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## Swannekens Ende Wilden: Linguistic Attitudes and Communication Strategies among the Dutch and Indians in New Netherland

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Hare tale, die het eerste is by hun te besigen,  
dunckt my gansch vreemdb. Vele onder ons ge-  
meyne volck heten se gemeynlijck een lichte tale,  
die haest geleert is. Ick teen van een andere  
opinie.<sup>1</sup> Jonas Michaelius, 1628.

### 1. New Netherland Dutch and Cape Dutch

After a long period of relative neglect, many aspects of the Dutch colonial presence in North America have in the past several years finally received serious consideration in the scholarly literature. There remains, however, at least one central aspect of the social history of New Netherland which has continued to be largely ignored, namely the linguistic aspect. Until recently, the only frequently discussed issue involving the Dutch language in colonial North America is the process of language shift from Dutch to English among the New Netherlanders and their descendants, a process that began with the English conquest of New Netherland in 1664 and continued up to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the old New Netherland dialect was last used in conversation in Bergen County, New Jersey, and in the Mohawk Valley region of New York. This process is always dutifully mentioned in historical works on the Middle Atlantic colonies but has only once been subjected to detailed study by a trained

<sup>1</sup> From a letter of Michaelius (New Amsterdam) to Adrianus Smoutius (Amsterdam), 11 August 1628, translated by Eekhof (1926: 133) thusly: "Their language, which is the first thing to be employed with them, methinks is entirely peculiar. Many of our common people call it an easy language, which is soon learned, but I am of a contrary opinion." For helpful comments I thank Amy Dahlstrom.

linguist, to wit, Gehring (1973). Earlier treatments of New Netherland Dutch written by linguists are all relatively short and the analyses contained therein are superficial; to make matters yet worse, one of the most often cited sources on the structure of the Dutch dialect of upstate New York and its late survival (Van Loon 1938) is not only linguistically amateurish but most likely presents falsified data.

While the issue of the linguistic shift of the Middle Atlantic Dutch speakers to English, as part of the more general process of cultural assimilation, is unquestionably an important matter in the social and cultural history of the region, the lopsided focus on the period after the arrival of British rule constitutes another instance of the strong Anglocentric bias in the study of colonial North America. The sociolinguistic dynamics within the New Netherland colony and the place of the New Netherland dialect in the broader context of metropolitan and colonial Dutch varieties has been limited to very valuable but essentially peripheral treatment in Gehring's (1973) dissertation on language attrition in upstate New York and has been treated in detail only in Buccini (1995). There seems to be a widely held assumption among not only social historians but also linguists that the analysis of a colonial dialect such as New Netherland Dutch is of little inherent interest.

It is the contention of this writer that relatively conservative colonial varieties of European languages in general and the New Netherland Dutch dialect in particular can provide crucial insights into both colonial social history and the development of related language varieties. In the case of New Netherland Dutch, I have argued that a careful dialectological analysis of this variety brings into relief problems in the study of the demographic profile of the colonial population as well as the degree to which a socially dominant core group of settlers exercised a strong homogenizing cultural influence. In addition, the linguistic and demographic evidence provides new perspectives on two other important problems. First, it gives us a new insight into the linguistic processes of dialect "leveling" or restructuring and standardization in the urban centers of seventeenth-century Holland, out of which ultimately grew the modern northern standard spoken variety of Dutch. Second, given that the early European populations of New Netherland and the Cape Colony in Southern Africa had remarkably similar ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, a comparison of the development of the Dutch language in the two colonies provides us with a new tool with which to examine the highly controversial issue of the origins of Afrikaans. More specifically, it lends strong support to the view that the indigenous peoples and imported slaves in the African colony played a central role in the formation of that language. In this regard, it seems increasingly clear that in the Cape Colony there were sustained and intimate contacts between the Europeans and non-Europeans and that, in the course of the linguistic absorption of the non-Europeans into colonial society, Cape Dutch was radically restructured. In short, among the indigenous Khoisan speakers and the imported slave population, there arose a strongly creolized variety of Dutch, and subsequently this strongly creolized variety exercised a profound influence on the development of the originally conservative variety of the Dutch spoken by an ultimately significant

part of the Colony's European population. The standardized Afrikaans language maintains a number of the phonological and syntactic features and most strikingly much of the simplified morphology of the creolized variety (or varieties) of the Cape Colony, but lexically it has remained remarkably close to Dutch, in large part simply as a result of the particulars of the creolization process itself but also in part as a result of a "purifying," Batavianizing attitude among the white Afrikaners who were active in giving the language its standard, literary form. Afrikaans has consequently come to be viewed as a "semi-creolized" language by many linguists.<sup>2</sup>

New Netherland Dutch, as mentioned above, has drawn relatively very little attention from Netherlandicists, and consequently, a number of both popular and learned misconceptions about the dialect have remained uncorrected. The most egregious of these appears simply to reflect the disdain which Anglophone Americans have traditionally shown for languages other than English. Summing up the Anglophone attitude toward New Netherland Dutch, Romig (1959: 154) writes: "Unlike such derivative languages as Afrikaans or even dialects like Pennsylvania German, this uneuphonious lingo represents progressive deterioration of speech, the result of unacquaintance with either good English or good Dutch." Not surprisingly, Dutch speakers themselves took on a negative view of their language, and this attitude surely became one of the factors which led to its ultimate demise: one of the last speakers of New Netherland Dutch, James Storms, refers (1964: 2-3) to the dialect as "a mixture of both Dutch and English" and a "jargon." More recently, historian David Cohen (1992: 151) writes of a process of "blending between English and Dutch" which resulted in "the formation of a creole dialect."

While it is abundantly clear that New Netherland Dutch, in the course of its very gradual extinction, stood under strong influence of English, it is in my view completely wrong to describe the dialect with the terms "jargon" or "creole," in either their popular or scientific senses. What is from the linguistic and socio-historical standpoints most striking about New Netherland Dutch was its remarkable conservatism. Even as late as 1910, when Columbia professor J. Dynely Prince published an article on the Dutch of Bergen County, New Jersey, the dialect maintained both its lexicon and its phonological and grammatical structures sufficiently well that its affinities with specific European dialects of Dutch can be clearly demonstrated. Contrary to received opinion, which maintains that there was a strong southern Dutch or Flemish element in the colonial dialect, New Netherland Dutch can be unambiguously traced back to the dialects of western Utrecht and the adjoining portion of central Holland and shows no southern Dutch influences whatsoever (Buccini 1995). Given that the available historical evidence indicates that Dutch speakers from this dialect area were a minority among the overall Dutch-speaking colonial population, and further that

<sup>2</sup> E.g. van Coetsem (1988: 135): "standard Afrikaans appears as a kind of compromise between Dutch and more deviant forms of Afrikaans, rather than a regular continuation of any particular one of these forms." For recent, detailed discussions, see Ponelis (1993) and Roberge (1994).

some 40–50 percent of the colony's European population came from French, German, Scandinavian, and English-speaking lands in Europe (Cohen 1981, Rink 1981), it is striking that there appears to have been practically no influence exercised by these alloglot groups on the development of the colonial dialect. It is thus clear that during the dialect's formative period, which I would date to roughly 1640–1690, the north-central dialect of the area between Amsterdam and Utrecht was regarded as something akin to a standard spoken variety within New Netherland, and speakers or, perhaps more accurately, the children of speakers of other Dutch dialects and other European languages acquired the socially dominant group's variety. It should further be noted that while the north-central dialect contributed to the formation of a standard spoken variety of northern Dutch in the seventeenth century, it differed from that standard in a number of important ways, and, with respect to those differences, New Netherland Dutch generally stood on the side of the north-central dialect.

It is my belief that a very similar process of language and dialect leveling in favor of the north-central dialect of Dutch also took place in the early period of the Cape Colony in Southern Africa and that the colonial dialect which ultimately was transformed into Afrikaans originally looked very much like its North American counterpart (Buccini forthcoming a). As mentioned above, the crucial difference in the early linguistic developments in the two colonies had little or nothing to do with the composition of the two European colonial populations but rather with their very strongly differing relations with non-European groups. In Southern Africa, an important part of the rural European population, that is, the forefathers of the Voortrekkers, lived largely as nuclear family units in intimate contact with the indigenous Khoikhoi workers whom they employed and the imported slaves whom they owned. Contact between the white families was relatively limited, and they enjoyed little in the way of educational, religious, or even postal services. In New Netherland, on the other hand, the European population was for the most part concentrated in a small number of enclaves, where a reasonable effort was made to establish the social structures and institutions which they had known in Europe. No less important was the fact that slavery, though certainly known in New Netherland, was never so widespread there as in Southern Africa, and the peculiar social conditions of the interior of the Cape had no parallel in the North American colony.<sup>3</sup> Finally, and perhaps

<sup>3</sup> Goodfriend (1978) has shown that ownership of slaves in New Netherland was not limited to the elite of society, but, aside from the West India Company itself, there seem not to have been any major slaveholders. In any event, the estimated population of New Amsterdam at the time of the English conquest in 1664 was 1,500 European colonists with approximately 300 slaves and 75 freed slaves (Goodfriend 1992: 13), but while the residents of New Amsterdam from Africa clearly formed a significant part of the population, neither their number nor their distribution among and contact with the European population was such that they could have exercised a strong influence on the development of the local Dutch dialect, especially given the social structure of the European element. For a discussion of slave life in New Netherland, see Goodfriend (1991).

Evidence for the linguistic behavior of the Africans in New Netherland is extremely sparse, though it is clear that some, after many years in the Dutch colony, still did not

most importantly, the New Netherlanders' contacts with the indigenous Indian population differed radically from those of the Cape Colonists with the Khoikhoi. From the early period of the Dutch presence on the Cape, we find clear indications of a rapid breakdown of Khoikhoi society and their gradual incorporation in the Europeans' colonial society as an underclass dependent upon the Colonists for menial employment. We find, moreover, early indications that the Khoikhoi, together with the slaves, acquired a reduced, creolized form of Dutch, and it is clear that, over time, the Khoikhoi as well as the slaves gradually shifted from their native languages to the creolized form of Cape Dutch. In the remainder of this paper, I would like to examine some aspects of the differing social and linguistic relations between the Dutch of New Netherland and the indigenous peoples with whom they were in contact.

## 2. The Development of Dutch-Indian Relations and Linguistic Contacts

It is a widely known fact that the original goals and priorities of the Dutch in North America differed considerably from those of the English; for the Dutch, in particular, the West India Company, New Netherland, was originally viewed first and foremost as a trading operation and, moreover, one of secondary importance in the overall scheme of New World operations. During the early decades of the colony's existence, official interest in the establishment of a large, agrarian colony was low and very much measured in terms of its relationship and cost to the conduct of a profitable, company-monopolized trade in furs. Only in the 1640s, with the realization that the English were likely soon to overwhelm the Dutch, was a more serious effort made at establishing permanent, agrarian settlements. The changing nature of the Dutch presence in North America was to a certain degree directly reflected in Dutch-Indian relations.<sup>4</sup> According to Trelease (1962: 139–140), we can distinguish three phases in these relations: an initial phase of generally peaceful relations, during which the European population was small and trade with the Indians of paramount importance; a second phase of strained relations culminating in intermittent warfare as the colonial population and its demand for land grew and trade with the local Indians became far less important; and a third phase, during which the local Indian population became completely marginalized or eliminated. This pattern of de-

veloped Dutch, as indicated by the need of an interpreter in a court case (Christoph 1991: 162); it seems quite possible that Spanish and Portuguese or, more likely, creolized forms of these languages were in use amongst the slaves. The free-black population of New Amsterdam apparently assimilated to Dutch ways to a considerable degree, though there is some evidence that there existed a particular (creolized?) dialect of Dutch which they spoke within their own community (Prince 1910: 460, 468).

<sup>4</sup> A brief overview of the history of the New Netherland colony, especially with regard to the development of the colonial dialect, is given in Buccini (1995: 213–218). Recent book-length treatments of the colony's history are Condon (1968) and Rink (1986). Trelease (1960) gives a comprehensive overview of Dutch-Indian relations. For further bibliographical information, see Gehring (1988), Goodfriend (1988), and Buccini (1995).

velopment obtained in the core area of the colony, namely the lower Hudson region, but in the area around Fort Orange (Albany) generally peaceful relations continued even after the European population began to grow, presumably because the fur trade there continued to be of considerable importance.<sup>5</sup>

Turning now to the question of the communication strategies used by the Europeans and Indians in New Netherland, we should consider the findings presented in Feister's (1973) article on the subject. On the basis of textual evidence drawn from a variety of seventeenth-century Dutch and other colonial sources, Feister proposes that we recognize three major phases, each characterized by its own dominant communication strategy. During the initial period of contact, the Dutch had to rely on hand and body gestures in communicating with the Indians (1973: 26–28). While the use of such non-verbal means of communication surely continued to be necessary under certain circumstances, the following phase distinguished by Feister involved the use of "lingua franca" and the development of trade jargons and ultimately pidgin languages.<sup>6</sup> Feister emphasizes, however, the importance of trade jargons and pidgins and, more specifically, such language forms based on the languages of native peoples rather than on Dutch (1973: 30–33). Interestingly, Feister's discussion of this aspect of Dutch-Indian communication strategies includes no mention whatsoever of the sundry attestations of Pidgin Delaware but rather seems to be wholly based on the interpretation of those bits of commentary on Dutch-Indian interactions found in Dutch documents of the period. The third phase in Feister's periodization was characterized by a decreased reliance on jargons and pidgins as the number of bilinguals who could function as interpreters gradually increased. In this regard, Feister draws attention to the fact that with increased European settlement, not only the frequency but also the nature of contacts changed: whereas Dutch-Indian relations were probably predominantly concerned with trading native furs and foodstuffs for various European commodities and wampum during the early years of the colony, interaction in the areas of permanent European settlement soon involved an expansion of trade to include new commodities, such as land, liquor, and firearms, and also the negotiation of the many disputes and ultimately warfare that arose from these new conditions (1973: 33–36). A further scenario for more intensive interaction which Feister does not mention was the employment by the Dutch of Indians as guides, messengers, and occasional laborers, a practice which is frequently mentioned in colonial documents and seems to have been reasonably widespread.

There is clearly a close correspondence between the periodization of Dutch-Indian relations proposed by Trelease and the periodization of communication

<sup>5</sup> While I am in agreement with Trelease's three-phase analysis for the lower Hudson and Fort Orange regions, it should be noted that he does not consider the other areas of Dutch activity in North America, namely the Delaware River region and southern New England.

<sup>6</sup> With the term "lingua franca" Feister refers to the occasional use of third languages such as French between the Dutch and Indians or the use of Mohawk between Dutchmen and Oneida (1973: 28–30).

strategies proposed by Feister. In both, a major turning point is assigned to about the year 1640, coinciding with the first major expansion of the colonial population and the concomitant development of New Netherland from an almost exclusively trading operation to a mixed trading operation and agrarian colony.<sup>7</sup> As in the case of Trelease's phases, Feister's divisions must not be taken as rigid; there surely was considerable overlap in the use of the three communication strategies she discusses. In addition, it must be remembered that demographic and social conditions did not develop at one and the same pace in all of the subregions of New Netherland (lower Hudson, Fort Orange, Delaware River, and Southern New England).

Beyond these general qualifications to Feister's analysis, I believe that we might also add some more specific qualifications and additions to her discussion of the developments in the period following 1640. First, it must be pointed out that the occasional mention of the use of interpreters by the Dutch in their dealings with the Indians says nothing about the degree to which jargons or pidgins may still have been used throughout the colony. Second, the linguistic abilities ascribed to the Dutch interpreters with regard to Indian languages with phrases such as "well acquainted with," "reasonably experienced in the use of," or "able to understand" cannot be taken as necessarily meaning that these interpreters had acquired the actual Indian languages in question. Taking all the sundry references to Dutchmen speaking "Indian," it seems that there is no discernible difference in the wording of such references between the early decades when trading contacts dominated and the later decades when the references often involve peace negotiations or court testimony.

While Feister speaks of an increase in the importance of bilinguals who functioned as interpreters for mediation of the more intense and complicated social relations of the later period of the Dutch colony, she does not consider the question of what languages were involved. Although there clearly were some individuals who were bilingual in the sense that they had a reasonable degree of competence in both Dutch and one or possibly more of the Native American languages of the region, it seems equally clear that such bilinguals were not very numerous and certainly not numerous enough to mediate all the large- and small-scale transactions and negotiations between the colonists and natives. In the absence of widespread bilingualism of the sort just described, the Europeans and Indians bridged the linguistic divide primarily through the use of pidginized varieties of the Indian languages and, in the later period around areas of relatively dense settlement, perhaps through the use of reduced forms of Dutch. It is, however, important to note that, while there is evidence that some Indians (and in later years perhaps many) learned to speak some manner of Dutch, the Indians' relationship with the Dutch never paralleled that of the Khoisan peoples of

<sup>7</sup> Note too that in my study on the development of New Netherland Dutch, I point to this same period of expansion of the European population as a watershed in the dialect's history: it was during this period that I believe a "founder population" (Mufwene 1993: 122) was established and the direction for subsequent sociolinguistic developments of the colony's Dutch was set (Buccini 1995: 249).

Southern Africa. Only perhaps in a few small areas and then probably only in rather small numbers did Indians become incorporated into Dutch (and later Anglo-Dutch) society; for the most part, those Indian groups that managed to survive the warfare and disease that colonization brought withdrew to the west or were incorporated into the relative stability of the Iroquoian world in central New York.

At this point I should call attention to the diversity of the indigenous languages with which the Dutch came into contact. Among these languages were representatives of two unrelated language families, namely the Algonquian and the Iroquoian. In the central region around the lower Hudson, the local Indians spoke dialects of the Algonquian language, which is now generally called Munsee. In the southern region around the Delaware, another Algonquian language, now generally referred to as Unami, was spoken. This language was a close relative of Munsee, and there was a transitional dialect in central New Jersey by which the two languages' dialect continua were connected; these languages are sometimes referred to collectively as "Delaware" or "Lenape." In the eastern region in Connecticut, the local Indians spoke poorly attested Algonquian languages belonging to the southern New England subbranch of the language family which were quite distinct from Munsee and Unami. Finally, in the northern region, the Dutch were in contact primarily with speakers of one Iroquoian and one Algonquian language. To the west of Fort Orange dwelt the Iroquoian Mohawk and to the east were the Algonquian Mahicans. The Mahican language shared features both with Munsee and with the neighboring New England Algonquian languages.

Although there are, in my view, good reasons to believe that reduced or pidginized forms of Mohawk, Mahican, Dutch, and possibly Munsee were used in New Netherland, only one such pidgin language is well attested, namely Pidgin Delaware, a variety which Goddard (1971, 1995) has identified as a specifically Unami-based pidgin, and one which, in his view, was also widely used between the Dutch and Munsee speakers in the lower Hudson Valley region. There are six major textual sources for this language; of these, two were written by Swedes during the period of the New Sweden colony and three were written by Englishmen after the conquest of New Netherland. Only one of the sources comes to us from the Dutch, but it is the earliest, namely the word list which appeared in de Laet's *Novus Orbis* of 1633.<sup>8</sup>

While at first blush it may not seem to be particularly remarkable that there developed a pidginized form of the Unami or Delaware language, the existence of this pidgin and its apparent early and widespread use in the Middle Atlantic

<sup>8</sup> Excerpts from de Laet appear in English translation in Jameson (1909). The Swedish sources are the word list and catechism by Campanius (published 1696, based on material learned in the 1640s) and the words and phrases recorded by Lindestrom in the 1650s (Jacobsson 1923). The most important English source is the so-called "Indian Interpreter," a word and phrase list written in the 1680s in West Jersey (Prince 1912). The other English sources are from William Penn (1683) and Gabriel Thomas (1698), which are both included in Myers (1912).

colonies has served as the focal point for a far-reaching claim concerning the dynamics of linguistic relations more generally between Europeans and Native Americans throughout North America. Observing that in all parts of the world pidgin languages which have developed in the context of European colonization have almost always been lexically based on the language of the European colonizers, Thomason (1980), in the first linguistic study of Pidgin Delaware, has argued that this pidgin cannot have arisen as a result of the contact between the Dutch and Unami Indians but rather must have first developed before the arrival of the Europeans as a means of communication between the Iroquoian Susquehannock or Minquas of interior Pennsylvania and the Unami living along the Delaware River.

Thomason approaches the problem of the origins of Pidgin Delaware primarily from the standpoint of language contact theory; more specifically, she claims that a pidgin language should normally show grammatical structures deriving from all the languages centrally involved in its development. In order to demonstrate that none of the languages of the Europeans present on the Delaware River in the seventeenth century—namely English, Swedish, and Dutch—could have contributed to the formation of Pidgin Delaware, she offers an analysis of the syntax of the pidgin and in particular focuses on two prominent features. Given space restrictions, I can offer only a brief summary of my criticism of Thomason's theoretical and structural analysis. Her claims regarding a sociohistorical setting for the development of a Delaware-based pidgin between the Susquehannock and Unami are purely conjectural and without any factual support; they need not be considered further here.<sup>9</sup>

The two syntactic features of Pidgin Delaware in question are the following: first, this language shows a strong favoring of SOV (subject-object-verb) word order, albeit with fairly frequent occurrences of SVO word order; second, it shows a very consistent pattern of clause-initial negation. With regard to the latter, Thomason notes that clause-initial negation is a shared feature of both the Algonquian and Iroquoian languages but is wholly foreign to the Germanic languages. With regard to the former, she claims that, while word order is to a degree dependent upon discourse factors in the Algonquian and Iroquoian languages, the unmarked word order is SOV. It is here that Thomason makes an unconscionable error: she claims that "like the [clause-initial] negative constructions, the OV word order is as foreign to the best-known pidgins (and creoles) as it is to English, Dutch, and Swedish" (1980: 179). While SOV order was indeed foreign to seventeenth century English and largely or perhaps wholly so from the colloquial Swedish of the seventeenth century, it most certainly was not foreign to Dutch; indeed, SOV word order was and is quite prevalent in Dutch at the surface level and is widely assumed to be the basic word order for

<sup>9</sup> I have presented a detailed critique of Thomason's views on Pidgin Delaware in a conference paper (27th Algonquian Conference, Chapel Hill, Oct. 1995) and will include that discussion in a lengthier publication on the language which is now under preparation (Buccini, forthcoming b).

the language.<sup>10</sup> Given that the Dutch were the first Europeans to have regular contact with the Unami, one of Thomason's central syntactic arguments for a pre-colonial origin of Pidgin Delaware falls away as vacuous.

With regard to the other argument, it is, of course, true that clause-initial negation is foreign to all the Germanic languages as well as to other attested pidgins and creoles, but here Thomason makes a grave theoretical error. She uses the term "pidgin" in an excessively broad manner, failing to recognize the crucial differences between the kind of multilingual, sociohistorical settings out of which arose the classical pidgins and creoles of, for example, the Caribbean and instances where only two languages are in contact. While in the multilingual situations, it is reasonable to expect that relatively highly marked features such as clause-initial negation might well not gain acceptance in a pidgin, in a situation where but two languages are in contact, appeals to notions of language universals and markedness carry far less force.

### 3. The Development of Pidgin Delaware

While there is no historical evidence that Pidgin Delaware was used as a means of communication between Algonquians and Iroquoians, there is some evidence that suggests that this was not the case. This evidence includes direct references in colonial texts to the difficulty the Dutch had in communicating with Iroquoian speakers and, more tellingly, about the inability of Dutch interpreters to understand them; in addition, there is an account in which it is stated that the Chesapeake Algonquian interpreter for an English party on the Delaware, who is said to be able to speak the language of the Delaware Algonquians, is not able to communicate with the Susquahannock, the party encountered there.<sup>11</sup> In light of this evidence, the possibility that Pidgin Delaware arose specifically in the context of Dutch-Unami contacts needs to be considered, and we should therefore examine what the dynamics of that contact were and why it is that it resulted in the development of a so-called "pidgin" based not on the Europeans' language but rather on that of the indigenous population.

If we consider the nature of Dutch visits to the Delaware region in the early decades of the colony, I believe we can readily see why it is that the primary means of communication which developed there was based on the indigenous language and not on Dutch. Throughout the early period of Dutch activity, up to the time of the establishment of New Sweden and beyond, the Dutch presence on the Delaware River was largely limited to occasional trading visits, during

<sup>10</sup> It should be noted too that SOV order was not completely foreign to seventeenth-century Swedish; it was commonly used in literary (and perhaps too in "high" spoken) style in various constructions with analogs in German and Dutch. See, for example, the writing of the aforementioned New Sweden colonist, Lindstrom. With regard to the word order of the Indian languages in question here, Mithun (1987) has argued that no one word order pattern can be identified as basic for Iroquoian; Dahlstrom (see note 1) similarly considers Algonquian to lack a single basic order.

<sup>11</sup> See the "Relation of Captain Thomas Yong, 1634" in Myers (1912). Further historical evidence against Thomason's theory is presented in Goddard (forthcoming).

which the Dutch traders would sail from one possible point of contact to another. Although such contacts probably came to be regularized, it remains that many of the encounters in the early years occurred purely by chance. Under such circumstances, with the Dutch intentionally seeking wide contacts with Indians who had had little or no previous exposure to the Dutch language, it was simply good business sense to try to acquire a functionally adequate vocabulary of indigenous languages encountered. Given that all of the coastal peoples with whom the Dutch had dealings in the early period were speakers of Algonquian languages and, moreover, that there was something of a greater "Delaware" dialect continuum extending from the south side of Delaware Bay up to the central area around the lower Hudson and that the languages of eastern Long Island, Connecticut, and Rhode Island were also fairly closely related, it is very likely that many useful trade-related words learned by the Dutch in one area were also useful in other areas.

Another factor to be noted is that in the three peripheral regions of New Netherland (Fort Orange, Delaware River, and southern New England regions), the Dutch were never the only colonial group with whom the Indians had contacts. In the south, of course, the Swedes arrived in the 1630s and, given the weakness of both the Dutch and Swedish presence in the region, Englishmen from the Virginia and Maryland colonies appear to have been regular visitors there. In southern New England (and eastern Long Island), the Dutch and the English stood in constant competition up until the time that the English presence gradually overwhelmed and ousted the Dutch. Finally, in the northern region, the Mohawk had some early, though largely hostile, contacts with the French, and in the course of the seventeenth century, the Algonquian Mahicans and the related tribes to the east along the upper Connecticut River valley came increasingly within the English sphere of influence. In addition to these considerations, we might also bear in mind that the Dutch and, for that matter, also the Swedish colonists were by no means linguistically homogeneous groups, though certainly Dutch in New Netherland was indisputably the language of commerce and administration. In any event, it is clear that many of the Indian peoples with whom the Dutch had dealings during the earliest period of the *Voorcompagnieën* and also in the early period of the West India Company's operations had occasional contacts with speakers of more than one European language, and the Dutch, who had little in the way of permanent settlements in America, were in no position to expect the Indians to learn their language. Instead, exhibiting the practical approach to trade for which they already were famous in the seventeenth century, they clearly had no ideological, cultural, or political problem with the idea that they could best do business by communicating with the Indians in the Indians' own languages, and this they dearly tried to do.

This question of practicality must, however, also be considered from the standpoint of the Native Americans, who were by no means merely passive participants in the colonization process. The Indians' contacts with different European languages in, for example, the Delaware River region must have been from the Indians' perspective a good reason to develop a simplified form of their own language which they could use with all the European groups. And indeed, there

is historical evidence that the Indians did play an active, perhaps very conscious and intentional, role in the development of "pidginized" or reduced forms of their languages for use with the Europeans. In the case of Pidgin Delaware, Goddard (forthcoming) has adduced several grammatical features of the language which point strongly to being the results of simplification on the part of the Unami themselves rather than being merely European barbarisms. In the citations from Michaelius and Megapolensis offered in the appendix to this article, we hear suspicions that the Indians deliberately simplified their speech when speaking to the Dutch and thus concealed their real language from them, suspicions which may betray a certain paranoia but, in light of Goddard's findings, a paranoia which was probably not wholly unjustified. The Indians, confronted with the ever more intrusive and well-armed Europeans, may well have desired to exclude the newcomers from full access to their languages, and it is quite possible that they already had some tradition of linguistic security, as perhaps indicated by the apparent reference to the use of warpath language or secret codes found at the end of the citation from Megapolensis. In this connection too, we might add that European distrust of the reserved and laconic demeanor of Indians perhaps represented a misinterpretation of a cultural attitude which favored extreme verbal sobriety.

From this very condensed discussion of the sociolinguistic context of the early colonial period, I hope it is clear that there were good reasons for both the Dutch and the Indians to develop reduced language varieties based on the Indians' languages. In light of these facts, Thomason's observation that such reduced languages are extremely rare in the context of European colonization and her further deduction that we must therefore a priori seek a pre-European origin for Pidgin Delaware seems misguided. As mentioned briefly above, I also believe that Thomason's syntactic arguments in favor of a purely American origin of the pidgin are also gravely flawed, not only with respect to her mistaken notion that SOV word order is as foreign to Dutch as it is to English, but also in her belief that the admittedly highly marked clause-initial negation of Pidgin Delaware decisively points away from European involvement in the language's development. In this regard, we come to the final topic which deserves consideration here, namely, the actual process by which Pidgin Delaware came into being.

In the preceding discussion I indicated that I believe that the Dutch actively and willingly tried to acquire native languages to a sufficient degree so as to be able to carry out their business with the Indians as easily as possible. If we consider this linguistic task that confronted Dutch or, for that matter, Swedish and English colonists, we must immediately recognize the extremely great degree of topological difference between these Germanic languages on the one hand and both the Algonquian and Iroquoian languages on the other. These Native American languages are all characterized by bewildering morphological complexity and polysynthesis. For brevity's sake, I will simply quote one of the important Algonquianists of this century, Truman Michelson (1927: 408), on one of these languages: "the number of verbal pronominal affixes must, theoretically at least, run into the thousands; and at times I despair of ever being able to reduce this to

order. My only consolation is that I know that for simple conversation six or seven hundred will suffice."

In short, full acquisition of such languages, in the context of frontier life, by an adult speaker of a typologically radically different language, is virtually impossible. At least two groups of people in New Netherland seem to have been aware of this, namely the Indians themselves and some of the more reflective and better educated colonists. Recognition of the great complexity of the Indian languages and simultaneously of the great differences between what the Indians spoke amongst themselves and what the Indians and Dutch spoke to each other is nicely attested in the three citations from Dutch authors given in the appendix. Also interesting to note is the fact that these more astute language observers all remark that average Dutchmen who spoke "Indian" thought that they were in fact actually speaking the Indians' language; they were aware that they were using not only Indian words but also grammatical structures that differed considerably from those of their own language, and many, it seems, thought that the impoverished linguistic flexibility of the pidgin reflected the simplicity of the savage mind of the *Wilder*, as the Dutch called the Indians.<sup>12</sup> I believe that this vulgar attitude of the New Netherlanders is reflected in some of the Dutch words that were used in the pidgin and which appear as Dutch loanwords in a number of the region's Indian languages. Here I refer to the words for animals introduced to the Indians by the Dutch, which generally are reduplicated forms resembling Dutch animal calls, such as *poespoes* for cat, *kipkip* for chicken, *meelmeek* for sheep, and *kusjkusj* for pig. While some of these forms have onomatopoeic value, they may also have been used in place of the normal words *kat*, *kip* or *kuiken*, *schaap*, and *varken* by the Dutch out of condescension, in effect substituting infantile forms for the normal words. Be that as it may, it is clear that Dutchmen felt that they were acquiring a new language when they learned Pidgin Delaware, regardless of whether or not they were fully aware of its great differences from the actual Delaware language. Consequently, the presence of the marked feature of clause-initial negation in the pidgin is not at all surprising: this was a very salient and pragmatically crucial feature of the language presented to them by the Indians, and the Dutch accepted it as part of speaking "Indian."

Unfortunately, there remain no direct records of Indian opinions concerning the pidgin or the Dutch language, and it would be wrong to speculate too much on this. Nevertheless, one thing is clear, namely that the Indians also took a very pragmatic and, perhaps in some sense, more sophisticated approach to the problem of communication with their new neighbors; they presented their language to the Dutch in such a way that the newcomers could acquire it, but at the same

<sup>12</sup> An interesting parallel is discussed by Bakker (1994:16), namely that of John Long, a trader active among the Ojibwa in the late eighteenth century. Long was "very proud of his knowledge of Indian languages, in particular Ojibwa, and repeatedly claims fluency in these languages." Bakker's analysis of the texts which Long wrote in his "Chippeway" shows, however, that he had an extremely poor knowledge of Ojibwa grammar and that he actually spoke something resembling an Ojibwa-based pidgin.



time also helped to maintain a certain distance between the two parties. In doing this, they seem to have retained for a time a certain control over a situation that for them was soon to go irrevocably out of control and managed to play a linguistic trick not only on many of the simpler *Swannekens*, as they called the Dutch, but also on such figures as William Penn, and possibly even a few modern linguists.

### Appendix

#### Some Observations by Europeans on the Indian Languages

*Rev. Jonas Michaëlius*. 1628. Letter dated 11 August 1628. The author arrived in New Netherland on 7 April of that same year (trans. Jameson 1909: 128):

Their language, which is the first thing to be employed with them, methinks is entirely peculiar. Many of our common people call it an easy language, which is soon learned, but I am of a contrary opinion. For those who can understand their words to some extent and repeat them, fail greatly in the pronunciation, and speak a broken language, like the language of Ashdod. For these people have difficult aspirates and many guttural letters, which are formed more in the throat than by the mouth, teeth and lips, to which our people not being accustomed, make a bold stroke at the thing and imagine that they have accomplished something wonderful. It is true one can easily learn as much as is sufficient for the purposes of trading, but this is done almost as much by signs with the thumb and fingers as by speaking; and this cannot be done in religious matters. It also seems to us that they rather design to conceal their language from us than to properly communicate it, except in things which happen in daily trade; saying that it is sufficient for us to understand them in that; and then they speak only half sentences, shortened words, and frequently call out a dozen things and even more; and all things which have only a rude resemblance to each other, they frequently call by the same name. In truth it is a made-up, childish Language; so that even those who can best of all speak with the savages, and get along well in trade, are nevertheless wholly in the dark and bewildered when they hear the savages talking among themselves.

*Rev. Johannes Megapolensis*. 1644. A short account of the Mohawk (trans. Jameson 1909: 172–173):

The principal nation of all the savages and Indians hereabouts with which we have the most intercourse is the Mahakuaas, who have laid all the other Indians near us under contribution. This nation has a very difficult language, and it costs me great pains to learn it, so as to be able to speak and preach in it fluently. There is no Christian here who understands the language thoroughly; those who have lived here long can use a kind of jargon just sufficiently to carry on trade with it, but they do not understand the fundamentals of the language. I am making a vocabulary of the Mahakuaas' language, and when I am among them I ask them how things are called; but as they are very stupid, I sometimes cannot make them understand what I want. Moreover, when they tell me, one tells me the word in the infinitive mood, another in the indicative; one in the first person; another in the second person; one in the present, another

in the preterit. So I stand oftentimes and look, but do not know how to put it down. And as they have declensions and conjugations also, and have their augments like the Greeks, I am like one distracted, and frequently cannot tell what to do, and there is no one to set me right. I shall have to speculate in this alone, in order to become in time an Indian grammarian. When I first observed that they pronounced their words so differently, I asked the commissary of the company what it meant. He answered me that he did not know, but imagined they changed their language every two or three years; I argued against this that it could never be that a whole nation should change its language with one consent; —and, although he has been connected with them here these twenty years, he can afford me no assistance.

*Adriaen van der Donck*. 1655. Description of New Netherland (trans. Johnson, in O'Donnell 1968: 92).

Their languages and dialects are very different, as unlike each other as the Dutch, French, Greek, and Latin are. Their declensions and conjugations have an affinity with the Greek and accord to it. Their declensions, augmentations, cases, and adverbs are like the Greek; but to reduce their language to any of ours, would be impossible, for there is no resemblance between the same ... Their various tongues may be classed into four distinct languages, namely, Manhattan, Minquas, Savanoos, and Wappanoos. With the Mannhattans we include those who live in the neighboring places along the North River, on Long Island, and at the Neversink. With the Minquas we include the Senecas, the Maquaas and other inland tribes. The Savanoos are the southern nations, and the Wappanoos are the eastern nations. Their languages are seldom learned perfectly by any of our people, and those who by long and continued intercourse and conversation with the Indians learn to speak their languages are not men of education and are unable to compose grammatical rules for the same and of course are unable to instruct others.

*William Penn*. 1683. Letter to the Committee of the Free Society of Traders (Myers 1912: 230–231):

Their language is lofty, yet narrow, but like the Hebrew; in Signification full, like Short-hand in writing; one word serveth in the place of three, and the rest are supplied by the Understanding of the Hearer: Imperfect in their tenses, wanting in their Moods, Participles, Adverbs, Conjunctions, Interjections: I have made it my business to understand it, that I might not want an Interpreter on any occasion: And I must say, that I know not a Language spoken in Europe, that hath words of more sweetness or greatness, in Accent and Emphasis, than theirs; for Instance, Octorockon, Rancocas, Ozicton, Shakamacon, Poquerim, all of which are names of Places, and have Grandeur in them: Of words of Sweetness, Anna, is Mother, Issimus, a Brother, Netap, Friend, usque ozet, very good; pone, Bread, metse, eat, matta, no, hatta, to have, payo, to come; Sepassen, Passijon, the Names of Places; (231) Tamane, Secane, Menanse, Secatereus, are the names of Persons. If one ask them for anything they have not, they will answer, mattá ne hattá, which to translate is, not I have, instead of I have not.



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## Rediscovering the Eighteenth Century Rediscovering Early Discoveries: André Brink's Novel *On the Contrary*

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The thing, I think, is this: that this land does not make it easy for a man to hold fixed opinions. There are so few certainties. (Brink, 1993:245)

### 1. Discovery and Naming

There is always a close relationship between discovery and naming. The first thing any discoverer does is to give names to everything he discovers. Naming opposes chaos. Early discoverers came to South Africa and named and mapped in order to get some kind of control over the apparent chaos of the unfamiliar continent. The only Dutch writings of the seventeenth century in which descriptions of the Cape are found are the official journals, starting with Jan van Riebeeck's diary. Van Riebeeck's successors (until 1795) continued to keep long descriptions of the weather and economic transactions. The official journeys undertaken into the interior were also described in detailed journals. These journals were intended to help future travelers with descriptions and maps.<sup>1</sup> Sienart & Stiebel (1996: 92) argue that naming is the main way in which discoverers familiarize themselves with everything strange: "The primary act of reducing an unfamiliar land to familiar or at least recognizable status is by NAMING." The European travelers gave new names to everything they "discovered," in spite of the fact that everything had already been named before their arrival. The local inhabitants' names for places and things were simply ignored.

<sup>1</sup> Books were also written to inform Europeans about Africa. Some of the most interesting information is found in the work of Olfert Dapper (1668), who never traveled to Africa.