

Republic Fruin, who at that time was a teacher in Leiden, published a tract on the years 1588-1598. It appeared as an appendix to the annual report of his school, the Stedelijk Gymnasium, and went virtually unnoticed.

But that soon changed. In 1859 and 1860, Fruin placed a discussion of several books about the Dutch Revolt in the journal *De Gids*. In reality, this discussion was a fierce criticism of Motley's work. Motley described events in an appealing way, Fruin conceded, but fell seriously short when it came to analysis. The main reason for this was that he placed all the emphasis on freedom and ignored state formation – the absolute topic of the moment in the nationalistic Europe of the nineteenth century. Partly because of these articles, a year later Fruin was appointed a professor in Leiden and published a series of works which formed the basis for classical Dutch political historiography.

What makes Jaap Verheul's book so readable is the good mix it offers of biography and historiographical context. But there is more than that. It is also important because Motley, as Verheul illustrates persuasively, was a more important figure than people realise. While he provided American history with a tradition, he also forced Dutch historiography to formulate a vision. Those are two large birds with one stone.

CHRIS VAN DER HEIJDEN
Translated by Julian Ross

Jaap Verheul, *De Atlantische pelgrim. John Lothrop Motley en de Amerikaanse ontdekking van Nederland* (The Atlantic pilgrim. John Lothrop Motley and the American discovery of the Netherlands), Boom, Amsterdam, 2017.

From Ghent to South Korea

Ghent University at 200

Ghent University is celebrating its 200th anniversary in 2017/2018. Together with its sister university in Liège and stakeholders within and outwith the university, the anniversary will be used to mark the position and significance of the university in the twenty-first century. But it also offers a perfect opportunity to commemorate the history of the old university. A brief exhibition has been held, a book

has been written and a website has been created documenting the 'memory' of the university community.

How are universities born? In the case of Ghent University, it was tied in with matters of statehood. In 1817, William I became the new king of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. To bring together his newly acquired territories in a sense of a shared culture, he needed to invest in language and education. On 25 September 1816, the king proclaimed a higher education law which created six state universities throughout the kingdom. One of the southern universities was in Ghent. The two others were in Leuven – where the medieval university had been abolished in 1797 – and Liège. Partly due to the policy used to appoint professors, the new universities became the tools of an enlightened politics which sought to promote Dutch as a language of unity. Among the well-known figures who either taught or studied in Ghent between 1817 and 1830 were the Dutch statesman Johan Rudolf Thorbecke and the Ghent psychiatrist Joseph Guislain.

After the Belgian Revolution (1830), which saw present-day Belgium separate from the Netherlands, Ghent, like Liège, once again became the seat of a state university. Henceforth, however, the language of teaching and science was French. Free universities were established by private initiative in Leuven and Brussels. The two state universities consequently found themselves ranged against a Catholic (Leuven) and a liberal (Brussels) counterpart. Until the university expansion in the 1960s, these four institutions held each other in balance. Despite the wave of secularisation, ideological oppositions still played a role in Flemish university life.

These ideological oppositions arose shortly after 1830. In areas such as care and education, the early liberal governments increasingly found themselves facing a militant, ultramontane Church. The state university in Ghent fell victim to this polarisation; in the 1850s the university found itself at the heart of the clerical struggle that ensued from a number of headline-making disputes about the rationality of its teaching. The number of students fell to 291. The then newly formed – but still in existence today – student society *'t Zal wel Gaan* was even the subject of a papal excommunication order, an edict that was received as if it were a trophy.

The 1880s ushered in a new period. A dynamic chief administrator took the helm at the university, and a period of expansion followed, with new buildings erected, new disciplines added, more scientific and specialist teaching and research. Until the First World War, student numbers continued to rise. Many of them came from abroad to study at the engineering department, which enjoyed international renown at that time. During the First World War, several students from Ghent went to the Front, where eighty-two of them lost their lives. In the meantime, the German Occupier, supported by a group of radical Flemish nationalists, seized the initiative to found a Dutch-language university in Ghent, the *Vlaamse Hoogeschool*, which operated between 1916 and 1918. Also known as the Von Bissing University, it functioned for barely two academic years and numbered no more than a few hundred students. But its symbolic significance was considerable. The controversy surrounding the 'collaboration university' meant it was unable to recapture its pre-war glory days in 1918. The whole interwar period was dominated by the question of the language of education. The university community divided. A 'Flemish front' of students and professors was created to oppose the long-standing *Gand français*. A new law passed on 5 April 1930 transformed the French-speaking *Université de*

Gand into the Dutch-speaking *Rijksuniversiteit Gent*. The first rector of the first Dutch-speaking university in Belgium was the art historian August Vermeylen. Other successes followed. In 1938, the pharmacologist Corneel Heymans won the Nobel Prize for Medicine. At around the same time, the architect Henry Van De Velde designed a new university library in the form of a tower, which would become the *Boekentoren*. In keeping with its function as a symbol of science and knowledge, it was built at the highest point in the city. In 1940, the new library proved to be an ideal spot for the German occupying forces to position a lookout post with gun emplacement.

The Second World War was followed by a period in which Ghent University, like many others, became a mass institution. It democratised, expanded and opened new campuses in other towns and cities. Big Science became the norm in the university's research: large, interdisciplinary research groups whose peer-reviewed research sought to attract national and European research funds. The first student accommodation appeared in the townscape in the 1960s, the university's response to the massive increase in student numbers; in 1940 there were 1,782 students; in 1970 this had risen to 11,486, and in 2000 to 21,387. 1969 and 1978 were the peak years of student revolt and protest.

The status of the university changed in 1991, when it was transformed from the State University of Ghent into Ghent University, an independent institution with its own legal personality and autonomy. New, more structural changes followed in the 2000s. The academic programmes of University College Ghent and Ghent University were brought together in the *Associatie UGent*. At European level, the teaching activities were harmonised by bringing in Bachelor and Master programmes to replace the old *licenties* and *kandidaturen*. Further afield, Ghent University opened an overseas campus in South Korea. Meanwhile, the student population continued to grow, reaching 35,424 in the 2016/2017 academic year. Their social profile has become more varied and contains more women, but there is still a predominance of white students.

This highlights one of the objectives of the present management team, namely raising the number of students with a migration background entering higher education. A socially minded, engaged



Matheus Ignatius van Bree, *The Solemn Inauguration of Ghent University by the Prince of Orange in the Throne Room of the Town Hall on 9 October 1817*, 1817-1830, oil on panel, 65 x 52 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

university that is open to everyone: that is the direction on which the university, in its anniversary year, is looking to embark.

RUBEN MANTELS

Translated by Julian Ross

www.UGentMemorie.be

Gita Deneckere, *Uit de ivoren toren. 200 jaar Universiteit Gent* (From the Ivory Tower. 200 Years of Ghent University), Tijdsbeeld & Pièce montée N.V. Publicaties, Ghent, 2017, 352 p.

Patrick De Rynck, Agnes Goyvaerts et al., *200 jaar UGent in 200 objecten* (Ghent University. 200 Years in 200 Objects), Hannibal, Veurne, 2017, 240 p.

Literature

A Reynard for Our Time

Animal tales are among the most ancient, widespread and enduringly popular forms of storytelling. Their range is enormous – from the Bible and its seductive snake in Paradise, the Greek myths of their gods in animal disguise and the many Indian tales that made it into Aesop's fables, through the South East Asian adventures of the mercurial mouse deer Kancil to the Arctic with its Inuit folktales of men as salmon spirit and the stories of Anansi the Spider from Africa.

In Low Countries literature, one animal tale stands out in particular: Reynard the Fox, a brilliant contribution to the genre, which originated in the medieval Latin epic *Ysengrimus* (1150) by Master Nivardus of Ghent, translated into French as the *Roman de Renart* in 1170, then also into Dutch around 1250. Of its Flemish author not much is known beyond his name, 'William who made Madocke'. But his comedy has delighted readers down the centuries, for its literary qualities and its portrayal of Reynard as a cunning trickster who again and again outwits his enemies and escapes the punishments they have in store for him. With its Machiavellian intrigue and mischievous humour, this was a fox for his time. The tale was written down, copied and edited in the monasteries;

told, retold and performed at court and in popular theatre; translated into many English, German and other versions, printed in early chapbooks; widely disseminated across northern Europe; and it has continued to inspire new versions until today, such as Louis Paul Boon's *Wapenbroeders* (Comrades in Arms; 1955), and Italo Calvino's 'Giovanuzza the Fox', included in his wonderful collection of *Italian Folktales* of 1956.

Ranking fourth in the authoritative Canon of Dutch Literature of 2002, Reynard's satire continues to flourish, and so does Reynard scholarship. In 2017, an online series of Reynard talks was included in the open access course on Dutch medieval literature at Antwerp University. *Tiecelyn*, the lively e-platform of the Belgian Reynaert Society, provides Reynard lovers with news of scholarly and other activities. And the International Reynard Society offers biennial scholarly conferences, while its multilingual yearbook *Reinardus* is published by John Benjamins in Amsterdam.

Here, the long history of Anglo-Dutch connections provides an obvious context for further investigation. For the Madocke riddle discussed by Alexia Lagast and Cor Hendriks, for example, there is the intriguing question what link there could have been between Reynard's Flemish author and the 'William Madocke' listed on the parish priest name board in the Welsh village church of Manorbier on the Pembrokeshire coast.

Reynard's future, meanwhile, is central to the new North Sea Crossings Project, funded from 2017 by the National Lottery, which aims to bring Reynard as Fantastic Mister Fox to British schools and children through a programme of cultural heritage education in new and imaginative ways.

For this project a four-way partnership has been established, between, first, Bristol University professor Ad Putter with his cutting-edge scholarship in medieval English and European literature, witness his recent edition of *The Works of the Gawain Poet* (Penguin, 2014); then secondly, the Bodleian Library in Oxford with its incredible riches in documentary heritage, texts, book history and the iconography of the Fox; thirdly, Aardman, the Bristol-based Animation Studio, with its technological wizardry in animation and its world-famous comedies, from *Wallace and Gromit* (1985) through