



Arthur der Weduwen, *Dutch and Flemish Newspapers of the Seventeenth Century, 1618-1700* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2017, 2 vols., xxiv + 1554 pp., ISBN: 978 90 0431 731 4).

These two volumes begin in 1618, the year in which the first issues of the *Courante uyt Italien, Duytslandt, &c* were published. Up till now, no Dutch newspaper of earlier date has been uncovered. In his study, Der Weduwen has unearthed 49 newspapers written in Dutch, and presents an overview of all known surviving copies of seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish newspapers. According to Der Weduwen, four requirements have to be fulfilled in order to call a publication a newspaper: periodicity (frequent and regular publications), contemporaneity (new news), miscellany (report news from various locations), and public availability. Arthur der Weduwen has taken this very strictly, as he has excluded newspapers published in the Low Countries in other languages than Dutch.

With these two colossal volumes, Der Weduwen proves the Swedish scholar Folke Dahl wrong in his 1946 claim that assembling a complete overview of Low Countries' newspapers would be impossible. This work stands at another level completely, although a publication on Italian newspapers can be expected in 2018 by Der Weduwen's fellow-researcher Nina Lamal. *Dutch and Flemish Newspapers of the Seventeenth Century* is essential for anyone studying news and newspapers, whether in chronological perspective, or diachronically. It could also be an aid for urban historians as it provides wonderful insights into the information about the networks people had access to during the Golden Age.

This work consists of six introductory chapters, which set the scene of newspaper publications in the Low Countries, followed by seven appendixes with registers, lists of publication days, availability, printers and publishers. The 49 newspapers are each briefly introduced by a short text, followed by an extensive list – per newspaper – where the individual copies of these newspapers can be found. Der Weduwen has studied the press in the Low Countries extensively and has compared major newspapers in Amsterdam, like *Courante uyt Italien, Duytslandt, &c* and *Tijdinghen uyt vele Quartieren* in detail.

Newspaper publishing was a difficult business. A city council could restrict the number of publishers in their city. As a consequence, some Amsterdam publishers would choose to move outside the city walls to e.g. Weesp in order to print there, but would still sell their newspapers in Amsterdam. Plagiarism also occurred, as newspapers could be easily reprinted – which would lead to woodcut markings at the top and warnings

at the end to distinguish the genuine newspapers. The Flemish press had problems with, for example, paper-supplies as warfare seriously harmed supply chains from the South.

Dutch publishers responded to a demand for information and developed their own networks to gather reliable information; moreover, they developed a network for spreading their mechanically printed newspapers throughout the Northern and Southern Netherlands. They were trendsetters for using a single sheet of paper, printed on both sides and divided into two columns in order to print as much text as possible. Messages were very short, demanding a lot of precognition of the reader. According to Der Weduwen, it was not uncommon for readers to compare newspapers and comment on their reliability of news. Obviously, the high costs of subscriptions would limit these comparative exercises.

Considering the enormous amount of details, statistics and analyses, it is highly surprising that this is only a small part of Der Weduwen's doctoral research. This excellent work is an exposé of perseverance, dedication and precision. By holding the volumes and turning the pages alone, the reader understands how much work must have gone into assembling the data for this book. Not only has the author researched which newspaper was published where, he also included the date of issuance and has included locations where these issues can currently be found. When there is no surviving copy of a certain newspaper, the author has still included it in the list in order to know when it was issued.

To some it may come as a surprise that such a volume is still published in paper since a digital version could become a starting-point for linking the newspapers and develop an in-depth search. Without doubt, these two volumes form – literally and metaphorically – a solid basis for further research of newspapers, information networks and the development of relaying information. Nonetheless, let's hope that in the near future, Brill will also make these lists of newspapers searchable through a database.

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