

# Editorial

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Regular Dutch Crossing readers will have noticed that an unusually short period of time has passed since the last issue of *Dutch Crossing : Journal of Low Countries Studies* appeared in April. Rather than having a summer and a winter issue as in the past, from 2010 onwards *Dutch Crossing* is being published three times a year, in April, July and November respectively. We take this increase in publication frequency, which thankfully was made possible by the journal's publisher Maney, as a sign of the vitality of Dutch and Low Countries studies in the Anglophone world, despite the budget cuts in the UK and elsewhere that affect not only our subject(s) but the Higher Education sector as a whole. Even in these troubled times, however, *Dutch Crossing* has every reason to celebrate. Not only did we receive an Honourable Mention in the *Council of Editor of Learned Journals'* 2009 journal awards competition<sup>i</sup> in December 2009 but in the same month we could also celebrate the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dutch studies as an academic discipline at University College London, the 'home base' of *Dutch Crossing* as it were. As we enter another decade we are looking forward to completing the first century of our subject in this country.<sup>ii</sup>

Starting this issue by extending a big thank you to Esther Mijers for guest-editing the April issue, an exciting representation of new research on the Low Countries, based on the papers of the second annual Early Modern Studies conference held at the University of Reading in 2009, we intend to make this format a regular feature of *Dutch Crossing* in the future with approximately one issue in three as a guest-edited topic-based special issue for which a separate, focussed call of papers will be issued. Suggestions for themed special issues and guest editors are welcome and should be addressed to the editors.

Having said that, this 'regular' issue of Dutch Crossing comprises of phantastic pieces as well. Jan Machielsen (Oxford) opens the issue with a study on early modern print history focusing on 16<sup>th</sup> century Antwerp, one of *the* centres of print and publishing in the Low Countries and indeed in early modern Europe. Examining the question that scholars have asked themselves at all times (even before the introduction of research assessment exercises), namely how to get their work published, he exemplarily contrasts the successful approach of the Spanish-Flemish Jesuit Martin Delrio (1551–1608) with the vain attempts of the English Catholic Thomas Stapleton (1535–1598) to convince their publisher, Jan Moretus, Christophe Plantin's successor as proprietor of the famous Plantin Press, to commit their writings to print. The two case studies, apart from being highly illuminating in their own right, shed light on Moretus' considerations as publisher at the time and on the market forces that were at work in early modern publishing.

Freya Sierhuis (Munich) provides a re-appraisal of Pieter Cornelisz Hooft's tragedy *Geerardt van Velsen* (1613), a dramatisation of the rebellion of Dutch noblemen against Floris V, Count of Holland and Zeeland, at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Her new reading of the play's complex political stance shows Hooft not only balancing two conflicting strands of early modern political thought, Tacitist *raison d'état* on the one hand, and Grotian natural law on the other, but also provides a sophisticated comment on Machiavelli's intellectual legacy, in order to answer the central question of the morality and legitimacy of republicanism and tyrannicide in the period.

Similarly, Mary Christine Barker (Auckland) reinterprets one of the most famous of all Rembrandt's etchings, the *Death of a Virgin* from 1639. Her research challenges the established notion of Rembrandt as a 'protestant' painter and shows how this designation both limits and distorts the reading of some of his works. Using insights from Catholic theology and Christian legend her reading suggests that Rembrandt transcended the religious categories of his time as well as those that our present era has tried to impose on him.

Literary studies and art history are brought together by Julien Vermeulen (Kortrijk) in his study of Hugo Claus' reconstruction of the old masters in his literary writings. The recently deceased Belgian master (1929–2008), himself not only a poet who has been on the Noble Prize committee's shortlist for decades but also a lifelong practising modernist painter, probably best known for his involvement in the international COBRA-group in the 1950s, borrowed a wide range of motifs for his poetry from the baroque surrealism typical of some paintings by Brueghel, Bosch, Memlinc or Van der Goes. His poems reveal a complex inter-artistic dimension, showing affinities not only with 'old masters' but also with works by contemporary artists such as Corneille, Alechinsky, Appel and Raveel. The canonised status of mediaeval art is treated in the subversive registers of colloquial language, a postmodern approach that began long before the term 'postmodernism' was coined.

Demmy Verbeke (Leuven) rounds the issue off with a lively piece on a seemingly timeless topic, for which he won the essay prize of the Association for Low Countries Studies in 2009, drink culture and alcohol abuse in early modern Britain. Using two works which were advertised as translations from either Dutch or German, despite the fact that they were original English compositions, he investigates the reputation of Germany and the Netherlands as heavy-drinking nations and the alleged or real cultural transfers that have taken place in this field from the continent to Britain.

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ii In 1919, the first Chair in Dutch Studies was established at UCL. Cp. the recently edited autobiography of the first incumbent: Pieter Geyl, *Ik die zo weinig in mijn verleden leed: autobiografie 1887–1940*, bezorgd en toegelicht door Wim Berkelaar, Leen Dorsman en Pieter van Hees, Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 2009 and Theodoor Weevers, 'The beginnings of Dutch Studies in the University of London', *Dutch Crossing* 25 (April 1985), pp. 85–89.