

## Editorial

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A new year always provides an occasion for looking back and taking stock as well as for making plans for the future. After the first four annual volumes with Maney we can summarise that the 11 issues published between 2009 and 2012 (out of which three were guest-edited special issues) consisted of 58 journal articles by 60 contributors from 14 different countries, not including book reviews and editorial columns. The country ranking list, perhaps unsurprisingly, is headed by the Netherlands with 15 contributors, followed by the United States with 10, the United Kingdom with 8 and Belgium with 6 contributors. On a higher level it can be said that just short of half of all contributions (28) came from the Anglophone world (apart from the US and UK, from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland and South Africa), a third from inside the Low Countries (21), and the rest from other European countries like Germany, France, Italy, Poland and Israel (9). This reflects very well *Dutch Crossing's* special focus on contacts and exchanges between the Anglophone and Dutch-speaking worlds through the centuries while also including other aspects of Low Countries Studies. In addition there were 15 book reviews, mainly from the UK, US and the Netherlands.

Content-wise the three main strands, although categories are not always clearly distinguishable and a large number of articles present cross-disciplinary boundaries research, were clearly history of the Low Countries and their encounters with the Anglophone world with about 50 percent of the contributions (30), two thirds of which were about the early modern period with 19 and one third related to the modern and contemporary period (post-1800) with 11; art history accounted for slightly more than 25 % (16) and literary studies for about 20 % (12) of the contributions, but the volumes also contain topics as diverse as architectural history, urban studies, history of robes and costumes, colonial and postcolonial studies, memory and trauma, sports history, tourism studies, etc. Without wanting to attach too much weight to these statistics, it seems safe to conclude that they attest to the international and interdisciplinary nature of the journal, two aspects that we would like to continue and if possible extend further in the new year. A last remark before moving on to the new contributions in the present issue, regards the gender-balance of *Dutch Crossing*. Interestingly, without ever having taken these considerations consciously into account (as a blindly peer-reviewed journal), the cohort of *Dutch Crossing* contributors is almost perfectly balanced (31 female, 29 male).

And the present first issue for 2013 continues these trends. It comprises of three historical and three literary contributions. 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 (and those of modern day the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany still meet) in a border triangle,

investigates how religious groups of all shades resourcefully utilised political borders to further their religious aims, and dissenting groups in particular found that the proximity of such borders facilitated their survival and worship. His study 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.

Siobhán Higgins (Cork) turns her attention to the changing representations of migrants from the Low Countries in late Elizabethan London. Her study analyses the complex framework of relationships between natives and strangers and how it shaped images and imaginings of the Dutch and Flemish in Britain. Her analysis shows that the stereotypical or satirical image of the Dutch as incoherent drunkards or religious extremists was only *one* aspect of the varied, ambiguous and often contradictory representations of the Dutch and Flemish in early modern Britain.

A comparison of the construction of narratives of World War II and its aftermath in the Netherlands and in Belgium, both amongst historians and in the wider public, is what Bram Mertens (Nottingham) turns his attentions to. Whereas in the Netherlands a popular public consensus about the War, actively supported by the government, emerged immediately after the war and would remain in place until it was challenged by historians in the 1980s, in Belgium, political turmoil in the post-war period prevented a similar consensus developing. Instead, a specific Flemish counter-narrative was developed in Catholic and nationalist circles, which would come to dominate public discourse in Belgium until it too was challenged in the 1980s.

Geertjan de Vugt (Princeton/Tilburg) looks at the phenomenon of ‘Dandyism’ and one of its representatives in Dutch literature, namely the novelist and member of the movement of the 1880s (‘Tachtigers’), Alberdingk Thijm (1864–1952), better known under his writer name Lodewijk van Deysse. Traditionally Thijm’s work has been regarded as a major example of the generally apolitical phenomenon of Dandyism in Dutch literary history, whose representative were more interested in aesthetics and devoid of political aspects. By presenting how Van Deysse could be read politically, De Vugt presents a major revision of this view and shows how dandyism may be studied for its political dimension.

Two articles take a postcolonial approach, albeit from very different angles. Since in 2010 the Netherlands Antilles have been dissolved, the island of Curaçao has become one of the four constituent countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, on equal footing with Aruba, Sint Maarten and the Netherlands itself. Florencia V. Cornet (Columbia, South Carolina) turns her attention to three contemporary Curaçaoan women writers, 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.

In a related vein Liesbeth Minnaard (Leiden) looks at a postcolonial take on Antwerp, more precisely at the *Antwerpse stadsgedichten* by the Dutch-Palestinian writer Ramsey Nasr, composed during his 2005 appointment as City Poet of Antwerp.

Through close analysis of three selected city poems Minnaard explores the ways in which Nasr, currently Poet Laureate of the Netherlands ('Dichter des Vaderlands', 2009–), explores the urban space of the Flemish city of Antwerp and represent the various inhabitants of the Flemish metropolis. It investigates the work of the poet-laureate, the representative poet so to speak, and scrutinises his poetic strolls through the city.

As readers by now expect, a review section closes the issue of Dutch Crossing. As always best wishes for good reading!