

Introduction

Dutch Crossing: Journal of Low Countries Studies (July 2022)

On the eve of this year's 14th biennial conference of the ALCS, which under the motto 'Homing In' will be held in Scotland for the first time,¹ and whose papers will be published in one of the next issues of *Dutch Crossing: Journal of Low Countries Studies*, I am very happy to introduce the contributions to this 'regular' issue, which, once again, demonstrate the wide range of Low Countries Studies, both disciplinary and geographically:

Dave de Ruyscher (Tilburg) opens the issue by investigating sixteenth and seventeenth-century customs and municipal law in the Low Countries. Questioning common assumptions about the age and lastingness of these norms, De Ruyscher argues that efforts at debunking should be combined with a deeper analysis of past societies' legal consciousness and proposes doing so by looking at old municipal private law not as a set of rules fixed by tradition, but rather as a malleable body of legal norms.

Rick Honings (Leiden) turns his attention to the nineteenth-century author Paul Adrianus Daum (1850–1898), who in recent historiography of Dutch East Indies literature has been portrayed as a colonial writer who, like his contemporary Multatuli (Edouard Douwes Dekker, 1820–1887), underwent a fundamental transformation to anti-colonial views during his years as an editor of several local newspapers in Java. Focusing on the representation of indigenous people in three of Daum's novels, *Uit de suiker in de tabak* ('From Sugar to Tobacco', 1884), *Goena-goena* ('Guna-guna', 1887) and *Aboe Bakar* ('Abu Bakar', 1894), Honings argues that actually no such development can be found in these novels, at least not in Daum's attitude towards Indonesians.

Kenneth Lasoen (Antwerp) looks at intelligence and security in the Netherlands and Belgium from a comparative perspective, establishing many parallel developments that shaped the securitization of both countries. Facing common security and defence challenges, the two neighbours dealt with them in their own ways but still largely along the same lines. His comparison offers insight into how the proximity and similar development of the Low Countries provided a common set of security contingencies and activities, and the differing or similar attitudes and responses both countries adopted towards common security problems.

Martine Mussies and Wouter Steenbeek (both Utrecht) are interested in the popular children's choir *Kinderen Voor Kinderen* (KVK, 1980–present). Firmly rooted on the political left of Dutch society, KVK dared to address controversial topics such as the

fear of nuclear war, female puberty, homosexuality and diversity. By analysing three case studies, *Brief aan Ernst* ('Letter to Ernst'), an answer song to *Doe Maar* ('Go ahead') and reaction to the doom-mongering (*doemdenken*) of the 1980s; *Het Tietenlied* ('Song about female breasts'), which broke the *taboo* of developing bosoms in teenagers; and *Kom erbij* ('Join in'), a song about diversity and gender issues, Mussies and Steenbeek demonstrate how this pop phenomenon managed to mirror the *zeitgeist* of profound societal change in the Netherlands.

Lastly, looking at South Africa, Małgorzata Drwal (Poznań) discusses the writer Hester Elizabeth Cornelius (1907–1978) and her drama *Die Offerande* ('The Sacrifice', 1941), which adopts the Soviet aesthetic of socialist realism, transplanted into an Afrikaner cultural setting. Drwal demonstrates how the play employs the socialist-realist principle of *narodnost* (i. e. inclusion of a national folk element) by incorporating motifs characteristic of traditional Afrikaans farm novels, references to historical events on which Afrikanerdom founding myths are based, and characters representing 'typical' Afrikaners. Moreover, Drwal argues, the play's plot reflects a socialist realist novel master plot, illustrating the protagonist's transition from political immaturity to political awareness and his becoming the Marxist 'new man', or better, as Cornelius cast women in the main roles, the working-class 'new woman'.

A review article by Jane Fenoulhet (London) on two new translations of Herman Gorter's poems into English rounds the issue off.

As always, best wishes for good reading.