

NETHERLANDISH ART AND LUXURY GOODS  
IN RENAISSANCE SPAIN



# NETHERLANDISH ART AND LUXURY GOODS IN RENAISSANCE SPAIN

*Studies in honor of Professor Jan Karel Steppe (1918-2009)*

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# Table of Contents

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Introduction .....	3
DAAN VAN HEESCH, ROBRECHT JANSSEN AND JAN VAN DER STOCK	
‘Le chanoine rouge’: Tribute to an Inspired and Inspiring Master .....	5
PAUL VANDENBROECK	
‘As yche othere brothere’: The Human Factor within the Hispano-Flemish World .....	13
RAYMOND FAGEL	
Made in Iberia: A New Look at the Retable of Contador Saldaña in Santa Clara de Tordesillas .....	27
NICOLA JENNINGS	
Flemish Carved Altarpieces in Spain: Reflections on their Patronage and the Relationship between Flemish and Spanish Artistic Traditions .....	45
JESÚS MUÑOZ PETRALANDA, MAITE BARRIO OLANO AND ION BERASAIN SALVARREDI	
Jean Mone, Barcelona, and the Origins of the ‘Netherlandish’ Antique Manner .....	63
ETHAN MATT KAVALER	
Flemish, Spanish, or Somewhere in Between? On a Netherlandish Anonymous Draughtsman of the 1530s and his Inventions. ....	77
KRISTA DE JONGE	
Trading with the Enemy: The Spanish Market for Antwerp Prints and Paintings during the Revolt .	93
STEPHANIE PORRAS	
The Plantin Book Trade and the Supply of Art Objects to the Spanish Elite .....	107
DIRK IMHOF	
The Duke of Alba’s Tapestry Acquisitions in the Low Countries (c. 1555–73) .....	123
IAIN BUCHANAN	
Historical Substance and Acquired Meaning of Rogier van der Weyden’s <i>Deposition of Christ</i> at the Court of Philip II .....	133
ANTONIA PUTZGER	

Flemish Mathematical Instruments as Luxury Goods of Knowledge and their Migration to San Lorenzo de El Escorial . . . . .	147
KOENRAAD VAN CLEEMPOEL	
The Guevaras as Collectors of Netherlandish Art at the Spanish Court. . . . .	165
ELENA VÁZQUEZ DUEÑAS	
Gender, Representation and Power: Female Patronage of Netherlandish Art in Renaissance Spain . .	181
NOELIA GARCÍA PÉREZ	
The Dukes of Medina Sidonia and Netherlandish Art: On the Artistic Patronage of a Sixteenth-Century Iberian Court. . . . .	201
EDUARDO LAMAS-DELGADO	
‘Tan universal aplauso’: Communal Praise in Seventeenth-Century Madrid . . . . .	219
ABIGAIL D. NEWMAN	
Archives . . . . .	233
Bibliography . . . . .	237
Notes on the Contributors . . . . .	281
Index of Names and Places . . . . .	285

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# ‘As yche othere brothere’: The Human Factor within the Hispano-Flemish World

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RAYMOND FAGEL

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## ‘As yche othere brothere’

The *Libelle of Englishe polycye* is a poem about the English trade written between 1436 and 1438.<sup>1</sup> And although several suggestions have been raised, there is no definitive proof as to its authorship. Already in the beginning of the poem, the anonymous author exclaims: ‘For Spayne and Flaundres is as yche othere brothere, / And nethere may well lyve wythowghten othere.’ We find ourselves a few years after the diplomatic mission of Jan van Eyck (c. 1380–1441) to Portugal and Spain in 1428–29. As a result, princess Isabel of Portugal would travel to the Low Countries in 1430 as the new bride of duke Philip the Good. The visit of Van Eyck to the Iberian Peninsula is considered the beginning of direct Spanish contact with the new Netherlandish art. In 1431, the Spanish painter Luis Dalmau (active 1428–61) would return the visit, and around that time we can also find artists from the Low Countries in Barcelona and Valencia, such as Luis Alimbroot (c. 1410–60) of Bruges. So we can safely say that the origins of the Hispano-Flemish world,<sup>2</sup> defined as a shared cultural space between Spain and the Low Countries, really started off somewhere in the thirties and forties of the fifteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Using the term Hispano-Flemish, *Hispanoflamenco*, in such a broad manner, has its complications, as it

has originally been used exclusively to describe art made in Spain by Spanish artists influenced by the art of the Low Countries. Art historians tend to avoid the term more and more, because it does not do justice to autonomous developments within Spanish art.<sup>4</sup>

Contacts between Spain and the Low Countries were based on a mixture of politics and trade, but in the beginning the commercial element was clearly dominant. Or, as Jan Karel Steppe stated in his wonderful and very complete essay for the 1985 Europalia exhibition on Spain: ‘De muze volgde de koopwaar’ – ‘the muses followed the merchandise.’<sup>5</sup> The English poet of the *Polycye* was not interested in cultural contacts or in cultural products: ‘Wheche Spaynes marchandy / Is into Flaundres shyped full craftylye / Unto Bruges as to here staple fayre’. The poem explains that both Flanders and Spain need to have peace with England in order to maintain this beneficiary relationship, but it clearly describes the bilateral trade dependency between Spain and Flanders.

And whenne these seyde marchauntz discharged be  
Of marchaundy in Flaundres neere the see,  
Than they be charged agayn wyth marchaundy  
That to Flaundres longeth full rychelye,

1. Libelle 1926; Scattergood 2001.

2. Fagel 1996.

3. Simonson Fuchs 1977, pp. 6–7, 95; Yarza Luaces 2002; Bermejo 2003, pp. 100–01; Kasl 2014, pp. 2–3.

4. Didier 2001, pp. 115–20; Silva Maroto 1993; Silva Maroto 2002, pp. 143–44; Kasl 2014, p. 173.

5. Steppe 1985b, p. 247.

Fyne clothe of Ippe, that named is better  
than oures,  
Cloothe of Curtryke, fyne cloothe of all  
colours,  
Moche fustyane and also lynen cloothe.

From the Spanish side, we also find a long list of products:

Bene fygues, raysyns, wyne, bastarde and  
dates,  
And lycorys, Syvyle oyle and also grayne,  
Whyte Castell sope and wax is not in vayne,  
Iren, wolle, wadmole, gotefel, kydefel also,  
(For poyntmakers full nedefull be the ij.)  
Saffron, quiksilver; wheche Spaynes march-  
andy [...]

## People on the move

This trade between Spain and the Low Countries not only created a flux of products going hence and forth, but also a movement of people that went with the flow: sailors and merchants of course, but also artisans of all sorts, following the demands of the market.<sup>6</sup> The artisans often started their international career at a very young age. Shoemaker Juan (Hans) de Amberes, 'beardless, of medium height and slightly overweight and red', told his life story to the inquisition, in Spanish.<sup>7</sup> He had left the house of his father, an Antwerp shoemaker, when he was sixteen years old, to go to work at a shoemaker's in Cambrai. Afterwards he also worked for some time in Orléans, until he finally decided to go to Spain, where he spent six weeks with a shoemaker in Laredo on the north coast,

and then four months with shoemaker Juan de Malinas in Burgos. He continued his career with shoemaker Roque in Toledo and with a Spanish master. At the time the Inquisition got to him, he worked for several courtiers, for Juan de Lieja and for another master from the Low Countries called Abel. He could read, but had forgotten how to write. He said he spoke Dutch and French, and 'un poco castellano'. He had wanted to leave Toledo because of the high prices, but he and two other young shoemakers from the Low Countries had no money for the journey.<sup>8</sup>

Mari-Tere Álvarez shows us another side of the Spanish labor market when debating the situation during the reign of the Catholic Kings – Spain as the land of golden opportunities:

Beneficial financial incentives and legislation [...] stimulated the immigration of foreign merchants to Spain. In Castile [...] merchants were able to live for ten years within the kingdom without paying taxes [...]. Artisans, artists and art dealers from the north arrived in large numbers to establish themselves in Spain. In the Low Countries, they had been straitjacketed by a myriad of rules, taxes, dues, and regulations imposed by the government, and the artists' guilds. [...] Artists in Spain were not subject to oppressive guild rules, did not have to pay for citizen's rights, and were not required to pay dues. [...] Artists could move their merchandise to Spain without being taxed. There were no import duties between towns that held fairs.<sup>9</sup>

However, how could art have flourished in the Low Countries if the social and economic

6. Fagel 2003; Fagel 2006; Thomas, Stols 2000, p. 52. See also: Thomas, Stols 1995; Martens, Peeters 2002; Kasl 2014, pp. 7–97.

7. 'sin barbas, mediano de cuerpo, algo gordo y roxo'. Fagel 1996, pp. 258–59.

8. Thomas, Stols 2000, p. 52, state that those who found work in Spain were well off, but those that could not find a good job lived in misery, also because of the rising prices, and ultimately returned home to the Low Countries.

9. Álvarez 1998; Álvarez 2003, pp. 48–52, 179.



conditions for artists were that poor? Following Filip Vermeulen, this negative qualification might in a minor way relate to the Bruges’ art market,<sup>10</sup> but certainly not to the expanding art market of Antwerp. In the period between 1490 and 1519, the guild of St Luke of Antwerp received 212 new masters and 179 new apprentices.<sup>11</sup> But Spanish cities were booming as well. Around 1500 there were some 23 cities in the Low Countries with more than 10,000 inhabitants, against some 20 in Spain. Fifty years later we find 24 in the Low Countries but 27 in Spain. The population was growing, prices were rising, and new opportunities, like America, opened up new possibilities.<sup>12</sup>

Marina Belozerskaya stated in 2002 that according to her ‘fifteenth-century Europeans perceived the Burgundian dukes and the arts emanating from their domains as cultural leaders of the day’.<sup>13</sup> Others focus more on the specific character of artists from the Low Countries: ‘early modern Netherlanders, in particular painters, sculptors and goldsmiths, tended to be more mobile than their colleagues from other European countries’.<sup>14</sup> In both visions, Spain is seen as just one of the countries in which the culture of the Low Countries was well received, and as just one of the countries that welcomed many artists, thus limiting the importance of any special ties between Spain and the Low Countries.<sup>15</sup> Why did people from the Low Countries go to work in Spain? Crisis at home, or opportunities abroad? Most probably, the answer consists of a mixture of both push and pull factors.<sup>16</sup> And, as with all emigrants

throughout history, some would succeed, and others would fail. Another interesting point Álvarez accentuates concerns the routes. Isabel of Castile created a whole system of places with markets and fairs along the pilgrimage routes.<sup>17</sup> This concerns not only the well-known larger fairs of Medina del Campo,<sup>18</sup> Medina de Rioseco<sup>19</sup> and Villalón, but also many other smaller places, such as Villafranca del Bierzo, where we can find many merchants from the Low Countries, and elsewhere. Alongside these routes we can find colonies of immigrants from the north.<sup>20</sup>

## The examples of Burgos and Antwerp

We shall continue looking at the emigrants from the Low Countries in Spain using the example of Burgos, a very well-known Castilian city and art treasure, being both a commercial center and a main city on the road to Santiago. The tax lists of 1561 contain at least some ten people from the Low Countries, varying from shoemakers and a tanner, to a needle maker and woodworkers (*entalladores*), to weavers and a cloth-shearer. Within one single volume of notarial deeds from 1553,<sup>21</sup> we find the deceased image maker (*imagero*) Cornelio de Amberes and his widow Magdalena López de Valpuesta, but also Vernal Martínez who despite his name is a maker of coats of mail from the Low Countries, Juan Flamenco, a shoemaker and citizen of Burgos, widower of Isabel de Avellanosa, and yet another citizen, Juan de

10. Martens 1998, p. 26.

11. Vermeulen 2003, pp. 15–19, 163–65; Martens, Peeters 2006.

12. Fagel 1996, p. 450.

13. Belozerskaya 2002, p. 3.

14. Scholten, Woodall 2013, p. 9.

15. North, Ormrod 1998, p. 3, clearly see Spain and Italy as the main markets for Flemish art.

16. Scholten, Woodall 2013, pp. 12, 17. For recent studies

on the art market in the Low Countries in the late sixteenth and seventeenth century, see the special issue of *De Zeventiende eeuw*, 31 (2015), ‘Art on the Move’.

17. Fernández Pardo 1999.

18. Fernández del Hoyo 1995, pp. 365–66.

19. Redondo Cantera 1999, pp. 837–42. This article contains the inventory of the goods of a merchant from the Low Countries in Medina de Rioseco (1519).

20. Álvarez 2003, pp. 83, 143, 171.

21. AHPB, Registros notariales, Asensio de la Torre, 1553.

Flandes, a tailor. Burgos was of course also the destination of the famous Antwerp sculptor Gil de Siloe and the stained-glass artist Arnao de Flandes. Both men married local women and their offspring afterwards played an important role in the development of Renaissance art in Spain. One son of Arnao decided to work under the same name as his father, but his brothers used their mothers' name and are known to us as Arnao and Nicolas de Vergara.<sup>22</sup>

A very special object related to Burgos is a painting hanging in Burgos cathedral. The painting, studied among others by Mireille Madou, dates from the late fifteenth century and shows a scene with two patron saints, Christ, and two contemporary figures. In between one of these last two we see a band with a text in black gothic letters: 'Here kneels Cornelis van Aken, living in Burgos in Spain as testamentary of Anthonis Valke.'<sup>23</sup> It is easy to give more examples of people from the Low Countries in Burgos, such as the hat maker (*bonetero*) Andrés Flamenco, also a citizen of the city around the same time as the arrival of Gil de Siloe.<sup>24</sup> The last example concerns the presence of a nameless sculptor (*tailleur d'images*) from Saint-Omer who lived in Burgos with his wife and family. Courtier and chronicler Laurent Vital met him when the court passed through Llanes (Asturias) in 1517, while this artist was working on the high altar of the church. The Basilica de Santa María del Conceyu of Llanes indeed possesses a *plateresque* altar of wooden sculpture and painting, dated around 1517, but the name of the artist is not totally clear. Most probably, Laurent Vital had been talking to the sculptor and painter León Picardo (d. 1547).<sup>25</sup> The emigrant artist was very happy to meet people

from his home country: 'God keep you, gentlemen! From your words, I heard that you are not natives of Castile but that you are from the Low Countries.'<sup>26</sup> He wanted to talk to them, and hear all the news from back home. It must have been a long and pleasant conversation between Vital and the sculptor, because in his travel account Vital offers us a very long story that the artist told him on the perils of the sea, including a love story between a man and a mermaid.<sup>27</sup> There might be a connection with the fact that until today there is a house in Llanes called the house of the mermaids, *la casa de las sirenas*.

The example of Burgos shows us four elements that were very important regarding the presence of these men in Spain: they became citizens, married local women, and worked within a wide array of trades, but mostly in several clear specialties, some of them in what we today would consider the fine arts, but others as mere artisans, such as tailors and shoemakers. And they moved around a lot, working in many places, the craft masters as well as young apprentices like Juan de Amberes. The same image holds true for most Spanish cities in the sixteenth century. When working on artists in Spain, we should keep in mind this larger picture of migrating artisans. Steppe already stated that we should not forget that many art products were in fact objects of practical use.<sup>28</sup> I would like to suggest that the proven presence of artists from the Low Countries in a certain city, as a result of the persistent archival work of art historians, may be used as an indication of the presence of 'other' types of Flemish artisans in these same cities as well.

Research on Seville by José Gestoso y Pérez around 1900 shows that more professions can be

22. Fagel 1996, p. 245.

23. 'Hier knielt cornelis van aken, wonend te bourgos in spanyen als testamentaris van anthonis valke'. Madou 2006b, pp. 215–17.

24. Fagel 1996, pp. 242–45.

25. Enciclopedia Museo del Prado 2016.

26. 'Dieu garde, messieurs! A voz devises bien oy que n'estes point natifz de Castille, mais de nostre quartier de par delà'. Vital 1881, p. 105.

27. Vital 1881, pp. 105–11.

28. Steppe 1985b, p. 247.

revealed from the notarial records when a slightly broader definition of art is being used. Besides sculptors, such as Roque Balduque (d. 1561), glass makers like Arnao de Flandes (d. 1557), and painters such as Pedro de Campaña (1503–80) of Brussels and Hernando de Esturmio (active 1537–c. 1557)<sup>29</sup> of Zierikzee, we find professions like gunner, jeweler, printer, clockmaker, locksmith, silversmith, gunmaker, and a maker of playing cards.<sup>30</sup> From other sources we know that there also lived more humble artisans from the Low Countries, such as hosier (maker of stockings) Domingo who had been put in prison because of his debts. It was cardinal Adrian of Utrecht (1459–1523) himself, at the time governor of Castile, who urged that his compatriot be freed: ‘because he is a person I love very much for his nature, goodness and honesty, and besides he is being confronted with many diseases and suffers from poverty and misery [...] And he has children without the means to support them and he finds himself in a strange land and with no friends.’<sup>31</sup>

The wording seems to indicate a very personal relationship between the governor and the prisoner. Did Adrian know this man from his childhood years in Utrecht, or from his many years as a student and a scholar at the University of Leuven? Who knows?

How does the situation in Burgos compare with a city like Antwerp? Using information on the attainment of citizenship in Antwerp by Spaniards between 1489 and 1555, we can clearly find, as was to be expected, a dominant group of long-distance traders, but also silversmiths, makers of stockings, tailors and a shoemaker. For

example, Antonio de Segura was a silversmith and citizen of Antwerp married to a local woman. Tailor Sancho de Anuncibay of Bilbao had a shop in Antwerp that was kept open by his locally hired servant while he was away on business in Spain. Bernardin Maroufle of Spain promised to learn his trade to somebody from the Low Countries without hiding anything of ‘his trade and art of working with sugar confitures, candied fruits and other confitures.’<sup>32</sup> He would also teach him on ‘preparing gold and silver and applying it for things like buttons, chains, ropes, and other fine works.’<sup>33</sup> This jack-of-all-trades would even pass on his knowledge on perfumes and anything else he knew.<sup>34</sup>

I am emphasizing the presence of Spanish artisans in the Low Countries in order to state that we should take care not limiting ourselves to successively studying artisans from the Low Countries in Spain, and Spanish merchants in the Low Countries. There may have been more Spanish merchants in the Low Countries than there were merchants the other way around, but this is a quantitative difference, not a qualitative one. And it may even be in part the result of different sources and different historiographical traditions. The merchants from the Low Countries tended to travel through the vast Spanish lands alone or in small groups, like Eustache de la Fosse in the late fifteenth century,<sup>35</sup> while the Spanish merchants in the Low Countries often organized themselves in nations in the trade centers of the concise Scheldt statuary. You can think of the famous Castilian nation of Bruges, but also of the short-lived Andalusian nation in Middelburg.<sup>36</sup> The difference in size must have influenced the

29. Serrera 1983.

30. Fagel 1996, pp. 271–74.

31. ‘porque el es persona que por naturaleza e bondad e onestidad yo le amo mucho y a mas desto le veo afrontado y afligido de muchas enfermedades y constituido en mucha pobreza y miseria [...] y tiene hijos sin tener con que les mantener y puesto en tierra estraña y sin amigos.’ Fagel 2001, p. 34; Fagel 2003, p. 328.

32. ‘son metier et artifice a ouvrier de confitures du sucre,

conserves succades et aultres confectures.’ SAA, Not. W. Stryt, 1535, fol. 71<sup>r</sup>.

33. ‘a tirer l’or et l’argent et le mectre en ouvrage comme de faire boutons, chaines, passemens, et aultres gentilleses.’ SAA, Not. W. Stryt, 1535, fol. 87<sup>v</sup>.

34. Fagel 1996, pp. 120–21.

35. Fagel 1995; Fagel 2003, pp. 325–26.

36. Fagel 2015.

way immigration took place. Courtier Sancho Cota described this as follows:<sup>37</sup>

In two days you can cross  
this country of Flanders  
because here they are small,  
his territories  
There are populated cities,  
so very beautiful,  
but it is not like Castile,  
where it takes you twenty days<sup>38</sup>

The individual merchant hardly leaves a trace in the sources, like the two merchants from Utrecht who were procuring material for glass windows as residents of Burgos as early as the 1420s,<sup>39</sup> while the Castilian institution of Bruges left a whole archive to the historians. On the other hand, a relatively small city such as Medina del Campo has preserved more notarial records for the reign of Charles V than the Antwerp metropolis.<sup>40</sup> Of the Antwerp notaries that were specialized in Spanish clients, Pieter van Lare and Anton van Male, we do not even have a single register left for this period.<sup>41</sup>

Using the documentation of the temporary export duties to Iberia in 1553, Vermeylen has shown that this part of the Antwerp art market was in the hands of mostly Germans, Spaniards and Italians, and that not that many merchants originating from the Low Countries were active in this trade.<sup>42</sup> This makes the presence of these Spanish merchants very important for the cultural transfer between these regions. Of course, these merchants also donated works of art to the churches of their place of origin, such as García de Salamanca in the

church of San Lesmes (*Retablo de la Santa Cruz*) in Burgos or the López Gallo family in the church of San Juan in Castrojeriz (*Retablo de los Gallo*).<sup>43</sup>

The number of Spanish merchants in Antwerp is difficult to quantify. A much-used document from 1560 lists 60 married and 38 unmarried Spaniards. At the beginning of the century, the city registers mention 171 Spaniards between 1488 and 1514, but most of them are only registered during one specific year. Only 39 showed up before the city clerks in the span of more than one year. In general, about ten Spaniards a year used these official city documents, with half of them part of this more residential group. Using the few notarial registers preserved for the reign of Charles V, we can find some 250 Spaniards in the city for the period 1535–40. And these registers are not even from the notaries I believe were most important for the Spanish merchants. Many of them must have been visiting the city only for a short period, and cannot be considered residents. The Aragonese merchant Pedro de Casanova declared in 1540 that his large house in Antwerp was often used by visiting merchants, sometimes twenty at a time. Some stayed for more than one year, while others visited it ‘more than a hundred and a hundred times.’<sup>44</sup>

## Finding artisans from the Low Countries in Spain

Just like the famous painter Juan de Flandes (active 1496–d. 1519), favorite of queen Isabel of

37. Fagel 1996, p. 442.

38. ‘El camino es de dos días  
por este pays de Flandes  
porque acá no son muy grandes  
auquestas sus señorías  
son de villas bien pobladas  
hermosas a maravilla  
pero no es como Castilla  
donde ay veynte jornadas’.

39. Kasl 2014, pp. 19, 173.

40. Fagel 1997, p. 233; Igual Luis 2004, pp. 135–38, 148–49.

41. Oosterbosch 1992, vol. 1, p. 224, and vol. 4, nr. 1088; Fagel 1996, pp. 100–06.

42. Vermeylen 2003, pp. 98, 156.

43. Martens, Peeters 2002, pp. 165–66; Yarza Luaces 2003a, pp. 109–10; Casado Alonso 2005, pp. 155–59; Negro Cobo et al. 2010.

44. ‘meer dan honderd en honderd maal’. Fagel 2002b, pp. 95–98.

Castile, we know most artists and artisans from the Low Countries only by these toponyms that the Spanish archives are full of. In the earliest sources, this court painter is also referred to as Juan Flamenco.<sup>45</sup> Art historians of Galicia have stated that they presume there were three different sculptors with the name of Cornieles de Holanda active during the same period. These artists also moved around a great deal, from one city or village to the next.<sup>46</sup> They seem to have been able to obtain without too much difficulty the citizenship of these places during their stay. We find Francisco de Amberes, painter, first as a citizen of Palencia and soon afterwards as a citizen of Madrid.<sup>47</sup> These difficulties make it almost impossible to reconstruct the history of these artists and artisans. A current debate takes place on the biography of the sculptor Antonio de Malinas. Are we always dealing here with the same person, or are there two sculptors using the same name?<sup>48</sup> In 1561 we find Nicolas van Haorlem, an assembler (*ensamblador*), and as the source states: 'a natural of the city of Holland, that lies in Flanders, and at present in this city of La Guardia'.<sup>49</sup> Juan Bautista de Holanda, a young merchant working in Medina del Campo around 1566, was found to be from the village of Grave, close to Nijmegen, and as such he did not actually come from the county of Holland. His surname in its Dutch original was 'Van Hollant', so in this particular case the toponym was in fact an actual name.<sup>50</sup>

In 1488, Rodrigo de la Corte tried to prove his noble status (*hidalguía*) to the royal court of justice (*Chancillería*) of Valladolid. Among the witnesses he produced to plea for his case were Ber Amante, son of Juan Ferador, Lanberte, Enrique,

Gutiere de Bulduy, son of Arnao Ober, and Juan de Bulduy, son of Arnao Ber. They were all citizens (*vecinos*) of Valladolid. The documents prove that all his witnesses came from the village of Son, surrounding villages and the nearby city of 's-Hertogenbosch. The surname of Rodrigo was almost certainly 'Van Hof', translated into Spanish as 'De la Corte'.<sup>51</sup> So translating a surname into Castilian was another option for immigrants from the Low Countries, an option that makes them very hard to find for modern researchers, unless the documents are there to prove otherwise. Another example is the 1570 account of merchants in Seville who wanted to export precious metal, recently studied by Javier Vela Santamaria. For this historian from Valladolid, Corneyles Adrijansen was easy to register under the *flamencos*, but Justo de Busto, Juan Dagula, and Miguel de Molina could only be put on the same list because the documents mention their origin from the Low Countries.<sup>52</sup>

## The attraction of the court

In his 1985 essay, Steppe stated that the flow of art from the Low Countries to Spain followed three paths.<sup>53</sup> The first, international trade between these countries, has already been discussed. Steppe's second path consists of the dynastic relations. While those with Portugal already started under the Burgundian dukes, the dynastic involvement with the Spanish crowns clearly started much later, with the 1486 embassy of Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca to the Low Countries, where the subject of marriages between Habsburg and Trastámara princes was first raised. In 1488, a Burgundian

45. Vandevivere 1985; Weniger 2010, p. 31; Weniger 2011.

46. Fagel 1996, pp. 251–52.

47. Fagel 1996, p. 257.

48. Pereda 2004, pp. 139–57; Lahoz 2013, p. 185.

49. 'natural de la villa de Holanda, que es en Flandes, estante

al presente en esta villa de La Guardia'. Enciso Viana 1981, p. 256.

50. Fagel 1997, pp. 251–52.

51. Fagel 1996, pp. 229–33; Fagel 2003, pp. 330–31.

52. Stols 1992, p. 26; Vela Santamaria 2013–14.

53. Steppe 1985b, p. 247.



embassy came to Valladolid under leadership of Boudewijn of Burgundy, a natural son of the late duke Philip the Good. The cultural influence of these diplomatic contacts was immediate. The embassy of 1488 was received in Valladolid with feasts and tournaments, but they also received gifts to take home. Although the sources do not mention it, the ambassadors must surely have brought presents with them from the Low Countries. Still during their stay in Spain, Boudewijn married the Spanish noble woman Marina Manuel, who took with her a large bridal gift from queen Isabel of Castile.<sup>54</sup> Spanish ambassador Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca (1451–1524) would later on become bishop of Palencia and in this capacity he commissioned a large quantity of paintings for the central altarpiece of the cathedral to Juan de Flandes. Fonseca also brought with him another altarpiece from his embassy to the Low Countries in 1505, made by Jan Joest van Calcar (c. 1499–after 1545), and he is also responsible for the early sixteenth century tapestry preserved in Palencia. Ignace Vandevivere speaks of the ‘outspoken preference for Flemish art’ of this ambassador.<sup>55</sup>

The travels of the princely courts, starting with the arrival in Flanders of Joan of Castile and her court in 1496, made that large groups of people travelled from one country to another, causing a large increase in cultural influences within this Hispano-Flemish world.<sup>56</sup> For one, there were the artists, and other artisans of course, as members of the princely households, such as Juan de Flandes under Isabel of Castile,<sup>57</sup> Jacob van Lathem<sup>58</sup> of Ghent under Philip the Fair, Jan Cornelisz. Vermeyen<sup>59</sup> of Beverwijk under

Charles V, and Anthonis Mor<sup>60</sup> of Utrecht under Philip II.<sup>61</sup> During the reign of Philip II, the court would become much more sedentary, travelling mostly around Madrid, and artisans from the Low Countries could be found working on the palaces and gardens of the king.<sup>62</sup>

I have been mentioning as many people as possible originating from the present-day Netherlands – where they tend to forget this part of their history and start their modern history directly with the Dutch Revolt. Provinces like Holland and Zeeland, but also Guelders, North Brabant and even Frisia, all belonged to the Hispano-Flemish world of the sixteenth century that stretched from Amsterdam to Antwerp and Arras. However, I want to stress that the work of contemporary researchers from Belgium is also sometimes characterized by the same flaw. For most of the sixteenth century no such region as the Southern Netherlands existed, and nor did the Northern Netherlands. Of course, even a broader perspective still does not do justice to the flexible cultural borders between the Low Countries and the surrounding Holy Roman Empire and the Kingdom of France.<sup>63</sup>

Besides painters, we should also think of tapestry officers and their collections that made up an important element of the Burgundian court on its travels in order to furnish the large and cold rooms of its temporary residences. Pieter van Aelst (c. 1450–after 1531), ‘tapissier’ of Philip the Fair, combined his work for the court in Spain with his own private enterprise. Even after the death of the young king of Castile, Pieter remained for two more years in Spain with his assistant, while most other courtiers from the north had hurried home

54. Fagel 1996, pp. 294–95.

55. Vandevivere 1985, pp. 12–13; Sagarra Gamero 2005.

56. Fagel 2011a.

57. Brans 1952; Yarza Luaces 1992, pp. 133–50; Weniger 2011.

58. Zalama, Domínguez Casas 1995, pp. 347–58.

59. Horn 1989.

60. Woodall 2007; Van Wamel 2014, pp. 49–60.

61. Brans 1959.

62. Steppe 1985b, p. 269. On artists from the Low Countries during the reign of Philip II see also: García López 1999, pp. 156–62.

63. Recently, art history in Flanders and the Netherlands is being studied in a more integrated way, for example within the program ‘Art history of the Low Countries in its European Context’ at Utrecht University. De Clippel, Vermeylen 2015, p. 6.

as quick as they could, fearing a violent reaction from the Spaniards.<sup>64</sup> There is also the essential part played by court musicians in the cultural transfer between Spain and the Low Countries.<sup>65</sup> And we should not forget the gold and silver-smiths that travelled with the court.<sup>66</sup>

However, another special effect was also created by the presence of a princely court. It attracted people from all territories of the prince, and even people from further away, and the style of the court and its protagonists influenced the cultural taste of anybody who came in contact with it. The court served as a showcase for new and different cultural expressions, of course with clothing in the first place. The word ‘fashion’ springs to mind, or as John Hale stated when referring to this period: ‘foreign costume was a matter of absorbing interest’.<sup>67</sup> We see this especially well through the professional eyes of the already mentioned Laurent Vital, who has left us detailed descriptions of clothing during Charles V’s voyage to Spain in 1517, as he was one of the two *garde robes* of the young prince.<sup>68</sup> According to Vital, the prince never dressed in a Spanish fashion and when in Spain he even asked for new textiles from the Low Countries in order to have new clothes made. By then, the court had already started dressing up in an Italian fashion. A decade earlier, under Philip the Fair, the Spanish nobility was already influenced by the fashion of the Burgundians. Nobleman Antoine de Lalaing tells us the story of the young duke of Medinaceli who at the age of seventeen had to be helped by two servants because of a disease of his legs, presumably caused by wearing the pointy shoes of Burgundian fashion. But Philip the Fair was more

open to Spanish clothing than his son and successor, as he also wore Spanish costumes at formal occasions.<sup>69</sup>

Spanish merchant Gregorio de Ayala, who had organized the production of black cloth in the city of Haarlem, received a subsidy from the city government for every piece of cloth exported out of the country. The idea was that this would enhance the fame of Haarlem cloth abroad, especially in Spain, Portugal and Naples. When Haarlem mayor Frans de Witte, coincidentally also the father in law of Gregorio, had to defend this policy to the members of the council, he stated that these cloths had been sent to the court of Charles V and used by the nobility for their wardrobe. When Charles V had gone to Italy, the new Haarlem cloth had become famous there as well, even as far as Naples and Rome. As the cloth made by Gregorio was not enough to satisfy the growing demand, now other producers from Haarlem could profit from its fame. And now that Charles had gone to the Holy Roman Empire, Frans de Witte expected that the same development would occur over there.<sup>70</sup> It is unclear if this development can be related to the growing use of black at the court of Philip II later on, and on the influence this Spanish fashion would have on clothing in the Low Countries.<sup>71</sup> If so, a Spaniard influenced the production of cloth in the Low Countries that changed fashion in Spain and elsewhere, and in turn this consequently influenced again fashion in the Low Countries; it would be an example of cultural transfer at its very best.

These two examples clearly show the importance of the court as a center of cultural transfer. Without any doubt, it must have functioned in a

64. Fagel 1996, p. 216. Recent books on Flemish tapestry include: Brussels 1994; Delmarcel 2000a; Delmarcel 2002; Ghent 2009; Buchanan 2015c.

65. Bossuyt 1994; Ros-Fábregas 2001, pp. 101–22.

66. Steppe 1985b.

67. Fagel 2001, p. 33.

68. Fagel 2014, p. 119.

69. Fagel 2001, p. 34.

70. Fagel 1996, pp. 172–73. It is also possible that this Frans de Witte was the brother in law of Gregorio.

71. Madou 2006a, p. 236.

similar way with products of the higher valued arts, such as painting and tapestry, but also with more basic products such as foodstuff. When Charles V – the carnivore par excellence – had to eat borage (*bernagie*) for his health, everybody at court had to follow his example and even say that they liked it very much.<sup>72</sup> We are not far from Norbert Elias' idea of the process of civilization, albeit constructed for a completely different time frame.<sup>73</sup>

In 1543, the duke of Nájera asked permission to go home from Brussels and decided to start off with a small tourist trip that took him to Mechelen, Antwerp, Bruges and Ghent. The Spanish secretary of the duke, with the intriguing name of Pedro de Gante, wrote a small but very interesting description of the journey. The author was keenly interested in painting and they went to visit, in what is now the cathedral of St Bavo, the famous *Ghent Altarpiece* of the Van Eyck brothers.<sup>74</sup> They probably had to pay some money to the church official that opened the altarpiece for them, like Albrecht Dürer had done years before them. After 1529–30, these payments were even registered in the church accounts.<sup>75</sup>

Like the duke of Nájera, there must have been many other courtiers moving around in small groups, but they unfortunately did not provide us with clear written records of their travels in the Low Countries. We can easily find an example the other way around using the already mentioned Antoine de Lalaing. During his stay at the court in Spain in 1502, he left his lord for three trips I would dare to call tourist excursions with some friends. On the famous monastery of Guadalupe he visited on his trip to Granada, our Burgundian

tourist stated: 'The chairs on which the monks sit are made of cedar wood, very well cut and beautifully decorated with various paintings'.<sup>76</sup>

On their return from another excursion, to Santiago de Compostela, they met several other small groups of courtiers of Philip the Fair, all on their way to the shrine of the apostle.<sup>77</sup> In short, any journey of the princely court also created a great deal of smaller trips of the courtiers, that are not that well documented nor studied, but that also must be taken into account when studying the importance of the court for cultural transfer. There exist many more examples that underline the importance of courtiers, prelates and noblemen for the diffusion of cultural products and fashions.

## The appeal of Flemish art in Spain

The third way in which the art of the Low Countries reached Spain, again according to Steppe in his 1985 contribution, is what he calls the 'own appeal' of Netherlandish art. These products possessed a specific cultural identity that was very much admired in Spain. According to Steppe, this third way is the most fundamental one in explaining the presence of Flemish art in Spain:

The richness of the Flemish palette, its shining transparency, the realistic vision on man and nature, the fine shades in the display of light, the deeply felt religiosity of our devotional panels, and next to that also the artisanal solidness of the Flemish artistic product.<sup>78</sup>

72. Mejía 1930, pp. 77, 123. Other food related issues are debated in: Stols 2001, pp. 159–79.

73. Duindam 1995.

74. Fagel 1996, p. 302.

75. Van der Stock 2012, pp. 5–7.

76. 'Les fourmes où sient les moines sont de bois de cèdres, bien entretailiées, et gorgiasement painctes de diverses peintures'. Lalaing 1876, p. 200.

77. Fagel 2011b, p. 283; Fagel 2017.

78. 'De rijkdom van het Vlaamse palet, zijn stralende doorzichtigheid, de realistische visie op mens en natuur, de fijne schakeringen in het lichtspel, de diep gevoelde religiositeit van onze devotiepanelen en daarnaast ook de ambachtelijke degelijkheid van het Vlaamse artistieke product'. Steppe 1985b, p. 249.



In the fifties of the sixteenth century, the cathedral of Salamanca needed new windows and it was decided to import these windows from the Low Countries, not because the canons had heard that these were better or more beautiful, but because they were cheaper. In the end, some glaziers came to Spain with the colored glass so the canons could choose the stories they wanted to see, based on the patterns and drawings that the *flamencos* had brought with them. So we should not forget that prices could also be a factor in deciding to import Flemish art.<sup>79</sup> There exists a comparable story on the cathedral of Granada. The already mentioned glazier Arnao de Flandes the Younger had to judge the quality of the glasses for the cathedral. He preferred the glasses of Juan del Campo, who was also from the Low Countries (Van de Velde?), to those that Teodoro de Holanda had imported. However, again, the imported glasses were cheaper. In the end, a compromise was reached and both men would be involved in the production of the glasses of the cathedral.<sup>80</sup>

Another element that should be mentioned is that in time the artists from the Low Countries became more and more influenced by the Italian Renaissance and started working in a more Italianate style. While Gil de Siloe still worked in the Hispano-Flemish style, his son Diego, already half-Spanish, went to Italy and learned to work in a modern manner. The same holds for the sons of Arnao de Flandes. Steppe stated in his article that the art from the Low Countries did become influenced by the Italian Renaissance, but that it maintained its own character. Without getting into these stylistic aspects, I would again like to stress the importance of the market. If people wanted art

in the modern style then artists would provide it, like, for example, sculptor (*entallador* and *ymaxinario*) Cornelis de Olanda who in 1532 promised to make an altarpiece with statues 'labrados de talla al Romano' – 'in the Roman style'.<sup>81</sup> Especially at the end of the reign of Charles V, new glaziers came to Spain working in a mannerist style, travelling from one place to the next. They could provide cheap and quick services, combined with a high quality. This probably also led to a competitive struggle with local Spanish artists that might have resulted in jealousy. And this jealousy could in turn have led to the denouncement of the foreigner to the Spanish inquisition. This happened to glazier Carlos de Brujas in Seville who could only finish one glass before his life ended in the hands of the inquisition.<sup>82</sup>

## The Hispano-Flemish world

We have been focusing on three main groups: the merchants, the artisans (including the artists), and the courtiers. These sectors undoubtedly constituted the nucleus of social presence and activity within the Hispano-Flemish world. However, there are many more groups that can be taken into account: sailors and soldiers, students and scholars, monks and pilgrims, printers, book sellers and authors, couriers, servants and apprentices of all kinds, and of course, women. I would like to highlight the sailors and the soldiers, as they have not received too much attention within the existing historiography.

The maritime traffic between Spain and the Low Countries resulted in the presence of sailors

79. Fagel 1996, p. 255; Fagel 2006, p. 213. In 1407, the council of Barcelona had already ordered stained-glass windows from the Low Countries and in 1437 they sent a pattern of a glass to the Low Countries so it could be fabricated over there. Nieto Alcaide 1970; Ruiz i Quesada 2003, p. 60.

80. In 1539, Fernando Esturmio of Zierikzee won a bid for

the right to execute an altarpiece in the monastery of San Francisco in Seville by bidding three times until he had done the lowest bidding. Prices could win over style and quality. Brown 1998, p. 43.

81. Fagel 1996, p. 236.

82. Fagel 1996, p. 215. See also for Bilbao: *ibidem*, p. 253; Thomas 1991.

from both sides residing often for months on end in the port cities. We know very little of the nature of their stay. Around 1552, Adriaen, a sailor from Zierikzee (Zeeland) of some 49 years of age, went ashore in Sanlúcar de Barrameda with three colleagues from Antwerp to have a drink in the town. Two of them finally went to have a salad. Adriaen and Gielis from Antwerp later on met Wessel from Amsterdam, who was standing talking to a prostitute on the corner of the street. Gielis asked Wessel why he had sent his mates in their inn to start a row. Wessel responded that he had not done so and, to put strength to his argument, started threatening him. In the end, Wessels' dagger mortally wounded the Amsterdam sailor.<sup>83</sup> It is one of the very few moments where we actually hear about the Netherlandish sailors during their stay in Spain.

Again, we have to stress that this was a development that went both ways. We can find many Spanish ships in the Low Countries, mostly from the Spanish north coast, but also from the southern Atlantic and Mediterranean harbors. To give an impression from a small region: a list of all available vessels in Guipúzcoa in 1534 mentions several ones ready to leave for the Low Countries in San Sebastián, and others originating from this city that were already there, or on its way from Andalusia. In Rentería, four out of twelve ships were in the Low Countries while two others had just left in that direction. In Fuenterrabía, two ships had again just sailed out to the Low Countries, as had done another one in Orio. Juan Martínez de Ayztarbe, from Azcoitia, possessed houses in Antwerp, Arnemuiden (called 'Ramua' by the Spanish) and Middelburg.<sup>84</sup> Many inhabitants of this region lived for years in the Low Countries, travelling, as in one example, between cities like Bergen op Zoom, Antwerp and Mechelen. The

records from a court trial mention a witness from San Sebastián who had lived in the Low Countries for eight years. Others from the same region had also lived there for years.<sup>85</sup> And Guipúzcoa is not the region considered to have been most involved in shipping between Spain and the Low Countries. We can really state that many smaller localities on the north coast of Spain all had their sailors travelling to the north. In 1486–87, the maritime accounts of Sluis mention 33 ships from Spain: Bilbao, Ondarroa, Laredo, San Sebastián, Mundaca, Portugalete. In Arnemuiden in 1528–29, 139 Spanish ships entered.<sup>86</sup>

The same holds true for many small localities in Flanders, Zeeland and Holland, but also from the Dutch Hansa cities more to the east. However, the northern part of Holland seems to have been the origin of many ships and of many sailors involved. Ships from the Low Countries were especially present in Spain as from the thirties of the sixteenth century.<sup>87</sup> These cargo ships were used during the sea crossing of Charles V to Barcelona in 1529, and again during the invasion of Tunis in 1535. At least twelve ships can be traced in the detailed accounts of that event, providing us with the complete measurements of the ships and the names of most of the crew members. For example, on the Sant Llorente of Zierikzee the officers came from Zeeland while the sailors came from the county of Holland.<sup>88</sup> There were four ships from Enkhuizen present at Algiers in 1541, but also, and often forgotten, eight ships from the Low Countries as part of the Armada Invencible of 1588. Probably most of the ships that travelled between Spain and the Low Countries possessed a crew of in between thirty and sixty. This must have resulted in a very large group of people in the coastal regions with knowledge of the routes and of the different cultures within the Hispano-Flemish

83. Fagel 1996, pp. 436–37.

84. Ibidem, pp. 156, 158.

85. Ibidem, pp. 106, 159.

86. Ibidem, pp. 138–39.

87. Fagel 2002a, pp. 519–20.

88. Fagel 1996, pp. 381, 408–09.

world. Many local parish churches in the north of Spain contain artefacts from the Low Countries that demonstrate the cultural influence that was generated through the maritime connection, like the panel that Juan Martínez de Mendaro donated to the church of Zumaia after his victory over a Portuguese fleet in 1475.<sup>89</sup>

Another group of people that travelled on a large scale between Spain and the Low Countries and that has not received that much attention for the first part of the sixteenth century consists of the military, and then especially the Spanish soldiers fighting in the Low Countries against the forces of the French king, and often also against those of the duke of Guelders.<sup>90</sup> Philip II was clearly not the first Habsburg sovereign to use Spanish soldiers in the Low Countries. As from 1505, Philip the Fair, as the self-proclaimed new king of Castile, used Spanish troops against the French and the same happened during the war against Guelders of 1511–12. Hernando Gómez de Ávila played an important part in these wars until his death in 1512. In order to compensate his family, Margaret of Austria promised to give the future spouse of his daughter a place in the Habsburg household. A Juan Tello later claimed the function of *maestre sala* and *gentilhombre*, as well as a membership of the military order of Santiago, using as an argument his marriage to Hernando's daughter, stating that otherwise he would never have married her because of her poor dowry.<sup>91</sup> In the twenties of the sixteenth century we can already find several thousands of Spanish soldiers in the Low Countries, fighting the French and those from the duchy of Guelders. During the famous Ghent rebellion (1539–40), 2,000 Spanish soldiers were being prepared to sail north to pacify the Low Countries. However, this direct confrontation was

to be postponed until 1567 as the Ghent rebellion died out before the troops had set sail.<sup>92</sup> From the forties onwards, the presence of Spanish troops is almost continuous, with thousands of soldiers, and the first conflicts with the inhabitants are beginning to show: ‘Tonight the Spanish soldiers will come and while you are at war, they will take care of your wives.’<sup>93</sup>

Besides the obvious mixed relations that must have come out of this influential Spanish presence in the Low Countries, I would like to stress that it meant that Spaniards from all regions were confronted with the culture of the Low Countries. A document from 1543 listing some 300 deserted soldiers, shows they came from everywhere within Castile, but we also find individuals from Asturias, the Basque Country, Andalusia, Aragon, Valencia and Navarre. In the end, some 2,000 did make the crossing to the Low Countries and we may assume that this group possessed the same geographical variation.<sup>94</sup> Already long before the outbreak of the Dutch Revolt, in every small village of Spain, a soldier could come home and tell his family, friends, and neighbors, about his time in the Low Countries.

## Conclusion

Besides sailors and soldiers, there were many other groups involved. However, it is not possible to present a complete overview of human presence and activity within the Hispano-Flemish world. I have intended to show both the quality, the quantity and the diversity of the people involved and what this could have meant for the cultural transfer between Spain and the Low Countries. At the same time, I have tried to stress the reciprocity and

89. Álvarez 2003, p. 268. However, she describes the donor as ‘sailor Martínez de Medrano’.

90. Fagel 1996, pp. 379–87.

91. Ibidem, p. 382.

92. Ibidem, pp. 386–88.

93. Ibidem, p. 400.

94. Ibidem, pp. 390–92.

the equality of these contacts. The Low Countries were leading, together with Italy, in most art forms, but this does not make the Spanish a mere receiving culture.

The question remains whether this Hispano-Flemish world can be seen as an extraordinary case of cultural transfer in the early modern period. I would like to think so, although the inhabitants from Spain and the Low Countries did maintain of course many contacts with people from other countries as well. Artists from the Low Countries can be found anywhere in Europe and

merchants from Castile were also present around the continent. However, the combination of the quantity and the diversity of the people involved, and the quality of the contacts between these two geographically separated cultures, and I stress that they were not neighboring cultures, seems to me quite unique for the early modern period. The Hispano-Flemish world, as I have tried to describe it, was an exceptional historical phenomenon. In short, Spain and the Low Countries were 'as yche othere brothere'.