‘Also, I am sending you two cheeses’:
Dutch Strangers, c.1470–c.1550

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Introduction
On 21 August 1567, a recent arrival in England wrote a letter to his wife in Flanders. He wrote to try to convince her to come join him in Norwich: ‘You would never believe how friendly and supportive of each other the Flemish people here are, and also the English; with what care they treat our people, so that if you were here with half our possessions, you would never consider returning to live in Flanders.’

Norwich was the most populous city of England after London; it is therefore not surprising that it also had the second largest community of Dutch speakers in the country. New migrants preparing the North Sea crossing knew they would find a community which they were already part of: ‘I want to ask you to send me, with the first available messenger,’ one wrote back home while in harbour waiting to embark on his journey to Norwich, ‘the family tree which I once lent you, of the family of our mother and her sisters, for I hope to find many of our relatives there.’ Early modern cities, for their economic growth and prosperity as well as development of new industries, depended on a continuous supplementing of their population by immigrants. New communities replenished old, and ensured new routes of communication to the areas of origin. ‘Also,’ another Fleming in Norwich wrote his old friends back in Flanders, ‘I am sending you two cheeses. It is a small present, but the even the smallest is still good.’

The coming of the Dutch Strangers, religious refugees from the Southern Netherlands, to various cities in England—especially London and Norwich—in the middle of the sixteenth century, is a new stage in the history of the presence of Dutch speakers in Britain; Dutch-speaking churches were established, and printers in England became involved in printing Dutch texts. The ease with which these new communities established themselves, it has been said, depended on pre-existing communities of Dutch speakers. Andrew Pettegree has noted that ‘[i]t was indeed extremely important for the first generation of foreign Protestant refugees [to London] that they were able to join a well-established and settled foreign community in the city, and many of these foreign

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1 This work was carried out as part of the project The Literary Heritage of Anglo-Dutch Relations, c.1050–c.1600, funded by the Leverhulme Trust, whose support I most gratefully acknowledge. I am grateful to my project collaborators, Ad Putter, Elisabeth van Houts and Moreed Arbabzadah, for productive conversations.
4 Janssen, ‘De hervormde vlugtelingen’, p. 263: ‘ic wylde wel dat ghy my sondt hyden eersten boode den boom van de afcompste van Coornelys van Schoere, die ic u eens gheleent hebbe, emmers de copie tot de kinderen van Pieter Bladelinex toe, ons moeder en huer zuisters; want ic hope daer jaere vele van ons maerschyp te vynden’.
5 Janssen, De hervormde vlugtelingen’, p. 239: ‘Ende ick late u weten, dat ik u twee casen zende bij Wlffaert Boeteman. Die ghiefte es elene, maer de mensste es ghoeit.’
6 Janssen, De hervormde vlugtelingen’, p. 239: ‘Ende ick late u weten, dat ik u twee casen zende bij Wilhaert Boeteman. Die ghiefte es elene, maer de mensste es ghoeit.’
7 Pettegree, Foreign Protestant Communities, pp. 85–96.
residents of an earlier generation would give the foreign churches sturdy support in their first difficult years.8

Such formulations, however, tend to imply a presumption of the existence of two populations relevant to the historical analysis: 'Strangers' and those who are not. But this dichotomy risks obfuscating the nature of the pre-existing infrastructure on which the ' Stranger' communities of the middle of the sixteenth century could build. This paper will investigate some of this Anglo-Dutch infrastructure of the 1470s to around 1550, focusing on five people involved in the burgeoning printing industry and book trade: William Caxton, Jan van Doesborch, Jacob van Meeteren, Steven Mierdman and Nicolaes van den Bergh. The choice to focus on this one particular group of professionals is partly because they were, as has been noted by Lien Bich Luu, over-represented among the ‘Strangers’ of London,9 but also because as publishers they have unusually well-documented lives, as the usually scant documentary evidence is complemented by their output. Each had an Anglo-Dutch life which was defined as such by much more than being Dutch ‘Strangers’ in England, but as we shall see each did contribute significantly to the Anglo-Dutch infrastructure of London.

William Caxton10

It may at first instance seem surprising to see William Caxton ranked among 'Dutch Strangers' here – in addition to the justified objections one may already have about my use of 'Dutch' for people from Brabant and Flanders. But when we define our terms linguistically, which has its own limitations but in research spanning the Middle Ages and the early modern period seems to me preferable to the available alternatives, Caxton certainly qualifies as ‘Dutch’, as he himself was eager to stress in his introduction to the first work he published in English, The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye,11 which he himself had translated from French. Here, Caxton asked his readers to excuse him for his limited skill both in French and English, for the ‘simpliness and imperfectness that I had in both languages, that is to wit in French and in English. For in France was I never, and was born and learned my English in Kent in the Weald where I doubt not is spoken as broad and rude English as in any place of England, & have continued by the space of 30 years for the most part in the countries of Brabant, Flanders, Holland, and Zeeland’.12

Caxton, when he wrote this in the early 1470s, was only part English; the Dutch language was his vernacular.13 The technology he introduced to England in 1474 was provided to him by Johan Veldener, himself a prolific Dutch typographer and printer.14 Among Veldener’s publications was a Middle Dutch Brut chronicle which, while geared toward a Dutch audience, also promotes a deliberately politically slanted, namely Lancastrian view of English history.15 Helmer Helmers has

8 Pettegree, Foreign Protestant Communities, p. 9.
9 Luu, Immigrants, p. 115–17.
10 This section on William Caxton is indebted to the work of Ad Putter in our project The Literary Heritage of Anglo-Dutch Relations, c.1050–c.1600.
11 USTC 438831: The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye ([Ghent: William Caxton, 1473/4]).
12 The Recuyell, fol. 1r–2r: ‘symplenes and vnpervfghtnes that I had in bothe langages, that is to wete in frenshe 7 in englissh For in ffrance was I neuer, and was born 7 lerned myn englissh in kente where I doubt not is spoken as brode and rude englissh as in ony place of englond 7 haue contynued by the space of xxx. yere for the most part in the contres of Braband. flandres holand and zeland’.
identified the existence of an ‘Anglo-Dutch public sphere’ in the mid-seventeenth century,\(^\text{16}\) Veldener’s Middle Dutch Brut, published the same year as Caxton’s own, provides evidence that this public sphere already existed in the fifteenth century.

Even if the thirty years which Caxton had spent on the Continent did not make him a ‘Stranger’ in London when he set up his press in Westminster, he did as much as any of his contemporaries to contribute to the Anglo-Dutch infrastructure of England. He took with him not only the technology he picked up in the Dutch Low Countries (as well as, in all probability, personnel),\(^\text{17}\) but also texts – a French/Dutch phrase book rolled of his press in a French/English translation;\(^\text{18}\) he helped Reynard the Fox cross the North Sea,\(^\text{19}\) and as Ad Putter has shown even his translations from French were larded with Dutch words.\(^\text{20}\)

### Jan van Doesborch

In 1501, Jan van Doesborch took over the press of the widow of Roland van den Dorpe, and he ran an active publishing business in Antwerp between 1501 and 1530, which he continued briefly after a move to Utrecht, until he died in the mid-1530s.\(^\text{21}\) Several of his publications have English links – either in subject matter, such as the Dutch Bevres of Hamtoun (Die historie van Baerijne van Austoen unt Engelandt geboren – ‘The History of Bevis of Hampton, Born in England’),\(^\text{22}\) or indeed in intended readership. His predecessor Roland van den Dorpe had printed exclusively in Dutch and French,\(^\text{23}\) but Doesborch, from the earliest years of his press, in addition to Dutch and Latin works, also published works in English.\(^\text{24}\) This output included works originally written in English, such as the short grammar of the Latin language attributed to John Stanbridge,\(^\text{25}\) but also translations from Dutch, such as the History of Eueraulus and Luercia of Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini,\(^\text{26}\) translated into English from the Dutch translation of the original Latin;\(^\text{27}\) and the Story of Mary of Nenmegen, the story of the young woman from Nijmegen who spent seven years in a relation with the devil, which was translated into English prose from the Dutch verse.\(^\text{28}\) While Doesborch is mentioned once as translator in a reprint of one of his editions,\(^\text{29}\) he also published others’

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22 USTC 403633: Die historie van Buerijne van Austoen (Antwerpen, [Jan van Doesborch], 1504).

23 USTC 70743, 436422, 761181, 436389, 436380, 436467, 436564.

24 The earliest known example is USTC 410043: The XI’ Tokens the Whiche Shullen Bee Showyd Afore ye Drefull Daye of Judgement ([Antwerp, Jan van Doesborch, 1505]), of which van Doesborch also printed a Dutch edition: USTC 436709: Vanden vijftien vreeselijcke toekenen ([Antwerpen], Jan van Doesborch, [1505]).

25 USTC 404695: John Stanbridge, Accedence. How Many Parts of Reasons Be There ([Antwerp: Jan van Doesborch, 1515]).

26 USTC 436929: [History of Euarualus and Luercia], ([Antwerp: Jan van Doesborch, 1515]).

27 P.J.A. Franssen, ‘Jan Van Doesborch and the History of Euryaulus and Luercia’.

28 USTC 437010: Mary of Nemmegen ([Antwerp: Jan van Doesborch, 1518]).

translations, including work of Laurence Andwee,\textsuperscript{30} an Englishman from Calais, who after working with Doesborch set up his own printing house in London.\textsuperscript{31} There are some signs that Doesborch may have collaborated with Wynkyn de Worde, too.\textsuperscript{32}

In 1520, the first known documentary evidence complements the evidence provided by the printed books, when Doesborch is recorded trading through Middelburg – a passing station from the Low Countries to England.\textsuperscript{33} Then, in 1523, he is recorded as taxpayer in the Subsidy Rolls of the London parish of St Martin in the Fields, which record taxes received ‘[d]e Johanne van Dwysborow, extraneo’.\textsuperscript{34} A ‘Stranger’, then, but only briefly, it seems, as there are no further records. There is, however, the work published by the London printer Robert Bankes, \textit{The IX Drunkardes}, of that same year, which may well be the work of Doesborch himself.\textsuperscript{35} He did not stay long, however, as later in the same decade, new titles by Doesborch are published in Antwerp.\textsuperscript{36} His subsequent move to Utrecht in the 1530s, as Piet Janssen has argued, may also be indicative of the central role that England played in Doesborch’s life: the rise of the Reformation, and the central role that Antwerp played in the production and trade in clandestine publications for the English market, answered by increasing suppression of that trade, will have made a business like that of Doesborch, which relied in a large part on uninterrupted trade on England, unsustainable.\textsuperscript{37}

Robert Maslen has recently argued that Doesborch’s publications, presenting a wide range of literary narrative prose in English, in a uniform format and presentation across volumes, presented ‘English readers and aspiring writers an unprecedented range of models of prose fiction in their own language, available to be mimicked, plundered, or bettered as the fancy took them’,\textsuperscript{38} and as such played a crucial role in the development of the English novel.

\textbf{Jacob van Meeteren}

Where the Reformation may have spelled disaster for Doesborch’s business model in Antwerp, it created opportunities for others in the city, such as the merchant Jacob van Meeteren.\textsuperscript{39} He was commissioner, financier and publisher of the first complete printed Bible in English, the so-called Coverdale Bible.\textsuperscript{40} As the biographer of his son would later write: ‘His father, in his youth, had learned the art of typesetting, and he was gifted with the knowledge of many languages, and other good sciences; he knew at that time to distinguish the light from the darkness, and showed his special dedication in the financing of the translation and publication of the English Bible in Antwerp, for which he used the service of a learned student named Miles Coverdale, to the great


\textsuperscript{32} Franssen, \textit{The World of Jan van Doesborch}, 5.2, pp. 28–29.

\textsuperscript{33} Franssen, \textit{The World of Jan van Doesborch}, 1.2, pp. 10–11.

\textsuperscript{34} Franssen, \textit{The World of Jan van Doesborch}, 1.2, pp. 10–11.

\textsuperscript{35} USTC 501738: \textit{The IX Drunkardes} ([London: Richard Bankes, 1523]). See Franssen, ‘Jan van Doesborch (?–1536)’, p. 273.

\textsuperscript{36} Franssen, ‘Jan van Doesborch (?–1536)’, p. 273–4; USTC 441405, 437396, 437415.

\textsuperscript{37} Franssen, ‘Jan van Doesborch (?–1536)’, pp. 279.


\textsuperscript{39} For van Meteren’s biography, see W.D. Verduyn, \textit{Emanuel van Meteren. Bijdrage tot de kennis van zijn leven, zijn tijd en het ontstaan van zijn geschiedwerk} (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1926).

promotion of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ in England.\textsuperscript{41} The ambitious production involved a network of scholars, tradesmen and merchants, Dutch and English.\textsuperscript{42}

The same biographer notes that Jacob's trade comprised travel to England – including one journey during his wife's pregnancy.\textsuperscript{43} During one such journey, in 1550, continuing his involvement in shaping religious life in England, Jacob was among the founders of the Dutch Church in London – the very first established Dutch Reformed Church.\textsuperscript{44} Soon after, the family made the decision to move permanently, but the parents' journey came to an unfortunate end when their ship was caught in cross-fire between French and Spanish battleships, and was sunk, Jacob's life cut short soon after being one of the founders of the Strangers' Church, but before he had the opportunity to start his new life as a 'Stranger' himself.\textsuperscript{45}

Jacob's son Emanuel van Meeteren's own Anglo-Dutch identity, too, was more complex than the simple dichotomy of 'Stranger' versus 'not a Stranger' suggests. After his parents' death, his move to London was cancelled, and he continued living with family in Antwerp. He would, however, eventually settle in London in the 1560s, and became a denizen;\textsuperscript{46} afterwards, he saw himself as English, yet also continued to identify as a citizen of Antwerp – once, imprisoned by the Spanish authorities in Antwerp, finding himself confronted by the dilemma which identity to prefer: 'I could not easily decide whether I wanted to prosecute my defence as a citizen of Antwerp or as English.'\textsuperscript{47} Emanuel was Jacob van Meeteren's third great contribution to the Anglo-Dutch infrastructure of England: as trade consul of the nascent Dutch Republic, Emanuel became the linchpin in a network of English and Dutch politicians, scholars and merchants.

\textbf{Steven Mierdman and Nicolaes van den Berghe}

The Dutch Church in London, founded in 1550, immediately became a central institution to the rapidly growing Dutch community of London, and its existence also led to the establishment of Dutch printing activity in the city. The recent arrival Steven Mierdman, who in the 1540s had established himself as printer of both Dutch and English religious tracts in Antwerp,\textsuperscript{48} was one of its earliest members, and in 1551, he serviced the early foundation with a Dutch summary of the Church's teachings and a Dutch catechism for the children;\textsuperscript{49} new versions were published a year later by Nicolaes van den Berghe – a printer whose name was occasionally Anglicized as Nicolas Hill.\textsuperscript{50}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[41] Simeon Ruytinck, 'Het leven ende sterven vanden eerwerden, vromen, ende vermaerden Emanuel van Meteren', in: Emanuel van Meeteren, \textit{Historie der Neder-landscher ende haerder na-huren oorlingen ende geschiedenisen}, Hillebrand Jacobssz, The Hauge, 1614, fol. [672]–[673]; at fol. [672]: 'Sijn Vader in sijn Jeucht hadde gheleert die edele Conste van 't Letter setten, hy was begaeft met de kennisse van veelderley talen ende andere goede wetenschappen, wist van in die tijden t'licht t'onderscheyden van duysternisse, ende bethoonde sijnen bysonderen yver in 't becostighen vande oversettinghe ende Druck vanden Engelschen Bijbel binnen Antwerpen, daer toe ghebruycckende den dienst van een gheele Student met namen Miles Coverdal, tot groote bevoorderinge van het Rijcke Jesu Christi in Enghelandt.'
\item[43] Ruytinck, 'Het leven ende sterven', fol. [672].
\item[47] Ruytinck, 'Het leven ende sterven', fol. [673]: 'ick kon niet wel resolveren of ick my als Poorter van Antwerpen wilde defenderen of als Engels'.
\item[48] Andrew Pettgeree and Malcolm Walsby, \textit{Netherlandish Books: Books Published in the Low Countries and Dutch Books Published Abroad before 1601} (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), nos 7983, 16686 (Dutch sermons); 7990, 13076, 23325, 32045 (Dutch religious instruction); 27331 (Dutch polemics); 7002 (Catechism); 4068, 4360, 4596–7 (Biblical texts in Dutch); 4582–3 (Biblical texts in Spanish); 3130–1, 5910, 3083–5, 9066, 11637, 12694, 29769 (English polemical works); 21004 (English translation of a tract of Philipp Melanchthon); 18350 (English catechism).
\item[50] Pettgeree and Walsby, \textit{Netherlandish Books}, nos 17995–6; 21338 (Marten Micronius, catechism), 21340 (religious instruction), 4087 (Utenhove, \textit{Psalmen}).
\end{footnotes}
The Dutch Reformed Church was suppressed by Queen Mary upon her accession in 1553. About 175 members promptly fled, in two Danish ships that happened to be waiting in the Thames for favourable wind. After a tortuous journey and being rejected from several places, they resettled in the city of Emden in Lower Saxony, where others joined them over time. Van den Berghe and Mierdman continued to print in Emden, including among their publications editions of both the catechism and the teachings of the Dutch Church in London. Title pages of Emden editions of the Psalms noted that the Dutch lyrics were the ones ‘that were customarily used in the Dutch congregation of London’. Other books have as place of printing on their title pages ‘outside London’. In four short years, but on the basis of much longer relations with England, the London congregation of the Dutch Church had acquired itself an identity that was inherently linked to the city, compounding its self-description as a diaspora community as defined by its origins both in the Dutch Low Countries and in London. After the accession of Elizabeth I in 1558, the Dutch Church of London was once again restored in 1560. Many of the Emden exiles returned, taking their Anglo-Dutch infrastructure with them, and the congregation was further replenished with new arrivals from the Netherlands.

Conclusion
The Anglo-Dutch infrastructure that existed in English cities like Norwich and London, which helped newcomers establish themselves and communities to thrive, did not consist exclusively of Dutch people who had settled permanently, but also of temporary residents such as Jan van Doesborch, visitors such as Jacob van Meeteren, as well as English remigrants from the Dutch Low Countries such as William Caxton. The Anglo-Dutch infrastructure was also based on activities in the Dutch Low Countries, such as those of Steven Mierdman, and could be further developed outside England or the Dutch Low Countries, as it was in Emden in Lower Saxony by someone like Nicolaes van den Berghe. As such, a focus on ‘Strangers’ or ‘Aliens’ when thinking about Anglo-Dutch lives in the period leads us to underestimate the true nature as well as the pervasiveness of the Anglo-Dutch infrastructure. The North Sea was not principally a border across which migration happened, it was a geography in its own right on which, and around which, lives played out; where a gift of cheeses could serve to remind one of continued bonds in spite of physical distance.

53 Utenhove, J. (trans.), *25 psalmen end andere ghesangen, diemen in de Duydtsche gemeente te Londen was ghebruyckende* (Emden, Gellius Ctematius, 1557).