



Pascal Lodi



The True Likeness of a True Patriot: Susanne Caron's Portrait of Pascal Paoli

• KEES VAN STRIEN AND LIEKE VAN DEINSEN •

In the late summer of 1769, soon after his defeat at the hands of French invaders, the famous Corsican patriot Pascal Paoli (1725-1807) visited Holland on his way to exile in London. Despite his recent setback, Paoli was welcomed as a hero and his brief stay in the Dutch Republic was recorded and celebrated by numerous Dutch journalists and poets. His visit also gave rise to a flourishing production of printed portraits. The popularity of these portraits was in line with a broader trend. Over the course of the eighteenth century, political figures such as Paoli increasingly gained reputations as public celebrities and their portraits became popular collectors' items.¹ Although over a hundred portraits bearing his name were produced during Paoli's lifetime, his visit to the Low Countries resulted in something unprecedented with regard to his visual imaging. His likeness painted from life by the French-born pastellist Susanne Caron (c. 1734-c. 1777) (fig. 1)² and engraved by the renowned Jacobus Houbraken (1698-1770) (fig. 2) was an eye-opener for the public. It showed the general in a way unlike any previous portrait and confronted people with a very different Paoli from the man who until then had been portrayed by artists who had never seen him. Thanks to newspaper reports we know details about the sitting, and a

< Fig. 1
SUSANNE CARON,
*Portrait of
Pascal Paoli*, 1769.
Pastel,
300 x 246 mm.
Bastia, Collection
Mattei, fonds corse
bibliothèque
Tommaso Prelà.

recently discovered letter Caron sent to Pieter Burman Burman (1713-1778) (fig. 3), the most vocal of Paoli's Dutch supporters, offers unique insights into the creation of this portrait and the search for a fitting caption (appendix).

Pascal Paoli's Reputation in the Dutch Republic

In 1755, after more than four centuries of rule by Genoa, Corsican patriots founded their own constitutional republic and 'democratically' elected Paoli as their political and military leader. Such an election was unheard of at a time when most countries in Europe were ruled by crowned heads or hereditary oligarchies.³ In the subsequent struggle for his country's independence, Paoli acquired the status of a hero throughout enlightened Europe, especially after the publication of James Boswell's *Account of Corsica: The Journal of a Tour to That Island and Memoirs of Pascal Paoli*. First printed in February 1768, it sold over seven thousand copies before the end of the year.⁴ When the Genoese finally transferred their sovereignty over Corsica to France in May 1768, Paoli was faced with a much more powerful opponent.

In Holland the conflict was closely followed by periodicals and newspapers, both the Dutch *couranten* and the French *gazettes* published in Amsterdam, The Hague, Leiden and Utrecht.



Fig. 2
 JACOB HOUBRAKEN
 after HENDRIK
 POTHOVEN, *Self-
 Portrait*, 1769-70.
 Engraving,
 198 x 146 mm.
 Amsterdam,
 Rijksmuseum, inv. no.
 RP-P-OB-48.647.

Their reports were often tinged with a pronounced sympathy for the Corsians and their leader.⁵ Paoli also became the subject of several poems, setting him alongside Dutch patriots from the past. In January 1769, for example, Maria Geertruida de Cambon-van der Werken (1734-after 1796) published a 450-line poem in which she compared Paoli to William of Orange, the Dutch national hero, who, two centuries previously, had been hailed as a state martyr in his attempts to deliver the

Dutch from the Spanish yoke.⁶ Paoli's struggle for freedom thus became part of a lively political debate in which both the supporters of the stadholder and his opponents rallied behind well-known historical patriots in order to support their views on how the country should be ruled.⁷

The crushing defeat Paoli's army suffered on 8-9 May 1769 prompted Pieter Burman the Younger, professor of eloquence, (Latin) poetry and national history in Amsterdam, to publish

an elegy. Soon afterwards, his poem was translated by a member of the Leiden literary society *Kunst Wordt Door Arbeid Verkreegen* (Art is Attained Through Labour) and printed under the title *Op de haetlijke overwinning der Franschen op Pascal Paoli* (On the Hateful Victory of the French over Pascal Paoli).⁸ Burman saw clear parallels between Paoli and Johan van Oldenbarnevelt (1547-1619) and Johan de Witt (1625-1672), the two Dutch grand pensionaries who had fallen victim to the antipathy of the then stadholders. At his country house, Santhorst, halfway between Leiden and The Hague, Burman regularly brought together other 'true patriots', many of them aristocrats ideologically opposed to the highest office in a republic's being in the hands of a prince with near royal prerogatives.⁹ Burman's poem about Paoli's sad fate could therefore also be read as a comment on the political state of affairs in Holland.

Paoli's forced departure from his island generated similar responses in the Dutch Republic. On 13 June 1769 he boarded an English frigate that carried him to Livorno, after which he and his small retinue travelled overland to London to ask France's traditional enemy for support. The *Middelburgse Courant* called him 'the celebrated champion, who almost succeeded in giving the heroic Corsican nation its liberty, which has now been smashed to the ground by French usurpation and superior force'.¹⁰ On 15 July the *Opregte Haerlemsche Courant* printed his farewell speech to the remainder of his followers, in which he blamed the Corsican clan leaders, who had accepted French bribes and laid down their arms. He and his partisans now had the choice between slavery and glorious death. These stirring words inspired at least five more Dutch poets to sing Paoli's praises, among them Cornelis van Hoogeveen the Younger (1741-1792), publisher of both Cambon's and Burman's verses and president of *Kunst Wordt Door Arbeid*

Verkreegen.¹¹ During the meetings of this society and in its publications, Paoli was celebrated as a hero and held up as an example for the Dutch.¹² Hoogeveen also published an undated engraving by Paulus Constantijn La Fargue (1729-1782), a member of his literary society, showing Paoli trampling the Genoese flag (fig. 4).¹³ He celebrated the occasion with a sixteen-line poem he never published.¹⁴

Paoli was given an enthusiastic welcome on his arrival in the Dutch Republic. On 24 August he travelled from Nijmegen to Utrecht, where amid great public interest he was given a guided tour. The next day Paoli went to the stadholder's summer residence in Gelderland, where during a grand dinner he sat at the right hand of

Fig. 3
JACOB HOUBRAKEN
after JAN MAURITS
QUINKHARD,
*Portrait of Pieter
Burman, 1759.*
Etching and
engraving,
266 x 184 mm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum, inv. no.
RP-P-OB-48.872.





Fig. 4
PAULUS
CONSTANTIJN
LA FARGUE,
*Pascal Paoli,
Opperbevelhebber
der Corsen*, 1769.
Etching,
226 x 182 mm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum, inv. no.
RP-P-OB-46.860.

William v (1748-1806), a cousin of the king of Great Britain.¹⁵ On 26 August he admired the long succession of country houses and gardens on the banks of the River Vecht, arriving in Amsterdam at seven o'clock. Here he visited the principal tourist attractions, among them Gerrit Braamkamp's celebrated collection of paintings.¹⁶ He also had a long conversation with Pieter Burman.¹⁷ His hotel *The Star* in the Nes was besieged by admirers from early in the morning till late at night. According to the *Amsterdamse Courant* they saw not a general, but an amiable gentleman, without glamour

and grandeur, 'who only distinguished himself by the heroic fire that radiated from his eyes'.¹⁸ However, according to friends of Belle de Zuylen (1740-1805) who had spoken to him in Utrecht, there was nothing particularly striking about his appearance, his features or his conversation. A French tourist who accompanied him on his tour of the principal collections of fine arts in Amsterdam found that none of Paoli's portraits looked like him.¹⁹

Soon afterwards, Van Hoogeveen advertised one more poem, which he had probably written himself: *Welkomst-groet aen Pascal Paoli, groot voorstan-*

der der Corsische vrijheid, bij zijne aenkomste in Holland (Welcome to Pascal Paoli, Great Champion of Corsican Liberty, upon his Arrival in Holland).²⁰ Another poem was published under the telling pseudonym Phileleutherus (Friend of Liberty).²¹ On Tuesday 5 September, Paoli set out for The Hague. At six o'clock he arrived at Santhorst, where he was Burman's guest of honour at a dinner.²² Van Hoogveen, who had been present along with four other members of Kunst Wordt Door Arbeid Verkreegen,²³ produced yet another poem (604 lines), and distributed it among the members of his masonic lodge, La Vertu in Leiden (fig. 5).²⁴

Fig. 5
[CORNELIS
VAN HOOGEVEEN
THE YOUNGER],
*De Ridderhofstad
Santhorst verheerlijkt,
door het ontvangen
van den grootsten
held dezer eeuw*
Pascal Paoli ..., 1769.
Leiden, Erfgoed
Leiden en Omstreken,
archive no. LB 89925.

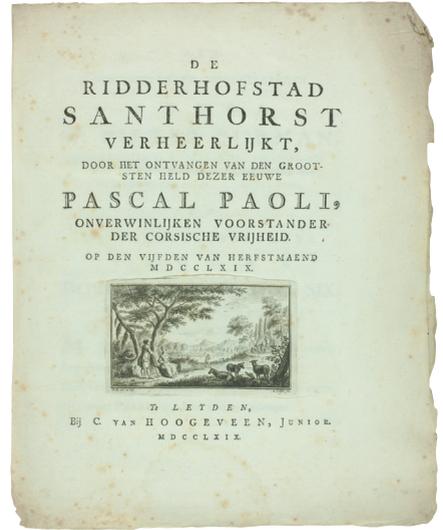


Fig. 6
CHRISTIAN FRIEDRICH
FRITZSCH,
*Pascal Paoli. Generaal
der Corsen*, 1769.
Etching and
engraving,
144 x 94 mm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum, inv. no.
RP-P-1906-2191.



In The Hague Paoli was fêted by the members of the L'Indissoluble Lodge.²⁵

An 'eyewitness account' of his programme in Amsterdam appeared at the end of September. *Amsteldam opgetogen over de komst en 't verblyf van den Corsicaanschen held Pascal Paoli voor eenige dagen binnen haare muuren* (Amsterdam Delighted by the Arrival and Several Days' Residence within its Walls of the Corsican Hero) was available with or without 'a speaking likeness of the general' by the Amsterdam-based engraver Christian Friedrich Fritzsich (1719-1774) and published by Gerrit Bom (fig. 6).²⁶



Fig. 7
 ANONYMOUS,
 Portrait of Paoli, 1768.
 Etching (and
 engraving?),
 124 x 77 mm, from
*Nederlandsche Post-
 Ryder*, June 1768,
 facing p. 616.
 Leiden, University
 Library, 301 G II.

In an octagon and against the background of his camp, the general is portrayed from the waist up, in uniform and wearing a tricorne. The pedestal below the image includes the profile of a moor's head, a reference to the Corsican flag. Whether the portrait resembled Paoli, however, was a matter of opinion,

particularly after so many people had seen him. One of the editors of *Nieuwe Vaderlandsche Letteroefeningen* ironically commented that other eyewitnesses would not agree.²⁷

At that time, many of the engravings sold as portraits of Paoli were largely the product of the imagination of the



artists involved or produced after existing prints. The picture in the *Nederlandsche Post-Ryder* of June 1768 (fig. 7), for example,²⁸ was based on an engraving in *The Gentleman's Magazine*.²⁹ In October 1768 the Amsterdam bookseller Samuel Cruys sold a 'portrait' by Hendrik Kobell the Younger (1751-1779)

(fig. 8), who had largely followed a creative German artist.³⁰ By contrast John Lodge's frontispiece to the third edition of James Boswell's *Account of Corsica*, which came out in May 1769, was based on a full-length portrait (seven feet by five feet), made in 1768 in Corsica at Boswell's request by

Fig. 8
HENDRIK KOBELL
THE YOUNGER,
*Pasqual Paoli. Hoofd
der Corsen*, 1768.
Etching, 207 x 156 mm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum, inv. no.
RP-P-OB-47.584.



Henry Benbridge (1743-1812) (fig. 9). This young American artist had been praised for the way he had rendered Paoli's face.³¹ Also based on Benbridge was a mezzotint by Richard Houston, announced in July 1769 by the Amsterdam bookseller Adriaan Hupkes as 'a fine and authentic portrait' (fig. 10).³²

From 18 September onwards, the Amsterdam publisher Martinus de Bruyn advertised *Bericht van Corsica*. This Dutch translation of Boswell's *Account of Corsica* was available for twenty-six *stuivers* and featured a frontispiece with Paoli's portrait by the 'celebrated engraver' Reinier Vinkeles (1714-1816) (fig. 11). Individual portraits were to be had from Hupkes for eight *stuivers*.³³ This portrait is a good example of the cut-and-paste technique that many early modern professional printmakers used. Vinkeles copied elements directly

from the portraits made by Lodge and Houston, so his image is the reverse of these models. Lodge provided Vinkeles with Paoli's face, including the voluminous double chin, and thanks to Houston he enhanced Paoli's military status by adopting the more prominent military coat and breastplate. Instead of the shield, olive branch and liberty cap, which in Lodge's frontispiece crown the portrait proper, Vinkeles put in the more explicit moor's head. Under the portrait and the name *PASCAL PAOLI*, anonymous verses sing his praises:

The Dutch heart that naturally treasures liberty
 Also wishes to acclaim, O Corsica, your hero,
 Who bravely went to war for your preservation;
 Who in his fall could reap more glory
 Than France did by its hateful victory,
 And sees his name consecrated to immortality.
 MDCCCLXIX.

'Hateful victory', of course, was a reference to Pieter Burman's elegy on the French conquest of Corsica. This poem again exemplifies the extent to which the selfless Paoli served as a model for patriotic Dutch citizens. This process of political appropriation proved to be

the driving force behind his popularity in the Dutch Republic. Not everyone, however, was equally eager to frame the general in this national patriotic narrative, as can be illustrated by the search for a fitting caption to accompany the engraving of the portrait Caron painted of Paoli.

<< Fig. 9

JOHN LODGE,
Pascal Paoli.
General of the
Corsicans, 1769.
Etching and
engraving,
181 x 110 mm.
Deventer,
Athenaeum-
bibliotheek, 17 H 30.



< Fig. 10

RICHARD HOUSTON,
Pasqual Paoli, 1769.
Mezzotint and
etching, 502 x 352 mm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum, inv. no.
RP-P-OB-32.053.

Fig. 11

REINIER VINKELES,
Pascal Paoli, 1769.
Etching and
engraving,
170 x 107 mm.
Amsterdam, Rijks-
museum, inv. no.
RP-P-OB-62.815.

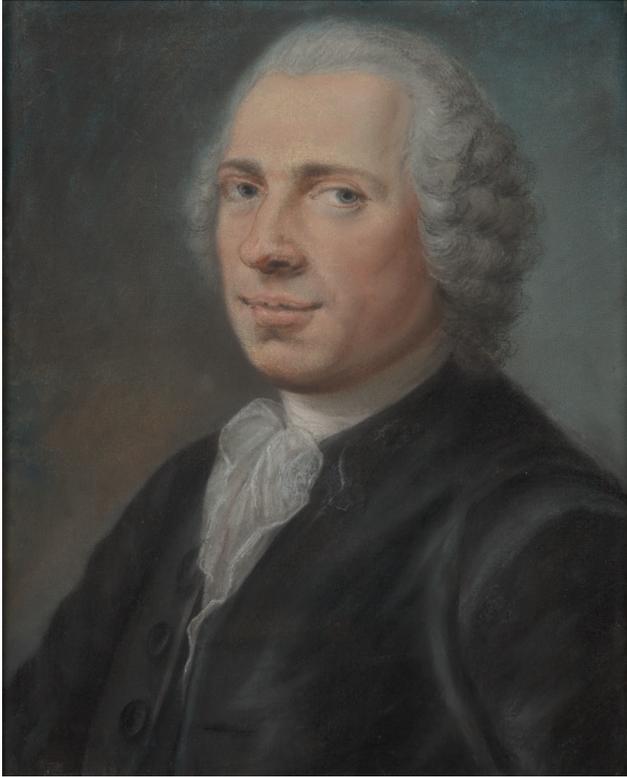


Fig. 12

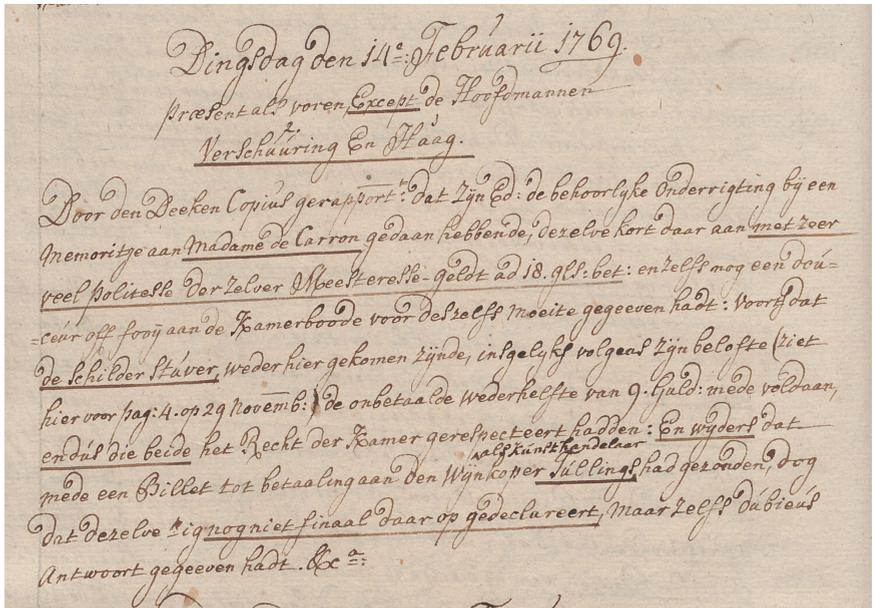
SUSANNE CARON,
Portrait of
David Henry
Gallandat, 1759.
Pastel,
550 x 448 mm
(frame).
Middelburg,
Zeeuws Museum,
kzgw Collection,
inv. no. G1599.
Photo: Jan Torfs

Susanne Caron's Portrait of Paoli

At a time when multiple portraits of the general were already circulating in the Republic, yet another and entirely new portrait of Paoli saw the light in Amsterdam. The artist was the Paris-born Antoinette-Susanne Caron, according to a French ladies' journal a talented pastellist, who on 22 March 1759 had painted a portrait of David Henry Gallandat (1732-1782), a medical student from Flushing, who lodged with the Caron family on the Quai de l'Horloge (fig. 12).³⁴ In the spring of 1768, she decided to try her luck in the Dutch Republic, where initially she stayed with friends in Flushing. At the end of that year she moved to The Hague, where on 14 February 1769 she became a member of the *confrérie Pictura*, the local academy of painters (fig. 13).³⁵ A scant seven months later, she made a name for herself when she managed to persuade Paoli to sit for her.³⁶

Fig. 13

Registration of
Susanne Caron as
a member of the
confrérie Pictura.
The Hague,
Municipal Archives,
164-01, inv. no. 4,
fol. 10v.



She approached him in a letter dated 1 September 1769, copies of which circulated in manuscript before it appeared in the *Leydse Courant* (fig. 14). She began by referring to Paoli's fame and the public's desire to learn what he really looked like. As a member of the weaker sex, she initially lacked the courage to address herself to the great man, but after she had seen him, his bravery proved infectious. She hoped he would allow her 'to make her brush immortal by passing on to posterity the features of a hero, who in spite of being a citizen of the world, has been led by his love of freedom to take up arms against the best of all kings'. His complaisance would of course not deny such a favour to a woman.³⁷

On 3 October the *Middelburgse Courant* printed some details of the sitting, allegedly taken from a Leipzig newspaper. In fact, the story had already appeared on 21 and 22 September in the *Whitehall Evening Post* and in the *Münchener Zeitung* and probably in other newspapers as well. An anonymous traveller who had observed Mlle Caron at work in Paoli's hotel states that it had not been easy for her, being French, to keep the general in good humour. When she had finished Paoli's face, she requested the traveller to ask Paoli in what costume he wished to be represented. Paoli turned to Mlle Caron and answered: 'Your nation has stripped me to the skin, which is why you may dress me as you will'.³⁸ As Caron's original sketch shows (see fig. 1), she opted for the costume he was wearing then. In so doing, she pictured him in a completely novel manner: an ordinary man in his forties, wearing a small wig and civilian clothes. Neither a general nor a hero. It was an image that the numerous people who had seen him would recognize. The newspaper concluded that this portrait was possibly the only one that perfectly captured his likeness.

These reports may well have been part of a publicity campaign that started

AMSTERDAM den 7 October. Den eersten September laaftleeden, toen de Corfische Generaal *Pascal Paoli* zig in deze Stad bevond, schreef de beroemde Franfse Schilderfse *S. Caron* aan denzelven een Brief, waar in zy volgens de Franfse *Coppen*, die men daar van ziet, zig aldus uitdrukte:

Gantsch Europa kend de Grootheid van Uwe Ziel: Zoo treffelyk hebben Uwe Daaden dezelve in alle Harten gefchilderd; maar de Trekken van die Schildery, welke de geheele Waereld begeert te kennen, kunnen door de Faam niet dan onvolmaakt getoond worden: Ik ben Vrouw en Schilderfse, Myn Heer: De Zwakheid myner Sexe zouw my genoezaam wanhoopig maaken, als niet het aanschouwen van een groot Man noodwendiglyk Geest en Bekwaamheid inboezemde: Sraa my dan toe, Myn Heer, dat ik myn Pinfel onsterfelyk maake door aan de Nakomelingfchap over te laeveren de Trekken van een Held, die een Burger van de geheele Waereld zynde in weertwil van zyn eien zelve door de Liefde, voor de Vryheid tegen den alierbesten der Koningen in de Wapenen gebragt is: Deze Infchikkelykheid voor een Vrouwspieroon is buiten twyffel eene der Hoedaanigheeden van Uw Hart: Waarom zouw ik zwaargheid maaken, Myn Heer, om U.E. dit openhartig te betuigen? Een Uur van Uwe tegenwoordigheid kan voor altoos myne Reputatie maaken: Ik durf zeggen, dat ik verzekerd ben van een gewenschten Uitflag: Alle Helden zyn elkander gelyk; en ik bespeur dat ik verders niets van noden heb als U van naby te zien: Weiger dan deze Gunft niet aan die Persoon van de Waereld, dewelke met de diepte Eerbied en Agting is enz. S. CARON.

on 8 September with anonymous advertisements in the newspapers, among them the principal French gazettes, which were read throughout Europe. The public was advised that on 4 September Paoli had been portrayed by Mlle S. Caron, 'a talented portraitist, well-known both in France and Holland', who, unlike anyone before her, had succeeded in representing Paoli to the life. Paoli himself had been struck by the likeness. Mlle Caron had already received commissions for copies and intended to have the portrait engraved as soon as possible.³⁹ The advertisements also warned readers not to purchase engravings that would shortly be available in Amsterdam: they were based on a portrait in London which did not look like Paoli at all (fig. 15).⁴⁰ This, of course, was a thinly veiled attack on the forthcoming engraving by Reinier Vinkeles for Boswell's *Bericht van Corsica* (fig. 11), which, as we have seen, was largely based on Paoli's face in the portrait by Henry Benbridge. Be that as it may, Vinkeles' publishers Martinus de Bruyn and Hupkes answered the charge by inserting in

Fig. 14
Letter from
Susanne Caron
to Pascal Paoli,
Leydse Courant,
9 October 1769.
Leiden, Erfgoed
Leiden en Omstreken.

La Demoiselle S. CARON, si avantageusement connue en France & en Hollande par son talent pour le Portrait, eut l'honneur de peindre le 4. de ce mois Mr. PASCAL PAOLI. Ce General des Corfes, dont aucun Peintre n'avoit encore pu rendre les traits, a été frappé lui-même de la parfaite ressemblance, de l'expression & de la vérité que la Demoiselle Caron a sçu donner à sa tête. Cette Artiste se propose de servir la curiosité & l'empressement qu'excite encore tous les jours Mr. Paoli, en faisant graver sur le champ ce beau Tableau, dont plusieurs Particuliers ont déjà prie la Demoiselle Caron de leur faire des Copies. Comme on a envoyé de Londres à Amsterdam un Portrait de ce Général, qui ne lui ressemble en aucune manière, qui n'est qu'une Copie faite à la hâte, que l'on grave actuellement, & qui doit être exposé au Public dans quelques jours avec les Estampes; il est bon d'en avertir les Amateurs, qui aimeront sans doute mieux attendre la gravure du Portrait, si beureusement executé à Amsterdam d'après nature.

Avec PRIVILEGE de Nos Seigneurs les Etats de Hollande, & de West-Prise,
A LEIDE, par ETIENNE LUZAC.

Fig. 15
Publicity for Susanne Caron's projected engraving of Pascal Paoli's portrait, *Gazette de Leyde*, 12 September 1769.

their subsequent advertisements after the standard qualification 'welgelykend': 'As to the likeness, all those who have seen that hero will be able to judge'.⁴¹ Meanwhile Jacobus Houbraken announced that he had started to transfer Caron's pastel on to a copper plate. As an experienced craftsman, he promised its size would be such that it would fit in perfectly with other works in a connoisseur's cabinet. Subscriptions were available at two and a half guilders (fifty *stuivers*) from Evert van Harrevelt, bookseller in Amsterdam. After publication the price would be three guilders and ten cents. Subscribers were also entitled to good proofs: at that time sought-after collectors' items.⁴²

Naturally Houbraken's engraving would not be complete without a poem in praise of Paoli. Pieter Burman, not wishing to miss an opportunity to add to Paoli's glory, while adding to his own, composed a poem in Latin and sent it to Caron:

Not bowed down by fate, Paoli is here represented to the life in an exquisite engraving.

His heroic face radiates with courage and concern for Corsica's liberty. Conscience-stricken tyranny shudders at the sight of this portrait.

It should be ashamed to have won trophies against such a great man.

May the Dutch nation, amazed by so much patriotism, take this as a model.⁴³

She returned these verses with a long letter (appendix), acknowledging that Burman's fine Latin poem would almost certainly boost demand for the print.⁴⁴ However, she had a problem with one of his lines:

I had your poem explained to me word by word. You write: 'Conscience-stricken tyranny shudders at the sight of this portrait. It should be ashamed to have won trophies against such a great man'. But Sir, it is I who should shudder when I consider that these verses appear under an engraving signed Caron. Is it possible, Sir, that you propose to a Frenchwoman to make it known through the printing press that her King is a tyrant? ... I was born one of his subjects, Sir, and ... it thus would be the height of frenzy, hypocrisy, ludicrousness and madness, for an insignificant private individual such as myself, to employ these terms with regard to the greatest monarch in Europe.

After paying Burman a somewhat stilted compliment on his poetic talents, she continued:

You know, Sir, that I am going to be married to a Frenchman (fig. 16). What would he think of me? What would his father in France think ... if he finds out that my dowry consists of hatred for the King and my nation. Do you really wish, Sir, that I condemn myself ... to a permanent exile from my country?

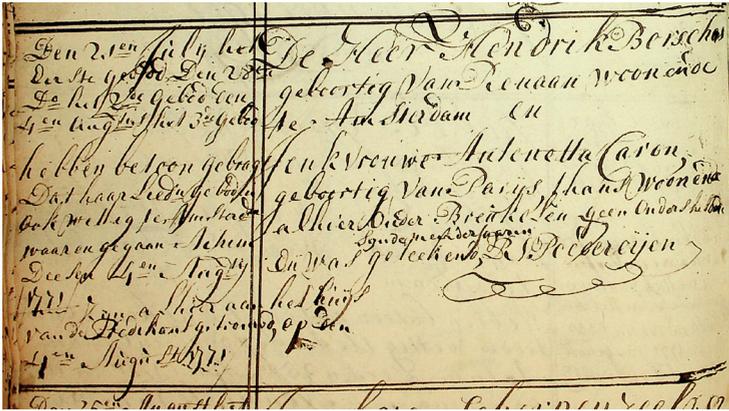


Fig. 16
Record of Susanne Caron's marriage to Henry Borchers. Breukelen, Regionaal Historisch Centrum Vecht en Venen, 1200, inv. no. 451, scan 162.

In what follows, she openly acknowledged that her decision to reject Burman's verses was also partly due to her own vanity:

Fortune has provided me with a unique opportunity to acquaint the public with my humble talents. My portrait of Paoli has been praised. The engraving is going to be something special. A great artist is working on it and I am happy to say that the verses under the portrait are going to be in French. Good or bad, but in any case my own. You are famous; eight verses more or less will not make a difference.

In admiration of Paoli, she concluded:

I wish to avail myself of the opportunity to thank Mr Paoli publicly for his atten-

tions, but it seems to me that my laudatory verses on that warrior should be pure, without bile, without bitterness and without partisanship. In short, worthy of his great soul. I know that this requires your talents and my convictions, but I also know that when the heart speaks, the ear will listen with indulgence (fig. 17).

Having scraped a precarious living in Paris and The Hague, Susanne Caron had finally made a breakthrough as an artist. She was not prepared to make a return to France impossible by allowing politics to interfere with her art. Having summoned up all her courage in approaching Paoli, she was not going to dance to the tune of an Amsterdam professor. Instead, she preferred to stick to her own verses, which were unlikely to cause offence in France.

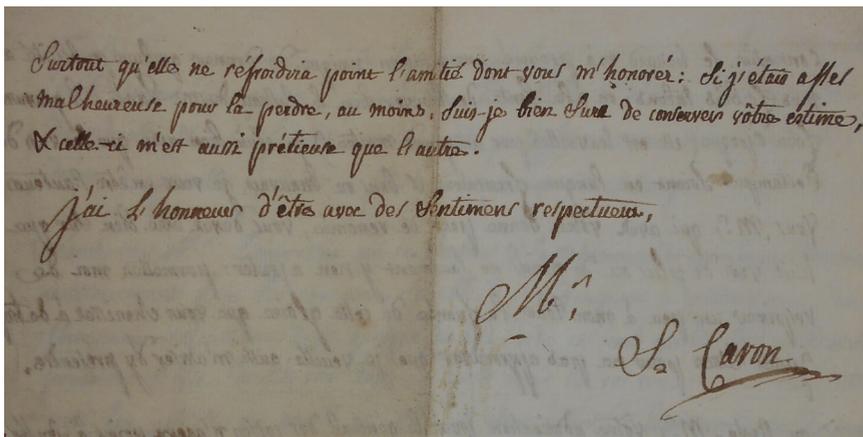


Fig. 17
Signature of Susanne Caron under her letter to Pieter Burman. The Hague, National Archives of the Netherlands, inv. no. 2.21.098, box 43.

Fig. 18

JACOBUS
HOUBRAKEN,
Pasqual de Paoli,
Général des
Corses, 1769.
Etching and
engraving,
349 x 248 mm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum, inv. no.
RP-P-OB-48.413.



Publication of Houbraken's Engravings

The engraving (in *quarto*) was published in November 1769 (fig. 18).⁴⁵ It was not an exact replica of Caron's pastel. Possibly following instructions from Caron, the publisher or those involved in the advertising campaign, Houbraken portrayed 'Pasqual de Paoli, général des Corses', wearing a breastplate beneath a more

detailed version of the coat in the pastel. Under the portrait are Caron's verses, in which she presents Paoli, a 'democratic' leader and a courageous warrior, respected by his enemies:

Protector of our laws, virtuous citizen,
Intrepid soldier, generous enemy,
Respected by the French even after their victory.
Nothing is lacking to my glory.

S. CARON.⁴⁶

Fig. 19
 JACOBUS
 HOUBRAKEN,
 Portrait of
 Pascal Paoli, 1770.
 Engraving,
 166 x 104 mm.
 Amsterdam,
 Rijksmuseum, inv. no.
 RP-P-OB-48.414.



It is difficult not to interpret the final verse as applying equally to Caron herself: Paoli has entered the history books and, thanks to his portrait, her name too has become known throughout Europe.

In March 1770, a smaller version (in *octavo*) of the engraving was advertised by Martinus de Bruyn (twelve *stuivers*). He suggested it could be inserted in part two of Boswell's

Bericht van Corsica, which he had published in December 1769.⁴⁷ This time the portrait carried Burman's Latin verses, which would have ensured ready buyers, together with a Dutch translation by Hendrik de Bosch (fig. 19).⁴⁸ On 12 March De Bruyn promised Boswell that both he and Paoli would receive two copies of the portrait.⁴⁹ Opening his parcel, Paoli, whose age (forty-five) figures in the

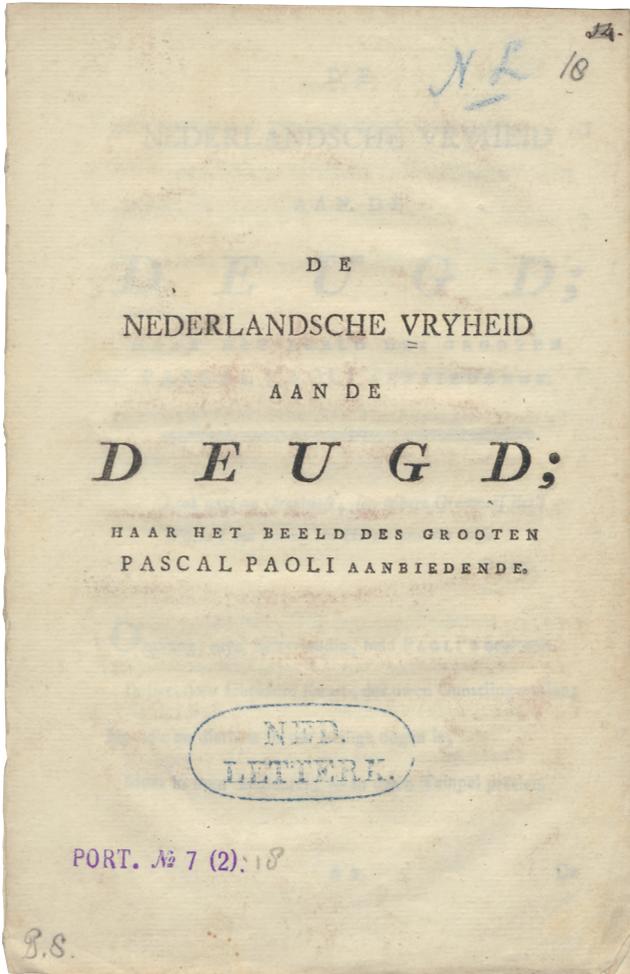
top corners of the engraving, may have felt flattered by the verses Caron had rejected. In line with the more general reception of Paoli in the Dutch Republic, Burman's verses portrayed Paoli as a true patriotic leader whose bravery in the face of unjust oppression not only inspired his own people, but also successfully appealed to like-minded communities elsewhere in Europe, such as the Batavians.

The portrait by Houbraken proved a success. Among those who purchased both formats was the Dutch novelist Elizabeth (Betje) Wolff (1738-1804), who had welcomed Paoli with a poem on his arrival in Holland.⁵⁰ Now she gave voice to her feelings of admira-

tion and pity in *De Nederlandsche Vryheid aan de Deugd; haar het beeld des grooten Pascal Paoli aanbiedende* (Dutch Liberty to Virtue, Presenting Her with the Image of the Great Pascal Paoli): 'Looking at this picture, my soul is moved by his fate. Such expressive eyes!' (fig. 20).⁵¹ However, when the poem came out in May 1770, her publisher advertised it simply as *De Nederlandsche Vryheid*. Paoli was no longer the hero he had been taken for only nine months earlier. It looked as if he was reluctantly languishing in permanent well-paid exile in London, where his British pension had been raised from eight hundred to a thousand pounds sterling per annum.⁵²

Paoli's fame in Holland was intense, if relatively short-lived. From the moment his army had been defeated by the French in May 1769, he had become a tragic patriot, who inspired poets and who reminded those longing for political reform of their own nation's struggle for liberty. During most of this period, however, people had been uncertain as to his appearance. It was only following the publication of Houbraken's engravings after Caron's pastel portrait, that those who had seen Paoli for themselves finally discovered a portrait that showed him as he really was.

Fig. 20
ELIZABETH
WOLFF-BEKKER,
*De Nederlandsche Vry-
heid aan de Deugd ...*,
Leiden, University
Library, PORTEF. 7:2:18.



APPENDIX

Letter from Susanne Caron to Pieter Burman,
probably September/October 1769⁵³

A Monsieur le professeur Burman

Monsieur,

J'ai l'honneur de vous renvoyer les deux copies des vers que vous avez eu la bonté de me faire tenir. S'ils étaient écrits dans une langue que j'entendisse, je les garderais sans doute, par la seule raison que vous les avez faits; mais comme ils sont exclusivement destinés à orner l'estampe de M. Paoli, et qu'il m'est impossible d'en faire usage, j'ai cru devoir vous les remettre. Il ne me siérait pas, Monsieur, d'avoir l'air de refuser quelque chose d'un homme comme vous, sans entreprendre de me justifier. Mes raisons seront assurément très fortes puisque je leur sacrifie la célébrité que vos vers ne manqueraient pas de donner à l'estampe. Veuillez donc perdre un instant à m'écouter et j'ose attendre de la droiture de votre cœur que vous approuverez vous-même ma conduite.

Je me suis fait expliquer vos vers mot à mot. Vous y dites : la tyrannie confuse frémit à l'aspect de cette image. Elle (la tyrannie) doit rougir d'avoir remporté des trophées sur un si grand homme.

C'est moi, Monsieur, qui dois frémir lorsque je me représente ces vers gravés au bas d'une estampe signée Caron. Est-il possible, Monsieur, que vous proposiez à un[e] Française de faire imprimer que son Roi est un tyran ? Car le mot de tyrannie ne peut pas se prendre ici en général. L'apostrophe est directe, puisque c'est cette même tyrannie qui doit rougir d'avoir remporté ces trophées. Je suis née sa sujette, Monsieur, et vous me mépriserez de me prêter à de pareils excès quand je ne serais pas Française. D'ailleurs ne sais-je pas [1v] que les Rois représentent l'Être Suprême, que les personnages même les plus considérables doivent les respecter ? Ce serait donc le comble de la démence, de l'imposture, du ridicule et de la frénésie qu'une petite particulière comme moi s'avisât de donner de pareilles épithètes au plus grand monarque de l'Europe.

Savez-vous, Monsieur, l'impression que la chaleur et la véhémence de vos ouvrages doivent nécessairement faire sur une âme sensible ? C'est d'inspirer le patriotisme. L'enthousiasme républicain dicte quelquefois à la poésie ces écarts que lui seul justifierait s'ils pouvaient l'être. Doutez-vous donc, qu'après avoir lu vos vers, on n'ait envie d'être aussi bon patriote que vous ? Oui, Monsieur, ils sont autant de leçons aux hommes d'aimer leur patrie avec autant de transport que vous aimez la vôtre. Vous voyez que je suis loin de vouloir apostropher la France et que c'est de vous que j'apprends à l'aimer.

Des raisons de convenance viennent encore à l'appui de celles que je trouve dans les sentiments de mon cœur. Vous savez, Monsieur, que je suis dans le cas d'épouser un Français. Que penserait-il de moi ? Que dirait son père, qui vit en France, qui est établi dans une de ses provinces, lorsqu'il apprendrait que j'apporte dans sa famille la haine du Roi et de ma nation ? Vous-même, Monsieur, voudriez-vous que par une complaisance déplacée, je me bannisse entièrement de ma patrie ? Qui sait si des affaires indispensables ne m'y appelleront pas au moment que j'y songerais le moins ? Et vous concevez qu'après une pareille démarche, je me garderais bien d'y mettre le pied.

Quand je n'aurais pas d'aussi puissants motifs de me refuser à ce que vous exigez, je vous avouerais, Monsieur, que ma petite vanité suffirait pour m'empêcher d'y [2r] consentir. Le hasard m'a procuré une occasion unique de donner quelque publicité à mes faibles talents. On a la bonté de trouver bien le portrait de M. Paoli ; la gravure fera époque (elle est travaillée par un grand maître). Je suis bien aise que les vers de l'estampe soient en langue française, et bons ou mauvais, je veux en être l'auteur. Vous, Monsieur, qui avez votre bonne part de renommée, vous devez être bien sûr que huit vers de plus ou de moins ne sauraient y rien ajouter. Permettez-moi de respirer un peu à mon tour la fumée de cette gloire que vous chérissez à de trop justes titres pour ne pas approuver que je veuille aussi m'aviser d'y prétendre.

Au reste, Monsieur, votre admiration pour le général des Corses n'aura point à souffrir. Je me mêle de partager vos sentiments à son égard et si je ne le loue pas avec autant d'éloquence que vous, je le louerai sûrement d'aussi bon cœur. Il ne serait trop l'être. On m'a appris en France à respecter, à aimer la vertu dans les plus grands ennemis de la nation et j'ose avancer que les Français prodigueraient les éloges les plus sincères, même aux vers que vous faites contre eux.

Encore une fois, Monsieur, je veux saisir l'occasion de remercier publiquement M. Paoli pour ses bontés pour moi ; mais il me semble que l'éloge de ce guerrier doit être pur, sans fiel, sans amertume, sans partialité, digne en un mot de sa grande âme. Je sais qu'il faudrait pour cela vos talents et mes intentions ; mais je sais aussi qu'on écoute avec indulgence lorsque c'est le cœur qui parle.

Je me flatte, Monsieur, que ma conduite n'a rien que vous puissiez désapprouver et j'espère [2v] surtout qu'elle ne refroidira point l'amitié dont vous m'honorez. Si j'étais assez malheureuse pour la perdre, au moins suis-je bien sûre de conserver votre estime, et celle-ci m'est aussi précieuse que l'autre.

J'ai l'honneur d'être avec des sentiments respectueux,

Monsieur,

S. Caron

ABSTRACT

When the famous Corsican patriot Pascal Paoli (1725-1807) visited the Dutch Republic in 1769 soon after his defeat at the hands of French invaders, he was given a hero's welcome. Several printed portraits depicting Paoli, a symbol of true patriotism, were circulated and eagerly seized upon by the Dutch public. Perhaps the most striking of these likenesses was painted by the little-known French-born pastellist Susanne Caron (c. 1734-c. 1777) and shortly afterwards engraved in copper by the renowned engraver Jacobus Houbraken (1698-1770). Newspapers throughout Europe claimed this portrait was Paoli's first 'true likeness'. This article presents a previously unknown letter by Caron to professor Pieter Burman (1713-1778), the ideologist of the Dutch 'patriotic' faction, which provides a fascinating glimpse into the genesis of this remarkable portrait.

NOTES

- 1 On the emergence of a celebrity cult in the eighteenth century, see Antoine Lilti, *Figures publiques. L'invention de la célébrité. 1750-1850*, Paris 2015, esp. chapter 6.
- 2 See Kees van Strien's forthcoming contribution 'De pastelliste Susanne Caron: wereldberoemd en snel vergeten', in *Jaarboek De Achttiende Eeuw*, 2021.
- 3 See Franco Venturi, *The End of the Old Regime in Europe, 1776-1789*, vol. 2, Princeton, NJ, 1991, pp. 497-98.
- 4 Frederick A. Pottle, *James Boswell: The Earlier Years, 1740-1769*, London 1966, p. 356.
- 5 See e.g. the digitized collection of historical newspapers in Delpher.
- 6 Maria Geertruida de Cambon-van der Werken, *De Vryheid, heldendicht* (Liberty, an Epic Poem), Leiden 1769.
- 7 For an account on the use of the past in the political debate in the eighteenth century, see e.g. Niek van Sas, *De metamorfose van Nederland. Van oude orde naar moderniteit 1750-1900*, Amsterdam 2004, esp. chapters 30 and 32.
- 8 Pieter Burman the Younger, *In victoriam Gallorum invisam de Pascalo Paulo ...*, Leiden 1769, see Venturi 1991 (note 3), pp. 505-09; advertisement *Opregte Haerlemsche Courant*, 4 and 8 July 1769; translation by Michael Jacobus van Staden, *praeceptor* at the Latin school in Leiden (*Het vijf- en twintigste verjaerfeest des tael- en dichtlievenden genootschaps ... Kunst wordt door Arbeid verkreegen*, Leiden 1791, unpagged); advertisement *Leydse Courant*, 5, 12 and 17 July 1769.
- 9 See Venturi 1991 (note 3), pp. 497-501; P.J. Buijnsters, *Wolff & Deken: een biografie*, Leiden 1984, pp. 93-97.
- 10 *Middelburgse Courant*, 2 September 1769: 'de alomme beroemde Verdediger der byna verkreegen, dog door de Usurpatie en overmagt der Fransche ter aarde gesmeetene Vryheid der Heldachtige Corsische Natie'.
- 11 *Ingenuis musis amicus* (Friend of the candid Muses), *Lofzang op den doorluchtigen held Pascal Paoli, by de verovering van het eiland Corsica door de Franschen* (Hymn to the Illustrious Hero Pascal Paoli at the Conquest of the Island of Corsica by the French), Amsterdam 1769; advertisement '*s-Gravenhaegse Courant*, 7 August 1769; anonymous, *Pascal Paoli aan zyne landsgenooten* (Pascal Paoli to his countrymen), *De Denker* 7 (28 August 1769), no. 348, pp. 273-80; Cynrophilus (Friend of Corsica), *Laatste redevoering van den generaal Paoli aan de getrouwe Corsen ...* (Last address of General Paoli to the Faithful Corsicans), Nijmegen 1769; R[oe]lof[us] Heenes, *Troostzang op 't verlies der Corsicaense Vryheid ...* (Song of Consolation on the loss of Corsica's Freedom), Amsterdam 1769; advertisement '*s-Gravenhaegse Courant*, 4 September 1769; Cornelis van Hoogeveen the Younger, *Pascal Paoli's afscheid, aen Corsica, bij zijn vertrek naer Livorno* (Paoli's farewell to Corsica on leaving for Livorno); advertisement *Opregte Haerlemsche Courant*, 18 and 22 July 1769.
- 12 On the interest in Paoli by Kunst Wordt Door Arbeid Verkreegen, see Marleen de Vries, *Beschaven! Letterkundige genootschappen in Nederland 1750-1800*, Nijmegen 2001, pp. 255-56.
- 13 This engraving was possibly advertised by Isaac Du Mee ('*s-Gravenhaegse Courant*, 21 July 1769): a fine portrait of Pascal Paoli, 'engraved after the painting by Rominti' (18 stuivers).
- 14 The Hague, National Library of the Netherlands, 129 G 5 (Van Hoogeveen, ms poems).
- 15 *Middelburgse Courant*, 2 September 1769.
- 16 *Opregte Haerlemsche Courant*, 29 August 1769; *Leydse Courant*, 30 August 1769.
- 17 *Münchener Zeitung*, 22 September 1769 (The Hague, 10 September 1769); Venturi

- 1991 (note 3), p. 503 (quoting the Florentine *Notizie del mondo*, 26 September 1769).
- 18 *Amsterdamse Courant*, 31 August 1769: 'Het Heldenvuur dat hem ten Oogen uitstraalt, en de Minzaamheid die hem natuurlyk eigen is, doen hem genoegzaam kennen'.
- 19 Isabelle de Charrière/Belle de Zuylen, *Oeuvres complètes*, Amsterdam 1979-84, vol. 2, p. 150 (18 September 1769); Philippe Marchand, 'Un père et ses enfants au XVIII^e siècle. Lettres, 1768-1787, de Jean-Baptiste Carpentier (1731-1788)', *Lias* 23 (1996), no. 1, p. 130.
- 20 Signed H.; advertisement *Leydse Courant*, 30 August 1769.
- 21 Phileleutherus, *Pascal Paoli*, Leiden 1769.
- 22 *Leydse Courant*, 8 September 1769.
- 23 *Het vijf- en twintigste verjaerfeest ...* (note 8).
- 24 *De Ridderhofstad Santhorst verheerlijkt, door het ontvangen van den grootsten held dezer eeuw Pascal Paoli ...* (The Manorial House of Santhorst Glorified for Welcoming Pascal Paoli, the Greatest Hero of this Century); The Hague, National Library of the Netherlands, microfiches: Luchtman's archief, boekverkopers, 1765-69, fol. 195, 9 October: '4 *Santhorst verheerlijkt*, 4^o à 9 *stuivers*'; André Hanou, 'De loge Parterre', in Anton van de Sande and Joost Rosendaal (eds.), 'Een stille leerschool van deugd en goede zeden'. *Vrijmetselarij in Nederland in de 18de en 19de eeuw*, Hilversum 1995, p. 51.
- 25 *Mercure historique et politique* (September 1769), vol. 167, pp. 370-72.
- 26 *Amsterdam opgetogen over de komst en 't verblyf van den Corsicaanschen held Pascal Paoli voor eenige dagen binnen haare muuren*, Amsterdam 1769, p. 19; advertisements 's-Gravenhaegse *Courant*, *Leydse Courant*, 25 September 1769 (4 or 7 *stuivers*); see Clarysse Binet (ed.), *Pasquale de Paoli (1725-1807): la Corse au cœur de l'Europe des Lumières*, Corte (Musée de la Corse) 2007, p. 301.
- 27 *Nieuwe Vaderlandsche Letteroefeningen* (December 1769), no. 10, p. 477.
- 28 *Nederlandsche Post-Ryder* 13 (June 1768), facing p. 616.
- 29 *The Gentleman's Magazine* 38 (April 1768), between pp. 172-73; Binet 2007 (note 26), p. 296.
- 30 Advertisement *Amsterdamse Courant*, 6 October 1768 (5 *stuivers*); Binet 2007 (note 26), pp. 295-96.
- 31 On this portrait, see Francis Beretti, *Pascal Paoli et l'image de la Corse au dix-huitième siècle. Le témoignage des voyageurs britanniques*, Oxford 1988, pp. 98-103; Binet 2007 (note 26), p. 313.
- 32 Advertisements *Amsterdamse Courant*, 29 July 1769; *Leydse Courant*, 31 July 1769: 'Een fraai en autenticq PORTRAIT'; Binet 2007 (note 26), pp. 314-15.
- 33 De Bruyn's first announcement (*Opregte Haerlemsche Courant*, 6 June 1769) does not mention Vinkeles. De Bruyn: 's-Gravenhaegse *Courant*, 18, 22 and 25 September 1769; Hupkes: 's-Gravenhaegse *Courant*, 25 September 1769; Binet 2007 (note 26), pp. 311-13.
- 34 *Journal des dames* 3 (November 1761), part 2, p. 191.
- 35 Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of Pastellists Before 1800*, <http://www.pastellists.com/Articles/Caron.pdf>; four letters (1765-1768) by Susanne to David Henry Gallandat in a private collection.
- 36 We have found no evidence for the claim (Binet 2007 (note 26), p. 308) that the masonic lodge L'Indissoluble commissioned Caron to portray Paoli.
- 37 *Leydse Courant*, 9 October 1769: 'Staa my dan toe, Myn Heer, dat ik myn Pinseel onsterfelyk maake door aan de Nakomelingschap over te leveren de Trekken van een Held, die een Burger van de geheele Waereld zynde in weerwil van zyn eigen zelve door de Liefde voor de Vryheid tegen den allerbesten der Koningen in de Wapenen gebracht is'.
- 38 *Middelburgse Courant*, 3 October 1769: 'Uwe natie heeft mij naakt uitgeschud; daarom kunt gij mij kleden zodanig als gij wilt'.
- 39 For one of these copies, see *Catalogus van een fraay cabinet schilderyen, tekeningen en prenten ... Alle het welke op Maandag den 20 January 1772 ... zal Verkogt worden ... door ... Hendrik de Winter en Jan Yver*, Amsterdam 1772, no. 144: 'Het portret van de Corsische generaal Paoli, levensgroot, zijnde een borststuk, krachtig op doek geschilderd. Hoog 21½, breed 171/3 duim' (55.3 x 44.6 cm). Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum Research Library, VEIL-17720120.
- 40 *Gazette d'Amsterdam*, 8 September 1769; *Amsterdamse Courant* and *Opregte Haerlemsche Courant*, 9 and 12 September 1769; *Gazette d'Utrecht, Utrechtse Courant* and 's-Gravenhaegse *Courant*, 11 September 1769; *Gazette de Leyde*, 12 September 1769: 'La demoiselle S. Caron, si avantageusement connue en France et en Hollande par son talent pour le portrait'; *Leydse Courant*, 13 September 1769.
- 41 For the advertisement, see note 32: 'Over de gelijkenis kunnen allen die die held gezien hebben oordelen'.

- 42 Advertisements *Opregte Haerlemsche Courant*, 16 September 1769, and *Gazette d'Amsterdam*, 10 October 1769.
- 43 This poem and its translation into Dutch appeared in March 1770 under the *octavo* version of Houbraken's print.
- 44 See Appendix for the original letter.
- 45 Advertisement Van Harrevelt, '*s-Gravenhaegse Courant*, 24 and 29 November 1769; good proofs: *Opregte Haerlemsche Courant*, 6 January 1770. We have been unable to find out when Rienk Jelgerhuis (1729-1806) published his mezzotint version of this engraving (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. RP-P-1908-312).
- 46 Binet 2007 (note 26), pp. 308-10.
- 47 Advertisement *Amsterdamse Courant*, 1 March 1770 and *Opregte Haerlemsche Courant*, 19 and 26 December 1769.
- 48 Published in the second edition of *In viciniam Gallorum ...* (note 8); advertisement *Leydse Courant*, 25 December 1769; Binet 2007 (note 26), pp. 310-11.
- 49 Binet 2007 (note 26), p. 310.
- 50 *Atlas der Vaderlandsche Historie ... By een verzameld door Mejuffrouwen Elisabeth Wolf ... en Agatha Deken ...*, Amsterdam [1789], pp. 35 (no. 796) and 49 (no. 361); *De Nederlandsche vrijheid aan der Corsen generaal Pascal Paoli* (Dutch Liberty to Pascal Paoli, General of the Corsicans), Leiden/Hoorn 1769; advertisement *Opregte Haerlemsche Courant*, 14 and 17 October 1769.
- 51 Elizabeth Wolff, *De Nederlandsche Vryheid aan de Deugd; haar het beeld des grooten Pascal Paoli aanbiedende*, Hoorn 1770; advertisement *Opregte Haerlemsche Courant*, 12, 17 and 24 May 1770. 'Ik voel myn ziel, ontroerd! Wat doet zyn lot my aan!// Daar ik dit Beeld aanschouw! Wat zyn dat spreekende oogen!'
- 52 *Middelburgse Courant*, 31 May 1770.
- 53 The Hague, National Archives of the Netherlands, 2.21.098, J.M. Kemper Collection (Cras), inv. no. 43 (autograph). Spelling modernised; abbreviations filled in.