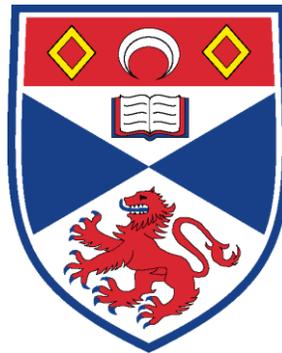


The development of the Dutch press in the seventeenth century  
(1618-1700)



Candidate name: Arthur der Weduwen

Matriculation number: 140002361

Supervisor: Professor Andrew Pettegree

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I hereby certify that this dissertation, which is 15,532 words in length, has been composed by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree. This project was conducted by me at the University of St Andrews from April 2015 to July 2015 towards the fulfilment of the requirement of the University of St Andrews for the degree of Master of Letters in 'The Book. History & Techniques of Analysis' under the supervision of Professor Andrew Pettegree.

31 July 2015

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## Note to the reader

All translations from Dutch and French are my own, unless the quote is directly cited from an English-language work (as referenced in a footnote).

All dates in this dissertation are in the New Style (Gregorian) calendar, which was the calendar used in the states of Holland and Zeeland throughout the seventeenth century, and used in combination with the Old Style calendar throughout the other states of the Dutch Republic.

I employ a modern English spelling for place names and locations (therefore Brussels, The Hague and Cologne), but not when an early modern version is more appropriate (therefore Breslau, not Wroclaw).

In the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, the three most common denominations of currency were the *gulden*, the *stuiver* and the *penning*. 1 *gulden* was worth 20 *stuivers*; 1 *stuiver* was worth 16 *penningen* (1 = 20 = 320). 1 English shilling was in approximate value to 1 *gulden* throughout the seventeenth century.

The following abbreviation is used throughout the footnotes of this work:

*NN* Joad Raymond and Noah Moxham (eds.), *News Networks in early modern Europe* (Leiden, forthcoming).

## Acknowledgements

This dissertation could not have been written without the support of many institutions and individuals. I had the good fortune to be encouraged to work with early Dutch newspapers since I first visited St Andrews as an intern with the Universal Short Title Catalogue (USTC) project in June 2013. I have always received the full support from the USTC community and the School of History, and I was able to test some of my early findings and research on Dutch newspapers with encouraging audiences in St Andrews on multiple occasions.

In particular I would like to thank Dr Graeme Kemp, for his help with the compilation and improvement of my newspaper databases, and Jan Hillgärtner, for his substantial help with photographs from the Royal Library in Stockholm and the Herzog August library in Wolfenbüttel, as well as his extensive knowledge of German newspapers of the seventeenth century.

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For the illustrations used in this dissertation I made use of reproductions from the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the National Archives in Kew, the Royal Libraries in Stockholm and The Hague, the Noord-hollandsarchief in Haarlem and the Persmuseum in Amsterdam. I am grateful to all institutions for the generous availability of their holdings.

It has been a pleasure to share this year of study with Edwin Goi and Drew Thomas; Fran, Timo, Anne-Marie, Dagmar and Victor always provide a source of

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## Chapter I.

### Newspapers in the Dutch Republic and the Study of the Periodical Press

In the early modern period political information became commercialised.<sup>1</sup> From the first decades of the seventeenth century this development was supported by the emergence of the newspaper. Born out of a long tradition of handwritten, periodical newsletters, the newspaper took Europe by storm. The first newspaper was printed in Strasbourg in 1605. By the 1630s newspapers had arrived in the Low Countries, France, England and Italy; by the 1660s they were printed in the peripheries of Portugal, Sweden and Poland. Characterised by several unique features (periodicity, a wide scope of news and public availability), the newspaper had become a notable phenomenon of the European news world. By the end of the seventeenth century newspaper reading was accepted as a part of daily social and political life of a growing middling class of urban citizenry.<sup>2</sup>

The Dutch Republic provided fertile ground for the development of the periodical. The young state was located at a crucial economic and information gateway between Northern and Southern Europe. A high degree of urbanisation and literacy, combined with decentralised political structures encouraged a sophisticated printing industry. The urban dwellers of the Republic's many cities were leading consumers of books and prints. The first newspaper was published in the Dutch Republic by 1618, spurred on by the eruption of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). Subsequent developments were pioneering. The Dutch Republic was the birthplace of a competitive press. It saw the emergence of the first broadsheet newspapers, as well as the earliest adoption of paid advertising.

By the mid-1640s, Amsterdam was the newspaper capital of Europe; with seven titles produced by six publishers, supplying a total of ten weekly issues on four days of

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<sup>1</sup> Brendan Dooley, *The Social History of Skepticism: Experience and Doubt in Early Modern Culture* (Baltimore, 1999), pp. 9-12, and Andrew Pettegree, *The Invention of News: How the World Came to Know About Itself* (London, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> See for example Kaspar Stieler and his *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz* (1695), cited in Pettegree, *Invention of News*, p. 253.

the week.<sup>3</sup> Over the course of the entire seventeenth century at least 28 Dutch newspapers would be published in nine towns (see figure 1.1).

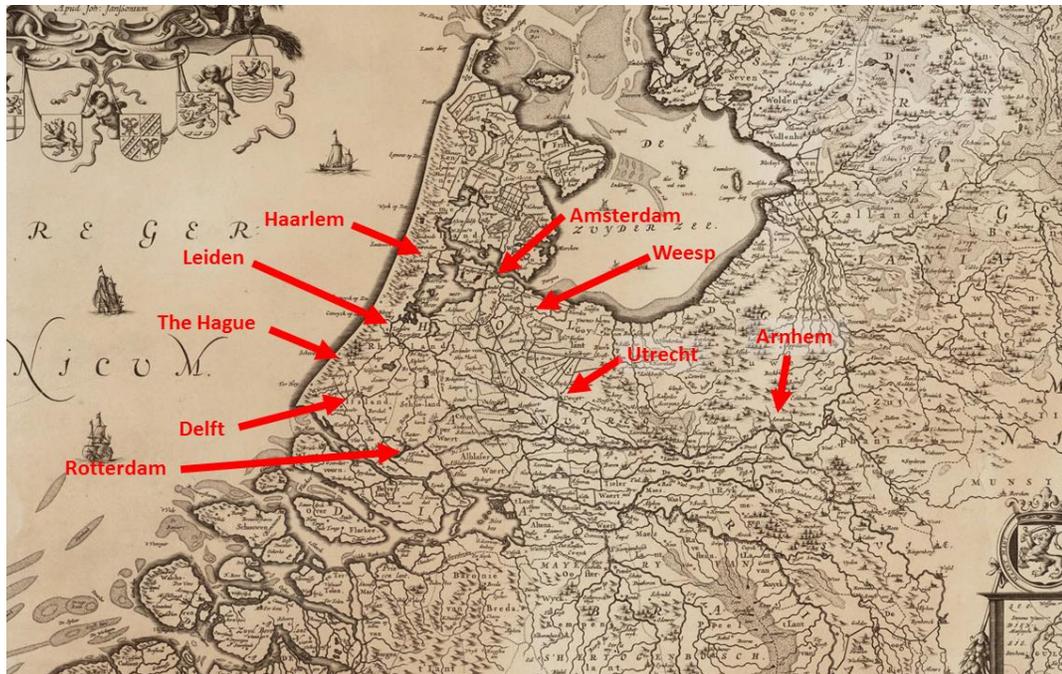


Figure 1.1: the nine towns of the Dutch Republic with at least one newspaper throughout the seventeenth century: Amsterdam (1618), Arnhem (1619), Delft (1620), The Hague (1652), Haarlem (1656), Weesp (1656), Utrecht (1658), Rotterdam (1666) and Leiden (1686). The map is a detail from the map of the Seven United Provinces by Johannes Janssonius, featured in his *Belgii Foederati Nova Descriptio* (Amsterdam, 1658) Source: Wikimedia Commons.

For a nation of two million inhabitants, this is all the more striking compared to the rest of Europe. The first printed newspapers would not be published in Italy till the later 1630s; in Spain regular and irregular news serials emerged in patches until the publication of the *Gazeta Nueva* in 1661.<sup>4</sup> In France, one newspaper served a nation of 20 million for the entire century. In the Holy Roman Empire, the birthplace of the

<sup>3</sup> Folke Dahl, 'Amsterdam – Earliest Newspaper Centre of Western Europe', *Het Boek* 25, No. 3 (1939), 161-198.

<sup>4</sup> Pettegree, *Invention of News*, pp. 205-206, 364-365, and Javier Diaz Noci, 'The Iberian Position in European News Networks: A Methodological Approach', in *NN*.

newspaper, periodicals were spread out over vast territories totalling more than 10 million inhabitants.

In England, periodicals were centred on London, where throughout the century they underwent several disruptive transformations.<sup>5</sup> Although the Civil War sparked the appearance of dozens of serial newsbooks, many folded after several issues, and the English press would be restrained once more by the mid-1650s. In the Habsburg Netherlands, newspapers emerged in the early 1620s, and would expand to be published in Antwerp, Bruges, Ghent and Brussels.<sup>6</sup> Yet the total production of the Habsburg Netherlands would never reach beyond four titles at any given time.

Dutch newspapers were already recognised as pioneers in their own time. When the state-sponsored *London Gazette* was founded in 1665, it adopted the unique broadsheet design of Dutch newspapers, as opposed to the more conventional pamphlet style of other European newspapers. The reputation of Dutch papers for the quality and reliability of news prompted this shift: the English state aimed to sponsor a trustworthy and superior publication. The geographically-restricted language of Dutch newspapers did not hinder their continental popularity. They were read at the courts of France, Sweden, and the princely states of the Holy Roman Empire. The periodicals would be translated, copied and re-printed in Cologne, London and Moscow.<sup>7</sup> Yet if early Dutch newspapers were popular in their own day, their historic significance has been rather lost in modern times.

### **A bibliographical rat race**

It is a telling state of the current historiography of the early Dutch press that the most authoritative accounts available today were written in the 1860s and 1870s. In this era W.P. Sautijn Kluit wrote several book-length articles on the history of Dutch

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<sup>5</sup> Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks 1641-1649* (Oxford, 1996); Joad Raymond (ed.), *Making the News: An Anthology of the Newsbooks of Revolutionary England 1641-1660* (Moreton-in-Marsh, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> Paul Arblaster, *From Ghent to Aix: How they Brought the News in The Habsburg Netherlands, 1550-1700* (Leiden, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Ingrid Maier and René Vos, 'Gelezen van Londen tot Moskou : Internationale dimensies van de *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* in de zeventiende eeuw', in *Haerlem Jaarboek* (2005), 9-32. Also Arblaster, *Ghent to Aix*, pp. 132, 140.

newspapers from their inception to his contemporary age.<sup>8</sup> Sautijn Kluit's approach was one of narrative microhistory. In each article he offered a chronological history of the press in one Dutch town, detailing changes in typography, editorship and other peculiar characteristics.

For the seventeenth century Sautijn Kluit had access to only a few surviving issues of each newspaper. He therefore relied largely on archival sources: convictions, sentences and privileges handed out to newspaper publishers. Most of his bibliographic conjectures are no longer valid, but many have not yet been replaced by modern studies – for example, nothing has been published on the early Dutch press in Rotterdam since Sautijn Kluit in 1878.<sup>9</sup>

Many scholars were more content to use the early history of newspapers for patriotic justifications.<sup>10</sup> Around the turn of the twentieth century it was deemed most important to find evidence of the earliest newspaper. Scholars chased archival references to claim that lost newspapers unknown to bibliography had been published in their country before any others.<sup>11</sup> Such nationalistic sentiments of press history did not suit the atmosphere of post-WWII Europe. For the Dutch Republic the Swedish bibliographer Folke Dahl was responsible for ending the liberal interpretations of his predecessors. After Dahl discovered a cache of over 1,000 seventeenth-century Dutch newspapers in the Royal Library in Stockholm, he devoted himself to the documentation of the first decades of Dutch newspaper printing.<sup>12</sup>

In Stockholm Dahl found the earliest known Dutch newspaper, dated to June 1618. The collection also included unknown issues of newspapers from Delft and Arnhem. These discoveries, together with issues held in Paris, The Hague and other

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<sup>8</sup> See the secondary bibliography for a full list of relevant publications by Sautijn Kluit.

<sup>9</sup> W.P. Sautijn Kluit, 'De Rotterdamsche Courant', *Jaarboek van de Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde, 1878* (Leiden, 1878), 3-92.

<sup>10</sup> Dahl, 'Amsterdam – Earliest Newspaper Centre', p. 165. See also Joad Raymond, 'News networks: putting the "news" and "networks" back in', in *NN. An exception was Sautijn Kluit. See his 'Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Dagbladpers tot 1813', Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis van den Nederlandschen Boekhandel, 7<sup>e</sup> Deel* (Amsterdam, 1896), pp. 106-107.

<sup>11</sup> Dahl, 'Amsterdam – Earliest Newspaper Centre', pp. 165-168; Maarten Schneider, *De Nederlandse Krant. Van "nieuwstydninghe" tot dagblad* (Amsterdam, 1949), pp. 31-43; and Henri Overhoff, 'Wanneer verscheen de oudste krant?', *De Gids* 112 (1949), 209-220.

<sup>12</sup> This discovery is detailed in Dahl, 'Amsterdam – Earliest Newspaper Centre'.

towns, were brought together in *Dutch Corantos*, Dahl's bibliography of Dutch newspapers up to 1650.<sup>13</sup> To date, this is the only bibliography available to scholars. While Dahl's work was invaluable to the understanding of the early periodical press in the Low Countries, Dahl was hesitant on role of these newspapers in the study of history. Dahl believed that

It cannot be expected of him [the bibliographer] to state the relative importance of newspapers in this [Dutch] culture, because such a close knowledge of politics, science, literature, art, etc. is needed that one man could hardly weigh their comparative merits...it would be in the interest of scientific economy to limit his field of research accordingly.<sup>14</sup>

Dahl did not go much beyond his bibliographical inquiry: nor were others inspired to forge a new path. It would be several decades before further ground-breaking work on the Dutch press was conducted. In the 1980s and 1990s, scholars such as Annie Stolp, Otto Lankhorst and Ingrid Maier discovered new holdings of Dutch newspapers in London, Germany, Poland and Russia.<sup>15</sup> They extended some of Dahl's findings beyond 1650, and improved on his bibliography before 1650.

A bibliography of all seventeenth-century Dutch newspapers remains missing, despite calls by multiple scholars to complete such a work.<sup>16</sup> I am currently undertaking the development of a general bibliography at the University of St Andrews. This project brings together dispersed collections of circa 15,000 surviving issues of Dutch newspapers across sixty libraries and archives in fourteen different countries. Alongside

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<sup>13</sup> Folke Dahl, *Dutch Corantos, 1618-1650: A Bibliography* (Göteborg, 1946).

<sup>14</sup> Dahl, 'Amsterdam – Earliest Newspaper Centre', p. 163.

<sup>15</sup> Ingrid Maier, 'Amsterdamer und Haarlemer Zeitungen ("Couranten") des 17. Jahrhunderts im Niedersächsischen Staatsarchiv zu Oldenburg', *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch* 78 (2003), 170-191 and Ingrid Maier, 'Niederländische Zeitungen ("Couranten") des 17. Jahrhunderts im Russischen Staatsarchiv für alte Akten (RGADA), Moskau', *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch* 79 (2004), 191-218. Also René Vos, 'Een Gouden Eeuw met grote gaten: Enkele ontwikkelingen rond de "Republiek der Couranten" (1675-1800)', *Documentatieblad werkgroep Achttiende eeuw. Jaargang 2003* (Hilversum, 2003), 124-134.

<sup>16</sup> Otto S. Lankhorst, 'Newspapers in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century', in Brendan Dooley and Sabrina A. Baron (eds.), *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe* (London, 2001), pp. 151-152.

these bibliographical movements, the history of the Dutch press has had some benefit, and much more to profit from wider historiographical changes and interests.

### **New turnings**

Whereas the history of the press was for the most part of the twentieth century pursued by antiquarian or bibliographic interests, it has now come to the forefront of political and social history.<sup>17</sup> Jürgen Habermas' *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* transformed discussions of the role of the press in early modern politics and social life.<sup>18</sup> Habermas traced the emergence of popular and public political debate in European society around the early eighteenth century. He focused on the growing prominence of a civil society independent of the state, operating in a 'public sphere'. The public sphere characterised by Habermas was the result of increasing opposition to the traditional realm of the politics, in which discussion of the affairs of state were limited to an exclusive arena of statesmen and courtiers. The Habermasian public sphere was effected by all citizens, who, coming together in public spaces, debated and exchanged opinions of political constitution and current affairs, refuting one another through rational arguments.<sup>19</sup>

This was not yet, in the eyes of Habermas, a sphere designed to manipulate the public authorities. It was free of censorship and private commercial or political interests.<sup>20</sup> Instead, the public sphere was based on the open exchange and evaluation of information. In this the role of newspaper was crucial: it served as a platform in which citizens could regularly receive political information and assess its trustworthiness in comparison to other media. In the public sphere, the newspaper aided the rise of an informed, critical citizenry.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Jeremy D. Popkin, 'New Perspectives on the Early Modern European Press', in Joop W. Koopmans (ed.), *News and Politics in Early Modern Europe (1500-1800)* (Leuven, 2005), p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, translated by Thomas Burger (Cambridge, 1989).

<sup>19</sup> Joad Raymond, 'The Newspaper, Public Opinion, and the Public Sphere in the Seventeenth Century', in his *News, Newspapers and Society in Early Modern Britain* (London, 1999), pp. 111-112.

<sup>20</sup> Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, pp. 159-195.

<sup>21</sup> Raymond, 'The Newspaper, Public Opinion', p. 113.

Regardless of the accuracy of Habermas' public sphere as a historical phenomenon, Habermas reinvigorated interest in the history of the press in England, France, Germany and the United States. The emergence of newspapers is no longer observed as a single defining moment of news culture, but as an accompaniment of wider economic and social transformations in the early European information world. The importance of scribal newsletters and postal networks has been emphasised as crucial foundations of the newspaper industry.<sup>22</sup> Histories by Popkin and Raymond of the French and English press respectively highlight the human qualities and personal reactions of newspaper writers and readers.<sup>23</sup> Instead of treating the press as a natural opponent of the state and its repressive institutions, pressures from within the news industry and the willingness of publishers to demand privileges, have come to the forefront of press history.<sup>24</sup>

Scholars are also increasingly paying attention to the distribution of news; to the business relations of booksellers and editors; and the role of the newspaper in a wider sphere of print and information. Here public opinion is subject to the dynamics of business as much as politics. The public sphere characterised by Habermas has come under increasing criticism for its failure to incorporate the subtleties of financial and political manipulations.<sup>25</sup>

In the Low Countries scholars have taken note of international trends and followed suit. Henk Borst and Michiel van Groesen have done recent work on the contents of early Dutch newspapers, focusing on the interaction between text, publisher and wider news industry.<sup>26</sup> Their work highlights the unique, if limited role of the

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<sup>22</sup> Joad Raymond, 'Introduction: networks, communication, practice' in his *News Networks in Seventeenth-Century Britain and Europe* (Abingdon, 2006); see now also the edited volume by Joad Raymond and Noah Moxham, *News Networks in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, forthcoming).

<sup>23</sup> Jeremy D. Popkin, *Revolutionary News: The Press in France 1789-1799* (Durham, 1990) and Joad Raymond, *Invention of the Newspaper*.

<sup>24</sup> Pettegree, *Invention of News*.

<sup>25</sup> Raymond, 'The Newspaper, Public Opinion', and Peter Lake and Steven Pincus, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere in Early Modern England', *Journal of British Studies* 45, No. 2 (2006), 270-292.

<sup>26</sup> Henk Borst, 'Broer Jansz in Antwerpse ogen: De Amsterdamse courantier na de slag bij Kallo in 1638 neergezet als propagandist', *De Zeventiende eeuw* 25 (2009), 73-89; Michiel van Groesen, 'A Week to Remember: Dutch Publishers and the Competition for News from Brazil, 26 August-2 September 1624', *Quaerendo* 40 (2010), 26-49; and Michiel van Groesen, '(No) News from the Western Front: The Weekly Press of the Low Countries and the Making of Atlantic News', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 44, No. 3 (2013), 739-760.

newspaper within a market for information and print across national boundaries. Most significantly, Paul Arblaster has published extensively on the history of early newspapers in the Habsburg Netherlands, news networks and the relationship between the press and the state.<sup>27</sup> He frames the development of Habsburg newspapers in a wide European sphere of news, centred on postal routes and international Habsburg relations. The intricate relations between publishers in Antwerp, Bruges, Ghent and Brussels, as well as their particular editorial ambitions and limitations, are placed aptly alongside the political motivations of the Habsburg state.

Despite historiographical revisions the development of the Dutch press throughout its first century remains a central subject which has not yet been treated adequately. The lack of a foundational bibliography plays a large role in this neglect. The history of Dutch newspapers remains in a similar state to that of English newspapers several decades ago: here periodicals were seen as developing along inherent teleological paths.<sup>28</sup> Without any in-depth studies, it seems that there was little development in the Dutch newspaper market throughout the seventeenth and much of the eighteenth centuries.<sup>29</sup> It is such sentiment that has prompted Harms to claim that ‘it is doubtful whether a systematic selection and analysis of seventeenth-century *couranten* would result in any new findings.’<sup>30</sup>

It is important to challenge the above conjecture. Throughout the seventeenth century a national Dutch press adapted and evolved to changing political and economic circumstances, at home as much as abroad. This dissertation seeks to highlight the intricate association between the state, publishers and the wider news market. This relationship is wrought with paradoxes. The Dutch press is innovative in form and design yet regressive in its overall expansion; Dutch authorities engage and support the press but at the same time seek to repress its scope. For all the innovation, competition, inspiration and popularity of the early Dutch press, it was not to lead European news culture into the

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<sup>27</sup> Arblaster, *Ghent to Aix*.

<sup>28</sup> Joad Raymond, ‘Introduction: Newspapers, Forgeries and Histories’, in his *News, Newspapers and Society in Early Modern Britain* (London, 1999).

<sup>29</sup> See for example Schneider, *Nederlandse Krant*, p. 74.

<sup>30</sup> Roeland Harms, *Pamfletten en publieke opinie: Massamedia in de zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam, 2011), p. 26.

eighteenth century. By the end of the seventeenth century it suffered less political freedom, fewer publishers and a smaller role in the European sphere of information. One sees, seemingly, Habermas' public sphere in retreat. The Dutch press would come to play an entirely different role to that of England or France. This transformation is fundamental to our comprehension of the development of periodical news in the early modern period.

For the sake of brevity, this work concerns in depth only the Dutch-language newspapers of the Republic. The primary consumers of English and French newspapers printed in the Dutch Republic were located abroad. Foreign-language titles were not in great competition with local Dutch titles, and are not central to the present analysis.

## Chapter II.

### Amsterdam – Innovation and Transformation

The origins of the Dutch periodical press are to be found in the most dynamic centre of the Low Countries – Amsterdam. A small medieval town built on the marshes of Northern Holland developed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries into the major entrepôt of the European bulk-carrying trade.<sup>31</sup> Ruthless mercantile competition supported by commercial innovation, an expansive navy and an influx of thousands of Protestant refugees provided a foundation for Amsterdam's success.

With political and financial success came the need for information; in a young state built on economic prosperity, knowledge of the affairs of Europe and its rulers was essential. Yet, a demand for news alone is not enough to explain the emergence of the periodical. Around the turn of the seventeenth century, the industry of information was regulated and commercialised.<sup>32</sup> The expansion and improvement of a postal system was crucial. From the mid-sixteenth onwards Dutch towns began to appoint *stadsbodes* – city messengers, departing with regular schedules.<sup>33</sup> By the early 1600s, there were four postal offices in Amsterdam: for Antwerp, Hamburg, Cologne and the domestic post, with the latter serving around twenty different Dutch towns.

The foundation of other institutions supported the rise of commercial news. In 1586 a currency exchange was established in Amsterdam. This was followed by the Bank of Amsterdam in 1609 and the bourse in 1611.<sup>34</sup> These institutions served as well-known locations for the exchange of news and information. Hundreds of merchants gathered at the bourse, sharing the latest reports (see figure 2.1). Almost all Amsterdam newspaper publishers would establish themselves close to this beating heart of the city's information network.

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<sup>31</sup> Clé Lesger, *The Rise of the Amsterdam Market and Information Exchange: Merchants, Commercial Expansion and Change in the Spatial Economy of the Low Countries c. 1550-1630* (Aldershot, 2006).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 214-257.

<sup>33</sup> Schneider, *Nederlandse Krant*, p. 19. See now also Nikolaus Schobesberger, et al., 'European Postal Networks', in *NN*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>34</sup> John J. McCusker and Cora Gravesteyn, *The Beginnings of Commercial and Financial Journalism: The Commodity Prices Currents, Exchange Rate Currents and Money Currents of Early Modern Europe* (Amsterdam, 1991), p. 43.



Figure 2.1: Boëtius Adamsz Bolswert, *De Beurs van Amsterdam*, 1609 (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-67.488).

The development of the postal network and the physical infrastructure of Amsterdam’s information exchange sustained the emergence of paid news services. Enterprising businessmen took advantage of the demand for exclusive information. By gathering up reports from across Europe’s great postal centres, they could sell this news as a short digest of written reports. The manuscript services were extremely popular. The East India Company chamber of Amsterdam paid 25 *gulden* a year for written newsletters in 1606, but cancelled the subscription in 1616 on the grounds that most members preferred their own newsletters.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Annie Stolp, *De Eerste Couranten in Holland. Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis der geschreven nieuwstijdingen* (PhD Thesis, University of Amsterdam, 1938), pp. 9, 84.

The first printed newspapers emerged out of the established market and culture of manuscript newsletters. The incentive to turn to print was above all commercial: a printed newsletter could be rapidly produced in large quantities. Dahl estimates that 100 copies of the early Amsterdam newspapers could be printed in one hour.<sup>36</sup> Crucially, the mechanical production of newsletters drove down the retail price. The philosopher Justus Lipsius in Antwerp paid 14 *gulden* a year for a weekly manuscript newsletter service, and the town council of Leiden paid 36 *gulden*.<sup>37</sup> An annual subscription to a weekly Amsterdam paper cost only 3 *gulden* – around 1.1 *stuivers* per issue.<sup>38</sup> The commercial and information infrastructure of Amsterdam ensured that there was both a supply and a demand for cheaper periodical news.

### **A competitive press in a national market**

The first newspapers appeared in Amsterdam by 1618. The oldest extant issue is dated to 14 or 15 June: this is the *Courante uyt Italien, Duytslandt, &c.* (Current events from Italy, Germany, etc.) of Caspar van Hilten (?-1623). At least by February 1619 the *Courante* was joined by an unnamed newspaper published by Broer Jansz (1579-1652). This paper was to be called the *Tijdinghen uyt verscheyde Quartieren* (Tidings from various Quarters) from 1629 onwards.

Van Hilten and Jansz were experienced newsmen.<sup>39</sup> Both styled themselves as ‘*Courantier*’ of the army of the Prince of Orange. Jansz certainly had experience on the front: already in 1604 he wrote, printed and published news pamphlets detailing the progress of the war in Flanders.<sup>40</sup> Jansz had settled down in Amsterdam by 1614, for in that year he was appointed *stadsdrucker*, or city-printer, by the city council.<sup>41</sup> Caspar van

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<sup>36</sup> Folke Dahl, ‘On Quoting Newspapers: A Problem and a Solution’, *Journalism Quarterly* (December 1948), 331-338.

<sup>37</sup> Arblaster, *Ghent to Aix*, pp. 101-102; Stolp, *Eerste Couranten*, p. 9.

<sup>38</sup> See Chapter IV.

<sup>39</sup> M.M. Kleerkooper and W.P. van Stockum Jr., *De Boekhandel te Amsterdam voornamelijk in de 17<sup>e</sup> eeuw* (Den Haag, 1914-1916), pp. 259-260 (for Van Hilten) and pp. 322-325 (for Jansz).

<sup>40</sup> *Journael ofte Dach-register van 't principaelste in Vlaenderen geschiet, sedert den 25 April tot den 15 September 1604* (Amsterdam, 1604). Also cited in Dahl, *Dutch Corantos*, p. 55.

<sup>41</sup> Kleerkooper, *Boekhandel te Amsterdam*, pp. 322-325.

Hilten died sometime between June 1622 and March 1623. His son Jan, aged 20, took over the business.<sup>42</sup>

All news serials in the Holy Roman Empire, and later those in France, Italy and other countries, were published as folded quarto or octavo pamphlets.<sup>43</sup> In contrast, the Amsterdam papers appeared as unfolded half-sheet folios. While the early reports in Amsterdam newspapers did not differ greatly in content from German, French or English news, the new format maximised the quantity of news in relation to the paper used. The broadsheet papers were relatively plain, featuring only a simple title as heading (see figures 2.2 and 2.3). This was followed by two columns of news on both sides of the sheet. The margins were thin and Van Hilten and Jansz did their best to fill their papers to the brim. Many pamphlet newspapers featured elaborate title pages, and usually contained one or two blank pages (often the last verso, sometimes the back of the title page). The Amsterdam newspapers contained around 1,750-2,000 words of news per issue – in contrast, Abraham Verhoeven would fill his Antwerp news serial with only 1,000 words per issue. Driving down the cost of paper, the Amsterdam newspapermen could invest more in their news sources and correspondents. Most Dutch newspapers, and later English periodicals, would follow the format and design set by the early Amsterdam papers.

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<sup>42</sup> See for Jan van Hilten: Klerkoooper, *Boekhandel te Amsterdam*, pp. 260-261.

<sup>43</sup> Allen Hutt, *The Changing Newspaper: Typographic Trends in Britain and America 1622-1972* (London, 1973).

Tydingen uyt verscheyden Quartieren, 1636. N<sup>o</sup>. 9.

Wt Venetien den 30. Januarij 1636.

**B**rieven van Milanen melden/ dat de Fransoyfen ende Sa-  
bopaerts de 5000. Spaensche  
die naer Milanen in aentocht  
sijn/ aende Frontieren van Ge-  
nuua op passen. Ondertusschen  
hebben de Spaensche int gebied  
van Parma/ Fondio gheoccupeert / ende Gu-  
asta Maglio belegerd / waer ober den Marquis  
de Ville met 2000. Musquetiers ende ettelijcke  
Kuyters derwaerts in aentocht is / om de selve  
plaets rontsetten. Intertim bebinden sich de  
Hertogen van Saboyen/ Parma/ Crivui ende  
Cozas in persoon tot Verzelli : Ende heeft die  
van Parma de Stadt Placenza op 80000. ende  
Parma oock op 80000. Croonen te continueren/  
getareert.

Het Duytsche volck 't welck door Swijts  
marcheert / ende tot Alsdorp aengekomen is/  
werde op den lesten deser int Milaensche gebied  
verwacht / souden inde 8000. sterck zijn.

Brieven van Constantinopelen melden / dat  
van die aenkomende troupen uyt Persien / ober  
200000. personen soo gheschieden als verlooren  
sijn.

Wt Weenen den 3. Februarij.

Dan hier is weynigh te adviseren / alleene  
dat die aengheselde Kuyter-Coutnopen ende  
Bastelabour-spelen haren aenbanck ghenomen  
hebben / daer op sich Wapen / Graven ende  
Heeren magnificqueelijc hebben upgesteert/  
hoe het eynde afloopen wil / leert den tydt.

Den Pfaltz-Graef van Neuborgh sal eerst-  
daeghs van hier vertrecken / ghelijck dan alre-  
de twee Bagagte-wagghens voozt uyt gesonden  
sijn.

Wt Brylagh den 5. Februarij.

Gemaer is op ghenade ende ongenade aen de  
Fransche oberghegheben / ghelijck alhier voozt  
weynigh upzen gereferert is. Marchelzen is  
opghepocht door een Trompetter / maer also de  
selve gesuspiceert wierde / is de selve gebanc-  
kelijck inghetrocken / doch ghelijckwel terstont  
wederom los ghelaten ; de selve seyt dat den Co-  
ningh van Franckrijc alreede 4000. Mijl-  
Ezels hadde / de welke dagheijer meer ende meer  
volgen souden / ende soude het Magazijn we-  
sen tot Colmar / wilde alle onleggghende kleyne  
plaetsen occuperen / oock Hochburgh probian-  
deren / ende eens eeten doet stabileren.

Hertogh Sarens Overste Luytenant Schin-  
delwein is verleden Donderdag met 20. Heerden  
binnen Wasel ghekomen / sijne berichtinge is  
noch secreteer ; de Stadt heeft hem reeffelijck ont-  
fangen ende bereert.

By de jonghst ghehouden Landdach alhier/  
hebben de Standen onder anderen gheconsen-  
teert twee Regimenten voozt een half Jaer te on-  
derhouden ; hebben daer teghens gheobtimeert/  
dat alle Oostenrijchsche Commissarissen ober al  
de factio sullen gecassiert ende afgheschaft wer-  
den.

Colloredo heeft pas versocht ober de Wasel-

sehe Bugghe / maer de antwoordt gediffereert  
zijnde opte resolutie van Weern ende Luytich/  
heeft sy niet willen wachten / maer is tot Gem-  
belde ober ghetrocken.

Wt Wittenbergh den 5. Februarij.

De Banniersche laten sich dagheijchs met  
stercke troupen sien / ende vallen vele schermit-  
selen tusschen de Cheur-Saxische ende Sweeds-  
sche / brenghen alle Probiande die sy aentreffen  
in Maeghdenburgh. De ghevangens bercla-  
ren dat sy bevel hadden merre luyden int Stift  
Maeghdenburgh vrendelijck onme te gaen/  
maer Cheur-Saxens Landt was hun prijs ge-  
geven / ghelijck sy dan tot Calbe ende andere  
plaetsen met branden ende plonderen qualijck  
huys gehouden hebben / was oock tusschen de  
Oder alles gerumeert. De Sweedsche hebben  
Warby metten vijftien storm verobert / ettelijcke  
Compagnien die daer inne laghen/meest neder-  
gehouden / ende inde 300. Schepel Meel daer  
inne ghebonden. Daer teghens heeft Cheur-  
Saxen den Pas Bezaun gheantacureert / befer/  
ende de Sweedsche nae Verbrilijn conuoperen  
laten. Van Berlijn af tot hier toe seyt het langhs  
de wegghen ende Bosschagien vol brancke ende  
verhougerde Soldaten / werden vele van de  
wilde Dieren berteert. Den Generael Bannier  
heeft sich in Maeghdenburgh seer gheslecht/  
soude by de 14000. te Perde ende 10000. te voete  
by hem hebben. Die van Slefen souden by den  
Coningh van Polen beschermitinge versocht/  
ende goede vertroostinghe / oock groote vryheden  
in Druyssen / so van wegghen de Religie als Com-  
mercie / verkreghen hebben.

De spraecke gaet / dat den Generael Luyte-  
nant Bernshelm ober de Keijserlijcke Rijck ende  
Hanse-Steden Armade / tot een Generael ver-  
claert is.

Wt Leypligh den 6. Februarij.

Desen abondt hoimt alhier een Post van Hal-  
met beschept / dat die aldaer ghelegene Para-  
sintische Armade van daer nae Moosburgh was  
ghewecken / dewijle hem de Sweedsche alre-  
de twee Schildwachten wegh ghenomen had-  
den / van daer comt vele volck gheblucht ; onse  
ende de Keijserlijcke Caballerije is wel aen dese  
zijde / maer de Infanterie / alsmede de Artillerie/  
noech aende andere zijde / is door de diepte der  
wegghen onmoghelijck voozt te brenghen / ende  
soo de ghevangens berclaren / souden de Sweed-  
sche gerefolbeert zijn de onse aen te tasten / soo  
dat in korten dagghen wel wat groots mochte  
ghehoort werden / mochte ons wel stimmer  
treffen als opt gheschiet is / dewijle de Sweed-  
sche dese Stadt hert ghebrecht hebben.

Wt Mets den 4. Februarij.

Inde Ober-Pfals zijn ontrent 600. Solda-  
ten soo hier ende daer te samen geboeght / de selve  
sullen voozt by Neurenburgh ende soo nae boben  
gevoert werden.

Wt Wulffenbittel den 5. Februarij.

Cheur-Saxen is mer sijne Armade door  
Spandou opte Sweedsche aenghetrocken / des-  
sels Armade is van wegghen vele toeballen ende  
gebreck van Probiande / niet soo bestant als wel  
te wenschen waer. Den Generael Bannier mar-

Figure 2.2: the *Tijdinghen uyt verscheyde Quartieren*, 1636, No. 9 (Persmuseum, Amsterdam).

Wt Breslau den 13 Junij 1645.

**V**An dage is alhier een Trompetter van de Dvstin van Teschen gecomen/versoeckt assistentie van het Keyserlijcke Ober-Ampt/ dooz dien Ragotzky met 20000 mannen by Tablauck is gecomen/innemende twee Schantzen stormenderhandt/ ende de derde hadde hy belegerd/deselve gewinnende/soude hy onderhindert in der Slesien kommen inbeken.

Wt Metz den 15 dito.

Dooz la Motte werdt aen de twee Mijnen dapper ghevoecht / eene van deselve met drie kameren is gheredt / ende d'ander / dooz dien water daer in komt / kan soo haest niet gheredt sijn / daer h sullen gesamentlijck in wepnich dagen aengesteken werden: Den Gouverneur daer in heeft twee Regimenten / welke byuten de Bestinghe ghequartiert laghen/nu in de Fortificatie getrocken. Den Hertogh van Anguin met sijn Arme / 3000 te paerde ende 5000 te voet / schoon Volck ende wel ghemonteert / is men om dese Stadt verwachtede.

Wt Coppenhagen den 17 dito.

Eergisteren is de Vloot van haer Hoogh-Mog. met de Contingens / na datse hun zeplen gestreken / ende peder Schip drie Canon-schoten ter eere van dese Croone gedaen hadden/hier voozby gelooopen/sonder eenighe Col te betalen. Van den 24 Maay uyt Stockholm schijfmen / dat hare Majest. de Coninginne van Dalslam / na datse de Vloot hadde sien t'zepl gaen/wederom aldaer gecomen was. Tot Stockholm sijn opgebzacht dooz 't Schip de Faem twee Deensche Schepen / d'een genaemt de Coningh David / groot 100 lasten / ende d'ander 't Schip de Kroos met 15 stucken/daer onder 11 metale.

Wt Praga den 17 dito.

Veleden Maendagh sijn vyf Regimenten van Brandenburg/onder 32 Staendaerden/2100 koppen/hier dooz na Pilsen ghemarscheert: Twee andere Regimenten/als van Cap ende Krombs/sijn in de Waitseler Creutz gebleven/ om de straogende partijen van den Dpandt waer te nemen. Ertz-Hertogh Leopoldus is na Mariensfel/om sijn debotie/ ende komt in persoon te velde / tot dien eynde de Volckeren in Stier / Crain ende Carenteren opgesicht / met andere aen de Donau / in vollen marsch sijn. Men straopt uyt dat Wyn met het Slot / na dat den Gouverneur van sijn quetsere gheftozwen was/haer heeft overgegeven/ende dat sijn Excell. Cozstenzoon na den Pas Augustus in Ougeren is / om deselve aen te tasten. Den negenden heeft den Turckelien Boatschapp/over confirmatie van den Dede/ by den Keyser audientie ghehad/ende geen andere presenten mede ghebzacht dan twee slechte Paerden.

Zedert acht dagen heeft den Grave van Pompei het Eplandeken in de Donau met de vaste Wercken/ teghens ober Crems/ stormenderhandt inghecregen/ ghevanghen nemende twee Capiteynen/ 1 Vaendraget/ 1 Corporael/ 29 Soldaten becominge / twee schoone metale stucken / ende in de tweede ende derde Schantkens op het Eplandt eenige Dalkonnetten ende Vaacken: Op dit succes sijn de Keyserliche ober de Riviere ghecomen/innemende by Steyn de Schantzen mede stormenderhandt/ende Crems met cracht aentastende/indien

in der haest gheen ontset komt/sal den Dpandt deselve Pas quijt sijn.

Wt Straesburgh den 19 dito.

Den Hertogh van Anguin werdt tot Zaberem verwacht/dessels Arme volght. Gisteren sijn 70 Waghenen met Canon-kageler uyt Banchrijck na Hagenau gheboert: Groote quantiteyt van Granen werdt alhier ingecocht / ende wel Voodr vooz de Arme ghebacken.

Wt Leypfich den 21 dito.

Den Veur-Dvst van Saren becomt vier Keyserliche Regimenten tot assistentie / en de laet uyt der Slesien sijn Volck te rugge komen. Den Veur Axel Eli brenghet 3000 Sweedtsche by-een. By Sabaluncka hebben de Wallacheren ende Sevebergeren twee Schantzen ingenomen. Regen Regimenten Sweedtsche sijn in Bohemen / om de Keyserliche by Schutterhof aen te tasten. 16

Wt Lubeck den 23 dito.

De Orloghs-Schepen van de Hoogh-Mog. Heren Staten met de Coopvaerders / sijn den 15 de Soudt ghepasseert/na datse hare Mars-zeplen ende Blagghen ter eere van de Croon ghestreken hadden / ende in 't passeren van de Castelen dede den Admirael de Wit van sijn Schip drie schoten/daerna den Vice-Admirael/den Schout by Pacht ende voorts alle de Orloghs-Schepen. Tot den Dede tusschen beide Croonen is goede apparantie. 20 Schepen van sijn Majest. liggen aen de Southolms.

Wt Franckfoort den 25 dito.

De gheconjungeerde Arme is van Fridbergg/ welke Stadt sy meenden te belegeren/ergisteren wederom tusschen dese Stadt ende Hanau ghecomen / ende heeft 1000 Paerden na Mentz (om Amunition te halen) gecommandeert/ende 40 Kuypteren uyt Huerst verrascht: Enige van de Cavalerie is alreede ober de Maay/ende sal de gheheele macht apparentlijck van daghe volghen. Mans. Crast is verleden Sondag tot Straesburgh ghecomen / maecht groote preparatie vooz de Arme van Ducq d'Anguin. Dooz la Motte heeft men dese weke de Mijnen willen aensteken.

Van Dzesden schijfmen / dat by Sudelwijck 4000 Keyserl. Kuypteren van de Sweedtsche overvallen waren.

Wt Brugge den 25 dito.

Sijn Excell. den Grave Piccolomini mainteneert de Vaert van Wijnorbergen tot Dvynkerken tot op heden / sonder van deselve meester te wesen / kammern Dvynkerken niet belegeren/ende uyt deselve Stadt werdt Martijck gesecondeert. Den 22 was sijn Excell. met 4000 Paerden dicht onder de Crentheen van den Dpandt. Van daghe ofte mozghen sullen de Lottheringhsche by sijn Excell. wesen.

Wt Gendrt den 25 dito.

Den Baron de Beck heeft veel Voeren op antboden met Schoppen/ Spaden ende Mutsaerden/ tot wat eynde weetmen niet. Den 23 is den Grave van Pegnarada van Antwerpen na Munster op de Dede-handelingen gereyft. Met alle Garuisonen marcheert veel Volck na den Grave Piccolomini ; men maecht staet dat sy dese weke wel 24000 mannen sal sterck sijn.

Wt Munster den 25 dito.

Ducq de Longeville is gisteren tot Dalbeek

Figure 2.3: the *Courante uyt Italien ende Duyslandt, &c.* 1645, No. 26 (Permuseum, Amsterdam).

The Amsterdam papers were precocious in their use of paid advertising.<sup>44</sup> By the mid-1630s, three-quarters of the issues of both the *Courante* and the *Tijdinghen* featured at least one advertisement. This is all the more extraordinary if one considers that Flemish, English, French and German newspapers featured few, if any at all. Advertisements contributed to the cash-flow of the newspapermen, but also added an original source of domestic and local news. Most reports in the newspapers regarded foreign princes, armies, treaties and other occurrences abroad. The advertisement brought the news closer to home. Through advertisements for professional handbooks, devotional texts, and maps of sieges or battles, the newspaper reader was brought into a wider sphere of print and knowledge (see figure 2.4).

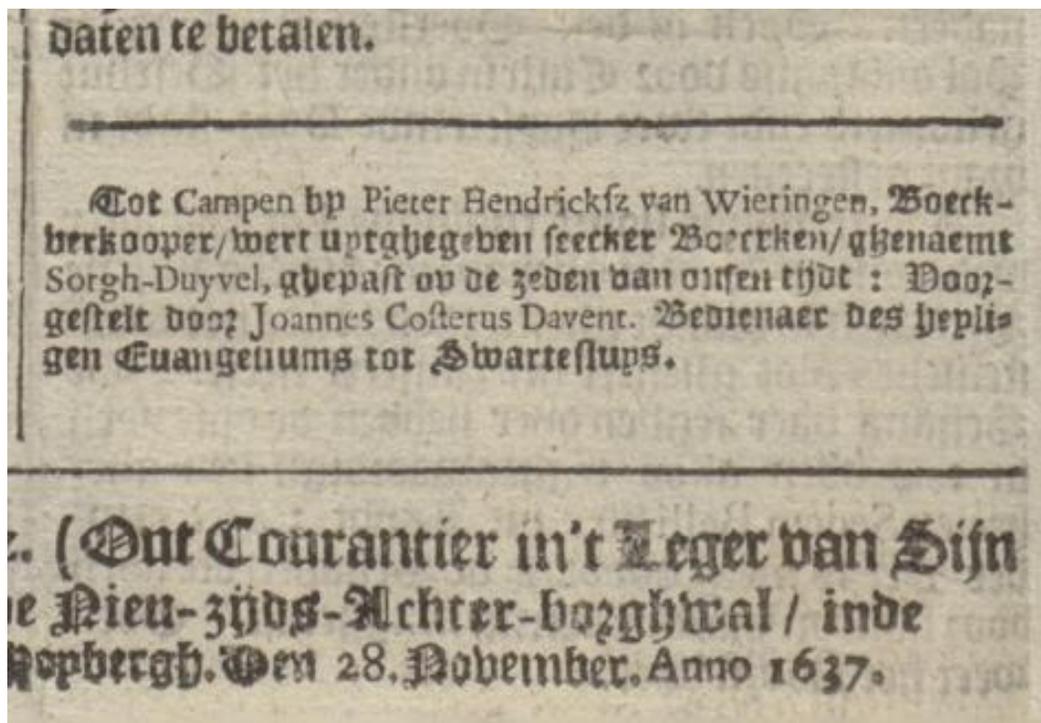


Figure 2.4: an advertisement by a Kampen bookseller in the *Tijdinghen* of 28 November 1637 (Royal Library Stockholm): ‘At Kampen by Pieter Hendricksz van Wieringen, bookseller, is published a certain book, entitled *Sorgh-Duyvel*, fit for the morals of our time: presented by Joannes Costerus Davent. Evangelical preacher in Swartesluis.’

<sup>44</sup> W.P. Sautijn Kluit, ‘De Amsterdamsche Courant’, *Bijdragen voor Vaderlandsche Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde, Nieuwe Reeks, Vijfde Deel* (1868), p. 12; Dahl, ‘Amsterdam – Earliest Newspaper Centre’, p. 183.

Advertisements also demonstrate the wide reach of the Amsterdam newspapers. Booksellers and publishers across the Dutch Republic used the papers to highlight their latest publications. I have been able to identify a total of 758 advertisements for books and prints in Amsterdam newspapers published between 1636-1645. These advertisements were placed by 166 different booksellers from 23 towns. It is certain that a large proportion of the weekly print run was despatched to these towns throughout the Dutch Republic: Van Hilten, for instance, sent 12 copies of his weekly paper to a bookseller in Leeuwarden, and another 26 to a bookseller in Nijmegen.<sup>45</sup>

The dissemination of Amsterdam papers across the Dutch Republic explains the slow development of periodical ventures in other Dutch towns. Customers in Leiden, Haarlem or Leeuwarden were easily served by the Amsterdam newspapermen. Before 1652, only two other towns maintained weekly papers: Arnhem and Delft. Arnhem was located on the Eastern frontier of the Dutch Republic, far away enough from Amsterdam to serve a local clientele with news from the Holy Roman Empire. In contrast, the Delft *Courante uyt Italien, Duytsland ende Nederlandt* was not an independent venture. This newspaper was closely modelled on the Amsterdam papers, and copied 90% of its news from the two Amsterdam periodicals. Thus it served only as a local re-issue of the Amsterdam periodicals.

### **A Mercurial Rise**

Habermas claimed that a competitive commercial sphere for news only emerged in the later seventeenth century, in England, around 1695.<sup>46</sup> He states that one cannot yet speak of the 'routine production of news' before this period. Habermas, however, missed the developments taking place in Amsterdam throughout the 1640s. Indeed, Amsterdam provided the first truly competitive commercial sphere for periodical print in Europe. In 1637 Jan van Hilten and Broer Jansz were the only two newspapermen active in Amsterdam. By 1645, there would be four others. Within the space of eight years, the total production of the Amsterdam press would increase from two to ten issues a week.

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<sup>45</sup> H. Borst, 'Van Hilten, Broersz. en Claessen. Handel in boeken en actueel drukwerk tussen Amsterdam en Leeuwarden rond 1639', *De zeventiende eeuw* 8 (1992), p. 134; Lankhorst, 'Newspapers in the Netherlands', p. 152.

<sup>46</sup> Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, pp. 16-17.

Habermas' account presents the growth of a competitive press as a reflection of the inherent opposition of the public sphere to the state.<sup>47</sup> The press was by its nature a political phenomenon. In contrast, the development of the Amsterdam newspapers in the 1640s originated from commercial pressures.

In 1632 the bookseller Jacob Thomasz Sergeant was responsible for an untitled newspaper, of which only one issue survives.<sup>48</sup> It is uncertain how long Sergeant's paper lasted – he died in October 1636.<sup>49</sup> The first stable newcomers to the Amsterdam newspaper industry were François Lieshout (1595/6-1646) and Joost Broersz (1608/9-1647).<sup>50</sup> Lieshout started a weekly Tuesday paper in June 1638, entitled the *Ordinarise Middel-weeckse Courant*. Broersz was a son of Broer Jansz, and by the later 1630s also published a Tuesday paper, the *Ordinaris Dingsdaegse Courant*.

Another member of the Jansz family soon entered the newspaper market. Jan Jacobsz Bouman (?-1671) married Broer Jansz's daughter in 1640, and joined the St Lucas guild in 1643.<sup>51</sup> In 1645 Bouman was responsible for the *Extra Europische tijdingen uyt verscheyde Quartieren*, a bi-weekly paper published on Mondays and Thursdays. With Bouman and Broersz, the Jansz family now published four issues a week, on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

It is possible that there was cooperation between Jansz, his son Joost Broersz and Bouman. When Jansz died in 1652, it was arranged that Bouman would take over the publication of the *Tijdinghen uyt verscheyde Quartieren*, but that the paper would continue to bear the widow's name.<sup>52</sup> Bouman was required to pay the widow 200 *gulden* a year for the privilege (the equivalent of around 70 annual subscriptions). No trace can be found of Bouman's *Extra Europische tijdingen* after 1645, but given his entry into the guild in 1643, it is likely that he published this paper throughout most of the 1640s.

By March 1642 the newspaper publishers had also been joined by Mathijs van Meininga. Probably the most obscure figure of the newspapermen, nothing is known of

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<sup>47</sup> Popkin, 'New Perspectives', p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> Dahl, *Dutch Corantos*, pp. 84-85.

<sup>49</sup> Kleerkooper, *Boekhandel te Amsterdam*, p. 721.

<sup>50</sup> For Lieshout and Broersz see *ibid.*, pp. 367-368, 106-107.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

Van Meininga's background or lifespan.<sup>53</sup> He was located on the Dam, at the heart of Amsterdam, from at least March 1642 until November 1646. Throughout this period he published the *Europische Courant*, in three issues per week: on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Van Meininga was the first publisher in the Dutch Republic to publish a tri-weekly. It is likely that he retired or died at the end of 1646 or in 1647.

Van Meininga published ephemeral print only. 18 other works are known of his press, all dated between 1642 and 1646 – the vast majority are broadsheets, in similar style to his newspaper series. He frequently printed extraordinary issues of his series, containing special reports and news items.

In the 1640s, the Dutch Republic and its capital Amsterdam experienced the height of its Golden Age. While the rest of Europe was engulfed in what various scholars have characterised as an age of crisis, the Dutch Republic was left relatively unscathed – there was no significant political crisis in the republic between 1619 and 1650.<sup>54</sup> Instead the public gaze was fixed on events abroad. Revolts in Naples, Catalonia and Portugal, as well as warfare in the Britain, the Southern Netherlands and the Holy Roman Empire were subject to increasing news coverage. From the mid-1640s peace negotiations at Münster and Osnabrück provided news reports even when the campaigning season was over.

Jan van Hilten and Broer Jansz had started their newspapers in the second decade of the seventeenth century on their own initiative, without privilege of the town council. They were officially licensed as newspaper publishers around 1624, for on 24 June of that year the council of Amsterdam ordered both to pay 6 *gulden* to the almshouse for their appointment.<sup>55</sup> This chronology is remarkable in comparison to other newspaper publishers throughout Europe. Most, like Johann Carolus in Strasbourg in 1605, or Théophraste Renaudot in Paris from 1631, were closely connected to their respective authorities from the inception of their periodical. In Amsterdam, the council was initially slow to react.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 408.

<sup>54</sup> A long-lasting debate which took off with H.R. Trevor-Roper, 'The general crisis of the seventeenth century', *Past and Present* 16 (1959), 31-64, but see most recently Geoffrey Parker, *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 2014).

<sup>55</sup> Sautijn Kluit, 'De Amsterdamsche Courant', p. 8.

Such freedom was not to last. In a resolution of 11 December 1645 the burgomasters of Amsterdam noted sourly that the cost of the delivery of newspapers, pamphlets and paper to the town council came to 6,000 *gulden* for the year.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, Lieshout alone had been paid 428 *gulden* and 10 *stuivers* in 1642 alone for the delivery of news and paper.<sup>57</sup> The proliferation of newspaper publishers and subscriptions had, in the eyes of the burgomasters, become rather extravagant. Therefore, the burgomasters proposed to regulate the delivery of newspapers.<sup>58</sup> It was not mentioned what measures were to be taken, but change was clearly on the horizon.

### **The ‘Instruction for the Courantier’**

In the 1650s and 1660s one finds only four newspaper titles in Amsterdam. The *Courante uyt Italien* was taken over by bookseller Otto Barentsz Smient at the end of 1655 after the death of Jan van Hilten; the *Tijdinghen* was published by Bouman in the name of Broer Jansz’s widow; the *Ordinaris Dingsdaegse Courant* was published by the widow of Joost Broersz until 1661, when it was taken over by Johannes van Ravesteyn; and the *Ordinarise Middel-weeckse Courant* continued to be published by the widow of François Lieshout.

Sautijn Kluit and Maier both indicate that the Amsterdam burgomasters implemented various changes to the Amsterdam industry around 1670.<sup>59</sup> At this point the four independent titles ceased publication. Henceforth they were combined under one newspaper title: the *Amsterdamsche Courant*, published once a week on Tuesdays and Saturdays. Bouman died in 1671, and was replaced by Caspar Commelijn, while the widow Lieshout was replaced at her death in 1669 by her son-in-law, Matheus Coesaert.<sup>60</sup> The four active publishers alternated in the publication of the *Amsterdamsche Courant*. Coesaert and Van Ravesteyn published the Tuesday edition, while Smient and

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 18-19.

<sup>57</sup> Kleerkooper, *Boekhandel te Amsterdam*, pp. 367-368.

<sup>58</sup> Sautijn Kluit, ‘De Amsterdamsche Courant’, pp. 18-19.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 23, and Maier, ‘Niederländische Zeitungen (“Couranten”)’, p. 205.

<sup>60</sup> See for Coesaert: Kleerkooper, *Boekhandel te Amsterdam*, pp. 152-153.

Commelijn were responsible for the Saturday issue.<sup>61</sup> A Thursday edition was added in 1673: the four men each published one issue every four weeks.

While Sautijn Kluit and Maier were correct to identify the significance of the rearrangement of 1670, other changes had occurred much earlier. When Otto Barentsz Smient was appointed to replace Jan van Hilten on 10 December 1655, it was stated that he was granted the right ‘to publish the Saturday newspaper every fourteen days...as was done by the same Jan van Hilten...’<sup>62</sup> This suggests that the *Courante* changed from a weekly to a fortnightly publication.

I have identified 311 issues of the four Amsterdam newspapers dated between 1654 and 1669. In every year, each newspaper only survives in either odd or even issue numbers; never in both. While this correlation might be coincidental for only a couple of years, the data supports the wording of the privilege granted to Smient: already from 1654 the Amsterdam newspaper publishers were alternating, publishing at fortnightly rather than weekly intervals. Before 1654, one still finds the four titles operating competitively.

Although this was a rather complex arrangement, it was not unique. In 1666 the council of Bruges would grant three local publishers the right to alternate the publication of one monopolised newspaper.<sup>63</sup> This, however, was initiated by the publishers in order to raise the necessary capital for a license. Throughout Europe some of the strongest proponents of censorship were newspaper publishers themselves – but this does not seem to be the case in Amsterdam.<sup>64</sup>

A resolution adopted by the burgomasters on 16 May 1656 sheds further light on their intentions.<sup>65</sup> In the spring of 1656 Nicolaes Jacobsz, a bookseller active in the small town of Weesp, requested permission to start a newspaper in Amsterdam. Jacobsz, in his petition, stated that he was the grandson of the recently deceased Jan van Hilten, and that he was already a ‘Courantier’ in Weesp.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, the Royal Library of Sweden holds

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<sup>61</sup> Sautijn Kluit, ‘De Amsterdamsche Courant’, p. 23.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>63</sup> Arblaster, *Ghent to Aix*, p. 250.

<sup>64</sup> Pettegree, *Invention of News*, pp. 186-187, 267-268, 368.

<sup>65</sup> Cited in Sautijn Kluit, ‘De Amsterdamsche Courant’, p. 19.

<sup>66</sup> Dahl, ‘Amsterdam – Earliest Newspaper Centre’, p. 174.

several issues of Jacobsz's newspaper, the earliest issue dated to March 1656.<sup>67</sup> The paper was entitled *Courante uyt Italien ende Duytschlant, &c.*, an exact copy of the Amsterdam title of the same name.

Weesp was located just South of Muiden, close to Amsterdam. It is likely that Jacobsz started this imitation of his grandfather's paper before 1656, perhaps with the view to sell the paper in the east of the Netherlands, via the trade routes emanating out of Amsterdam. With the death of his grandfather at the end of 1655, Jacobsz saw an opportunity to establish himself in the capital.

However, Jacobsz's request was denied. In their resolution the burgomasters argued that there were already four newspaper publishers in Amsterdam – which, they thought, was plenty. The burgomasters had established that four publishers, responsible for only two issues of news a week was enough. The commercial opportunism of the 1640s had given way to a timid news culture.

Jacobsz did not give up, and continued to publish his *Courante* in Weesp until at least 1660. By 1666 another publisher in Weesp tried his luck. The National Archives in Kew hold the first issue of a 1666 Weesp newspaper entitled *Oprechte Donderdagse Courante* (see figure 2.5).<sup>68</sup> This paper, otherwise unknown and never before described, was printed by Mattijs Perfect. The imprint mentioned specifically that it was 'to be sold in Amsterdam by Samuel Imbrechts'. Clearly the Amsterdam burgomasters could limit the number of local publishers, but they could not impede the import of other Dutch newspapers. There remained a market for more than two issues a week.

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<sup>67</sup> *Courante uyt Italien ende Duytschlant, &c.* 1656. No. 13. The exact date is illegible due to damage to the extant copy.

<sup>68</sup> *Oprechte Donderdagse Courante.* 1666. No. 1. 25 February 1666.



Figure 2.5: Previously unknown – the *Oprechte Donderdagse Courante* of Weesp (National Archives, Kew).

In October 1682 conditions in Amsterdam changed once more. Adriaen van Gaesbeeck was appointed as a new *Courantier* of Amsterdam. Only Commelijn remained of the original four partners of the *Amsterdamsche Courant*.<sup>69</sup> Gaesbeeck and Commelijn worked together until February 1686, when the former died. Now the burgomasters decided that it was best to have only one *Courantier* serving the city: Commelijn alone would continue with the privilege, ‘excluding all others’.<sup>70</sup> The newspaper was sold by bookseller Aert Ossaan, but produced solely by Commelijn. For the first time since 1618, Amsterdam had one Dutch newspaper publisher. To the burgomasters of Amsterdam, the desire for the control of news had surpassed their taste for the diversity of news. It was easier to control one publisher and one paper rather than a multitude.

The burgomasters continued to increase their influence over their local paper. When Commelijn died in 1693, the lawyer Willem Arnold was granted the right to publish the newspaper, in partnership with Jacomijntje van Duijveland, the widow of Ossaan.<sup>71</sup> It was decreed that they would divide equally all costs and profits: Arnold was

<sup>69</sup> Sautijn Kluit, ‘De Amsterdamsche Courant’, pp. 29-30.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., pp. 36-37.

tasked with the gathering of news, translation, editing and printing, whereas the widow would distribute and sell the paper.

In addition, the burgomasters drafted particular instructions for Arnold, consisting of nine points. The three most significant specified that Arnold

1. Will pay close attention, never to enter in the *Courant* any news concerning the condition and composition of the navy and army of the state, which could be used to the advantage by the enemy or any other ill-intentioned parties, and lead to the disadvantage of the common good of the state.

2. That he will not mention what ships of particulars are in preparation to depart these lands, or return to these lands, nor any of the convoys, with regards to the enemy taking advantage of such information to the detriment of the subjects of this state.

7. That he will not divulge through the *Courant* any domestic affairs or resolutions of the state, even if they are not secret, as they are not suited to be disseminated by a public *gazette*.<sup>72</sup>

These points are a firm attestation of the burgomasters' perspective: the newspaper is to play a minor role in political society. It is unlikely that the instruction for Arnold was followed strictly. Arnold could not easily decide which reports detailing the arrival or departure of ships could impede the safety of the Dutch Republic. Instead, this document represents a legal assurance for the burgomasters. It presented grounds on which they could pursue Arnold in the event of a complaint or mishap. The control of the local press would not be based on preventative censorship, as occurred in the Habsburg Netherlands.

Fundamentally, the document asserts the precedence of the city council over the commercial enterprise of the newspaper publisher. In Habermas' public sphere the newspaper emerged from repressive censorship to become a bastion of defiant opposition

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<sup>72</sup> Cited in *ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

to the authorities. At a time when the monopoly of periodical news was broken in London, ironically under the reign of a Dutch king, a monopoly was duly reinforced in Amsterdam (see figure 2.6).

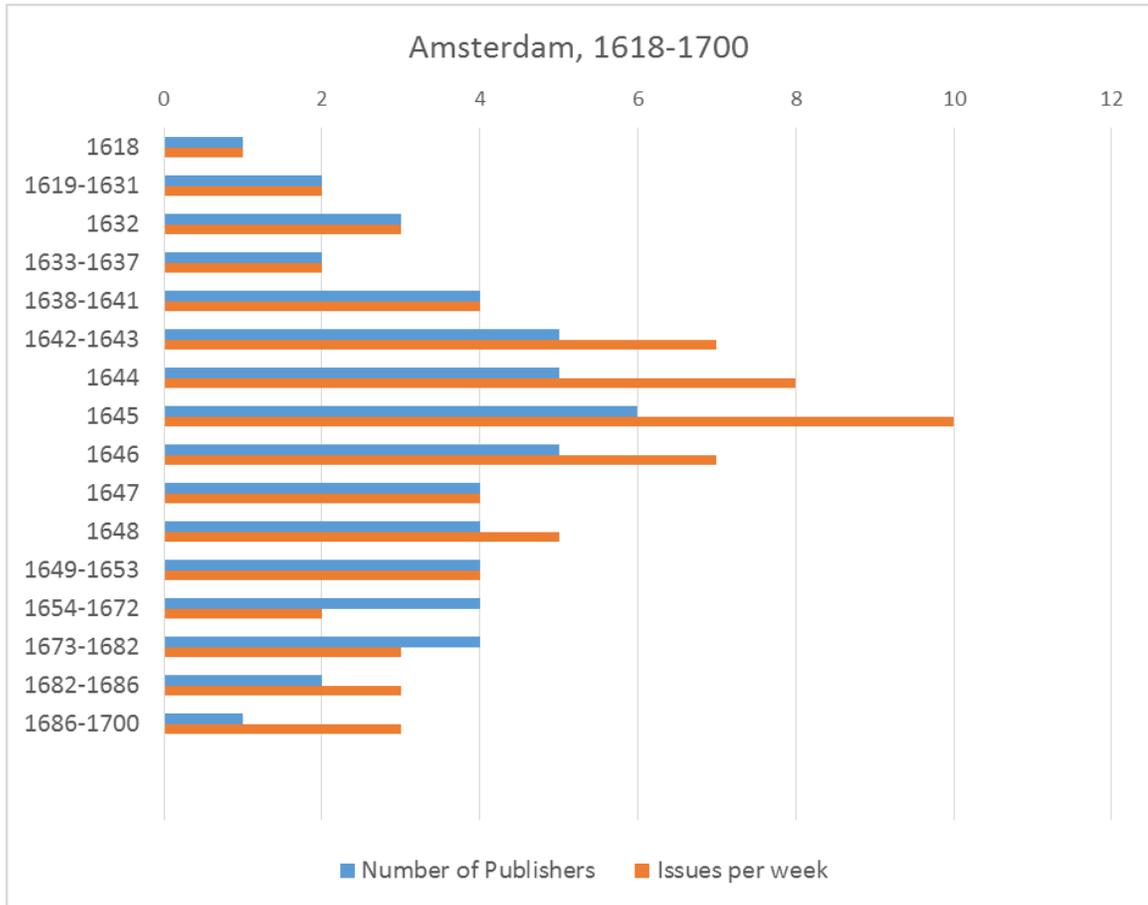


Figure 2.6: newspaper publishers and issues of news per week, 1618-1700.

### Chapter III.

#### Privileges, Scoundrels and Gentlemen – New Structures of the Industry

On 24 April 1666, the publisher/printer Johannes Naeranus submitted a petition to the town council of Rotterdam.<sup>73</sup> Naeranus requested a license to publish a bi-weekly newspaper. He stated that such newspapers were already printed in Haarlem and Amsterdam, to the disadvantage of citizens in Rotterdam and its surroundings. Naeranus argued that most of the news in the Haarlem and Amsterdam newspapers traveled through Rotterdam: he claimed that the Tuesday news in those papers could be published four days earlier in Rotterdam. Faced with a reasonable petition, the burgomasters of Rotterdam consented to Naeranus's request.<sup>74</sup>

The first issue of his *Rotterdamse Zee- en Post-tijdingen* (Rotterdam Sea- and Post-tidings) was published on 22 May (see figure 3.1).<sup>75</sup> Naeranus had chosen an opportune moment: by May 1666 the Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665-1667) was in full swing. Throughout the summer of 1666, two extensive naval engagements were fought: both were subject to extraordinary news coverage.



Figure 3.1: An early issue of Naeranus' periodical: *No. 32 Rotterdamse Donderdaagse Zee- en Posttijdingen*, 1666. (National Archives, Kew).

<sup>73</sup> See Sautijn Kluit, 'De Rotterdamse Courant', pp. 5-6.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>75</sup> The earliest surviving issue is No. 9, dated to Saturday 19 June 1666 (held in the National Archives, Kew).

The emergence of a newspaper in Rotterdam was also a symptom of wider developments in the European postal network (see figures 3.2-3.3).<sup>76</sup> The diversity and frequency of routes throughout Europe increased; in the Dutch Republic regular courier services were established with London, Danzig, and Paris.



Figures 3.2-3.3: The role of the post was increasingly emphasised in Dutch periodicals of the 1650s. The details above are woodcuts featuring on the title pages of the *Post-tydingen uyt 'sGraven-Hage* (The Hague, 1656-1660) and the *Haegsche Weeckelicke Mercurius* (The Hague, 1655-1658) (both Royal Library, Stockholm).

The developments taking place in the 1650s and 1660s were to define the structures of the press for the remainder of the seventeenth century, as much as into the eighteenth century. The decline of Amsterdam in the 1650s was directly related to the emergence of different press centres: The Hague, Haarlem, Utrecht, Rotterdam and Leiden. Dutch authorities began to take a greater interest in the regulation of the newspaper industry while publishers experimented with new forms and adapted to their changing role within the local municipality.

### **News at the Heart of the State**

In his petition of 1666 Naeranus had missed one vibrant news hub: The Hague. A decade before Naeranus' request, The Hague had seen the emergence of multiple short-lived newspapers. By 1666 it had settled for one bi-weekly paper, but the 1650s present a similar explosion of news to that of Amsterdam in the 1640s. The Hague was a melting

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<sup>76</sup> Schobesberger, 'European Postal Networks'.

pot of international trends and traditions. It provided an influence with a profound impact on the local and national newspaper industry.

The Hague was the political capital of the Dutch Republic. A small town without walls, it supported the leading political institutions of the state, which were clustered on several streets. Foreign agents and ambassadors, as well as dignitaries from other Dutch towns and provincial States contributed to a constant hubbub of gossip, news and intelligence.

Local authorities provided good business for the local print industry. Already from 1604 onwards, different booksellers in The Hague supplied printed and manuscript news to the High Court of Holland.<sup>77</sup> The delivery of books, stationery, pamphlets and periodicals would make Aert Meuris and the Van Wouw family some of the richest citizens in The Hague.<sup>78</sup> The different governing departments provided the bulk of the business for ephemeral specialists such as Jan Veely: between 1637 and 1650 he was paid more than 1,800 *gulden* by the Treasury, and another 1,150 *gulden* by the High Court of Holland.<sup>79</sup>

Commercially, the news industry of The Hague was closely tied to the institutions of state.<sup>80</sup> Physical ties were even closer: given the small size of The Hague, most booksellers were located in the *Grote Zaal* (Great Hall) of the *Binnenhof*, the central complex containing the States General (the assembly of the seven Dutch provinces), the States of Holland (the assembly of the leading towns of Holland), the High Court of Holland and the residence of the Prince of Orange (see figure 3.4).

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<sup>77</sup> W.P. Sautijn Kluit, 'De 's Gravenhaagsche Courant', *Jaarboek van de Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde*, 1875 (Leiden, 1875), p. 11.

<sup>78</sup> Marika Keblusek, *Boeken in de hofstad: Haagse boekcultuur in de Gouden Eeuw* (Hilversum, 1997), pp. 58-59.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.



Figure 3.4: The *Grote Zaal*, also known as the *Ridderzaal*, pictured in 1651 for the extraordinary session of the States General. All stalls were removed for the occasion, but this hall was usually the scene of trade, exchange and gossip. Painted by Bartholomeus van Bassen and Anthonie Palamedesz. (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, SK-C-1350).

During the later 1640s The Hague became the home of the Royal English court in exile, accommodating many other Royalist refugees.<sup>81</sup> The first publisher to try his luck with a weekly serial was an Englishman, Samuel Browne (c.1611-c.1666). A London printer, he fled England in the mid-1640s and settled in The Hague.<sup>82</sup> By 1647 he had his own print shop, which was responsible for a large proportion of all Royalist publications in the Dutch Republic, including many news reports emanating from the conflict in Britain. By 1648 Browne published the *Mercurius Anglo-Britannus*, a news serial which

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<sup>81</sup> Helmer J. Helmers, *The Royalist Republic: Literature, Politics, and religion in the Anglo-Dutch Public Sphere, 1639-1660* (Cambridge, 2015), p. 56.

<sup>82</sup> E.F. Kossmann, *De Boekhandel te 's-Gravenhage tot het eind van de 18de eeuw* (Den Haag, 1937), pp. 51-54; Keblusek, *Boeken in de hofstad*, pp. 276-277, 280; Helmers, *Royalist Republic*, p. 56.

brought tidings of ‘various parts of England, Scotland and Ireland, concerning the King, the Parliament and the three Kingdoms’.<sup>83</sup>

Browne’s serial imitated the periodical newsbooks published in Britain throughout the 1640s. Instead of presenting the news by geographical origin (‘from Rome’, ‘from Vienna’), reports were divided in segments of the preceding week’s days. This was a familiar style to Browne: by maintaining the same format of publication on the continent, the communication of the English Civil War beyond the British Isles was closely tied to the distinct newsbook format.

During the First Anglo-Dutch War (1652-1654) Browne continued his denunciations of the Cromwellian regime. On 6 January 1653, Browne commenced a new publication: the *Noodig, Continueerlick Acht-Dagen-Nieus* (Necessary, Continuing Eight-Day-News). A folded sheet in quarto, the subtitle of the newspaper stated that it contained news from ‘England, France, and other quarters, cities or places’. Browne’s news was indeed predominantly sourced from England, Ireland and France, but the surviving issues also contain reports from Venice, Frankfurt, Cologne, Heidelberg and Maastricht, amongst others. Maier and Vos’ claim that Browne’s publications cannot be classified as a newspaper is here incorrect.<sup>84</sup>

Browne faced competition by another publisher taking advantage of the political developments in England and France. In April 1652 a weekly newspaper entitled *Wekelycke Nieus uyt Vranckryck, Engelant ende andere Plaetsen* (Weekly News from France, England and other places) was published anonymously in The Hague: its imprint only stated that it was to be found in the ‘Groote Zael’.

Throughout 1652 and 1653, the *Wekelycke Nieus* was wholly dedicated to news from England and France. The only reports placed in the newspaper were sourced from London, Paris and The Hague. An eight-page quarto pamphlet, the *Wekelycke Nieus* was rarely filled: the second, seventh and eight pages were frequently blank. The weekly report from London was often delayed, with the publisher forced to state only that the ‘letters from London have not yet arrived’.

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<sup>83</sup> Ingrid Maier and René Vos, ‘Van oude kranten de dingen die opduiken: Nieuw licht op de Haagse pers in de zeventiende eeuw’, *Jaarboek Die Haghe* (2004), p. 13.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

The *Wekelycke Nieuws* was a venture designed to profit from interest in the First Anglo-Dutch War and the *Fronde* – but clearly its publisher had limited contacts, and was not able to develop a wider network of correspondents. He was also cautious: only on 13 June 1652, with the publication of issue 10, did Johannes Rammazeyn (1619/20-1693) reveal his name on the imprint.

On 27 February 1653 Rammazeyn's name disappeared once more. Now the fortunes of the *Wekelycke Nieuws* changed, as it was taken over by the scholar, mathematician and bookseller Adriaen Vlacq (1600-1667). The range of sources expanded. Reports from London and Paris remained a staple, but Vlacq added regular correspondence from Milan, Turin, Hamburg, Naples, Rome, Danzig and Brussels.

In order to aid the distribution of his newspaper, Vlacq made a deal with the Amsterdam bookseller Gillis Joosten Saeghman.<sup>85</sup> The details of their agreement is unknown, but several variant issues of the *Wekelycke Nieuws* have survived from 1653 and 1654. These variants carry a different imprint: 'In The Hague, printed for Gillis Joosten, living in Amsterdam in the *Nieuwe-straet*' (see figure 3.5). Although only eight issues of the variant have survived, it is likely that the entire print run of the newspaper was divided between the two publishers throughout at least 1653 and 1654. Vlacq and Saeghman entered the Amsterdam market exactly around the time that the burgomasters of Amsterdam decided to restrict their local periodical industry.

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<sup>85</sup> Keblusek, *Boeken in de hofstad*, p. 133.

No. 25.  
W E K E L Y C K E  
N I E U S  
Uyt  
V R A N C K R Y C K  
E N G E L A N T  
Ende andre Plaetsen.



*I N ' S G R A V E N - H A G E .*

Gedrucke voor *Gillis Joosten*, woonende tot Amsterdam  
in de *Nieuwe-straet* den 20. Junij 1653.

Figure 3.5: The title page of a 1653 issue of the *Wekelycke Nieuws* with the variant imprint of Gillis Joosten Saeghman (Royal Library, The Hague).

By 1663 Vlacq was in charge of a new periodical, entitled *Haeghsche Post-Tydingen* (Hague Post-Tidings). This venture was established in partnership with the Amsterdam bookseller Pieter Aertsen: the two men agreed that Vlacq would print the newspaper ‘in the format and manner of the Amsterdam and Haarlem newspapers’, and would deliver half of the print run to Aertsen.<sup>86</sup> In order to compete more successfully in

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 98.

the Amsterdam market, it was important to do away with the quarto style and adopt the expected standard format of newspapers in the Dutch Republic.

While Vlacq adapted over time, other newspapermen were not so successful. The plight of the newspapermen in The Hague was closely related to the whims of the authorities. The fact that the *Wekelycke Nieuws* was published anonymously for several stretches indicates that Rammazeyn and Vlacq knew they were operating in a precarious market.<sup>87</sup> Browne, the first newspaper publisher in The Hague, was also the first to be pursued. On 4 March 1651 he was banned from The Hague and fined 1,000 *gulden*, an enormous sum quite beyond Browne's means, after publishing a polemic Royalist pamphlet.<sup>88</sup> Paradoxically, the ban was repealed, and the States General and the Council of State even ordered a dozen copies of the pamphlet, followed by a further order of another couple of dozen.<sup>89</sup>

This episode illuminates a fundamental paradox of the news industry in The Hague. The news market fits neither a traditional narrative of oppressive authorities seeking to limit the development of a popular press; nor the periodicals of the Habermasian public sphere, which operate independently of the state. Instead, one sees here that the state is deeply involved in the process of periodical news: primarily as consumer, but also a regulator responding to political forces beyond the market place. It is likely that Browne's sentence was only passed for the benefit of the Cromwellian legation in The Hague, with whom the States were eager to avoid the hostilities which would erupt next year.

The most outlandish figure of the Dutch periodical industry arrived in The Hague in 1654. Gerard Lodewijk van der Macht (1622/23-1698), the son of a noble, was born in Ghent.<sup>90</sup> Van der Macht's name never appeared on any publication in The Hague. Unlike other Dutch newspaper publishers, he intended to hide his identity, and devoted his time to news-gathering. Van der Macht employed Rammazeyn, the former publisher of the *Wekelycke Nieuws*, for his first venture. On 22 May 1654 the first issue of the *Wekelycke Mercurius van alle het gedenckwaerdigste dat door geheel Europa passeert* (Weekly

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<sup>87</sup> Maier and Vos, 'Van oude kranten de dingen', pp. 17-18.

<sup>88</sup> Keblusek, *Boeken in de hofstad*, pp. 282-283.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 282-283.

<sup>90</sup> Kossmann, *De Boekhandel*, pp. 248-249.

Mercury of all the noteworthy events occurring throughout Europe) was published. A quarto pamphlet of two sheets (eighteen pages), Van der Macht was able to fill the weekly with an average of 29 reports. True to the title, the reports were sourced from the entire breadth of Europe. A typical issue of the *Wekelycke Mercurius* included reports from:

Constantinople, Messina, Naples, Rome, Genoa, Berwick, Turin, La Rochelle, Rennes, Nantes, Breisach, London, Paris, Rheims, Rethel, Soissons, Compiègne, Marle, Sainte Menehould, the French army, the Spanish army around Rocroi, Ghent, Brussels, Antwerp, Warsaw, Regensburg, Strasbourg, Hamburg, and The Hague.<sup>91</sup>

By the twelfth issue, Rammazeyn's name disappeared from the imprint; the thirteenth issue of 21 August 1654 was the last to appear. Van der Macht turned to another printer, Wilhelm Breeckevelt. Van der Macht wasted no time, and the first issue of Breeckevelt's *Haegsche Weekelycke Mercurius* was published on 4 September 1654 (see figure 3.6). Almost identical in title to Rammazeyn's banned newspaper, the new periodical was published on one sheet in quarto only. It can be identified clearly as Van der Macht's publication given the similarity in the news reports. Almost every issue opens with reports from Constantinople, Sicily and the Italian peninsula, followed by news predominantly from Britain and France. Even with one fewer sheet, Van der Macht managed to insert over 20 sources in each issue.

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<sup>91</sup> *Numero 6. Wekelycke Mercurius van het gedenckwaerdichste dat door Europa passeert*, 3 July 1654.



Figure 3.6: The newspaper in the top-left corner of this still life (1655) by Anthonius Leemans was most certainly painted after one of Van der Macht's issues printed in The Hague by Wilhelm Breeckevelt (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, SK-A-752).

Breeckevelt's newspaper was banned by July 1655. Again, after only a couple of weeks of laying low, Van der Macht started a new version of the *Haegsche Weeckelicke Mercurius*. The imprint hinted for the first time to Van der Macht's role: 'In The Hague, printed for the author'. He closed a deal with two other members of the book trade:

Christianus Calaminus and Hendrik Hondius.<sup>92</sup> The former printed Van der Macht's periodical, whereas the latter was in charge of its distribution and sale.

Van der Macht's customers could expect a certain exclusivity: he continued to frequent the offices of government, where he was supplied with classified diplomatic news and resolutions. In September 1657 an investigation was started against several clerks who were suspected of this misconduct.<sup>93</sup> Van der Macht knew that he was subject to investigation, and throughout 1658 the pseudonym 'Anthoni Pieters' appeared on his publications. On 5 April 1658 the High Court handed Van der Macht a ten-year ban from Holland, requiring him to leave The Hague within 24 hours and to leave the boundaries of Holland within three days.

Van der Macht quickly settled in the nearby province of Utrecht: by July 1658 he was already responsible for an irregular pamphlet series, as well as a bi-weekly newspaper. These he published under the pseudonym of 'Anthoni Benedicti'. Van der Macht continued to impact upon the wider news industry from the relative safety of Utrecht. He sold his periodical in The Hague with several old contacts, including his former seller, Hondius.<sup>94</sup> Van der Macht's flamboyant career lasted until December 1669, when he was banned from Utrecht and Holland for life after several warnings by the local magistrates.<sup>95</sup> Now, the Dutch newspaper industry was to be dominated by another force.

### **The Gentleman-Publisher**

In 1645, at the height of Amsterdam's status as a centre of news, the town of Haarlem seemed an unlikely competitor. Twenty years later there was little doubt that Haarlem, around twelve miles from Amsterdam, was the new periodical centre of the Dutch Republic. This was largely due to the efforts of Abraham Casteleyn (1628-1681), the son of the *stadsdrucker* of Haarlem, Vincent Casteleyn.

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<sup>92</sup> E.F. Kossmann, 'Haagsche uitgevers van de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw. I. De beide Haagsche uitgevers Hendrik Hondius', *Het Boek* 22 (1933-34), p. 284.

<sup>93</sup> Kossmann, 'Haagsche uitgevers', p. 285; Keblusek, *Boeken in de hofstad*, p. 135.

<sup>94</sup> Keblusek, *Boeken in de hofstad*, p. 135.

<sup>95</sup> W.P. Sautijn Kluit, 'De Hollandsche en Fransche Utrechtsche Couranten', *Bijdragen en Mededeelingen van het Historisch Genootschap. Deel 1* (Utrecht, 1877), pp. 33-34; Kossmann, *De Boekhandel*, pp. 248-249.

Abraham Casteleyn printed the first issue of his newspaper, the *Weeckelycke Courante van Europa* (Weekly Newspaper of Europe) on Saturday 6 January 1656. As promotion, Casteleyn sent his periodical to various booksellers throughout the country, adding a small printed notification in which he outlined his venture (see figure 3.7):

Sir. The falseness of the newspapers which nowadays inform us of the movements of this troubled world, had motivated me, on behalf of some interested persons and for my own satisfaction, to write for special newsletters from the most important places in Europe, a process which has not been possible without some trouble and expense. The late Mr. Jan van Hilten asked me, when he saw these [newsletters] at my house, to put them or something from them at his service every week, a thing which I did now and again and which made his newspapers better than those of the others. But after Mr. van Hilten died, I judged it best to no longer remain a slave of others, and print news for myself, despite other *courantiers* requesting my newsletters, as I have also gained new opportunities to gather various fine newsletters ...<sup>96</sup>

Casteleyn further urged the recipients of the circular to favour his periodical, especially if they had hitherto bought Van Hilten's newspaper. This unique advertisement offers a vital clue to Casteleyn's background as newsletter-writer. It is interesting that Van Hilten employed someone outside of Amsterdam as a gatherer of news. Amsterdam's success was reliant on newsmen like Casteleyn, who played a vital, if largely anonymous role in the sustenance of a competitive news centre.

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<sup>96</sup> Noord-hollandsarchief, Haarlem. OHC 1112c. Also cited partly in Dahl, *Dutch Corantos*, p. 18.

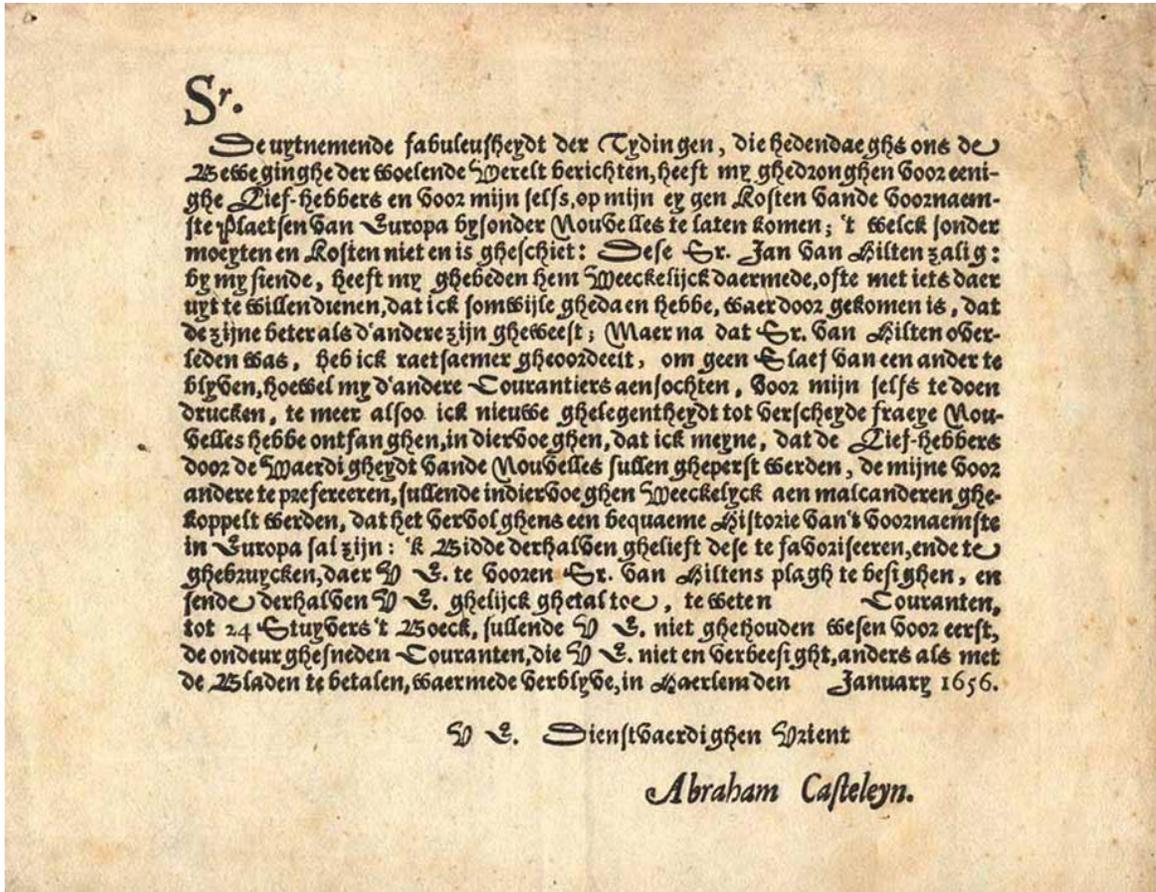


Figure 3.7: Casteleyn's notification of January 1656 (Noord-Hollandsarchief, Haarlem, OHC 1112c).

In the autumn of 1658, Casteleyn started a second weekly edition, published on Tuesdays; the *Haerlemse Dingsdaegse Courant*. The name of the *Weeckelycke Courante van Europa* was changed at the start of 1659 to the *Haerlemse Saterdagse Courant*: Casteleyn was creating a uniform brand. A further change occurred in 1664, when Casteleyn added the word *Oprechte* ('Genuine') to the start of the title. On 16 September 1664 Abraham Casteleyn had complained to the burgomasters of Haarlem that his own brothers Johannes, Pieter and Vincent Casteleyn printed and distributed 'news and post-tidings'.<sup>97</sup> The change in title served to protect his customers and warn his siblings of

<sup>97</sup> Sautijn Kluit, 'De Haarlemsche Courant', p. 9.

Abraham's monopoly. On 9 June 1667 Casteleyn made a final change to his newspaper, when he added a Thursday edition, the *Extraordinaire Donderdaegse Haerlemse Courant*.

Casteleyn's newspaper was a pioneer of the Dutch news industry. Although he copied the broadsheet format and design of the Amsterdam newspapers (opting for the Amsterdam 'courant' rather than the 'mercurius' or 'post-tydingen' prevalent in The Hague), he was responsible for new national developments and trends.

Throughout the 1650s and 1660s issues of the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* featured on average 20.5 reports, whereas the four Amsterdam newspapers of the same two decades featured only 14.8. While Casteleyn was able to offer 62 reports a week from 1667 onwards, the Amsterdam newspapers were published fortnightly, offering only 30 reports a week until the addition of a Thursday edition in 1673.<sup>98</sup>

In order to present a large quantity of news, Casteleyn experimented with the design of the news columns and the typeface. Dutch newspapers, until the 1650s, had been presented largely in a Gothic typeface. Casteleyn was the first publisher to use a smaller roman typeface for most of his reports. By 1670, issues of the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* were printed almost exclusively in a roman typeface (see figure 3.8). The total word count of the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* increased while Casteleyn did not use any additional paper. Whereas the Amsterdam newspapers of the 1640s and 1650s would present around 2,100 words per issue, Casteleyn was able to fit at least 3,000 words in each weekly issue.

With a smaller typeface, Casteleyn also introduced geographical divisions in order to guide the reader through the dense text. Casteleyn grouped reports by their geographical origin, and placed a large header above each section: 'Italy', 'Germany and neighbouring territories', 'Poland & Prussia', 'England', 'France', 'the Netherlands'. Casteleyn first featured such headers in his *Weeckelycke Courante van Europa* in the later 1650s, and by the end of the 1660s other newspaper publishers throughout the Dutch Republic were implementing similar changes.

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<sup>98</sup> This analysis was conducted with 346 issues of the Haarlem newspaper between 1656 and 1669, and 307 issues of the Amsterdam newspapers between 1651 and 1669.

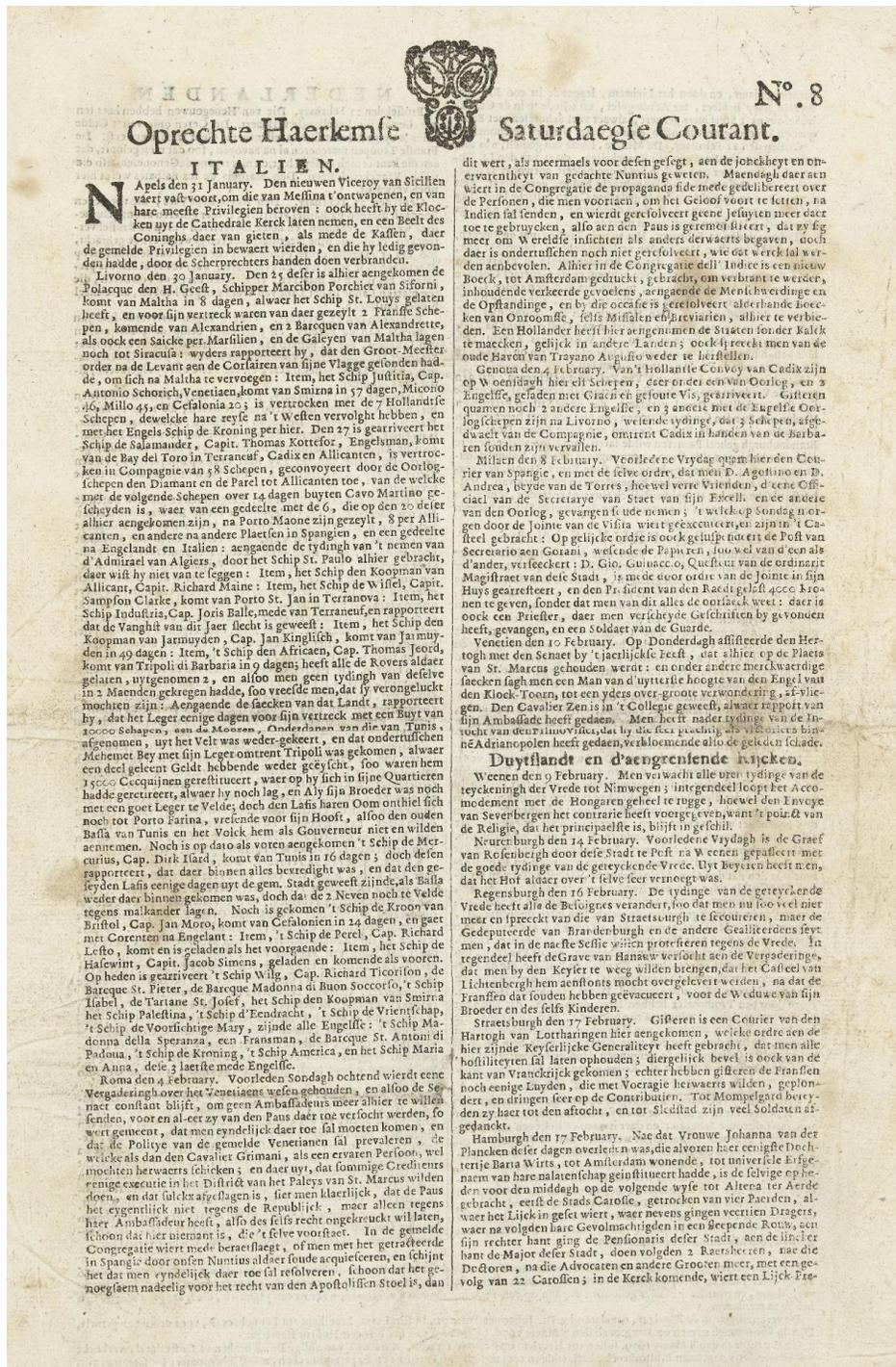


Figure 3.8: A typical issue of the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant*: issue 8 of Saturday 25 February 1679. Note especially the large geographical headers: ‘Italy’ and ‘Germany and neighbouring territories’. The headers of the individual reports (‘Naples’, ‘Rome’, etc. are integrated into the paragraphs. (Rijkmuseum, Amsterdam, BI-1887-1463-92A).

Casteleyn's rivals undoubtedly imitated Casteleyn's style due to the popularity of the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant*. The Haarlem paper was read throughout the country: during the 1660s and 1670s the newspaper featured advertisements from booksellers and publishers of 36 different towns in the Dutch Republic.

Casteleyn's paper had considerable impact abroad. Today the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* is found in large quantities in London, Moscow, Bremen, Oldenburg, Wolfenbüttel and Stockholm. Maier has written extensively on the frequent handwritten translations of the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* in Moscow. By 1660 the Haarlem newspaper was regularly translated and read at the court of the Tsar.<sup>99</sup> Kleerkooper discovered four different series of printed English translations of the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant*, dating to 1679-1680, 1681, 1689 and 1695.<sup>100</sup> The earliest known translation, *The Haerlem Courant*, featured an announcement in its second issue:

A person of much leisure has undertaken to render into English the Haerlem Gazettes; which having the best repute of all that are foreign, it is hoped may contribute much to the satisfying the curiosity of such, as are not only desirous to be acquainted with the actions abroad, but the accounts that are given of the occurrences here ...<sup>101</sup>

Throughout Europe, the content of newspapers was frequently copied across different titles and countries. However, with the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* English printers copied a periodical brand, rather than only news reports. This was an otherwise exceptional feature of the international news industry in the seventeenth century.

The popularity of the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* in England rested largely on the quality of its English news. Throughout Europe newspapers included little valuable information on domestic politics; instead readers relied on foreign periodicals for snippets of news on their home court or condition. In the frequent political crises of the

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<sup>99</sup> Maier and Vos, 'Gelezen van Londen tot Moskou', p. 19.

<sup>100</sup> See M.M. Kleerkooper, 'De Haarlemsche (en de Rotterdamsche) courant in het Engelsch', *Tijdschrift voor Boek- en Bibliotheekwezen* 4 (1906), 99-107.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

Restoration period, England was awash with foreign newspapers and newsletters commenting on English affairs. Casteleyn ensured that he was at the forefront of this demand for news by establishing a prominent relationship with Joseph Williamson (1633-1701), then under-secretary of State for England.

Williamson had been the driving force behind the creation of *The London Gazette* in 1665, and engaged in widespread news-gathering. He maintained dozens of regular contacts throughout Britain, many of them post-masters. He used their intelligence to compose a special manuscript newsletter, which he exchanged with foreign newswriters and publishers for their foreign news; this he then used for the *London Gazette* and other manuscript ventures.<sup>102</sup> News was a currency best exchanged with other publishers; Casteleyn and Williamson exchanged reports in correspondence on a weekly basis.<sup>103</sup>

A large number of Casteleyn's reports to Williamson have survived in the National Archives in Kew.<sup>104</sup> The manuscript reports focus on movements of the Dutch army, the Dutch admiralties, and the movements and components of the Dutch fleet. Casteleyn also added other continental news which came to his attention, but news regarding Dutch military preparations was the most valuable to Williamson.

A typical newsletter from Casteleyn, dated 5 May 1666, 8AM in the morning, contains a passage of code when it speaks of the details of the Dutch fleet: '... as such the fleet and its armament 620 609 289 18 607 604 51 576 75 313 171 473 10 611 178 164 580 303 317 506 386 506 609 603 ... 15 days have passed since Admiral de Ruyter left for the Meuse and has arrived at Texel with nine warships....'<sup>105</sup>

The news exchanged between Williamson and Casteleyn was highly compromising. The two men communicated throughout the Second Anglo-Dutch War, an act akin to treason. It is no surprise that Williamson hid his correspondence with Casteleyn in his account books under pseudonyms: 'Sir David' or 'Sir David Frank, broker in Amsterdam'.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Peter Fraser, *The Intelligence of the Secretaries of State and their monopoly of Licensed News, 1660-1688* (Cambridge, 1956), p. 44.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 46; Raymond and Moxham, 'Introduction: News Networks in Early Modern Europe', p. 11.

<sup>104</sup> The National Archives, Kew. SP101/48-62: Holland, 1666-1684.

<sup>105</sup> Newsletter, 5 May 1666, folios 286-287, SP101/48, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>106</sup> Fraser, *The Intelligence*, p. 73.

Casteleyn was taking risks, but he was also shrewd. As well as his connections to Williamson, he maintained valuable sources in The Hague. Otto Callenfels, deputy to the Danish ambassador in The Hague, sent Casteleyn resolutions of state several times a week.<sup>107</sup> Casteleyn paid him 16 *stuivers* for each manuscript sheet; the equivalent of the revenue of 16 copies of his newspaper.

On 24 February 1670 the High Court of Holland demanded that Casteleyn present himself in The Hague. It was found that Casteleyn frequently printed direct copies of resolutions in his newspaper. However, Casteleyn did not travel to The Hague; the Haarlem town council protected him under the pretext that they alone could punish him if he was guilty of any crime, and that Casteleyn could only be tried in Haarlem.

By the 1670s Casteleyn had successfully ingratiated himself with local government. The protection offered him by the ruling council was a sign of his status as the leading national news publisher. His son, Gerard, who took over the publication of the newspaper in 1698, became a member of the town council in 1701.<sup>108</sup> The prestige of the Casteleyn family was typical of a wider shift in the reputation and appearance of the newspaper publisher throughout the seventeenth century. In a 1663 painting by Jan de Bray, Abraham Casteleyn presented himself and his wife, who was a notable presence in the print shop, as respected members of the bourgeois elite (see figure 3.9). Casteleyn was a gentleman-publisher: scholarly, affluent and decorous.

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<sup>107</sup> Sautijn Kluit, 'De Haarlemsche Courant', p. 20.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 28.



Figure 3.9: Jan de Bray, *Abraham Casteleyn en zijn echtgenote Margarieta van Bancken*, 1663 (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, K-A-3280).

Casteleyn's role as publisher was far removed from that of the compositor and field-reporter Broer Jansz. Instead of Jansz, Casteleyn emulated a newspaper publisher like the French Théophraste Renaudot, a physician and administrator who established himself at the core of French regime in the 1630s. The changing position of the newspaperman as an officer of state came with benefits. The publisher was able to circulate in circles of power and intelligence, where he conversed and socialised with like-minded individuals interested in political news; the publisher could assert himself in municipal government and regulations; and, above all, he could ensure the protection of his rights and monopoly.

## Chapter IV.

### Politics, Public and Periodical Press in the Dutch Republic

To Jürgen Habermas, the advance of the newspaper was a fundamental step in the birth of modern society.<sup>109</sup> Other historians have reiterated a similar viewpoint. According to Sommerville, the periodical was responsible for a ‘new type of consciousness’ which ‘politicised society’.<sup>110</sup> Anthony Smith likewise described the development of the newspaper in progressive categories of political influence.<sup>111</sup> The expansion of the newspaper was hailed, already by the end of the eighteenth century, as a triumph of civil society.

In the seventeenth century, commentators would not have agreed. The emergence of the newspaper was met more often than not with satire rather than admiration. A favoured topic of literati was the ‘news-crazed citizen’: gullible, politically-inexperienced and exploited by a greedy newsman.<sup>112</sup> The English playwright Ben Jonson is today regarded as the archetypal satirist of early commercial news culture. In Jonson’s *The Staple of News* (1625) it mattered not what news was sold or bought, as long as it was fresh and controversial. In the first Act of *The Staple of News* the master of the news staple (Cymbal) and his main accomplice (Fitton) explain the purpose of their scheme:

Cymbal: To keep so many politics pens / Going to feed the press –

Fitton: And dish out news, / Were’t true or false ...<sup>113</sup>

One is left with two extremes. Many historians of the press have singled out their subject for particular importance in the development of modern civil society, while commentators of seventeenth-century newspapers had much derision for the periodicals. As Raymond argues, one should not rely too much on the statements of contemporaries

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<sup>109</sup> Pettegree, *Invention of News*.

<sup>110</sup> C. John Sommerville, *The News Revolution in England: Cultural Dynamics of Daily Information* (Oxford, 1996), here pp. 20, 168.

<sup>111</sup> Anthony Smith, *The Newspaper: An International History* (London, 1979), pp. 7-12.

<sup>112</sup> Raymond, ‘News networks’, p. 6.

<sup>113</sup> Ben Jonson, *The Staple of News*, edited by Anthony Parr (Manchester, 1988), Act I, scene V, p. 95.

on the general nature of newsbooks and periodicals: they are often repetitive and stereotypical.<sup>114</sup> Recent scholarly work on the history of news has also moved beyond the traditional historical narrative. Works by Pettegree, Raymond, Popkin, Dooley and Arblaster demonstrate that in order to understand the early press, one must turn to the perspectives of the newsmen and their customers.<sup>115</sup>

### **The pursuit of the public**

The early modern citizen was a news-curious being.<sup>116</sup> The exchange of news was at the foundation of basic decorum. To have little news to share was considered poor etiquette: newspaper publishers always apologised if particular letters were late to arrive. It was important to apologise, for customers were fickle and news readers could source their daily news from a variety of media.

It is here necessary to emphasise that the emergence of the newspaper was not a seminal moment. The newspaper was a by-product of a commercial market of news in which various media were deeply imbedded. Manuscript newsletters, pamphlets, almanacs, histories and maps were flexible and overlapping commercial genres, and the newspaper was only another feature available within this fluid culture.<sup>117</sup>

In a social world dominated by the consumption and exchange of news, newspaper publishers had to stand out. They had to persuade potential customers that it was worth spending a *stuiver* on news from the Holy Roman Empire or England which they might have picked up for free at the bourse or at the *Binnenhof*. Newspaper publishers did their best to market their new product: they extolled the quality of their sources and stressed the long hours they spent compiling the newspaper. The content of the newspaper was diverse. Publishers copied speeches, letters or ordinances, detailed the

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<sup>114</sup> Raymond, *Invention of the Newspaper*, p. 17.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.; Pettegree, *Invention of News*; Popkin, *Revolutionary News*; Dooley, *Social History of Skepticism*; Arblaster, *Ghent to Aix*.

<sup>116</sup> Paul Arblaster, “‘Dat de boecken vrij sullen wesen’: Private Profit, Public Utility and Secrets of State in the Seventeenth-Century Habsburg Netherlands”, in Joop W. Koopmans (ed.), *News and Politics in Early Modern Europe (1500-1800)* (Leuven, 2005), p. 86.

<sup>117</sup> Helmer J. Helmers, ‘Cartography, War Correspondence and News Publishing: The Early Career of Nicolaes van Geelkercken, 1610-1630’, in *NN*; Van Groesen, ‘A Week to Remember’; and Stolp, *Eerste Couranten*.

cargo of East or West-Indiamen, listed the casualties of far-flung battles and found space for an occasional comic remark on a Habsburg or French defeat.

All newspaper publishers of the Dutch Republic were responsible for many other publications beyond their newspaper. Helmers emphasises the importance of studying newspapers and their publishers' career in a wider world of print.<sup>118</sup> The most successful newspapermen of the Dutch Republic enjoyed more prominent roles as *stadsdrukkers* (Broer Jansz, Abraham Casteleyn and Johannes van Ravesteyn), scholars (Adriaen Vlacq) or historians (Casparus Commelijn) (see figure 4.1). The output of the newsmen was varied, and included works of literature, religious devotion and political polemic.

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<sup>118</sup> Helmers, 'Cartography, War Correspondence and News Publishing', pp. 2-3.



Figure 4.1: Casparus Commelijn, the publisher of the *Amsterdamsche Courant*, was evidently more proud of his achievement as writer of the *Beschryvinge of Amsterdam* (Description of Amsterdam), published in 1693. Here pictured with his work by David van der Plas (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, SK-C-517).

Publishers were also adept at promoting their diverse output through their news reporting. In his newspaper of 13 September 1668 Johannes Naeranus reported the publication of an ordinance in Middelburg, where the magistrates denounced and banned a particular Socinian text. Four weeks later, Naeranus printed the same prohibited text in Rotterdam and advertised it in his newspaper.<sup>119</sup> The mix of news and advertising was a potent force in the repertoire of the newspaper publisher; it would come to define and strengthen the newspaper industry in the eighteenth century and beyond.

### **The ideal reader**

The German Johann Hermann Knoop (1706-1769) was a bestselling author of practical guidebooks and handbooks throughout the mid-eighteenth century. In 1758 Knoop composed the *Kort Onderwys, hoedanig men de Couranten best lezen en gebruiken kan* ('Brief education, on how one can best read and use newspapers'). Knoop was not the first to muse on the subject: by the end of the seventeenth century several other German writers had done the same.<sup>120</sup> Knoop was the first to write in Dutch. His purpose in doing so was to aid the: '... normal man, whether a peasant or a citizen, who cannot read and understand the newspaper the same as a lettered person, while many of them do wish to do so ...'<sup>121</sup>

Knoop offers six conditions of newspaper reading. The competent reader must:

1. Be able to read
2. Understand the jargon of the newspaper
3. Know the location and importance of the most prominent towns and places mentioned in the newspaper
4. Read the newspaper regularly in order to understand it
5. Trust the writer or publisher of the newspaper

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<sup>119</sup> No. 75 *Oprechte Rotterdamse Donderdaagse Zee- en Posttijdingen*, 13 September 1668 and No. 81 *Oprechte Rotterdamse Donderdaagse Zee- en Posttijdingen*, 4 October 1668.

<sup>120</sup> Pettegree, *Invention of News*, pp. 261-263.

<sup>121</sup> Knoop, *Kort Onderwys, hoedanig men de Couranten best lezen en gebruiken kan* (Leeuwarden, 1758), p. 4.

## 6. Pass rational judgement on the newspaper and evaluate its contents<sup>122</sup>

Knoop's conditions conform to the Habermasian model of news consumption. The reader is presumed to be rational, critical and knowledgeable of the overall context of current affairs. Above all, the reader must follow the newspaper regularly, and must do so with purpose.

These presumptions are not fully reflective of early modern readers. The Habermasian construction of the public sphere takes for granted the motivation and comprehension of newspaper readers. The philosopher Justus Lipsius and the writer P.C. Hooft read the news for leisure. Reading was a social act which stemmed from the traditional common exchange and discussion of news.<sup>123</sup> Hooft would read manuscript letters and newspapers to his guests in Muiden, satisfying 'their ears with the taste of tidings.'<sup>124</sup> Newspapers were not limited to rational auto-didacticism; they could entertain or bore, and provided bonding material in a coffeehouse or at the bourse.

As with other ephemeral literature of the seventeenth century, it is also difficult to establish the social spectrum of newspaper readers. Harline, in his study of Dutch political pamphlets, presumes that readers came from many strata of society.<sup>125</sup> Raymond, discussing English newsbooks of the 1640s, emphasises that 'people of all literate classes' read the periodicals: readership was 'socially and geographically diverse.'<sup>126</sup> The high urban density of the Dutch Republic stimulated the development of a relatively politicised and literate society in comparison to other regions in Europe.

Advertisements provide useful evidence of the readership of newspapers. Almost all advertisements before the 1640s were for books or prints, placed by other booksellers in the trade. The majority of books advertised were short, vernacular works, and were part of a popular market for religious, literary and political texts. While the book trade continued to dominate advertising throughout the century, the newspaper was used by a

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>123</sup> Arblaster, "'Dat de boecken vrij sullen wesen'", p. 88.

<sup>124</sup> Hooft to Joachim de Wicquefort, 12 August 1645, in W. van Tricht, et al. (eds.), *De briefwisseling van Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft (derde deel)* (Culemborg, 1979), pp. 705-706.

<sup>125</sup> Craig E. Harline, *Pamphlets, Printing and Political Culture in the Early Dutch Republic* (Dordrecht, 1987), pp. 25-71.

<sup>126</sup> Raymond, *Invention of the Newspaper*, pp. 244, 253.

more diverse audience from the 1650s onwards. French and Latin schoolmasters, surgeons, inventors, brokers and postmasters all make regular appearances.

By the end of the century newspapers catered to an even larger audience. The periodicals featured notifications of distraught parents searching for their lost sons or daughters, of small towns in the East or South of the Republic advertising their market-days, or of widows auctioning or selling the books of their late husbands. If not all these advertisers read newspapers, one can certainly presume that they interacted with the periodicals. Newspapers, through advertising, were integrated into the fabric of daily society.

One may also learn more of newspaper readers through specific case studies. A well-known reader of seventeenth-century Dutch newspapers was David Beck.<sup>127</sup> A schoolmaster teaching at the ‘French school’ in The Hague in the 1610s and early 1620s, Beck was provided with copies of Van Hilten’s *Courante uyt Italien* by his uncle, who lived in Amsterdam.<sup>128</sup> It seems that Beck received the *Courante* on an irregular basis; he did not read the latest issue every week. Instead he read the newspaper for particular interesting accounts, or to follow a developing story in the West Indies or in the Thirty Years’ War.

With a salary of around 500 or 600 *gulden* a year, Beck was securely fixed in the upper echelons of urban society.<sup>129</sup> His friends and acquaintances included magistrates and delegates to the States General; he was well-versed in history and current affairs, and read widely. An annual subscription to an Amsterdam weekly would have cost Beck around half a percent of his annual income: a weekly Amsterdam newspaper cost on average three *gulden*. He could clearly afford to read periodical news on a regular basis, but it remained a financial commitment.

It was this considerable annual price of the newspaper which provided a natural barrier to the development of a mass readership in the seventeenth century. In Holland,

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<sup>127</sup> Jeroen Blaak, *Literacy in Everyday Life: Reading and Writing in Early Modern Dutch Diaries*, translated by Beverley Jackson (Leiden, 2009), pp. 41-112.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

one issue of a newspaper was similarly priced to a litre of beer or half a kilo of rye bread.<sup>130</sup>

While many newspaper publishers throughout Europe emphasised the collectability and seriality of their newspaper, this may not have been the preferred method of consumption of all customers. Beck did not feel the need or interest to dedicate a large portion of his salary to a weekly paper. The account books of the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* of the early eighteenth century demonstrate that many customers only bought the Saturday or Tuesday issue of the newspaper, rather than subscribing to the full, and more expensive tri-weekly.<sup>131</sup> Most literate urban citizens in the Dutch Republic might afford the occasional newspaper issue, but the cost of the annual subscription fee was too high for many readers.

### **Problematic customers**

Today, most Dutch newspapers of the seventeenth century survive abroad. While a schoolmaster like Beck was part of the targeted newspaper audience, another group of readers paid close attention from beyond the Dutch Republic. Dutch newspapers have been preserved in the archives of statesmen in Sweden, England, France, Germany and Russia. They were forwarded by merchants and diplomatic agents with their regular correspondence.

Peacey shows that diplomats often tried to persuade newspaper publishers or correspondents with favours.<sup>132</sup> When a persuasive approach was not applicable, foreign rulers were quick to raise complaints. The Russian court in Moscow complained several times in the 1640s, 1650s and 1660s on the use of the title ‘grand prince’ instead of ‘Tsar’ when the Tsar was described in Dutch newspapers.<sup>133</sup> Another complaint came in to the States of Holland on 18 December 1680: the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* of 12

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<sup>130</sup> Data on prices is from Jan Luiten van Zanden ‘The prices of the most important consumer goods, and indices of wages and the cost of living in the western part of the Netherlands, 1450-1800’, on Jan Luiten van Zanden (ed.), *The IISH List of Datafiles of Historical Prices and Wages*, accessible at <http://www.iisg.nl/hpw/brenv.php>.

<sup>131</sup> Noord-hollandsarchief, Haarlem. HBA 3523: Courantenboek. Register van leverantien aan agenten enz. ingedeeld naar deze afnemers. Deel I, 1719-1723.

<sup>132</sup> Jason Peacey, “‘My friend the Gazetier’: diplomacy and news in seventeenth-century Europe”, in *NN*.

<sup>133</sup> Maier, ‘Zeventiende-eeuwse Nederlandse couranten vertaald voor de Tsaar’, p. 42.

September 1680 had in its report on the marriage of the Tsar denigrated the Tsar's bride and the ceremony.<sup>134</sup>

The *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* was subject of more scrutiny in January 1681, when the Swedish ambassador complained of a discussion of the principal advisors of the Swedish king.<sup>135</sup> The *Rotterdamse Zee-en Post-tijdingen* received two objections from England in July and September 1667 after publishing 'insulting comments'.<sup>136</sup> The burgomasters of Cologne reserved particular derision for the *Utrechtse Courant*, which they criticised three times in the 1680s. The city of Lubeck did likewise in 1683.<sup>137</sup>

These complaints are significant to the machinations of the early Dutch press. Newspapers in the Dutch Republic were not subject to preventative censorship. Dutch authorities had little interest in censoring publications when complaints were not received.<sup>138</sup> Repeated criticism from abroad, especially at times of diplomatic tension, could motivate the regents to take action.

Sautijn Kluit's articles on the history of the Dutch press all emphasise the prominent role of the state in censoring the press.<sup>139</sup> The research of Groenveld and Haks reinforces this viewpoint.<sup>140</sup> In the second half of the seventeenth century a shift occurred in the use of repressive censorship. The number of edicts and persecutions against 'seditious' books and pamphlets increased and financial punishment for convicted authors and booksellers increased tenfold throughout the century. Newspapers are presumed to have been hit particularly hard from the 1650s onwards.<sup>141</sup> Of the 28 Dutch newspapers I have identified between 1618 and 1700, at least 12 were at one point pursued by the authorities.

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<sup>134</sup> Sautijn Kluit, 'De Haarlemsche Courant', p. 23.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., pp. 23-24.

<sup>136</sup> Sautijn Kluit, 'De Rotterdamsche Courant', pp. 15-16.

<sup>137</sup> Sautijn Kluit, 'De Hollandsche en Fransche Utrechtsche Couranten', pp. 39-43.

<sup>138</sup> Helmers, *Royalist Republic*, p. 36.

<sup>139</sup> Especially Sautijn Kluit, 'Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Dagbladpers', pp. 87-284.

<sup>140</sup> Donald Haks, 'War, Government and the News. The Dutch Republic and the War of the Spanish Succession, 1702-1713', in Joop W. Koopmans (ed.), *News and Politics in Early Modern Europe (1500-1800)* (Leuven, 2005), p. 172; S. Groenveld, 'The Mecca of Authors? States Assemblies and Censorship in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic', in A.C. Duke and C.A. Tamse (eds.), *Too mighty to be free: Censorship and the Press in Britain and the Netherlands* (Zutphen, 1987), pp. 63-80.

<sup>141</sup> Groenveld, 'The Mecca of Authors?', p. 72.

One should, however, be careful in assigning the statesmen of the Dutch Republic a central role as the bogeyman of the Dutch press. While regents and political commentators were quick to deride ‘licentious’ talk and print, tolerance was pursued more in practice than in theory.<sup>142</sup> Many sentences handed out to newspapermen were shortened, or not carried through at all. When the King of England, the Dutch William III, wrote to the Leiden burgomasters to prohibit Jacob Huysduynen from publishing his newspaper, they consented.<sup>143</sup> They banned Huysduynen in December 1693 – by June 1694 he was publishing once more.

Many statesmen were simply too interested in the news to follow through with repressive sentences for their local newspapers.<sup>144</sup> Punishments were handed out more often than not to make a statement to the complaining foreign authority. If statesmen would not admit that the newspaper was a useful tool, they certainly believed so. From the later 1630s onwards national and local authorities began to employ newspapers as means of state communication. The States General, the States of Holland, the Admiralties and especially burgomasters of numerous towns placed ordinances, notifications and warnings to their citizens in the newspapers. The authorities announced the regulation of market-days, the sale of naval prizes, the introduction of new canals and travel schedules, and warned of criminals and impostors. The state had gained confidence in the circulation and influence of the periodical on literate society.<sup>145</sup>

In the end the greatest impact of the Dutch state was financial. In 1674 the States General passed an ordinance which established a new tax on printed paper.<sup>146</sup> The ordinance targeted in particular ‘newspapers, gazettes and post-tidings’. It stipulated that all newspapers printed on both sides of a half sheet (described as ‘the usual manner’) were to be taxed at four *penningen* per copy. A tax collector was to demand the payment each week at the printers’ shop.

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<sup>142</sup> Harline, *Pamphlets, Printing and Political Culture*, pp. 111-114, 127, 129.

<sup>143</sup> Sautijn Kluit, ‘De Hollandsche Leidsche Courant’, pp. 13-14.

<sup>144</sup> Keblusek, *Boeken in de Hofstad*, p. 136.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. Fraser, *The Intelligence*, p. 43.

<sup>146</sup> See Simon van Leeuwen (ed.), *Groot placat-boeck, vervattende de placaten, ordonnantien ende edicten van de ... Staten Generael ... ende van de ... Staten van Hollandt ende West-Vrieslandt: midtsgaders van de ... Staten van Zeelandt. Derde Deel* (The Hague, 1683), pp. 847-848. See also Sautijn Kluit, ‘Amsterdamsche Courant’, pp. 28-29.

This was an extraordinarily heavy tax. The new rate quadrupled the cost of paper, perhaps cutting the profits of the publishers by half. Abraham Casteleyn was one of the first publishers to complain, before subverting the tax. He was duly investigated throughout the 1670s for his tax-evasion by the States of Holland.<sup>147</sup> It is therefore not a surprise that demands for greater freedom of publication in the seventeenth century were not demands for editorial freedom, but for ‘books to be free’ of excise.<sup>148</sup>

Alongside a regular tax, the authorities required ever-larger payments from the publishers for their privilege. The Enschedé family, were required to pay 2,500 *gulden* to the Haarlem almshouse each year for their appointment as newspaper publishers in Haarlem in 1737.<sup>149</sup> Compared to the meagre six *gulden* that Jan van Hilten and Broer Jansz had to pay in 1624 for their appointment, this was a meteoric increase. Financial control, rather than political repression, was the true power of the state over the press.

### **1690: balance in the market**

By the 1690s four newspapers were published in the Dutch Republic: in Haarlem, Amsterdam, Utrecht and Leiden. The Haarlem, Amsterdam and Leiden newspapers appeared three times a week; the former two on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, and the latter on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. The *Utrechtse Courant* appeared twice a week, on Mondays and Fridays. The curious (and wealthy) Dutch citizen could read two newspapers on four days of the week.

The newspapers still followed the major conflicts of the European continent, and the Nine Years’ War (1688-1697) and the Great Turkish War (1683-1699) dominated the news content of the 1690s. They were published almost exclusively in a small, roman typeface. The newspapers of the 1690s contained double the amount of news in comparison to their predecessors of the first half of the century. The *Utrechtse Courant* could fit over 3,500 words on a half-sheet of paper; the average number of report per issues reached well over twenty.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Algemeen Rijksarchief, 3.01.09 (Gedeputeerden van Haarlem ter Dagvaart van de Staten van Holland), inv. 355.

<sup>148</sup> Arblaster, “‘Dat de boecken vrij sullen wesen’”, p. 94.

<sup>149</sup> Noord-hollandsarchief, Haarlem. Inventory HBA 4831: Rekening van de Courant, 1737-1743.

<sup>150</sup> See here for example the *Utrecht Maendaegse Courant*, 1691, No 37, with 3,592 words.

With the consolidation of the tri-weeklies and increasing word counts, newspaper readers could read more news than ever before by the end of the seventeenth century. At the same time the editorial perspectives available in the Dutch Republic had declined (see figure 4.2). Throughout the 1640s, 1650s and 1660s seven to ten newspaper publishers were active throughout the country; each cultivated different correspondents, tapped into different news networks, and developed their own editorial priorities. As Arblaster had recently reminded, the publication of more news does not equate to the presence of greater diversity.<sup>151</sup>

Instead, by 1690, the newspaper market had settled. The capital required to enter the industry was too high for many businessmen. The political decentralisation of the Dutch Republic ensured that town councils maintained the initiative for the publication of new titles. They held power over the crucial privileges which tied the publisher to local government – and which were by no means opposed by the remaining publishers.

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<sup>151</sup> Arblaster, *Ghent to Aix*, p. 235.

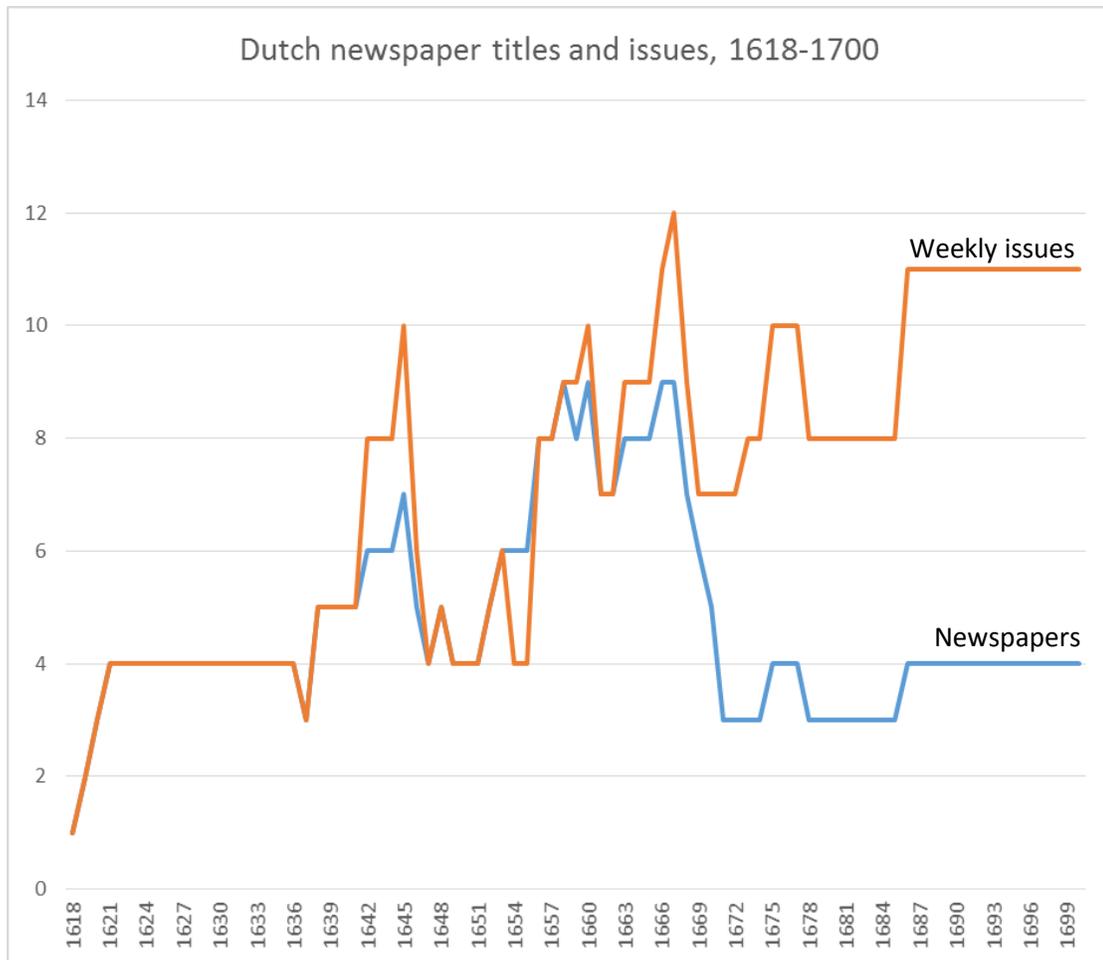


Figure 4.2: the development of the Dutch press throughout the seventeenth century, displaying the general increase of weekly issues compared to the relative decrease of newspaper titles.

For much of the seventeenth century, the Dutch press was responsible for new innovations which were to become staples of the European industry. The market was fluid: new titles came and went, and the future of the press was uncertain. At the end of the century new dynamics were to be found across the Channel. While the Dutch press had landed at a steady equilibrium, the British newspaper industry exploded. The restraining Licensing Act had expired in 1695, paving a way beyond the enforced monopoly of the *London Gazette*. By 1709 18 newspapers were published in London for a total of 55 issues of news a week.<sup>152</sup> Sponsored by politicians on either side of the

<sup>152</sup> Pettegree, *Invention of News*, p. 245; Jeremy Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1987), pp. 14, 104-5.

political spectrum, the newspaper became one of the main channels for public discussion of politics.<sup>153</sup>

In contrast, the newspapers of the Dutch Republic were not publications which changed political opinion, or garnered opposition to magistrates. The numerous Amsterdam newspapers of the 1640s did not stimulate an appetite for opposition; they remained commercial ventures responding to and stimulating a demand for news in that tumultuous decade. Instead newspapers were a symptom of awareness and an attachment of importance to the affairs of Europe. Hooft captured the spirit of the engaged reader: ‘... whether it is good or bad news, it is always welcome, because it illuminates the world.’<sup>154</sup>

The newspaper moved slowly out of the realm of the regent and the merchant. This was not, however, a straightforward or rapid development. Throughout the seventeenth century, most Dutch newspaper readers were part of the ruling class. The publisher had much to lose by challenging the socio-political backgrounds of its audience. The weekly periodical was instead an additional tool in the vast repertoire of the mercantile oligarchy of the Dutch Republic. It was never in opposition, but in support of the mechanisms of state. The history of the early Dutch press here presents a paradox in the narrative of a progressive and enlightened press.

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<sup>153</sup> Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society, 1695-1855* (Harlow, 2000), pp. 9-28.

<sup>154</sup> Cited in Stolp, *Eerste Couranten in Holland*.

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