

BAS JONGENELEN AND
BEN PARSONS

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Van der Noot"

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BAS JONGENELEN AND BEN PARSONS

The Sonnets of *Het Bosken*
by Jan Van der Noot

Jan Van der Noot (c.1540–c.1601) is a central figure in Dutch literature, widely regarded as the first true Renaissance poet in the Netherlands. He was the earliest Dutch poet to imitate Ronsard, Baïf, and Petrarch, and the first to use the sonnet-form. Van der Noot also has vital links with sixteenth-century England and English literature. While living in London (1567–72), he produced the source-text for Spenser and Roest's *Theatre of Voluptuous Worldlings*. Yet despite this contribution, he is frequently overlooked by English-speaking critics. Even when he does receive consideration, he is seldom viewed as a poet in his own right. As an attempt to redress this, we offer here fresh translations from Van der Noot's work, lightly annotated throughout, concentrating on the sonnets that are the lynchpin of his reputation.

LIFE AND WORK

IF JAN VAN DER NOOT IS known at all outside Holland, it is as a stagehand in the service of more renowned authors. For English readers especially, he is a figure working in the wings, supporting other writers but eclipsed by them. His limited fame rests on a single work, *Het Theatre oft Toon-Neel*, the source of the English *Theatre for Voluptuous Wordlings*. This later work is, of course, not only notable for being the first emblem book in English, but also for containing the earliest published work of Spenser, who translated the verse sections of Van der Noot's original.¹

In the literary history of the Netherlands, however, Van der Noot occupies a place of central importance. He is regarded as a towering

figure of the *Gouden Eeuw*, the first true *renaissancedichter* of Dutch poetry. For modern critics he is the first writer to introduce the key ideas of the *Pléiade* into Dutch. Even in his lifetime Van der Noot's standing as a poet was honored: his fellow Antwerpians Gerard Goossens and Lucas d'Heere both salute his "excellence." Subsequent centuries have not dimmed his reputation. G. Kalff's assessment is still widely echoed: "Van der Noot had clearly seen the future for the arts of poetry and music."²

Many of the key details of Van der Noot's life are sketchy. His dates of birth and death are equally uncertain: the former is generally fixed at 1539 or 1540, while the latter can only be placed between 1595 and 1601. He is known to have been a *schepen* or alderman at Antwerp in 1562–63, and again in 1565–66. At some point in the 1560s he was converted to Calvinism, becoming a member of the so-called *Antwerpse Consistorie*. The circumstances underlying this are not known, but it is unlikely that he joined the *Consistorie* while still an alderman. In *Het Theatre*, Van der Noot claims to have persecuted "the true Word" of Protestantism during his service as a magistrate. One thing is beyond doubt: Van der Noot was an enthusiastic advocate of his new faith, proving an ardent champion of the Reformers' cause. He played a central role in the uprising of 1567, in which a Calvinist faction attempted to depose the Margrave of Antwerp, and install Van der Noot in his place.

The coup, however, was a complete fiasco, failing entirely in its objectives. Van der Noot's involvement in this *geuzenoproer* soon forced him to flee the Netherlands. In March 1567 he reached London, where he would remain for half a decade. He apparently took lodgings at Botolph Ward, between London Bridge and Billingsgate: a 1568 mayoral census names one "John van de Note" as a resident of this area.³ While living in London, he seems to have inhabited the fringes of a vibrant, itinerant intellectual community. According to J. A. Van Dorsten, he was in the orbit of such figures as Jacob Acontius and Michel de Castelnau.⁴ He also had firm connections with the English intelligentsia. One of his kinsmen was Emmanuel van Meteren, author of the *Nederlantsche Historien*, and an associate of Richard Mulcaster.⁵

In terms of literary output, Van der Noot's exile was certainly productive. *Het Theatre* appeared in 1568. This sequence of twenty-one visionary epigrams, accompanied by prose commentaries and a virulent disquisition on the papacy, is a bold statement of Van der Noot's Calvinism. As Witstein's careful dissection has shown, *Het Theatre* is the work of an author familiar with many currents of Protestant thought. While Van der Noot's main sources are Du Bellay

and Petrarch, he grafts on to this stem material from John Bale and the Swiss Reformer Heinrich Bullinger.⁶ The work was printed by John Day, "the great Elizabethan master printer" responsible for Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* and Golding's *Metamorphoses*, inter alia.⁷ Day also published Van der Noot's French translation of *Het Theatre*, which appeared shortly after the Dutch original. This version of the text provided the base for the English *Theatre for Voluptuous Worldlings*, printed by Henry Bynneman in 1569.

The year 1570/1 saw the publication of *Het Bosken*, the volume from which our selection is taken. While the oldest surviving edition of this work does not quote its place or date of publication, it is most likely the work of Bynneman. This is the conclusion of F. S. Ferguson, who compares "the ornaments and the initial" of *Het Bosken* with Bynneman's other works. Smit reconfirms these findings in his edition of the text.⁸ The book's title means "the copse," or "the little forest," and is designed to convey the miscellaneous character of the work. The volume certainly encompasses a wide variety of poetic forms: its contents range from psalms to elegies, epithalamia to Pindaric odes, and from *rondelen* to sonnets. This formal diversity implies that the book was an anthology of earlier work, possibly assembled from texts printed in Antwerp but now no longer extant. Despite its variety, the dual influences of Petrarch and the *Pléiade* permeate *Het Bosken*, lending it a unifying core.

There is some indication that Van der Noot was held in high regard while he lived at London. In 1569, William How published *The Governance and Preservation of Them That Fear the Plague*, by one "John Vandernote." This is probably the work of a quack-doctor from Flanders who had died sixteen years earlier: but the mere fact that How chose to publish the work of a "Vandernote" soon after Day and Bynneman's editions suggests some demand for Van der Noot's work, which How was keen to exploit.⁹ Van der Noot was also introduced at court during his exile, possibly by the diplomat Adolf van Meetkercke. In the English version of *Het Theatre*, Van der Noot recalls hearing Elizabeth speak to a party of "Embassadours" in "their owne naturall language, with a singular dexteritie and princely maiestie."¹⁰

By 1572 Van der Noot had left London for Cologne. Here he revisited his most successful work, and produced a German translation of *Het Theatre*, the *Theatrum das ist Schawplatz*. This version of the text differs considerably from its predecessors, in that the antipapal passages have been carefully excised. These modifications may well indicate that Van der Noot had already returned to Catholicism by

the early 1570s. He had certainly abandoned Calvinism by the summer of 1578, when he was readmitted to Antwerp as a Catholic. Once again, what motivated this reconversion is unknown. In 1579 Van der Noot published *Het cort begryp der XII boecken Olympiados*, a long and densely allegorical dream-vision. The following decade seems to have been one of prolonged hardship for Van der Noot. Between 1581 and 1592, appeals to the aldermanic council for financial support provide the last verifiable references to him.

THE TRANSLATION

Our translation—which is, to our knowledge, the first attempted in English—has endeavored to remain as faithful as possible to the meaning of original poems. Because of this, some formal aspects of the texts may not be clear from our rendering. For example, Van der Noot frequently experimented with meter and line-length, writing in pentameter and alexandrines with equal ease. He also used highly varied rhyme-schemes to produce different emphases and effects: the sestets of his sonnets employ the full range of possible rhymes. Since our priority has been the accurate re-creation of Van der Noot's sense and syntax, it has not been possible to preserve these features. Hopefully the inclusion of the original Dutch text will enable the reader to identify these characteristics for themselves.

Nor does our work pretend to give a full translation of *Het Bosken*. It concentrates solely on the Dutch sonnets collected in that volume. We have selected these poems in the belief that they provide the best possible introduction to Van der Noot. Indeed, it is with this form of poetry that Van der Noot's name is most firmly associated in the Netherlands. In many key respects the sonnets are representative of his work as a whole. First, they reveal the engagement with new Renaissance forms that is the cornerstone of Van der Noot's reputation. As our notes attest, a number of these works are derived from Petrarch, Ronsard, or Bâif.¹¹ The fondness for oxymoron and antithesis, the manipulation of blazon conventions, the preference for loose rhythm over strict meter: all of these features betray the influence of Petrarch and the Pléiade. But the sonnets also demonstrate Van der Noot's equal commitment to older Dutch forms. He is not a slavish imitator of the French and Italian writers: he evidently believed that drawing modern forms into Dutch should not involve abandoning older traditions. Often this desire generates a peculiar hybrid of Renaissance and medieval conventions. Sonnet IV, for example, is in

fact a *rondeel*, a traditional Dutch lyrical form related to the French *rondeaux* and English roundelay. While pressed into sonnet-form, the piece retains the marked repetition that is characteristic of *rondelen*. The overall effect is a curious compromise between the older and newer conventions.

The sonnets also showcase the stylistic variety of Van der Noot's work. Although mostly concerned with conventional love conceits, a wide variety of tones are on display here. The poems move from the light satire of Sonnet I to the fervent piety of Sonnet XVIII, from the elegiac timbre of Sonnet VI to the more conversational tone of Sonnet XV. Lastly, Van der Noot's sonnets are the part of his canon most likely to appeal to English readers. The strong elements of Petrarchanism in these poems connects them with several works in English, as Van der Noot feeds in the same cultural waters as Spenser, Wyatt, Sidney, even Chaucer. At the very least these pieces offer an interesting counterpoint to some of the best-known pieces of the English Renaissance, from the *Amoretti* to the "Canticus Troili."

Our translation is based on *Het Bosken en Het Theatre*, ed. W. A. P. Smit (Amsterdam and Antwerp: W.B., 1953; rpt. Utrecht: H. E. S. Publishers, 1979). This is available online at http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/noot001bosk01_01/index.htm. Editorial apparatus has been used sparingly. Rather than imposing a full reading on the poems, our notes merely suggest Van der Noot's likely sources, and indicate where the original text is corrupt.

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Sonet I: *Venus spreekt tot Cupido om sommige oorsaken.*

- Het is wel waer dat ghy verscheyden laghen
 Hem hebt gheleyt, en u netten ghespreyt,
 Maer ghy en hebt alst al wel is gheseyt,
 Niet eerst ghemerct wat vrouwen hem behagen:
 5 Weer een rycke of een edele van maghen,
 Oft een die heur gheerne dickmael vermeyt
 T alder feesten, oft die de digniteyt
 Soekende is doer costelycke baghen:
 Weer een seeghe, wyse ende ghestichte,
 10 Oft een wilt dier, oft woeste Venus nichte:

Oft een die is seer deuchdelyck van leven.
 Dees' ionghe man is van goeder nature,
 En yeghelyck soect gheerne syn parture,
 Dus moet ghy hem een syns ghelycke gheven.

Sonnet I: *Venus to Cupid on the Nature of Things*

- It is true that you have launched many attacks
 Against him, and you have cast your nets,
 But you did not—to speak plainly—
 First discover what kind of female he prefers.
 5 Is it a wealthy or a noble maiden,
 Or one that likes to indulge herself
 At every festival, or is it one who pursues
 Honor in expensive adornments:
 Is it one that is chaste, wise, and pious,
 10 Or a wild beast, or a kinswoman of Venus:
 Or is it one who is virtuous in her living.
 This young man is of good character,
 And everyone seeks out his mirror-image,
 Thus you must bring him one like himself.

Sonet II

- Een hiende reyn sach ick wit van colure
 In een groen bosch lustich in een valleeye,
 (Wandelen gaen int soetste vanden Meye)
 Ghelegghen fraey by een rivire pure,
 5 Neffens een bosch seer doncker van verdure:
 Des morghens vroeck deur der sonnen beleye
 Sach ick soo soet en fierkens het ghereye
 Heurs schoons ghesichts, dat ic van dier ure
 Heur volghen moet latende alle saken.
 10 Niemandt en roer my, sach ic staen gheschreven,
 Om heuren hals met fyne Diamanten
 Int gout gheset. Ick wil gaey slaen en waken
 Nam ick voor my, want yemant straf van leven
 Mocht dese leet aen doen in vremde canten.

Sonnet II¹²

- A spotless hind I saw, white of color
 In luscious green woodland in a valley
 (While wandering in the sweetest time of May)
 Lying gracefully by a river pure,
 5 Beside a forest that was dark with foliage:
 As morning was being crafted by the hands of the sun
 I saw, so sweet and fair in its bearing,
 Her beautiful face, and I from that hour
 Feel compelled to follow her, forsaking all else.
 10 "No man may touch me," I saw inscribed,
 About her neck with fine diamonds
 Set in gold. I will be ready and alert
 I vowed to myself, for some brutish man
 May do her harm in alien lands.

Sonet III

- Heur ooghen syn als twee schoon Esmerauden,
 Blinckende claer gheensins om te verlichten
 Fraeykens gheset voor alle mans ghesichten,
 In twee peerlen de schoonste die bedauden
 5 Aurora oyt alssy d'Oosten verlauden:
 Schoonder dan gout syn die my dick bevichten,
 Heur wynbraukens ende heur suyver vlichten,
 Soo schoon gheveruft dat sy my dick benauden:
 Dan out yvoir syn witter heur schoon tanden,
 10 Neerstich bewaert met twee coralen randen.
 Dees' veruwen al, heur soo suyver vertoonen
 In heur aensicht, wel weerdich om te croonen,
 Dat sy my ghants van herten en van sinne
 Verandert nou hebben deur heur reyn minne.

Sonnet III

- Her eyes are like two beautiful emeralds
 Glistening clear, polished to perfection
 Neatly embedded for every man's esteem,
 In two pearls of great beauty, which bedewed them
 5 As Aurora when she warms the east:
 Finer than gold are those rivals for my heart,

- Her eyebrows and her plaited hair,
 So fair-colored that I can barely breathe:
 Whiter than ivory are her fair teeth,
 10 Delicately sheathed in two arcs of coral.
 These colors all, she so purely displays
 In her face, most deserving of a crown,
 That is why she has changed my heart and senses
 Twisting me inside out with her pure love.

Sonnet IV

- Waer wilt ghi loopen lief, waer wilt ghi toch al loopen?
 Ghy vliet van my scoon lief eer ghy weet wat ick meyne.
 Hoe wilt ghi my altyts deen pyn op dander hoopen?
 Myn liefde is schoon lief gestadich goet en reyne.
 5 Waerom vliet ghy van my? waer wilt ghi toch al loopen?
 Myn liefde touwaerts is gestadich goet en reyne,
 Dies en wilt my niet meer d'een pyn op dander hoopen
 Maer blyft staen lief, vertoeft en verstaet wat ick meyne.
 U schoonheyt suyver maecht en u goede manieren,
 10 U wijsheyt, u verstant en u deucht goedertieren,
 U oochskens scoon en claer, en u reyn eerbaer wesen
 U suyver blondich haer, u wynbraukens by desen,
 Behaghen my soo wel, dat ick tot alle tyen,
 By u wel wilde syn twaer in vreucht oft in lyen.

Sonnet IV¹³

- Where do you wish to go, my love, where do you plan to go?
 You flee from me, sweet love, before you know my mind.
 Why do you always pile one pain upon another?
 My love is, sweet love, steadfast, good and pure.
 5 Why do you flee from me? where do you plan to go?
 My love for you is steadfast, good and pure,
 So, do not pile one pain upon another
 But wait, my love, stay and take heed of my mind.
 Your beauty, pure maiden, and your good habits,
 10 Your wisdom, your wit and your fine virtues,
 Your eyes comely and clear, and your pure noble ways
 Your flawless blonde hair, your twinned eyebrows,
 Please me so greatly, that until the end of time
 I long to be with you in joy or in anguish.

Sonnet V

- Ick sach myn Nimphe int suetste van den Iare
 In eenen beemt gheleghen aende sye
 Van heuren hof, alleene als de vrye:
 Neffens een gracht, waer af het water clare
 5 Gheboort met lisch, cruyt en bloemen eenpare,
 Lustigher scheen dan alle schilderye,
 Noyt man en sach schoonder tappisserye,
 Soo schoon was tvelt ghebloeyt veer ende nare:
 Ghelyck Flora sadt sy daer op de bloemen,
 10 Om heur schoonheyt machmense Venus noemen,
 Om heur verstant Minerva wys van sinne,
 Diana oock om heur reyn eerlyck wesen,
 Boven Iuno is sy weert t'syn ghepresen:
 Tsynts desen tyt queelt myn siele om heur minne.

Sonnet V¹⁴

- I saw my Nymph at the sweetest time of year
 In a pasture that lay alongside
 Her courtyard, alone and free:
 Next to a canal, in which clear water
 5 Carried irises, plants, and flowers in great number;
 Lovelier it seemed than any painting;
 No man ever saw a finer tapestry,
 So finely the field blossomed far and near:
 Like Flora she sat there upon the flowers;
 10 For her beauty one may name her Venus,
 For her wits Minerva, wise in senses,
 Diana too for her flawless, honorable ways;
 Above Juno is she in meriting praise:
 Since that time my soul has pined for her love.

Sonnet VI

- Soo haest als myn ooghen heur schoon figure
 Hebben ghesien soo suyver ende reyne,
 Merckende veel gratien (niet ghemeyne)
 In dese maghet eerbaer, goet ende pure,
 5 Werde ick ghetreft recht op die selve ure,
 Van Cupido, en na der minnen treyne,

Werde ick dienaer van dit maechdeken cleyne:
 Wiens liefde my dickwerven het sure
 Doen prueven heeft met suchten ende beven:
 10 En wederom is my deur heur ghegheven
 Blyschap' en vreucht, maer altyts onghedurich:
 Hope gheeft troost, maer duchten doet my pyne,
 Ick hop' nochtans noch eens vertroost te syne,
 Maer vast vinde ick my nu dicwerven treurich.

Sonnet VI

As soon as my eyes her beautiful figure
 Had seen, so glorious and innocent,
 Noting many graces (none of them common)
 In this worthy maiden, good and pure,
 5 I was struck in that same instant,
 By Cupid; in love's usual manner,
 I became dedicated to this fine maiden:
 Her love frequently the bitter
 Makes me taste, with sighing and quivering:
 10 On the other hand she also causes me
 Blissfulness and glee, but only briefly:
 Hope gives solace, but pain makes me fear;
 I hope that consolation may come,
 But for now I find myself utterly saddened.

Sonnet VII

Isser iemant onder des hemels ronde
 Die gheproeft heeft Cupidos tyrannie,
 Dat ben ick wel, die met herten onblye
 Ghequetst ben met een dootelycke wonde
 5 Die hy my ghaf door d'ooghe van de blonde,
 Stellende heur soo in de heerschappye
 Over myn hert en sinnen t'allen tye,
 Beruerende myn siele tot den gronde.
 Nacht ende dach en doen ick niet dan claghen,
 10 Suchten, kermen, ende myn herte cnaghen,
 Biddende hem dat hy myn leven eynde.
 Maer laes hy neemt in myn smerte behaghen,
 Want hoe ick hem roepe en smeeke by vlaghen,
 Hy en vertroost my niet waer ick my weynde.

Sonnet VII¹⁵

If any man under the circle of heaven
 Has experienced the tyranny of Cupid,
 It is I, who with a miserable heart
 Has been made to suffer a deadly wound
 5 Which he dealt me with the eyes of a blonde,
 Installing her firmly in the office
 Of my heart and senses for all time,
 Piercing my soul to its foundation.
 Night and day I do nothing but complain,
 10 Sighing, groaning, and gnawing at my heart,
 Begging that he might end my life.
 But alas he delights in my agony,
 As I shout out and implore him to stop,
 He gives me no relief wherever I go.

Sonnet VIII

En ist de liefde niet, wat ist dan dat my quelt?
 En ist de liefde ooc, wat mach de liefde wesen?
 Is sy soet ende goet, hoe valt sy hert in desen?
 Is sy quaet, hoe is dan soo suete heur ghewelt?
 5 Brande ic met mynen danc, hoe ben ic dan ontstelt?
 Ist teghen mynen danc, sal tsuchten my genesen?
 Vreucht van pynen vol, pyne vol vreucht geresen
 Droefheyt vol ioleyts! o blyschappe verfelt!
 Levende doot hoe moecht ghy teghen mynen danck
 10 Dus vele over my? maer ben ick willens cranck,
 My claghende tonrecht, de liefde ick tonrecht blame.
 Liefde goet ende quaet, my leet en aenghename,
 Gheluck en ongheluck, suer en soet ick ghevule:
 Ic suke vryicheyt, en om slaven ick wule.

Sonnet VIII¹⁶

And if it is not love, what is it that torments me?
 And if it is love as well, what might love be?
 If it is sweet and good, why is it so harsh now?
 Is it is angry, then why is its assault so sweet?
 5 If I burn by choice, why am I so unsettled?
 If it is against my choosing, shall sighing make me well?

- Joy with pains filled, pain filled with joy rising,
 Sadness filled with pleasure! o savage bliss!
 Living dead, how can you against my will
 10 Rule over me? but if I am willingly infected,
 Pitying myself falsely, then love I falsely chide.
 Love good and faulty, my delight and odium,
 Pleasure and displeasure, bitter and sweet I feel:
 I seek freedom, but I choose to be enslaved.

Sonet IX

- Noyt en is u minlyck wesen gheweken
 Wt myn verstant, maer sie altyts present
 U wesen soet, u schoonheyt excellent,
 U aenschyn claer, ende de soete treken
 5 Uwer oochskens die machtich syn te breken
 De strafficheyt van een hert dat ghewent
 Tot quade is, en in wreetheyt verblent,
 Doende t'selfde virighe tranen leken.
 U suyver haer (sweer ick u op myn trouwe)
 10 Dunct my gemencht syn met draykens van gouwe.
 U wynbraukens syn boochskens van Hebenen:
 Den mont corael, de borstkens van albaste,
 De tanden van yvoir als de ghepaste,
 Ermkens massyf, en wel ghemaecte schenen.

Sonet IX

- Never has your lovely being faded
 From my understanding, but it is always present
 Your sweet being, your excellent beauty,
 Your face clear, and the sweet devices
 5 Of your eyes that are mighty enough to break
 The harshness of a heart that is bent
 To evil, and by wrathfulness blinded
 Causing it to pour forth fiery tears.
 Your hair (I swear upon my honor)
 10 To my mind seems woven with gold thread.
 Your eyebrows are longbows of ebony:
 The mouth coral, the breasts of alabaster,
 The teeth of ivory as is most fitting,
 The arms shapely, with well-crafted shin-bones.

Sonet X

- Wil iemant sien in een seer ionghe ieucht
 Alle schoonheyt, alle suyverheyt reene,
 Ootmoedicheyt, en hoefsheyt niet ghemeene,
 Alle eerbaerheyt, wysheyt, verstant en deucht?
 5 Wil iemant sien (compt te wyl ghyt sien meucht)
 Twee ooghen claer, en een godheyt niet cleene?
 De glorie oock van onsen tyt alleene?
 Come besien die my 't herte verheucht:
 Hoe Cupido byt en lacht sal hy leeren,
 10 Hoe hy gheneest, en hoe hy ooc doorwont,
 Dan sal hy heur siende segghen terstont
 Gheluckich is, die een vat soo vol eeren,
 Wysheyt, verstant en deucht, aenschouwen mach,
 Maer salich hy, die heur noch trouwen mach.

Sonet X¹⁷

- Does any man wish to see a youthful creature
 All beauty, all spotless purity,
 Cordiality, and grace not widely found,
 All delicacy, wisdom, wit and nobility?
 5 Does any man wish to see (come while you still can)
 Two clear eyes, and a divinity of no trifling kind?
 The glory found in our age alone?
 Come and see the one who cheers my heart:
 You shall learn how Cupid bites as he laughs,
 10 How he soothes, but how he stabs as well;
 Then shall he say at once on seeing her:
 Lucky is he, who such a trove full of honor,
 Wisdom, wit and nobility, might witness,
 But blessed is he, who might also wed her.

Sonet XI

- Soo langhe mynen gheest dees leden sal doen ruren
 (Sweere ic u suete lief) en sal nemmermeer vrouwe
 Dan ghy, over myn ieucht (in des werelts landouwe)
 Heerschappye hebben, want myn liefde sal duren
 5 Ghestadichlyck altyts, wat leet ick moet besuren.
 U alleene (schoon lief) sal ick blyven ghetrouwe,

- Want veel liever wil ick u dienaer syn in trouwe,
 Dan eens anders dienaer wat vreucht my mocht ghebeuren.
 U schoonheyt is soo hooch in mynen gheest verheven,
 10 En u liefde is soo vast in myn herte gheschreven,
 Dat noch den langen tyt, noch Atropos geruchten
 Niet keeren en sullen, ick en sal 't allen daghen
 In myn herte geprint ende gheschildert draghen,
 U ooghen, uwen mont, u lachen, u versuchten.

Sonnet XI¹⁸

- As long as my spirit still stirs these limbs
 (I swear my sweet love) nevermore will a woman
 Other than you, over my youth (in all the world's lands)
 Hold authority, for my love will endure
 5 Throughout all time, whatever hardship I must bear.
 To you alone (fair love) shall I remain true,
 For I would rather be your sworn servant,
 Than servant to another no matter what mirth I gain.
 Your beauty is so elevated in my mind
 10 And your love is so firmly on my heart inscribed
 That not the expanse of time, nor the threats of Atropos
 May ruin or soil it, that which I keep all my days
 In my heart printed and stained with inks,
 Your eyes, your mouth, your smiles, your sighs.

Sonnet XII

- U suet ghesichte en u seer eerlyck wesen
 Reyn suyver maecht, so suyver van aenschynen,
 Doen lancx soo meer vermeederen myn pyne:
 Nochtans worden van my altyts ghepresen
 5 U aenschyn claer, u bruyt oochskens by desen,
 U blondich haer waer deure ick ten fyne,
 Hopende ben volcomen medecyne,
 En soo deur u noch te worden ghenesen.
 Versmaeyt ghy my, myn leven sal haest eynden,
 10 Deur pyne swaer in droefheyt onghemetten,
 Maer seght my lief en sou u dit niet deeren,
 Dat ghy alsoo myn schaduwe soudt seynden
 Naer Lethes vloet om te blyven vergheten?
 God (hope ic) sal die wreetheyt van u weeren.

Sonnet XII

- Your sweet face and your most honorable being
 True pure maiden, so bright of appearance,
 While I suffer the more my pain will grow:
 Yet nonetheless I will always praise
 5 Your fair appearance, your brown eyes as well,
 Your blonde hair which I adore for its fineness;
 I hope you are the welcome medicine
 And thus will cure me with your being.
 If you deny me, my life will soon end
 10 Due to this grave pain of measureless woe,
 But I ask you my love, would it not grieve you
 To know that you will also send my shade
 To the Lethe and to outright oblivion?
 God (I hope) shall keep this cruelty from you.

Sonnet XIII

- Had ic tverstant so grof, so plomp en onbesneden
 Als vele die int velt spitten, graven en spayen,
 Oft waer ick als sy syn die als weerhanen drayen,
 Soo en sou u schoonheyt, noch u verchierde leden,
 5 Weerde suyver maecht my niet houden tonvreden
 Noch ic en sou altyts niet staen t'uwder genaeyen,
 Maer sou nu hier nu daer vast myn ghenuchten maeyen,
 Die ick ghisteren sach sou syn vergeten heden:
 Boven dese acht ic my nochtans gheluckich t'syne,
 10 En boven alle goet acht ick myn bitter pyne
 Die ic om u reyn lief lyde nachten en daghen:
 Want sonder liefde lief sou ick sonder ghenuchten
 Leven gelyck sy doen (al moet ic nu dick suchen)
 Die na eere noch deucht, noch reyn liefde en vraghen.

Sonnet XIII¹⁹

- Had I understanding so gross, so rude and unrefined
 Like the folk in the fields that root, grub and dig
 Or if I resembled those who spin like weathercocks,
 Neither your immense beauty, nor your comely limbs,
 5 Worthy bright virgin, might keep me in confusion
 Nor would I be always so fixed to your bidding,

- But here and there I would swiftly seek pleasures,
 Those I found yesterday would be forgotten today:
 Above such men however I rate myself lucky,
 10 And above all goodness I rate my bitter pain
 Which I bear for you, sweet love, night and day:
 For without love, my love, I would be without joys
 Living as they do (although I must now sigh heavily)
 Who do not pursue honor, or pure love and virtue.

Sonet XIV

- Suet ghepeys, o sware fantasien!
 Groote vreucht! die my comt deur t'gedencken
 Van u minlyck wesen het welck my schenken
 Can een eerlyck ende salich verblyen.
 5 Droefheyt bly', ô ghenuchelyck lyen!
 Ghesontheyt, ô daghelycx vercrenken!
 Scherp verbot, ô lieffelyck weerwenken!
 Suren peys, ô aldersoetste stryen!
 T is my al vreucht, al goet ende bequame:
 10 T is my al lief, wilcome en aenghenname,
 Wat ick deur u liefde (reyn lief) ontfanghe:
 Tsy suer oft suet, alst u wel mach behaghen:
 Maer nochtans is al myn vlieghe en iaghen,
 Naer uwen troost, en naer u ick verlanghe.

Sonet XIV²⁰

- Sweet misery, o somber daydream!
 Great gladness comes to me with the thought
 Of your lovely being, which grants to me
 An honorable and a blithesome joy.
 5 Doleful bliss, o joyful suffering!
 Robust health, o daily decline!
 Sharp restraint, o lovely regret!
 Bitter peace, o sweetest conflict!
 To me all is mirth, all is good and pleasing:
 10 Everything is love to me, welcome and true,
 That I derive from your love (fair love):
 Whether bitter or sweet, as it may please you:
 Yet still all my haste and urgency are,
 Ever in your service, as for you I yearn.

Sonet XV

- Ghy en syt my niet wreedt, niet hert, noch ongenadich,
 Maer vriendelick sydy, beleeft en goedertieren:
 Seer minlyck en seer goet, soet en seech van manieren:
 Ghy en syt oock gheensins wilt, straf noch onghestadich:
 5 Ghy en syt my ooc niet verachtich noch versmadich
 En ic en sueck' ooc niet dan u deucht te verchieren
 Waerom doet my dan nu u liefde dus crayeren?
 Segget my toch soon lief, en weest my toch beradich:
 U eere en u deucht, en u manierlyck wesen,
 10 Gaen als den noorden wint d'oneerbaarheyt veriaghen.
 En ic heb ooc altyts in dorperheyt mishaghen:
 Ontbeyt lief ic verstaet, ic sueck' de deucht gepresen
 En die en is toch hier beneden niet te vinden,
 So veele als in u dees' doet my touweerts winden.

Sonet XV

- You are not cruel, not hard, not unmerciful,
 But are cordial, courteous and tender-hearted:
 Most charming and good, sweet and shy in manners:
 You are not wild at all, nor coarse and fickle:
 5 You do not dislike me and do not despise me
 And I wish for nothing but to honor your grace
 Then why does my love for you make me cry out?
 Tell me this beautiful love, and give me relief:
 Your dignity and virtue, your well-mannered ways
 10 Carry away vice like the northern wind.
 And I have always loathed all roughness:
 Wait my love, I know now. I seek cherished virtue
 And that which may not be found in this world,
 So that which is in you makes me turn to you.

Sonet XVI

- Hoe sou ick van u (lief) scheydende connen spreken
 Dat druckich woort Adieu, oft God moet u bewaren
 Ghemerct my het gepeys alleene can beswaren?
 Voorwaer tseyden van u doet myn tranen als beken
 5 Seer overvloedelyck over myn wanghen leken:
 Nu god beware u lief alst dus met u moet varen,

- Myn leven, mynen troost, alder liefste der charen:
 Adieu ghy die myn pyn cunt meerderen of breken
 Adieu reyn suete lief: vaert wel schoone meestersse,
 10 Die my dic suchten doet, en weerom meucht verheughen,
 Ghy die ic dienen sal altyts na myn vermeugen.
 Bewaren moet u God, myn vreucht en bitter persse,
 Die my dic branden doet en ooc dicmael doet vrisen
 Leeft met my soo ghy wilt, ken sal gheen ander kiezen.

Sonnet XVI²¹

- How at your departure (my love) might I speak
 That dire word Adieu, or may God keep you
 When the thoughts alone cause me sadness?
 For your departure makes my tears run
 5 Flowing like brooks down my cheeks:
 God keep you, my sweet, if this must pass,
 My life, my solace, my loveliest companion:
 Adieu to you, who can increase or break my pain.
 Adieu, pure sweet love: farewell, bonny mistress
 10 Who makes me sigh gravely, and cheers me again,
 I will always serve you as well as I can.
 God must keep you, my joy and bitter torment,
 Who makes me burn and also causes me to freeze
 Live with me if you wish, I will never choose another.

Sonnet XVII: *Tot sijn muse*

- Veel herder dan in stael, in coper of pourphier,
 Heb ick dit werck volbrocht so dat de loop der Iaeren,
 Den reghen noch den wint, noch ooc Mulsibersscharen,
 Dat selfde nymmermeer en sullen schenden fier:
 5 Als mynen lesten dach my sal doen slapen schier,
 Dan en sal *Vander Noot* niet al gaen inde baren:
 Want synen boeck sal dan synen naem bet verclaren
 Dan Marmer of Pourphier, al en ist maer pampier,
 Den welcken over all ieuchdich tot allen tyen
 10 Sal vliegen (wiet benyt) om dat ick my geveucht
 Hebbe tot d'eerlyck werc dat den musen geneucht.
 Musa wel aen, vliecht op en bootschapt met verblyen
 Inden hemel, dat ick al ree heb' overwonnen,
 Deur ulie ionste goet, deur dwerck met u begonnen.

Sonnet XVII: *To His Muse*²²

- Much harder than steel, copper or porphyry,
 I have brought forth this work, so that the years,
 The rain and the wind, and Mulciber's kindred,
 May never inflict fierce damage upon it:
 5 When my last day puts me forever to sleep
 Van der Noot will not be entirely borne to his grave:
 For his book will assert his name more boldly
 Than marble or porphyry, though it be mere paper,
 Bearing it up ever-youthful through all ages,
 10 Who will look on in envy, because I set myself to this,
 This honorable work that delights the muses.
 Come Muse, soar upwards and joyously proclaim
 To the heavens, that I have already triumphed
 By your blessing, through the work I began with you.

Sonnet XVIII

- Op u betrou ick God, weest toch myn toeverlaet,
 Ghy hebt over my macht, onnut syn myn goey wercken:
 Maer ick suecke belust den voorspoet uwer kercken
 Want op d'afgods dienaers sal comen alle quaet.
 5 De Heere is den gront daer myn rent' vast op staet,
 D'best eerfdeel (siet) es my toe comen tot versterken,
 Gheloeft sy god die my onderwyst en doet mercken,
 Ick roep hem, hy verhoort en troost my hoe dat gaet.
 Siet hierom is myn hert verheucht, myn tonge lacht,
 10 Wel wetende dat ghy myn lichaem inder eerden
 Gheen en eewigen slaep en sult laten aenveerden,
 Maer sult my inden wech des levens deur u cracht
 Leyden, daer ic sal sien u aensicht met verblyen,
 Want de oprechte vreucht is by u t'allen tyen.

Sonnet XVIII²³

- Preserve me, O God; in thee do I put my trust,
 Thou hast dominion over me, fruitless are my works
 Unless I seek with glad heart the glory of thy Church,
 Confounded shall be all that serve graven images.
 5 The Lord is the ground that maintaineth my lot,
 The goodly inheritance which strengthens mine heart.

- I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel,
 I call upon him, he gives ear, and attends unto me,
 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth,
 10 For I know that when my flesh cleaveth unto the dust
 Thou wilt not leave my soul to sleep in endless sleep.
 In thy righteousness thou wilt show the path of life
 And lead me to look on thy face with bliss,
 For in thy presence is the fullness of true joy.

NOTES

1. See Jan Van der Noodt, *A Theatre for Voluptuous Worldlings*, trans. Theodor Roest and Edmund Spenser, ed. L. S. Friedland (New York: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1936).
2. G. Kalff, *Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche letterkunde* (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1907), 183.
3. Karel Bostoën, "Van Der Noot's Apocalyptic Visions: Do You 'See' What You Read?," *Anglo-Dutch Relations in the Field of the Emblem*, ed. Bart Westerweel (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 49. See also Laura Hunt Yungblut, *Strangers Settled Here Amongst Us: Policies, Perceptions and the Presence of Aliens in Elizabethan England* (London: Routledge, 1996), 18.
4. J. A. Van Dorsten, *The Radical Arts: First Decade of an Elizabethan Renaissance*, Publications of the Sir Thomas Browne Institute 4 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).
5. Richard Rambuss, "Spenser's Life And Career," in *The Cambridge Companion to Spenser*, ed. Andrew Hadfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 17.
6. S. F. Witstein, *De Verzencommentaar in Het Theatre van Jan Van der Noot*, Utrechtse Publikaties voor Algemene Literatuurwetenschap 8 (Utrecht: Utrecht University Press, 1965).
7. John N. King, "The Light of Printing: William Tyndale, John Foxe, John Day, and Early Modern Print Culture," *Renaissance Quarterly* 54 (2001): 53.
8. W. A. P. Smit, "Inleiding," in Jan Van der Noot, *Het Bosken en Het Theatre*, 19.
9. See Ben Parsons and Bas Jongenelen, "Jan Van der Noot: A Mistaken Attribution in the Short-Title Catalogue?," *Notes and Queries* 53 (2006): 427.
10. Van der Noodt, *A Theatre for Voluptuous Worldlings*, f.Aiiij.
11. For further information, see Van der Noot, *Het Bosken en Het Theatre*, 79–130.
12. A free translation of Petrarch, Sonnet CLVII, "Una candida cerva sopra l'herba." 10: "No man may touch me" (see John 20:17).
13. Although not a direct translation, this piece resembles Ronsard, "Dittes, maistresse, hé que vous ay-ie fait" (*Continuation des Amours*, 11).
14. Compare Ronsard, "Le vy ma Nymphe entre cent damoiselles" (*Amours* I, 114).
15. Here, the octave is reminiscent of Baïf, "O Brinon, si quelcun a senty la rigueur" (*Amour de Francine* I, 107), while the sextet recalls Ronsard, "Dame, depuis que la premiere fleche" (*Amours* I, 47).

16. Owing to textual corruption, Smit has reconstructed this sonnet in his edition. Compare Baïf, "Si ce n'est pas Amour, que sent donques mon coeur?"—itself a translation of Petrarch, Sonnet CII, "S'amor non è . . ." (Baïf, *Amour de Francine* I, 22).
17. See Ronsard, "Qui voudra, voir dedans vne ieunesse" (*Amours* I, 63).
18. Reconstructed by Smit.
19. Reconstructed by Smit. The opening quatrain appears to be based on Ronsard, "Petit barbet, que tu es bienheureux" (*Amours* I, 78).
20. Reconstructed by Smit. This sonnet bears certain similarities to Petrarch, "O passi sparsi, ò pensier uaghi, et pronti," separately translated by Clement Marot, Louise Labé, and Baïf. Van der Noot probably knew Baïf's version alone (*Amour de Francine* II, 44).
21. See Ronsard's madrigal "Comment au departir adieu pourroy-ie dire" (*Amours* II, 48).
22. Compare Ronsard, "A Sa Muse" (*Odes* V, 36), itself adapted from Horace (*Carmina* III, 30).
23. This sonnet directly alludes to several psalms, and contains echoes of numerous others. Compare especially Psalms 16, 13, and 97. Van der Noot produced many verse translations from the Psalms in his lifetime: see Van der Noot, *Het Bosken en Het Theatre*, 131–81.