

Centenary of Low Countries Studies in the Anglophone World (1919–2019)

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As every few months, it is a great pleasure to introduce a new issue of *Dutch Crossing: Journal for Low Countries Studies*, this time even more so as it marks a special occasion in the history of the journal's subject. When this copy appears in print, the centenary celebrations for the institutional foundation of Dutch Studies will be well underway. Almost exactly 100 years ago, in September 1919, Pieter Geyl, the later famous historian, was appointed as first Chair for Dutch Studies in the United Kingdom (and by extension in the whole wider English-speaking world) at the University of London, allocated to both University College London (UCL) and former Bedford College in Regent's Park. The foundation of Dutch Studies was the result of a marrying of two initiatives, the teaching of Dutch at Bedford College that had started largely under the impression of the influx of Belgian refugees to the UK during World War I, and the growing concern among Dutch business circles in post-war London about the negative reputation of the Netherlands, which, against the backdrop of the asylum provided to the German Kaiser by Queen Wilhelmina, was widely, if not necessarily correctly, suspected of having been too pro-German during the war.

While Geyl's peculiar Greater-Netherlands view on the history and, even more so, on the present of the Low Countries, would prove to be contentious, it firmly established research on language, history and culture of the Low Countries and their interactions with the wider world as an academic subject in London.¹ The departments and libraries Geyl began building up at University College London (UCL), Bedford College and the Institute for Historical Research (IHR) hold among the largest and most important Dutch collections in the Anglophone world and, together with the marvellous collections of the British Library and other London-based institutions, rival those of many places in the Low Countries themselves. UCL and the ALCS will mark the centenary with a large conference "Worlding Low Countries Studies" in the autumn (6–8 November), plus with many academic and cultural events throughout the academic session 2019/20.²

On to the contributions to this issue. Michael Green (Mainz) opens the issue with his study of the educational policies and practice of the Orange-Nassau family from 1584 to 1711. Based on a close analysis of primary sources debating the choice of teachers and subjects to be taught, Green demonstrates how the *stadholder* family

instilled a sense for the family's role as protectors of both the fatherland and Calvinism on its younger generation and prepared them for their future role in the family's complicated constitutional position in the Dutch Republic.

Marlise Rijks (Leiden) continues by investigating the value attached to coral, both in its natural form and as a pictorial motif, in 17th century Antwerp art collections. As her study demonstrates, the process of collecting was directly related to new understandings of matter and material transformations, and coral, with its manifold artistic, scientific and mythological aspects, functioned both as a place of appreciation for artisanal work and as a visual motif related to the understanding of material transformation and the process of petrification in particular.

Next comes Hannelore Magnus's (Leuven) analysis of a unique painting depicting seven women battling for a man's trousers by the Antwerp genre painter Hiëronymus Janssens (1624–1692). In her analysis of the painting and the topic's visual and the cultural-historical tradition, Janssens was not only influenced by contemporary French printing tradition but also deliberately emphasised the comical and erotic aspects of the topic, which makes his painting a beautiful example of the 17th century exchange of visual imagery between French prints and Southern-Netherlandish genre painting.

Remco Ensel (Nijmegen) revisits a crucial chapter in the history of 20th century Dutch nationalism, the debate on the construction of the *Afsluitdijk*. One of the most significant infrastructural projects of the interwar period, the successful closure of the *Zuiderzee* (1927–1932) was both an eminent hydraulic engineering feat and a national achievement that gave rise to an extensive cultural production, ranging from commemorative photo albums and documentary films to works of literature. By charting the multifaceted debate, Ensel demonstrates how visual representations of the enclosure in particular led to a renegotiation, re-imagination and re-invention of Dutch nationality that in various forms had been linked with water management since the middle ages.

A review section, like in most Dutch Crossing issues, concludes this number. As always best wishes for good reading.

¹ Cf. the contributions in *Pieter Geyl and Britain: Encounters, Controversies and Impact*, ed. by Ulrich Tiedau and Stijn Vanrossem, London: Institute for Historical Research, 2019 [forthcoming].

² Centenary of Dutch Studies at UCL <<http://www.dutch100.com>>.