

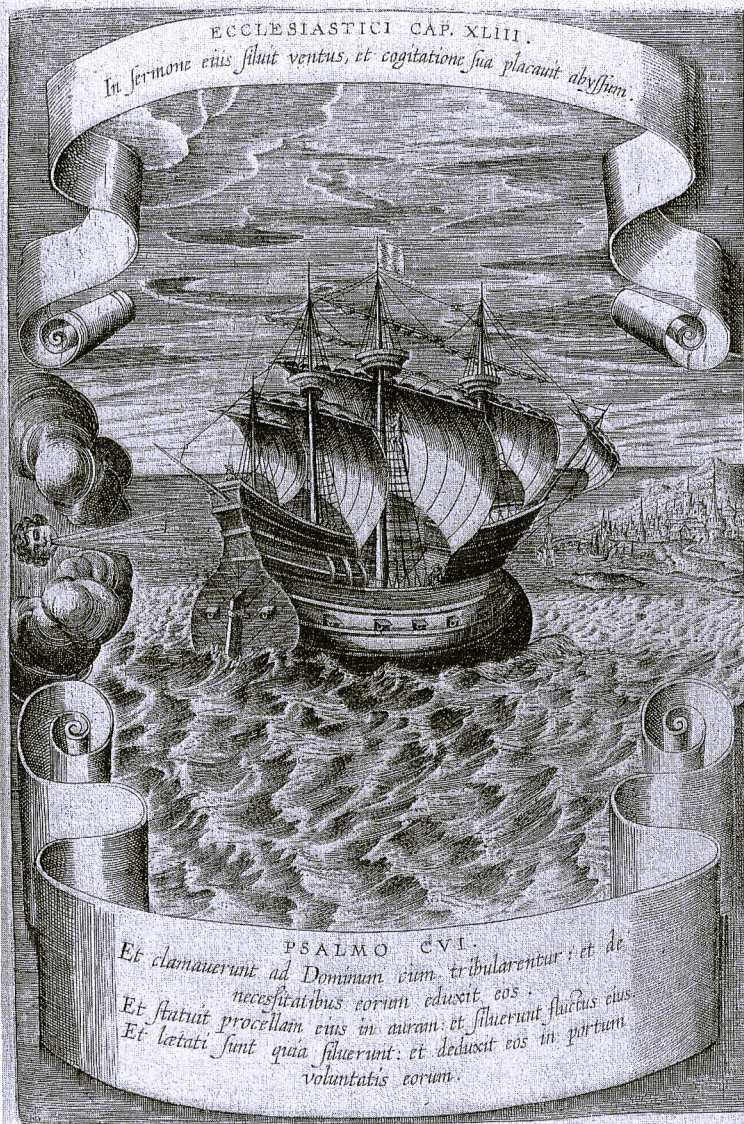
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PRINCIPIS RADZIVILI.

221

ECCLESIASTICI CAP. XLIII.

*In sermone eius sicut ventus, et cogitatione sua placavit abyssum.*



PSALMO CVI.  
*Et clamauerunt ad Dominum cum tribularentur: et de  
 necessitatibus eorum eduxit eos.  
 Et statuit procellam eius in auram: et siliuerunt fluctus eius.  
 Et letati sunt quia siliuerunt: et deduxit eos in portum  
 voluntatis eorum.*

Ee 3

## *Across the Narrow Seas*

Studies in the history and bibliography  
of Britain and the Low Countries

Presented to Anna E C Simoni

*Edited by Susan Roach*

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## Foreword

Anna Simoni's contacts with the Low Countries go back more than 50 years; her involvement in Dutch studies came almost 20 years later and started – like so many important personal moves in life – by accident. Anna joined the British Museum library in 1950 as an Assistant Keeper second class. Having come to grips with Panizzi's cataloguing rules, she compiled (with Dennis E. Rhodes) two volumes of additions to Halkett and Laing's *Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous English Literature* (1956, 1962) and took her early steps on the road of a lifetime's devotion to Dutch literary and bibliographical studies by reading the proofs of the *Short-Title Catalogue of Books printed in the Netherlands and Belgium... 1470 to 1600, now in the British Museum* (1965). As she had some knowledge of Dutch and of Holland – acquired during a brief visit to Scheveningen in 1938 – she was made responsible for the library's Dutch collections, their acquisitions and cataloguing. It would not be unfair to say that she was thrown in at the deep end, but she swam, and mastered her new element with a thoroughness and an enthusiasm that have remained her chief characteristics over the following decades. Both were based on her insatiable curiosity, her need to know and her determination to find out. This determination led her to explore obscure and seemingly unlikely sources; it also led her to find, make and keep a host of devoted helpers and friends, in the Netherlands, in Flanders and in Britain. Her inquisitiveness, her ever-widening knowledge, and – above all – her boundless generosity attracted other scholars in her field, whether already established or young and untried, who relied on her help and who shared their own knowledge with her. She never failed to encourage scholarly talent in those around her and her enthusiasm was an inspiration to many of her colleagues in the British Library and elsewhere.

Though she had studied in Turin, Genoa and Glasgow, where she obtained a degree in classics, she was largely self-taught in Dutch bibliography. This makes her achievements the more remarkable. In the British Library she has left three monuments behind: the collection of Dutch clandestine material with her catalogue *Publish and be free* (1975), her massive *Catalogue of Books from the Low Countries 1601-1621 in the British Library* (1990) and, perhaps most important of all for generations of scholars to come, the British Library's holdings of Dutch material which she built up from a relatively modest collection to arguably the best outside the Netherlands. She made many friends in the process, several of whom have contributed to this *Festschrift*: an act of respect, appreciation and love to Anna on her 75th birthday.

MIRJAM M. FOOT  
Director, Collections & Preservation  
British Library

Bert van Selm

*Bewitched by books: Anna Simoni*



Every large library with a great history seems to inexperienced visitors like a maze in which, without expert help, they can waste a lot of time. How fortunate I was that when I first visited the British Library on 6 September 1976 Anna Simoni was there to be my guide to one of the largest and most fascinating collections of older Dutch imprints outside the Low Countries. Neither before nor since in any other library have I received such a warm and friendly welcome as on that day in the imposing building in Great Russell Street. Not only did she give me a concise survey of the possibilities for finding systematically the collection of 17th-century imprints from the Dutch Republic, she also immediately invited me to a tasty lunch. Both these acts are highly typical of Anna as a helpful curator and an engaging personality. Both before and after me she has welcomed and advised young scholars from the Low Countries. Through her good offices the old and rare Dutch works in London no longer remain unread in the stacks. On the contrary, because of her these sources have been used increasingly in cultural and historical research in the Low Countries and abroad.

Anna Simoni's publications also perform a bridging role: to open up and publicise the collections of *Neerlandica* in the British Library. Who knew before 1975 that the BL possessed such an extensive collection of clandestine books that appeared in the Netherlands during the occupation of 1940-45? Those who know her life-history will understand why Anna felt attracted to these often modest little books. Even if the literary, intellectual or aesthetic worth of these works is not very great, their emotional value can scarcely be overestimated. It was these books that gave comfort to people in difficult circumstances; they gave a feeling of freedom and fellowship in a time of crude violence and barbaric oppression, they bolstered hope for a better future. If ever a prize is given for the catalogue with the best title, then *Publish and be free* must be a candidate. This work contains much more than just formal bibliographical descriptions; the plentiful information about authors, designers, printers and publishers does full justice to the importance that illegally and clandestinely printed books had and have, namely as shining examples of spiritual freedom stretching into the distant future.

Few people will feel called upon in middle age to begin a new, large-scale project: to describe and make accessible 17th-century books from the Low Countries. The courage and energy with which Anna embarked upon her self-appointed task commands admiration. These books in particular pose countless questions which take a long time to answer. In any event a comprehensive knowledge of Dutch bibliography, literature and art-history is a primary requisite. Numerous works appeared anonymously or pseudonymously. Anna's aim was to

*specialist journals, but above all in her magnum opus, the Catalogue of Books from the Low Countries 1601–1621 in the British Library, she reported on her findings, for example the discovery of the original work on which the Dutch translation is based.*

*Many modern managers of research libraries just cannot understand why the description of older books takes so much time and trouble. Often they have no idea at all of the problems which confront the scholar. For it isn't sufficient to establish who is the author and who the translator; we also need to find out where, when and by whom a work was printed and published. For the 17th century certainly there is very little bibliographical apparatus available to unmask the numerous fictitious addresses or to ascribe the many anonymous works to a particular workplace. Anna has rightly seen it as one of the curator's tasks to solve bibliographical puzzles as far as possible. In so doing she has acted as a true ambassador of the Dutch book. Because of the relatively small linguistic area of Dutch, awareness abroad of Dutch book-history has been very limited. With her publications, reviews and countless translations from Dutch into English, Anna has made an unparalleled contribution to a greater knowledge of the bibliographical research that is carried out in the Low Countries.*

*Anna always knows how to formulate the right questions in a clear way and she calls on her many Belgian and Dutch friends when she can't find the answer herself. Few others have as much insight into the skill and care with which older books were made, and she is fully alive to the great culturo-historical value of the sources which surround her daily. This deeply-rooted awareness is apparent not only in her many publications, but above all in conversation with colleagues and visitors at the British Library.*

*With this volume Anna Simoni's friends in Britain and the Low Countries have the opportunity to thank her for the great work which she has done in the service of the Dutch book. But I hope even more that this volume speaks her language: a language of warm humanity and friendship.*

(Translated by Susan Roach)

## *Editor's Introduction*

*Across the Narrow Seas* (a phrase borrowed from Lotte Hellinga's essay) could be the title of an account of Anna Simoni's own journeys back and forth between the Low Countries and Britain. Since the time she passed through the Netherlands on her way to the safety of Britain just before the outbreak of the Second World War she has crossed the North Sea and the Channel on numerous occasions, to visit libraries, to call on booksellers and, always, to maintain the personal and professional friendships to which she has committed herself so enthusiastically.

I first approached friends and colleagues of Anna in 1988 with my ideas for a volume of essays to celebrate her 75th birthday in 1991. The contributors were asked to suggest essays dealing with relations between Britain and the Low Countries in the earlier centuries which have so fascinated Anna. I had in mind a broad range of approaches: literary, bibliographical, cultural, political and art-historical. The resulting volume has elements of all these approaches and also covers a wide time-span, from the dawn of printing to the end of the Napoleonic Wars.

The title has taken on two shades of meaning, on the one hand indicating a fixed position on one side of the water, and on the other denoting movement to and fro. The first meaning is reflected in the essays on Low Countries topics of special interest to Anna: freedom of the press in Leiden; Flemish engravings accompanying Neo-Latin poems; the printer Henrick van Hastens, and the binding of a volume published by Theodorus Crajenschot. The second meaning comes out in a number of different ways. The English travel to the Low Countries, either in person or in the form of their (translated) writings; Dutchmen come to London and visit the British Museum, celebrate the coronation of James I or, in the most famous example, take the crown from James II! One essay traces the origin and subsequent travels of a Dutch word. Books roam freely and come to rest in libraries in Ireland, Germany and London. Printers, artists and mapmakers influence each other without apparently finding the intervening waters a barrier to communication.

The geographical area of the Low Countries dealt with here is essentially that of the modern Netherlands and Belgium but includes French towns like Douai and Saint-Omer which have in the past belonged to Flanders. It would have been a very tricky exercise to standardise throughout these essays the use of the various adjectives, Belgian, Dutch, Flemish, Netherlandic, in view of the complex history and changing status of the territories in question. I think that meanings will be clear in what each contributor has chosen for his or her essay.

In the Europe of the 1990s and the next century the destinies of Britain and the Low Countries are set to become more and more intimately connected, but what I hope this volume shows is that we have been linked by ties of friendship and mutual influence for many centuries.

It has been a great privilege and pleasure to work with the contributors to this volume. I am grateful to them all for their co-operation and support. I would like especially to

Library, Dennis Rhodes and David Way, and in the home camp, Anna's husband, Bill Harvey, who has undertaken photography under false pretences and had to commit all sorts of minor perjury to keep the project a secret.

SUSAN ROACH  
9 July 1991

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### List of Contributors

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