

Dutch Crossing's 'ruby jubilee' (1977–2017)

Ulrich Tiedau

University College London, UK

This issue of *Dutch Crossing: Journal of Low Countries Studies* appears exactly forty years after, in March 1977, Karel Bostoën, David Holmes, Polina Komodikis, Willy Pe-reboom and Paul Vincent published its first issue, back then at Bedford College London in leafy Regent's Park. As the editors used to set out the journal's objectives back then:

"Neither the origin of our title nor its precise application are entirely clear; we are informed that it is a mainly transatlantic usage, though it does not appear in any of the standard handbooks of American English that we have consulted (...). However, the loss in precision is a gain in suggestiveness: 'Dutch Crossing' evokes an adventurous, risky enterprise (sometimes even one of doubtful 'respectability'), but it also holds the promise of excitement, and of discovery 'on the other side'. To shift the metaphor slightly, we hope the title will serve, as Dutch has it, as a flag to cover a cargo as diverse as the interests and talents of its readers and contributors".¹

Forty years later the founders' vision, reflecting the desire to let *Dutch Crossing* become something like a 'showcase' of Dutch and Flemish culture and to focus on the allegorical bridges and connections between the Dutch- and English-speaking worlds, still holds true, even if *Dutch Crossing* has undergone many changes in the four decades since.² While unlike silver and golden jubilees this round birthday is not an anniversary 'of the first order', we are nevertheless taking the journal's 'ruby' jubilee as a reason to celebrate. We can do so all the more as there is another achievement to report: Our new publisher (since 2016), Taylor & Francis, has finished retro-digitising *Dutch Crossing* all the way back to its inaugural issue, and for the first time this forty years body of interdisciplinary Low Countries Studies scholarship is now completely accessible online, interspersed with, especially in the early issues, many gems of original Dutch and Flemish literature and literature in translation.³ The completion of the digitisation project is also a very welcome development because the early issues have not been distributed too widely, and some have even become bibliophile objects or collectors' items, as we can see from the steady stream of inquiries.

On to the individual contributions of this jubilee issue: Jeroen Jansen (Amsterdam) opens it with his investigation of the Dutch poet and playwright Gerbrand Bredero's (1585–1618) appreciation of the Dutch language. Like many 17th century writers from the Dutch Republic, Bredero took pride in his mother tongue, and shared ideas about linguistic protectionism and language development with his fellow members of the Amsterdam chamber of rhetoric. Jansen's article shows the ways and extent in which Bredero's writings correspond and engage with that of his predecessors Dirck Coorn-

hert and Hendrik Spiegel in particular. Although to a lesser degree than these two, Bredero also left his own creative mark on the use of the Dutch language.

Joost Coté (Melbourne) draws on a recently discovered cache of letters written by the sisters of the Indonesian national heroine Raden Ajeng Kartini (1879–1904), a pioneer in the area of education for girls and women's rights, to examine female colonial friendships in the early 20th century Dutch East Indies. While revealing previously unknown aspects of Lady Kartini's life and work, Coté's article also illuminates the ambiguous nature of female colonial friendships in this period. It suggests that closer reading of this correspondence reveals the growing sense of national identity that enabled 'real' friendships between European and Indonesian women in colonial Java in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Philipp-Sebastian Schmidt (Berlin) turns his attention to the acclaimed contemporary Dutch author Cees Nooteboom's novel *Het volgende verhaal* (1991). In his close analysis he untangles the web of intertextuality with literary texts from Latin and Greek antiquity spun throughout the novel and distinguishes between "memories *in* the text" and "memories *of* the text". As the intertextual references have the function of reminding the reader about the existence of a writing author, this, in Schmidt's interpretation, can thus be read as a statement by Nooteboom against the post-modern claim of "the death of the author".

Annie van den Oever (Groningen) looks at the role that early television played in the career of Belgium's longstanding candidate for the Nobel Prize in literature, Louis Paul Boon (1912–1979). From the early to mid-1960s Boon regularly appeared on Belgian national television, resulting in a peak of his fame in the 1960s and 1970s. Drawing on approaches from literary studies and television and media studies, Van den Oever's article investigates the turn in appreciation for Boon in the decade in which public life was profoundly changed by the new mass medium, the 1960s.

Yves T'Sjoen (Ghent) investigates translating other writers' poetry as a legitimization and recuperation strategy for poets. Using the example of Flemish poet Herman de Coninck's (1944–1997) adaptation of sonnets by the popular American bohemian writer Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892–1950) and Hugo Claus's (1929–2008) 'creative' translations of non-Dutch poems, T'Sjoen demonstrates the ways in which writers appropriate the work of foreign authors and use it strategically to affirm their own position in the literary system. Not just *what* is being translated, or how and when a text is being translated, but also the manner in which the adaptation of the foreign source texts functions in the individual body of work, are important here.

A book review by Benjamin Teensma (Leiden) of Caspar Baerlaeus' *The History of Brazil under the Governorship of Count Johan Maurits of Nassau, 1636-1644* (University of Florida Press), concludes the jubilee issue. It remains to wish *Dutch Crossing's* esteemed readership a happy New Year 2017 and, as always, good reading!

¹ Karel Bostoën, David Holmes, Polina Komodikis, Willy Pereboom, Paul Vincent, 'The Whys and Wherefores', *Dutch Crossing: Journal of Low Countries Studies* 1 (March 1977), p. 2.

² For an overview of the journal's development from 1977–2009 see Ulrich Tiedau, 'A New Dutch Crossing', *Dutch Crossing: Journal of Low Countries Studies*, vol. 33 (2009), no. 1, pp. 3–6.

³ Online Archive of *Dutch Crossing: Journal of Low Countries Studies* <<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ydct20/>>