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# The Dutch Revolt through Spanish Eyes



Self and Other in historical and literary  
texts of Golden Age Spain (c. 1548–1673)

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# Introduction

It was raining in Flanders. 'Pon my word, it rained pitchforks and anvils that accursed winter, turning to pure mud the flat, shifting, swampy land that was crossed in every direction by rivers, canals, and dikes that seemed to have been laid out by the hand of the devil himself. It rained for days, for weeks, for months, until the gray landscape of low clouds was completely erased. It was a strange land with an unfamiliar tongue, populated by people who despised and at the same time feared us; a countryside denuded by the season and the war, lacking any defense against the cold, the wind and the water [...]. The place our iron- and leather-clad men had come from [...] and those rough, proud soldiers now in the lands of the north [...] recognized that they were very few in number and a great distance from any friendly country. But that was the impetus that allowed us to be masters of Europe for a century and a half: knowing that only victories kept us safe among hostile peoples and that if defeated we had nowhere we could reach on foot.<sup>1</sup>

With these dramatic words a Spanish soldier at the siege of Breda in 1625 describes the difficult conditions under which the Spanish troops had to fight in the Netherlands. The author of this report could at first sight be a seventeenth-century chronicler, but it is in fact Arturo Pérez-Reverte, a very successful contemporary Spanish writer whose oeuvre includes several historical novels. His novel of 1998 focuses on the Eighty Years' War – *las guerras de Flandes* – and refreshes the historical memory of his compatriots. Dutch and Belgian readers will probably look somewhat askance at his picture of the Eighty Years' War. After all, they are not used to seeing the other side of the coin, the Spanish viewpoint. The question, however, is whether Pérez-Reverte provides an accurate version of how the seventeenth-century Spaniards thought about this protracted conflict and about the inhabitants of the distant Netherlands. I shall return to this question at the end of this book.

The aim of the present imagological study is to investigate the development of the Spanish image of the Netherlands and its inhabitants in the period

1 Pérez-Reverte, *The Sun over Breda*, 34–36. Original version: Pérez-Reverte, *El sol de Breda*, 42.

between around 1568 and 1648, as well as the significance of the Dutch Revolt and the ensuing war in this process. It will also consider to what extent the historical and literary sources reveal an interaction between the picture that the Spaniards had of the inhabitants of the Netherlands, on the one hand, and the description of the Spanish self-image, on the other. Since any investigation of historical representations cannot start *in medias res*, the book opens with an account of the images that were current before the outbreak of the revolt in 1568. And to analyse whether changes took place after the hostilities had ended, I also pay some attention to the years after the Peace of Münster in 1648.

There can be no denying that the past of the Netherlands and Belgium is closely intertwined with that of Spain, even before the outbreak of the Dutch Revolt and the Eighty Years' War. The political, intellectual and economic influence of Spain on the Netherlands was extremely important throughout the early modern period. The historian Geoffrey Parker even considers it to have been stronger than that of any other country: 'Contacts of the Low Countries with other states may be more interesting and less sensitive, but they are, without question, secondary. There may be many planets, but there is only one sun; and for early modern Netherlands, much as the fact may be resented, the sun rose and set in Spain.'<sup>2</sup> Given the importance of the Dutch Revolt for the formation of the Netherlands as a nation, it is not surprising that it has always been the object of considerable scholarly interest in the Netherlands and Belgium. The Netherlands was split as a result of the Eighty Years' War, which was eventually to result in the emergence of the modern states of the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxemburg. The Dutch Revolt has been studied from all kinds of perspectives in these countries. As a result, the Dutch image of the Spaniards during this period is relatively well known.<sup>3</sup>

Vice versa, the Netherlands was an extremely important possession of the Spanish monarchy, a fact that is usually ignored in the Netherlands and Belgium today. It is often assumed that the war in the Netherlands was not so important for the Spanish Crown since it was constantly embroiled in many international conflicts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However,

2 Parker, 'New Light', 231.

3 De Schepper, 'La Guerra de Flandes'; Swart, 'The Black legend'; Meijer Drees, 'Génesis y desarrollo de la imagen de España en los Países Bajos'; Meijer Drees, *Andere landen, andere mensen*.

the Netherlands always played a crucial role for the Habsburg dynasty; Charles V, Philip II and Philip III all regarded the Netherlands as the most valuable jewel in their empire: *Belgium coronae Regiae gemma praestantior*.<sup>4</sup> The famous dramatist Lope de Vega repeated this idea in one of his plays on the war in the Netherlands. They were the most valuable possessions of the King of Spain, even more than his American territories, in spite of the gold, pearls and coral to be found there:

Aunque el indio le da en Chile  
oro puro, y el cristal  
del Sur perlas y coral,  
y ambar que España destile,  
estos estados de Flandes  
estima en más, como prenda  
del vínculo y encomienda  
de dos Príncipes tan grandes.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, these northern provinces occupied a key strategic link because of their central position in Europe and their strongly fortified towns. The Netherlands was an ideal European stage of war (*plaza de armas de Europa*). Eventually it was also to earn the title ‘cemetery of Europe’ because of the

- 4 These words can be found, for instance, on a triumphal arch in Lisbon to celebrate the visit of Philip III in 1619. The iconology reminds the king of the importance of the Netherlands and of how his grandfather Charles V had always regarded these territories as the most important jewel in the Spanish crown: *Belgium coronae Regiae gemma praestantior teste avo tuo Cesare* (‘the most valuable jewel in the royal crown, witness your grandfather Caesar [i.e. Charles V]’). *Arco triunfal* 1619, fol. A2. According to the poet Pedro de Padilla, the *Estados de Flandes* were the favourite jewel of Charles V, not only because they were a part of the inheritance of the king, but also because he had been born there (in Ghent). Padilla, *Romancero de Padilla, en el que se contienen algunos sucesos que en la jornada de Flandes los Españoles hizieron. Con otras historias y poesias diferentes*, Madrid 1583, 1–2.
- 5 ‘Although the Indian in Chile supplies him with pure gold, and the crystal of the South pearls and coral, and amber for Spain to distil, he rates these states of *Flandes* higher, as a pledge of the bond and charge of two such eminent princes’. Lope de Vega, *Los españoles en Flandes*, 96. This play was composed between 1597 and 1606.

large numbers who died there.<sup>6</sup> The war in the Netherlands was to be a major source of concern in the foreign policy of the Spanish monarchy down to the end of the conflict in 1648,<sup>7</sup> and the Spanish population was also aware of the repercussions of the war, as formulated by the Spanish writer and nun Luisa de Carvajal: 'Whatever affects Flandes affects all of us in Spain' (*nos toca a todos en España, todo cuanto a Flandes toca*).<sup>8</sup> That protracted war is even regarded as one of the major causes of the decline of Spain as a world power.<sup>9</sup> Although the Spanish empire was involved in military conflicts elsewhere too, the duration of the conflict and the religious connotations made the Eighty Years' War an important mirror for Spanish identity as well.

Considerable attention has been paid to this period of Spanish history by Spanish historians as well as by their Belgian and Dutch counterparts, but the image that the Spaniards had of their opponents in the Netherlands is almost entirely lacking from their accounts. In 1948 the Dutch historian Poelhekke expressed in his thesis on the Peace of Münster the hope that someone would undertake extensive research in Spain to find out what the Spaniards thought of their enemy in the Netherlands.<sup>10</sup>

One of the aims of the present study is also to refine the relatively monolithic and static picture that has existed so far of a very Catholic Spain that regarded the rebellious inhabitants of the Netherlands as nothing more than heretics and rebels. The Spanish historian Fernández Álvarez already demonstrated that the Spanish chroniclers, for instance, were sharply divided in their views of the war in the Netherlands. Besides loyal defenders of the trinity of God, fatherland and king (*Dios, patria y rey*), there were also critical authors who did not turn a blind eye to the abuses of the Spanish and the qualities

6 Justus Lipsius called the Netherlands 'the common grave of Europe' (*commune sepulchrum Europae sumus*). Echevarría Bacigalupe, *Flandes y la monarquía*, 111.

7 Israel, 'El final de la guerra de Flandes', 29; Fernández Álvarez, 'Politieke geschiedenis van Spanje', 59.

8 Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza, letter of 10/9/1601 (*Epistolario*, c.c.p. 113 b), cited in: Robben, *Anverso y reverso*, 98.

9 Parker, 'War and economic change', 185. It was not the Netherlands that was responsible for the collapse of the Spanish monarchy, but the policy implemented in Madrid itself. Valladares, '*Decid adiós a Flandes*', 53. However that may be, wherever the blame for the decline is laid, that very decline and the fate of the Spanish monarchy are undeniably linked with the Netherlands.

10 Poelhekke, *De Vrede van Munster*, 17, 19.

of the inhabitants of the Netherlands.<sup>11</sup> The same is true of other primary sources such as plays. They not only express the voices of those who defend the status quo, but also contain dissonant echoes that criticise certain wrongs relating to the war in the Netherlands. The picture of the inhabitants of the Netherlands that was created proves to be less monolithic and more complex than has been hitherto recognised.

A number of essential imagological questions have to be tackled in order to provide some answers. Which images and representations circulated the most? Where did they come from? Which rhetoric was used to present them to the public? In which genres and contexts were they disseminated and preserved?<sup>12</sup> These specific questions are the thread that runs through this study, both for the image of the Netherlands and for the Spanish self-image. The specific role of the wartime situation will also be brought in at each point.

## Image formation and identity

Research on image formation and identity in international relations is an important area of research within cultural history and the history of mentalities. Among those who have devoted themselves to the theoretical framework of research on image formation – imagology – are F.K. Stanzel, H. Dyserinck, and in the Netherlands J.Th. Leerksen.<sup>13</sup> This discipline within comparative literature studies the process of image formation in texts: the emergence, formation and dissemination of representations. It focuses on the processes by which these images are repeated, confirmed, supplemented, varied, rendered more precise or less black-and-white. Every process of image formation is set within a polarity between the hetero-image and the auto-image: the image of the other and the image of self, 'which coexist in reciprocal complementarity

11 Fernández Álvarez, 'La cuestión de Flandes'.

12 See: Leerksen, 'Over nationale identiteit', 426; Meijer Drees, *Andere landen*, 1.

13 Dyserinck, *Komparatistik*; Dyserinck, 'Komparatistische Imagologie'; Leerksen, 'Reflections'; Leerksen, 'Culturele identiteit'; Leerksen, *National thought in Europe*; Stanzel, 'Der literarische Aspekt'; Stanzel, 'Das Nationalitätenschema'. See the new imagological handbook: Beller and Leerksen, *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters*.

and mutual historical dependence'.<sup>14</sup> When a representation becomes fixed and unchanging, we can call it a stereotype. It is well-known that people were often characterised in the past by means of succinct stereotypes and that there were even all kinds of classifications by nationality in circulation.<sup>15</sup> The factual validity and veracity of the dominant images are left out of account.

Research in this field over the last few years has made it clear that image formation and identity cannot be seen in isolation from one another.<sup>16</sup> Leerssen refers to the existence of a 'binary polarity between identity and alterity', emphasising the interaction between self-images that refer to one's own identity and images of the other.<sup>17</sup> By analysing how a specific culture characterises a different group and passes value judgement on it, much can be discovered about the construction of the identity of that culture. So the study of the Spanish image of the Netherlands and its inhabitants inevitably entails an analysis of the Spanish self-image. I shall therefore try to reconstruct how a particular Spanish self-image was shaped in the sources.

The present study is therefore devoted to tracing and analysing the dominant images and self-images. The factors that play a part in the creation of dominant images are of various kinds, such as historical circumstances and literary conventions. In the present case, the historical context is of crucial importance. From the moment that the war breaks out, the image of the other – in other words, of the inhabitants of the Netherlands – is partly an image of the enemy. Wartime situations par excellence lead to a strengthening not only of the image that is constructed of the enemy, but also of the self-image.<sup>18</sup>

14 Leerssen, 'Over nationale identiteit', 426.

15 Leerssen, *National thought in Europe*, 62–63. These were mainly classifications that had been developed since classical antiquity and were based on the influence of the climate and geographical situation on people's attitudes. Stanzel, 'Das Nationalitätenschema'.

16 Identity and a sense of identity are complex concepts. The Dutch historian Willem Frijhoff has demonstrated how sloppily the relation between the two concepts is handled. Identity is often used as a synonym for mentality, sense of identity, or collective memory. The study of the sense of identity focuses on image formation, i.e. the perception of identity. Identity is above all a matter of 'the interaction between that perception and social action'. Frijhoff, 'Identiteit en identiteitsbesef', 625, 634. On Spain see: E. Belenguer et al., *La idea de España en la edad Moderna*; López de Abiada and López Bernasocchi, *Imágenes de España*; Vega Cernuda and Wegener, *España y Alemania*.

17 Leerssen, 'Reflections', 127

18 Meijer Drees, *Andere landen*, viii.

This implies that all kinds of strategies can be used to deliberately play with these images and to deploy them in order to influence the formation of public opinion. Public opinion and propaganda are closely intertwined in wartime. The powers that be make use of propaganda to stimulate feelings of loyalty and togetherness among their subjects. The stage, for example, proved to be an excellent vehicle for political messages. The question is to what extent the propaganda directed from above really influenced the thoughts of the ordinary people. The lack of information about reception at the time is an obstacle, but we know at any rate that plays were seen by many people: the stage was a veritable mass spectacle.<sup>19</sup> A French traveller in Spain recorded how difficult it was to find a place in the theatre at the time because the *comedia* was so popular with the Spanish people.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, the question remains of whether the representations that we find for this period are a reflection of the image that people had of the inhabitants of the Netherlands, or a vision that was directed from above: the image that the powers that be wanted ordinary Spaniards to share. These aspects – the veracity or validity of representations – are left out of account here.<sup>21</sup>

The source of this attempt to influence or direct the people from above was the circle associated with the Spanish court. It might be objected that, as a result, there is less emphasis on the voices of the opposition or the periphery.<sup>22</sup> But it is simply a fact that the majority of the available historical sources

19 Maravall, *La cultura del Barroco*; Díez Borque, *Los espectáculos del teatro y de la fiesta*, 180; Valladares, *Teatro en la guerra*, 49; Gómez Centurión, 'El conflicto de los Países Bajos en tiempos de Felipe II', 31–42.

20 'El pueblo se siente tan inclinado a la comedia, que con trabajo se puede encontrar asiento en los corrales'. Díez Borque, *La sociedad española y los viajeros*, 140.

21 Tomás y Valiente, *La España de Felipe IV*, xl. On the close interrelation between power, ideology and propaganda, see: Maravall, *Teatro y literatura*; Elliott, 'Power and propaganda'; Valladares, *Teatro en la guerra*.

22 Classic examples of resistance from the periphery are the revolts that broke out in various parts of the Iberian peninsula and in Italy in the 1640s. To avoid misunderstandings, it must be clearly stated that I shall try to reconstruct the image of the Netherlands that existed in *Spain*. The court in Brussels was subject to other factors that influenced the processes of image formation, such as the counter-reformation campaign of the archdukes Albert and Isabella. According to Israel, there is another aspect to be taken into account too: 'an emerging new South Netherlands identity linked to Spain' slowly begins



in this wartime context were created in close contact with the court.<sup>23</sup> They present Spain as a political and religious unity, while the diversity within the Iberian peninsula was evident in reality. According to the historian Mía Rodríguez-Salgado, the wars against the infidels in the past had contributed to the formation of a common Spanish identity. Moreover, during the reigns of Charles V and Philip II, rivalry with 'others', especially with the inhabitants of the Netherlands, played an important role in the process of the formation of Spanish identity.<sup>24</sup>

The same desire for unity can be seen on the Spanish stage, where the majority of plays from the second half of the sixteenth century on present national identity as something that is taken for granted.<sup>25</sup> Even when there was disagreement with the central government, it was still possible to accept the glorifying self-images of superiority that it projected. As Brown and Elliott argue, 'there must also have been a considerable body of people, either in the court or in its fringes, who were hostile to the government or at best lukewarm, but who still believed – or wanted to believe – in the high destiny of Spain.'<sup>26</sup>

Terminological caution is called for in speaking about Spain. Spain existed in the early modern period as a geographical unit, but the term did not refer to a state. The Spanish king ruled over a powerful composite state, consisting of a personal union of various kingdoms and other principalities and domains, both in the Iberian peninsula and outside it.<sup>27</sup> The most important kingdom was Castile, which was often identified with *España*. Rodríguez-Salgado entertains the possibility that the diversity within Spain already led to the development of patriotic visions of unity under Charles V and Philip II,

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to take shape. Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 414. On the question of national identity in the Netherlands on the eve of the revolt: Duke, 'The elusive Netherlands', 10–37.

23 Tomás y Valiente, *La España de Felipe IV*, xviii; García Hernán, *La cultura de la guerra y el siglo de oro*, 27–47.

24 Rodríguez-Salgado, 'Patriotismo y política exterior', 103.

25 Cohen refers to the situation on the English and Spanish stage: 'Finally most of the comedies performed during this period in both countries take national identity for granted'. Cohen, *Drama of a nation*, 137.

26 Brown and Elliott, *A palace for a king*, 192.

27 Other terms were used, such as the Spanish Monarchy (*Monarquía Hispánica*). Koenigsberger, 'Dominium Regale', 12. In the early modern period the term *Españas* in the plural was also used, and the king was referred to as 'King of the Spains' (*Rex Hispaniarum*).

and that this process was encouraged by the use of the term *España*.<sup>28</sup> A number of studies point to the clear construction of a national identity already in the early modern period.<sup>29</sup> In the case of Spain, it has been claimed that 'there was a more complex and developed sense of the "Spanish nation" during the reign of Filips II and Filips III than has often been suggested'.<sup>30</sup> I agree completely and am convinced that during this period there was undeniably a construction of a Spanish identity, whether it was a deliberate process or not.<sup>31</sup>

As far as the Netherlands is concerned, these provinces were also among the possessions of the Spanish monarchy and its inhabitants were subjects of the Spanish king. But although the monarch might well function to some extent as an element of cohesion between different states, this does not mean that the Spaniards regarded the people of the Netherlands as members of the same unity.<sup>32</sup> In dealing with the Netherlands, we have to exercise the same terminological caution as in the case of Spain. The Netherlands consisted of seventeen separate provinces that were only linked with one another to a limited extent.<sup>33</sup> (see PLATE 8) Seen through Spanish eyes, the conglomerate of the Netherlands formed a vague whole that was usually designated by the Spanish term *Flandes*. The synonyms *País Bajo* or *Países Bajos* were also used, though less commonly.<sup>34</sup> The Eighty Years' War was called in Spanish

28 Rodríguez-Salgado, 'Patriotismo y política exterior', 103. She mentions that further research is called for on the extent to which the Aragonese or the Portuguese assimilated these unification attempts, but that issue is not the theme of this book. It was not uncommon at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century for the Castilian élite to use the term Castile in the sense of Spain. Gil Pujol, 'Un rey, una fe', 61.

29 Grabes, *Writing the early modern English nation*; Hampton, *Literature and the nation in the sixteenth century*.

30 Dandeleit, *Spanish Rome*, 118.

31 Pace Orest Ranum, who claims that in this period the ruling class failed to create an 'effective Spanish national feeling'. He dates the emergence of such a feeling to the nineteenth century at the time of the Napoleonic wars. Ranum, *National consciousness*, 169; Dandeleit, *Spanish Rome*, 118.

32 Werner Thomas uses the term 'commonwealth español de los siglos XVI y XVII' to refer to an amalgam of peoples and cultures under the same ruler. Thomas, *Rebelión y resistencia*, 10.

33 Stein, 'Seventeen. The multiplicity of a unity in the Low Countries'.

34 The introductions by the Spanish chroniclers indicate that *Flandes* and *Países Bajos* were used as synonyms. See, for example: Calvete, *El felicísimo viaje*, 2; Mendoza, 'Comentarios',

*la guerra* or *las guerras de Flandes*. The inhabitants of *Flandes* were called *Flamencos*. But *Flandes* was also sometimes used in a more restricted sense to refer to the province of Flanders. To avoid anachronisms as far as possible, the term 'the Netherlands' is used to refer to what the Spanish texts call *Flandes* or *Países Bajos*. Terms such as the Northern Netherlands and the Southern Netherlands should be used with caution, because this terminology was not current at the time.<sup>35</sup>

With the exception of the term 'Dutch Revolt', which has been 'authorised' by Geoffrey Parker's monograph of that title, the epithet 'Dutch' has been generally avoided for the early period of the war. English lacks an adjective corresponding to the Dutch 'Nederlands' ('Netherlandish' is mostly confined to the world of art history), so the translator has been obliged to make use of circumlocutions such as 'inhabitant of the Netherlands'. In steering between the Scylla of readability and the Charybdis of non-anachronistic terminology, the course has veered more closely towards the latter; it is hoped that the reader's patience will not be exhausted by the at times repetitive or even long-winded formulations.

The de facto recognition of the Dutch Republic in 1609 eases the terminological difficulties because from that date on it becomes legitimate to employ the epithet 'Dutch' to refer to an inhabitant of the Dutch Republic of the seven United Provinces. The remaining provinces were now referred to as the Spanish Netherlands. However, this distinction was only gradually introduced in the course of the seventeenth century, and it was not hard and fast. The Spanish texts continue to use the terms *Flandes* and *Flamencos* to refer to the Netherlands as a whole and to its inhabitants. In the course of time these terms also came to be used in a more restrictive sense to refer to the land and inhabitants of the Spanish Netherlands alone, while *Holanda* and *Los Estados* make their appearance as terms applicable to the rebel provinces and the later Dutch Republic.

In other respects the usage for foreign place-names and personal names follows that adopted by Parker, though with a preference for the French name

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392; Lanario, *Guerras*, dedication to the reader, 1 r.; Vázquez, 'Sucesos' 72, 11; Carnero, *Historia*, 2 r.. See: De Schepper, 'Nationale identiteit', 43.

35 On the incorrect division of the early modern Netherlands into North and South see: De Schepper, '*Belgium Nostrum*', 4.

for a place in cases where both a French and a Flemish name exist (thus Malines but not Mechelen, Tournai but not Doornik) in the belief that this is more likely to be familiar to an English-speaking reader.

## Historiography

In spite of the existence of a number of studies, there is as yet no coherent presentation of the Spanish formation of images of the Netherlands and its inhabitants. Spanish views on the inhabitants of the Netherlands are discussed in works by *hispanistas* such as A. Morel-Fatio, A. Farinelli and E. Gossart, but these are by and large descriptive studies and compilations which, in spite of their valuable references to the Spanish sources of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, do not analyse the process of image formation.<sup>36</sup>

The first real presentation of the Spanish vision of the Netherlands and its inhabitants is the standard work by Miguel Herrero García from 1928.<sup>37</sup> It is the only Spanish study in which a certain attempt to analyse images can be detected. Herrero García provides a compilation of conventional Spanish images of the inhabitants of the Netherlands in the seventeenth century, but does not investigate how they arose and were distributed. As for the Spanish self-image, Herrero García discusses the self-image of the *Españoles* in general before going into the images of the inhabitants of different regions of Spain: Castile, Andalusia, Aragon, etc.

In the Netherlands it is mainly Johan Brouwer and Simon Vosters who have examined the Spanish image of the Netherlands. Some years after the publication of the book by Herrero García, Johan Brouwer translated a number of fragments from the Spanish war chronicles. Brouwer wanted this well-known work, *Kronieken van Spaansche soldaten uit het begin van den Tachtigjarigen Oorlog*, above all to present a picture of the lives of the Spaniards in the far North in order to offer the reader a different perspective on the events. As a

36 Morel-Fatio, *Etudes sur l'Espagne*; Farinelli, 'España y Flandes'; Gossart, *Les Espagnols en Flandre*.

37 Herrero García, *Ideas de los españoles*, 449–474: chapter XV 'los Flamencos'; chapter XVI 'los Holandeses.'

Hispanophile, Brouwer was mainly interested in polishing the tarnished image of Spain in the Netherlands of his day, not in the process of image formation during the Eighty Years' War. After 1948 the *hispanista* Simon Vosters has been the one to draw attention to the relations between Spain and the Netherlands. His 1955 thesis was a study of the Spanish influences on Dutch literature, followed in 1978 by a study of the role of the Netherlands in medieval Spanish literature. His detailed monograph on and translation of the play by Calderón de la Barca on the siege and surrender of Breda, published in 1993, has made this important play on the war in the Netherlands accessible to a Dutch audience.<sup>38</sup>

The work that devotes most attention to the Spanish image of the Netherlands is the unpublished thesis by the gifted *hispanista* F. M. A. Robben. The author draws on all kinds of sources to build up a rich arsenal of statements about the inhabitants of the Netherlands, but does not take Spanish self-images into account. Moreover, the approach is not chronological, so that no attention is paid to the development of the images in the course of time.<sup>39</sup> The most recent publication – and the only one so far – to deal with the relations between Spain and the Netherlands from the perspective of image formation is by Marijke Meijer Drees.<sup>40</sup>

38 Brouwer, *Kronieken van Spaansche soldaten*. He made a selection from the works of the chroniclers, using mainly Alonso Vázquez (1624?) and Antonio Carnero (1625). Vosters, *Spanje in de Nederlandse literatuur*; Vosters, *Los Países Bajos en la literatura española*; Vosters, *Het beleg*. Cf. Nauta, 'De Nederlandsche Opstand in de Spaansche letteren' and Van Nuffel, 'De Opstand van de Nederlanden in de literatuur'.

39 Robben, 'Anverso y reverso de la imagen de los Países Bajos'. J. C. M. Boeijen's character sketch of the inhabitants of the Netherlands in a number of war chronicles is partly based on the work of Robben. Boeijen, 'Een bijzondere vijand'.

40 Meijer Drees, *Andere landen*, 99–114. See also: Meijer Drees, 'Génesis y desarrollo de la imagen de España en los Países Bajos'.

## Historical and Literary Sources

The sources on which the present work is based are historical and literary. For imagology, historical and literary texts forms 'a coherent discursive field'.<sup>41</sup> There is, however, a clear difference between the two types of source. Aristotle pointed out in his *Poetics* that history writing is characterised by a higher degree of truth than literature with its poetic freedom. Literature thus often functions more clearly than history as a conveyor of dominant conceptions, but in certain cases it is not easy to determine whether a source should be characterised as literary or historical. Certain texts, such as the historical plays, contain elements of both because of their hybrid character. Moreover, dramatists draw on historical works for the details in their plays about the war with the Netherlands.

Although the distinction between historical and literary sources is in principle not essential for the reconstruction of the images themselves, it is of importance for the presentation that is chosen and for the rhetorical strategies that are deployed. Treating the different genres separately does not just show how effectively literary writers fill in and elaborate certain themes with regard to the historical sources. They make use of all kinds of stylistic devices to back up their viewpoints. Such a separation of sources in a diachronic study like the present one also reveals how the picture of the war in the Netherlands developed within a particular genre in the course of time. Moreover, distinctions can be found within the oeuvre of a single author, as in the case of Lope de Vega.

41 Leerssen, 'Over nationale identiteit', 429. I do not go into the writings of the *arbitristas* or preachers. An *arbitrista* was someone who devised solutions for the economic or political problems of Spain and who put his ideas down on paper in the form of notes or reports. It is certainly possible to distil much information about Spain and the complicated situation in the Netherlands from these sources, but they are mainly of a general political or economic character. Preachings naturally have a predominantly religious message. Although texts of this kind have received more attention recently, I have not studied them because of their specific character. The images of the inhabitants of the Netherlands in the preachings were probably determined by the contrast between true religion and heresy. Dansey Smith, *Preaching in the Spanish Golden Age*, 2, 10 and 29; Negroredo del Cerro, *Los predicadores de Felipe IV*.

The corpus on which this study draws consists of printed sources. This choice is determined by the fact that in theory printed sources were able to reach a much wider public. Only in a few cases shall I make use of unpublished sources, such as letters, historical works and political treatises, to back up the argument. This does not mean a failure to recognise the importance of the circulation of manuscripts. It has been convincingly shown that the handwritten manuscript still continued to play an important role in early modern society for a long time.<sup>42</sup> Practical considerations also motivated the decision to limit the research to printed sources. For instance, I have not investigated the valuable historical sources of the Archivo General in Simancas, which contains all kinds of unpublished correspondence, official documents and handwritten pamphlets.<sup>43</sup> Besides, it is impossible to be exhaustive in a study of this kind. Isolated statements on the Netherlands and its inhabitants can be found in all kinds of sources: in a letter from a diplomat, in a report by an official, in a handwritten newsletter... These statements would probably mainly contain examples that reinforce the images presented in this book.

In terms of quantity, war chronicles and *relaciones* are by far the main historical sources for this inquiry, in particular twelve war chronicles that were written by eye-witnesses mainly between 1577 and 1625.<sup>44</sup> These Spanish

42 The importance of the circulation of manuscripts was neglected by Spanish historians until recently, as most of the attention was focused on all kinds of aspects connected with the printed book. Unlike the printed book, manuscripts had potentially more freedom than printed works, which were easier to control. Bouza, *Corre manuscrito*, 15–25. International attention has been drawn to the circulation of manuscripts within the framework of the European Science Foundation project ‘Cultural exchange in Europe circa 1400–circa 1700 (1998–2003). See Bethencourt and Egmond (eds), *Correspondence and Cultural Exchange in Europe*, 1400–1700.

43 On Dutch history in Simancas: Van Durme, *Les archives de Simancas*. See also: Bussemaker, ‘Opgave van’. Many handwritten *avisos* are also preserved in Vienna, Rome and elsewhere.

44 Most of them were published in 1568–1609 and 1621–1625. I leave out of consideration the Italian historians who have written on the war in the Netherlands: Cesare Campana, Girolamo Conestaggio Franchi, Guido Bentivoglio and Faminio Strada. The last two were very well known in the Netherlands because their works were translated into Dutch. In spite of their shared Catholic background, these historians are at times critical of the Spanish monarchy. It would be interesting to compare the Italian discourse with the Spanish one and with that of the Southern Netherlands. It is a known fact that a lot was written in Italy in connection with the *guerras de Flandes*: Moretti, ‘La trattatistica italiana e la guerra’, 133; Espino, *Guerra y cultura en la época moderna*.

chroniclers were members of the armed forces, prelates and diplomats who reported on the course of the war in the far North. I also draw on a corpus of some hundred *relaciones* and *avisos*. These were brief pamphlets – precursors of the Spanish press – that informed the broad public about current topics, including the course of the hostilities in the Netherlands. These pamphlets were distributed rapidly in large numbers by a variety of printing houses. They were usually written in prose, though some are in verse.<sup>45</sup> These texts, which were also known as *nuevas* or *noticias*, were the only form of printed news in Spain until 1661, when the *Gaceta nueva* first appeared.<sup>46</sup> Although we find these texts already in the sixteenth century, the genre became immensely popular at the start of the following century. The heyday of the printed *relación* was in the first half of the reign of Philip IV (1621–ca. 1650). The minds behind the royal propaganda machine saw how useful this medium could be in influencing public opinion. Information in these texts was clearly filtered and manipulated to ‘legitimise the early absolutist Catholic regime and to guarantee its long-term continuity’.<sup>47</sup> The main foci of attention of these texts were the army, the crown and the church.

There was no need for the contemporary Spanish *relaciones* to always show the enemy in the Netherlands in a negative light in order to present a strong and homogeneous Spanish self-image. It was enough to tell good news about the progress of the Spanish cause, for example by stating that the silver fleets from the Americas had arrived laden with cargo or to celebrate military victories.<sup>48</sup> Satirical pamphlets of the kind that circulated in the Netherlands were not to be found in Spain. It has often been assumed that there was no demand for such pamphlets in which the enemy in the Netherlands was criticised. In this connection, Peer Schmidt has raised the interesting suggestion

45 The place, date and author of the text are often not mentioned. It was not unusual for them to take the form of letters. A few of these *relaciones* and *avisos* were illustrated. Ettinghausen, ‘The illustrated Spanish news’, 120. See: García García, ‘Las guerras de Flandes en la prensa’. Writers on contemporary events used the *relaciones* to confer an air of veracity on their accounts. On the *relación* and the conventions of the genre see Infantes, ‘¿Qué es una relación?’. There is no Spanish equivalent to the list of Dutch pamphlets contained in Knuttel, *Catalogus van de pamflettenverzameling*.

46 Ettinghausen, ‘The illustrated Spanish news’, 118.

47 Van Damme en Deploige, ‘Slecht nieuws, geen nieuws’, 16.

48 Ibid., 13.



that there was a reaction to the anti-Spanish pamphlets in Spain, but that this was carried out in the form of books, mainly of a theological, political or ideological kind.<sup>49</sup>

The historical plays are the main literary genre for the representation of the Dutch Revolt and the Eighty Years' War. Regarding this genre, I have examined a corpus of some thirty-five printed plays in which the conflict in the Netherlands plays a part.<sup>50</sup> For this genre I have endeavoured where possible to establish the year in which the work in question was written. In those cases where this was impossible to determine precisely, a rough date has been assigned on the basis of biographical information and extant editions. Plays of the Spanish Golden Age were mainly written to be performed, and it was very common for a long period of time to elapse between the writing and performing of a play and its publication.<sup>51</sup> Once they had gone into print, these plays – with the images and self-images that they contained – made a renewed contribution to the formation of images.

In the case of works by Lope de Vega, which form a considerable proportion of the corpus, there is the useful standard work by Morley and Bruerton.<sup>52</sup> They have tried to determine the dates of composition of the plays of Lope de Vega on the basis of internal evidence. Unfortunately, such chronological studies are not available for the majority of the other playwrights discussed here.

49 Schmidt, *Spanische Universalmonarchie*, 400–404. It would be interesting to study the relation between pamphlets and books for the conflict between Spain and the Netherlands.

50 Spanish literary historians have always concentrated on seven works: *Los españoles en Flandes*, *El asalto de Maastricht*, *Pobreza no es vileza*, *El Brasil restituído*, *La nueva victoria de Don Gonzalo de Córdoba* by Lope de Vega and *El sitio de Breda* by Pedro Calderón de la Barca. As the Spanish historian Gómez Centurión has argued, it is essential to regard these plays, which have often been considered in isolation, as a whole from both a thematic and a chronological perspective. Gómez Centurión, 'El conflicto de los Países Bajos', 35.

51 Arellano, *Historia del teatro español*, 61, 172. The printing of these works was a matter of secondary importance; putting them on stage without delay was what mattered. *Los españoles in Flandes*, for instance, was first published in 1620, although its date of composition can be set between 1597 and 1604. Dramatic texts could also undergo different variations once they were performed. See: Rubiera Fernández, *La construcción del espacio*, 13.

52 Morley and Bruerton, *The chronology*.

Other literary genres appear to have taken less interest in the *guerras de Flandes*. At any rate, a number of prose writings are worth considering because of their comments on the Netherlands, including those by Francisco de Quevedo y Villegas (1580–1645), the diplomat Diego Saavedra Fajardo (1584–1648) and the Jesuit Baltasar Gracián (1601–1658). There are also several eulogies and poems that were written in the context of the war, but on the basis of samples I can state that the Netherlands played a very marginal role in occasional political poetry. Neither is the genre of the travel account, which is highly productive in terms of image formation, well represented in the corpus.<sup>53</sup>

## Periodisation

In order to chart changes in the Spanish image of the Netherlands, the period has been broken down into five parts. The first chapter is devoted to the period leading up to the outbreak of the Dutch Revolt in 1568. It goes back to classical antiquity because that is where certain conventional images originated. Chapter Two, which covers the period from 1568 to 1609, marks the start of the study proper of the influence of the Dutch Revolt on the Spanish image of the Netherlands and the extent to which that image changed. This chapter also focuses attention on images relating to the Dutch Revolt itself. What did the Spaniards write about its causes and leaders? This is followed by the period of the Twelve Years' Truce, from 1609 to 1621. The key issue in this third

53 I have found few printed historical poems on the war in the Netherlands. The corpora of poems consulted are: Rodríguez Moñino et al., *Nuevo diccionario bibliográfico*; García de Enterría, *Catálogo de pliegos sueltos poéticos*; García de Enterría, *Sociedad y poesía*. The travel accounts by Calvete de Estrella and Vicente Álvarez on the occasion of the journey to the Netherlands of Charles V and Prince Philip in 1548 have no successors until the end of the seventeenth century, with works such as *Segunda Peregrinación del doctor D. Pedro Cubero Sebastián* (Valencia 1697). There is also a diary (first published in the twentieth century) of a journey to the Netherlands by Bernardo José Olivés de Nadal in 1670: Amorós and Canut, *Lo que vió Bernardo José*. This edition also includes some passages from the work of Cubero. García-Romeral Pérez, *Bio-bibliografía de viajeros españoles*.

chapter is that of whether the truce brought about a change in the perception of the Netherlands and its inhabitants. After all, the United Provinces were *de facto* recognised in 1609. This chapter also deals with the self-image of the Spaniards in this period.

Chapter Four, covering the years from 1621 to 1648, leads us back into the war. The conflict was resumed in all its violence in 1621 and the formation of negative images of the enemy – the Dutch Republic – reached its climax. The Peace of Münster was finally signed in 1648. Chapter Five, on the years 1648 to 1673, deals with the postwar relations down to the Treaty of The Hague. This was the first occasion in which there was mention of a formal alliance between the two former enemies. The Kingdom of the Netherlands continued to be a part of the Spanish monarchy until 1714. Do we find a change in (self-)perceptions after so many years of warfare? This study concludes with a brief epilogue in which I return to the twentieth-century historical novel on the war in the Netherlands by Arturo Pérez-Reverte. From the perspective of a diachronic study of image formation like the present one, it is interesting to see what image of the war in the Netherlands Pérez-Reverte offers to Spanish readers today.