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150 years of netherlandism in the Czech Republic

Introduction

The title of this paper is related to the name of the conference – 150 years of netherlandism in the Czech Republic. What exactly do we mean by ‘netherlandism’? The definition of ‘netherlandism’ as used in this paper is the reception of Netherlandish, that is to say Dutch and Flemish literary culture to a greater extent. As translations from Dutch and Flemish literature started relatively late, I will be examining only one and a half centuries – from the middle of the nineteenth century till today.

General cultural contacts between the Low Countries and the ‘heart of Europe’, however, are in a certain sense as old as the Czech state itself. The first king in this country was a Frankish merchant, known as Samo, who came at an opportune time when the Slavonic tribes were fighting against the Avars. He was elected as their king in 626, now 1375 years ago.¹ We do not know which part of the Frankish kingdom Samo came from, but the centre of that kingdom was near the Walloon Liege and the Dutch Maastricht – thus in the present Low Countries.

Extensive contacts between both regions mainly existed in three periods: in the high Middle Ages, during the Reformation and the Thirty Year’s War and in the 20th century. In the Middle Ages we know of leading Czech clergymen who studied in Liège² and about Czech artisans imported to build churches. In the opposite direction, Flemish artisans arrived, in the second half of the 12th and the beginning of the 13th century, in both Czech and Moravian cities as part of the so-called German “Drang nach Osten”. Thus in Brno (Brünn) Flemish people reclaimed the marshes around St. James (the parish church of the city), whereas their Walloon counterparts were imported to establish cloth-weaving and settled around the Lower Square and the church of St. Nicholas (the church of the merchants, destroyed in the 19th century).

¹ Lubomír Havlík, *Moravské letopisy. Dějiny Moravy v datech* (Moravian chronicles. A history of Moravia in data), Brno 1993, p. 27.

² To give only two of the most interesting prae-Luxemburgian examples: Cosmas of Prague (ca. 1045-1125), the first historian of the Czech lands and author of the *Chronica Bohemorum* studied ca. 1082 in Liège, as did perhaps also his son Henricus Olomucensis (Jindřich Zdík, ca. 1095-1150), who stood at the beginning of the Olomouc scriptorium and thus of literature in Moravia.

The highlights of intercultural contacts were during the period of the Luxemburg kings (1310-1437). Hundreds of Dutch students studied in Prague,³ Flemish craftsmen settled in South-Moravia and were present at the Court in Prague. It is still an open question as to how far the Czech spiritual movement of Milič of Kremsier and his followers influenced the Dutch *Devotio Moderna* of Geert Groote⁴ and to what extent Dutch and Flemish painters were an example for late gothic painting in the Czech lands.⁵ One thing is certain, however: contacts were up until the 16th century mainly in Latin or in some kind of German dialect. Dutch as such played no serious role in the contacts and Dutch literary works were not translated directly into Czech. A good example of these contacts is the most known Dutch humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam, with whom e.g. the Olomouc bishop Stanislaus Thurzó de Béthlenfalva had very warm contacts⁶ and whose Latin written work was very rapidly

³ More than 180 of the Dutch students graduated in Prague. Some of them were even chosen as Deans of the Faculty of Arts. See Moll, *Kerkgeschiedenis van Nederland vóór de Hervorming* (Ecclesiastical history of the Netherlands), vol. II, Utrecht 1864, pp. 289-290, and the oldest immatriculations of Charles University Prague as printed in *Monumenta Historiae Universitatis Carolo-Ferdinandee Pragensis*, vol. I-II, Prague 1830-1834 *passim*.

⁴ A survey of the discussion about is in Wilken Engelbrecht, *War Geert Grote in Prag? Zur Frage der Beziehung Grotes zum Vorhussitismus - eine Problemskizze* (Was Geert Groote at Prague? About the question of Grote's relationship with prae-Hussitism), *Studia minora Facultatis philosophicae Universitatis Brunensis* E37 (1992), 171-185 (the Dutch side of the discussion). See also Manfred Gerwing, *Die sogenannte Devotio moderna* (The so-called Devotio moderna), in: Ferdinand Seibt (ed.), *Jan Hus. Zwischen Zeiten, Völkern, Konfessionen* (Between times, peoples and confessions), Munich 1997, pp. 49-58 (the German and Czech side of the discussion) and Peter Morée, *Preaching in Fourteenth-Century Bohemia. The life and ideas of Milicius de Chremsir (+1374) and his significance in the historiography of Bohemia*, Heršpice 1999, pp. 247-254 (synopsis).

⁵ The main work on Dutch and Flemish influence on Czech and Moravian art was done by the Brno professor of Art History, Albert Kutal, who looked at the influence of Dutch art on Czech and Moravian sculpture from 1460 onwards (mainly Rogier van der Weyden and Nicholas Gerhaert of Leyden). See A. Kutal, *Gotické sochářství v Čechách a na Moravě* (Gothic sculptures in Bohemia and Moravia), Prague 1940; A. Kutal, *Gotische Kunst in Böhmen* (Gothic art in Bohemia), Prague 1971; K. Chamonikolasová, *Nicolaus Gerhaert of Leyden in the Moravian Context*, *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 58 (1995), 61-84.

⁶ The depth of their friendship is documented by the fact that Erasmus dedicated his edition of Plinius' *Naturalis Historia* (1525) and his interpretation of Psalm 38 (1532) to Thurzó and that Thurzó sent Erasmus in 1522 four Roman gold coins evidently found near Olomouc (The place "Redusch" was for a long time unknown and the fact doubted as a typical humanist fiction, but archeological excavations near Neředín – now the western part of Olomouc – in 2001 make clear that there must have been real finds, perhaps at this site). See K. Wotke, *Der Olmützer Bischof Stanislaus Thurzó von Béthlenfalva (1497-1540) und dessen Humanistenkreis* (The Olomouc bishop Stanislav Thurzo of Béthlenfalva and his humanist circle), *Zeitschrift des Vereines für die Geschichte Mährens und Schlesiens* 3 (1899), 376-384; M. Kouřil, *Vztah olomouckých biskupů k Erasmovi Rotterdamskému* (The relationship of

translated into Czech.⁷

The facts change for a relatively short period in the 16th century. The Low Countries and the Kingdom of Bohemia were ruled by Charles V as parts of the same Empire, both countries were Habsburg territories. In both countries Protestantism became the dominant religion with the Helvetian, Calvinist variant as a very important feature. When the Northern Netherlands succeeded with their uprising against the Spanish Habsburgs and William the Silent founded the first university in Leyden, it became beneficial to send young Czech men on their *peregrinatio academica* to the Netherlands as well.⁸ This was one of the reasons for the election of Frederic V of the Palatine as King of Bohemia and for his flight after the 1620 Battle of the White Mountain to The Hague.⁹ Dutch books in the libraries of Breslau and to a lesser extent in Prague document an interest in Dutch religious and political writings and it is almost certain that many young Czech humanists learnt at least passively a fair amount of

Olomouc bishops with Erasmus), *Studia Comeniana et Historica* 18 (1988), 120-126.

⁷ E.g. the translation of Erasmus' preachings *Kázání Earsma Rotterdamského* printed in 1558 by Caspar Aorgus in Olomouc (Olmütz) – see *Knihopis českých a slovesnkých tisků od doby nejstarší až do konce 18. století* (Bibliography of Czech and Slovak printings from the most ancient times until the end of the 18th century) II.8, Prague 1965, no. 2349.

⁸ This is documented in the best way by František Hrubý, *Étudiants Tchèques aux écoles protestantes de l'Europe occidentale à la fin du 16^e et au début du 17^e siècle. Documents* (Czech students at protestant schools in Western Europe from the end of the 16th till the beginning of the 17th centuries). Brno 1970. The first Czech students were registered 1598 under Gomarus in Leyden: Johann Heckel and the Moravian Johann Opsimates (the first translator of Calvin into Czech). After the Battle at the White Mountain many Czech and Moravian intellectuals fled to the Netherlands. During the Thirty Year's War 217 students from Bohemia and Moravia were registered: 150 in Leyden, 49 at Franeker, 15 in Groningen and 3 in Utrecht. Their real number will have been higher as many of the exiles could not pay the registration fee. See Wilken Engelbrecht, *Die Bedeutung der friesischen Universität zu Franeker für die tschechischen Exulanten nach der Schlacht am Weißen Berg* (The influence of the Frisian university at Franeker after the Battle at the White Mountain), *Philologia Frisica* Anno 1999 (=2000), 57-87.

⁹ The best work on the partly Dutch background of the Czech uprising is Josef Polišenský, *Tragic Triangle. The Netherlands, Spain and Bohemia 1617-1621*, Prague 1991. Compare also the work of Nicolette Mout: *Bohemen en de Nederlanden in de 16^e eeuw* (Bohemia and the Netherlands in the 16th century). Diss. Leiden 1975 and her article *Political and religious ideas of Netherlanders at the court in Prague*, *Acta Historiae Neerlandicae* 9 (1976), 1-29

Dutch.¹⁰ All of this, however, does not amount to ‘netherlandism’ in the sense of studying the culture and the language of the Netherlands.

Prague netherlandistics

The first systematic study of Dutch culture in the Czech Republic starts with the founding of a Dutch lectureship at Prague Technical University in 1918 by **František Kalda** (1888-1969) who studied German and Classical Philology at Charles University. His establishment of a Dutch section of the Department of German Philology at Charles University in 1921, now 80 years ago, may be considered the beginning of Dutch university studies in Czecho-Slovakia. This section existed up until the closing of the university during the Second World War in 1942 and was renewed after the war in 1945.

Kalda's habilitation (post-doctoral thesis) “*Západogermánská flexe se zvláštním zřetelem k nizozemštině*” (West German flections with a special attendance to Dutch, Prague 1921) initiated a series of important studies on the comparison of German and Dutch verbs which is nowadays, unfortunately, nearly unknown and deserving of republication. His main interest was however German philology, the official title of his professor's chair. Interestingly, the Prague Netherlandistic department came into existence independent of the Leipzig chair, which is the mother of most other Central European Netherlandistic departments.¹¹

Less well-known is the fact that the Prague lectureship co-existed along with a similar chair in Bratislava, then the second capital of Czecho-Slovakia. Here it was also Kalda, who started in 1928 at the newly founded Comenius University in Bratislava (Pressburg) the Chair for German and English Philology. One of the main reasons for his decision to accept the position was the possibility to introduce Dutch as well. As Slovakia was during the Second World War formally an independent state, Kalda could continue working in Bratislava, where

¹⁰ Adam Skura (edited by A. van der Eijk, R. Mulder), *Catalogus van de in Nederland gedrukte boeken in de Universiteitsbibliotheek van Wroclaw. I. Nederlandstalige boeken tot 1700. II. Nederlandstalig toneel tot 1800* (A Catalogue of in the Netherlands printed books in Wroclaw University Library. I. Dutch books up to 1700. II. Dutch theatre up to 1800) Leiden 1996. For the Czech lands a similar catalogue is still missing. An idea of what is present today can be seen by the survey of books of Grotius in major Czech libraries as presented by Jana Engelbrechtová, *Grotiana in the Czech Republic*, forthcoming in *Grotiana* 20/21(1999/2000), 107-120.

¹¹ See the history of Prague netherlandistics Jitka Růžicková-Hronová, *Het Nederlands in Praag* (Dutch language at Prague), *Ons Erfdeel* 37.4 (1994), 616-620.

he stayed until his retirement in 1959. Afterwards the study of Dutch in Bratislava was renewed in October 1990.¹²

Kalda's interest was mainly directed towards philology and historical linguistics. This direction was also chosen by his followers in Prague – the English specialist **Bohumil Trnka** (1895-1984), one of the founders of the famous Prague linguistic circle, who took over the chair after Kalda's departure to Bratislava in 1929, and Professor Vorrink, who became a lecturer of Dutch after the second World War and continued up until 1948. Linguistics is still one of the main pillars of Czech netherlandistics and is still connected with the name of a great linguist – **Přemysl Janota** (*1926), one of the greatest phoneticians in Europe and vice-president of the International Society of Phonetic Sciences. He studied English and Philosophy in Prague and studied Phonology at Amsterdam after the war. In 1948 he took over the Prague lectureship of Dutch from Vorrink and made it into an actual department. His main co-worker was Olga Krijtová (*1931) about whom I will speak later. They managed to maintain the department during the dark years of the communist regime. Since the Prague Spring in 1968, Dutch has been a main subject in the form of a five-year MA study.



The three Czech universities with netherlandistics

Brno and Olomouc

Prague is, however, not the only university in the country and also not the only one where Dutch studies started relatively early. The founding of both other departments is connected with the fate of one of the main Czech professors of philosophy in the twentieth century – **Josef Ludvík Fischer** (1894-1973). This philosopher was in the Netherlands in 1939, at the

¹² About František Kalda see Elemír Terray, *In memoriam prof. Františka Kalda*, *Germanica Bratislaviensia* 1969, 239-240. After his retirement Kalda continued to help for a number of years as emerited professor in Prague in the netherlandistics there.

moment of the outbreak of the war, and simply did not return to Czecho-Slovakia.¹³ The years spent in Dutch exile and his contacts with the Dutch resistance groups brought about his election in 1945 as first president of the Dutch-Czechoslovak Society with his consequent encouragement of the founding of Dutch lectureships. The first was at Masaryk University, Brno, where he returned as Dean of the Philosophical Faculty, and the second one at Palacký University, Olomouc, of which he became the first post-war rector in 1946. The mentioned Dutch lectureships began at both universities in 1947 and were both filled by Dutch German specialists: Erika Solářová-Montijn (*1912) at Brno and dr. Aimé van Santen (1917-1988) at Olomouc. After a promising start the communist regime put an end to the Olomouc lectureship when Van Santen was banished in 1951.¹⁴ Four years later in 1955, the Brno department was degraded to a mere lectureship, filled first by Erika Solářová-Montijn and since the eighties by Ems Máčelová-Van den Broecke (*1914).¹⁵ Both departments began to develop once again only after the Velvet Revolution.

Translations

Thus the university study of Dutch has an eighty year old tradition. Why then the 150 years in the title of this paper? The other pillar of netherlandistics, of course, is the study of Dutch and Flemish literature and the translation of it into Czech. This aspect of university activities has a much greater impact as it reaches a wider public. Translations from Dutch started in the eighties of the nineteenth century, in a period when university study of Dutch in Bohemia and Moravia was non-existent. University study of Dutch was completely absent at the remainder of Austrian-Hungarian universities, and even in the majority of Germany. Nevertheless the

¹³ Lubomír Valenta, "Filosof a jeho doba" (The philosopher and his time). In: J.L. Fischer, *Zrcadlo doby. Abeceda skoro filosofická* (The mirror of the time. A nearly philosophical ABC), Olomouc 1996, 209-211.

¹⁴ Niels Bokhove, 'Dat hopeloze stadje hier'. *Olomouc als bakermat van Aimé van Santens Kafka-visie* (This hopeless little town. Olomouc as origin of Aimé van Santen's vision of Kafka). In: Leopold Decloedt, Wilken Engelbrecht and Kateřina Málková (eds.), *50 jaar neerlandistiek in Moravië* (50 years of netherlandistics in Moravia), Olomouc/Brno 2000², 245-267.

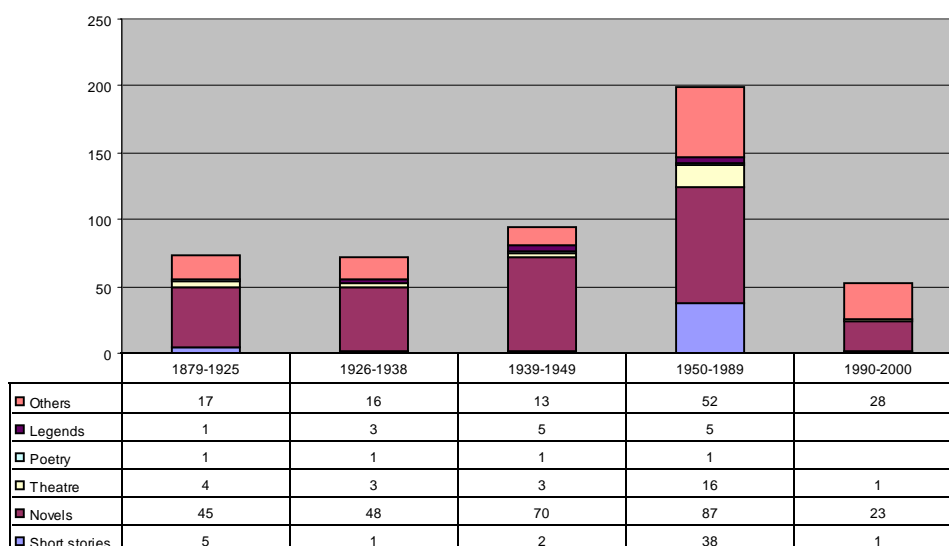
¹⁵ Erika Solářová-Montijn, *Nederlands als bijvak in Brno in de vijftiger en zestiger jaren* (Dutch as an optional subject in the fifties and sixties). In: Leopold Decloedt and Wilken Engelbrecht (eds.), *Didactiek van de Nederlandse Taal en Cultuur in Midden- en Oost-Europa* (Didactics of the Dutch language and culture in Central and Eastern Europe), Olomouc 1997, 149-151.

works of several major writers, mainly of Flemish origin, were translated, sometimes quite soon after the publication of the Dutch original.¹⁶

We can make the following outline of the translations into Czech:

- 1879-1925 The Austrian-Hungarian Double Monarchy and the initial years of the Republic of Czecho-Slovakia
- 1926-1938 The first Republic of Czecho-Slovakia
- 1939-1949 The occupation and the restored democratic state
- 1950-1989 The years of the communist regime
- 1990-present The renewed democracy.

Translations from Netherlandish literature - first survey



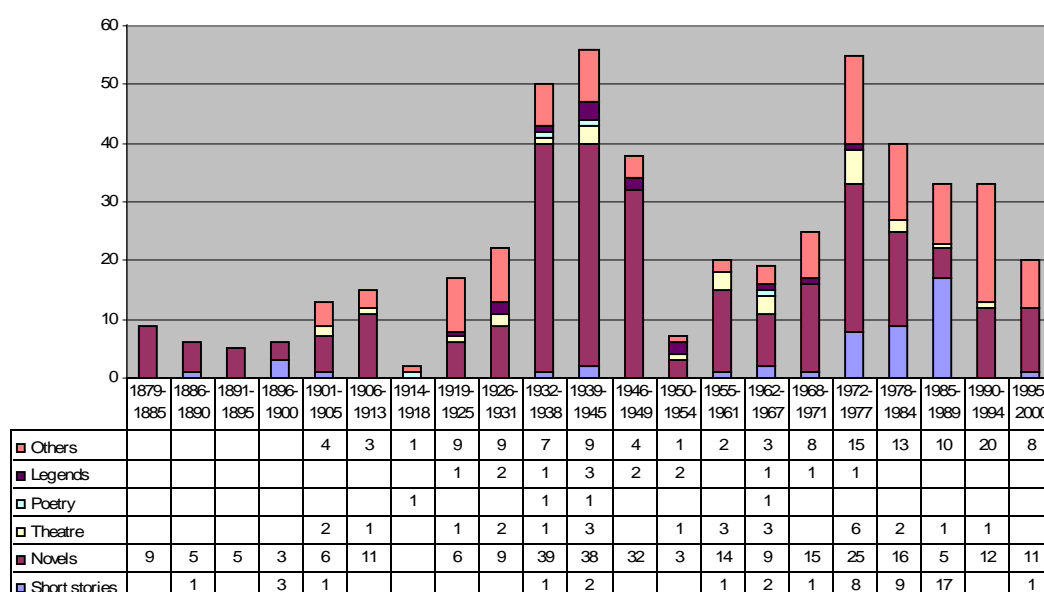
¹⁶ About translations from Dutch and Flemish literary works into Czech see Wilken Engelbrecht, *Schwejk versus Kapitan Bontekoe. Nederländische Literatur in tschechischer und tschechische Literatur in niederländischer Übersetzung* (Schwejk versus Captain Bontekoe. Dutch literature in Czech and Czech literature in Dutch translation). In: Leopold Decloedt and Herbert van Uffelen (eds.), *Der niederländische Sprachraum und Mitteleuropa* (The Dutch language and Central Europe), Vienna 1995, 103-114.

The translations can be divided into the following genres:¹⁷ a) short stories published in literary periodicals, b) novels and romances, c) pieces for theatre, d) poetry, e) legends and old literature before ca. 1600, f) others – children’s literature, fairy-tales, non-fiction. At first sight, the period of the communist regime was with some 200 translations very open towards Dutch and Flemish literature. However, when we compare those 40 years with the only 13 years of the stabilised First Republic and the 11 years of the Second World War and the restored democracy, it is clear that the picture is not as positive as it may seem. The second graph gives a finer dividing:¹⁸

¹⁷ A survey of translations has been made by Olga Krijtová, Ruben Pellar and Petra Schürová (eds.), *Bibliografie van vertalingen uit het Nederlands in het Tsjechisch en Slowaaks vanaf 1890 tot 1993* (A bibliography of translations from Dutch into Czech and Slovak between 1890 and 1993), Prague 1994. Here were also used the unpublished list by Wilken Engelbrecht, *Vertalingen uit het Nederlands in het Tsjechisch en Slowaaks* (Translations from Dutch into Czech and Slovak), Brno 1993 and the unpublished actualization of the *Bibliografie* by Ruben Pellar e.a., *Doplňky k publikaci „Bibliografie překladů z Nizozemštiny do češtiny a slovenštiny od roku 1890 do roku 1993“* (Appendix on the „Bibliography...“), Prague 1998.

¹⁸ **1st period:** dividing in periods of 5 years up to the World War, then the World War (1914-1918) and its aftermath (1919-1925); **2nd period:** division in 3 periods of 6 years; **3rd period:** the occupation (1939-1945) and the restored democracy with its last half-democratic year just after the Communist coup d’état (1946-1949); **4th period:** Stalinist regime (1950-1954), the socialist period up to the declaration of the “socialist state” (1955-1961), the years before the Prague Spring (1962-1967), Prague Spring and its aftermath (1968-1971), the normalization (1972-1977), the normalization period after Charta ‘77 (1978-1984), the final years of the regime (1985-1989); **5th period:** the Velvet Revolution and its aftermath (1990-1994), after the division of the CSFR (1995-2000).

Translations from Netherlandish literature - second survey



The first period – 1879-1925

Historically, the first translations into Czech were the Flemish writer Hendrik Conscience – his *Schat van Felix Roobeek* in 1879 (The Treasure of Felix Roobeek) and Jacob van Lennep's *De lotgevallen van Klaasje Zevenster* in 1880 (The Fate of Nicole Sevenstar, original 1865). During this first period of translations, lasting till 1926, the most important translated authors were Louis Couperus, Frederik van Eeden, Guido Gezelle, Herman Heijermans, Multatuli, Domela Nieuwenhuis, Henriëtte Roland-Holst and Jan van Ruusbroec.

At first glance this may seem a somewhat illogical group. This is not the case, however, as the authors all have in common an interest in a “better world”. For the Flemish authors this is a better world in a nationalistic sense while for the Dutch the world of the soul. Nationalism and modernity were at this time significant themes in Czech society, mainly focused around the nationalistic Young-Czech Party and the oppositional Czech Moderns. Similar features are present in Polish translations from the Dutch, where the nationalist Flemish writer Conscience is presented as the ‘Flemish Kraszewski’ – the fact that ‘he taught his people to read the mother tongue’ was a strong argument to translate his works in both languages.¹⁹ Similar

¹⁹ Compare Zofia Klimaszewska, *Niederländische und polnische Literatur in Übertragung: Eine Konfrontation auf kulturhistorischem Hintergrund* (Dutch and Polish literature in translation. A confrontation against a cultural historical background). In: Leopold Decloedt and Herbert van Uffelen (eds.), *Der niederländische Sprachraum und Mitteleuropa* (The Dutch language and Central Europe), Vienna 1995, 115-119.

nationalistic problems and a similar orientation on modernism – in contrast with the conservative Habsburg regime and, after 1918, complementary to the rebuilding of their own states – made Dutch and Flemish literature an important feature for both countries. Of interest is the fact that in the genre of non-fiction literature the works of socialist leaders such as Henriëtte Roland-Holst and Domela Nieuwenhuis were translated into Czech.

The second period – 1926-1938

The second period of translations (1926-1946) were more influenced by market considerations. The main translators Lída Faltová and Rudolf Jordán Vonka concentrated mainly on well selling leisure time literature or romantic literature about Indonesia or the Flemish countryside. Typical translated writers were Madelon Székely-Lulofs, Johan Fabricius, Anton Coolen, Herman de Man, Ernest Claes and Felix Timmermans. The similarity with the situation in Poland is striking, the more so because in Czecho-Slovakia university studies of Dutch started in 1921 (Prague) and 1929 (Bratislava), whereas in Poland such studies started after the 2nd World War. As mentioned earlier, however, the university studies were mainly focused on linguistics and thus had no influence on translations. The total production of translations from Dutch was in those barely 13 years as high as in the 46 years before: 72 translations as compared with 73 translations in the first period, with a slight shift toward novels and romantic literature.

The third period – 1939-1949

One would think that the period of German occupation which began in 1939 and of open war afterwards would not be favourable for literary translations. Quite the opposite is true, however. Of the 94 translations during the third period (1939-1949) more than half of the production (47 translations) was produced in the years of the occupation with an amazingly high number of literary works. Only a percentage of the translations were reprints of pre-war editions. During the German occupation typically translated authors were mainly of Flemish origin, painting the rural life of the countryside – such as Ernest Claes, Stijn Streuvels and Felix Timmermans – or giving a psychological picture of the Flemish soul – such as Maurice Roelants²⁰. On the Dutch side the situation was similar. The translated Dutch authors wrote about heroic life on the sea – e.g. Ben van Eysselsteijn with remarkable titles like *Tusschen*

²⁰ From the 38 translated novels 18 were by the four mentioned authors.

Zuiderkruis en Poolster (between the Southern Cross and the Polar Star, 1936, Czech translation 1942) –, about life in Indonesia – Ary den Hertog and Madelon Székely-Lulofs –, the Dutch countryside – Anton Coolen – or popular storytellers known to Czech readers even prior to the war such as Johan Fabricius.

Most of the relatively large-scale production in the few years between the end of the war and the beginning of the communist regime involved reprints of beloved pre-war translations and a few new editions of other works by the same authors.

The fourth period – 1950-1989

The fourth period of translations was in a certain sense also a period of great possibilities for Dutch and Flemish literature in translation. In the first five years, the period under president Klement Gottwald who died in 1953, the same year as Stalin, nearly nothing was translated from Dutch. Interestingly this was not merely due to the strongly anti-western character of the Stalinist regime. In part, Dutch literature itself was one of the reasons: as Dutch literature in the early fifties protested against traditional Calvinism and Catholicism, the atmosphere in Czechoslovakia was somewhat optimistic – even if this may seem unreal to us who are aware of the cruelties of that period. The people saw the Soviets as their liberators and the Western-European nations as the ones who betrayed Czechoslovakia in 1939. Intellectuals were, as before the war, left-wing and entered the Communist Party en masse. Consequently, Dutch literature was not of interest at that time.

When the communist regime became openly restrictive in the fifties and the eyes of many people were cruelly opened, Western literature became more attractive. Even more so, because visiting Western countries – for Czechoslovaks until the war a quite normal feature – began to be impossible. It was at that moment, in 1959, that the first translation of **Olga Krijtová** (*1931) appeared. This was not a translation of a popular work but one from the work of a great Dutch writer, the *Het fregatschip Johanna Maria* (The Frigate Johanna Maria, 1930) of Arthur van Schendel. This first published translation from her hand indicated the direction of the majority of an unbelievable number of 74 of her own translations as well as 18 translations involving collaboration: towards serious literature, recognized in the Netherlands and Belgium as such.²¹ It is no accidental circumstance that in her person

²¹ Considering that most of her translations were published before 1990 and that the total amount of translations from the Dutch in this period is 200 pieces, this means that she translated or co-operated in the translation of almost 50% of them. A complete survey of Krijtová's translations is given by Ruben Pellar, *Bibliografie prací doc. PhDr. Olgy Krijtové do roku 2000* (A bibliography of the works of Olga

translator and university teacher of literature were unified – in addition to the translations Olga Krijtová found time to edit some twenty-two handbooks, lesson-books and anthologies about Dutch in general and Dutch literature in particular. When she was honoured in 1995 with one of the highest Orders of the Netherlands – Knight of Orange-Nassau – there were no doubts as to the merit as she had been the main propagator of Netherlandish culture in the Czech Republic. A striking feature in the graph of this period is the accumulating number of translations of single stories after the Prague Spring. This is due mainly to Olga Krijtová's policy of pushing her students to publish their own translations in the literary periodical *Světová literatura*, which presented significant foreign authors to interested readers.

What picture of Dutch and Flemish literature did she present to Czechs? It was generally a very balanced literary picture including popular fiction such as the books of Fabricius who was with over 630 thousand copies the best selling Dutch author in Czech history as well as very fine works of children literature – mainly thanks to the friendship between the Dutch author Miep Diekmann and Olga Krijtová. It was a picture that was attractive in a period when people were used to reading between the lines – Dutch literature is a critical one and many books would have been read by Czech readers in quite a different sense than their author originally meant. Most of the chosen authors were left-wing writers, in the genre of critical historical romances. Louis Paul Boon, Hugo Claus, Yvonne Keuls, Harry Mulish, Multatuli, Maurice Roelants, Simon Vestdijk and Theun de Vries are only a couple of examples. All of them could be interpreted in a way possibly critical to the regime, and this made them attractive for Czech readers.

The Velvet Revolution

As elsewhere in Central-Europe, the 1989 Velvet Revolution meant a new start. In a certain sense it was a return to pre-war circumstances. The still existing Dutch lectureship in Prague had the opportunity to become a real department under the guidance of the already mentioned **Olga Krijtová** (*1931). In 1990, the German departments of Comenius University in Bratislava and Palacký University in Olomouc invited the Classical philologist **Wilken Engelbrecht** (*1962) to rebuild their former Dutch lectureships.²² Both departments soon introduced a complete MA study: Bratislava in 1995 and Olomouc in 1997. Only Brno has

Krijtová up to the year 2000), *NE-BE* 3.1 (2000), 9-13.

²² Wilken Engelbrecht, *De draad weer opgepakt. Nederlands in Bratislava en Olomouc* (Continuing Dutch in Bratislava and Olomouc), *Neerlandia* 98 (1994), 185-187

remained thus far only a lectureship as the faculty there is not interested in supporting the growth of minor Germanic languages.

Netherlandistics has flourished after the “Wende”, but the transition in the region was a particularly poor time for translated Dutch literature with the exception of theological books.²³ Reading between the lines was no longer interesting and most of the people that bought literary books before were too involved with survival in the new situation, where money tends to come first. This was immediately reflected by the translations, where non-fiction such as cook-books became the primary texts. It is not surprising that the Olomouc department which from 1995 onward focused firmly on business Dutch and translation is now one of the biggest departments of Dutch in Central Europe. Students are now forced to start a subject that promises work after completion, with culture as a secondary item.

Nevertheless, the future is still hopeful for literary translations as post-modern Dutch and Flemish writers are using the same themes as young Czech writers. Historical ties between the Czech Republic and the Low Countries are growing more and more interesting for Czech historians who can finally look into the theological background of many facts without being harassed by communist censors. Dutch art is undergoing a revival and in the last few years important collections have been presented to the Czech public. When the economic situation will stabilise, people will have time once again to read literature. Without, however, control by the censor the picture created by literary translations will not be formed according to the official Dutch canon. It will reflect more the mirror of the Czech soul, just as before the war.

Conclusion

Thus, Netherlandism consists of the cultural and scientific ideas reflecting the topics of the mind that are identical with parts of the Netherlandish culture. For Czechs this meant in former times mostly modernising theological ideas, in the nineteenth century Flemish nationalism and Dutch Moderns, in the between the war period exotic colonies and psychological romances, during the Second World War the idyllic and heroic side of the life of those two little countries in the north, in communist times with freedom and now with the successful “polder model”.

²³ The influence of Dutch Calvinist literature on the three major Czech protestant churches (the Czech Evangelical Brethren Church, the Brethren Church and the Brethren Union) has thus far been neglected and still has to be surveyed. As one can easily see by opening a Czech protestant periodical such as *Protestant*, the Dutch influence is very strong.