

1 News from the Netherlands

I have sent you a book of news and one of the weekly courantes. I would willingly have your mind keep awake in the knowledge of things abroad.

Lady Brilliana Harley to her son at Oxford, 1 March 1639¹

In 1607 an anonymous English pamphleteer contrasted the relative peace that his own country had known during the previous half-century with the ‘many years of terror’ and ‘rugged war’ suffered by England’s ‘near neighbours, the United Netherlands’:

Their calamities and miseries [he wrote], which of us can be ignorant of? English ears have heard their roaring cannons echo in the air, imitating Jove’s thunder ... English eyes have seen the devastations, spoils, sieges, ransackings and flaming cities of those countries: English lives have been liberally spent in their martial business, followed their fortunes, bled in their quarrels and died in their battles.²

The calamities and quarrels referred to in these lines were part of what is now usually called (by English writers) the Revolt of the Netherlands and (by Dutch) the Eighty Years War (1568–1648) – a series of conflicts and upheavals in which the people of the Low Countries fought each other as well as their Spanish overlords and out of which, more by accident than design, a new independent state gradually emerged, to be known as the United Provinces of the Netherlands.³ Like many of his compatriots, the pamphleteer took it for granted that English soldiers had played an important part in this struggle. He also took it for granted that it was a struggle with which his readers in Britain were already familiar. For who could ignore what was happening in the Low

¹ *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, ed. T. T. Lewis (CS old series 58, 1854), p. 32.

² *A declaration or proffer of the archdukes of Brabant* (London, 1607, STC 3471), sig. B2^{r-v}: passage addressed ‘To the reader’ and possibly written by Robert Prickett, a ‘poor soldier’.

³ The term Dutch republic, though commonly used by historians today, was hardly ever used by writers of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: see below, ch2/n24, ch. 6/n. 4.

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Countries? Wasn't the story of the Spaniards' tyranny and of the armed uprising of their Netherlands subjects 'sufficiently known to the world'?⁴ – 'so well known' indeed, as a later English author remarked, that it was unnecessary to 'spend the time to relate' it.⁵

We should be careful about taking such remarks too literally. When writers say that their subject is too well known to require explaining, what they usually mean is that it is too long and complicated – and the Revolt of the Netherlands was certainly that. Nevertheless, there is truth in the assertion that these events were generally familiar in Elizabethan and early Stuart Britain – familiar not only to the political elite but also to people outside that restricted circle – and it is worth considering how this familiarity had come about. By what means did information about the evolving struggle in the Low Countries circulate in Britain during this period? And what was the nature of that information?

Word of mouth

In trying to answer these questions, historians must of course rely on the evidence that has come down to them, most of it written or printed. Yet it is also clear, and is worth emphasizing at the outset, that a good deal of news, foreign as well as domestic, must have circulated at this time by word of mouth. This was the obvious way of exchanging information in societies where the majority was illiterate; and even those who could read and had access to newsletters and printed pamphlets often found that verbal reports reached them more quickly.⁶ Moreover, the spoken word was a natural means of communication between the Netherlands and England, given that the two countries were not only geographically close – 'one directly opposite the other', as Queen Elizabeth's *Declaration* of 1585 put it⁷ – but also commercially interdependent.

The presence of Dutch and Walloon communities in London and the south-east of England, growing in number and size as successive waves

⁴ [W. Verheiden], *An oration or speech appropriated unto the ... princes of Christendom* ([Amsterdam], 1624; *STC* 18837), p. 19; English translation of Verheiden's *De jure belli Belgici* (The Hague, 1596).

⁵ [G. Marcelline], *Vox militis* (London, 1625; *STC* 20980), p. 30.

⁶ *Barrington family letters 1628–1632*, ed. A. Searle (CS fourth series 28, 1983), p. 83 n. 1; R. Cust, 'News and politics in early seventeenth-century England', *PP* 112 (1986), 65–6; A. Th. van Deursen, *Plain lives in a golden age: popular culture, religion and society in seventeenth-century Holland* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 140; H. van Nierop, '"And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars": rumour and the Revolt of the Netherlands', in J. Pollmann and A. Spicer (eds.), *Public opinion and changing identities in the early modern Netherlands: essays in honour of Alastair Duke* (Leiden, 2007), pp. 69–86.

⁷ *A declaration of the causes mooving the queene of England to give aide to the defence of the people afflicted and oppressed in the Netherlands* (1585), *Somers tracts*, vol. I, p. 411.

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of refugees left the Low Countries from the mid sixteenth century onwards, must have heightened English awareness of the developing struggle in the Netherlands, not least because the refugees continued to be openly involved in their country's cause, organizing armed raids across the North Sea, recruiting men and collecting money for the rebel forces, and appointing days of public fasting and prayer.⁸ At the same time there were burgeoning British communities in the Netherlands – the long-established groups of merchants supplemented during the last quarter of the sixteenth century by growing numbers of soldiers and religious dissenters (Roman Catholic as well as Protestant) plus a sprinkling of university students – all of whom had their own stories to tell about the dramatic events occurring around them. (For foreign communities in the Low Countries and Britain, see the maps accompanying Chapters 3 and 5: pp. 83, 139.) It was partly by *talking* during the 1590s to the 'many English who have lived long in that country' that Fynes Moryson gathered the information about the Netherlands which he was later to publish in his *Itinerary* of 1617.⁹ And a few years later another observer noticed how easily one could pick up news in the Netherlands, thanks to the openness with which the Dutch discussed their public affairs:

almost every common man is a statesman, [and] the point of government, from the highest to the lowest, may be learned in a passage boat going from one town to another, as well as in the assembly of the General States.¹⁰

⁸ A. Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant communities in sixteenth-century London* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 216–18, 239–40, 252–5, 260, 294; O. P. Grell, *Dutch Calvinists in early Stuart London* (Leiden, 1989), pp. 27–9; Pettegree, *Emden and the Dutch Revolt* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 189–91; D. J. B. Trim, 'Protestant refugees in England and confessional conflict in France and the Netherlands, 1562–c. 1610', in R. Vigne and C. Littleton (eds.), *From strangers to citizens: the integration of immigrant communities in Britain, Ireland and colonial America 1550–1750* (Brighton, 2001), pp. 68–79. Loyseleur de Villiers, later the Prince of Orange's chaplain and the likely author of his *Apologie*, and Emanuel van Meteren and Jean François Le Petit, two of the most influential early historians of the Dutch Revolt, were all members of the Dutch exile community in London: Grell, *Dutch Calvinists*, pp. 38, 122; Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant communities*, pp. 256, 266–7; E. Grimeston, *A generall historie of the Netherlands* (London, 1608; STC 12374), sig. Avi.

⁹ F. Moryson, *Shakespeare's Europe*, ed. C. Hughes (London, 1903), p. 381. There were probably more British living in the Low Countries at this time than in the whole of the rest of Europe put together: J. Stoye, *English travellers abroad 1604–1667*, revised edn (New Haven, CT, 1989), p. 173.

¹⁰ 'The politia of the United Provinces' [1615–20], *Somers tracts*, vol. III, p. 631. Moryson remarked that the Dutch were 'expert in state matters, though most of them are of mechanical education': *Shakespeare's Europe*, p. 372. Writing from the Netherlands in 1667, Sir William Temple was similarly surprised by 'the strange freedom that all men took in boats and inns ... of talking openly ... upon all public affairs, both of their own state and their neighbours': Temple, *Works*, 2 vols. (London, 1750), vol. II, p. 42.

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Of the English and Scots who lived in the Low Countries, few were permanent exiles. Like the Dutch exiles living in England, they returned home periodically and these journeys, too, provided opportunities to pass on the latest news. Soldiers, for example, came and went with the seasonal rhythms of war. The veteran campaigner, recounting recent actions and holding forth about ‘how to banish the Spanish from out the Low Countries’, was a familiar figure in the taverns of London and other English towns by the early seventeenth century and played a part in stimulating public support for the international Protestant cause.¹¹ Others travelled back and forth across the North Sea more frequently still, from fishermen bringing word of the latest military manoeuvres to state envoys and officials carrying reports of a more sophisticated kind.¹² As the diplomat Hubert Languet remarked in a letter to the young Philip Sidney, it was not always necessary to send a written account of the current situation in the Netherlands since ‘people are always passing between Belgium and England who can tell you the news from thence’.¹³

No doubt this was true. But while we can recognize how often news must have travelled by word of mouth, we can usually only guess at what was said. We cannot eavesdrop on the talk of our ancestors. In order to judge the quality of the news reaching Britain from the Netherlands at this time and to see how it changed in form during the course of the Eighty Years War, we must for the most part rely on what was written down – or rather, on what was written and what was printed. Fortunately, there is no shortage of such material.

Manuscript newsletters and histories

To begin with, there are manuscript newsletters – private letters, that is, as distinct from the more or less official dispatches of diplomats. Despite

Cf. P. J. Blok, *History of the people of the Netherlands*, 5 vols. (New York, 1898–1912), vol. IV, p. 153.

¹¹ B. Rich, *A martiall conference ... betweene two souldiers* (London, 1598; STC 20991.3), sig. E2^{r-v} (quotation); *Diary of John Manningham ... 1602–3*, ed. J. Bruce (CS old series 99, 1868), p. 74; *Tom Tell-Troath* (written 1621, printed 1622), in *Harleian miscellany*, 8 vols. (London, 1744–6), vol. II, pp. 400–2; K. H. D. Haley, *The British and the Dutch* (London, 1988), p. 48; A. Fox, *Oral and literate culture in England 1500–1700* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 340, 348. At Myddle in Shropshire William Preece was famous for telling ‘romantic stories of his strange adventures’ in the Low Countries wars during the 1590s: R. Gough, *The history of Myddle*, ed. D. Hey (Harmondsworth, 1981), pp. 32–3.

¹² For an example of fishermen (from Veere on the island of Walcheren) bringing news to London, see *Newes from Ostend* (London, 1601, STC 18893), sig. Biv^{r-v}.

¹³ *The correspondence of Sir Philip Sidney and Hubert Languet*, trs. S. A. Pears (London, 1845), p. 151.

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his assertion that letters were hardly needed when so much was communicated orally, Languet actually sent Sidney quite regular accounts of the current situation in the Netherlands and in the wider international sphere between 1574 and 1580; and a comparable series of letters survives from the 1560s, written by the Antwerp-based merchant Richard Clough to Sir Thomas Gresham in London.¹⁴ By the late sixteenth century the writing and circulation of manuscript newsletters had become a commercial business, with semi-professional London journalists like John Chamberlain and John Pory supplying regular digests of domestic and foreign news to clients in the English counties in return for an annual fee.¹⁵ And it was mainly from the Low Countries that these newsmongers got their foreign intelligence – from Antwerp, thanks to its unique position at the crossroads of north-western Europe's postal systems, and increasingly from Amsterdam too.¹⁶ Both Chamberlain and Pory relied also on Sir Dudley Carleton, British ambassador at The Hague from 1615 to 1628, as a source of information, and at about the same time Carleton's opposite number in London, Albert Joachimi, was sending regular accounts of continental affairs to Sir Simonds D'Ewes, the Member of Parliament.¹⁷

But it was not only news that circulated in manuscript. Printed tracts were often copied out by hand, especially those which the authorities had suppressed, like Thomas Scott's anti-Spanish polemic, *Vox populi or newes from Spayne* (1620).¹⁸ And manuscript histories of the

¹⁴ *Correspondence of Sidney and Languet*, pp. 45–6, 56–7, 68–9, 73–4, 81, 115–16, 138–9, 151–2, 155–6, 160, 173–5, 178–9; J. W. Burgon, *The life and times of Sir Thomas Gresham*, 2 vols. (London, 1839), vol. I, pp. 275–8, 377–92, 405–11, vol. II, pp. 46–8, 52–4, 132–49, 167–74, 209–11, 228–38, 245–7.

¹⁵ *The letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. N. E. McClure, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, PA, 1939); W. S. Powell, *John Pory 1572–1636* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1977); R. F. Williams (ed.), *The court and times of James I, illustrated by authentic and confidential letters*, 2 vols. (London, 1849); R. F. Williams (ed.), *The court and times of Charles I containing a series of historical and confidential letters*, 2 vols. (London, 1848); H. Love, *Scribal publication in seventeenth-century England* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 9–12; H. R. Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the circulation of manuscripts 1558–1640* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 183–4; I. Atherton, 'The itch grown a disease: manuscript transmission of news in the seventeenth century', in J. Raymond (ed.), *News, newspapers and society in early modern Britain* (London, 1999), pp. 39–65.

¹⁶ P. Arblaster, 'London, Antwerp and Amsterdam: journalistic relations in the first half of the seventeenth century', in L. Hellinga et al. (eds.), *The bookshop of the world: the role of the Low Countries in the book-trade 1473–1941* ('t Goy-Houten, 2001), pp. 145–50.

¹⁷ *The autobiography and correspondence of Sir Simonds D'Ewes*, ed. J. O. Halliwell, 2 vols. (London, 1845), vol. I, p. 421.

¹⁸ Love, *Scribal publication*, pp. 75, 96–7; Woudhuysen, *Sidney*, pp. 52, 146–7. In November 1624 Elias Pettit wrote from Cambridge to his brother Henry about having seen 'both written and printed' versions of a controversial pamphlet about the

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Netherlands were available too. Some of these were transcribed from existing printed accounts, such as Edward Grimeston's *Generall historie of the Netherlands* (1608).¹⁹ But others were more original in content, or were tailored to the needs of a specific readership. The anonymous 'History of the Netherlands from 1369 to 1566', a manuscript now preserved among the State Papers Foreign of the later 1560s, was probably written for the information of Queen Elizabeth's secretaries of state and other privy councillors as they sought to make sense of events in the Low Countries during the early years of the revolt.²⁰ Later in the reign, when England and Holland were allies against Spain, the scribe Richard Robinson produced a series of manuscripts relating to the revolt and the allied war effort, including in 1595 an English translation of Emanuel van Meteren's as yet unprinted *Historia Belgica*, and in 1596 accounts of the Armada campaign (in Latin, also transcribed from Van Meteren) and of the Anglo-Dutch raid on Cadiz (in English, compiled from the 'most credible' reports), the latter intended for presentation to the Lord Admiral, Howard of Effingham, and those who had accompanied him on the raid.²¹ Robinson was a commercial hack, scraping a living from his pen. But manuscripts on Netherlands history and topography were also produced by gentlemen, writing (or claiming to write) simply for their own satisfaction.²² One such was William Taylor of Weybridge in Surrey, whose 'Breife collection of history conteyned in the affaires of the Netherlands' was completed in November 1621, a few months after fighting in the Dutch–Spanish war was resumed following the expiry of the Twelve Years Truce. Taylor addressed the work to his sons, evidently intending that they should

massacre of Amboyna: D. Gardiner (ed.), *The Oxinden letters 1607–1642* (London, 1933), pp. 17–18.

¹⁹ A manuscript copy of Grimeston's *Historie* is recorded among the Burke papers: HMC *Third report*, p. 205.

²⁰ National Archives, Kew, SP 70/87, fos. 151–233; *CSPFor*, vol. VIII, 1566–1568, p. 159.

²¹ Woudhuysen, *Sidney*, pp. 197–201. Van Meteren's *Historia Belgica*, which Robinson translated and transcribed, circulated in manuscript for several years before it was printed in 1598. The chapter on the Armada was subsequently printed in an English translation (presumably made by Robinson) in Richard Hakluyt's *Voyages* (1599–1600; Everyman ed., 8 vols., 1907, vol. II, pp. 369–401), while Robinson's (much abbreviated) translation of Van Meteren's whole History was printed in 1602 as *A true discourse historical of the succeeding governours in the Netherlands* (STC 17846).

²² For example, Sir Francis Vere's *Commentaries*, written c. 1606 for circulation in manuscript, were not printed until 1657; James Howell's *Letters*, including several written from Holland in 1617–22, were printed between 1645 and 1650; Sir William Brereton's 'Travels into Holland and the seventeen provinces', written in 1634, were printed in 1844.

now serve the international Protestant cause in the Low Countries as he himself had done with the Earl of Leicester's expedition a generation before.²³

Printers and translators

As a means of spreading news and information, communication by word of mouth and by manuscript copy had the advantage of avoiding government control. But the same could not be said of printed books and pamphlets. Far from being free, these were subject to what has been called 'a dual system of control', exercised both by the printers' own guild, the Stationers' Company, and by ecclesiastical commissioners who were responsible to the crown for licensing (and where necessary censoring) all texts prior to their publication.²⁴ Yet despite its authoritarian appearance, this system was not uniformly restrictive, as the history of news publishing in Britain shows. It is true that by law some things were out of bounds to British printers, including matters of church and state and much of what today would be termed home news. But *foreign* news could be published quite freely, with only occasional interference by the authorities.²⁵ (Not until the mid 1630s did the crown make a sustained attempt to limit the publication of foreign news, and even then the ban imposed was partial rather than total and was not

²³ W. T[aylor], 'A breife collection of history conteyned in the affaires of the Netherlands' [from 1439 to 1609], ms. formerly at Ragley Hall, Warwickshire (HMC *Fourth report*, appendix i, p. 252) and now in the library of the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, XV.05079. For Taylor's service in the Netherlands in 1586, see R. C. Strong and J. A. van Dorsten, *Leicester's triumph* (Leiden, 1964), p. 131. His continuing commitment to the international Protestant cause is suggested by the fact that he contributed £20 to the loan raised by the crown in 1625 to pay for England's new war with Spain: A. R. Bax, 'The names of those persons in the county of Surrey who contributed to the loan to King Charles I', *Surrey Archaeological Collections* 17 (1902), 81.

²⁴ C. Hill, *Collected essays*, 3 vols. (Brighton, 1985–6), vol. I, *Writing and revolution in seventeenth-century England*, pp. 32–9; C. S. Clegg, *Press censorship in Jacobean England* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 178–80.

²⁵ During Elizabeth's reign there is evidence of just two occasions when the authorities intervened to prevent publication of news from the Low Countries. In 1568 three London printers (two of them natives of Antwerp) were imprisoned for publishing a pamphlet in French about the Duke of Alba's regime, and in 1587 John Stow's account of the Earl of Leicester's expedition to the Netherlands was removed from the second edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles*: W. W. Greg (ed.), *A companion to Arber* (Oxford, 1967), p. 11; E. Rosenberg, *Leicester patron of letters* (New York, 1955), pp. 94–5; C. S. Clegg, *Press censorship in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge, 1997), ch. 7. The early Stuart monarchy showed a little more concern to limit the growth of news publishing. In 1621 James I persuaded the Dutch States General to prohibit the export of corantos (the earliest newspapers) to Britain – a move which had no discernible effect – and a couple of years later copies of the periodical *Mercurius Gallo-Belgicus* were 'called in' for misreporting what the king had told Parliament about his policy towards Spain:

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intended to be permanent.²⁶) Consequently, printers who wanted to exploit the public's growing appetite for news of current events tended to look abroad for their material – and that meant looking to, among other places, the Netherlands. For the Netherlands was important both as a focus of public interest and as a purveyor of the printed word. Like France during the Wars of Religion and Germany in the Thirty Years War, it was the scene of a major conflict with implications for Britain's security. And it was a place with a vigorous, and increasingly international, printing trade of its own. As has often been remarked, the Dutch Revolt was the first revolutionary movement to make full use of the printing press as a means of propaganda. More than ten thousand pamphlets and books were issued during the course of the Eighty Years War and this massive output naturally had the effect of stimulating the press in neighbouring countries, as publications from the Low Countries were translated, imitated or answered.

It is not surprising, then, to find that of the thirty-six English-language pamphlets relating to the Dutch Revolt which were published in London between 1566 and 1584, no fewer than twenty-six were translations from Dutch or French, the two main languages of the Low Countries. A few of these translations were short news-pamphlets of a dozen pages or less, hastily printed in order to make the most of the rather meagre military successes achieved by the rebels during

J. F. Larkin and P. L. Hughes (ed.), *Stuart royal proclamations*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1973–83), vol. I, pp. 495–6, 519–21, 583–5, 599–600; F. S. Siebert, *Freedom of the press in England 1476–1776* (Urbana, IL, 1952), pp. 150–1; M. Frearson, 'London corantos in the 1620s', *Studies in newspaper and periodical history annual* (1993), 3–17; J. Raymond, *The invention of the newspaper* (Oxford, 1996), p. 7; Williams (ed.), *Court and times of James I*, vol. II, p. 421; Clegg, *Press censorship in Jacobean England*, pp. 181–7. There is also evidence that a news-play of 1619, *The tragedy of Sir John van Olden Barnavelt*, was altered before performance by the Master of the Revels, mainly in order to make the character of Prince Maurice of Nassau more sympathetic: F. J. Levy, 'Staging the news' in A. F. Marotti and M. Bristol (eds.), *Print, manuscript, performance: the changing relations of the media in early modern England* (Ohio, 2000), p. 258.

²⁶ In October 1632 the Privy Council issued an order suppressing 'for the present' the publication of weekly newsbooks. The decision was taken partly in response to diplomatic complaints about the unfavourable reporting of Habsburg affairs in the English periodical press and partly to forestall criticism of Charles I's disengagement from the European war. But the ban did not apply to all news-pamphlets (the half-yearly *Swedish intelligencer* continued to be printed in London) nor did it prevent printers in Holland from issuing newsbooks aimed at the English market. It was eventually lifted in December 1638 and weekly publication of foreign news was resumed almost immediately: L. Hanson, 'English newsbooks 1620–41', *The Library* fourth series 18 (1938), 375–7; F. Dahl, 'Amsterdam – cradle of English newspapers', *The Library* fifth series 4 (1950), 173–6; Greg (ed.), *Companion to Arber*, pp. 291–2; K. Sharpe, *The personal rule of Charles I* (New Haven, 1992), pp. 646–7, 653; C. S. Clegg, *Press censorship in Caroline England* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 194.

these early years.²⁷ But the majority were quite different in character. Substantial pieces of political propaganda (running in some cases to more than eighty pages), they sought to explain the traditional constitution of the Low Countries, to justify the actions of the Netherlanders in taking up arms against their Spanish Habsburg overlords and hence to win support for the Dutch cause from neighbouring countries.

Some addressed their arguments directly to the reader, as in the manifestoes written for the Prince of Orange's first (and unsuccessful) campaign against the Duke of Alva in 1568 and Philip Marnix's *Pithie and most earnest exhortation*, a tract of 1583 calling for the formation of a European league against Spain's ambition for universal monarchy.²⁸ But most of these early polemics adopted an indirect approach, simply reproducing the text of one or more public documents (petitions, letters, treaties and so on) and leaving the reader to draw his own conclusions. Thus the very first pamphlet in the series, *A briefe request or declaracion* of 1566, printed the petition presented by the lesser nobility of the Netherlands to the governess-general Margaret of Parma in April of that year alongside related letters between Margaret and Philip II (including part of the king's notorious letter from the Segovia Woods, in which he laid down his uncompromising religious policy), without providing any accompanying explanation for those in England who might not already be familiar with the crisis in the Netherlands.²⁹ Over the next few years, English readers were offered fifteen similar tracts containing further significant documents, including the Netherlands' appeal for the support of the Imperial Diet in 1570 (STC 18441), Orange's *Supplication* of 1573 to Philip II (STC 25710), the Pacification of Ghent of 1576 (STC 18448), Orange's objections to the so-called Perpetual Edict of 1577 (STC 25710.5), an exchange of letters between the Prince of Parma and the States General in March 1579 (STC 333), and the religious settlements which Orange agreed with the magistrates of Ghent and Antwerp, respectively in December 1578 (STC 11808)

²⁷ For example, *A true rehersall of the honorable & tryumphant victory which the defenders of the trueth have had againste the tyrannical and bloodthirsty league of the Albanists* (London, 1573; STC 13578), recounting an episode in the defence of Haarlem during the Spanish siege of 1573. A translation from the Dutch, this pamphlet was published in London just twelve days after the events to which it referred. A similar time-lag is found in news-pamphlets of the 1590s and 1600s: D. C. Collins (ed.), *Battle of Nieuport 1600* (Oxford, 1935), pp. xxii–xxiii.

²⁸ *A declaration and publication of the most worthy prince of Orange* (London, [1568?]; STC 25708); *A iustification or cleering of the prince of Orendge*, trs. Arthur Goldyng (London, [1575]; STC 25712); [P. Marnix], *A pithie and most earnest exhortation concerning the estate of Christendome* (Antwerp [=London], 1583; STC 17450.7).

²⁹ *A briefe request or declaracion presented unto Madame the duchesse of Parme* (London, 1566; STC 11028).

and June 1579 (*STC* 25711). No doubt the documentary form of these tracts stemmed from what seems to have been one of the main roots of the pamphleteering tradition of the Netherlands – the convention by which provincial states and other public bodies when presenting a petition to their ruler would also have it printed, thus appealing to the public as well as to the prince.³⁰ But appealing to the public in the Netherlands was not the same thing as addressing the people of a neighbouring country. And since the translations of these sometimes complex and convoluted texts were published with little or no introductory comment, one cannot help wondering what English readers made of them. The anti-Spanish message of Orange's famous *Apologie* of 1581 may have seemed clear enough, even though it was addressed to 'my lords' of the States General rather than directly to the reader.³¹ But can Elizabethan Londoners really have understood, for example, the medieval text of the *Joyfull Entrie* of Brabant, which appeared in English translation in the same year (*STC* 3472), without a word of explanation as to its constitutional significance?³²

British writers in the Netherlands

Presumably London printers were still feeling their way towards a satisfactory way of presenting news from abroad. Nor is it clear in these early years how particular texts from the Netherlands were chosen for translation into English and publication here. From around 1580, however, three changes were becoming noticeable in English press coverage of the Dutch Revolt, changes whose general effect was to make the progress of the conflict more accessible to an English readership. In the first place, pamphlets had begun to appear which were not translations but original works, written by British eye-witnesses of the war in the Low Countries. The earliest was George Gascoigne's graphic narrative of the Spanish army's sack of Antwerp, published at the end of 1576, shortly after the event itself.³³ And over the next sixty years other soldier-authors followed in Gascoigne's path, from his older contemporary Thomas Churchyard, who had served in William of Orange's

³⁰ C. E. Harline, *Pamphlets, printing, and political culture in the early Dutch Republic* (Dordrecht, 1987), pp. 159–61.

³¹ *The apologie of Prince William of Orange against the proclamation of the king of Spaine* (Delft, 1581; ed. H. Wansink, Leiden, 1969).

³² *The ioyfull entrie of the dukedome of Brabant*, trs. R. V. S. (London, [1581]; *STC* 3472).

³³ [G. Gascoigne], *The spoyle of Antwerpe* (1576), in Gascoigne's *Complete works*, ed. J. W. Cunliffe, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1907–10), vol. II, pp. 586–99.