

Institution: University of Bristol		
Unit of Assessment: 27) English Language and Literature		
Title of case study: <i>North Sea Crossings</i> : reanimating the literary heritage of Anglo-Dutch relations for special educational needs students and the heritage sector		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2007-present		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Prof. Ad Putter	Professor of Medieval English	08/1994-present
Dr. Edward Holberton	Senior Lecturer in Early Modern English	09/2015-present
Dr. Sjoerd Levelt	Senior Research Associate	05/2020-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: March 2015-December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		

1. Summary of the impact

Historical relations between England and the Low Countries created a rich literary heritage. Prof. Putter's *North Sea Crossings* project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, is bringing that heritage back to life in a puppet animation co-produced with Aardman Animations, a best-selling children's book, and a major exhibition in The Bodleian's Weston Library. The project has enriched the education and life opportunities of Special Educational Needs students; equipped University students with professional and personal skills; enhanced the cultural value and interpretation of Anglo-Dutch literary heritage in the Bodleian and The National Archives; created business expansion opportunities for collaborators; and has generated new cultural expressions of that heritage, in turn increasing interest and engagement with it.

2. Underpinning research

Putter, Levelt and Holberton have produced internationally recognised research on the cultural relations between speakers of Dutch and English. The closeness of Anglo-Dutch relations has been well recognised in scholarship on the later 17th century and the 'Glorious Revolution'. University of Bristol (UoB) research has shown, however, that the Glorious Revolution of 1688 was in fact a Glorious Evolution going back to the Norman Conquest.

The research began in 2007, with the Leverhulme-Trust-International-Network *Multilingualism in the Middle Ages* [i], which revealed Dutch to be one of the spoken languages of medieval Britain. The volumes of proceedings from the Multilingualism conferences, published by Brepols, shaped a new research agenda. Putter's essay in the 2010 volume [3.1] drew attention to the presence of Flemish speakers in Britain. Following the Multilingualism project, Putter was commissioned to cover Dutch Printing for *Incunabula: The Printing Revolution in Europe*. His microfiche collection of 171 early printed books, published in association with the British Library [3.2], focused attention on Dutch printers who produced books for an English market. Research on Anglo-Dutch relations was taken forward into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by Levelt [3.5] and Holberton (*RES* 66 (2015), 71-86), dealing respectively with the connections between Anglo-Dutch historiographical traditions and the literature of the Anglo-Dutch wars.

The Anglo-Dutch research culminated in the Leverhulme-funded project *The Literary Heritage of Anglo-Dutch Relations, c.1050-c.1600* [iii], which examines how relations between English and Dutch speakers shaped the literatures of both England and the Low Countries. Project conferences and workshops (including The Heritage of Anglo-Dutch Relations, Bristol, 16 November 2018; Anglo-Dutch Relations, Cambridge, 3 May 2019; The English-Dutch language border, Society for Renaissance Studies, online 7 July 2020) and conference panels (including Medieval Academy of America, Philadelphia, March 2019; Leeds IMC, July 2019) are continuing to invigorate research in this field.

Important archival discoveries – for example, a seventeenth-century book in the Wellcome Institute revealing Marvell to have been a Dutch spy (Holberton et al) [3.4], a Boendale

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manuscript in The National Archives (Putter) [3.6] – have rescued items of Anglo-Dutch heritage from obscurity.

The value of this archival research to the heritage sector has been recognised by external funders. An AHRC Studentship under the Collective Doctoral Partnership [CDP] Scheme (PI: Holberton, 2016-2019), in partnership with TNA and National Maritime Museum [ii], has produced new insights into Anglo-Dutch literature and has made it prominent in galleries and public lectures. The Leverhulme Trust has funded research [iii] towards the forthcoming book *North Sea Crossings* by Levelt and Putter (Bodleian Library Publishing) to accompany the major exhibition on Anglo-Dutch cultural exchange, opening in the Weston Library in December 2021 (delayed by one year due to Covid-19).

Central to this public-facing research has been work on medieval stories of Reynard the Fox, from *Ysengrimus* to Caxton's *Reynard*. As shown by Putter et al. in 2018 [3.3], Anglo-Dutch relations shaped these beast epics and helped them gain new forms and new audiences. This reception history, including children's literature and early animation, continues with the children's book and the Reynard animation described below.

3. References to the research

Publications

- 3.1 **Putter A** (2010). Multilingualism in England and Wales, c. 1200: The Testimony of Gerald of Wales, in Kleinhenz C and Busby K (eds.), *Medieval Multilingualism: The Francophone World and its Neighbours*, Turnhout: Brepols, pp. 1-13, 84-105 [Available on request]
- 3.2 **Putter A** (2010) ed. and intro., *Incunabula: The Printing Revolution in Europe, 1455-1500*. Units 68 and 69: *Printing in Dutch*, London: Gale in association with British Library [Available on request]
- 3.3 **Putter A**, van Houts E, **Levelt S**, and Arbabzadah M (2018). *Ysengrimus en Reynard the Fox: Engels-Nederlandse contacten als context voor de Reynaerttraditie*, *Tiecelijn*, **24**, pp.65-81 (in Dutch). Open access at: <http://www.reynaertgenootschap.be/files/Ysengrimus%20en%20Reynard%20the%20Fox.pdf>
- 3.4 **Holberton E**, Delzainis M and Coster S (2020). Andrew Marvell and the Dutch Fifth Column: Evidence from a Copy of *Mr Smirke* with Authorial Annotations, *The Seventeenth Century*, **36.1**, pp.105-117, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0268117X.2020.1830158>
- 3.5 **Levelt S** (2020). Marcus Boxhorn's Misattribution of Verses from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* to John Gower, *Notes and Queries*, **67.1**, pp.14-16, <https://doi.org/10.1093/notesj/gjz164>
- 3.6 **Putter A** (2020). A Fragment of Boendale's *Melibeus* in England: Manuscript, Text and Context, *Spiegel der letteren*, **62.2**, pp.143-169, <https://doi.org/10.2143/SDL.62.2.3288553>

Funding information

- i. **Putter A** (PI), *Multilingualism in the Middle Ages*, Leverhulme Trust International Network Award, 2007-2009, GBP50,148
- ii. **Holberton E** (PI), *News Culture during the Anglo-Dutch wars*, AHRC Collective Doctoral Partnership, 2016-2019, in partnership with The National Archives and National Maritime Museum; PhD student Jack Avery, GBP68,648
- iii. **Putter A** (PI), *The literary heritage of Anglo-Dutch relations c.1050-1600*, Leverhulme Trust Research Project, 2018-2021, GBP363,449

4. Details of the impact

Putter's research into Anglo-Dutch literary heritage [3.1 – 3.3] led to a Heritage Lottery Fund award in 2018 (GBP163,100). The project, entitled *North Sea Crossings* (NSC), enabled Putter and his team to widen participation in Anglo-Dutch literature and the Reynard tradition [5.1].

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Collaborating with the Bodleian Libraries, Aardman Animations, Flash of Splendour, and two Special Educational Needs [SEN] schools, the team delivered educational workshops leading to the design and development of an inclusive exhibition, two accessible books (one exhibition book and one children's book) and a puppet animation based on Caxton's *Reynard*. The main beneficiaries have been:

- SEN students
- University of Bristol film and TV students
- Flash of Splendour
- Aardman Animations
- The Bodleian Libraries and The National Archives

Improving Educational Experiences and Life Opportunities for SEN Students

With mainstream schools routinely benefiting from academic input, NSC deliberately reached out to SEN students, who are often overlooked in Arts and Humanities outreach: 'I have been a SEN teacher for over twenty years and have never been involved in a project like this. I'm so pleased that all involved were ambitious in their thinking and took a chance on working with young people with autism. We are frequently overlooked by organisations' [5.4]. Beginning in 2018, the NSC team led weekly workshops with SEN students at Ormerod Resource Base at the Marlborough School (Oxfordshire) and Kingsweston School (Bristol), where students discovered the original Reynard stories. The workshops have been transformative in both schools. They have helped the schools to deliver on key curricular priorities in History, English, Geography and Languages [5.3; 5.4]; they have made students 'think about language and meaning' and 'increased their vocabulary' [5.3]. Together with undergraduate students at UoB's Film and TV Department, students learned to adapt the Reynard stories for animation, guided by world-leading professionals from Aardman Animations [5.2]. The workshops, delivered at Aardman's studios, at the University of Bristol, and in the classroom, expanded their horizons, equipped them with skills in animation, characterisation, storytelling and communication, and boosted self-confidence [5.4]. The Ormerod Resource Base Coordinator described NSC as: 'enriching and broadening the educational and cultural experiences of young people with disabilities' [5.3]. The impact on their development has been life-changing: SEN students previously mute in the presence of strangers flourished in group discussion [5.4]. In March 2020, workshops were suspended due to Covid-19.

Personal and Professional Development Skills for Film and TV Students

In 2018, a newly established Industry Placement Unit for Film and TV students at UoB enabled undergraduate students to participate in the NSC project working with Aardman Animations. This unique opportunity to work with an award-winning animation study and SEN students equipped UoB students with valuable professional and personal skills to take forward into their future careers. The project was delivered as a 'live' production, giving the students a real sense of what it would be like to craft a film at Aardman Animations. Two cohorts of UoB students have already benefited hugely. They learned much about medieval literature and language, gained valuable knowledge in animation, but, more than that, they learned to appreciate and collaborate with young adults with severe autism.

In 2019, puppeteer and puppet maker Katie Williams joined the NSC project (funded by TS Eliot Foundation, GBP8,000). Katie had recently worked as a puppeteer with Coldplay and Film Director Wes Anderson. She designed and produced the puppets for the animation [5.2]. Puppetry was chosen as it is a more accessible medium than stop-frame, enabling students to be more hands-on and to learn how manipulating even simple, basic objects can create real meaning. The puppet workshops and animation shoot were scheduled for April 2020 but postponed due to Covid-19.

Feedback from students involved in NSC demonstrates the impact on their personal and professional development, for instance [5.5]:

- *'I've learned to communicate in ways that I would never have a chance to otherwise, and it has been really valuable'.*
- *'[The project] made me a better and more thoughtful animator'.*

- *'Working with the students has taught me so much about storytelling and collaborating. It has also encouraged me to seek new teaching methods and workflows that we found facilitated creativity and collaborative work'.*
- *'I have gained valuable knowledge in animation which will better my skills for my own projects. I have also developed my teaching skills as well'.*
- *'This is really a meaningful project for me as I actually learnt so much through it'.*

Enhanced Funding, Fresh Opportunities and New Partnerships for a SEN Organisation

Creative arts organisation Flash of Splendour (FOS) specialises in work with SEN students. The NSC project has had a massive impact on their organisation, providing knowledge, resources and opportunities that have allowed them to expand their operations on a larger and more ambitious scale than before and to establish a reputation in new areas such as young adult fiction [5.6]. The financial benefit of the Heritage Lottery Fund (GBP95,141) has enabled FOS to upscale their educational and outreach work and to establish new partnerships with organisations and schools. The Director of FOS said that the support and resources provided by Putter and his team have had a 'hugely positive impact on young participants, associate teachers and FOS alike and helped us at FOS to be confident in our delivery of content and context... this cascade of teaching/learning has enabled us to deliver many more high-quality sessions and to move into new subjects and disciplines. The close collaboration with UoB researchers, Film and TV undergraduates, and Aardman Studios – has also allowed us to also significantly expand our work in the South-West' [5.6].

As a result of the NSC project, Bodleian Publishing commissioned Anne Avery, Director of FOS, to write a children's version of Caxton's *Reynard*. Putter and Levelt supported her throughout the process, advising on content and context [5.6]. The book was published on 9 October 2020 and has received glowing reviews. It was featured on BBC Radio 3's 'Free Thinking' programme and the Wall Street Journal [5.8]. It sold 3,500 copies across the UK, Europe and North America in the first two months alone, and is already in its second printing [5.8]. The Bodleian subsequently commissioned FOS to write a further series of ten short Reynard tales [5.6].

Influencing New Directions at Aardman

Helping children in need is a key part of Aardman Animations' mission, and Aardman are proud to have been involved in guiding SEN students and UoB students through the animation process. The NSC project enabled them to extend their work with schoolchildren into the SEN sector [5.2]. Furthermore, the successful collaboration with UoB students through the Industry Placement Unit of the Department of Film and Television has encouraged them to expand their own industry training provision. On the back of the NSC project, Aardman Animations have now launched their own industry placement course (<https://www.aardman.com/aardman-academy-launches-three-month-industry-trainingcourse/>), which incorporates some of the elements developed for the NSC animation workshops [5.2].

Widening Participation and Inclusivity at the Bodleian Libraries

NSC has provided the Bodleian Libraries with the expertise and resource (GBP63,690) to stage an ambitious and inclusive exhibition on the theme of Anglo-Dutch heritage for the first time in its history. As the Bodleian's Head of Public Engagement states, *North Sea Crossings*, curated by Levelt and Putter, was also 'the first time where we have designed an exhibition with the need of a SEN audience considered from the point of inception rather than as an additional strand added later in the project plan' [5.7]. The NSC project has allowed the Bodleian to work with partners beyond the University of Oxford, complementing the exhibition with a varied and rich programme of activities and events aimed at family and intergenerational audiences. The collaboration enabled Bodleian to explore new approaches, such as animation, and use their collections to tell inclusive stories for audiences who less frequently engage with an academic library. The publication of a best-selling children's book alongside a conventional catalogue for the first time [5.8], the prominence given to Reynard the Fox in the exhibition and the virtual 2020 events – theatre performances, readings, children's activities – (<https://visit.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/event/meet-reynard-the-fox>), were cornerstones of an audience development plan developed by NSC to help the Bodleian to achieve its ambitions for inclusivity [5.7]. The Head of Public Engagement

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at Bodleian Libraries has hailed the exhibition as “a new and important step for the Library in its journey towards inclusive programming” and the NSC project has had a “major impact in helping us to make our events accessible to a broader demographic” [5.7]. The launch of the exhibition has been delayed to December 2021 due to Covid-19.

Following the success of the approach adopted in the NSC project, the Bodleian are applying what they have learnt to the design of a forthcoming exhibition (in 2022) that takes account of the needs and preferences of visitors with visual impairments [5.7].

Uncovering Hidden Treasures at The National Archives

The National Archives (TNA) have benefited from UoB's Anglo-Dutch research and from the AHRC-funded Collaborative Doctoral Partnership (CDP) project on this topic. The CDP brought to light important new material, enhancing the cultural value of Anglo-Dutch heritage in TNA's collections, improving its interpretation and cataloguing, and showcasing it in the exhibition '1657: Rebel Christmas' (November 2019 - January 2020) [5.9]. Putter's discovery of a fragment of Boendale's *Melibeus* in TNA [3.6] raised international awareness to a previously miscatalogued manuscript. As the Head of Early Modern Collection states, 'the catalogue improvements allow us to engage those interested in our sizable Dutch collections both in Britain and abroad, attracting further attention to these records. It also enhances TNA's involvement in cultural events, in particular academic and diplomatic gatherings, where our collections regularly form the centerpiece of the cultural offering that reflect not just present relations but the deep histories that our records reveal'. Collaborative research on the *Melibeus* manuscript led TNA to trial multispectral imaging technology to recover illegible text, with amazing results: 'revealing text that has faded beyond our physical ability to read is a significant advancement for our team and our audiences' [5.9]. The lead scientist reported: 'This analysis has allowed research scientists and conservators in our Collection Care Department (CCD) to build knowledge and capacity and to diversify the records submitted to multispectral analysis' [5.10]. Subsequent research funding applications have followed the trial's success [5.9].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

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- 5.1 Heritage Lottery Fund – press release with funding details (August 2018), [Discovering the distant Dutch relative of Fantastic Mr. Fox and Disney's Robin Hood](#) [Accessed 25/1/21]
 - 5.2 Letter of support from Producer at Aardman Animations (December 2020)
 - 5.3 Letter of support from Ormerod Resource Base Coordinator, Marlborough School, Oxfordshire (December 2020)
 - 5.4 Letter from SEN teacher at Kingsweston School, Bristol (December 2020)
 - 5.5 Questionnaires from students (2019-2020)
 - 5.6 Letter of support from the Director of Flash of Splendour (January 2021)
 - 5.7 Letter of support from the Head of Public Engagement, Bodleian Libraries (December 2020)
 - 5.8 Letter of support from the Head of Publishing, Bodleian Library (December 2020); BBC Radio 3 Free Thinking, 14 October 2020 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000ncf4>; Wall Street Journal book review, 18 December 2020, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/childrens-books-one-famous-fox-11608305672> [Accessed 9/2/21]
 - 5.9 Letter of support from the Head of Early Modern Records, The National Archives (December 2020)
 - 5.10 The National Archives – blog post (June 2019), [Collection Care welcomes a new multispectral imaging system](#) [Accessed 25/01/21]