

Annual Report | Dutch-Belgian Society for Eighteenth Century Studies

Academic year 2021-2022

General

The Dutch-Belgian Society for Eighteenth Century Studies (in Dutch: *Werkgroep 18e Eeuw*) is an active association with a number of regular activities per year, a Dutch-language yearbook sent to all members, and it participates in an English-language, peer-reviewed open-access scholarly journal *Early Modern Low Countries*. As of now, the Society counts approximately 225 individual members, plus approximately 43 institutional members. The Society focuses on stimulating research on the (long) 18th century, as well as supporting (junior) researches who are working on this period. To that end, it hosts several activities per year, from lectures to conferences. Additionally, it publishes a yearbook and participates in the successful journal *Early Modern Low Countries (EMLC)*, founded in 2017, together with the Society for Seventeenth Century Studies. The Society explicitly aims to address both an academic and a non-academic audience, which is reflected both in its activities and its publications. As of this year, there have been some internal reforms: Wouter de Vries, our former secretary, has left the society and has been replaced by Vanessa Van Puyvelde. Some members have left, while others have joined. The board currently consists of 10 members: Fokko Jan Dijksterhuis (president), Alberto Feenstra (treasurer), Vanessa Van Puyvelde (secretary), Lieke van Deinsen, Lien Verpoest, Devin Vartija, Josephina de Fouw, Brecht Deseure, Sarah Adams and Eleá de la Porte.

Outreach efforts

Members are informed of the latest news via a digital newsletter, the website, our Facebook page, Twitter account and LinkedIn presence. The Society has made efforts to improve its social media presence, in order to expand our reach and address new audiences. We have appointed one of our board members, Devin Vartija, as the Society's social media manager, meaning that things are running more smoothly now. In the future, we intend to work together with Amsterdam University Press (AUP), so that our events gain traction and visibility.

Events

The pandemic has significantly impacted the activities organized by the Society at the end of 2021, when there were still certain lockdown measures in place. Last year, due to the COVID-19 crisis, the board was forced to postpone the annual conference and the annual lecture of the Society. To make up for this lack of physical activities, we set up wonderful online program. In addition, the Society has been continuously involved in contemporary debates on the eighteenth century, both via social media, our website, the newsletter, or through the boards' personal involvement in initiatives and events.

Eighteenth-century lectures and seminars | Because the webinar series of the previous two years was well attended, the board decided to once again organize a series of monthly webinars on eighteenth-century topics during the fall of 2021 (June-September), with lectures by Brecht Deseure (KBR, VUB), Alice Insley (Tate Britain) en Bob Pierik (Universiteit van Amsterdam en Uppsala University). The theme of this webinar series was 'The Modern City Imagined', dealing with (representations of) the city in the long 18th century. Deseure's lecture focused on the Antwerp native Pierre Goetsbloets (1765-1816), whose watercolours dealt with the revolutionary turmoil sweeping over his city as it came under French

rule at the end of the century. In the second webinar of the series Alice Insley, curator of Tate Britain, discussed the exhibition *Hogarth and Europe* at Tate Britain, in an attempt to explore the ways in which British artists Hogarth and his contemporaries grappled with the rapidly changing world around them in the mid-eighteenth century. Finally, Pierik's lecture showed us a unique view of everyday Amsterdam street life in the eighteenth century, from arguments about city sidewalks to figures about the early modern commuter. The different lectures were hosted and moderated by different board members of the Society. This series, too, was a success: each lecture had approximately 70 participants.

Annual conference 2022 | Every year, the Society organizes a congress. On Friday 26 August 2022, the joint annual conference of the Society for Seventeenth-Century and Eighteenth-Century Studies will take place in Leiden. The congress committee consists of Olga van Marion, Lieke van Deinsen, Kornee van der Haven, Tine De Koninck, Carolina Lenarduzzi, Sven Molenaar, Tim Vergeer and Evi Dijcks. The conference theme will be 'Emotions in Conflict', presenting a balanced offer of recent research on the 17th and 18th centuries. This will be the first joint conference of the two Working Groups, and it will explore how people individually or in groups dealt with emotions in early modern times, be it conflicting emotions or emotions in conflict situations. There will be multiple parallel sessions, on themes as diverse as 'emotions imagined', 'emotions on the stage', to 'colonial discourse', 'emotional regimes', and 'emotions in Church life' as well as 'digital humanities and 'satire in Europe'.

Events for members | After two years of restrictions, the Society could finally meet its members again in the spring of 2022. It was therefore with great pleasure that we invited our members to an excursion to the exhibition *The Forgotten Princesses of Thorn* in the Limburgs Museum (Venlo) on Wednesday, March 30. In cooperation with the Limburgs Museum, the Society put together a special program for its members. While enjoying a cup of coffee and a piece of Limburg vlaai, we started the day with an introduction to the exhibition, by Dr. Joost Welten (Leiden University), author of the book *The Princesses of Thorn* (2019) and guest curator of the exhibition. Welten talked about his research into the living environment of this former kingdom of high nobility women. After this introduction there was time to visit the exhibition. After this we met again for a substantive debriefing on the exhibition, led by the Limburgs Museum's project manager of the exhibition, and attended by a delicious lunch.

Publications and collaborations

As of 2017, the Society is a party in the journal *Early Modern Low Countries (EMLC)*, together with the Society for Seventeenth-Century Studies (in Dutch: *Werkgroep 17e Eeuw*). In addition, the Society publishes a Yearbook, bridging the gap between scholarly and non-scholarly audiences. Once a year, during Autumn, the members of the Society receive this (officially Dutch-language) yearbook. The editors of the yearbook are Angelie Sens, Marleen de Vries, Christophe Madelein, Elwin Hofman and Sarah Adams (editorial secretary). Jeanette Kamp will also be joining the editorial team shortly. This year, the yearbook has been published by Amsterdam University Press.

The diverse disciplinary backgrounds of the authors provide a rich palette of accessibly written new insights into the literature, culture, institutions, and society of the eighteenth century. The 2021 yearbook was dedicated to the theme of "Love and Lust", with guest editor Delphine Calle compiling a stimulating dossier on love, passion and eroticism during the Enlightenment.

Sven Molenaar elaborates on the erotic fantasies in the amazing Antwerp manuscript 'The Mixture' from 1696. A contribution on the enigmatic erotoman Hadrianus Beverland is a must in this dossier. Karen Hollewand examines his *De Stolatae Virginitatis Iure*, in which Beverland writes seductively and critically about the sexual freedom of Dutch women. Lust creeps where it cannot go, Peter Thissen shows in his article about the pornographic novel *Dom Bougre* (1741), which was also popular in the Netherlands despite the prevailing papism. Marie-Charlotte Le Bailly describes how secret lovers could get into serious trouble by means of a criminal case against Sophia van Noortwijck from The Hague who had an affair with a married Jewish man. Hilde Neus discusses another sexual and social taboo in her contribution: relationships between white men and women of color in eighteenth-century Suriname. Harry Oosterhuis shows how the Enlightenment ideal of self-determination sowed the seeds for radical but ultimately unsuccessful ideals of gay emancipation in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. And on the basis of a close reading of Rhijnvis Feith's sentimental novel *Ferdinand and Constantia* (1785), Paul Pelckmans tries to explain why eighteenth-century readers just couldn't get enough of pathos in an era characterized by reason and libertinism.

Kees van Strien and Jan Rotmans are responsible for the individual contributions. Van Strien puts the spotlight on a forgotten female artist of the eighteenth century: the French pastelist Susanne Caron, who tried to make a living with her art in the Netherlands. Jan Rotmans in turn sheds light on San Marino by looking at Jan Hendrik van Dongen's three-volume *My Time's Gain* (1789-1791). Van Dongen, another forgotten eighteenth-century man, wrote this treatise on the causes of republican decline at an early age against the background of the Dutch Republic during the Patriot era in the 1780s.

In addition to the thematic dossier, the Yearbook also has a new regular column, 'Spectator', in which you will find short essays on how the eighteenth century manages to inspire the twenty-first. Carl Haarnack, Kornee van der Haven and Elwin Hofman will be the first to write about the Rijksmuseum's slavery exhibition, the topicality of the 1720 Wind Bubble and the Netflix series *La Révolution*, respectively.

The next issue of our yearbook will come out in October 2022. It will focus on people with disabilities in the (long) 18th century, with Ruben Verwaal (Durham University) as guest editor.

In addition, the Working Group has been participating since 2017 in the digital open-access journal *Early Modern Low Countries* (EMLC), which it manages together with the Working Group *Seventeenth Century*. This journal is intended as an international platform for research into the Low Countries in the early modern period (1500-1800). The language of instruction is in principle English. The editorial board includes specialists in both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and includes Dr. Joris Oddens (chair), Dr. David van der Linden (managing editor) and Prof. Dr. Maarten Prak (associate editor). Recent issues have featured contributions from historians such as Judith Pollman, David Onnekink and Joris van den Tol.

Grants and awards

The Society offers one award to stimulate the study of the eighteenth century, and in particular the participation of junior scholars.

Thesis award | As of 2018, the Thesis Prize will no longer be awarded annually, but only once every two years, in odd years. As a result, no thesis prize was awarded in 2020. The prize is accompanied by a monetary amount, which has been increased to 500 euros in 2018 (before 250 euros). In addition, the winner has the opportunity to turn their thesis into an article for the yearbook of the Society or the magazine EMLC. The grant of 2022 will be awarded to Dieter Cammaerts (KU Leuven) in October 2022.