

Belle de Zuylen/Isabelle de Charrière's correspondence online. From hand-written letters to an on-line Time Machine

At Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands, we are working on the digitization of the correspondence of Belle de Zuylen/Isabelle de Charrière: her c. 2600 letters are digitized and annotated, spelling is modernized. Translations are/will be added. All this is done in collaboration with members of the Dutch Belle de Zuylen Association as volunteers/crowdsourcers, and with students of French (Nijmegen University).

Launching these letters takes place in three phases. Two years ago, October 26 2019, a first series – of 199 letters – was presented at the Utrecht Archives (see [site HUA](#)). These were the letters the manuscripts of which are kept in *Dutch* libraries and archival collections. They can, since then, be consulted at: <https://charriere.huygens.knaw.nl/>.

November 23, a new series of letters will be presented on-line: those that were sent from *Utrecht*, and those where comments are to be found about 18th-century Utrecht, its inhabitants and remarkable streets or spots, such as the « Maliebaan », the bookshop where Belle de Zuylen used to buy her reading materials, the Utrecht fair with its famous waffles etc., and by extension those letters which contain statements about: the Netherlands, Dutch culture, characteristics of inhabitants etc. – a total of 764 letters.

The third and last presentation will take place in 2022 (date to be specified) at Lausanne University, Switzerland.

During the symposium celebrating the launch of the “Utrecht/Dutch” letters we will discuss the possibilities, created thanks to online editions in general, and – as far as *these* letters are concerned – the opportunity to better understand the personality and authorship of Belle de Zuylen. Too often stereotypes and clichés are used when characterizing and discussing her – as well as other women who wrote.

A number of these letters is being used within the project, currently going on at Utrecht University, *Utrecht Time Machine* (<https://utrechtmemachine.nl/>) in view of presenting – by text and image – the “history” of Belle de Zuylen/Isabelle de Charrière: her youth in Utrecht, contacts with the city once she had left the country, and souvenirs linked to the city of Utrecht. It will be presented during this symposium.

Participation is possible for the morning or afternoon session, or for the whole day. The morning session will be held in English, due to the participation of speakers from abroad (we plan distributing abstracts in Dutch). The afternoon session will be in Dutch, dedicated to the relationship between Belle de Zuylen/Isabelle de Charrière and her current Dutch audiences, and to the potential interest existing in the Netherlands and especially in Utrecht, for her, for her published works and for her private correspondence.

Given Belle de Zuylen's status at the top of the Utrecht Literary Canon Littéraire (<https://www.cityofliterature.nl/auteur/belle-van-zuylen/>) this session addresses a diverse audience of people feeling concerned about the history of Utrecht. It will be held in Dutch (we plan distributing abstracts in English).

The symposium is being organized by Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands (KNAW, Amsterdam), Huizinga Institute for research in cultural history (Working Group NEWW [New approaches to European Women's Writing]) and the Descartes Centre (both in Utrecht).

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