

Editorial

Ulrich Tiedau, University College London

With many thanks to Elke Brems, Theresia Feldmann, Orsolya Réthelyi and Ton van Kalmthout for guest-editing the last issue of *Dutch Crossing*, a special issue on the manifold transnational trajectories of Dutch literature,^[1] it is my pleasure to introduce this next 'regular' issue of the *Journal of Low Countries Studies*. We realize that some authors have been waiting for a long time to see their articles in print, for which we would like to present our apologies, but also use the opportunity to remind our esteemed audience and contributors that Dutch Crossing is operating a 'hybrid' publishing model like in the natural sciences, with time-stamped online publication of articles with Digital Object Identifier (DOI) and all bells and whistles in a first step, which counts as a full publication, before in a second step, the individual articles are assigned to an issue, which is published both, in print and online. While our turnaround time for the former has decreased to only a couple of months or so, the latter occasionally, especially after special issues, alas takes a bit longer.

On to the contributions to this last issue in this memorable year (November 2020), starting with Coen van't Veer's (Leiden) analysis of gender in novels about the sea passage between the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies from the 1850s to the 1890s. Based on a close reading of eighteen novels that depict the long journey around the Cape of Africa Van't Veer investigates the colonial microcosm that the yearlong passenger communities formed in these novels, from which contemporaries gained important information about colonial life in the Indies.

Marcin Polkowski (Lublin) discusses the 17th-century Anglo-Dutch polemicist and publisher Richard Verstegan's concern about the misuse of language and its impact on society, as reflected in his religious publications. As his analysis of Verstegan's pamphlets shows, the writer, also known as Richard Rowlands (~1550–1640), acknowledged the existence of a close link between the misuse of power and that of language in Elizabethan England and used elements of mystification in his pamphlets that were characteristic of the convention of 'epistolary fiction'.

Michał Wenderski (Poznań) turns his attention to cultural transfers between the Netherlands and Poland, namely to the influence that the Warsaw-based avantgarde artist Mieczysław Szczuka (1898–1927) had on experimental Dutch artist Hendrik Nicolaas Werkman (1882–1945) in Groningen.

While the two eminent representatives of Polish and Dutch interwar vanguards lived and worked far from artistic 'centres' and did not travel much, their work displays undeniable influence of one of these 'peripheral' artists on the other. Wenderski's analysis, based on historical sources as well as Szczuka's and Werkman's paintings, provide evidence for the former's importance for the latter and at the same time questions widespread assumptions regarding the direction of cultural transfers 'from centres to peripheries' and 'from West to East'.

Cornelis W. Schoneveld (Leiden) is interested in the reasons behind the Elizabethan poet and courtier Sir Philip Sidney's (1554–1586) choosing the melody of the *Wilhelmus*, a song from the Dutch Revolt that became the national anthem of the Netherlands, as the tune for a poem he wrote in 1583, published as part of his *Certain Sonets*. Combining a close reading of the sonnet, which proves its character as an elegy,

with historical research that leads to a rejection of the traditionally supposed identity of the person who is the subject of the poem, his analysis establishes the real identity of that person.

Lastly, Bram Mertens (Nottingham) looks at Erwin Mortier's acclaimed debut novel *Marcel*, first published in 1999, which tells the story of a Flemish family haunted by the involvement of several family members in the wartime collaboration with the Nazis. While the novel has usually been read as a narrative of reconciliation, showing the often painful process of successive generations gradually gaining some understanding of the past and coming to terms with it, Mertens' close reading and historical contextualization of *Marcel* reveals a much more complex picture, casting doubt both on the accuracy of the characters' understanding and the sincerity of their intentions. This article is the first to offer a rival interpretation of Mortier's novel, proposing that, rather than recognizing their guilty past, the characters may be unable or unwilling to acknowledge it as such and could instead be poised to sow the seeds of its continuation and repetition.

As always best wishes for good reading. Stay safe!

Note

[1] "Transnational Trajectories of Dutch Literature, Dutch Crossing," *Journal of Low Countries Studies*, vol. 44, no. 2 (July 2020), <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/ydtdc20/44/2?nav=toCList> [accessed 5 September 2020]. Disclosure Statement