

**Alisa van de Haar**

*The Comeback of Peeter Heyns: Rebuilding a Reputation in the 1585 Antwerp Diaspora*

When in 1585 Antwerp, the flourishing trading metropolis of the Low Countries, came in Habsburg hands, its Protestant citizens were given four years to decide whether they would convert to Catholicism or be exiled from the city. Most of them did not need this much time to make up their minds and within the first year 21,000 people, a quarter of the city's population, had left their homes and often also friends and family behind in search of a new life elsewhere. One of them was Peeter Heyns (1537-1598), a well-known rhetorician, translator, and master of a French school for girls, the *Laurel Tree*, which attracted the daughters of the some of the richest merchants in the area. Heyns, accused of Protestantism, saw himself forced to leave his home town in 1585. His family followed later and together they wandered towards Frankfurt and Stade to settle, some years later, in Haarlem. There, Heyns proved to be exemplarily and inspirationally resilient in a period of personal and communal crisis. While he had been a famous man in Antwerp, he was just one of the many immigrants that seemed to flood his new town Haarlem. Instead of losing heart and withdrawing from public life, he started to rebuild a name for himself. He opened a new *Laurel Tree* and, with the help of his son, he (re)published many of his written works, among which there were a collection of fables, French instruction books, a pocket atlas, and three of the plays Heyns had written for his pupils to perform while still residing in Antwerp. This paper shows how these texts, containing references to the Dutch Revolt and supporting the case of rebel leader William of Orange, not only allowed him to rebuild his fame as a writer, connoisseur of the French language, teacher, and supporter of Orange, but also added to the communal memory culture of the Antwerpians in exile.