodl. Oxf., MS Bodl. 404

Bodl. Oxf., notes for Perin del Vago letters, Rawlinson MSS

Nationaal Archief, The Hague, MS 3.03.06, 13, fols. 115r–116d

Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague, MS KW 131 G 25

University of Leiden, papers and letters

University of Munich, letters and notes

Likenesses

P. Schenck, mezzotints, 1680–99 (after G. D. Vois), NPG

I. Beckett, mezzotints, 1681–8, NPG

G. Kneller, oils, 1689, Bodl. Oxf.

A. de Vois, oils, 1675–1680, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

W. Sherwin, print, 1675–1680 (after Muyck), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

portrait, 1690, AM Oxf.

See also

Gomme, Sir Bernard de (1620–1685), military engineer <<http://oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-10932>>