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978-1-107-08761-3 - The Royalist Republic: Literature, Politics, and Religion in the Anglo-Dutch Public Sphere, 1639–1660

Helmer J. Helmers

Excerpt

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Introduction: The Royalist Republic

On 22 January 1649, shortly after eleven o'clock in the morning, the States General of the United Provinces met in The Hague for an extraordinary session. From among the great multitude of carriages assembled at the Inner Court, a most unlikely visitor stepped into the cold Great Hall. The Prince of Wales, in the company of, amongst others, Lord Henry Percy and Sir William Boswell, made his appearance before the national assembly. Taking his position opposite the Lord President, the young Prince muttered a few words in English which few of his Dutch audience understood. Then Boswell took over in French and spoke what must be one of the most dramatic phrases that ever resounded in the ancient Hall: 'J'ai l'horreur de dire, qu'un Prince de Angleterre vient requirir intercession pour la vie du Roy son pere'.¹

The result of Boswell's impassioned request was immediate. That same day, the States resolved to send an embassy to England in order to prevent the anticipated execution of the reigning monarch of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Arriving in London a fortnight later, the emissaries, Adriaen Pauw van Heemstede and Albert Joachimi, were courteously received by Parliament, and were allowed conferences with both the generals Fairfax and Cromwell. Yet of course, as we now know, Pauw and Joachimi were unable to alter the fate of the king. After what must have been three frustrating days for the Dutchmen, Charles I was condemned for high treason on 8 February 1649, and sentenced to be executed the next day. Several members of the entourage of the ambassadors – though not the ambassadors themselves – witnessed the event. 'The execution of the king', one of them wrote in a pamphlet published in Holland a few weeks later, 'was the most remarkable and saddest spectacle that I ever saw'.²

Word of the king's death and the embassy's failure reached Holland five days after the execution, on 14 February, when an express boat delivered

¹ Aitzema III, 297; Geyl, *Orange and Stuart*, 45.

² Kn. 6309. *Copie van eenen brieff* (1649), 1. 'Het executeren vanden Coningh is het wonderbaerlijkste en het droevighste spectakel dat ick oyt gesien hebbe'.

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confirmation of the feared outcome in Scheveningen.³ One of the first to be informed was the king's son-in-law, stadtholder William II. According to one Dutch description of the arrival of the shocking tidings, the Prince of Orange sent one of his chaplains, the Scotsman David Stuart, to inform his brother-in-law Charles, the Prince of Wales, who had been living in The Hague for the past six months. In a dramatic scene, the unenviable Dr Stuart found the future Charles II reading. Utterly uncomfortable with his task, the chaplain talked to the Prince about various issues. When Charles asked why he looked so sad, Dr. Stuart reportedly 'fell to his knees, and cried: "God bless your majesty!" upon which the Prince dropped his book and instantly knew the sad truth'.⁴ If the execution of Charles I was a tragedy, as royalist authors frequently suggested after 1649, at least one scene of that tragedy was set in The Hague. It provides one vivid illustration of the Dutch Republic's deep involvement in civil war, regicide, and restoration in England.

This involvement was also, and arguably most vehemently, expressed in print. In the years following the execution of Charles I, the Dutch Republic witnessed an unprecedented output of publications in support of the Stuart monarchy in England. The Stuarts could count on almost general support by Dutch opinion makers; pamphleteers, poets, preachers, politicians, and printmakers from all ideological and religious backgrounds conspired to create a profuse and generically heterogeneous corpus of texts that was nevertheless consistent in its partisan royalism. The death of the king caused a genuine media hype in which the executed king and his family were the central figures.

This is especially apparent in Dutch topical poetry of the 1650s. In 1649 and 1650, nearly all living Dutch poets mourned Charles I, and in 1660, they eulogized his son. In the bellicose poetry written during the First Anglo-Dutch War of 1652–1654 and Baltic War of 1656–1660, English politics also figured prominently as poets sought to come to terms with these unprecedented economic conflicts. I have identified 369 poems that had English politics as a subject in this period. They were printed in pamphlets, on engravings, and in books published between 1649 and 1660.⁵ In only three of these poems are the king's opponents defended, all the others emphatically support the House of Stuart.

The unnerving upheavals of war in Britain that culminated in the execution of Charles I also meant that the interest of Dutch historians in Britain intensified. Whereas Dutch historiography had been primarily concerned with the Dutch national past before the outbreak of

³ Aitzema III, 681. ⁴ De Lange, *Tweede deel der Nederlandsche Historien* (1663), 2–3.

⁵ The number is the result of a systematic survey of catalogued pamphlets and poetry books published in this period.

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the English troubles, E.O.G. Haitsma Mulier has shown that Dutch historians published nine original histories of Britain in the years 1639–1660.⁶ In addition, the same period witnessed the (re-)publication of existing histories by Englishmen in Latin or in translation.⁷ These books did not necessarily reflect on current events as such, but covered the entire history of the British Isles. Such accounts were evidently in demand because they served as a frame of reference with which current events could be understood. ‘When the situation returned to normal’ after Charles II’s coronation in 1661, Haitsma Mulier observes, ‘the historiographical interest waned’.⁸ The political signature of these histories can be succinctly illustrated by the frontispiece of Montanus’ history of the First Anglo-Dutch War, which shows a double-faced male figure representing the English Parliament. Trampling over Neptune, it maliciously kicks three crowns into the air.⁹ Like the poetry, these histories adopted a royalist perspective on history.

In the drama the impact of the British troubles was felt with equal intensity. Plays such as Vondel’s *Maria Stuart* (1646) and Johan Dullaert’s *Karel Stuart* (1649, perf. 1652) have long been recognized as topical to the English Civil Wars. A systematic study of all the plays published between 1640 and 1660 has enabled me to identify a considerably larger group of plays participating in the discourse on the English Revolution. History plays, such as Joachim Oudaen’s *Konradyn* (‘*Conradin*’) (1649), and Lambert van den Bosch’s *Roode en witte roos* (‘*Red and white rose*’) (1652), revenge tragedies, such as Jan Bara’s *Herstelde vorst* (‘*The Prince Restored*’) (1650) and comedies, such as Melchior Fockens’ *Klucht van Dronkken Hansje* (‘*Farce of drunken Hans*’) (1657), are but a few of the dramatic contributions to the discourse on English politics. With the exception of a triad of Thomas More plays, published in the later 1650s, they invariably adopt a royalist perspective. Performed both at the centre of Dutch theatrical culture, the Amsterdam Municipal Theatre, and on stages erected by travelling players throughout the country and beyond, such plays were at least as instrumental in affecting popular opinion as poems and histories.¹⁰

⁶ Haitsma Mulier, ‘The History of Great Britain’.

⁷ Baker, *Cronyke van ’t leven* (1649); Carrington, *Het verhael, van het leven en de doot* (1659); Vergil, *Historiae Anglicae* (1649); Vergil, *Historiae Anglicae* (1651); Camden, *Rerum Anglicarum* (1639); Camden, *Britannia* (1639); Bacon, *Historia regni Henrici Septimi Angliae regis* (1647); Johnston, *Historia rerum Britannicarum* (1655); Godwin, *Rerum Anglicarum* (1653).

⁸ Haitsma Mulier, ‘The History of Great Britain’, 146.

⁹ Montanus, *Beroerde Oceaen* (1656), *1r.

¹⁰ Bloemendal and Van Dixhoorn, ‘Introduction’, 1–3. On the royalism of travelling players: Astington, ‘Actors and the Court’, and Helmers, ‘Unknown Shrews’.

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Debate on the regicide, then, was not limited to the bare, written word. Indeed, other media were equally instrumental in creating a cultish atmosphere surrounding the House of Stuart. Songs and ballads added not only melody but also emotion to the verbal message of prose pamphlets and topical poetry. They were easily committed to memory, and repetition made the lyrics hard to forget. The use of melody could also add new layers of meaning. Walking through the streets of Amsterdam, in the early 1650s, one might have heard a song on Charles' execution to the elegiac melody that was also used in spiritual songs lamenting the death of Christ.¹¹ Several songs on the king's death were set to the famous royalist melody 'Prince Rupert's March'.¹² By thus referring to Rupert of Bohemia's march on York, in 1644, such songs not only provided constant reference to the history of the Civil War, but also added martial, even vengeful emotion to the text. Fifteen Dutch songs on English politics have survived in printed form, although more probably circulated orally.

Visual sources also played an important part in the Dutch discourse on English politics. Images, after all, were powerful weapons of political propaganda and polemic, and functioned alongside or in conjunction with textual and performative genres.¹³ More than one hundred Dutch prints published between 1640 and 1660 reflected on English politics, and the vast majority of those supported the Stuart cause. One particular omnipresent pictorial element in this corpus was the engraved image of Charles I after Wenceslaus Hollar's adaptation of Anthony van Dyck. Functioning in a wide variety of contexts, ranging from frontispieces of royalist propaganda to vanitas paintings, the portrait of the king became a veritable icon, worshipped and meditated on by Dutch audiences (see Chapter 4).

The remarkable profusion of pro-Stuart texts in a Republic dominated by Calvinists is the central problem which this study seeks to examine. Why did the Dutch Republic, ostensibly the logical continental ally of the new, equally Protestant English Republic, embrace the royalist cause – at least in print? What constituted the attraction of the royalist cause for Dutch authors? Stuart defenders came from a wide range of social, geographical, and religious backgrounds. Some were and still are famous, such as the middle-class Catholic poet laureate Joost van den Vondel and the aristocratic, Reformed secretary of the princes of Orange, Sir Constantijn Huygens. Although the latter preferred not to

¹¹ Thys. 2465. *Een waerachtigh nieu liedt van d'wreede sententie in Enghelant* (1649).

¹² Thys. 2482. *Liedeken* (1649); Kn. 6361. *Prins Roberts Antwoordt* (1649).

¹³ Sharpe, 'An Image Doting Rabble'; Pierce, *Unseemly Pictures*; idem, 'Anti-episcopacy'.

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broadcast his political opinions widely, Huygens, knighted by James I, was as deeply troubled by the upheavals in England as Vondel, and actively promoted the royalist cause throughout the 1650s. Others, including a host of anonymous scribblers, were more obscure; some published nothing else but incidental royalist poems and pamphlets. Ideologically, royalist authors ranged from the Orangist freethinker Jan Zoet to his Amsterdam Catholic enemy Jan Vos, and from the Calvinist apothecary Jan Six van Chandelier to influential magistrates such as the Amsterdam burgomaster Jan Six and the Dordrecht diplomat Cornelis van Beveren. Their motivations cannot unequivocally be explained in terms of domestic partisanship. Indeed, as we shall see, the profusion of royalist rhetoric in Dutch texts and images exposes some of the faultlines in the political culture of the young Republic, since the rejection of the English Revolution and the religious veneration of Charles I in the 1650s are difficult to align with Dutch religious and political identities.

The radical turn in Dutch public opinion on the Civil Wars in 1649 adds to the problematic status of the ubiquitous Dutch Stuart support in printed texts and images of the 1650s. In the 1640s, Parliament had been extremely successful in acquiring popular support in the Dutch Republic. After the execution of the king, however, Dutch support for Parliament almost disappeared. The politician, spy, and news-trafficker Lieuwe van Aitzema was baffled by this sudden change in allegiance, which he considered to be a ‘remarkable sign of human fickleness’.¹⁴ In Aitzema’s analysis ‘the people were so enraptured by Compassion, that they repudiated the actions of the Parliamentarians (with whom they had always agreed before), and now agreed with the king (whom they had always opposed before)’.¹⁵ Although the situation was not as clear-cut as Aitzema presents it, the change in public opinion is indeed remarkable. It is a change, moreover, that requires more rigorous analysis and a better explanation than Aitzema has on offer.

This book argues that the profusion of royalist support in the Dutch public sphere was part of an Anglo-Scoto-Dutch discourse inspired by the Wars of the Three Kingdoms. Charles II’s supplication to the States General in 1649 was only one of the many British appeals for Dutch support in the period between the outbreak of the troubles during the late 1630s and the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660. Many of these

¹⁴ Aitzema III, 325. ‘Een merckelijck teecken van de menschelijcke veranderlijckheyt’. On Aitzema’s various activities: Rowen, ‘Lieuwe van Aitzema’; and Van der Plaet, *Eendracht als opdracht*.

¹⁵ Aitzema III, 326. ‘De Gemeente in dese Staet, soo door compassie verruickt, dat sy ‘t doen der Parlementarissen improbeerden ende nu den Coninck, diese te voor altydt in ‘t ongelijck hadden gestelt, gelijk gaven’. Also cited in: Grosheide, *Cromwell*, 8.

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appeals were made in printed pamphlets in the Dutch vernacular. It is the argument of this study that in order to understand the prominence of the royalist voice in the Dutch Republic, it is vital to study it as part of the international debate on the Wars of the Three Kingdoms that found its origin in such appeals.

In line with its subject, this study will adopt a double, Anglo-Dutch perspective on the extensive corpus at hand. Paul Sellin's article on the prefatory material that was added to the Dutch translations of Salmasius' *Defensio Regia* (subtitled 'notes towards an investigation') has provided a major source of inspiration to undertake that effort. Sellin pointed out that the many pro-Stuart topical poems ought to be studied as 'a distinct corpus of interrelated material'. He emphasized that from a study of the kind of topical sources outlined above as a distinct corpus of interrelated material 'not merely the political and literary-bibliographical history of the Netherlands can profit but that of the history of English printing and literature'.¹⁶ This book indeed addresses scholars of both British and Dutch history.

For cultural, literary, and political historians of the Civil War period in Britain, this study discloses a vast amount of sources that have hitherto remained out of view. Although for the most part original Dutch productions, these texts and images are of central importance to the study of the Wars of the Three Kingdoms. In the first place because they were of major interest to British contemporaries, including Charles II and Oliver Cromwell, authors such as John Milton and Andrew Marvell, and religious leaders such as William Laud and Robert Baillie. Secondly, because these sources evince the extent to which continental contexts inform both our knowledge of the business of propaganda and the discourse of civil war. Dutch literary scholars and historians already acquainted with at least some of these texts will find familiar sources recontextualized and reinterpreted in the light of Anglo-Scoto-Dutch relations in the mid seventeenth century. Moreover, as will be dealt with in detail below, I seek to apply the methodology of the new cultural history developed by scholars of the Stuart age to the Dutch Republic. Both groups, finally, will hopefully find use in my interpretation of an Anglo-Scoto-Dutch moment fraught with religious, political, and literary dialogue.

Dutch royalism

As my title indicates, this study treats Dutch printed support for the Stuart monarchy as a form of royalism. By challenging the

¹⁶ Sellin, 'Royalist Propaganda', 259.

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terminological divides between national disciplines, I seek to arrive at a mode of analysis that is able to reveal the fascinating international dynamics of early modern political discourse and the early modern public sphere. Nevertheless, the application of the British political label of royalism to Dutch texts published in a Dutch context is likely to raise eyebrows among scholars, and should be justified from the outset.

Contemporary uses of the terms ‘royalist’ and its synonym ‘cavalier’ offer ample justification for applying the term royalism to Dutch authors and texts, as authors on both sides of the channel frequently confounded Dutch and English political terminologies. One ‘letter from Holland’ published in 1642, pointing out the similarities between English and Dutch political conflicts, reported that ‘the Prince and the States are united and separated, as the king and Parliament are in England’.¹⁷ Another pamphleteer blurred the distinction between Orangism and royalism even more explicitly when he wrote about ‘the great store of Arms and Ammunition, which were sent from the Prince of Orange and the Dutch Cavaleers to his Majesty’.¹⁸ A decade later, George Downing even considered the entire Dutch Republic to be ‘a meere nursery of cavallierisme’.¹⁹ Dutch commentators, too, often thought in hybrid, Anglo-Dutch terms. Thus Lieuwe van Aitzema, who worked as a spy for the English Secretary of State John Thurloe, wrote about Dutch Calvinist preachers as ‘good royalists’.²⁰ Indeed, Thurloe’s pervasive interest in the Dutch popular print of the 1650s (see Chapter 1) depended on the idea that something like Dutch royalism existed in the first place.

If some pamphleteers signalled an Anglo-Dutch royalist faction led by the united Houses of Stuart and Orange, others similarly saw an Anglo-Dutch republican opposition. A dominant theme in the Orangist propaganda against Amsterdam in 1649–1650, for example, was the city’s supposed leaning towards the republican, regicidal regime in England (see Chapter 5). In a positive vein, Jacob Cats emphasized the republican brotherhood between the Dutch and the English in public speeches delivered in The Hague and London in 1651–1652.²¹ The result of such public utterances was a hybrid political discourse in which Anglo-Dutch parties were pitted against each other.²² In this discourse, royalists and Orangists were fighting an alliance of Parliamentarians and state party supporters.

¹⁷ Wing N1036. *News Out of the Lowv-Countries* (January 1643), A3v.

¹⁸ Wing M2930. *A most true relation* (December 1642), 1.

¹⁹ Thurloe VII, 246. Cited in: Scott, ‘Good Night Amsterdam’, 345.

²⁰ Aitzema III, 323. ²¹ Kn. 7141. Cats, *Oratie* (1652).

²² Cf. Scott, ‘Good Night Amsterdam’.

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In the religious sphere, too, English, Scottish, and Dutch oppositions were often represented as congruous, in Britain as well as in the United Provinces. As Chapter 2 will argue, between 1639 and 1645, Dutch Contra-Remonstrants, Scottish Covenanters, and English Presbyterians cooperated in a propaganda campaign in the Dutch Republic aimed at representing the First Civil War as a battle against ‘Arminians’ who were jeopardizing the entire Reformation. On the other side, prominent Dutch Remonstrants, including the Remonstrant colossus Grotius, were devoted defenders of episcopacy and the Church of England. In their interpretation too, the Civil War was fought over the future of Anglo-Dutch Protestantism, as we shall see in Chapter 3.

Using royalism as a category for analysing Dutch political discourse also finds support in current developments in royalist studies. Revising the simplified Whig images of the royalist movement, historians of the English Civil Wars have come to realize that royalism was never a monolithic ideology, nor one that can simply be divided into convenient dichotomies such as the divide between ‘absolutists’ and ‘constitutionalists’. Royalism, scholars now realize, was inherently multifarious and dynamic. In terms of religion, for instance, royalists ranged between radicals and conformists. Nor were all royalists constant in their allegiance to the king. As the cases of Andrew Marvell, Marchamont Nedham, and even Abraham Cowley illustrate, allegiance to the monarchy was not necessarily stable: individuals might opt into and out of royalism depending on the circumstances, and adopt appropriately ambiguous rhetoric in doing so.²³ Instead of treating royalism as a unified party, then, scholars now realize that the term covers a broad range of people who rationalized their support for the king in such diverse ways as to cause frequent discord and conflict.²⁴

This insight also applies to nationality, since royalism (traditionally studied mainly from Anglocentric points of view) is no longer treated as an English phenomenon. Recent archipelagic perspectives have emphasized that royalism was essentially international, and that Scottish and Irish royalisms were not necessarily identical to English ones. Indeed, this book develops John Kerrigan’s suggestion, in *Archipelagic English*, that the Dutch Republic became part of an Anglo-Scoto-Dutch triangle in the early 1650s.²⁵

²³ Hopper, *Turncoats and Renegadoes*; McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship*, 93–126; McElligott and Smith, *Royalists and Royalism during the English Civil Wars*, 11, 15. On royalist allegiance to Charles II in exile: Greenspan, ‘Charles II’.

²⁴ McElligott, *Royalism, Print, and Censorship*. McElligott and Smith, *Royalists and Royalism during the Interregnum*, 1–15; 66–88; De Groot, *Royalist Identities*.

²⁵ Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English*, 220–243.

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In view of these developments, it is remarkable that continental perspectives are still rare in this new and vibrant field of study. It is telling, in this respect, that two outstanding books on royalism, Robert Wilcher's *The Writing of Royalism* and James Loxley's *Royalism and Poetry in the English Civil Wars*,²⁶ are both 'strikingly thin' in their accounts of the 1650s.²⁷ The underemphasis on this period in the current scholarship on royalism is partly explained by its preoccupation with texts in the English language. After Charles I's disastrous defeat at the battle of Naseby, however, English royalism was increasingly an exiled, continental movement, which depended upon continental support both for its survival and its ambitions to regain its former power. Although well aware of this, scholars of royalism have not yet adopted the appropriate multilingual approach required to assess its political culture during this decade of exile. Particularly if we want to gain an understanding of the royalist propaganda strategies and of the contexts in which royalist and Parliamentary rhetoric functioned, foreign contexts and literatures need to be taken into consideration, as continental audiences were foremost in the minds of political actors across the politico-religious spectrum. By labelling Dutch Stuart support as 'royalism', I want to emphasize its affinities and connections with various British royalisms.

In addition to foregrounding international continuities, the title *Royalist Republic* is meant to emphasize the frictions between domestic and international political discourses. Indeed, the very fact that Dutch Stuart support in the 1650s did not easily fit into domestic politico-religious divides, is compelling reason to apply the distinct label of royalism to it and not simply to equate royalism with Orangism as scholars of English and Dutch politics alike have tended to do.²⁸ As we have seen above, Dutch allegiances during the 1640s and 1650s did not correspond with domestic ideological divisions as easily as English and Dutch polemicists alike suggested.

In the case of the Anglo-Dutch politico-religious debate on the Civil Wars, such tensions were aggravated by a structural asymmetry between the political and the religious Anglo-Dutch identities sketched above. Contra-Remonstrants of the Voetius circle, who had gravitated towards the Princes of Orange in the domestic sphere in the 1610s, supported the Parliament during the First Civil War. They therefore distanced themselves in printed pamphlets from Frederick Henry's royal alliance, and would never have supported an Orange-led war against Parliament in this

²⁶ Wilcher, *The Writing of Royalism*; Loxley, *Royalism and Poetry*.

²⁷ Raymond, 'Describing Popularity', 123.

²⁸ Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism*, esp. 108–109; Geyl, *Orange and Stuart*.

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period. When these Reformed came round to the Stuart/Orange point of view during the Second Civil War, their support of the restoration of Charles II was difficult to reconcile with their religious views. A poignant example of that tension is offered by the most notorious royalist propagandist of the period, Claudius Salmasius. Having published *Defensio Regia* in 1649 in order to propagate the Stuart cause among continental Presbyterians, Salmasius was soon lambasted in private letters for the blatant conflict between his politico-religious argument in favour of a Stuart restoration and his stated religious convictions. Whereas Salmasius defended the English bishops as good Protestants in *Defensio Regia*, he had vehemently argued against episcopacy only eight years earlier, in *De episcopis et presbyteris*.²⁹ Salmasius' political and religious convictions were evidently in friction, and similar frictions can be discerned in many Dutch royalist texts.

This is also apparent in the ideological thought of those authors whose support of the king was largely confessionally motivated. As we shall see in Chapter 3, Dutch Remonstrant, Catholic and heterodox authors who pleaded the Stuart cause in vernacular publications during the 1640s and 1650s were frequently tacit or outspoken supporters of the State Party and the stadtholderless settlement. In several cases they were even vehement opponents of the Prince of Orange (although that did not necessarily imply a principled stance against Orangism). Joachim Oudaen, for instance, developed a dislike for monarchical government, and was a loyal subject of the States of Holland. Yet in the 1650s, Oudaen was one of the main propagandists of the Stuart cause in popular print, and publicly defended the divine right of kings. As such, he acted in opposition to the States of Holland, who were genuinely troubled by the Stuart presence in the Dutch Republic. According to his earliest biographer, Oudaen came to resent his own 'enthusiasm' for the cause of the English monarchy in the 1670s.³⁰ Presumably he had by then realized that he had contributed to the magical aura of the Prince of Wales, who, as Charles II, had become the Republic's great enemy in 1665. In the 1650s, however, Oudaen either saw no conflict of interests, or chose to ignore it.

Condemning the English Revolution during the interregnum also sat uneasily with the Dutch national self-image. Thinking about the English Revolution inescapably reflected upon the Dutch Revolt against Spain. The question of whether it was justified to revolt against an anointed

²⁹ Salmasius, *De episcopis et presbyteris* (1641). For an example of a hostile letter, see: Symmons, *Life of John Milton*, 353–354n. 'Even a king's advocate', Claudius Serravius wrote about Salmasius, 'ought not, in his master's cause, to speak in public different from what he speaks and thinks in private'.

³⁰ Melles, *Joachim Oudaan*, 40; Van Hoogstraten, 'Het leven van Joachim Oudaen', 20ff.