

# **‘Dutch periodicals from 1697 to 1721: in imitation of the English?’**

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## Dutch periodicals from 1697 to 1721: in imitation of the English?\*

A.J. Hanou

IN the historiography of eighteenth-century Dutch literature we find the more or less stubborn opinion that by his *Hollandsche Spectator* (1731-1735), an imitation of the papers by Steele and Addison, Justus van Effen gave the impulse to the prosperity of those Dutch periodicals that criticise the manners and morals of the time, and in which essays, dreams and a great many other forms are used.<sup>1</sup>

Even if we do not doubt that this *Hollandsche Spectator* may indeed be called the first mature continental imitation of *The Spectator* (1711-1712) of Steele and Addison (leaving aside an unsuccessful attempt by Marivaux), we may still be surprised by this very fact. For, if there was any country in Europe, apart from England, in which the periodical press prospered in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it was in the Republic of the Low Countries. About 1700 there was no other country with which England maintained such close economic and cultural relations as with the Netherlands.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, before Steele and Addison, England had a great many papers that gave information, often amplified with commentaries written in a creative-fictitious way.<sup>3</sup> Can it be that neither Steele's predecessors nor Steele himself should have left any traces on whatever Dutch papers there may have

\* This article was presented as a paper at the Fifth International Congress on the Enlightenment, Pisa 1979.

1 see Hermine J. Vieu-Kuik, 'De Nederlandsche letterkunde in het noorden', in: *De Letterkunde in de achttiende eeuw in noord en zuid* (Antwerp 1975), pp.155-61; Justus van Effen, *Uit de Hollandsche Spectator*, ed. P. Maassen (Culemborg 1975), pp.11-12. On van Effen's predecessors: P.J. Buijnsters, 'Voorlopers van Justus van Effen', *Nieuwe taalgids* 59 (1966), pp.145-57.

2 see W.J.B. Pienaar, *English influences in Dutch literature and Justus van Effen as intermediary* (Cambridge 1929); Charles Wilson, *Anglo-Dutch commerce and finance in the eighteenth century* (Cambridge 1941).

3 see Richmond P. Bond (ed.), *Studies in the early English periodical*, second edition (Westport 1977).

been before that surprisingly late date of 1731? Were those former Dutch papers at all acquainted with English literature and did they pay any attention to it? If we do not find any English influences, in spite of the close relations between the two countries, we may well ask if there could have been an independent Dutch development in the weeklies, and if so, could van Effen's imitation of an English example be an exception to the rule? In order to solve this problem I would like to go through some periodicals from the period before van Effen.<sup>4</sup> For practical reasons I will confine myself to the years 1679 to 1721,<sup>5</sup> and moreover to those papers whose object is not only to give information (such as newspapers, learned journals, review journals, etc.), but in which the author writes his own opinions or other communications in an independent and creative way. These communications may vary from the author's elaborated comment on news-reports, to essays, short stories, and so on.

Within our defined period the very first periodical we meet is the *Haegse Mercurius* (August 1697 - September 1699) by Hendrik Doedyns; a Mercury in which a spirit of discussion, story-telling and playfulness predominates over the actual information. It is clear that here we have to do with a writer of some consequence; Doedyns has an eloquent, erudite and above all, witty style of writing and he knows how to furnish national and international events with the most exquisite marginal notes. According to his first issue, his paper served to deal with 'the deeds of Voluptuous *Satyrs*' (by which are meant drunkards and idlers) and to put forward some 'Satyricque railleries'. His examples are Lucian and Corneille, and, as appears from ii, no.104, also Juvenal, Rabelais, Don Quixote and others; in this last issue he also recalls his original intention 'briefly and entertainingly to present to those readers who have other things to do than I have: Philosophy, Histories &c.'<sup>6</sup>

- 4 for the Dutch language area a first heuristic expedient for this period (see note 5) are the almost complete bibliographies of spectators and satiric periodicals respectively, by P.J. Buijnsters and C.M. Geerars published in the 'Documentatieblad van de Werkgroep 18e eeuw', issues 1 and 5. I think that in this case and for this period it would be useless to differentiate between spectators and satiric periodicals, as in this case the very first aim of the writers is: criticism on manners and morals.
- 5 in the future I hope to discuss the possible English examples from 1722 till 1731 (the year of the appearance of the *Hollandsche Spectator*). Moreover, by 1721 we have already come across the first periodical by the extremely creative author Jacob Campo Weyerman, which is really illustrative of his later working-method.
- 6 here Doedyns formulates most interesting demands that should in his opinion be made upon the skill and creativity of a writer of papers of this type.

The amount of news about England in Doedyns's writings is, comparatively, not greater than his news about other countries. What is more remarkable is that now and again he uses an English word - knowledge of the French, not of the English language was common. Even more remarkable is the fact that he repeatedly refers to the works of English authors, such as Toland (i.23), Fuller (i.26), Hobbes (i.40; ii.23, 99), Congreve (i.87), Thomas Duffey (i.87), Tate and Bradley in so far as they are the authors of the new rhymed version of the psalms (i.102), Temple (ii.9), Dennis (ii.42) and perhaps Defoe (i.16). This knowledge could be explained by the fact that all these works are by authors whose views had political repercussions; the value of their news was important for a periodical like the one Doedyns conducted. But it can also be explained by a special interest he may have felt in England, for he had been there. This appears most clearly from a statement in a discussion in 1688 (ii.34) between him and a scholar who crossed the Channel with him. They talked about the problem of how to take part in present-day events which one would like to describe objectively later on. From this account we may conclude that Doedyns must have taken part in the crossing of William III; he must even have been an eyewitness of the Glorious Revolution. From this period of residence in England it also becomes clear that several descriptions must be based on his own experiences, such as Greenwich (i.29), the poor (i.68), the atmosphere of and irregularities in English theatres (i.16; ii.7), and (i.102) the Royal Society, Bedlam, the Stock Exchange and Parliament.<sup>7</sup>

But even more important is that Doedyns also appears to be interested in the English periodical press. In ii.4 he writes about the promotion of Yard, 'who writes the Gazette in London [...] This Gazette or Newspaper is one of the most respected of them all. No tidings are mentioned in it but those that are true.'<sup>8</sup> This remark about Yard, however, gives him the opportunity to make a kind of inventory of what he considers to be the more important English periodicals: 'Apart from the paper that can be found in the so-called *Officie van Staet* [=Yard's paper], we have in London 4 or 5 private Compositions; among these

7 see also i.47, 76, 99.

8 this was the official paper of the government. For the evaluation of the function of news it is not unimportant to see that the writers of normal newspapers and of the 'creative' papers were often the same people. Thus, a bit later, Steele was the official gazetteer of the *London gazette*, and he took advantage of his position for his news-reports in *The Tatler*. In Holland Weyerman seems to have been on the *Leidsche Courant*. It appears to be a little step from journalist to columnist or essayist.

is the weekly *Collection for improvement*, which was made by Sr. John Houghton [...]: In this collection we find the prices of all the things that concern Commerce and Domestic economy [...] The rate of exchange, curiosities, new editions of books, advertisements and a great many other useful and serviceable things are to be found in it.’<sup>9</sup> He goes on by saying: ‘Every week they also publish the *London Mercury*, which is to the same purpose.’ According to Bond<sup>10</sup> this was a competitor of the *Athenian Mercury* of John Dunton, founded in 1691 by Tom Brown. This *Athenian Mercury* must have represented a very popular type of paper in England, which did not exist in the Low Countries;<sup>11</sup> it gave answers to questions to the editor and in this way its form resembled that of the dialogue. According to Bond the *London Mercury* abandoned this form shortly after its foundation, whereupon the contents came to be more satirical. Perhaps this paper was a model for Doedyns and in that way it may possibly have been a prototype of the Dutch satirical weeklies.

The third periodical Doedyns names is the above-mentioned *Athenian*: ‘Then the *Athenian Mercury*, dealing with matters for scholars (almost the same way as the Haegse Mercurius does); because formerly the staple of Wisdom was in Athens.’ Here the most interesting fact is, of course, that Doedyns compares this paper with his own Mercurius. However, it may well be that the comparison concerns only the *level* of readers and writers. In the *Athenian* namely, the questions were answered by a quasi-Athenian (=wise, intellectual) Society. Doedyns himself often stresses the fact that his paper is written for people with a high level of knowledge and experience, for ‘fine wits’ (i.52; ii.104). But any connection in contents is hard to find; the questions in the *Athenian* had a theological, moral-philosophical, ethnological strain and were also concerned with business-problems and criticism; in Doedyns's paper only a few aspects of this material are brought up, and his starting-points are not questions but news-reports.<sup>12</sup>

9 Doedyns almost certainly refers to the second *Collection of letters for the improvement of husbandry and trade*, started in 1693.

10 *Studies in the early English periodical*, p.39.

11 except in a south Netherland Catholic monthly paper since 1703: *Artz-Broederschap der Christelyke Leringe*, of which I have not been able to trace a copy. It is mentioned by J. Smeyers, ‘De Nederlandse letterkunde in het zuiden’, in: *De Letterkunde in de achttiende eeuw in noord en zuid*, p.439.

12 it is a pity that Doedyns does not complete his enumeration; he only mentions the English reprint of the *Gazette de Paris* by Mead. As we should not exclude inspiration from non-English sources, we may well consider some other places: ii.73 Doedyns says that he will leave it to the reader to compare the Parisian *Mercure galant* by De Visé with his *Haegse Mercurius*. In i.32 he speaks with admiration about the *Mercure savant* and Bayle's *Nouvelles de la république des lettres* - though these papers are quite different in content, they serve him to ‘be a bright North-star to write my Haegse Mercurius’. In ii.34 he deals with the function of the Dutch *Europische Mercurius* as an information paper for the intelligentsia and for politicians; and in ii.8, 32, a *Salomonische courant* comes up for discussion, which is unknown to me.

I find that as early as Doedyns there is a tendency in the direction of the essay. The usual procedure is a divagation on the news. By way of illustration: in the issue of 30 November 1699 a report on a new lord mayor of London gives rise to a series of loose remarks on English weapons, English history, English national character, English women; all this a page long. But, to give another example, three quarters of the issue of 22 January 1699 is devoted to arguments for the existence of a supreme being. This argumentation, by an author who later on clearly appears to be a cartesian and epicurean, would not at all have been out of place in a moral weekly of half a century later.<sup>13</sup>

One<sup>14</sup> of the undisputed followers of Doedyns, possibly Jan van Hoogstraten,<sup>15</sup> also makes use of Doedyns's method in his *Haegse Mercurius van de Jaere 1708 and 1709*: news, then historical and political reflections and censure of vices *in general* (i.1). He also defends, referring to Doedyns, the use of fiction: 'At last, as the times deteriorate, Morality and Romanesque have been interlarded, and this, afterwards, was metamorphosed in public "Nouvellen" by the shrewd H.D.,

13 in view of the composition of the periodicals by Steele and Addison later on, or, earlier, that of the *Athenian Mercury*, I would like to mention the existence of a Hague society in Doedyns's *Mercurius*, though this society was not a formative influence. In i.32 he refers to a college of Hague 'Bentvogels' from 1656, which was composed of members of the magistracy, artists and intelligentsia. In i.53 this 'confrerie' is called the 'societeit la Mercuriale' (!) and a series of subjects and sciences for discussion is enumerated. The popularity of this periodical, which was read as far away as Moscow (ii.40, 77), also appears from a French translation, one Latin and several Dutch imitations; see P.J. Buijnsters, 'Hendrik Doedijns en zijn Haegse Mercurius (1697-1699)', *Levende Talen* (1968), issue 249, pp.396-406.

14 the first imitation is the *Nieuwe oprechte Haegse Mercur* from 1699 by the jurist Cornelis van Bynkershoek, but this paper does not deserve any special attention. The author takes a particular interest in the objectives of periodicals such as his own. He stresses the *lasting* value of the satires of his predecessors Horace, Persius, Juvenal, Lucian, Petronius, Lipsius, Heinsius, Cunaeus (issue 18). 'The glosses and remarks in the *Mercurialia* must be universal and of all kinds, for they are written by all sorts of people' (p.142). Gerrit van Spaan's *Boere Kourier* from 1703-1704 may remain unmentioned, as this periodical gives only continental news in a burlesque way.

15 P.J. Buijnsters, *Hendrik Doedyns*, p.404.

in order to dish up both useful and amusing stories to the inquisitive reader.' He is in favour of a mixture of the romanesque with satirical elements (preface to vol.i). That which is here called 'romanesque' must probably be put on a level with a kind of literature which, in the Dutch language of those days, was called 'verçierd' and which would now be called fiction. This clearly points in the direction of a tendency to use fiction in the Dutch periodical. An independent development? This Mercury also appeared in 1709; and the first issue of the *Tatler* appeared on 14 April 1709. It is very strange that this paper is not mentioned. Strange, because the author, who gives mainly English pieces of information, appears to be well informed about other literary events in England. He informs us, for instance (ii.94), of the detention of the author and the printer of the book *Reise in het Eilandt Atlande*.<sup>15a</sup> In his first issue (7 March 1708) we find the curious warning that we must not expect him to act as a prognosticating quasi-soothsayer. From this we may well conclude that the author (and his readers as well?) knew the ins and outs of what was *the* English hoax of the year: for in that same month Isaac Bickerstaff had for the first time appeared on the literary stage with his pamphlet the *Predictions for the year 1708*, in which the very famous charlatan-astrologer John Partridge was foretold that he would die on 29 March 1708 (in fact it was Swift who was the author of this pamphlet). It caused great pleasure on the London literary scene when on that same 29th the actual death of Partridge was facetiously reported. In our Mercury we find the remark (i.7) that on 27 March 1708 all London was anxiously awaiting the 29th of March: will Partridge die or won't Partridge die? So the author knows of Bickerstaff's first performance. But the second, famous performance, when Steele introduces Bickerstaff as an author of *The Tatler* - for he was a man whose opinions might be well trusted - appears to be unknown to our author. Or else, if he did know about it, he must have seen no reason for comment in the appearance of a paper as *The Tatler*.<sup>16</sup>

15a I have not been able to discover with any certainty the English title of this work. The *Term catalogue* for Easter and Trinity terms 1709 mentions 'secret Memoirs and Manners of Several Persons of Quality of Both Sexes. From the New Atlantis, an Island in the Mediterranean. Written originally in Italian. Printed for J. Morphew, near Stationers Hall, Octavo.' Perhaps this is the work.

16 the *Blygeestige Momus* from 1708 considers itself to be a rival of this Mercury which suggests the pattern of this paper. In the issue of 2 April 1708 Swift's Bickerstaff-pamphlet is spoken of at great length. The *Saturnus* from 1713-1714 (=issues 50 and 53 in Geerars' bibliography, a wrong separation) shows the usual model of news and divagation. No example is given; but an unknown Dutch paper, the *Iris*, comes up for discussion (p.2), and also the *Post boy* (p.27), an English news paper that appears three times a week. This *Post boy* and also the *Flying post* are more than once quoted in Jan van Gysen's *Amsterdamsche Mercuren* (e.g. vii.102; vii.162), which I have not consulted, as for ten years, it gives a very simplified kind of news for the lower classes, all put to rhyme. Any English predecessor or variant is unknown to me. It is noteworthy that Addison's death is mentioned (28 July 1719). Sometimes this Mercury goes beyond a rhyming news-letter; for instance, a whole issue on virtues and vices might well be called an essay turned into verse. And sometimes dialogues from raree-shows are recorded.

From *De Mens ontmaskert*, 1718, it clearly appears for the first time that this paper got its inspiration from England. Already in his first issue the supposed writer, John Duncan,<sup>17</sup> says that two publications have been the contributory causes of his work: the *Spectator* and the *Misanthrope* (the latter is a paper in French by the Dutchman Van Effen). His work is a Dutch imitation, though it is questionable if it will have a similar success, as the Dutch language was thought not to have the same ability ‘for natural fancies and lively expressions’ as had the English and French languages.<sup>18</sup> The author may well wonder; his linguistic creativity is rather poor compared to the usage of all other Dutch papers from the first two decades of the eighteenth century. Therefore his readers repeatedly reproach him for his being far too subdued in tone. The only writer up till now who referred to this periodical,<sup>19</sup> remarked: ‘Even more striking is that in form *De Mens Ontmaskert* represents the spectatorial type rather purely [...] We find character-sketches, familiar from the work of Steele and Addison, letters by feigned and real correspondents, ethical argumentations, fables and satires. Some papers even give samples of literary criticism on the poetry they have published before.’ Indeed, all these forms had already occurred in other Dutch papers; and not just from time to time, but as a rule. Of course, in this case there is no reason to doubt that he was indebted to Steele. As a matter of fact, on the side of the reader we do not find any protest against the strengthened position of the *censor morum*, which now, directly and without starting from news-reports, plunges straight into its moral lessons. What then were the above-mentioned reproaches of the Dutch based on?

A real or feigned discussion in issue 14 sheds some light on this matter. The author has entered a coffee-house to hear reactions to his periodical. One gentleman frankly comments upon it: ‘Has that

17 Buijnsters, ‘Voorlopers’, pp.147-50.

18 repeated p.57. It is noteworthy that Steele formulates the same difficulty for the English language with respect to the French language.

19 see note 17.



man taken leave of his senses, to start such sort of work after the *Spectator* and the *Misanthrope*? [...] If only he had patched up something in the style of Doedyns; that man knew the ropes.' In spite of his knowledge of the *Spectator*, this Dutchman appears to find that Doedyns and *De Mens ontmaskert* differ not so much in content as in style. The author defends himself by saying that after the *Spectator* and the *Misanthrope* it is hard to make something both new and witty. And as in direct discussion with the first *Haegse Mercurius*, he goes on to say:

I admit that the Mercuries by Doedyns, and some of those by his Imitator, are well written; but it is not my purpose to please you in the same manner and to gain credit in the world. Apart from the fact that we differ totally in our choice of subject-matter, there is also a rather important difference between my character and that of this bantering writer. Doedyn's language would be of little effect on a man, who, after he has seen all there is in the world,<sup>20</sup> so much so that he has grown tired of it, has withdrawn from its wildest bustle; if I must try to amuse, my work is also meant to teach [...]: and how queerly would I acquit myself of my duties in these matters if I conformed to Doedyns's way of writing; doesn't it appear from this that those who make use of such a language have never read the *Spectator* and the *Misanthrope*; otherwise, how could they say that I, as I have to some extent chosen these two excellent works as my examples, should have imitated Doedyns in style and content?

Our only conclusion after the defence of this rather priggish schoolmaster can be that *the reader* could very well appreciate writing like that of *The Spectator*, but that he compared its spirit to the moral lessons that were presented to him in the form of railleries in writings such as those by Doedyns. Imposing and longwinded imitations of Steele, unadorned moral lessons, were not appreciated. He seems not to have been aware of any more fundamental differences between Doedyns and Steele.

The *Amsterdamsche Argus* (May 1718 - August 1722), by Hermanus Van den Burg, which must have been very successful, as appears from its long life,<sup>21</sup> imitated the style of Doedyns: a news-report which gave rise to a mixture of comment and information, written in a rather burlesque way. And indeed, this obligation to Doedyns is affirmed in the first issue, when 'Argus' explains that formerly he had attended

20 this not quite correct observation may be due to the author's position as a censor, as an older 'spectator'.

21 the text after 1721 has not been consulted.

the lectures of Pythagoras, and that whenever there was a growing deterioration of morals, Pythagoras, making use of metempsychosis, hid him in the body of an important moralist. So he found himself back in Lucretius, Horace, Juvenal, Descartes (!), Corneille, Boileau, Racine, Molière (the materials of his soul must have been very elastic in those days) and... Doedyns.

The fact that these Frenchmen are mentioned is an indication that in Van den Burg's opinion there was no fundamental difference between their position as moral reformers and his. I presume that a difference in form, meaning or intonation between his paper and the ones by Steele and Addison wouldn't strike him either. He was, indeed, well informed about the English culture. Pieces of information such as the death of Newton (i, issue 11) or of Matthew Prior (iv.154) would certainly not escape his notice. But he paid special attention to Addison and Steele. As for Addison, for instance, the Dutch reader is informed about his virtues and vices (ii.58) and his moonstruck mind (iv.350). But Steele has to stand even rougher usage. He is more than once discussed in jest, e.g. at the death of his wife (i.259), his position as a theatre manager (iv.13), and his invention for the transport of fresh fish, which Van den Burg regards as antiquarian. Van den Burg continually uses puns on concepts such as speaking and tattling - which is done, of course, on account of Steele's *The Tatler*, which, though, he does not mention by name. 'Richard Steele, the distinguished Richard the Silent, has set up a theatre' (ii.283; cfr. ii.259, 381, 410). His knowledge of the existence of *The Spectator* also appears: '[we hear] the instructive saws of a speaking Mute, who, according to the principles and rules of *The Spectator* never spoke, except by signs' (iii.4; cfr. ii.310).

We may conclude that if the structure of Van den Burg's periodical does not clearly differ from Doedyns's paper - though there is a tendency in favour of separate issues on special subjects and stories (e.g. iv, issue 40) - it will be clear that this is not due to unfamiliarity with the English 'spectators'. However, it is hard to discover if their achievements gave rise to the wish to imitate them, or even if their existence generated a feeling of 'otherness'. Perhaps Van den Burg (and the Dutch contemporary?) did not mind whether he had to do with Juvenal, Molière himself or Steele - if only the general angle of incidence were maintained. Perhaps the Dutchman was too much ingrained in his own tradition of burlesque satire, in his own weeklies; and, implicitly, this

is the same reaction as we heard from the readers of *De Mens ontmaskert*: the somewhat different composition, the more serious tone are not necessary - the burlesque embroidery of persons and situations will do to point out the criticism and morals.<sup>22</sup>

It is a pity that Willem van Ranouw, the author of the *Examinator* (August 1718 - September 1720)<sup>23</sup> (unfortunately not a very well-known paper) does not give any positive information on contemporary sources of inspiration. But already in his first issue, he dissociates himself from that tradition which feels that satire can indeed influence the morals of the time. In their days neither Aristophanes, nor Diogenes, Juvenal, Persius or Martialis had succeeded in this respect. 'Sneering, taunting, chiding are impotent medicines for sick, languishing Virtue' (p.3). All the same, education and teaching are useful, that is to say: 'peering closely into the bowels of everything, often resuming and always dredging up the undefiled truth'. The best examples in this matter are Pyrrhon and Sextus Empiricus.

The fact that these sceptics and empiricists from antiquity are mentioned prepares us for what this particular author will tell us about morality, which will mainly be: an inquiry into the method and possibility of gathering knowledge. In this periodical virtue and morality are in the first place epistemological problems. It is not until they are solved that we may meet with sound judgements with practical consequences for social life. What is different from other Dutch papers up till then (with a few exceptions) is that in the *Examinator* the dissertations do not start from practical situations. True, sketches and 'moral cases' of persons and situations are inserted. Many issues of part two are about charlatans. But then we have to do with a special type of falsifiers; namely people who, by their charlatanish attitude towards truth, hinder others in their search for truth. As such we have the

22 possibly, in his heart of hearts Van den Burg remained too much of a news-critic. He comments upon wrongly or untimely reported news in English papers: the *London journal* (iii, pp.272, 386; iv, p.63) and Nathaniel Mist's *Weekly journal* (iii, p.36; iv, pp.42, 190) often do not get off without criticism. Evidently these papers should not be regarded as his examples. The Dutch journalists are also criticised because of their inexactitude and foolish style (i, issue 12; i, p.133, 295, 368; ii, pp.190, 252, 376; iii, pp.7, 30, 71-72, 98, 342; iv, pp.27, 30-31, 40, 204). Unfortunately other papers mentioned by Van den Burg cannot be traced, such as the *Fabrikeur in brieven* (ii, p.416) and the *Philosophische Mercurius* (i, issue 8). The *Examinator*, clearly a moral type of paper (see the text) was not appreciated by him (ii, p.416; iii, p.36, 115) and Van Effen's *La Bagatelle* in French is also sneered at (i, p.365).

23 see also Buijnsters, 'Voorlopers', pp.150-54.

*charlatan savant*; the *charlatan bibliothécaire*; the *charlatan des langues*; the *charlatan disputax*. They are people who work on their subjects with untested suppositions, so that they prevent others from making unprejudiced inquiries into truth. In fact this whole periodical is a classic example of the method of thinking of empirical philosophy. For me it is hard to say to what extent this is (in detail) a consequence of English empirical influences. It is clear that to Van Ranouw French philosophy is objectionable; he frequently speaks with contempt about cartesian philosophy. It is certain that he takes the state of science in England as his standard. Whenever he praises, he praises the English (except the Dutchman Geulincx, i, p.125). They have, whether they are concerned with poetical or scientific problems, the most advanced judgements (mentioned, among others, are Trapp, Harvey, R. Hoke, Gilbert, Nehemias Grew, Thomas Hyde), and again and again *De intellectu humano* by the 'shrewd Englishman John Locke' is quoted from (e.g. i.63, 118; iii.391; iv.466, 469). We are only warned of Hobbes (iii.7, 54) because of his atheism, and the English habit of simply copying their fellow-countrymen, never paying attention to discoveries on the continent, is not appreciated either (i.418). In short, in its composition, the Royal Society is in Van Ranouw's opinion the Olympus.

There is one other element in this non-satirical, un-mercurial paper that can possibly be of English origin. For the composition of his augmentations Van Ranouw avails himself of the same frame-work as *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* do. His protagonist, the Examiner, is a participant in and a reporter of discussions in various companies or societies. Thus, in i, issue 2, he finds himself in a 'starling-room' of authors and politicians; and in i, issue 9, in a society of poets in Amsterdam. This method is used with a special purpose; in issue 1 we read: 'In the various *assemblées* of these dilettantes and also during my uninterrupted travelling, which is my craft, I shall peek everywhere, and then, in my spare hours, in a way designed to give some vent to my thoughts, I shall, on the Monday of every week, truly inform my reader of all the things I have heard or may have made up by myself.' The most distinguished company in whose circle he finds himself is the 'Society of Combined Discord', whose members (with juridical, theological, medical and philosophic backgrounds) have committed themselves to solve every problem about which they would for reasons of principle disagree in daily life, *not* by disputing, but 'only by empiric investigation and proof of truth'. In this society a great number of the

conversations occur. It falls apart after some disagreement (ii.460), but even before that time a 'private College' had been founded out of its own members, by the Examiner, Prudentius, Sapienius and Fictor Umbraticus (ii.436). This society had kept almost the same possibilities for its various discussions, because of the various ways of thought of its members.

This procedure: the possibility of shedding light on a given subject or character from different angles, while by means of the single narrator the context is not lost sight of, is mainly known from Steele's periodicals. But we cannot even prove that this form is actually copied from them; we can only defend the plausibility of such a supposition by considering Van Ranouw's preoccupation with the English culture.<sup>24</sup>

While Van den Burg's *Argus* was still being published, and almost immediately after Van Ranouw's *Examinator* had ceased, a type of periodical began to appear, which in style and framework was to pay little attention to the two kinds of papers we have mentioned. This was the *Rotterdamse Hermes* (September 1720 - September 1721), by Jakob Campo Weyerman; it is the first of a series of weeklies which he continued to write well into the thirties. After having read all previous papers, we find that this is an author who, in creative linguistic usage, leaves even Doedyns far behind. In this paper the reader is carried along by an abundance of playful forms, together with an extremely baroque, but, curiously enough, accurate and efficient imagery, via a staggering jumble of stories, dreams, letters, dissertations, allegories, opinions and sallies. All previous or still existing papers have no time to enter into competition; they are simply pushed aside.<sup>25</sup> 'It will not do to imitate the *Examinator* in seriousness or the *Argus* in diversions.'

24 nowhere does Van Ranouw mention the only other un-mercurial periodical *De Mens ontmaskert*, though it began to appear as early as 1718. But he scornfully refers to the *Boekzaal* (a review-paper): it contains useless knowledge (i.235). He also speaks with contempt about those people in Amsterdam who flock together from curiosity in order to get an explanation of the 'weeklykze Nouvelles' - an indication concerning the habit of both readers and writers to suspect and to hide peculiarities of private persons of a more general nature.

25 not successful were 'the *Authors* of the Rotterdamschen SATURNUS, den Mensch ontmaskert, Fabriek in Brieven, Schuitpraatje, Reizenden Momus and the like; but Hermes was not at all disturbed by the ill success of his predecessors' (p.[6]). For information on this author, see C.M. Geerars, 'Jacob Campo Weyerman (1677-1747)', *Annalen van het Thymgenootschap* 45 (1957), pp.294-311; C.M. Geerars, 'De vrijdenkerij in de journalistieke werken van Jacob Campo Weyerman', *Tijdschrift voor de studie van de Verlichting* 3 (1975) pp.17-63; Jacob Campo Weyerman, *Den Vrolyke Tuchtheer* (1729, nos 1-20), part II commentary by A.J. Hanou (Amsterdam 1977).

Unfortunately, the *Hermes* has no preface or introductory dissertation in which Weyerman's view of his periodical is explained. But in the very first issue, right from the first line onwards, he is in discussion with Van den Burg's *Argus*; in a few metaphorical sentences, which, if quoted here, would take up too much space, this paper is reproached for being far too predictable and always staying below the mark.<sup>26</sup>

From this discussion with a quasi-rival, the *Argus*, which we have characterised as a follower of Doedyns's *Haegse Mercurius*, we might think that after all the *Hermes* is therefore also a Mercury, though after its own fashion: richer and more versatile.<sup>27</sup> However, in this paper and also in the next, Weyerman makes a far more extensive and creative use of all those literary forms that are usually attributed to the spectator-genre, just as Van Effen will use them later on, in imitation of Steele's periodicals. As for Van Effen, we saw that he is generally regarded as the one who definitely introduced the spectator-genre into Holland. Only Buijnsters (who in his paper on Van Effen's predecessors does not deal with Weyerman) still ends his paper on the *Haegse Mercurius* by Doedyns with the words: '[Doedyns] was only excelled by one who came to be a congenial spirit, Jacob Campo Weyerman, who knew how to combine the lively, witty style of Doedyns with the ability of the spectators to confine himself to one subject.'<sup>28</sup> This is certainly true; but it gives rise to the question whether in the case of Weyerman we have to do with an independent development; or does he write under English influence as we saw done by the authors of *De Mens ontmaskert* and, later on, by Van Effen? In this respect the *Hermes* itself gives no clue. In general it rejects not only the *Argus*, but also other papers by predecessors and contemporaries (e.g. pp.240, 278). This is done not so much on theoretical grounds, but because they are found to be too superficial, somnolent or unintelligent. On account of some passages we may conclude that Weyerman tries to aim at universality, general validity and to preach a moral lesson that goes beyond a warning deterrent.<sup>29</sup> There are also passages in which he seems to refer

26 it was said to deal as regularly as the seasons with: women, actionists, religion, and divagations on news-reports. As an extra some insipid and frantic jingles were added.

27 from other observations by Weyerman, we know that he started this periodical on account of a reproach that he couldn't even make anything better than the *Argus* and that therefore he should keep his criticism to himself.

28 Buijnsters, 'Hendrik Doedyns', p.404.

29 according to him his fellow-writers didn't get beyond 'kourant-bouffonnerieën', that is: exhilarated reporting of incidental occurrences (p.141); but a *Censor* (nota bene: also the title of a moralising English periodical from 1715 by Theobald), a moral reformer should be the most important instrument for the preservation of a free nation, by means of his *fabricated* truths all the better in attacking the abuse of his time. But Weyerman mockingly adds that actually he himself has no more traits of the character of a censor than there are chances that a man could really become king at a ballot on Twelfth Night. Elsewhere, however (pp.291-92), he also upholds to his readers that his observations have moral validity for *all* groups of readers (after which he facetiously says that at least his readers have already one quality in common: a general, unquenchable thirst for scandal).

to Isaac Bickerstaff's lucubrations (pp.89, 233). And then, the name of this know-all, *Hermes* - though in mythology on a par with Mercury, the informant of *incidents* - is here not meant to be taken only in the sense of mercurial, but also of universal: this Hermes identifies himself with Hermes Trismegistus, the one who knows all secrets, who sees through past and future. In his general management Weyerman seems to concur with Steele's and Addison's point of view (at this stage we shall offer no opinion on the question of actual influence). But on the other hand this paper twice mentions Doedyns's name. According to one of his tirades, *Argus* is no match for Antonides in rhyme, Hooft in prose, or Doedyns in frolicsome fancies (p.183). The mere fact that in Weyerman's train of thought Doedyns is comparable with a highlight in Dutch literature like Hooft, sets one thinking. Somewhere else the unfortunately deceased 'winsome Doedyns' towers above the author of the *Argus*. This seems to be an indication that Weyerman feels himself to be on a level with Doedyns, without any obligation to others.

But may we conclude that Weyerman is totally unacquainted with Steele's works? Or even, we may ask, is he in general familiar with English literature? Familiarity can certainly be shown. To take only the *Hermes*, we find quoted or casually mentioned: Owen [p.62], Buchanan [p.78], Bacon (pp.81, 412), Thomas More (p.85), Locke (p.101), Milton (p.101), Harvey (pp.124, 148), Sydenham (p.124), Jonston (pp.124, 374), Hobbes (p.143), Toland (pp.178, 371), indirectly Defoe (pp.204, 414), Ed. Waller (p.224), Swift (p.238), Ben Jonson (p.365), and Boyle (p.412). A very rich crop. This can well be explained by the fact that we know that as a painter Weyerman stayed in England several times between 1710 and 1720, that according to his own words he studied medicine in Oxford,<sup>30</sup> and was friends with Matthew Prior<sup>31</sup> and

30 J.C. Weyerman, *Levens-beschryvingen der Nederlandsche konst-schilders en konstschilderessen* (The Hague, Dordrecht 1729-1769), iv.416-31, 435-36.

31 J.C. Weyerman, *Maandelyksche 't Zamenspraaken, tusschen de Dooden en de Leevenden* (Amsterdam 1726), p.159. A meeting between Steele and Weyerman may well have taken place, as Steele was garrisoned at Breda, Jacob's main residence until about 1705.

the famous doctor Woodward (pp.64, 203). This whole situation explains the passage in the *Hermes* (pp.50, 53) that he feels himself to be half English - though we also know that his mother was English. Entire issues on the character of the English are clearly based on experience (issues 13 to 19).

Therefore it is more remarkable that in the *Hermes* Steele's periodicals are never mentioned, though he does mention those by Mist and Applebee (pp.73, 331, 232). Wouldn't it be incredible that a writer who stayed in England in the very years when *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* had their greatest impact should have been unacquainted with these works? As they are not mentioned in the *Hermes*, it is in this case legitimate to have a look at Weyerman's later periodicals. And indeed, in his next paper, the *Amsterdamsche Hermes*, Steele is brought up. This is done in a passage (issue of 16 June 1722, part I) in which those sports and arts in which a man can excel, together with their coryphaei, are discussed. If someone wishes to practise the art of writing, it would be best, according to Weyerman, if he wrote loveletters like monsieur Le Pays, criticised like Boileau, made tragedies like Addison (whose *Cato* is mentioned) or made *Spectators* like Steele did. In his second part he talks of Steele, who paints the scenery of the war during Marlborough's generalship (20 March 1723). In his *Ontleeder* of 30 July 1729 Weyerman sneers at a poetaster, who boasted 'to be a more creditable Author than the Knight Steele, and that Jan van Gysen [a poetaster at a weekly] had more wit than the Dissector of Defects [=Weyerman]'. In some respects Steele and Weyerman are here put on the same level, namely in the field of 'wit'. In his *Echo des Weerelds* of 1726 Weyerman also speaks with disapproval of the Dutch translation of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* (pp.392, 400). That he is acquainted with Steele appears sufficiently from these places. Whether he imitates anybody or not, does not come up for discussion.

Because of this silence, it is appropriate to have a look at a reaction by Weyerman to the *Hollandsche Spectator* by Van Effen, who in the historiography of Dutch literature is the first one reputed to be a hundred-per-cent follower of Steele. By implication we may anticipate an appraisal of Weyerman's own periodicals in comparison. In one of his later papers, the *Adelaar* of 1735, Weyerman reacts to the contemporary *Hollandsche Spectator* in a florid passage full of invective (pp.49-50), which I should not keep from the reader (29 March 1735; cf. also the issue of 11 April):



I suppose that the *Hollandsche Spectator* has discovered that secret [namely how to be popular both with dull and intelligent readers], as all its issues are adapted to the understanding of those who read letter-by-letter. I specially mention the weekly paper of the *Hollandsche Spektator*, a weekly reportedly propped up by a foursome of writers, quill-pushing heroes, who bend their knees, after the fashion of Asiatic camels, or as mules, weighed down by that depressing weekly load, for the single purpose of meeting the needs (and tastes) of these ‘men of letters’ among its readers. The other day I asked the superintendent of my beard, which vulgar people call a ‘hairgrater’ or beard-shaver, a man who was reputed to be an even greater tattler [!] than the *Echo* [=W.], why he was for ever stuttering over the weekly paper of the *Hollandsche Spektator*, without ever condescending to practise his art of spelling on the issues of the *Adelaar*? It is because the weekly paper of the *Adelaar* is as obscure as the book of miracles of David Joris, answered the tattling barber, as the paper of the *Hollandsche Spektator* is as transparent as a flake of ice from Street Davis.

The beardshaver was right in these words, but I consider the intelligibility of the *Hollandsche Spektator* of the same value as the intelligible dialogue of a couple of Harlem weavers, a pair, who, sitting in the corner by the hearth, kill the length of their Sunday nights by means of speeches and tales, on the same level as is the style of the *Hollandsche Spektator*. Ah me, doughty *Spektator*, tell us what use, what diversion there is in a weekly paper made intelligible for all, when its way of writing and subject-matter descend in such a heavy and dull way on the understanding of its readers that it is as if a piece of mouldered lead, abducted by a gale from a tower, falls plumply down before the clogs of a village sexton in a muddy graveyard? Every writer ought to be an accurate counterfeit painter of Nature; a man also skilful in counterfeiting the charms of that good mother with the artist’s brush or a masterly pen [...]. [It is also in the field of painting that bad artists are sometimes more inspired than for instance Rembrandt.] If all art-lovers and all inquiring minds were connoisseurs, how would the Friday-market pictures of Antwerp trash-painters or the weekly papers of the *Hollandschen Spektator* be disposed of?

In short, just as Want teaches a lively tone to the flea-market beggars in order to persuade passers-by to give an alms, so myopic Ignorance lends an intelligible style to the *Hollandschen Spektator*, so that even the lowest townsman and the cheapest artisan will not be without precepts and tales suited to their poor mental grasp.

In short, Weyerman appreciates Steele, but he doesn't like his follower. And his objections are not of a genealogical kind. There is no indication whatsoever that he regards a ‘spectator’ or moral weekly in itself as something of a different nature from his own periodical. The objections

are rather of a stylistic nature. Van Effen's achievements are too petty-bourgeois in his mind: they have no level, are too poor, have no intelligence, are too easily intelligible and do not show any 'wit'.

Also in his *Adelaar*, in the first issue, he formulates some demands that should be made upon a weekly. It would carry us too far to deal with all of them. However, they never refer to content, but to style and level. One observation is remarkable, namely that it is not always possible to attain the same level as Hooft, Huygens, Vondel: 'now and then, among the lilies some thorns of Mercuries, Hermeses, Arguses and Examinators may grow' (p.4). So he doesn't make any essential distinction between weeklies of the mercurial and those of the spectatorial type. It is not by accident that a little further on, we find the names of Boccalini and... Doedyns.

Essentially, we still cannot deduce anything about positive influences on the part of Steele on Weyerman. If, after further investigation, such influence would appear to have existed, Weyerman would be found to have caught up Van Effen's position. If there is no such influence, we must speak of an independent Dutch development, which avails itself of all those possibilities that have also been developed in England, though a little later. From this second thesis the great appreciation Weyerman feels for Doedyns could be explained. It is hard to avoid the impression<sup>32</sup> that he regards Doedyns as his predecessor. Unfortunately it would lead me too far to analyse all Weyerman's remarks on Doedyns; this would lead to an analysis on similarities and differences between two Dutch authors, and not to a discussion on imitations of the English (or possible imitations) in the Dutch periodical press.<sup>33</sup>

What, for the time being, may we conclude after this quick inventory?

It is not clear to what extent Doedyns in his *Haegse Mercurius* was influenced by English examples.

After Doedyns an independent Dutch tradition comes into being.

32 see for instance Weyerman's *Ontleeder der gebreeken*, ii, pp.141, 209, 353.

33 for the rest I would like to mention only those English writers occurring in the preface of Weyerman's second periodical, the *Amsterdamsche Hermes*, where he enumerates his predecessors in the field of satire. The works of Oldham, Rochester, Buckingham and Prior, and *The Tale of a tub* are appreciated by him, but for lack of space he cannot discuss them. In his preface he calls several of the periodicals discussed here insignificant, for instance the *Argus* and *De Mens ontmaskert*. Contemporaries would sometimes mention Steele and Weyerman in one and the same breath, see for instance *De Ontleeder der gebreeken ontleed* (Utrecht 1738), p.[5<sup>v</sup>].

This tradition is first of all inspired by Doedyns; later on the authors of the various weeklies imitate both him and each other. This mutual imitation is not caused by unacquaintance with English counterparts or with English literature in general. The moment of the appearance of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, which is often regarded as being crucial for the development of periodicals is for most authors no reason to change their direction. This is, among other things, because Dutch writer saw little or no difference between the achievements of the English and their own results. Weyerman seems to be a clear example in this respect. This does *not* mean that Weyerman never imitated certain forms, but this would require further investigation. Whenever authors consciously imitate Steele (*De Mens ontmaskert*; the *Hollandsche Spectator*) they lay themselves open to criticism, which mainly arises from the habitation to an independently formed Dutch tradition.

In Holland we distinguish at present between satirical and spectatorial weeklies. It would, however, be necessary to conduct an investigation to find out on what grounds this distinction should be made in the first half of the eighteenth century.