

# Editorial

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I would like to start this first issue in the twenty-twenties with a brief look back on the centenary celebrations of Dutch Studies as an academic subject in the UK, and by extension in the Anglophone world, last autumn.<sup>i</sup> The foundation of the first university department of Dutch in the UK in 1919, back then in a ‘soft diplomacy’ effort by the Royal Netherlands government supported by Anglo-Dutch business circles, was marked by a three-day-long conference *Worlding the Low Countries* at UCL from 6 to 8 November 2019. Selected papers of this centenary conference are currently under consideration for publication in *Dutch Crossing*. We were particularly happy about the large North American contingent at the conference and would like to take the opportunity to draw the attention of our readers to the upcoming 20th conference of the American Association for Netherlandic Studies (AANS) at the University of California, Berkeley, on 5–6 June of this year, in turn.<sup>ii</sup>

On the contributions of this issue: The first volume of the new decade is opened by David Worthington (Dornoch) with his study of the inter-imperial entanglements between Scotland and the Dutch Empire in the Western hemisphere, in the context of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century sugar trade. Uncovering early Scottish overseas slave-owning circles, his analysis provides a case study of the transnational, Dutch-influenced, nature of commerce in this non-metropolitan part of Britain. By highlighting two interconnected developments, the engagement of Scottish migrants or exiles in the sugar-based enslavement of African and indigenous populations in Suriname; and the region’s heavy reliance on the importation of sugar from the Dutch-Atlantic plantations, Worthington demonstrates both Highland agency in the oppressions of the ‘triangular trade’, and its merchant community’s opting for Dutch over Lowland-Scottish refined sugar when supplying and encouraging local demand at that time.

G. Roger Knight’s (Adelaide) analysis of ‘Kin, Colony, and Metropole’ around the turn of the century comes next. Using the example of a family of mixed Scots-Javanese-Dutch ancestry, that settled in The Hague in the late nineteenth century, he demonstrates an important prehistory of Indonesian settlement in the Netherlands, that so far has mostly been looked at with reference to the mid-twentieth century, postcolonial ‘returnees’ who arrived in the Netherlands after Indonesian independence (1945). In doing so, Knight also demonstrates the extent to which genealogical data can be used in the reconstruction of family histories to create a picture that can exist alongside discourse-based approaches to the subject.

Next comes Duco van Oostrum’s (Sheffield) investigation of Anton de Kom’s anti-colonial novel *Wij Slaven van Suriname* (‘We Slaves of Suriname’, 1934). Reading *Wij Slaven* in the context of African-American literature, he argues that the novel challenges the Dutch master narrative in similar ways in which African-American literature impacted on American literary discourse. In Van Oostrum’s analysis, frequently-heard versions of a Dutch narrative of innocence and ‘relatively benign’ involvement in slavery are juxtaposed with literary accounts of Dutch exploitation both in Suriname and in North America, to demonstrate the significance of De Kom’s intervention. *Wij Slaven*’s literary strategy of intertwining economic, historical, autobiographical, and fictional discourses offers a unique example of an inclusive, Dutch-Atlantic modern literature.

Paola Gentile (Leuven) turns her attention to the imagology of the Netherlands in Italy, as reflected in the popular press and in novel translations. Contrasting stereotypes of the Dutch spread by Italian

newspapers and images of the Netherlands that emerge from various translations of Dutch novels into Italian, her analysis reveals important media-specific differences in the way that the Netherlands is portrayed in the country.

Lastly, Jesse van Amelsvoort (Leeuwarden) analyses two twenty-first century gothic novels from the Low Countries, Herman Franke's *Wolfstonen* (2003) and Saskia de Coster's *Wat alleen wij horen* (2015). As Van Amelsvoort shows, both novels are occupied with contemporary globalisation and immigration to the Netherlands and Belgium and cast their locations as gothic spaces fraught with images of modern society including anxiety over societal cohesion in ethnically and culturally diverse cities. Apart from revealing the continuous renewal of the Gothic itself, his interdisciplinary reading of the two novels highlights new elements of the Dutch and Flemish cultural imaginary, especially in relationship with the changes brought to the Low Countries as a result of globalisation and immigration.

A book review section, as in most issues of *Dutch Crossing*, closes the issue. As always best wishes for good reading!

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<sup>i</sup> 'Worlding the Low Countries': 13<sup>th</sup> international conference of the Association for Low Countries Studies (ALCS 2019), 6–8 November 2019, <http://opendutch.org/alcs2019/>.

<sup>ii</sup> 20th Biennial Interdisciplinary Conference of Dutch Studies (ICNS2020), 5–6 June 2020, <https://dutch.berkeley.edu/icns-2020/>.