

**Adriaan van der Weel**

## Nineteenth-Century Literary Translations from English in a Book Historical Context

In the course of the 1880s the Dutch book trade became embroiled in a dispute about international copyright that was to keep its members deeply divided until the 1930s. While Belgium was one of the signatories to the original Berne Convention of 1886, the Netherlands did not join until 1912. The controversial question was whether or not the Netherlands should join the Berne Convention for copyright of 1886 and honour foreign authors' exclusive right to the translation of their work. Those who were against joining defended their position with the argument, among others, that the award of such a right was unjust because the parties were unequal. Dutch writing was unable to compete with that of other countries because of the small size of the Dutch language area. The Dutch would have to pay for the translation of books that they felt they needed to publish, while conversely no one was interested in Dutch books –which no one could read– and so the reciprocal right of Dutch authors to charge foreign publishers for translations would remain a 'platonic' one (Loosjes 101).<sup>1</sup> In the nineteenth century the Dutch book trade felt more marginal in Europe than it had ever felt before –or has felt since. The underdog attitude on the part of the Netherlands that this dispute displays was symbolic of the state of the Low Countries' book trade in an international context. The nineteenth century represents a nadir in the sense that as far as intercultural exchange was concerned, the Dutch were preponderantly on the receiving end.

In this contribution I should like to discuss some of the book historical background –and its socio-economic aspects in particular– against which the textual traffic between the English-speaking and Dutch-speaking cultures in the nineteenth century took place.<sup>2</sup>

### **The slow but steady rise of English**

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Low Countries had played a pivotal role in the European book trade. One of the conditions that made this possible was the fact that Latin was the lingua franca of reading Europe. This is not the place to discuss the causes of the waning of the Low Countries' dominant position in the

European book trade from the middle of the eighteenth century. However, in tandem with other factors, such as the dwindling political and economic significance of the Low Countries, what is directly relevant is the coming into being of the European nation states. Not surprisingly, the decline of the central Dutch position in the book trade was almost fully proportional to the increasing importance of national vernaculars and the diminishing significance of Latin as lingua franca. The publication of scientific and political books and treatises in French and, to a lesser extent, German and English, slowed the general downward trend for a while. But without a sufficiently large home market to compensate for the loss of international trade, the Netherlands gradually lost their competitive edge.

Seen against this background, the most obvious general observation to be made about the cultural transmission between Britain and the Low Countries in the nineteenth century is that it was very much the traffic between a linguistically and economically large, dominant culture and a small, almost marginal one. Factually, the sheer number of English speakers (and, consequently, readers and potential buyers) was several times that of the number of Dutch speakers and readers. In 1850 the Netherlands had only 3 million inhabitants, against Britain's 21 million –a contrast that the Dutch 80% literacy rate against the British 70% could not remedy.<sup>3</sup> In 1900 the population in Britain had grown to around 38 million, with a 96% literacy rate, while the population in the Netherlands had only reached 5.2 million at c. 97% literacy.<sup>4</sup> This had, not surprisingly, all sorts of consequences for the book trade, some of which it will be useful to discuss briefly.

For most of the nineteenth century the position of English as a source language was very different than that of French (and German). Throughout the nineteenth century French was widely spoken and read in the Netherlands, especially in educated circles. The need for translations was therefore greater in the case of English than in that of French, and this is *a fortiori* true when we take into consideration a reading public outside of the intellectual elite. For the same reason in the Low Countries many English authors would be read in French translations, especially in the first half of the century. In the Netherlands the first tentative signs of a change in the relative status of French began to appear after the end of the French period (the renewed independence of the Netherlands after 1810). But the Secondary School Act of 1863, which established the Hogere Burger School (HBS) with its emphasis on modern languages, provided a noticeable boost to English. By the 1920s

English had become familiar enough, at least passively, to cause concern among Dutch booksellers about cheap English novels flooding the market, especially in the form of translations, but also in the original.<sup>5</sup> English was by then well on the way to replacing the traditional place of first French and then German as a source of popular reading.

Translations are of course only one of the various channels through which literary culture may be transmitted. English literature would come to the Low Countries also in two other ways (besides its importation in the shape of French translations): in the form of physical imports of British books, and through local reprints in English (often, but not always, made without permission of the original author and publisher; sometimes even without their knowledge).<sup>6</sup> We should look at imports and local publishing in English briefly, before turning to translations. After all, both imports and local productions in English are more than a backdrop to the publication of translations. These three ways in which English writing crossed the Channel influenced each other in all sorts of ways. For example, W.H. Kirberger (who opened a bookshop in Amsterdam in 1850 and turned into a successful publisher and book importer) probably tested the market with his English imports before venturing to publish translations of some of them.<sup>7</sup> Vice versa, the publication of translations excited interest in the original.

### English Imports

In the period from about 1840 to 1940 there was uninterrupted growth in the value of book and periodical imports from Britain into the Netherlands. Compared with the Dutch title production, this growth is phenomenal (a 760% increase in imports in the 29-year period between 1850 and 1879 against a 200% increase in overall Dutch title production in the 50-year period between 1850 and 1900).<sup>8</sup> It should, however, also be compared with the imports from other countries (esp. France and Germany) if we want to make more definitive pronouncements about the relative popularity of English books in the Netherlands. Equally, it would be necessary to account for the number of English books read in French (or possibly German) translation. Nor do these figures include the pirated English editions published by Baudry and Galignani in Paris or, from 1841 onwards, the extremely popular continental copyright editions by Tauchnitz in Leipzig.

### Books published in the Netherlands in English

Purely in terms of quantity (no more than a few hundred titles in the course of the century), the phenomenon of books in English being published in the Netherlands does not appear to be of much significance. Nevertheless, apart from school and study books, they are indicative of some degree of adventurousness on the part of certain publishers, as well as of the growing fascination with English as a foreign language and the popularity of certain English writers. Without making any attempt at being comprehensive, a number of categories can readily be distinguished. The most obvious one is the cluster revolving around the study of English language and literature: dictionaries, school books, anthologies, methods for commercial English, etc. In this category we also encounter, for example, a title like *Biography of Celebrated Men and Women in Our Country* (Haarlem, A. Loosjes, 1808), the English counterpart of similar books used for Dutch and French language instruction.

The second significant category is that of works of literature for a general readership. This includes notably Tennyson, with at least three competing publishers and about twice that many editions of his work, variously entitled *Poems by Alfred Lord Tennyson* (Amsterdam, Binger, 1860), *The Poetical Works of Alfred Tennyson, Poet Laureate, Complete in One Volume* (Amsterdam, K.H. Schadd, 1869) and *The Complete Works of Alfred Tennyson, Poet Laureate* (Rotterdam, Jac. G. Robbers, n.d.; Robbers published two or three later editions under varying titles). All of these appear to have been published without permission of either the author or his publisher. Curious in this category are a number of books of 'literary wisdom': *The beauties of Byron*, edited by Alfred Howard (Amsterdam, Nayler, 1837); *Beauties of Sterne: with some account of his writings*, edited by Sir Walter Scott (Nayler, 1836); *Sir Walter Scott's Poetic Beauties* (Nayler, 1837); *Ouida-Album: Choise of Thoughts for every Day of the Year, Collected out of Ouida's Complete Works*, edited by Hilda Swarth (Arnhem, J. Minkman, 1881); and *Choice of Thoughts Collected out of George Eliot's Work and Letters*, edited by M.E. Pijnappel (Rotterdam, Nijgh & Van Ditmar, 1887).<sup>9</sup>

In a third category we find books on Low Countries subjects originating both in the Netherlands and abroad. Here we find for example John Motley's books about Dutch history. As well as in Dutch translations, his books were widely published in English. *The Rise of the Dutch Republic* and *History of the United Netherlands*

appeared in two editions each (by Binger and Robbers, and Nijhoff and Robbers respectively) and *The Life and Death of John of Barneveld* was published in a 'Continental copyright edition' by Nijhoff. Selections from *The Rise of the Dutch Republic* were also published in a school edition.<sup>10</sup> Although John Murray, his British publisher, was not consulted, it is possible that at least the first of the English editions appeared in the Netherlands with the tacit approval of the author, who stayed in The Hague for some time.<sup>11</sup> Also in this category belong a couple of books by Sir John Bowring, the famous polymath, who received a doctorate in law from the University of Groningen. These were *Batavian Anthology, or Specimens of the Dutch Poets: With Remarks on the Poetical Literature and Language of the Netherlands, to the End of the Seventeenth Century* (Groningen, Van Boekeren, 1825), and *Sketch of the Language and Literature of Holland: Being a Sequel to His Batavian Anthology* (Amsterdam, Diederichs Brothers, 1829). Lastly there are some translations of Dutch literature into English (such as S. Sanders' *Flowers of poetry and patriotism*, Rotterdam: Hartmann, 1833), and books for English-speaking learners of Dutch (such as O.H. Flowers' *Essentials of Dutch Grammar*, Amsterdam: Nayler, 1840).

Other assorted titles include religious works such as E. Brine's *The Danger of not Being Prepared: A Sermon in the English Church at The Hague on Sunday, August 7th 1859* (The Hague, M.J. Visser, 1859), guidebooks for English-speaking visitors such as the *New Illustrated Guide of The Hague and Its Environs* (The Hague, Couvée, 1857), and political texts concerning the East, such as *The Japanese Treaties, Concluded at Jedo in 1858 with The Netherlands, Russia, Great-Britain, The United States and France: Fac-simile of the Japanese Text* (The Hague, Nijhoff, 1862).

Notably absent are titles intended for distribution abroad – a category for which the Dutch had been well known in earlier centuries.<sup>12</sup> To judge by the holdings of scholarly and similar large institutional libraries, virtually none of the titles listed have found their way abroad.

## Translations

Having explored some of the wider context in which they were conceived, made and published, we can now turn to translations. As suggested, the background is that

of the fairly marginal position of the Netherlands on the European political and economic stage.<sup>13</sup> By the nineteenth century, book production in the Low Countries was focused largely on the home market. As far as books in Dutch are concerned, the main exceptions were some exports to the colonies and other Dutch-speaking territories or communities. This concentration on the home market applied to all categories of books, but perhaps especially to literature. In the case of scholarly books (law, science, theology, the classics) some were still published in Latin (esp. dissertations), French or German (rarely in English, though this occurred more frequently towards the end of the century). The antiquarian trade remained international, too. By and large, though, the Dutch book trade found itself rather isolated in a European context.

As we have seen, the sense of being marginal to European book culture was based on a keenly felt imbalance between the Dutch need to import culture on the one hand, and its difficulty in exporting it on the other. The principle of reciprocal copyright protection, it was argued, *sounded* fair, but wasn't in practice. If it was agreed that foreign authors owned, and so could *sell*, the right to translations of their work, Dutch publishers would suffer the financial consequences, and vital intercultural traffic would be hampered. Since, reversely, foreign publishers were not interested in Dutch books, there were no compensatory benefits. This would result in an unacceptable imbalance between the import and export of culture. That the Netherlands depended on foreign imports for the general cultural education of the Dutch people thus represented one of the chief arguments put forward by the Dutch book trade not to sign the Berne Convention.

In this way of reasoning we can identify one important reason for publishing translations: they allowed the Dutch to participate in a wider European culture.<sup>14</sup> But we should not exaggerate the importance attached to this argument even by the book trade itself. (There were other arguments with a similar ring of rationalisation about them, such as the argument that a translator worth his salt in fact created an entirely new work in his own language – an argument perhaps primarily designed to appeal to the public imagination.)

More important is the economic argument, which always runs in the background and often comes to the foreground. The relative cost of rights payments and translator's fees in relation to the total production costs may appear to be a pedestrian concern, but it was an important consideration in publishing economics.

It is not very difficult to attach credence to the publishers' argument that copyright in translations would confront them with the unwelcome prospect of additional costs. But in fact, as we will see, the absence of copyright obligations could make it more attractive to publish translations than original Dutch works. After all, although many forms and levels of remuneration were possible –including no remuneration at all– as the century wore on Dutch writers were becoming more alert to the potential financial rewards of publication, and negotiations with publishers became tougher.

### Translation rights: the procedure

What was the actual business practice concerning the publication of translated texts in a country not governed by the regulations of the Berne Convention? That the Netherlands did not join the Berne Convention till 1912 does not mean that anarchy reigned. The entire translation rights issue was in fact organised extremely efficiently –at least from the point of view of the Dutch book trade. Requests by Dutch publishers to translate foreign language titles were administered by the national book trade organisation, the Vereeniging ter Bevordering van de Belangen des Boekhandels (VBBB). The VBBB had been founded in 1815 in order to protect its members from illegal reprinting. A publisher who was a member of the VBBB could claim the right to translate a foreign work by being the first to deposit a copy of that work at the office of the VBBB. Despite the efficiency of this system, complications could –and occasionally would– arise. The only parties bound by the rules of the system were the members of the VBBB. The more popular an author, the greater the chance that some ruthless pirate –*ipso facto* not a member of the VBBB– might print his own translations in competition. Witness the following letter written by the Haarlem publisher Erven F. Bohn to William Blackwood on the subject of their planned translation of a new title by George Eliot. This letter also illustrates, incidentally, how publishers would attempt to preempt their colleagues by making deals to receive an early copy (here 'early sheets', that is to say an unbound copy) of the work in question to be able to deposit them with the VBBB before any competitor:

Having received your letters of 14th past we beg to answer you that, though we would be very glad to be the publishers of the Dutch translation of Eliot's new story, we never can pay a sum of £50.– for the right of early sheets, which you would be so kind to transfer to us in case

we did accept your proposition. Perhaps you are not aware that, though having received from you the right of early sheets, every bookseller in our country may publish another translation, which is not seldom the case. For instance: we got of Lord Lytton the said right for *Kenelm Chillingly* but, as another publisher gave a second translation, much more cheaper, as we could do, we never did defray our expenses. We had the same with Marlitt *Die zweite Frau*, and in this very moment, having got the right of early sheets of Hamerlings *Aspasia* (Richter Hamburg) a second Dutch translation is in the press and of course will very much damage us. It is therefore we cannot accept your terms, but if you will transfer to us the privilege of early sheets by paying you a sum of £20.– and by furnishing us with them two months before publication in your country, it would be very agreeable to us to know your answer.<sup>15</sup>

It need not surprise us that the Netherlands were often regarded, especially by British authors and publishers, as a nation of pirates. When pressed payment was made, but only because of the dictates of local competition.<sup>16</sup> In these conditions rights payments did not place an undue burden on the production costs of translations.

Translation costs are another matter. It is definitely worth exploring whether the fact that the Netherlands had not yet joined the Berne Convention may have provided the circumstances in which the publication of certain types of writing, notably fiction, in translation was commercially more attractive than the publication of (similar) local writing. If this were indeed the case, it would actually have promoted the publication of foreign fiction in Dutch translation.

Though little research has been done in this direction, an analysis of figures found in the archives of Sijthoff (Leiden) and Erven F. Bohn (Haarlem) seems to indicate that translations, with *f*4-8 per sheet of 16 pages, are indeed cheaper than original writing.<sup>17</sup> Although beginning authors are not necessarily paid well (and sometimes not at all), honoraria for original work range between *f*5 and *f*40 per sheet.<sup>18</sup> To establish the effect of this difference in costs per sheet on the total budget for translated vs original Dutch publications, it has to be borne in mind that popular writing with the same commercial potential as that of much foreign fiction was very scarce in the Netherlands. In the case of popular writing the higher print runs would make the cost of translation –being a fixed initial cost– a relatively minor expense.

### Demand for translations

Clearly, then, in a small country that wanted to keep abreast of European (and world) culture, translations were felt to be important. Moreover, to publishers they may have represented a relatively cheap resource, especially at a time when Dutch authors were beginning to assert the intellectual and economic rights to their work. But apart from these two generic circumstances, what were publishers' motives for publishing translations of particular individual works? One motive was clearly to supply a demand for specific authors and titles in Dutch translation. That is to say that the publisher was confident that a particular title would find a market on the strength of its reputation, whether pre-existing or yet to be created, through reviews, notices, word of mouth, etc. But it is my hypothesis that in the course of the second half of the nineteenth century a second motive for turning to translations increasingly came into play, i.e. to meet the unfocused but rapidly expanding demand for popular reading matter of a more trivial nature. In the course of the nineteenth century a large new reading –and importantly, *buying*– public came into being, as a result of factors on the supply side (printing speed, cheaper paper) as well as on the demand side (demographics, education, lighting, leisure).<sup>19</sup> This new reading public was a less intellectual and less bourgeois public. It had little interest in utilitarian notions of self-improvement, or even that other widely prevailing motivating factor, the desire to emulate the classes just above their own. Its motive for reading was often simply the desire to be entertained.

Obviously these are sweeping distinctions, and the two motives for publishing we have just identified cannot always be clearly distinguished. Still, roughly speaking, one might say that the motive to translate specific titles and authors would have been stronger in the case of serious (highbrow) literature and that it was to supply a demand from the higher and middle reaches of the reading public. The demand for popular reading matter, on the other hand, would have come from the newly literate lower strata of society. This demand would naturally have been very diffuse, and would make little distinction in principle between the books of one author or another, or those from one country or another (although I will suggest that British titles possibly hold a special place in this genre). Also, it needs to be taken into account that the most trivial reading matter of this popular type did not generally follow the same path as more serious books. Instead of being distributed through bookshops, these

trivial publications could be bought or borrowed from tobacconists, barbers, small stationers shops and so on, who ran commercial lending libraries and sold newspapers, periodicals and other printed matter. Few records of any kind detailing this activity have come down to us, and consequently much of it remains outside book historians' field of vision. (Another complication is that, in time, boundaries have shifted and some authors and titles that were once considered literary are so no more, while, vice versa, entire genres that were once considered trivial have become respectable.)

This fairly diffuse but pervasive demand for a trivial type of popular writing developed in most European countries in the course of the nineteenth century. But it is very likely that in the Netherlands, as a direct consequence of the small size of the Dutch book market, it resulted in a larger market for translations. For owing to the small size of the potential buying public, home-grown popular writing could not be easily sustained in Flanders and the Netherlands. The effect on translation activity of this diffuse demand for a particular kind of writing that was unavailable locally was in all probability especially strong in the case of some of the most popular nineteenth-century authors. As far as English literature is concerned, the cases of such writers as Sir Walter Scott, Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Ouida, etc. have been well documented. But this applies equally, if not more so, to now half or completely forgotten or even anonymous authors of trivial literature. In larger countries, the fight for financial rewards was now becoming worthwhile. It may have taken a great deal of lobbying by authors (especially Wordsworth, Dickens and Carlyle were active lobbyists), but in Britain popular writers like Dickens or Wilkie Collins could actually live off the sales of their works, as could a Balzac or a Dumas in France. In the Low Countries such professional authorship was a great deal harder to achieve: the economic foundation was simply weaker in smaller countries. It is no coincidence that a Dutch author's union was not founded until 1915, and a Flemish one until 1917, while the French Société des Gens des Lettres dates from 1838, and the English Society of Authors from 1884 (the Copyright Act of 1842 having already achieved in Britain the national copyright protection that the Society of Authors sought to establish internationally).

The very lucrative type of popular writing that especially Britain produced in such enviable quantities appears to have held a special place in the demand for popular reading matter insofar as that demand was served by translations. It seems

as if, for whatever reason, the British reading public was better served by popular authors than most European countries. My own previous research suggests that gradually, between Sir Walter Scott and Charles Dickens in the nineteenth century and the popular novelists of the 1920s (Edgar Wallace, A.S.M. Hutchinson, Ruby Ayres and such like names) the Dutch book market came to identify English books with entertainment.<sup>20</sup> One may think of the detective novel as a specific case in point: this was an entire genre that was almost exclusively imported from Britain.

It is worth observing, incidentally, that the popular reading market for which Britain was famous, was the result of supply as much as of demand. Faster printing techniques (mechanisation, the use of steam power, but especially the invention of the web-fed cylinder press) together with cheaper paper 'demanded' longer print runs to be economical. This stimulated the publishers' demand for more popular genres. A good illustration of this point is the way in which industrialisation in Britain stimulated a different publication model for poetry. In a matter of a few decades in the first half of the nineteenth century the preponderant publication form of poetry moved from slim and expensive single-author volumes in a limited print run to popular illustrated multi-author and multi-genre annuals such as the *Keepsake* or *Forget Me Not*.<sup>21</sup> Again, in the Netherlands such economies of scale could not easily be realised. The cylinder press was also adopted here, but it was mainly used for newspapers. High-volume book printing remained problematic. Certainly almanacks were also very popular in the Netherlands, and cheap series were also attempted.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, the variety and ubiquity of such series in larger language areas could not be matched.

### Envoy

Translations were widely regarded as a way of keeping in touch with the world outside the Netherlands. At a time when the Dutch book trade was inward-looking and internationally insignificant as it was in the nineteenth century, this was a particularly keenly felt need. But they were also a source of cheap popular publications. It would appear that the costs involved in publishing translations were competitive with local writings, especially in the more popular segment. Translations could actually be cheaper to produce than Dutch books. Perhaps the chief reason why Dutch publishers turned to translations, however, was that the latter enabled them to feed the market with a kind of popular literature that the Netherlands was unable to

produce, certainly not in any large quantity. English novels formed a significant proportion of that popular literature.

After the Netherlands signed the Berne Convention in 1912 it still took until 1931 for the Dutch book trade's position on foreign translations to fall into line with the rest of the world. The Netherlands had stipulated in 1912 that translation into Dutch of foreign works was free of copyright after ten years from the date of first publication. That Dutch publishers lost this privilege in 1931 did not, however, mean that translations lost their importance to the Dutch book trade, as the following table bears out:<sup>23</sup>

	1937	1938
<i>Dutch novels</i>	417	429
<i>Translated novels</i>	373	506
<i>Translated from English</i>	222	356
<i>Translated from German</i>	66	57
<i>Translated from French</i>	19	25

In 1938 the number of original Dutch novels published represented only 85% of the number of novels translated from foreign languages. Note that not only did the number of translated novels surpass that of original Dutch ones, but the number of novels translated from English (70% of all translations) was almost as high as the number of Dutch novels published. Even as absolute numbers fluctuated, the proportions have remained remarkably constant over time, with English representing some 70% of all translations of foreign fiction.<sup>24</sup> In 1996 the number of original Dutch novels published (651) was still the same 85% of the novels translated from other languages (774).<sup>25</sup> The Low Countries may now once again be one of the great centres of international publishing, but the number of Dutch speakers has not grown enough to diminish the need for translations.

### Bibliography

- Altick, R.D. *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800-1900*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 1957.  
 Archive of De Erven F. Bohn, Haarlem, Leiden University library  
 Boonstra, O.W.A. *De waardij van eene vroege opleiding: Een onderzoek naar de implicaties van het alfabetisme op het leven van inwoners van Eindhoven en omliggende gemeenten, 1800-1920*. Landbouwwuniversiteit Wageningen: Wageningen, 1993.  
 Curtis, George William; ed. *The correspondence of John Lothrop Motley*. 2 vols. Murray: London,

1889.

- Dongelmans, Berry. "Gepatenteerde roverij versus goed fatsoen: De Berner Conventie als spiegel van en splijtzwam in de Nederlandse boekenwereld 1888-1912." *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse boekgeschiedenis* 11 (2004): 163-80.
- Erickson, Lee. *The Economy of Literary Form: English Literature and the Industrialization of Publishing, 1800-1850*. Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 1996
- Gaus, H. "Literatuur en kunst 1844-1895." *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, deel 12. Fibula-Van Dishoeck: Haarlem, 1977. 191-208.
- Hoftijzer, Paul. "The English book in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic." *The Bookshop of the World: The Role of the Low Countries in the Book-trade 1473-1941*. Ed. L. Hellinga-Querido. Hes & De Graaf: Houten-'t Goy, 2001. 89-107.
- Chantal Keijsper, "De geschiedenis van het boekbedrijf in kort bestek" and "De Erven F. Bohn: Het bedrijf". *Deugdelijke arbeid vordert lang bepeinzen. Jubileumboek uitgegeven ter gelegenheid van het 250-jarig bestaan van uitgeverij Bohn 1752-2002*. Bohn Stafleu Van Loghem: Houten 2002: 2-15.
- "De Erven F. Bohn: Het bedrijf". *Deugdelijke arbeid vordert lang bepeinzen*: 36-48.
- Kuitert, Lisa. *Het ene boek in vele delen: De uitgave van literaire series in Nederland 1850-1900*. De Buitenkant: Amsterdam, 1993.
- Loosjes, Vincent. *Geschiedenis van de Vereeniging ter Bevordering van de Belangen des Boekhandels 1815-1915*. [s.n.]: Amsterdam, 1915.
- Nop Maas, "Het brievenarchief van A.W. Sijthoff." *Jaarboek van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden 1995-1996*. Leiden 1997: 18-29.
- Nieuwsblad voor den Boekhandel*.
- Ovink, G.W. "De Opgang." *Boeken in Nederland: Vijfhonderd jaar schrijven, drukken en uitgeven*. Vereniging van Grafische Reproductie Ondernemingen: Amsterdam, 1979.
- van der Weel, A.H. "Dutch Nineteenth-century Attitudes to International Copyright." *Publishing History* 47 (2000): 31-44.
- "The 'Engelsche "Novel"' in the Netherlands 1900-1940." *Women and Literature and Book and Publishing Studies*. Eds. C.C. Barfoot et al. English Department: Leiden, 1993. (Also at [www.bibliopolis.nl](http://www.bibliopolis.nl))
- "The Rise of the English Book in the Netherlands 1840-1900." *Quaerendo* 30.4 (2000): 277-8.
- "Scouting for Popular Fiction Between the World Wars." *New Perspectives in Book History: Contributions from the Low Countries*. Eds. Marieke van Delft et al. Walburg Pers: Zutphen, 2006. Forthcoming.
- "W.H. Kirberger: Early Specialist Importer of English Books in the Netherlands." *Quaerendo* 32.3-4 (2002): 245-56.
- van Voorst, Sandra. *Weten wat er in de wereld te koop is: Vier Nederlandse uitgeverijen en hun vertaalde fondsen 1945-1970*. SDU: Den Haag, 1997.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The history of the controversy up to 1912 is discussed by Dongelmans.
- <sup>2</sup> Though I will attempt to draw parallels with the situation in Flanders occasionally, the emphasis will be on the Dutch situation. Note also that the article concentrates on works of literature.
- <sup>3</sup> For literacy rates see Ovink (73). Belgium had a 50% literacy rate.
- <sup>4</sup> For literacy rates see Boonstra (20-32). The calculation of the number of Flemish readers is problematic; see Gaus (193). The literacy rate in Flanders stayed substantially behind that of the Netherlands; in 1900 it is estimated at 85%.
- <sup>5</sup> See van der Weel's "The 'Engelsche "Novel"' in the Netherlands 1900-1940."
- <sup>6</sup> Technically these cannot be called piracies, because they did not contravene any Dutch law or international treaty. For a more detailed discussion of the issue see van der Weel's "Dutch Nineteenth-century Attitudes to International Copyright."
- <sup>7</sup> See van der Weel's "W.H. Kirberger".
- <sup>8</sup> See van der Weel's "The Rise of the English Book in the Netherlands 1840-1900."
- <sup>9</sup> In 1872 A.C. Kruseman had already published a similar title in Dutch: *Uit George Eliot*, edited by Marie Neve.
- <sup>10</sup> *Selections from the Rise of the Dutch Republic, arranged for the use of the higher classes of schools and for private exercise*, ed. E. Peel, Utrecht, Broese, 1860.
- <sup>11</sup> Despite Motley's deep interest in the technicalities of –at least transatlantic– copyright issues, the

question remains somewhat shrouded in his correspondence. He writes that "The book very soon after its appearance was reprinted at Amsterdam, and has had a large sale, not to the benefit of the author's pocket, however, but I am very glad to have it circulated. The edition is quite a pretty one, and sells for about three-and-a-half dollars." (Curtis 1: 211) Motley goes on to discuss his satisfaction with the Dutch translation, being supervised by Bakhuyzen van den Brink (211-12).

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Hoftijzer.

<sup>13</sup> I suspect this was not very different for Flemish-speaking Belgium.

<sup>14</sup> As the perceived gap between popular writing and serious literature widens, in the twentieth century we see more often that publishers may act on idealistic, political, or personal motives to acquire 'cultural capital' by being seen to publish translations of serious but often commercially marginal literature.

<sup>15</sup> Letter from de Erven F. Bohn to Blackwood & Sons, 19 October 1875, Archive of De Erven F. Bohn, BOH C3, fol. 261. Italicisation and capitalisation have been normalised.

<sup>16</sup> Translations could be 'authorised', roughly from the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This merely meant that a commercial transaction of some sort had been conducted, not that the rights holder necessarily condoned the Dutch act of publication morally or financially –or, for that matter, in respect of the quality or faithfulness of the translation (see van der Weel, 'Dutch Nineteenth-century Attitudes to International Copyright').

<sup>17</sup> Account books in the Sijthoff and Bohn archives in the library of Leiden University. See also Keijsper, "De geschiedenis van het boekbedrijf in kort bestek", p. 11; Keijsper, "De Erven F. Bohn: Het bedrijf", 44-48; Maas, 25. Further examination of the various publishers' accounts ledgers that have come down to us with a view to gaining a better insight in the relative cost of copyrights (both foreign and local) and translations would be very useful.

<sup>18</sup> Keijsper, "De Erven F. Bohn: Het bedrijf", 45.

<sup>19</sup> See Altick and Ovink.

<sup>20</sup> More than three-quarters of the titles in the book series Spaarnestad Bibliotheek and Hollandsche Bibliotheek, both published by De Spaarnestad, was of UK, and later US, origin (see van der Weel, "Scouting for Popular Fiction Between the World Wars").

<sup>21</sup> See Erickson.

<sup>22</sup> See Kuitert.

<sup>23</sup> Figures from *Nieuwsblad voor den Boekhandel*, 5 April 1939, 242-46.

<sup>24</sup> See van Voorst 19-42.

<sup>25</sup> Stichting Speurwerk betreffende het Boek, <http://www.speurwerk.nl/bc/96nugi.htm> (last visited 8 March 2006). The proportion between the source languages is not given.

English literature includes literature composed in English by writers not necessarily from England, but all are considered important writers in the history of English literature (for example, Robert Burns was Scottish, James Joyce was Irish, Joseph Conrad was Polish, Dylan Thomas was Welsh, Thomas Pynchon is American, V.S. Naipaul was born in Trinidad). In other words, English literature is as diverse as the varieties and dialects of English spoken around the world. Until the early 19th century literature from Britain will mainly be discussed; then America starts to produce major writers and w Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, ownership of English land was concentrated in the hands of the relatively small landed classes, who retained their hold over the land through a system that encouraged the consolidation and extension of estates by enforcing strict inheritance laws. Entails of the kind referred to in the novel were established during this period in order to concentrate wealth and enlarge estates by funneling property to male children or male relatives rather than breaking it up and distributing it amongst family members.Â In the late eighteenth century, English conceptions of family and the role of women began to change, as British culture became increasingly focused on the accumulation and concentration of wealth within the family. George Eliot, *The Life of Jesus* (translation). 1846. Repeal of Corn Laws.Â [Books by Anonymous] had been popularised [sic] by [Sir] Walter Scott ('the Great Unknown'). The lengthy quotation on the title page of the book is from Thomas Carlyle, [which] runs: "'How knowest thou,' may the distressed Novel-wright exclaim, 'that I, here where I sit, am the Foolishest of existing mortals; that this my Long-ear of a fictitious Biography shall not find one and the other, into whose still longer ears it may be the means, under Providence, of instilling somewhat?' We answer, 'None knows, none can certainly know: therefore, write