

Sjoerd Levelt and Ad Putter, *North Sea Crossings: The Literary Heritage of Anglo-Dutch Relations, 1066-1688* (Oxford: Bodleian Library Publishing, 2022, 304 pp., ISBN 9781851245543).

Christopher Joby, *John Cruso of Norwich and Anglo-Dutch Literary Identity in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2022, 408 pp., ISBN 9781843846147).

The language of a ‘golden age’ may rightly be in decline when we talk about the Dutch seventeenth century, but it might still be appropriate to use when describing the period of recent scholarship on Anglo-Dutch encounters in the premodern period. Scholars in diverse fields have given fresh attention to the entangled histories of England (and Britain more broadly) and the Low Countries from the medieval period to the eighteenth century, in a growing body of scholarship which offers new perspectives on mobility, cultural exchange, artistic and literary influence, as well as broader political, diplomatic, and religious histories. The two books under review here offer new perspectives on Anglo-Dutch encounters at very different scales – one is broad in its temporal scope, spanning from the eleventh to the seventeenth century, and considering a wide variety of actors and kinds of cultural production, while the other is a study of Anglo-Dutch literary identity explored through one little-known writer – but both are valuable contributions to an exciting and rapidly developing field of scholarship.

*North Sea Crossings: The Literary Heritage of Anglo-Dutch Relations 1066-1688* emerges from the Bodleian Library exhibition which told a story of Anglo-Dutch contact going back to the Norman Conquest. Sjoerd Levelt and Ad Putter (with contributions by Robyn Adams, Moreed Arbabzadah, Anne Louise Avery, Jack Avery, Edward Holberton, Elisabeth van Houts and Kathleen E. Kennedy) have created a beautiful book whose full-colour reproductions will delight scholars and a broader reading public alike. It takes on core themes which allow for the plotting of Anglo-Dutch trajectories and connections, with individual chapters covering histories, manuscripts, printed books, maps, people, and finally the stories of Reynard the Fox whose rich history has long been an intertwined Anglo-Dutch one.

Levelt and Putter and their collaborators argue convincingly for a deep-rooted closeness between England and the Low Countries which was evident to premodern people. In 1585, Elizabeth I remarked that ‘This our realme of England and those countries have bene by common language of long time resembled and termed as man and wife’ (25), and this was an entangled history which writers of chronicles and histories set themselves to unpick. Dutch-speakers’ interest in Bede and Geoffrey of Monmouth gave

rise to a persistent origin story for the Low Countries which drew on the English Brutus myth and the tales of giants fleeing across the North Sea. Later, seventeenth-century Dutch authors sought to situate political and commercial conflict and coexistence in a historical framework, criticising the execution of Charles I as a step too far – as Levelt and Putter write, ‘When looking at history from an Anglo-Dutch perspective, the republican Dutch saw no contradiction in being English royalists’ (69). Soon, those republican Dutch would have a slice of England’s constitutions for themselves.

The riches of the Bodleian Library are the focus of chapters on topics ranging from manuscripts and printed books – which take us from the eleventh-century fragment of Dutch poetry probably scribbled by a multilingual scribe in Rochester – to pamphlets and newsbooks which crossed the North Sea, keeping both sides up to date on the latest developments. The production of Books of Hours in the Flemish style from the thirteenth century onwards created a prestige product for English readers: around 200 made for the English market survive. Scribes and artists moved across the North Sea, so we find Flemish illuminators active in England, and an illuminator named ‘Willem de Engelsman’ working in Utrecht in 1415. And the Anglo-Dutch space was traversed by animals real and imagined, too – Levelt and Putter explore the significance of some illustrations of the ‘Leo Belgicus’, the Belgian lion, having its tail in the east of England. We see Jan van Boendale’s fourteenth-century poetic vision of Death traversing the North Sea on horseback to bring the plague to England, and trace the tales of Reynard the Fox through manuscript and print, from Chaucer to Caxton. The latter’s presentation of the ‘beast epic’ reveals a profoundly Anglo-Dutch sensibility, with Levelt and Putter writing of Caxton that ‘he could not help thinking in Dutch, even when he was translating texts from French to English’ (260). Reynard, and those who wrote him into history, emerges as emblematic of ‘a shared literary heritage’ (270) that bound England and the Low Countries together.

These contacts prompted linguistic cross-pollination too. Jacob Walraven used his bilingual edition of *The Honourable Reputation of a Souldier*, published in Leiden in 1586, to encourage readers on both sides of the North Sea to learn each other’s language, including basic material on vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. And with the exchange of books came the exchange of technologies and ideas. English printing began with Netherlandish expertise and labour (which left their mark on English orthography), while Anglo-Dutch collaboration also underpinned linguistic scholarship. Research on (and printing in) Old English was an Anglo-Dutch affair, as exemplified by the Old English type found in the Bodleian: ‘The printing of Old English at the early Oxford University Press was thus made possible by the scholarly interest of a Dutchman with an Anglo-Dutch life, by his ideas about the affinity between Old English, old Dutch and other Germanic languages, and by the skills of Dutch craftsmen who were working in an established tradition of printing Old English in the Netherlands’ (143).

Texts and tales move because people do, and this is a volume which grounds broader questions of influence and Anglo-Dutch engagement in travel and traffic across the North Sea. The *album amicorum* of the Antwerp-born Emanuel van Meteren, who settled permanently in London in 1562, attests to Anglo-Dutch intellectual and artistic networks which linked figures like the antiquarians Robert Cotton and William Camden with the cartographer Abraham Ortelius and the painter Lucas de Heere. This was a network which fostered literary innovation including the Dutch sonnet. Less exalted spaces of exchange included the early seventeenth-century Holland's Leaguer, a Southwark brothel with an elite clientele. Scribes, sex workers, and scholars all left traces of their mobility in the texts and objects studied here, and the processes of creative and scholarly exchange are thoroughly grounded in the social history of Anglo-Dutch mobilities.

*John Cruso of Norwich and Anglo-Dutch Literary Identity in the Seventeenth Century* is the work of Christopher Joby, an expert on the Dutch language and Dutch-language literature in early modern England. Its subject, John Cruso (b. 1592), was the son of migrants to Norwich who became, among other things, a successful merchant, a captain of the city's 'stranger' militia (made up of the city's Dutch- and French-speaking migrants and their families), a poet in English and Dutch, a translator and a military author. Joby is not making the case for Cruso as a lost literary genius, describing his output as 'certainly competent and occasionally inspired' (21), but argues that a cultural biography of this largely forgotten figure allows for an exploration of 'how someone lower down the literary order fashioned his identity in Stuart England' (22).

Cruso's story is a Norwich story. There are indications that he spent some time in London, and some scholars have surmised that his 'lost years' may have involved continental military service, though Joby's careful archival work has found no evidence of this. But the majority of his life was spent in Norwich, where he likely imbibed humanist ideas and language at the city's Free Grammar School. Norwich, where 40 percent of the population were 'strangers' – international migrants – in 1578, was a city whose multilingualism is reflected in Cruso's output: he wrote in English and Dutch, translated from French, drew on an extensive knowledge of classical and Renaissance Latin texts, and sprinkled his writing with Greek. As a successful and upwardly mobile merchant, a local officeholder and a local militia man, Cruso set about earning his name as a poet.

Joby reads Cruso's writings as exercises in self-fashioning which allowed him to assert his place within wider networks, claim his Netherlandish heritage at the same time as showing himself an Englishman, and play the hybrid roles of the *miles doctus* and the *mercator poetans*. Cruso's first known appearance in print came in a collection of elegies for Simeon Ruytink, the late minister of London's Dutch church, published in 1622. His Dutch-language contribution sits within a book which represents 'a complex

cultural and literary network of prelates, scholars, merchants, and diplomats spread across the North Sea and English towns' (112). Cruso also wrote in English: three elegies for Lawrence Howlett, the Anglican preacher at St Anthony's in Norwich (an early indication of Cruso's relationships beyond the city's Calvinist Dutch Church where he served as an elder), and may be the 'J.C.' who penned an elegy for Richard Corbett, the late Bishop of Norwich. Later poems followed, including a 1400-line amplification in Dutch of Psalm 8, *Uytbreijdinge over den achtsten psalm Davids* (published in Amsterdam in 1642), which reflected Cruso's service as an elder of Norwich's Dutch Church and the stranger churches' rich culture of vernacular psalm-singing, as well as his ongoing engagement with developments in continental poetry in Dutch and French.

Cruso wrote five known works on military themes between 1632 and 1644. These were books which 'married learned literary references with practical military advice drawn from many years of drill exercises on the practice ground of the Norwich Stranger militia' (65). His *Militarie Instructions for the Cavallrie* (1632, with a second edition in 1644) was influential, helping to shape the field of 'English cavalry literature' (163), while marking Cruso out as an 'agent of cultural transfer' (149) whose print output combined up-to-date continental ideas with a depth of classical reference. He also put his multilingual background to work as a translator of French military treatises for an English readership. These were works geared towards the context of his time, though Cruso's own loyalties in the Civil Wars are unknown: while arguing that there is marginally more evidence suggesting Parliamentary sympathies, Joby shows that Cruso 'was willing to cross political boundaries, making public displays of his friendship with Royalists and Parliamentarians alike' (261).

In 1655, Cruso's *Epigrammata ofte winter-avondts tyt-korting* was printed in Delft. Only one copy of this collection of 221 Dutch-language epigrams based on Latin models is known to survive, in the British Library. Described by Joby as 'Neo-Latin verses in Dutch clothing', these pithy poems drew on models from Martial to Erasmus in a collection whose tone is wholly distinct from Cruso's other writing – these epigrams are by turns humorous, rude, scathing, and flippant. They also allowed Cruso to show off his multilingual abilities. He draws on his Latin reading and drops in French terms in macaronic mockery of affectation, while also deviating on occasion from a more standard literary Dutch to have fun with the dialect features of Flemish (likely reflecting the language he had grown up with). A number of these epigrams, along with other poems by Cruso, are reproduced and translated in an appendix, and the chapter devoted to the epigrams makes the case for the utility of a full scholarly edition of this intriguing text.

Joby's painstaking study of Cruso combines archival detective work with careful close reading of poetry and prose. It succeeds in showing the interest of an otherwise minor figure for thinking about hybrid identities and

multilingual cultural production in early modern England. There are points where the argument would work just as well without some of the explicit theoretical scaffolding: Joby's analysis of Cruso's print output stands on its own without the need for explicit engagement with Itamar Even-Zohar's ideas about 'polysystems' (144). At the same time, there are other tantalising details which could have been drawn out further – the inclusion of Cruso's mother's name in Norwich militia muster lists, for instance, or the reference to Cruso's having been directed by the mayor of Norwich to deal with 'the Mutinies and Tumults' in the city during the Excise Riots of 1646 (238).

These are two different views of the Anglo-Dutch relationship, but there is plenty of shared ground here. Both books share an interest in places and spaces of encounter. For Joby, there is an insistent argument that England's 'stranger churches' have received too little credit for their role as sites of cultural production and exchange, while for the authors of *North Sea Crossings*, Oxford emerges as a rich site for exploring and understanding these entangled histories. The first recorded international students at the university was Emo of Huizinge, from the province of Groningen, around the end of the twelfth century. Each of these works is animated by an interest in the overlapping literary and linguistic spheres of England and the Low Countries, and they share a refusal to limit that interest to canonical authors and texts. They work on different scales, but in their own way each book champions a capacious understanding of Anglo-Dutch encounter, and shows that much about that encounter remains to be studied in our archives and libraries.

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