

Introduction

The late seventeenth century has not attracted much interest from either Dutch historians, for whom the ‘Golden Age’ came to an end around the middle of the century, or British historians, who have tended to focus primarily on the Civil War.¹ The 1690s in particular have rather suffered from historiographical neglect.² The history of Dutch politics after 1688 remains as yet unwritten. Arguably, however, the last decade of the century was pivotal in the political history of both countries. England’s rise to greatness resulted primarily from the developments following the Glorious Revolution, whereas the wars against France marked the demise of the Dutch Republic. The unique character of this decade partly stems from the union between the two countries during the reign of the King-Stadholder, although Anglo-Dutch political relations during this period have been almost completely ignored.³ The decade signified a unique period in Anglo-Dutch history, because a ‘composite state’ emerged comprising Britain and the United Provinces. The King-Stadholder

1 Although currently there seems to be an historiographical reappraisal by British historians of the period of the Restoration and by Dutch historians of the early eighteenth century.

2 In fact, Craig Rose’s 1999 monograph on British politics in the 1690s marked the first synthesis on this period since the studies of Henry Horwitz on the English parliament and Patrick Riley on Scotland. C. Rose, *England in the 1690s: Revolution, Religion and War* (Oxford, 1999); H. Horwitz, *Parliament, Policy and Politics in the Reign of William III* (Manchester 1977); P.W.J. Riley, *King William and the Scottish Politicians* (Edinburgh, 1979).

3 But see G. van Alphen, *De Stemming van de Engelschen tegen de Hollanders in Engeland tijdens de Regeering van den Koning-Stadhouder Willem III 1688–1702* (Assen, 1938) and G.N. Clark, *The Dutch Alliance and the War against French Trade 1688–1697* (New York, 1923). The tercentenary commemoration of the Glorious Revolution witnessed an outburst of bilateral research, see for instance K.H.D. Haley, ‘The Dutch Invasion and the Alliance of 1689’ in: L.G. Schwoerer (ed.), *The Revolution of 1688 – Changing Perspectives* (Cambridge, 1992), J.I. Israel, ‘The Dutch Role in the Glorious Revolution’ in: J.I. Israel (ed.), *The Anglo-Dutch Moment. Essays on the Glorious Revolution and its World Impact* (Cambridge, 1991) and S. Groenveld, ‘“J’equippe une Flotte très Considerable”: the Dutch Side of the Glorious Revolution’ in: R. Beddard (ed.), *The Revolutions of 1688* (Oxford, 1988). Few historians, however, have considered Anglo-Dutch relations in the aftermath of the 1688/1689 events. Moreover, after a brief upsurge of historiographical interest in William’s reign in 1988, the past decade has remained relatively barren in this respect, but see A.M. Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution* (Cambridge, 1996) and two new biographies of William: W. Troost, *William III, the Stadholder-King: A Political Biography* (Aldershot, 2005), and A.M. Claydon, *William III* (London, 2002). See also E. Mijers and D. Onnekink (eds), *Redefining William III: The Impact of the King-Stadholder in International Context* (Aldershot, 2007).

headed a ‘personal union’, of which the separate parts co-operated on various levels.⁴ An Anglo-Dutch army operated in the Low Countries under William’s command, and a joint fleet protected the shores and merchant ships of the Allies. British and Dutch diplomats worked together, and counter-espionage networks exchanged intelligence. However, despite a certain degree of integration within the personal union, the three kingdoms and the republic also developed independently, each experiencing distinct domestic political and economic changes. To rule the independent parts of these realms and at the same time to co-ordinate their war efforts was a complex task.

This personal union was conjoined only at the highest level by the King-Stadholder, who was well served by a small circle of confidants.⁵ Most literature refers to them as ‘Dutch favourites’,⁶ but they constituted an international rather than a specifically Dutch entourage. This circle of foreign confidants assisting William III has been one of the blind spots in the historiography of the 1690s. Consequently, little is known about the influence of the so-called ‘Dutch counsels’ and of foreign advisers such as Everard van Weede van Dijkveld, the Duke of Schomberg and the Earls of Galway, Albemarle and Portland.⁷

In 1924 Marion Grew wrote a biography of the Hans Willem Bentinck, 1st Earl of Portland (1649–1709), undoubtedly the most prominent of these, but recently Mark Kishlansky, in his synthesis on Stuart politics, acknowledged the need for a modern study of his career.⁸ Both vilified and praised during his long career, the Earl played a prominent role in the political history of both the British Isles and the United Provinces. As the closest confidant of William III, his career was inextricably connected to that of the man who helped shape the political history of Western Europe during the last quarter of the seventeenth century, dominated by the foreign policy of Louis XIV. As a result of the Anglo-French struggle, the reign of William III witnessed profound domestic political changes in England as well as prolonged warfare.

It is within this configuration that Portland played an important role. It has not been my intention to write his biography as such, but rather a case study in Williamite policy, which will investigate the role of the favourite within the Anglo-Dutch union. Past historiography has often regarded Portland as no more than an

4 To what extent Britain and the United Provinces did in fact form a personal union is open to debate, as the Stadholder was formally a servant to the sovereign provincial assemblies. Given William’s *de facto* influence in the United Provinces, such a view has been accepted by several historians. E.g. S.B. Baxter, *William III* (London, 1966).

5 Cf. Baxter, *William III*, 280; N. Japikse, *Prins Willem III, de Stadhouder-Koning* (2 vols, Amsterdam, 1933), II. 292.

6 E.g. M. Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed. Britain 1603–1714* (London, 1996), 291; T. Harris, *Politics under the late Stuarts. Party Conflict in a Divided Society 1660–1715* (New York, 1993), 165.

7 But see Van Alphen, *Stemming van de Engelschen* and D. Onnekink, ‘“Dutch Councils”: the Foreign Entourage of William III’, *Dutch Crossing*, 29 (2005), 5–20.

8 M.E. Grew, *William Bentinck and William III (Prince of Orange). The Life of Bentinck, Earl of Portland, from the Welbeck Correspondence* (London, 1924); S.B. Baxter, ‘Recent Writings on William III’, *Journal of Modern History*, 38 (1966), 256–67, 260; Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 359.

executive servant of William III. Although analysing their relationship has proved essential for understanding his position, an attempt has been made to study his career on its own merits. The central concern of this book will be to establish the nature and significance of Portland's role and position as William's favourite, and aims to connect three recent historiographical debates.

Firstly, Portland's role will be situated within an Anglo-Dutch and European context.⁹ From the 1960s, revisionist historians largely demolished traditional, often nationalist, perspectives, and applied international interpretative models. By now, historians have become aware of the necessity to write British history, encompassing the Scottish and Irish as well as the English contexts.¹⁰ Jonathan Israel has rightly pointed out the need to expand on this tendency, to place British history within a wider European framework, or more specifically, to study the 'Anglo-Dutch moment' of 1688/1689 and its aftermath.¹¹ In his biography of William III, Stephen Baxter as well stressed the significance of the supranational nature of the 'Dual Monarchy' of the British Isles and the Dutch Republic.¹² Only within this British–Dutch – indeed European – context can William's reign be properly understood. His Dutch background was essential to understanding his policy after 1688, a view endorsed in recent works, including the two latest biographies of William III. To Tony Claydon, William was as much an Orange as a Stuart. Wout Troost paid attention to the United Provinces and England as well as Ireland and Scotland.¹³ Nevertheless, until now little research has been conducted into the actual co-operation between the Dutch and British on military, naval, and political matters during the 1690s.

9 Such an international perspective has not always been taken, as Dutch and British historians are not always familiar with each other's historiography or source material. Whig historians have traditionally applied national models, e.g. G.M. Trevelyan, *England under the Stuarts* (edn London, 1997); T.B. Macaulay, *History of England from the Accession of James II* (6 vols, London, 1914). Japikse's solid biography of the King-Stadholder (mentioned in footnote 5) is entrenched in traditional Orangism and is Dutch-centred. Primary sources that have been published also bear the mark of national interpretations. While Japikse's publication of the letters of William and Portland favoured Dutch correspondence, the *Calendars of State Papers Domestic* for the reign of William and Mary, for instance, have downplayed references to Dutch politics. *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, in the Reign of William and Mary*, ed. W.J. Hardy and E. Bateson (11 vols, London, 1969); *Correspondentie van Willem III en van Hans Willem Bentinck, Eersten Graaf van Portland*, ed. N. Japikse (5 vols, Rijks-geschiedkundige Publicatiën 'Kleine Reeks', XXIII, XXIV, XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII, The Hague, 1927–37).

10 Following the proposal of J.G.A. Pocock, 'British History: A Plea for a New Subject', *Journal of Modern History*, 47 (1975), 601–21, some historians now advocate this 'New British History' approach.

11 Israel, *Anglo-Dutch Moment*, 11.

12 Baxter, *William III*, 280.

13 Jonathan Scott's recent study on Stuart history emphasised the lasting and structural influence of the Dutch on English institutions in the 1690s, *England's Troubles. Seventeenth-Century English Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge, 2000), 474 ff. Cf. M. 't Hart, 'The Devil or the Dutch: Holland's Impact on the Financial Revolution in England 1643–1694', *Parliaments, Estates and Representations*, 11 (1991), 39–52; Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution*; Troost, *William III*.

Secondly, this book will also explain the role of Portland against the background of the changes that occurred after the Glorious Revolution. The emergence of the favourite coincided with the Nine Years War and the profound political changes on the British Isles. Revisionist historians have argued that there was a connection between the Revolution and these changes, triggered by William's quest for funds to finance the war on the continent. William's reign saw the emergence of a 'standing Parliament' which provided the King with the financial means to conduct the war and made it necessary for him to develop a means of managing Parliament. Portland's role in this process will be studied.

Lastly, this study will build upon the findings of a recent volume of essays which sought a model for the favourite as a European phenomenon. At the same time it will engage the editors' conclusion that the favourite disappeared after 1660, and explain its re-emergence in England between 1689 and 1710.¹⁴ Literature dealing with the phenomenon of the favourite has moved away from 'superficial psychological explanations' and concentrates on the 'growing complexity of the early modern state' as a way of understanding the significance of the favourite.¹⁵ Indeed, recent literature on the 1690s suggests that Portland's activities as favourite should be rather explained in light of the profound changes that occurred during this decade. John Carswell has drawn attention to Portland's pivotal role during the Glorious Revolution. Patrick Riley, Wout Troost and John Simms have pointed to Portland's involvement in the government of Scotland and Ireland. John Kenyon has analysed his connection with the Earl of Sunderland and their involvement in ministerial and parliamentary management in England. Rather than emphasising Portland's personal relationship with William, therefore, this study will focus on the political and military developments of the 1690s and will provide a new overall interpretation and evaluation of Portland's role as favourite.¹⁶

It is the purpose of this book to show how these factors were intimately connected and thereby to define the role of the Anglo-Dutch favourite in Williamite politics. The career of Portland will be narrated and analysed in nine chapters in a more or less chronological order. Chapter 1 presents 'the making' of the favourite and covers his years in the United Provinces until 1685. It will analyse his responsibilities as

14 L.W.B. Brockliss and J.H. Elliott (eds), *The World of the Favourite* (New Haven/London, 1999). Cf. M. Kaiser and A. Pečar (eds), *Der Zweite Mann im Staat: Oberste Amtsträger und Favoriten im Umkreis der Reichsfürsten in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin, 2003).

15 J.H. Elliott, 'Introduction' in: Brockliss and Elliott, *The World of the Favourite*, 1–10, 4. Elliott specifically refers to the work of Jean Bérenger.

16 W. Troost, 'William III and the Treaty of Limerick 1691–1697' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leiden, 1983); J.G. Simms, 'Williamite Peace Tactics 1690–1691' in: J.G. Simms, *War and Politics in Ireland 1649–1730*, eds D.W. Hayton and G. O'Brien (London, 1986), 181–201; J. Carswell, *The Descent on England* (London, 1973); J.I. Israel, 'Propaganda in the Making of the Glorious Revolution' in: S. Roach (ed.), *Across the Narrow Seas. Studies in the History and Bibliography of Britain and the Low Countries* (London, 1991), 167–78; L.G. Schworer, 'Propaganda in the Revolution of 1688–1689', *American Historical Review*, 132 (1977), 843–74; Riley, *Scottish Politicians*; J.P. Kenyon, *Robert Spencer, Earl of Sunderland 1621–1702* (London, 1958).

a politician, diplomat and military officer. The next chapter is essentially a case study, analysing Portland's activities preceding and during the Glorious Revolution. It will also pay attention to the wider international context in which the invasion took place. Chapters 3 to 7 are organised thematically rather than chronologically. Occasionally there may be some overlap or gaps, and chapter 3 sometimes refers to events explained in subsequent chapters. Nevertheless it is hoped that such a thematic and structural approach will provide a better insight into Portland's career. The five chapters form the core of this book and study the zenith of Portland's career between 1689 and 1697. They concentrate on the power, policy and perception of the Anglo-Dutch favourite. Rather than providing an exhaustive chronological account, they will focus on core issues which illuminate the nature of his activities and influence, as well as his role in the formulation of William's policy. Chapter 3 tracks Portland's role in stabilising the Revolution settlement, whereas the next chapter seeks to analyse his position as Anglo-Dutch favourite. Chapter 5 looks at his political activities and ideas, whereas the next chapter studies his military and diplomatic activities during the Nine Years War. Chapter 7 discusses Portland's role in the development of Williamite ideology and the emergence of an anti-favourite rhetoric. Chapter 8 will discuss his diplomatic activities towards the end and after the Nine Years War, most notably during the peace negotiations at Ryswick and the talks on the Spanish Partition Treaties. The final chapter analyses the reasons behind his retirement, initially in 1697 and finally in 1699, and covers his last years until his death in 1709.

The most important source on which this study has been based is Portland's archive from Welbeck Abbey, which has now been transferred to Nottingham University Library.¹⁷ Although Nicolaas Japikse has published the most material part of the correspondence, much remains unpublished.¹⁸ While Portland's vast archive has proved a solid basis for this study, its several limitations have posed methodological problems. Firstly, part of the archive has been lost, and it is not always clear to what extent it is actually representative and as such relevant in the reconstruction of his activities and network of correspondents. Secondly, there are few minutes of outgoing correspondence in the archive, and often analyses had to be based on indirect evidence. This is particularly disappointing as his important letters to, for instance, the Earl of Sunderland, have gone missing. Lastly, Portland preferred to discuss behind closed doors what was not essential to write down on paper, and often conjecture must be employed to reconstruct his role. The very essence of his powerful position as favourite was that it was based on his informal confidential relationship with William III. As a result, the exact dimensions of Portland's role and the extent of his influence cannot always be fully reconstructed.

These shortcomings can only be partly overcome by using his scarce and often curt outgoing letters in other archives. The Historical Manuscripts Commission has

17 A small section has ended up in the Egerton Manuscripts in the British Library, see footnote 18.

18 Nottingham University Library, Portland Welbeck Archive PwA 1–2870, Pw2A 1–29; British Library Egerton Manuscripts 1704–09, 1717, 1754B; Japikse, *Correspondentie*. His excellent introduction provides an analysis of the archive and its history.

published his correspondence with several politicians.¹⁹ The most important letters are those written to William III and are fully printed in Japikse's edition and in the Calendars of State Papers Domestic. The State Papers Foreign in the National Archive in London – a vast source much neglected by historians – have correspondence with English diplomats. As an international approach has been adopted in this book, much material has been used from non-English archives. The Nationaal Archief in The Hague and the printed Heinsius-correspondence shed light on Portland's activities in the United Provinces and his involvement in foreign policy.²⁰ The National Archives of Scotland and the National Library of Scotland contain a considerable quantity of letters to and from Portland that have often been overlooked. Additional material has been found in the published correspondences of George Melville and William Carstares.²¹ Lastly, the Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères in Paris contain numerous letters of Portland which have been previously overlooked. They provide an outward perspective of Dutch and British affairs. In addition, a wide range of contemporary correspondence, journals and diaries has been consulted to provide an insight into Portland's socio-political context – the Court, the army and Parliament. Pamphlet material has been analysed to reconstruct political discourse on the Anglo-Dutch favourite. Lastly, remnants of his material heritage – his estates, gardens and art collection – illustrate the representative aspects of the position of the Anglo-Dutch favourite.

19 E.g. correspondence with the Earl of Nottingham: HMC, *Finch Mss*, with the Duke of Shrewsbury: *Buckleugh Mss*, and with Matthew Prior: *Bath Mss*. The Surrey History Centre has the important correspondence with John Somers.

20 *De Briefwisseling van Anthonie Heinsius 1702–1720*, ed. A.J. Veenendaal (20 vols., The Hague, 1976–2001).

21 *Leven and Melville Papers. Letters and State Papers chiefly Addressed to George Earl of Melville, Secretary of State for Scotland, 1689–1691*, ed. W.L. Melville (Edinburgh, 1843); *State Papers and Letters Addressed to William Carstares*, ed. J. McCormick (Edinburgh, 1774).