

40th Anniversary Virtual Special Issue

Dutch Crossing: Journal of Low Countries Studies

This virtual special issue of *Dutch Crossing: Journal of Low Countries Studies* appears on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the journal and makes some of its most well received contributions from the last volumes free-access for a time-limited period.

Benjamin Kaplan (London) opens the issue with a study of the impact that the vicinity of borders had on religious practices in early modern Europe. His case study of Vaals, located where the borders of the United Provinces, the Habsburg Netherlands, and the Holy Roman Empire met makes us aware that territorial borders in early modern times were profoundly different from modern ones between nation states and leads to a re-examination of the famous principle *cuius regio eius religio* that had very practical limits in border regions, not just in and around Vaals but also across the whole of early modern Europe.

Erica Heinsen-Roach (South Florida) investigates the Dutch Republic's approaches at liberating compatriots held in captivity on the North-African Barbary Coast. Her analysis of Dutch diplomatic activities in the Mediterranean shows how far the domestic political constellation prevented a unified approach and that the Dutch redemptive practice rather mirrored and reinforced internal divisions of the United Provinces.

Judy Park (Los Angeles) turns her attention to John Massinger and Peter Fletcher's *The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnavelt* (1619), a political play based on the controversial execution of the Dutch Grand Pensionary in The Hague in the same year, performed at London's Globe Theatre. Rather than focussing on the issue of Jacobean censorship, of which the play was a prime example, Park's paper reads the dramatic piece as an analysis of the relationship between monarchy, mercantilism and the spectre of republicanism, not just in the Low Countries, but also, if somewhat veiledly, England.

Jeroen Dewulf (Berkeley) presents his reading of Sojourner Truth's famous slave *Narrative* (1850) as Dutch-American Contact Literature, based on the suggestion that even if an American literary text is written in English, the other languages of the 'contact zone' in which the text originated and/or to which it alludes also impacted the writing process and therefore need to be included in the analysis. Since Truth spent the first 30 years of her life as a slave in a predominantly Dutch-speaking environment in the Hudson Valley, analysing her narrative as 'contact literature' implies a focus on Dutch cultural traces.

Michael J. Douma (Springfield, Illinois) traces the life story of Siras Sill, the only black Dutchman living in the Dutch-American immigrant community of Holland, Michigan, in the second half of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century against the backdrop of the racial discourse of the Dutch in America. Douma shows how Siras, although respected by locals, could not escape the racial stereotypes and prejudices of the Midwest in this time. His highly illuminating micro-history of Siras, worked from primary sources, sheds light on a larger discourse of Dutch-American ethnic and national identity.

Joost Coté (Melbourne) draws on a recently discovered cache of letters written by the sisters of the Indonesian national heroine Raden Ajeng Kartini (1879–1904), a pioneer in the area of education for girls and women's rights, to examine female colonial friendships in the early 20th century Dutch East Indies. While revealing previously unknown aspects of Lady Kartini's life and work, Coté's article also illuminates the ambiguous nature of female colonial friendships in this period. It suggests that closer reading of this correspondence reveals the growing sense of national identity that enabled 'real' friendships between European and Indonesian women in colonial Java in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Florencia V. Cornet (Columbia, South Carolina) turns her attention to three contemporary women writers from the Dutch-Caribbean island Curaçao, Aliefka Bijlsma, Loeki Morales and Myra Römer, and their respective imaginings of a *Kurasoleña* identity, a Papiamentu word with loaded conceptual understanding of what it means to be a Curaçaoan woman. Cornet critically analyses the racial and gender decolonization process and social agency in their works of fiction to locate the performance of third space politicization and identity formation of Curaçaoan women.

Augustinus P. Dierick (Toronto) looks at Dutch Modernism at the turn of the century through the prism of Hendrik Marsman's literary critical writings from 1926, published under the title *De anatomische les*. Analysing the main topics of Marsman's poetic programme as the relation between life and art (in this case poetry), a definition of the work of art, and the effect of art on the reader, Dierick shows how Marsman regarded lyric poetry as a symptom of the all-pervasive individualism of modern times against which contemporary poetry, starting with the Tachtigers movement of 1880, provided a much-needed, although not unambivalent, antidote and corrective, and how he eventually changed his poetic practice, moving from an at times shrill 'expressionism' or 'vitalism' to a symbolist organic style, whilst continuing his defence of poetry against those who would question art's autonomy.

Jane Fenoulhet (London) looks at the writings of two Dutch twentieth-century writers, Charles Edgar du Perron (1899–1940) who died during the German invasion, and Hella Haasse (1918–) whose lifespan encompasses the whole 'short' twentieth century and beyond to the present day. Focusing on two eighteenth-century scandals that du Perron and Haasse re-narrated for a twentieth-century audience, her attention is directed at the contribution of life writing, particularly biography, to public memory. By placing private lives in the public arena on the assumption that they are relevant to the concerns of a reading public, biographical writing raises two questions: why are these particular stories worthy of interest and what power do they have to alter public memory?

Utecht Geert Buelens' essay, based on his keynote to the ALCS conference *Low Countries — Big Cities* in Sheffield, offers an analysis of the on-going discussion about 'Dutch identity' that has dominated both scholarly and public debates in the Netherlands ever since two political assassinations shook the peaceful country at the beginning of the 21st century. Challenging the consensus that a post-1945 emphasis on internationalism, cosmopolitanism and Europeanism in combination with a lax immigration regime alienated the Dutch from their national identity until a craving for that identity reappeared with a vengeance, Buelens approaches the topic from a popular culture angle, by investigating how aspects of Dutch nationalism and internationalism are reflected in the oeuvre of a popular Dutch rock band, 'the Nits', (1974–present) and how their evolution in this respect mirrors or nuances current debates about the elite's position vis-à-vis national character.

Donald Haks (Leiden) investigates military paintings glorifying kings around 1700. The European wars in the second half of the seventeenth century stimulated the development of a new type of military painting, combining the glorification of military commanders with a distanced, and, at first glance, realistic depiction of military actions. Originally emerging in France, Dutch, and at a later stage British, painters were involved in the development, adoption, application, and extension of this new style. In his article, Haks studies the process of cultural transfer and exchange, illustrated by one example, the siege of the town and castle of Namur in 1692 and 1695.

Lastly, Jochai Rosen (Tel Aviv) traces the influence of the painting *Soldiers Fighting over Booty* (c. 1625, London, National Gallery) by the 17th-century Dutch genre painter Willem Duyster (1599–1635) on one of the most famous of all Dutch paintings, Rembrandt's *The Night Watch* (1642, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum). Rosen establishes the acquaintance between Duyster and Rembrandt in Amsterdam during the first half of the 1630s, before revealing, through careful comparisons between numerous shared details, that Duyster's painting indeed served as a source of influence upon *The Night Watch*.

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