



Theo Hermans and Reinier Salverda (eds.), *From Revolt to Riches: Culture and History of the Low Countries, 1500-1700* (London: UCL Press, 2017, 250 pp., ISBN 978 1 910634 87 5).

This book is the third publication in UCL Press' 'Global Dutch Series', edited by Ulrich Tiedau. Here, two of Tiedau's former colleagues at UC London's Dutch Studies Programme, Theo Hermans and Reinier Salverda, present a collection of essays that are amended and extended versions of papers originally presented at the international conference 'The Low Countries in the World', organised by the Centre for Low Countries Studies and held at UC London in 1989. While the papers dealing with linguistic topics, aspects of medieval and modern literature, history and art had appeared in two successive issues of the journal *Dutch Crossing* in 1989, the essays dealing with the Renaissance and Golden Age were first published in the 1990s in the series *Crossways*. They have now been re-edited as part of UCL Press' Open Access scheme in order to reach a broader audience.

The fact that this collective volume discusses the Low Countries in an international context justifies its publication in the 'Global Dutch Series', albeit with the acknowledgment that most essays deal with Anglo-Dutch topics and not a single contribution extends the discussion beyond Europe. Since the original essays date back to the late 1980s, the reader should not be surprised occasionally to encounter observations that, by now, have become outdated. This is, for instance, the case with Jozef IJsewijn's reference to 'a country which today cannot yet participate in the ERASMUS scheme, yet was always a solid part of the old European cultural community, namely Hungary' (3). While the editors can be praised for the quality of the book's layout, the fact that such anachronisms have not been removed or rephrased is lamentable and raises questions about the thoroughness of the editorial process. This omission is all the more surprising considering that the editors did their best to add new photographic and print materials to the volume. In spite of this shortcoming, the statement Tiedau makes in his preface that the book gives voice to 'many research concerns which are still valid in present-day research in Belgium and the Netherlands' can be confirmed. The findings presented in several of the book's essays have, indeed, stood the test of time and can still appeal to a contemporary reading public interested in Low Countries studies.

It is not by accident that the book's title refers to two seminal works about the Low Countries by the English historians Geoffrey Parker and Simon Schama. These studies remind us that, more than any other

period in Dutch history, it is still the Golden Age that attracts international attention, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world. It is not surprising, then, that of all the papers presented at the 1989 conference the ones that have been selected for this new edition focus on either the Golden Age itself or the preceding Dutch Revolt. The essays are written by historians, linguists, bibliographers, art historians, and literary scholars and cover a variety of political, economic and cultural aspects of this extraordinary period in the history of the Low Countries. While it is, obviously, not possible to discuss all contributions in this short review, it is remarkable that many share an interest in migration, religion, and the production of pamphlets, several of which have beautiful reproductions in this volume. Another recurrent topic is the early development of a Dutch national consciousness, a process which Karin Tilmans already identifies in the late-fifteenth century. Equally important, however, is James Parente's warning that this development was never void of criticism and self-criticism, as shown in his essay on Vondel's *Gysbreght van Aemstel*. Koenraad W. Swart's contribution on 'William the Silent's statecraft' is not only outstanding for its impressive stylistic quality but also reveals how a paper presented in the late-1980s can, several decades later, suddenly become topical again. In fact, his demonstration of how William of Orange successfully manipulated the public opinion of his time contains so many parallels to today's concern about 'fake news' that it almost seems as if it was written only months ago.

One advantage of re-editing a volume based on contributions from earlier decades is that it allows for a tribute to deceased scholars. No less than seven of the volume's contributors have left us since the original conference was held. Sadly, Marcel Backhouse, Wiebe Bergsma, Jozef IJsewijn, Anna E. C. Simoni, Marijke Spies, and Koenraad W. Swart were recently followed by Paul R. Sellin. His essay is well-chosen as a tribute to this long-time Humanities Professor at UCLA and specialist in the work of John Donne since it concludes his decade-old search for the presumably lost seventeenth-century treatise *Méditations Chrestiennes* by Rutger Wessel van den Boetzelaer, Baron van Asperen, with a happy ending. While many had long given up the search and some scholars even assumed that the book perhaps never existed at all, Sellin's determination to find a copy finally bore fruit when in 2011 a copy of the treatise was discovered in a Swedish library. The fact that this discovery took place over a decade after the original paper was presented gives credit to Tiedau's hopes that the republication of these essays will prove valuable for further research in Low Countries Studies in the UK and worldwide.

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