



Review

Lucas d'Heere, *Tableau Poétique: Verzen van een Vlaamse migrant-kunstenaar voor de entourage van de Seymours op Wolf Hall*, Ed. Frederica van Dam and Werner Waterschoot (Gent: Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse Taal en Letterkunde, 2016)

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In 2012, the Flemish graduate student Frederica van Dam made a remarkable discovery in the library of Arbury Hall in Nuneaton, Warwickshire, that most scholars can only dream of. Hidden in the noble family's private collection she found a French language poetry collection of 64 pages in quarto, dedicated to Edward Seymour, First Earl of Hertford, by no one less than the exiled Ghent painter-poet Lucas d'Heere (1534-1584). Dated 1573, this *Tableau Poétique*, unknown to d'Heere scholars, was beautifully calligraphed by the renowned Brussels pen artist Clément Paret, and preceded by a high quality, colourful rendering of the Seymour coat of arms. Van Dam immediately recognized that the exquisite presentation copy was something special, a token not only of d'Heere's poetic ability in French, but also of his high-profile Protestant network in England. After all, although Hertford's reputation had been seriously affected by his illegitimate marriage to Catherine Grey, he remained the son of the famous Duke of Somerset (brother of Henry VIII's third Queen, Jane Seymour), and one of the most prominent noblemen in Britain.

Van Dam, who is currently working on her PhD on painters from the Low Countries in England, teamed up with Werner Waterschoot, a Flemish literary scholar who has published regularly on D'Heere and his circle in the past fifty (!) years, in order to produce the current, lavishly illustrated edition of the *Tableau Poétique*. The result of their efforts is timely as much as it is exemplary. Waterschoot's introduction to the poems (89-111) nicely complements Van Dam's wonderful introductory essay on D'Heere as painter in England (3-88), resulting in a rich, double introduction of more than one hundred pages. The edition proper consists of a diplomatic transcription of D'Heere's French poetry, mostly sonnets, accompanied by effective, literal Dutch translations on the facing pages, and followed by extensive historical notes.

In the preface to the *Tableau Poétique*, the editors apologize for the fact that they present a collection of French poems by a Flemish artist as a contribution to Dutch Renaissance literature. This, surely, is unduly modest, for they offer exactly the kind of material that will interest many people in early modern studies at present. Three developments in particular contribute to the book's relevance. First, in the past years, scholars such as Anne Coldiron, Nigel Smith and others

have been arguing that the boundaries between premodern national vernacular literatures erected in the nineteenth century and maintained throughout much of the twentieth should be broken down. Similarly, and largely simultaneously, scholars of the Dutch Revolt, the context in which D'Heere operated, have sought to internationalize the study of that pivotal event in sixteenth-century European history by devoting attention to issues such as migration, and the entanglement of the Revolt with other conflicts. Thirdly and finally, there is an ongoing scholarly effort to reconnect the study of early modern literature, the visual arts, and politics, which have long been unhelpfully separated by disciplinary divides -- especially in the Low Countries. While these trends have hitherto been only partially successful, this volume underscores their importance, and will greatly aid to further them.

Like fellow-exiles and acquaintances such as Marcus Geeraerts, Jan van der Noot, and Emanuel van Meteren, D'Heere combined an active professional life in England with a continued devotion to the Revolt. Indeed, he developed into a pivotal figure in Anglo-Dutch Protestant networks, acting as a go-between for Marnix van St Aldegonde and William of Orange after Marnix's visit to London in 1575. The *Tableau Poétique* foreshadows this later development. The poems in the collection bear witness to the circles in which D'Heere moved and sought patronage during his English period, before returning to his hometown after the Pacification of Ghent in 1576, and all of them were staunch supporters of the Revolt and the Anglo-Dutch alliance. Besides Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester and later Governor-General of the United Provinces we find illustrious Elizabethan Protestants such as William Cecil, Henry Killigrew (who would become member of the Dutch Council of State) and Thomas Gresham, the merchant, diplomat and gaoler of Mary, Queen of Scots. Among the "Dutch" contacts are fellow-exiles Pierre Loyseleur, the Calvinist preacher and adviser to William of Orange, Jan van der Noot, and the famous Hadrianus Junius, who had been Leicester's physician.

The paradox of this edition is that the text of the poetry – central to the enterprise of editing – is neither the central nor the most interesting part of the book. *Tableau Poétique's* fascination lies not so much in the rather conventional poetry, up to date with sixteenth-century poetical fashion as it may be. It is more the poetry's function, as well as the care and expense devoted to the materiality of the book, the Seymour coat of arms, and the illustrious names that appear in Paret's beautiful handwriting that draw the attention. D'Heere's English art (and a fine painter and draughtsman he was) which Van Dam helpfully inventorises and discusses in her part of the introduction, is much more easily accessible to modern readers than his poetry. It is therefore particularly useful that Waterschoot's introduction, which focuses on the poetry, also emphasizes the social aspects of D'Heere's style, tracing the French and Flemish poets who inspired him, and explaining the implications of the choices he made.

Foremost, however, *Tableau Poétique* is a reflection of the networks that made and sustained the Dutch Revolt as much as of D'Heere's circles. If there's one criticism to be made about the introductory essays, it concerns the relatively scant attention paid to the history of the Revolt and how art helped to cement the Anglo-Franco-Dutch alliance-making that shaped it. While D'Heere's work and circles provide strong evidence for the interplay between art, patronage, and international relations, such concerns remain largely implicit. Van Dam focuses on D'Heere as an artist within a patronage network, Waterschoot limits himself largely to technical, poetic issues. The networks in which D'Heere operated are expertly described by both, but the wider historical implications of the migrant's living and working in between London, the country houses of great English lords, and French-Flemish culture and politics still require more

attention. A deeper, analytical engagement with the work of scholars in Anglo-Dutch relations such as Jan van Dorsten (who is mentioned only in passing), with the similar careers of Geeraerts, Van der Noot, and Van Meteren, and with the diplomatic efforts of both the Prince of Orange and the English diplomats mentioned in the *Tableau Poétique* is still a desideratum. Perhaps it is unfair to ask this of an introduction that already does so much and does it so well, but if so, let it be testimony to the stimulating read it provides. Van Dam and Waterschoot's valuable work deserves to be followed by others, and their edition will hopefully turn out to be an impetus to more explorations in the understudied Anglo-Franco-Dutch cultural-political intertwinements of the late sixteenth century.