

Introduction / Lectori Salutem

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When four centuries and three decades ago the Low Countries formally declared their independence from the Habsburg monarchy, there can be little doubt about the central role played by William of Nassau, prince of Orange (1533–1584), in the English-speaking world sometimes better known as William the Silent. His Apology (1580) paved the way for the following Act of Abjuration (1581), declaring the forfeiture of Philip II's right to rule over the Low Countries. Similar to William's leadership in the rebellion his and subsequently his sons Maurice's and Frederick Henry's, role for the forming of the Dutch nation is uncontested and visible not only in the honorary title *pater patriae* ('Father of the Fatherland') bestowed on William by his compatriots during his lifetime, but also commemorated in the national anthem of the Netherlands, the *Wilhelmus*, to the present day.

While the centrality of the princes' role for Dutch nation building is evident, Liesbeth Geevers (Utrecht) in this issue takes a closer look at the dynastic history of the house of Orange-Nassau and subjects their self-conception and self-representation to a closer investigation, discussing the question to which extent the national sentiment of their subjects was reciprocated, in other words whether the Nassaus considered themselves to be Dutch. Comparing dynastic arguments used in William's Apology with an earlier and a later genealogy from 1541 and 1616 respectively, she demonstrates that a Dutch framing of the dynasty is indeed limited to the Apology, while in the other texts the Nassaus are primarily represented as a German family, owing their good fortune to the Holy Roman emperors, notwithstanding their transnational connections.

While historiography of the Dutch Revolt has always devoted much attention to the princes of Orange-Nassau, noblemen who during the conflict remained loyal to Philip II have traditionally received less attention. Violet Soen (Leuven) seeks to ameliorate this imbalance and turns her attention to Charles Count of Berlaymont (1510–1578) and Philip of Sainte-Aldegonde, Baron of Noircarmes (?–1574), two aristocrats who have frequently been portrayed as Catholic collaborators with the Spanish and egoistic parvenus longing for royal patronage. Soen's reassessment of the link between patronage and political opinion during the Revolt paints a more nuanced picture of Berlaymont and Noircarmes, showing them in the main as empowered bargainers who were able to voice their criticisms and even raise complaints against the regime of the Duke of Alba at the Spanish Court, rather than acting as mere puppets of Philip II.

Tamar Cholcman (Tel Aviv) investigates foreign resident merchants in the 16th and 17th century Southern Netherlands and their involvement in the emerging local custom of the *Joyeuse Entrée*, the first triumphal visit of a reigning monarch, prince, duke or governor into a Flemish or Brabantine city. Notwithstanding their status as guests of the cities, foreign merchant houses were frequently able to seize the opportunity to display their own interests and needs by patronizing and funding some of the *Joyeuse Entrée*'s monuments, always involving a delicate balancing act between the city's interests, their own and those of the crown. The foreign merchants' involvement also marked the beginning of the gradual evolution of the previously local custom to a transnational phenomenon, visible not least on the Iberian peninsula where, after Flemish merchants and Lusitanian humanists had transferred the tradition to Portugal, the merchants' voice became much less cautious and at times even dared to contradict the city's interests.

James P. McCarthy (Cork) is also interested in transnational transfers, namely the alleged and real Dutch influence in the transformation of the urban landscape of the eighteenth century Irish port town of Cork. After an expansion of its city limits at the beginning of the century, the cityscape both within and outside of the medieval city walls was reconstructed and surrounding marshlands reclaimed, bringing about an opportunity to redefine the ambience and visual perception of the urban landscape and to re-imagine and model a new, continental style of place and surrounding environment, in which Dutch influences played an important role.

Nicholas Piercey's (London) study on the professionalisation and beginning commercialisation of the 'most beautiful pastime of the world', a. k. a. football, in the Netherlands at the beginning of the 20th century rounds the issue off. Giving particular attention to the role of advertising in the media, investment and sponsorship he analyses the interactions of players from the Bourdieusian fields of business and sports, concluding that the idea of football supporters as consumers is perhaps not as recently a phenomenon as is often thought.

Let me conclude this editorial by amending the information given in the introduction to the penultimate issue of *Dutch Crossing*. The tradition of Dutch Studies at the University of London extends further back than we were aware of at the time.ⁱ A department of Dutch Studies and a Dutch library predate the establishment of Pieter Geyl's chair for Dutch history at UCL in 1919. They were set up by Dame Margaret Tuke during the 1914/15 session and the first degree course in Dutch was instituted by Bernardus Proper, founding Head of Department, at Bedford College in 1915 before, in 1983 the department of Dutch transferred to University College London. We are most grateful to William Woods, former editor of the *Bedford College Association Journal*, for bringing this fact to our attention, not only for the sake of historical accuracy and completeness but also because it will allow us to celebrate the centenary of Dutch Studies in the UK half a decade earlier than we imagined.

Last but certainly not least we would like to express our gratitude to Sabrina Barrows who has been the production editor of *Dutch Crossing: Journal of Low Countries Studies* for the past two and a half years, including the critical transformation period in 2008/ 09. The huge success the journal enjoyed in the past two years, visible not only in the increase of worldwide distribution and reception but also in the award of an Honourable Mention in the 2009 Journal Awards of the Council of Editors of Learned Journals are to a not small extent due to her indefatigable efforts and energy.

iTiedau, U., 'Editorial', *Dutch Crossing: Journal of Low Countries Studies* , vol. 34, no.2 (July 2010), 97–98 (p. 97).