Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

Craig Harline. *Pamphlets, Printing and political Culture in the Early Dutch Republic*. International Archives of the History of Ideas 116. Doordrecht, Boston, Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987. Pp. xiv, 309.

The last quarter-century has seen considerable research attention devoted to the impact the invention of printing had on the political, social and cultural history of Europe in the early modern period. Professor Harline's monograph is a useful addition to this literature, with a narrow focus on three specific features: geographical locus, time frame and type of printed material. It examines the printing and distribution of pamphlets (*libelli*, little blue books, pasquils) between 1565 and 1650 in what its author calls "that most curious early modern state, the Dutch Republic" (p. ix).

Harline's aim is to investigate the purposes and consequences of pamphleteering in the first century of the Dutch Republic, as well as the prevalence, practitioners (i.e. authors, printers and distributors) and readership of this print medium, and to assess the attitude and response of political and ecclesiastical authorities to the very widespread phenomenon. A mass of this pamphlet material exists in libraries in the Netherlands and Belgium: Harline suggests there are as many as 10,000 titles from the 1565–1650 period, scattered through three major and several minor extant pamphlet collections. He has worked on the largest of these, some 4,700 individual titles at the Royal Library in The Hague, employing a simple methodology to yield statistical data. The contents of 500 randomly chosen titles are organized into a 'random sample', and 'best-selling titles', defined as items in the random sample that had "at least four printings in the single Dutch-audience language before 1649" (p. 236).

The text of *Pamphlets* is essentially a commentary on the large and somewhat unwieldy mass of material as it has been organized to provide empirical data. The data base is the 'random sample', and the data themselves are classified and presented in twenty-six *Tables* printed intermittently throughout the text. The *Tables* offer in statistical form virtually everything anyone might want to know about early Dutch printed pamphlets: v. g. the number of pamphlets printed annually for the period under study (*Table 1*); the number of known booksellers and printers, by quarter-century from pre-1551 to 1651, by way of Dutch province and urban

community (*Table 10*); the intended audience divided into five broad and somewhat idiosyncratic categories, two of which are 'No One Specified' and 'The reader' (*Table 2*); general subject of pamphlet contents (*Table 4*) and major themes (*Table 5*); use of historical, biblical and classical examples by both period of publication (*Table 6*) and occupation of author (*Table 7*), etc. The cardpunching, data tabulation and statistical formulation, replete with probability factors and contingency coefficients, has all been completed, and the results recorded.

With perhaps one exception noted below, Harline's conclusions are generally unstartling, and arguably the same ones that might have been reached by a more intuitive, less formally scientific methodology. Pamphlets printed and distributed in the period under examination were overwhelmingly concerned with current political and/or religious subjects; many were direct responses to earlier pamphlets; a significant number of the authors and printers were anonymous, despite legal requirements that both be identified; the relatively high literacy rate among the Dutch population combined with low production costs and prospects for high profits to stimulate the explosion of Dutch pamphlets in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries; the fluid and developing situation in both politics and religion, and the interaction between them, was another major factor.

Harline's most significant conclusion may induce some revision in standard historical accounts of the development of political independence in Holland, and in Reformation history generally. He shows clearly that vigorous and largescale publication and dissemination of dissenting and conflicting political and religious points of view took place in the early Dutch Republic. But he establishes equally solidly that this phenomenon did not reflect 'enlightened' attitudes or policies on the part of either political or religious leaders of the period. Neither of these groups had any particular sympathy for the values of free speech and publication. In fact, they did what they could to control and eliminate 'libellous' views, and their failure here was not for want of trying. Official attitudes and policies were the conventional ones of other European ruling authorities: the simple minds of ordinary folk ought not to be aroused by anything but approved publications. According to Harline, and surely he is right here, widespread dissemination by way of pamphlets of critical political and religious dissent in the early Dutch Republic reflected the very limited ability of the overall authorities to exercise much control over many disparate communities and interest groups, each of which was sensitive about its own prerogatives and unenthusiastic about implementing anything but the most compelling demands from an outside authority.

The national authorities were well aware of their inability to control the output of the many printing presses in the country. This explains in part why they were not loathe to use the same presses to publish 'official' views in the same medium they failed to regulate. Harline comments wryly that other European governments of the

day must have noticed the apparent incongruity of the Dutch authorities subscribing in practice to the view that the pen is mightier than the sword.

This monograph is a worthwhile addition to the distinguished international Archives of the History of Ideas, and to the collection of specialized titles in early modern European history. The fact that its cost (\$78 US) reflects the continuing inability or unwillingness of European academic publishers to control prices, however, probably means that many more copies will find their way onto library shelves than into personal collections.

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Registres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs de Genève, tome IX, 1604–1606, publiés sous la direction des Archives d'Etat de Genève par Matteo Campagnolo, Micheline Louis-Courvoisier et Gabriella Cahier, Genève, Droz 1989, xxx, Pp. 369.

Après le compte rendu détaillé du volume VIII on peut se permettre de présenter plus brièvement le volume IX. Celui-ci a été traité, comme d'habitude, aussi consciencieusement que les volumes précédents. Il comprend comme sujet central le texte des Registres et comme annexe plus de 100 documents supplémentaires. C'est une vraie joie de prendre ce livre et d'approfondir la thématique des années 1604–1606, ce qui n'est pas évident d'une édition de sources qui n'annoncerait pas, par sa nature, une lecture captivante!

Le période agitée de l'Escalade était terminée; il s'en suivait des années plutôt calmes pour Genève. On ne s'étonne donc pas de constater qu'à ce moment, plus souvent que par le passé, des problèmes internes prirent plus d'importance. Parmi eux, ce furent avant tout des conflits de domination entre la Compagnie et le Conseil, par exemple lors de l'enterrement du réformateur Théodore de Bèze (1605), lorsque la Compagnie, pour motif que chacun naissait égal et que cela restait ainsi jusqu'à sa mort, voulut l'enterrer comme tout autre citoyen au cimetière, tandis que les Messieurs imposèrent que le corps de cet illustre habitant de la ville fût déposé au cloître de la cathédrale pour son ultime repos. Dans un autre cas, par contre, la Compagnie eut la dessus. Pour combler une place vacante de pasteur, le Conseil décida d'engager deux professeurs qui n'étaient, toutefois, pas très enthousiasmés par ce surplus de travail, et la Compagnie proposa un homme de leur rang, avec succès cette fois. La controverse la plus grave eut lieu lors de l'élection du président ("semainier") de la Compagnie. Par un arrêt arbitraire le Conseil revendiqua le droit de désigner à l'avenir un "semainier" parmi les trois candidats proposés, donc de se mêler des questions religieuses; la Compagnie détesta évidemment ce décret, d'une part pour des raisons de forme: le Conseil n'avait pas le droit de prendre seul