Pierre de la Primaudaye’s *The French Academie*: the source text for *Houwelycschen Staet ende Houwelycschen Voorwaerde* (1644)

The Leyden printer, bookseller and translator of English works Willem Christiaens van der Boxe published in 1644 *Houwelycschen Staet ende Houwelycsche Voorwaerden*, a potted marriage treatise, such as were regularly published in extended versions in England, and, on a more moderate scale, in the Netherlands.¹ In his Epistle to the Reader, Van der Boxe recommends *Houwelycschen Staet* to married couples, but also addresses young unmarried people:

Jonghe Luyden, hier kunt ghy lesen en leeren, watter van noode is om een Houwelijck met Vrede en goede Ghewisse te beleven. En ghelijcker veel wort vereyscht om een recht Man te sijn van uwe Vrouw; Vader van uwe Kinderen; Meester van uwe Dienstboden; (in het teghendeel mede soo van een Huysvrouwe) alsoo en moet ghy dit Werck niet onbedacht bij der hand ghenaen, beginnen: welck eens ghedaen sijnde, noyt mach herdaen werden (fo.(*6)r.).²

*Houwelycschen Staet* opens with arguments for and against marriage, a discussion of the various kinds of marriage (the successful marriage is based on love, equality of conditions, reason and moderation), and a short survey of ancient marriage customs. The husband’s duty in marriage is next considered, which is primarily, as usual, to be the head of his family, and to rule it with discretion. Although the wife is subordinate to the husband in the marital hierarchy, a husband should not presume on his position. A wife for her part is to love and honour her husband; all else, virtue, modesty and discretion, will follow from this.

After a consideration of the husband-wife relationship, the attention turns to the household. Husband and wife have the duty to preserve and increase the household goods. Servants are instrumental in running the household, and they should be treated well. Children, which complete and perfect the family, should be carefully brought up, and not treated with too much lenience or severity. A discussion of the ‘ages of man’, and a comparison between the married state and single life, complete *Houwelycschen Staet*.


² ‘Young people, here you may read and learn what is necessary to lead your married lives in Peace and good Security. And as much is required to be a good Husband to your Wife; Father to your Children; Master to your Servants; (this also holds for a Housewife), you must not begin this labour unadvisedly: which once done, can never be mended’.

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Houwelyschen Staet is advertised on the title-page as ‘Eerst in ’t Engels beschreven By een geleerdt Edelman’ [Originally written in English By a learned Nobleman]. Van der Boxe further qualifies the author of Houwelyschen Staet as ‘de geestichste ende oprechtste Commisaris ende Notaris in alle Houwelijcxse saecken’ [the most gifted and most upright Commissioner and Notary in all Marital affairs]. In his Epistle to the Reader, Van der Boxe states that he translated and published this work at the instigation of two Dutch divines, Festus Hommius and Ludovicus de Dieu. He does not mention the author of Houwelyschen Staet by name, but merely notes that he did not think it necessary to praise the author or his work too much; the discerning reader is bound to acknowledge that the work is necessary and useful for all able and efficient householders. Van der Boxe furthermore points out that he translated only a part of the entire work—again, without identifying the title, or the author, of the original.

By omitting any reference to the title and the author of the work which Van der Boxe used, Houwelyschen Staet has long remained one of the numerous anonymous works of the period. It is, however, a translation of chapters 45-52 of Book One of The French Academie, first published in England in 1586. The French Academie itself was not ‘Eerst in ’t Engels beschreven’, as Van der Boxe suggests, but an English translation of Pierre de la Primaudaye’s l’Académie Françoise. La Primaudaye’s l’Académie Fran-

3 Van der Boxe, recommending Houwelyschen Staet to the reader, notes that the work ‘voor desen behaelt heeft aen twee voorneme Gods-gelerde van onse Kerk en tijt; de Heeren Festus Hommius, en Ludovicus de Dieu, beyde zal: ghed: (door welcker aenraden wy dit werck begonnen hebben)’ [earlier [Houwelyschen Staet] pleased two prominent Dutch divines of our Church and age, the Revd. Festus Hommius, and the Revd. Ludovicus de Dieu, both of blessed memory (at whose recommendation we began this work)] [fos. (*5)r.-(*6)r.]. Festus Hommius (1576-1642) was preacher in Leyden from 1602 until the year of his death. Ludovicus de Dieu (1590-1642) was preacher in Leyden from 1619 until the year of his death.

4 ‘Vele te spreecken tot Loff van den Autheur, achte ik niet noodig; alsoo den Lezer selver, door zijn goed oordeel, anders niet sal kunnen erkennen, of dattet noodich ende dienstich is voor alle welgeregelde Huyshouders’ [fos. (*5)r.&v.).

5 ‘onder alle de deelen van ’t geheele Werck, daer wy ons dit uyt genomen hebben, isser niet treffelijcker als dit van ’t Houwelijck, met den aenkleven van dien’ [of all the parts of the entire work, from which we have taken this, not one is more excellent than this concerning Marriage, with all that belongs to it] [fo. (*5)v].

6 The chapters are: 45. of Marriage; 46. of a House and Family, and of the kinds of Marriage: of certain ancients customs observed in Marriage; 47. of the particular dutie of a Husband towards his Wife; 48. of the dutie of a Wife towards her Husband; 49. of the dutie of the head of a Family in other parts of the house, namely in the Parentall, masterly, & possessory part; 50. of the dutie of children towards their parents: of the mutuell love that ought to bee amongst brethren: of the dutie of servants towards their masters; 51. of the education and instruction of children; 52. of the division of the ages of man, and of the offices & duties that are to be observed in them’. Van der Boxe also includes a ‘Toegift’ [Addition], and an ‘Onderscheydt van den Houwelijck staet ende het eensaeem leven’ [the Distinction between the Married state, and single life], not found in The French Academie.