

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

*Chicken Run* (2000), *Creature Comforts* (1989) and *Shaun the Sheep* (2015) to its prehistoric caveman film *Early Man*, released in January 2018; and finally, the Oxford-based creative education organisation Flash of Splendour, which is taking these animal tales to reach out and go beyond reading, using innovative pedagogical approaches and new media in creative workshops for primary and secondary schools and in particular for children with special educational needs.

Marshalling the expertise of its four partners to produce an innovative, virtual and animated Fox for British children of any age, the project will culminate in 2020 in a programme of events around Reynard the Fox, including the publication of two books on Reynard (one for children, one academic); an exhibition in the Bodleian; a Reynard the Fox Day, school workshops, film festivals and of course Aardman's animation of *Fantastic Mister Fox*. All this a tribute to the enduring fascination of this Fox, with its wicked sense of humour, forever young.

REINIER SALVERDA

*Reynard the Fox and Other Mediaeval Netherlandish Secular Literature*. Edited and introduced by E. Colledge. Translated by Professor Adriaan J. Barnouw and E. Colledge. Leyden / London / New York, 1967.

Cor Hendriks, *Richard Deacon, Master of Disinformation*, 2016. Pdf available at: [robscholtemuseum.nl](http://robscholtemuseum.nl).

Alexia Lagast, 'A la recherche de l'œuvre perdue: kritische status quaestionis van het onderzoek naar de Madoc', in *Millennium* 24 (2010), vol.1, pp. 19-33.

Aardman – <https://www.aardman.com>

Bodleian Libraries – <https://bodleian.ox.ac.uk>

Bristol University, Professor Ad Putter – [www.research-information.bristol.ac.uk](http://www.research-information.bristol.ac.uk)

Dutch medieval literature online at Antwerp University – [www.moocmnl.kantl.be](http://www.moocmnl.kantl.be)

Flash of Splendour – [www.flashofsplendourarts.com](http://www.flashofsplendourarts.com)

International Reynard Society – [www.rose.uzh.ch/de/forschung/reynard\\_society.html](http://www.rose.uzh.ch/de/forschung/reynard_society.html)

Tiecelyn – [www.reynaertgenootschap.be](http://www.reynaertgenootschap.be)

## Alone on the North Sea Coast

Adriaan Roland Holst

Adriaan Roland Holst (1888-1976) set himself a truly formidable task when in 1932 he embarked on *Een Winter aan Zee* (*A Winter by the Sea*), published five years later, in 1937. It comprises sixty-three lyric poems, each eight lines long, each obeying the rhyming scheme *abacbdcd*, each in iambic trimeters. The sequence – but this is very much a *singular* work – is divided into ten sections, to the nature of which the poet supplied a brief, illuminating, though personally reticent 'explanation', included here as afterword. That the work has profound autobiographical roots there can be little doubting, with the first person regularly present, and noticeable in both the first and last poems. It gives us a man alone on the North Sea coast, bereft of the woman he has loved (and still loves?): she has gone to an unspecified city he believes to be corrupt and corrupting. The voice we hear – surmounting all ingenuities of language and metrics and all unflinching interior analyses – is one of agonised individuality. The speaker finds comfort however in the thought of his countless emotional predecessors, members of humanity throughout the ages abandoned, isolated, yet determined to understand their fate.

It is enormously to the translator's credit that this voice prevails – and stays with us – even as he himself wrestles with fashioning from Roland Holst's virtuosic scheme and verse-forms an English-language artefact – mostly in contemporary English, though there are echoes of the Elizabethans on whom translator Roger Kuin is an expert. Yet – and opposite the English text the original is placed in photographed manuscript – he is consistently and scrupulously faithful to a Dutch itself often extremely intricately wrought. Now and again there are sacrifices of fidelity of language to fidelity to Roland Holst's elaborate poetic ingenuities, but these seem unimportant beside the creation of a work that can stand up as a whole, a monument to intensity of feeling and artistic ambition.

Perhaps, as with so many works from the 1920s and 1930s, readers fare better after absorbing the writer's 'explanation': Eliot's *Waste Land* (1922) set an enormous precedent, and, as there, Roland Holst invites us to recall the ancient and