

Lectori Salutem

We hope this issue finds our esteemed readership well. It is actually the first number of the 45th year of *Dutch Crossing's* existence, so our journal has now officially reached middle age.¹ While not a round jubilee, there is little to celebrate in these trialling times anyway, but we do hope to at least to provide interesting reading matter for the lockdown.

What could be more fitting than to open the issue with Daniel R. Curtis' (Rotterdam) investigation of the female experience of epidemics in the early modern Low Countries? While recent research has proposed that in 'normal' times, women in some parts of this area experienced comparatively high levels of independence and agency, the outbreaks of diseases, as Curtis argues, revealed structural disparities between the genders that were normally hidden from view. As his study demonstrates, expectations of care within and outside the family household, various forms of persecution, and social controls were among the burdens and hardships, which women at times also managed to rebuff forcefully.

Tom Laureys' (Ghent) study of the Dutch historian and playwright Geeraerdt Brandt's popular revenge tragedy *De Veinzende Torquatus* (1645) comes next. Analysing the play against the backdrop of contemporary debates about the rightful succession of monarchs based on primogeniture, and the Calvinist belief that the Dutch *stadholders* were God's providential instruments, Laureys demonstrates that the play offers a confrontation between two conflicting conceptions of power, an idealistic one, represented by the protagonist Torquatus, in which man's rational faculty, including his capacity for rational deception, is all-decisive, and a materialistic one, epitomized by Torquatus' antagonist Noron.

Emil Rybczak (Warwick) discusses the role of the eighteenth-century publisher Thomas Johnson (1670–1735) as an agent of Enlightenment. Cataloguing Johnson's creation and exploitation of communications and retail networks, his study explores the publishers' business practices, his status within the community, and his significance in controlling the means by which ideas were disseminated, revealing Johnson's power in mediating who could participate in the Enlightenment, and the direction of its development.

Yiming Wang (Wuhan) turns her attention to the history of Chinese printing in the Dutch East Indies during the nineteenth century, which has not been adequately reviewed before.

Discussing eleven printers, editors, publishers and translators active at the time, some of which were previously unknown to the academic community, her study adds an important dimension to the history of print in the Dutch colony.

Audrey Heijns (Shenzhen) examines the image of Hong Kong in Dutch travel accounts from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. On the basis of an imagological analysis of ethnotypes and self-other oppositions in these travelogues, she concludes that the fact that most writers arrived from the Dutch East Indies, heavily colours their observations of Hong Kong, particularly in cases where writers compare the influence of the respective colonial powers in terms of facilities, infrastructure and policies.

Małgorzata Drwal (Poznań) examines the reception of the South African writer and social theorist Olive Schreiner's work *Woman and Labour* (1911) in the Netherlands. Translated by Aletta Jacobs, like Schreiner a prominent feminist of the first hour in her country, the book received mixed reviews in the Dutch press. Arguing that Schreiner's and Jacob's social visions differed in important respects, Drwal proposes that the reception of Schreiner's book reflects tensions between the socialist and the feminist movements in Europe and also do not take Schreiner's non-European perspective as well as her global approach to social processes, sufficiently into account, with gender, class, and race functioning as intersecting concepts.

As in most issues of *Dutch Crossing*, a review section rounds the issue off. As always best wishes for good reading.