

## Modern Dutch Studies: An Introduction

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The subtitle of this collection of essays makes clear its *raison d'être*: to honour the career and the retirement of Peter King, Professor of Modern Dutch Studies at the University of Hull. Peter King was born in Wimbledon on 5 May 1922, and was educated at the King's College Choir School in Cambridge, and then at Ardingly College in Sussex. Between 1941 and 1945 he served mainly in British submarines, during which time he spent – significantly – one year as a British Liaison Officer with the Royal Dutch Navy. Since then, his working life has been devoted more or less completely to the furtherance of Dutch studies at all levels, both in the academic world, and also in organizing and co-ordinating all manner of activities at international, national and local levels concerning the Low Countries and their culture.

After the war, in 1946 and 1947, he studied at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands, taking Dutch and French as his principal subjects. Between 1947 and 1950 he read Dutch at University College, London, and was awarded a First Class BA Honours degree there in 1950. For the next two years he was the incumbent of a research studentship at Bedford College, London, working on Vondel's *Adam in Ballingschap* and Grotius's *Adamus Exul*. In 1952 he moved to Cambridge University, with an appointment in the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages to teach Dutch language and literature in that University. In 1959 he was appointed to a University Lectureship in Cambridge, in 1960 was elected a member of the Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde, and in 1966 became a Fellow of St Edmund's House, Cambridge.

In October 1976 the Leverhulme Trust and other important benefactors assisted in the foundation of an Institute of Modern

Dutch Studies at the University of Hull, of which Peter King was appointed professorial director, and in which post he was to remain for the next eleven years. Initially the new Institute was set up as a research centre, to co-ordinate and stimulate the various research interests in Dutch studies already present at Hull University. Within three years, however, an undergraduate honours degree programme was launched, and the staff of the Institute was expanded by the addition of two full-time lecturers, alongside research personnel and language assistants. Over the last decade the Hull Institute has come to mean many things to many people, and almost all of it is Peter King's doing. At any one time there are some fifty joint- and single-honours BA students enrolled, a widely varied programme of academic research goes on, research students come and go, several Leverhulme Research Fellows have spent a year or more at the Institute, and international academic exchange programmes have been set up with universities in the Netherlands and Belgium for both students and staff. National and international conferences have been organized in Hull, research grants have been attracted to the Institute for all manner of research projects, and a first-class collection of books has been built up in the Brynmor Jones Library at Hull, numbering at least 10,000 items, and forming a collection on Modern Dutch Studies probably unrivalled in Britain. Besides these essentially academic pursuits, Peter King has founded a thriving Anglo-Dutch Society for the district of Hull and Humberside, he was instrumental in 1977 in setting up the national Association of Dutch Language Teachers (ADULT) in Great Britain, and in 1984 was appointed to the Anglo-Netherlands Mixed Commission which monitors the cultural treaty between the two countries. His most recent new departure is the organization of the William and Mary Tercentenary celebrations of 1988 in commemoration of 300 years of Anglo-Dutch relations, not only at the national level, where he is a member of the steering committee, but also in the Humberside region, where he has set up a vigorous committee with a long string of events in both the civic and academic spheres. One could go on and on. These things, and many others, are the normal activities of a university academic department: Peter King is exceptional only in that he has achieved them virtually single-handedly at Hull, and in that he has put his individual stamp indelibly on almost all he has done.

The title of this collection is *Modern Dutch Studies*, which refers to the

discipline with which Peter King has been involved for the last decade at Hull. 'Modern Dutch Studies' was deliberately chosen as the name of the Hull Institute, and while it is by no means perfect as a self-explanatory label, it does distinguish itself from simply 'Dutch', or 'Dutch Studies'. 'Modern Dutch Studies' is a variant of area studies, by which is meant a multi-disciplinary and on occasion interdisciplinary approach to a geographical area, most often associated with third-world countries, but in this case with the Dutch-language area of north-western Europe, including of course most of the northern half of Belgium. If we look at the rationale behind the BA programmes in Modern Dutch Studies at Hull, then we see that, as in most area studies programmes, the language is an essential tool of the trade, and thus a great deal of the students' first two years is spent in acquiring that language from scratch. The emphasis is very much on the Dutch language as it is today, particularly in the business community, and the course is directed towards communication in a working environment. Dutch literature is also taught extensively throughout the four years of the course, but more often than not as a reflection of the society which generated it, rather than for its own sake pure and simple: this also applies to the teaching of Dutch and Flemish art history, which has taken on an increasingly important profile in the Institute's programmes. Where the courses, and the work of the Institute as a whole, depart quite clearly from the practice of most language and literature departments is in their strong focus on the social sciences concerning the Low Countries, and in this field the cover is extended to the whole of the Low Countries, rather than the Dutch language area, as well as to the Dutch and Belgian (ex-)colonies. Social history, economic history and political history all form important components of the work, as does the examination of the present-day societies of the Netherlands and Belgium in their political, economic and social aspects. Returning to the degree programmes as a reflection of the definition of the discipline of Modern Dutch Studies, the students follow rather more than a quarter of their courses throughout four years in a single continued discipline taught outside the Institute, such as Law, Economics, or European Studies, and indeed spend their third year in the Netherlands or Belgium following courses in that discipline at a Dutch-language university, and following a placement in an office or business as closely related as possible to their option subject and to their chosen future career. The multi-disciplinary nature is continually

emphasized, as is the concentration on the present-day societies of the Low Countries.

From this brief outline the subject-area created in the Hull Institute becomes clear. Teaching and research is orientated towards the most recent developments and present situation in the linguistic, literary, cultural, economic, social and political spheres. More classical approaches to the study of language and literature are by no means excluded from our programme, and indeed Peter King has no mean reputation himself in those areas, but the Hull venture involves something more, especially in view of the fact that other university departments in Britain provide excellent honours courses in Dutch in a more conventional vein. The area studies approach followed in Hull is by no means everyone's choice, but it is unique in Britain, and the steady if modest student demand over a number of years is a testament to its success. In recent months the Institute has merged into a new Department of European and Modern Dutch Studies at Hull, and in a way this marks the end of Peter King's tenure of the Chair in Modern Dutch Studies. But in the stimulating and challenging opportunities for development and integration in the years to come, it is unlikely that the individuality of Modern Dutch Studies will be diminished.

The breadth of Peter King's academic interests and the scope of subjects taught at the Hull Institute are reflected in the subject matter of the essays collected here. They are arranged in four sections, namely Language and Translation, Literature, Social Sciences, and the Visual Arts. Within each section the essays are arranged more or less chronologically in terms of their subject matter.

In the section on Language and Translation, there are three essays on the intricacies of the translation process, and two on the issues of teaching language at university level, both being areas in which Peter King has been deeply involved for a working lifetime. Theo Hermans contributes an essay on the translation of proper names, and shows how a translator's technique and general point of departure can be illuminated by examining his treatment of the names of the characters in the piece. This can operate at a fairly simplistic level, as in the novel *De Witte* by Ernst Claes, where the various translators choose either to integrate the story into the culture of the target audience by providing local equivalents of the proper names, or to leave the names as they were in the original, thus presenting the story as a foreign occurrence.

At a much more sophisticated level, as in *Max Havelaar*, the satirical nature of the names in the Dutch original offers endless possibilities for interpretation by the translator. Paul Vincent's essay on the work of Sir John Bowring explores the working methods and impact of a man who built a reputation in Britain in the early nineteenth century as a specialist in relatively little-known languages, and who removed some layers of the veil from Dutch literature for the English public. John Irons provides a frank discussion of the technical problems of translating a poem by P. C. Boutens into no less than four separate Germanic languages other than Dutch, showing a remarkable sensitivity to the images created by language which in an ideal world should be the mark of all fine translators. He concludes his piece with a breathtaking set of Haikus, forming a very free rendering into English of the same poem, which breaks all the rules of translation *except* that of sensitivity.

Moving to the subject of language teaching, Jan Hulstijn and Elaine Marchena provide a research report of a carefully constructed test designed to estimate the difficulties caused by 'L1 interference', or in this specific case, the avoidance of certain linguistic structures not present in the mother-language. Roel Vismans' essay assesses the pedagogical value of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) at Hull, and presents the important conclusion that, given proper and diligent supervision, computers can take much of the tedium out of language teaching without being detrimental to student progress.

The section on Literature is the largest in the collection, reflecting the enormous breadth of Peter King's interest, and also the range that he has been expected to teach to students throughout his career. A. M. J. van Buuren provides what amounts to a highly erudite detective story on the authorship of the Middle Dutch ballad 'Het daghet in den oosten', ranging from characters in the thirteenth century to the present-day descendants of the proprietors of a ropeworks in Delft: Peter King's interest in dawn poetry is clearly reflected here. W. M. H. Hummelen's article seeks the origins of the flowering of the biblical plays of the rhetoricians, and finds those origins in the state entries and pageants of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Leonard Forster also contributes a detective story, on the track of the source and significance of an inscription of 1549 on a triumphal arch in Ghent. He leads us around the Humanist networks of northern Europe, in and out of the libraries of various monasteries, finally arriving at a likely scenario of the authorship, textual source

and hidden meaning of the inscription, which entirely escaped the Spanish prince whom it was intended to honour. Hendrik van Gorp provides an essay on the 'rogue literature' of England in the early modern period, and by examining the translations into Dutch of Head's *The English Rogue* and Defoe's *Moll Flanders* questions the validity of distinctions between the traditions of criminal biography and the fictional picaresque, concluding that fact and fiction are almost invariably intertwined.

Moving into the modern period, Guus Sötemann examines the attitudes to English poetry of the Dutch poets of 1910, namely Van Eyck, Bloem and Roland Holst. With the exception of the impact made by W. B. Yeats on Roland Holst, the conclusion is that these Dutch poets had a great deal more time and respect for the great historical tradition in English verse than for their contemporaries across the Channel: this, Sötemann remarks, was probably a function of the conservatism of their era. Frank Lulofs contributes a close textual analysis of the poem 'Langs een wereld' by Martinus Nijhoff, a poet who has been a major subject of interest to both King and Lulofs for many years. Reijnder Meijer examines the extraordinary names used in Bordewijk's novel *Bint*, noting how the use of proper nouns can enlarge and enrich the portraits of the novel's characters. Finally in this section, Marcel Janssens takes the device of the multiple-I narrative in Dutch prose fiction of the 1960s and 1970s, seeking its links with the novels of William Faulkner, especially through the work of Hugo Claus.

In the section on the Social Sciences, five historians have contributed essays, though there might just as well have been geographers, political scientists and even economists represented here. Peter King has not moved into this field himself, but over the last decade he has been closely involved with the supervision and discussion of research in these areas, because of their indispensable contribution to the concept of Modern Dutch Studies.

Theo van Tijn's essay is in the tradition of the social history of the Dutch labour movement, and examines the fluctuating use of Marxist doctrine in that movement between the 1890s and the 1930s. The gradual rejection of Marxism as a political creed culminated in the adoption of De Man's Labour Plan in 1935 by the Socialist political party and trade union movement. Mike Smith writes on the various solutions offered in the Netherlands to the crisis in 1938-40, when unemployment and foreign occupation loomed large. He homes in on

the role of the Nederlandse Unie, and presents evidence of a previously undocumented meeting of 4 July 1940 when De Quay and others appear to have been hatching a plot for a corporatist *coup* in the Netherlands. Richard Griffiths has produced a painstaking report of extensive archive research into the various Dutch and other plans for reducing tariff barriers in Europe in the early 1950s, moves which we can see (with the benefit of hindsight) were leading towards formal European economic integration. He confidently picks his way through a baffling thicket of seemingly endless negotiations, showing the Stikker Plan to have been hopelessly defective from the start, and concluding somewhat remarkably that at this stage, at least, the Netherlands was following the same policies as was France in this area, ironic in the light of their later head-on collision over the paths to European unity. Wim Blockmans writes on what he terms 'political culture' in Belgium, and presents a picture of public life which appears to be little short of scandalous, seething with intrigue and corruption, by no means uncovered but virtually ignored by the public. And Jan Lucassen has contributed a major historiographical review of Dutch social history in the last two decades, presenting his own list of desiderata for the attention of present and future social historians in the Netherlands and, by extension, in other countries. It is a courageous attempt to impose a principle of order on the ever-increasing and bewildering diversity of social history.

Finally, we have two contributions on the Visual Arts, an area in which Peter King has been particularly active in his most recent period in Hull, as can be readily seen from the list of his own publications which appears at the end of the volume. Christopher Brown presents a concise piece of art-historical research into the subject matter of a painting by Schalcken in the National Gallery. He takes us through the codes of iconography and emblems used in the painting of the seventeenth century in the Low Countries, and is able to conclude with a high degree of certainty that the subject of the painting has been incorrectly identified, and must be seen in terms of the allegory so widespread at the time. Allan Doig's essay on Theo van Doesburg's view of art criticism relates the philosophy and theory of art to the art and architecture produced at the time of the *De Stijl* movement, and follows carefully the interaction of the various strands of theory between the members of Van Doesburg's circle.

Nearly all the essays presented in this collection are marked by

some personal reference to the work of Peter King, and this is as it should be in a *estschrift* in honour of a long career in so diverse a field. And it is true to say that, over and above his achievements as a scholar, as a research supervisor, and as an indefatigable organizer of academic and many other activities, it is for his personality and as an individual that he will be most affectionately remembered.

# I

## Language and Translation

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[For personal names with a prefix, e.g. J. de Jong, see under the main stem, viz. Jong, J. de.]

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