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Law and Order in Exile Communities in Early Modern Norfolk

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Abstract
In November 1565, Queen Elizabeth issued Letters Patent permitting thirty textile masters from the Low Countries to settle in Norwich and practice their trade. By early 1566, two language communities, one Dutch and the other French, had been established, each with its own church. However, in the wake of the Iconoclastic Fury in the Low Countries, which began in August 1566, many Calvinists left their homes and moved to Norwich. By 1568, the number of exiles in the town exceeded 2000. This led to tensions between the exile community and local people. Alongside a raft of regulations setting limits on the exiles' commercial activities, the local authorities asked the Dutch and French communities to elect officials to maintain order within their communities and to act as a bridge in relations with the Anglophone community. These officials, known as *politicke mannen* in Dutch and *hommes politiques* in French, were elected annually for over 150 years. This article examines how they kept order within their communities and how they maintained relations with the local authorities, above all the mayor and the town council. It does so using correspondence and two minute-books of the weekly meetings of these officials in the town's Guildhall. Furthermore, the article examines how this *ad hoc* solution to the sudden influx of migrants provided a template for the maintaining of law and order in other English towns with significant exile communities.

I

In the depths of the storerooms in the British Library in London is a manuscript which, the cover records, was saved from the fire, although it does not tell us which fire nor in which year. The manuscript is more than 400 years old and so, here and there, small creatures may have taken a bite of it, and water has made a few words illegible. Nevertheless, most of the manuscript is still legible, though written in a seventeenth-century hand which presents the modern reader with significant challenges. The manuscript was written in Norwich, and is a minute-book of the meetings of officials known as 'Politic Men', who heard and passed judgment on cases involving petty offences, financial disputes, and guardianship in the town's exile communities.[1] There were two exile communities in Norwich. The members of one predominantly spoke Dutch and those of the other spoke French. About three-quarters of the Dutch-speaking Strangers in Norwich came from the Southern Netherlands, so I refer to them as Flemish rather than Dutch. Almost all the first wave of French-speaking Strangers came from the southern Spanish Netherlands and were typically called Walloons.

The aim of this article is to analyse the practices of the Politic Men (Dutch: *politicke mannen*; French: *hommes politiques*) and evaluate their role in administering justice and maintaining order within the communities, most of whose members were

[1] British Library (BL), Add. MS. 43862. I am currently transcribing, translating, and commenting on this text. I plan to publish this work with the Norfolk Record Society in 2028.

Calvinist exiles. The exiles were known locally as 'Strangers'. Although this term originally referred to anyone from outside an area, it came to be applied specifically to those in Norwich and other towns in England, who belonged to exile communities.

After a literature review and analysis of primary sources, I begin by examining why the office of Politic Men was introduced, and how it fitted into the existing structures of justice and the organization of the exile communities in Norwich. I shall then investigate how this office functioned: how the Politic Men were elected, how their activities were financed, and the role of the bailiff, who worked closely with the Politic Men. I will subsequently examine the weekly meetings or hearings of the men, beginning with an analysis of the clerks who kept the minutes and their use of language, before examining specific cases. These typically involved one Stranger or a group of Strangers making a complaint against one or more other Strangers with the Politic Men passing judgment on the cases and in financial disputes assessing the level of satisfaction required to discharge a debt. As well as telling us about the practices of the Politic Men, these cases provide us with rare insights into the everyday lives of Strangers: their deeds and misdeeds, who knew whom, and how order was maintained within the Stranger communities and between the Strangers and the local English population. It has been argued that the office and practices of the Politic Men in Norwich provided a template for the introduction of this office in other exile communities in England.[2] So, before concluding, I shall examine what is known about these officials in other exile communities.

Several authors have written on the Politic Men. In the late nineteenth century, W.J.C. Moens provided a short introduction to the origins and purpose of this office in his extensive history of the Norwich Strangers.[3] In 1996, the German historian Raingard Esser wrote a monograph on the positions and practices of the Flemish Strangers in Norwich in which she makes several references to the Politic Men.[4] Esser has also published articles on the Politic Men in Norwich, examining how they contributed to maintaining urban stability and controlling crime in the large exile communities.[5] The present article adds to Esser's work by analysing more extensively the origins and the eventual fall into desuetude of this office, the role of the bailiff in maintaining order, and examining details of cases not previously published. In 2015, I published a monograph on the knowledge and use of the Dutch language in early modern Britain. In a chapter on the social domain of work and government, I analyse the use of Dutch in documents relating to the Politic Men in Norwich and in other exile communities in England.[6] Frank Meeres's 2018 book on the Strangers provides a useful summary of the origins and aims of the office of the Politic Men as well as accounts of several cases that came before them.[7]

More generally, the article aims to add to our understanding of how Calvinist exile communities in early modern England functioned and worked with local and national authorities. The first exile communities and churches were established in

[2] Raingard Esser, '"They obey all magistrates and all good lawes … and we thinke our cittie happie to enjoye them": migrants and urban stability in early modern English towns', *Urban History*, 34/1 (2007), pp. 64–75, at p. 70.

[3] W.J.C. Moens, *The Walloons and Their Church at Norwich: Their History and Registers 1565–1832*, 2 vols. (Lymington, 1888–9), I, pp. 32–33.

[4] Raingard Esser, *Niederländische Exulanten im England des 16. und frühen 17. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1996).

[5] Esser, '"They obey all magistrates"'; Esser, 'Social concern and Calvinistic duty: the Norwich Strangers' community', in *Het Beloofde Land. Acht Opstellen over Werken, Geloven en Vluchten tijdens de XVIe en XVIIe Eeuw* (Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van de Westhoek 1) (Dikkebus, 1992), pp. 173–84; Esser, 'The Politijcke Mannen: A Particular Institution of the Norwich Strangers' Communities', in Norma Virgoe and Tom Williamson (eds), *Religious Dissent in East Anglia: Historical Perspectives* (Norwich, 1993), pp. 21–28.

[6] Christopher Joby, *The Dutch Language in Britain (1550–1702)* (Leiden, 2015), pp. 162–71.

[7] Frank Meeres, *The Welcome Stranger: Dutch, Walloon and Huguenot Incomers to Norwich, 1550–1750* (Norwich, 2018), esp. pp. 88–89.

London in 1550. Andrew Pettegree and Ole Peter Grell have both analysed these themes in their monographs on the London exile communities.[8] The second exile community in England was established in Sandwich in 1561. Marcel Backhouse has written extensively on this community.[9] Other exile communities such as the one at Colchester in Essex have also been analysed, although in less detail than Norwich, Sandwich, and London.[10]

II

Several primary sources reference the Politic Men. Some of these were written by Strangers themselves, whilst others are civic records. The most extensive records of their activities are two minute-books of their meetings and decisions. One, preserved at the Norfolk Record Office, covers the Politic activities between April 1583 and July 1590, with additions and notes for 1591 to 1600.[11] The minutes were recorded by the clerks to the Politic Men: first P. Langhelets, then Pieter Weynoet.[12] Life expectancy was shorter than today, and there were several plagues in early modern Norwich which killed many Strangers. Many entries therefore concern orphans and guardianship.[13] One unexpected entry is the inventory of the possessions of the Stranger Jacob van Somerman dated 3 April 1585. This is written in Dutch and lists some one hundred items.[14] Moens notes that the men sometimes advised 'their brethren on various business and family matters, acting as notaries and preparing testaments and nuncupative wills'.[15] The recording of this inventory probably falls under one of the latter activities. The other surviving minute-book is the one in the British Library mentioned in the introduction.[16] This document records the deliberations and decisions at the meetings of the Politic Men between 1605 and 1615.[17] Entries up to 7 July 1612 were written by Pieter Weynoet, and those from 28 July 1612 onwards by Johannes Coccelius.

Dutch and French are the most frequently occurring languages in each minute-book, with a few entries in Latin and English. This reflects the fact that most cases were probably heard in Dutch or French. Although Law French was still used in courts at this time, these documents are rare examples of the use of contemporary French and Dutch in legal proceedings in early modern England.

[8] Andrew Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London* (Oxford, 1986); Ole Peter Grell, *Calvinist exiles in Tudor and Stuart England* (Aldershot, 1996).

[9] Marcel Backhouse, *The Flemish and Walloon Communities at Sandwich During the Reign of Elizabeth (1561–1603)*, 3 vols. PhD thesis, University of Southampton, 1991, esp. I, pp. 50–60.

[10] For Colchester, see W.J. Hardy, "Foreign settlers at Colchester and Halstead", *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society*, 2 (1887–8), pp. 182–196; Nigel Goose, "The 'Dutch' in Colchester: The economic influence of an immigrant community in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries," *Immigrants & Minorities* 1(3) (1982), pp. 261–80, at pp. 266, 269–70. See also Joby, *The Dutch Language in Britain*, esp. pp. 35–36.

[11] Norfolk Record Office (NRO), MC 189/1, 634X3(a) (henceforth MC 189/1), Record of the 'politijcke mannen' or 'hommes politycques', the officials of the Stranger Community in Norwich, running from April 1583 to July 1590. This comprises four unbound gatherings foliated 2–49 with folio 1 torn away.

[12] The first name of Langhelets is not clear. Only the initial P. is clear. The precise point at which Weynoet took over from Langhelets is not explicitly indicated in the minute-book. However, the handwriting changes on fol. 11v. The first entry in Weynoet's hand is dated 17 October 1583.

[13] Dealing with orphans formed an important part of the role of both civic and Stranger community administration at this time. Great Yarmouth corporation managed an orphan fund. I thank Danny Buck for this information.

[14] NRO, MC 189/1, fols. 24r.-v; Joby, *The Dutch Language in Britain*, pp. 164–5.

[15] Moens, *The Walloons*, I, p. 33. One example of a nuncupative will occurred on 23 June 1585 when Clais Priem and Clais Blare appeared before the Politic Men as administrators of the estate of Catherine Hellincx, the widow of Jan Hellynck. The clerk, Pieter Weynoet, noted who would receive what from the estate. NRO, MC 189/1, fol. 23r.

[16] British Library (BL), Add. MS. 43862.

[17] The minute-book was previously owned by the Anglican priest and antiquarian Reverend Charles (Harold Evelyn) White, FSA. He presented it to the British Library in 1935. It has 181 folio pages and two extra pages which are the remains of old vellum covers.

The minute-books of the Walloon and Flemish Calvinist or Reformed church consistories give the names of the Politic Men elected by their communities for several years.[18] Correspondence between the Politic Men in Norwich and colleagues in other Stranger communities in England, which was published at the end of the nineteenth century by Johannes Hessels, provides further insights into the activities of these officials.[19] The Politic Men signed some letters jointly with church elders and deacons, with whom they formed the three colleges of the Norwich Stranger communities, whilst they signed other letters on their own.[20]

As the number of Strangers in London grew, many were encouraged to move to other towns with exile communities. One letter to the London Dutch church consistory in 1574, signed by Jan Ruytinck on behalf of his fellow Politic Men, warned the London church not to send any more Strangers to Norwich, as their number far exceeded the limit set by Queen Elizabeth I in Letters Patent issued on 5 November 1565.[21] The letters permitted thirty textile masters from the Low Countries and up to ten members of their households to settle in Norwich and practice their trade. Despite its title, the Book of Orders for Dutch and Walloon Strangers (BODWS) is a record in English of the Strangers' commercial, social, and political activities in Norwich between 1565 and 1643.[22] D.L. Rickwood describes it as a narrative of the history of relations between the Strangers and the civic authorities.[23] It includes orders on how these officials were to be chosen and what duties they were bound to perform to maintain order within the Stranger communities.

Brief references to the Politic Men occur in other documents. The Mayor's Court Book records a case heard by the men in 1571 in which one Stranger woman made a claim for payment against another Stranger woman.[24] Other examples occur in 'five leaves of an old book, very delapidated', published by the Norwich antiquarian Walter Rye in the late nineteenth century. One, in Dutch and dated 28 February 1592/3, records that the clerk, Pieter Weynoet, acknowledged receipt of money from the Politic Men and other Strangers to reimburse him for expenses relating to orphans. A second example, in French and dated 20 March 1592/3, concerns another orphan and lists three Politic Men, Guillaume Desbonnes, Christian Cornille, and Adrian de Leme, who dealt with the case.[25] Not all disputes in the Stranger communities were, however, heard by the Politic Men. One or two cases, such as an accusation of slander in 1635, were heard instead by the church consistories.[26]

III

Raingard Esser describes the institution of the Politic Men as a system of devolved crime control, which formed part of a strategy of 'shared authority between urban

[18] NRO, FC 29/17, for the Walloon church and NRO, MS 21490, *Dutch Reformed Church Register 1676–1879*, fol. 35, for the Flemish church.

[19] J.H. Hessels (ed.), *Ecclesiae Londino-Batavae archivum*, 4 vols (Cambridge, 1887–97).

[20] In June 1597, two church elders signed a letter written on behalf of the elders, deacons, and Politic Men in the Flemish community. The letter thanked the London Dutch church consistory for raising money for the poor of the Norwich Flemish community: Christopher Joby, *John Cruso of Norwich and Anglo-Dutch Literary Identity in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 2022), p. 45.

[21] Hessels, *Ecclesiae*, III, I, p. 268; Joby, *The Dutch Language in Britain*, p. 169.

[22] NRO, NCR, 17d/9.

[23] Douglas L. Rickwood, 'The Norwich Book of Orders for Strangers, Its Origin, Compilation and Purpose' (MPhil dissertation, University of East Anglia, 1989). See also Douglas L. Rickwood, 'The Norwich strangers 1565–1643: A problem of control', *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London*, 24 (1984), pp. 119–28.

[24] NRO, NCR, 16a/9, fol. 149r.

[25] Walter Rye, *The Norfolk Antiquarian Miscellany*, III (Norwich, 1887), pp. 194–5. The first example is also quoted in Joby, *The Dutch Language in Britain*, pp. 165–6.

[26] NRO, FC 29/17, p. 105. The 1635 case involved Jenne, the wife of Nathanael Havet, and Marie Bourgois.

magistrates and leaders of refugee communities to tackle conflict and crime amongst the aliens and between newcomers and natives'.[27] It will therefore be instructive to analyse briefly the system of civic administration in Norwich into which the office of Politic Men was integrated.

Since the early fifteenth century, the government of Norwich had been administered by two 'houses', an upper and a lower house.[28] The lower house comprised sixty common councillors drawn from the four Great Wards: Conesford, Mancroft, *Ultra Aquam* or Over-the-Water, and Wymer. These Great Wards were divided into twelve small wards. Two common councillors from each small ward were elected to sit as aldermen in the upper house. They enjoyed life tenure and served as Justices of the Peace (JPs) or magistrates. Each year, the mayor and two sheriffs were chosen from their ranks.[29]

Justice was administered through a system of courts. The Mayor's Court was effectively a magistrates' court. It met twice a week to hear cases of assault, theft, and adultery. The number of JPs sitting varied depending on the nature of the cases. Cases that came before the Politic Men, which proved irreconcilable, were referred to the Mayor's Court.[30] The JPs also sat at Quarter Sessions, where many of the cases involved felony. More serious cases came before the Assizes.[31] Below the Mayor's Court was the Sheriff's Court, or Court of Record. It dealt with less serious matters such as debt and minor misdemeanours.[32] To some extent, the weekly hearings of the Politic Men were the Stranger communities' equivalent of the Sheriff's Court sessions.

The eyes and ears of the Norwich system of justice were the ward constables. They were elected annually and were responsible for keeping law and order in their ward.[33] One Flemish Stranger who became a ward constable was John Cruso (1593–after 1650).[34] Ward constables often went on to become common councillors. As the son of a freeman, Cruso was eligible to become a common councillor, although there is no evidence that he did so.[35] There was no equivalent to ward constables for the Politic Men. There were, however, bailiffs who were responsible for keeping law and order amongst the Strangers in general. I return to this position below.

IV

The office of Politic Men was introduced only a few years after Queen Elizabeth issued Letters Patent in 1565. Initially, the council appointed two aldermen, one of whom had to be a Justice of the Peace, to hear cases concerning the Strangers, and newcomers had to present themselves to the mayor and the two aldermen.[36] This measure, however, proved to be temporary. In 1568, the first official census of the Norwich Strangers indicated that their number far exceeded that permitted by the Letters Patent: almost 1500 Flemish or Dutch exiles and 339 Walloons.[37] Norwich's

[27] Esser, '"They obey all magistrates"', pp. 65–66.
[28] This was a result of the charter of 1404, which made Norwich a separate county from the rest of Norfolk.
[29] John Pound, 'Government to 1660', in Carole Rawcliffe and Richard Wilson (eds), *Norwich Since 1550* (London, 2004), pp. 35–62.
[30] Esser, '"They obey all magistrates"', p. 70.
[31] Dick Meadows and Geoff Evans, *Nothing But the Truth: A History of Norwich Magistracy* (s.l., 2012), p. 51.
[32] Meadows and Evans, *Nothing but the Truth*, p. 32.
[33] Paul Griffiths, 'Inhabitants', in Carole Rawcliffe and Richard Wilson (eds), *Norwich Since 1550* (London, 2004), pp. 63–88, at p. 73.
[34] NRO, NCR 16d/5, Assembly Book (1613–42), fol. 102r.
[35] Joby, *John Cruso of Norwich*, p. 79.
[36] NRO, NCR 17d/9, fol. 18v.
[37] Meeres, *The Welcome Stranger*, p. 27. For the census, see NRO, DN/DIS 10.

population in 1565 was around 10,000, so they already made up some 15%–20% of the population. Furthermore, whilst the Strangers provided an economic boost to the city, not everyone welcomed them. In 1567, Mayor Thomas Whalle (in office 1567–8) declared that '[he] had no liking for the Strangers', and even argued that they should be thrown out or 'avoided' from the city. The aldermen prevented Whalle from realising this ambition.[38] Nevertheless, his successor Thomas Parker (in office 1568–9) recognized the challenges that this sudden increase in Stranger numbers represented and so the role of Politic Men was introduced in Norwich during his mayoralty. An entry in the BODWS provides the necessary details:

> The tyme of Mr. Thomas Parker Maior.
> An ordenaunce made for the Alyans straungers
> Item that owte of your whoale companye, ye shall electe & name to the maior for the tyme beinge, eight parsons for the Dutche congregation, and fower for the Wallownes, that shalbe governoures to the whoale companye: And shall take upon them the chardge and awnsweringe, for suche as shalbe fownde remysse and neclygente [i.e., negligent] in parfourminge the articles afore (for Straungers) specifyed, or anye article or order hereafter thought meete and necessarye to be kepte and observed.[39]

It continues:

> And those eight and fower parsons shall yeerelye be presented to the maior for the tyme beinge, within seaven dayes after the maior shall have taken his chardge. And yf anye of the eighte and fower shall fortune to departe eyther owte of this citye, or ellis shall dye: That then within seaven dayes after his or their departure of this citye, or their deathe: the resydewe of the eighte and fower shall (in the name of the whoale companye) present unto the mayor, the name & names of hym or them so elected & chosen anewe.[40]

This tells us that twelve Strangers were to be elected annually as Politic Men, eight from the Flemish community and four from the Walloons. No reason was given for the choice of twelve. One possibility is that this was the number of men who served in juries. Their election had to be approved by the mayor, to whom they would swear an oath.[41] They were one of three groups of officials who helped to keep order amongst the Strangers, the other two being the elders and deacons of the Reformed exile churches. Broadly speaking, the elders and deacons, working alongside ministers, were responsible for ecclesiastical matters, such as cases of alleged adultery, the spiritual well-being of their community, care for the poor, and church finances.[42] The Politic Men were responsible for civil matters such as petty offences, financial disputes, the registering of apprenticeships amongst the Strangers, and guardianship.[43]

[38] Three years later, in 1570, Whalle, now an alderman, wrote to Clement Paston that the Strangers 'did but sucke the lyvenges away from the Inglishe': Christopher Joby, 'De rol van bronnen in de imagologie: een case study van Vlaamse vreemdelingen, Engelse inwoners, ambtenaren en machthebbers van de stad Norwich in de zestiende eeuw', *Neerlandica Wratislaviensia* 29 (2019), pp. 111–24, at p. 120. Whilst this may sound like a case of straightforward xenophobia, this may not be the whole story. Recent research has identified that Whalle was a crypto-Catholic. He may therefore have opposed the presence of the Strangers on religious grounds. Matthew Reynolds, *Godly Reformers and Their Opponents in Early Modern England: Religion in Norwich c. 1560–1643* (Woodbridge, 2005), p. 52.

[39] NRO, NCR 17d/9, fol. 19v.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Hessels, *Ecclesiae*, III, i, p. 1042.

[42] Both the Flemish and Walloon churches in Norwich were founded according to the example of the Dutch church in London. The discipline of the churches was derived from Johannes a Lasco's *Forma ac ratio*, written for the London church, which comprised a set of rules and regulations for church governance and defined the roles of ministers, elders, and deacons who were responsible for the religious and social order of the churches and the exile communities. Esser, 'The Politijcke Mannen', pp. 21–22.

[43] D.H. Fogt, 'Regulating marriage and socio-religious boundaries: the reformation and acts of nonconformity in Dutch-speaking migrant Communities, 1570–1600' (PhD thesis, Washington State University, 2023), p. 194; Esser, '"They obey all magistrates"', pp. 69–70.

Norwich was not the first town where Calvinist communities appointed separate officials to manage ecclesiastical and civil matters. In Middelburg in Zeeland, in the wake of the Iconoclastic Fury or *Beeldenstorm* in 1566, two church councils (*kerkenraden*), old and new, emerged. The old council dealt with matters concerning religion, whilst the new council, despite its name, did not function as a church council, but dealt with political matters (*raeckende de policie*). In French towns, there was sometimes a consistory and a political equivalent, *le conseil politique*. It may be that the model adopted in Norwich of having two sets of officials within Calvinist communities, for religious and political matters, had its origins on the Continent, although this is by no means certain.[44] If not, it is a good example of improvisation in a contact situation resulting from a sudden influx of migrants.

In Norwich, the elders, deacons, and Politic Men worked closely together, and there was some overlap in their duties. For example, in the mid-1570s, the three groups of leaders devised orders which were subsequently included in the Book of Orders to regulate the Flemish textile workers.[45] Furthermore, some Strangers served as elders or deacons before or after serving as Politic Men. One other group of officials in the Stranger communities with whom they worked closely were the Governors of the Flemish and Walloon Wool Halls.[46]

Shortly after the inception of the office of Politic Men, in 1569 the leaders of the Flemish exile community agreed twenty-four articles to regulate its activities and relations with the local people and civic authorities.[47] Several articles specifically concern the Politic Men. Article 12 establishes how the men were to be chosen. Alongside the eight current Politic Men, sixteen others were selected by ministers, elders, and deacons and from those twenty-four men, the eight for the following year would be chosen. Article 13 stipulates that along with the Governors of the Wool Hall, the Politic Men,

> Shall endevoure themselves to mayntayne the ordenaunces appartayninge to the draperye and cangeauntrye…and all those politicall matters, which shall come befor them, shalbe united uprightelye by them.

The 'draperye' and 'cangeauntrye' reference the Flemish and Walloon Wool Halls, respectively. Article 14 sets out what issues they might face and how they should deal with them:

> That the seyde eight men, whearas they knowe or ar geven to understaunde of anye fighters, dronckardes, whooremongers, streete walkers by nighte, contencious or rebellious parsons, whether they be of the Congregacion or not: they shalle cawse them to be pounyshed accordinge to the faulte, that all evell maye be rooted owte emongeste us, lyke as theye are therunto ordeyned by the maiestrates.[48]

Mention of the magistrates is a reminder that the men were answerable to the civic authorities.

In 1571, a major faultline within the Flemish exile community was exposed, and there were fears of civil unrest. Two parties emerged within the community: one that favoured armed resistance against the Spanish in the Low Countries and the other that opposed it. The dispute came before the civic authorities, and after pleas to resolve it

[44] Clasina Martina Rooze-Stouthamer, *Hervorming in Zeeland: ca. 1520–1572* (Goes, 1996), p. 322.
[45] NRO, NCR 17d/12, fol. 20v.
[46] Moens, *The Walloons*, I, p. 33.
[47] NRO, NCR 17d/9, fol. 39r.-41v. Esser, *Niederländische Exulanten*, p. 63.
[48] NRO, NCR 17d/9, fol. 40r.

were ignored, the three ministers of the Flemish church were ejected from the city as were several other exiles who had been identified as troublemakers.[49]

After this, to restore and maintain order amongst the Strangers, the mayor, in consultation with the Bishop of Norwich John Parkhurst (in post 1560–75), made eleven further articles or orders for the Politic Men.[50] The third article stipulated that the men were responsible for restricting the number of Strangers in Norwich, which by 1569 had already reached nearly 3000.[51] It was probably a desire to keep this rule that led Jan Ruytinck to write to the London Dutch church in 1574. Despite the efforts of Ruytinck and his colleagues, however, by 1578 their number had risen to about 7000, or 40% of the city's population.[52] An order made in 1573 stipulated that new Strangers had to join one of the Stranger churches or obtain a bill from the elders or Politic Men. In return, they would need to give a surety to the Politic Men to help ensure that they behaved well. The men would then present them to the mayor who would enter their names into 'his booke'.[53] Given the surge in Stranger numbers in the 1570s, registering new arrivals would have kept the men and the mayor very busy and one wonders whether they managed to keep a comprehensive register. The Politic Men would continue to perform the role of gatekeepers to the Stranger communities deep into the seventeenth century.[54]

A major concern of both ecclesiastical and secular authorities was religious heterodoxy or, as they saw it, heresy. Most of the exiles were Calvinists who could prove their orthodoxy, or least give an outward appearance of it, by attending or being members of the exile churches or being catechised. The Politic Men were required to present to the civic authorities 'suche as be sectuaries or do maynteyne any scismes' and 'suche as make anie conventicles or gatheringes of people for anye other cause' (articles 5 and 6). In other words, they had to apprehend any exiles who met outside the designated churches for religious worship. One other rule illustrates the need to co-operate with local officials. If the Politic Men tried to apprehend any Stranger, who resisted arrest, then they were to call on the ward constable to help them arrest the Stranger in question, to imprison him 'with their ayders and abbettors, during Master Maiors pleasure' (article 9).

The annual election of the eight Dutch or Flemish and four Walloon Politic Men stipulated in Thomas Parker's mayorship continued for many years.[55] In the 1605–15 minute-book, in June of each year, an entry marks the change of mayor: it includes the name of the new mayor who would confirm the election of the Politic Men.[56] Some Politic Men served more than one term, whilst others did not. The case of Robert Miclo tells us much about the behaviour that was expected of the men. He was a Politic Man in 1605, but by the first months of 1606, the other men were denying

[49] Christopher Joby, 'The Norwich exile community and the Dutch Revolt', *History* 109/384–5 (2024), pp. 59–91, at pp. 89–90; Christopher Joby, 'What does the birth of the Flemish and Walloon exile communities in Norwich tell us about local and national positions and practices adopted in response to large-scale migration from the Low Countries?' *Immigrants & Minorities* (2024), advance access 21 August 2024 <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619288.2024.2392831>.

[50] NRO, NCR 17d/9, fols. 47v.-48r; Moens, *The Walloons*, I, pp. 32–33.

[51] Meeres, *The Welcome Stranger*, p. 38.

[52] Joby, *John Cruso of Norwich*, p. 38.

[53] NRO, NCR 17d/9, fol. 77v.

[54] NRO, NCR 17d/9, fol. 115v.

[55] NRO, NCR 17d/9, fol. 19v.

[56] See for example, BL, MS. Add 43862, fol. 13v. Dutch: 'Hier eyndiget het meyerschap van Mr. Thomas Souterton ende begint het meyerschap van Mr. Joseph Cullis Den 17. Junius 1606. Int 4. Jaer der Regieringe van onse genadighe Coninck Jacobus' ('Here ends the mayoralty of Mr. Thomas Souterton and begins the mayoralty of Mr. Joseph Cullis 17 June 1606. In the fourth year of the reign of our gracious King James').

him access to the bench where they sat in the fifteenth-century Guildhall.[57] On 6 May, in response to a series of questions that he put to them regarding their actions, they made five points. The main charge against him was that he had failed to act as executor of the estate of a deceased Stranger, Pieter Weecksteen. This meant that he had not kept the ordinance of the church concerning orphans and had broken his oath to the mayor to keep such ordinances. Furthermore, the Politic Men claimed that he had lied to them about giving money from Weecksteen's estate to his orphaned child. All the men agreed on these points, and the matter was considered closed.[58]

Whilst the order in the BODWS stipulated that eight Flemish and four Walloons should be elected each year, for many sessions recorded in the 1605–15 minute-book, more than four Walloons are listed.[59] Furthermore, for some sessions, fewer than eight Flemings were present. Over time, the number of Politic Men elected from each community diminished. The list of members of the Flemish church which indicated who was eligible to partake of the Lord's Supper in July and October 1677 mentions four *politicke mannen*.[60] Orders for the 'Dutch Congregation' subscribed at the foot by successive mayors from 1744 to 1759 refer to the *politiques* although no further details are given.[61] The membership list for the Flemish church for 1750 lists one *politijk*, Adriaen de Cleve, who was also the senior deacon. A membership list for 1812 mentions elders and deacons, but no Politic Men.[62]

The minute-book of the Walloon church consistory gives the names of elders and deacons elected annually. By contrast, it only occasionally mentions the Walloon *hommes politiques* elected for each year together with the names of their predecessors. By the second half of the seventeenth century, there were only three *hommes politiques*, one of whom was chosen as bailiff. On 13 June 1672, for example, Charles Empereur was elected bailiff and Jan du Moulin and Jan Fromeau as *hommes politiques*.[63] An entry in 1723 indicates that there was still a bailiff and two Politic Men in the Walloon community.[64] By the late eighteenth century or early nineteenth century, the office of Politic Men had probably fallen into desuetude. Whilst there continued to be separate church communities, the Strangers had by this time largely integrated into the local population, and so matters that had previously been dealt with by the Politic Men could probably be handled in the English court system.[65]

Most of the Politic Men could sign their names, which suggests a certain level of education, although a few used their trademarks. Some of them, such as Jan Ruytinck, mentioned above, came from the upper social ranks of the Stranger communities. Ruytinck had been secretary to the Council of Flanders in Ghent before being forced into exile in the late 1560s. In Norwich, he worked as a notary and ran a boarding school. He also served as a governor of the Wool Hall.[66] His legal expertise would

[57] One possibility is that the Politic Men held their hearings in the Court of Record in the Guildhall, where the Mayor's Court and Sheriff's Court also met: Meadows and Evans, *Nothing but the Truth*, pp. 38–39.
[58] BL, Add. MS. 43862, fol. 12r.
[59] The BODWS also calls the Politic Men 'governors', viz. 'the viij governors of the Duche Churche'. NRO, NCR 17d/9, fol. 21r.
[60] NRO, MS 21490, *Dutch Reformed Church Register 1676–1879*, fol. 35. The four are named as Jan Hooft, Jacob de Hoone, Abram Colerijck(?), and Arnoldus Waelen.
[61] NRO, NCR 10c/26: Orders for the Dutch Congregation n.d. [late seventeenth century]–1759. The document is badly damaged, so not all of it is legible.
[62] NRO, MS 21490, fols 17 and 22. There is no mention of Politic Men in any of the entries after 1812.
[63] NRO, FC 29/17. Date: le 13e de juin 1672 (13 June 1672).
[64] NRO, FC 29/17. The entry dated 30 May 1723 names Louis De France as the bailiff and Jaques Harel and Jean Dupuy as the Politic Men. There is no mention of Politic Men in any of the entries after 1723.
[65] The Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 represents a likely terminal date for the use of Politic Men, as it did with many of the institutions and bodies of Norwich's local government.
[66] NRO, NCR 17d/9/2, fol. 49r.

probably have helped the Politic Men to administer justice. His son, Simeon, studied at Cambridge and Leiden before becoming minister of the Dutch church in London from 1601 to 1621. Adryan Wallewyn, a Flemish Politic Man in the 1580s, belonged to one of the leading Stranger merchant families in Norwich.[67] Francis Boy, a Flemish Politic Man in 1615, was a schoolmaster in the Flemish Stranger community.[68]

We have few details about how the Politic Men were reimbursed for their activities. However, orders in the minute-book for June 1606 do give us some insights about how the men managed money and how their office was funded.[69] The fifth order indicates that no cashier (Dutch: *cassier*) was to make advance payments from the cashbox but should keep all the income and profit to the end of his term as cashier and then make an account and hand that over to the next cashier. The list of orders was signed by eight Politic Men as cashiers.[70] This seems to indicate that each of them held a cashbox. Furthermore, this order suggests that before June 1606, cashiers were making advance payments, a practice which, one might assume, had caused problems. The sixth order indicates, in part at least, how the office of Politic Men was funded: 'all the profits from appeals, certificates, contracts, accounts, wills or other things will be for the profit of the entire bench of the men'.[71] The summaries of the cases in the minute-book often mention who should pay 'costs' (Dutch: *quade costen*). At least some of these 'costs' were probably paid to the Politic Men for giving up time to hear cases.

Another office within this devolved system of justice was that of the bailiff. It seems that there was one bailiff for each Stranger community and that they were appointed in addition to the Politic Men. In general, the bailiff was, in theory at least, a physical presence on the streets, who helped to keep order amongst the Strangers. He would round up unruly Strangers or report their actions to the Politic Men. The BODWS includes a list of twenty-nine orders for the bailiffs of the 'Ffrench (sic) + Duch congregations'.[72] The fourth order stated that it was the bailiff's duty to round up Strangers not in church on Sunday. The Strangers that he apprehended had to pay five shillings for the first infringement and ten shillings for the second. In a case that came before the men in May 1609, Bailiff Buyck accused Cornelis Janson of walking about at the market during the sermon at the Flemish church and demanded a fine of five shillings from him.[73] Janson tried to defend himself by saying that he was on his way to the parish church of St Peter Mancroft, which is on the other side of the market from the Flemish church.[74] Nevertheless, the men, perhaps unsurprisingly, found in favour of the bailiff and told him and Janson to agree on a fine.[75] In October 1606, the bailiff reported that Abrahaem Pieren and Elyasaer de Hoorne had been walking around 'during the sermon' although we are not told where. The Politic Men ordered each of them to pay a fine.[76]

[67] NRO, MC 189/1, fol. 17r. Joby, *John Cruso of Norwich*, pp. 46, 88.
[68] BL, Add. MS. 43862, fol. 163v; Joby, *The Dutch Language in Britain*, p. 207; Joby, *John Cruso of Norwich*, p. 55.
[69] BL, Add. MS. 43862, fol. 14r.
[70] They were Pieter Deuwele, Abrahaem van Hecke, Nicolais Faes, Adriaen de Puyt, Jasper Burir, Boudewyn Wydoot, Jan Hoobbert, and Mr. Charels de Huyser.
[71] BL, Add. MS. 43862, fol. 14r.
[72] NRO, NCR 17d/9, fols 115r.-116v. This list was made in 1642, and there is a similar list for 1643 in the BODWS. However, it is likely that each year, the bailiffs would have to swear an oath before the magistrates to carry out these orders.
[73] BL, Add. MS. 43862, fol. 54v.
[74] The Flemish congregation met for worship in the building now called Blackfriars' Hall in the parish of St Andrew.
[75] This may be Larsar du Buicq, who was a witness to a baptism in the Walloon church in 1615. Moens, *The Walloons*, II, p. 66.
[76] BL, Add. MS. 43862, fol. 18v.

Other orders in the BODWS restricted the Strangers' trading activities, and it was the duty of the bailiffs to police these restrictions and fine those who ignored them. For example, Stranger bakers who bought corn in the market before one o'clock would be fined 5*s*.[77] Other cases involving the bailiffs were various in nature. In March 1606, the other bailiff, Jan Fremou, demanded a fine of 6*s*. 8*d*. from a Stranger called Everaert. Fremou accused him of calling a Walloon a thief, and, importantly, had witnesses to back him up.[78] In 1608, the bailiff, we are not told which one, asked David de Poortere for five shillings having found his son sleeping at 2 AM (Dutch: *tot ij*^{en} *stonden*) on the floor in the cathedral. Despite De Poortere's objection that the bailiff had no authority to arrest someone in the cathedral, the Politic Men approved the bailiff's request for recompense.[79] Additionally, these cases tell us how the bailiffs earned money. They also received money if orders for the Flemish textile workers were violated. For example, they earned 2*s*. 6*d*. if merchants or drapers used wool that had not been checked for quality.[80] The position of bailiff was not, however, without its risks. In 1608, Colaert Frerenburch was summoned to appear before the Politic Men. He had been involved in a fight and 'without good reason' had hit the bailiff, who was perhaps trying to break up the fight.[81]

The second of the twenty-nine orders mentions both the Politic Men and the bailiff.[82] It states that any Stranger who had settled in Norwich and was working for a master needed to have a bill issued by the Politic Men. This points once more to their role as gatekeepers to the Stranger communities and thus to living and working in Norwich. The article stipulates that the Strangers needed to be able show their bill to the bailiff on request. Failure to have a bill or to produce it when requested would result in a fine.

V

The 1571 orders for the Politic Men state that they were required to act 'as arbitrators of petye cawses'.[83] They did this at the weekly meetings or hearings, typically held on Saturdays. One advantage of this approach to justice was that cases could be heard in the Strangers' languages. The vetting and confirmation of their election by the mayor added safeguards to this process. Frequent reference to the mayor's ordinances in records of the Politic Men's decisions indicates that they were keenly aware that they were ultimately answerable to him.

In the 1605–15 minute-book, at the start of each mayoral year, except for the year 1610–11, the rules governing procedure for the Politic Men were listed. The six rules for 1606 included an exhortation to the men to keep the Christian ordinances that had been kept since the inception of the Stranger communities in the 1560s, and details of fines for missing meetings: if they missed one meeting, they would be fined 3*d*. (unless they were out of the country or ill), and another 6*d*. if they missed three meetings in a six-week period.[84] In 1607, the same six rules were listed with a couple of additions. They were written in Dutch and signed by the Flemish Politic Men. One addition was that none of the Politic Men should spread gossip or talk to

[77] NRO, NCR 17d/9, fol. 115r.
[78] BL, Add. MS. 43862, fol. 9r. He was witness to a baptism in the Walloon church in 1599. Moens, *The Walloons*, II, p. 77.
[79] BL, Add. MS. 43862, fol. 41v.
[80] NRO, NCR 17d/11, fol. 1r.
[81] Dutch: 'sonder couse'. BL, Add. MS. 43862, fol. 18v.
[82] NRO, NCR 17d/9, fol. 115r.
[83] NRO, NCR, 17d/9, fol. 47v. Rule 10.
[84] BL, Add. MS. 43862, fol. 14r.

others about the proceedings of their meetings. This might suggest that some of them had been letting their tongues wag. Anyone doing this would be fined 2*s*. Another addition stated that anyone who fell asleep during the meetings would be fined 2*d*.[85]

Minutes of the meetings were taken by the clerks to the Politic Men. The first clerk mentioned in the earlier minute-book, P. Langhelets, does not appear in other surviving Stranger records. His successor, Pieter Weynoet, was the stepson of Joos de Ram, a bookbinder who died in 1577. In his will, De Ram bequeathed a silver goblet, all his garments, and 'bookes aswell Lattyn as Dutch' to Weynoet 'for the advancement and furthering of his study'.[86] In the same year, 1577, Weynoet matriculated as a pensioner at Corpus Christi, Cambridge. He is listed in the Cambridge records as Peter Ramus, Ramus being a Latinized version of his stepfather's surname.[87] He was clerk to the Politic Men from 1584 to 1612. In 1622, Weynoet's successor, Johannes Coccelius, was recorded with his Anglicized name, John Cokele, a schoolmaster born 'beyond the seas'.[88]

VI

As noted above, most of the entries in the two minute-books are in Dutch or French. In broad terms, the language in which the minutes were written was probably the one used in the cases that they record. Dutch was therefore the main language spoken in the meetings, although French was also frequently used. Letters were written in both languages. Whilst the Dutch often exhibits dialectal features found in contemporary Flemish texts, the entries in French lack dialectal features found in other Norwich documents.[89] This suggests that Pieter Weynoet probably learnt French as a second or third language. A few entries are in English. In the eighteenth century, most Stranger records are in English, so English was probably used in the meetings and other activities of the Politic Men.

Latin was a prestigious language in the early modern period. It was sometimes used for titles and codas of entries in the minute-books. Under one entry in French in the earlier minute-book, Weynoet signed himself in Latin *politicorum virorum scriba Pieter Weijnoet alias Ramus* ('clerk of the Politic Men [*viri politici*], Pieter Weijnoet, also known as Ramus').[90] The use of Latin for titles and codas and a vernacular language for the main text points to code-switching, that is, switching between languages. In fact, Weynoet often engaged in code-switching; sometimes between Dutch and French, but also as here between a vernacular and Latin. A Latin title enhanced the official status of a text in the vernacular and imitated the practice of giving Greek titles to Latin texts in antiquity.[91] If there was no business at a meeting

[85] BL, Add. MS. 43862, fol. 25v. The Dutch word for spreading gossip is *clappen* (line 5 'iet clappen zal').
[86] Leonard Forster, *Janus Gruter's English Years* (London, 1967).
[87] John Venn and J.A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses: A Biographical List of All Known Students, Graduates and Holders of Office at the University of Cambridge, from the Earliest Times to 1900, Part I: From the Earliest Times to 1751*, 4 vols. (Cambridge, 1922–7), III, p. 418.
[88] Moens, *The Walloons*, II, p. 192.
[89] Christopher Joby, 'French in early modern Norwich', *Journal of French Language Studies* 27/3 (2017), pp. 431–51, at p. 439.
[90] NRO, MC 189/1, fol. 48v. In 1612, an entry in French has the Latin title *Spiritus Sancti nobis adsit gratia* ('The Grace of the Holy Spirit be present with us') (BL, Add. MS. 43862, fol. 122r.).
[91] James Adams, *Bilingualism and the Latin Language* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 390–3; Christopher Joby, *The Multilingualism of Constantijn Huygens (1596–1687)* (Amsterdam, 2014), p. 224.

of the men, Weynoet would sometimes write in Latin 'nullus cucurrit', indicating that nothing had happened.[92]

The clerks typically recorded the facts of the cases that came before the men and their judgment. The cases often involved financial disputes or guardianship, but also accusations of calumny and, exceptionally, fraud. They offer a window into the lives of the Strangers and tidbits of information that add colour to what we know about them.

The number of financial disputes that came before the men leads Esser to call them the 'economic watchdogs' of the Stranger communities.[93] The nature of the financial disputes varied. Some involved agreements that according to plaintiffs had been broken. In 1611, a work-related dispute between Jehan van Hecke and Simon Doen came before the Politic Men. They decided that Doen should stick to his agreement with Van Hecke and either employ him for a year or give him two weeks' wages and pay his expenses.[94] The men often came up with different solutions to address specific cases and deal with the financial situation of each person who appeared before them. In 1605, Jan Cattelle and Jaque le Grain Junior, themselves both Politic Men, brought a case against Charel Gringool, seeking 3*s*. 8*d*. plus costs. The minutes do not record why the defendant, Gringool, owed this money. However, they do tell us that he acknowledged his debt and offered to pay 6*d*. a week until the debt was settled. There were twelve pence in a shilling, so it would have taken seven to eight weeks to pay off this debt. The Politic Men reviewed the case and decided that the defendant should immediately pay a deposit, the amount of which the plaintiffs would have to agree to, and then settle the outstanding debt within three weeks.[95]

In 1605/6, Adryan Wallewyn bequeathed to Jan or John Cruso £4, and to 'every one of the children of John Crusoe 20*s*. sterlinge'. In 1606/7, John appeared twice before the Politic Men in relation to the Wallewyns. On 3 February, he appeared on behalf of Mrs. Wallewyn and was permitted to avoid any payment; no further details are given. Later that year, on 27 October, he appeared as the defendant to answer a complaint made by Daniel Wallewyn Junior. The minutes record that the Politic Men ordered John to pay Daniel £4. It may be a coincidence, but this matches the amount that Adryan Wallewyn had bequeathed to John.[96]

The amounts of money concerned varied significantly. Some financial cases concerned relatively small amounts of money.[97] One such case, heard on 28 April 1607, involved Jan Obert and Pieter de Vos. Obert, the plaintiff, demanded 2*s*. from De Vos, the defendant, which, he claimed, De Vos had borrowed from his mother. De Vos responded that he had never received any money from Obert. Clearly, further deliberations took place, and the men decided that Obert's claim against De Vos was baseless and that he should speak to his mother again on the matter and return to them if there was still a case to answer. At the same meeting, Jan Vasuer brought a case against Jan Hameau seeking the same sum, 2*s*., for board and lodgings or 'bread, butter and rent' (Dutch: *broot booter ende huyshueren*). Hameau had been summoned three times but failed to appear. The men declared that he should pay the amount immediately with costs.

In other cases, however, the amount of money involved was quite large. In 1600, one English pound was worth about £250 pounds in today's money. In 1606, Bastiaen van

[92] BL, Add. MS. 43862, fol. 45v. For two consecutive weeks in August 1607, no cases came before the men, so the clerk wrote in Dutch: 'Desen dach en wasser niet te doen' ('on this day there was nothing to do') (fol. 27v.).
[93] Esser, '"They obey all magistrates"', pp. 69–70.
[94] BL, Add. MS. 43862, fol. 86r.-v; Joby, *The Dutch Language in Britain*, pp. 167–8.
[95] BL, Add. MS. 43862, fol. 12v.
[96] BL, Add. MS. 43862, fols 21r. and 30r.
[97] BL, Add. MS. 43862, fol. 24r., 28 April 1607.

Buren came before the Politic Men to claim that the widow of Johannes van Straseele owed him £6, or £1,500 in today's money. She responded that this was a great calumny. The men adjudged that he should bring them evidence of the debt so that they could judge the case fairly.[98] In the same year, 1606, Mary du Val appeared before the men making a claim for wool to the value of £14 11*s*. 5*d*. This would be about £3500 in modern money. The defendant Jaspar Burir responded by saying that he owed wool to the value of £12 8*s*. 3*d*. The Politic Men therefore needed to pass judgment on the difference of £2 3*s*. 2*d*.[99]

In one case, satisfaction took an unusual form. On 20 October 1607, Margret, the widow of Jan Vicaerd, made a complaint against Jan l'Englar. She demanded a letter and a pot of conserve as well as costs. The defendant said that he had already delivered two pots of converse to the plaintiff and argued that he had delivered all the converse that he had received from his supplier in Calais. No more details are given about this intriguing story of cross-Channel conserve supply.[100]

Many cases involved putting the affairs of orphans in order; either ensuring that they received the money due to them from the estate of their deceased parents or that appropriate guardians or tutors were appointed to look after them until they came of age. Other cases involved accusations of calumny. In 1611, Jacques Enghebaert and Pieter Holnoet accused each other of calumny. Having examined the case, the men ordered Holnoet to pay a fine and costs.[101] In a case recorded in Dutch in 1606, Robert Maier said that he had heard Noel Have call Everaert Wervekin's son, Isaac, a thief. In response, Everaert asked why his son was called a thief, but admitted that he did not understand well 'de Walsche sprake', that is, the Walloon dialect of French.[102]

A few cases that came before the Politic Men involved violent behaviour. Above, I mentioned a case involving a fight in which the bailiff was hit. In 1613, the Politic Men charged two men and three women of the Flemish exile community with violent and aggressive behaviour and fined them 6*s*. 4*d*.[103] Some more serious cases involving Strangers were dealt with by the Mayor's Court. In February 1570, Christian de Ffox, who had been arrested and put in prison, was sentenced to be 'set in the stocks and commanded to departe the cittie within 100 dayes'. If, however, he was found to be still in Norwich after 100 days, then he would be 'whipped oute of the cittie'. His crime had been to offer 'vylany and to dishoniste a young woman newly maryed'.[104] Other cases concerning sexual *mores* occur in the minute-books. On 10 February 1606, Cornelis de Stoeldrayer appeared before the Politic Men. He promised 'with Gods help' to leave for Holland where, he confessed, he had a young common-law wife with whom he had a child. He claimed that he would marry her there.[105]

The minute-books often throw up some local colour or give us unexpected insights into local life. A case heard on 18 November 1606 involved two men called Jan Martin as plaintiff and defendant. To distinguish between them, the clerk named the plaintiff 'Jan Martin fait tout', that is, 'Jan Martin does everything', and the defendant 'Jan Martin fait rien' or 'Jan Martin does nothing'; perhaps these were

[98] BL, Add. MS. 43862, fol. 13r.
[99] BL, Add. MS. 43862, fol. 21v.
[100] BL, Add. MS. 43862, fol. 29v.
[101] Joby, *The Dutch Language in Britain*, p. 168; BL, Add. MS 43862, fol. 102r. The Dutch term used for 'calumny', *lecheragie* is unusual and does not appear in the authoritative Dutch dictionary, *Het Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*.
[102] BL, Add. MS. 43862, fol. 10r.
[103] BL, Add. MS. 43862, fol. 124. Quoted in Esser, '"They obey all magistrates"', p. 70, n. 21.
[104] NCR, 16a/9 Mayor's Court Book, Jun 1569–Jun 1576, p. 220. 10 February, 13 Elizabeth I (1570/1).
[105] BL, Add. MS. 43862, fol. 21v.

commonly used nicknames for the men. In the case, 'Does everything' made a claim for 5*s*. because he had hired a worker from 'Does nothing' and this worker owed 'Does everything' 5*s*. The Politic Men upheld the complaint and ordered 'Does nothing' to pay 'Does everything' the 5*s*. plus costs.[106] The minute-books occasionally mention local placenames. In one case, a Stranger called Everaert had heard merchants talking at 'in de platse van St Joores op Tombland', that is, the area of St George's Tombland; 'Joris' is the Dutch for 'George'.[107] In another case, Jacques le Rouge had overheard a conversation 'int witte peert' – that is, a pub, one of many in Norwich, called 'The White Horse'.[108]

Above, I mentioned Jan or John Cruso. In 1608, something happened which no doubt dented his reputation as a cloth merchant and church elder in the Dutch Stranger community. On 8 September, an extraordinary meeting of the Politic Men was convened to which Cruso was summoned. He was accused of falsifying seals (seals were attached to finished pieces of cloth that had met the required standard). This, it was argued, would not only harm his reputation but also that of the Stranger community. Indeed, one can only imagine what the reaction of the civic authorities would have been if they had got wind of this case. A similar case in the Flemish bay-making community in Colchester in 1581 had led local church leaders to comment that those who counterfeited seals in the Low Countries would have been condemned to the gallows.[109] So, it is not surprising that the Politic Men ordered that the matter be kept quiet. The clerk, Pieter Weynoet, recorded the case in Dutch. I have translated the relevant section into English as follows:

> the Politic Men have found that Jan Cruso has committed an offence against the trading community and harmed it significantly by attaching say-seals to send the same (i.e. the says) to London. Wanting to protect the honour of the community and attempting to resolve all these matters quietly and properly, the governors and the Politic Men have finally decided that to make good the situation. Jan Cruso shall first hand over to the governors of the same say-trade all the counterfeit seals that he had made for this purpose.

Cruso was given a fine of £5 15*s*., over £1250 in today's money.[110] Three months later, on 8 November 1608, Cruso had paid this fine.[111]

VII

Raingard Esser argues that the office of Politic Men in Norwich provided a template for dealing with civil matters in Stranger communities in other English towns such as Canterbury and London.[112] Politic Men also helped to administer justice and maintain order in the Stranger communities in Sandwich in Kent and Halstead in

[106] BL, Add. MS. 43862, fol. 19r.
[107] Tombland is an open area near the cathedral, where the market had been held before the Norman Conquest.
[108] BL, Add. MS. 43862, fols 6v., 15r. At one time, there were no fewer than nine pubs with this name in Norwich. K.I. Sandred and B. Lindström, *The Place-Names of Norfolk. Part 1: The Place Names of the City of Norwich* (Nottingham, 1989), p. 124.
[109] Joby, *The Dutch Language in Britain*, p. 138; Hessels, *Ecclesiae*, III, i, pp. 607–8.
[110] BL, Add. MS. 43862, fol. 45r.
[111] BL, Add. MS. 43862, fol. 47r.
[112] Esser, '"They obey all magistrates"', p. 70. For the Walloon community in Canterbury, see Beate Magen, *Die Wallonengemeinde von Canterbury von ihrer Gründung bis zum Jahre 1635* (Frankfurt/Main, 1973), pp. 147–57. See also Silke Muylaert. *Shaping the Stranger Churches: Migrants in England and the Troubles in the Netherlands, 1547–1585* (Leiden, 2020), p. 73. For the establishment of Politic Men in the London Dutch community, see O.P. Grell, *Dutch Calvinism in Early Stuart London. The Dutch Church in Austin Friars 1603–1642* (Leiden, 1989), p. 86.

Essex.[113] The minutes of the colloquium of French and Walloon exile churches in England held at Southampton in 1598 confirm that several of their communities such as Southampton and London had Politic Men, and so by the end of the sixteenth century, they formed an intrinsic part of the social fabric in exile communities. The minutes also indicate that one of the men's main tasks was to 'cleanse' (Fr. repurger) the exile churches of those who did not adhere to their rules.[114] A question addressed at the corresponding colloquium in 1619 asks at what point cases dealt with by the Politic Men should be handed over to the local magistrates. The answer given is that they should do whatever they can to resolve cases using the powers granted to them before passing them to local JPs. This illustrates that as in Norwich, more serious cases would be dealt with by the local magistrates.[115]

Apart from Norwich, there were three other Flemish exile communities in Norfolk: in King's Lynn, Thetford and Great Yarmouth. I have not yet found evidence for Politic Men in King's Lynn, although I do not rule out the possibility that they were appointed in the town. By contrast, correspondence provides evidence for Politic Men in Thetford and Great Yarmouth. The Stranger communities in both towns were established in about 1570. In 1580, the Flemish church consistory in Thetford wrote to its London counterpart that one of the community's members, Paesschier Clarebout, had asked the town's mayor to hold an election for Politic Men without the knowledge of the consistory, which up to then had always chosen the men. The members of the consistory were clearly not happy about this.[116] As for Yarmouth, a letter dated 9 September 1593 from the consistory of the town's Dutch church refers to elections being held after the Sunday sermon. The first election was to be held for *de mannen*, which is likely to refer to *politicke mannen*, who were elected annually.[117]

VIII

To conclude, the Politic Men in Norwich played an important role in resolving disputes between members of the town's Flemish and Walloon Stranger communities and contributed to maintaining urban stability in early modern Norwich. The office of Politic Men began as an improvisational measure to cope with the sudden influx of migrants from the Low Countries in the late 1560s. However, it developed as a well-regulated system of devolved crime control and evolved over time. In 1571, the civic authorities issued new orders in response to disputes that had emerged in the Stranger communities. Importantly, this system gave the Strangers access to justice in their own language. During the seventeenth century, English was probably increasingly used, reflecting the gradual integration of the Strangers into the local population. As the number of Strangers declined, so too did the number of Politic Men. Nevertheless, the office continued to function for two centuries. During this time, at minimal expense to the city coffers, it allowed for the social control of many migrants, who made a significant contribution to revitalising Norwich's economy.

[113] For Halstead, see Hessels, *Ecclesiae*, III, i, pp. 867–8; for Sandwich, see Hessels, *Ecclesiae*, III, i, p. 972, and Backhouse, 'The Flemish and Walloon communities at Sandwich', I, p. 107. See also Joby, *The Dutch Language in Britain*, pp. 169–70.

[114] For Southampton, see A.C. Chamier (transcr. and ed.), *Les Actes des Colloques des Eglises Françaises et des Synodes des Eglises Etrangeres refugiées en Angleterre 1581–1654* (Lymington, 1890), p. 38. For London, see Andrew Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 181–214. As well as in Norwich, there were French or Walloon exile churches in Canterbury, London, Rye, and Southampton.

[115] Chamier, *Les Actes des Colloques*, pp. 58–59.

[116] Hessels, *Ecclesiae*, III, i, p. 573.

[117] Hessels, *Ecclesiae*, III, i, p. 958.

This institutional innovation fitted well into the overall system of justice in Norwich. Whilst the Strangers could elect their own officers, the mayor had the power to reject any candidates whom he considered unfit. The men met in the Guildhall, the building from which the magistrates administered justice, and the men could hand over responsibility to the JPs for cases that they could not resolve. On occasion, however, as in the case involving John Cruso in 1608, they thought it best to keep the matter within the Stranger communities. As well as administering justice, the Politic Men acted as gatekeepers to their communities, requiring guarantees to help ensure that new arrivals did not cause trouble. One mark of the success of this office is that it may have provided a template for similar institutions elsewhere in Norfolk and further afield.

Finally, an analysis of cases that came before the Politic Men gives us rare access to everyday life in the Stranger communities. Whilst most of their activities doubtless passed off without trouble, the vignettes recorded in the minute-books tell of occasional financial disputes, non-fulfilment of obligations, accusations of slander, fights, and, in the case of Cruso, fraud. Cases involving the bailiff point to Strangers not attending church, falling asleep in the cathedral, and being involved in brawls. Further work on the two minute-books of the meetings of the Politic Men will provide more valuable insights into the deeds and misdeeds of the Norwich Strangers.