

# Commemorating Tollens: Cultural Nationalism, Literary Heritage, and Dutch National Identity

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This article discusses the celebrations and memorial activities that underscore the importance of Hendrik Tollens (1780–1856) as a national symbol in the light of cultural nationalism, nation building, and national identity formation. By examining the sociocultural features that Tollens (and his work) represented and the hero worship of this poet in particular, it becomes possible to interpret such collective adoration as being indicative of the specific role of literature as a medium of communal identity formation. Accordingly, this article argues that the rise and fall of Tollens' reputation as a national poet can be used as a model to describe the various phases that Dutch nationalism went through over the course of the nineteenth century.

**KEYWORDS** Hendrik Tollens (1780–1856), Dutch identity, cultural nationalism, nation building, literary heritage

## Introduction

On 6 March 2011, some fifty people gathered in the city of Rijswijk to unveil a marble monument for the Dutch poet Hendrik Tollens (1780–1856). This group of admirers, which also included some of the poet's descendants, had finally succeeded in raising the funds necessary to erect a new statue on the pedestal that had been vacant for over forty years (Fig. 1). In 1970, the old monument, which dated from the 1860s, had been demolished by the municipality because the maintenance costs had become too high. Besides, they argued, nobody would really mind if Tollens no longer had a memorial stone.

Covered only by the local newspaper, the small and modest ceremony that saw the reinstatement of Tollens' legacy provided a stark contrast with the poet's nineteenth-century reception, for in those days Tollens was considered to be one of the nation's most important poets. His popularity was unprecedented: his verse was widely



FIGURE 1 New marble monument on the grave of Hendrik Tollens, unveiled on 6 March 2011. Photo by Henk Eijssens.

circulated in huge print runs and many people knew his poems by heart. Moreover, Tollens had written the single most important Dutch poem: the country's national anthem *Wien Neêrlands bloed in de aders vloeit* ('Whose Dutch blood runs through the veins', 1816). On 24 September 1850, the date of his seventieth birthday, he was appointed Commander in the Order of the Dutch Lion and was honoured with an engraved gold medal, a silver inkstand, and a marble bust — miniature copies of the bust were even sold as souvenirs. His death in 1856 was considered to be a great loss to the nation, and Tollens received tributes in all major newspapers, and the composer Louis F. Revius honoured him with a musical piece titled *Les dernier moments de Tollens*. In 1860, four years after his death, the celebration of Tollens' national legacy reached its apex when two statues were unveiled: King Willem III himself presided over the ceremony in Rotterdam, and Tollens' grave in Rijswijk was adorned with the great poet's likeness.

In this study, I discuss these commemorative events in the light of cultural nationalism, nation building, and national identity formation.<sup>1</sup> Firstly, I describe the celebrations and memorial activities that served to underscore the importance of Tollens as a national symbol: which sociocultural features did he (and his work) supposedly represent? How is the hero worship of this poet in particular to be explained? Secondly, I link this particular case to one of the key questions concerning the commemoration of nineteenth-century writers in general: what does such collective

adoration tell us about the specific role of literature as a medium of communal identity formation? I subsequently argue that the rise and fall of Tollens' reputation as a national poet can be used as a model to describe the various phases that Dutch nationalism went through over the course of the nineteenth century.

### Celebrations and memorial practices: Tollens as a national symbol in the nineteenth century

Before discussing the celebrations and commemorations that were organised to extol Tollens' virtues, it might be useful to briefly consider his life and work.<sup>2</sup> Hendrik Tollens was born in Rotterdam on 24 September 1780. Just like most nineteenth-century poets, he wrote his verse in his spare time, working as a trader in paints to earn a living.

At the age of 19, he made his debut with *Proeve van sentimenteele geschriften en gedichten* (1799), a collection of sentimental prose and poetry. Over the next few years, he dedicated himself to penning romantic and pastoral poems (which he mostly translated from French and German) and to writing plays. He translated several French tragedies by Voltaire and Racine, and wrote one national-historical play, *De Hoekschen en Kabeljauwschen* (1806). His real breakthrough came when he began writing heroic poems in which he glorified the nation's past. These reverential poems won many prizes, and especially 'Huig de Groot' (Hugo the Great, 1804), 'De dood van Egmond en Hoorne' (The death of Egmond and Hoorne, 1806) and 'Willem de Eerste' (William I, 1807) received widespread approbation.

Tollens further boosted his popularity by publishing a series of national-historical 'romances', based on the genre of the medieval ballad but featuring Dutch national heroes. These and other poems fostered his reputation as a nationalist resistance poet during the years of the French occupation (1810–1813). Most of his early poems have been collected in *Gedichten* (Poems, 1808–1815, 3 vols), and in 1822, 10,000 copies of the fourth edition of this tome were printed, which marked an unparalleled success in Dutch literary history.<sup>3</sup>

In 1815, the popular poet was knighted by King Willem I, and in 1816 Tollens' composition *Wien Neêrlandsch bloed in de aders vloeit* was selected as the new national anthem, which it would remain until 1932. In 1818–19, Tollens published a new series of (translated) ballads: *Romancen, balladen en legenden* (1818–1819, 2 vols). A few years later, Tollens celebrated one of the greatest triumphs of his career with *Tafereel van de overwintering der Hollanders op Nova Zembla in de jaren 1596 en 1597* (1821). This poem, which depicted the northern expedition of Barentsz and Van Heemskerck, had countless print runs and not only became a classic in Dutch literature, but was also translated into French, English and German.<sup>4</sup> New collections of Tollens' poetry were published in *Nieuwe gedichten* (1821–1828, 2 vols), *Verstrooide gedichten* (1840), *Laatste gedichten* (1848, 1853) and *Nalezing* (1855). Tollens died in 1856, just before the completion of his collected works, *Gezamenlijke dichtwerken* (1855–1857, 12 vols).

Tollens' success might, in part, have derived from his very straightforward style. His poems did not rely on complex intertextual references to the classics, but rather offered plain and simple diction: they were meant to touch their readers' hearts. Tollens' œuvre combined unembellished sketches of everyday life with historical poems that depicted great episodes in the nation's history, and his verse was consequently perceived to mirror typically Dutch qualities such as honesty, simplicity and loyalty. In reality, however, these characteristics fitted more general literary patterns in contemporary European literary culture, but Dutch critics preferred to label Tollens' poetry more distinctively as being the ultimate expression of Dutch national character.<sup>5</sup>

During his lifetime and for many years after his death in 1856, Tollens was widely held in the highest regard, to which a plethora of tributes, memorials, and commemorations testify. Three of these celebratory events warrant detailed discussion: the knighthood that Tollens was awarded in 1815, the celebration of his seventieth birthday in 1850, and the commemorations that followed his death in 1856, which included the unveiling of two monuments. Who organised these events and what form did such celebrations take? What do they reveal about memory politics and the dynamics of canonicity in the nineteenth century?

When Tollens was awarded a knighthood in November 1815, he clearly reached a milestone in his career. A few months earlier, on 16 March 1815, Willem I had proclaimed himself King of the Netherlands; after having been a republic for more than two centuries and having been subject to French rule during the years 1806–1813, the Netherlands now officially became a monarchy — ruled, however, by a native rather than a foreign sovereign. The new King accordingly went to great lengths to promote national unity. For instance, he created the Order of the Dutch Lion on 29 September 1815 to honour people who had been shining examples of patriotism by fulfilling their duties as a citizen in some exceptional way, such as excelling in the arts or sciences. Two poets were among the first laureates: Tollens (Fig. 2) and Cornelis Loots. Ironically, however, both poets had previously declared their sympathies for the Patriots, who opposed hereditary succession of the stadtholder — however, the long years of French oppression had turned both writers into ardent supporters of the new King.

It is remarkable that the King chose two *poets* to be knighted along with a score of brave warriors and noble statesmen. Why did he specifically choose Tollens and Loots? Firstly, they had shown exceptionally brave and loyal conduct during the French occupation: both Tollens and Loots wrote resistance poetry that challenged French rule, and they had been very successful in propagating what were considered to be typically Dutch values during the dark times of foreign oppression.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, they had heaped praise upon their new sovereign after the French had been defeated. Tollens, for example, wrote a lyric poem to the 'king, shepherd, sovereign and father' on the latter's official installation as King of the Netherlands on 16 March 1815.<sup>7</sup> In short, their express loyalty to the nation and especially the country's new political order served to mark them as highly eligible candidates for a knighthood; their exemplary behaviour was very much in line with the newly-invested king's political agenda.



FIGURE 2 Portrait of Tollens with his royal decoration, printed in *De Nederlandsche Muzenalmanak* (1821). Private collection

The fact that two poets were the first recipients of such knighthoods illustrates a new attitude towards the role of literature in nation building: poetry was now officially recognised as an important means of proliferating nationalistic sentiments. In other words, literature became an integral part of the nation state's politics, and the specific choice of its representative poets therefore reveals how the Dutch national identity was perceived and shaped during these years. In Tollens' case, receiving a knighthood also marked a turning point in his career, since he now was an officially acclaimed national poet. Consequently, his work was also interpreted as typically Dutch, which only served to further reinforce his position and reputation as a Dutch poet laureate.

A second milestone in Tollens' career was the celebration of his seventieth birthday, on 24 September 1850. It was an event of great national importance, which was covered by all leading newspapers and periodicals. Scores of friends and admirers heaped gifts upon the septuagenarian poet, and these included, among many other tokens of appreciation, a golden medal and a silver inkstand. Moreover, Tollens was honoured with three very special gifts. Firstly, he was visited by J. T. H. Nedermeijer van Rosenthal, the Secretary of Justice, who congratulated him on behalf of the King and even elevated him to the rank of Commander in the Order of the Dutch Lion.

Secondly, Tollens received a present from a very special committee that sought to establish a so-called ‘Tollens fund’ for penurious poets. Its board was comprised by four members: the poet and sugar refinery owner W. H. Warnsinck, pastor Bernard ter Haar, the painter N. Pieneman, and the man of letters A. van Lee. They raised funds both through their own local networks and by spreading a manifesto asking for financial support. They believed that Tollens should be venerated because he had left his stamp on the nation as a whole: ‘Among those who bring eternal glory to the Netherlands, the nation reveres that man whose works have had the most potent influence on the spirit of the people, that man whose poems are everlasting, not only because thousands of copies have been bought and read with great joy by patrician and commoner alike, but even more because they live on in the mouths and hearts of the people’.<sup>8</sup> In 1902, the fund revised its objectives and instead decided to award — once every five years — a special ‘Tollens Prize’ to an author for his or her remarkable literary achievements; this prize still exists today. Thirdly, a marble statue was unveiled in Museum Boymans in Rotterdam, and miniature copies of this bust were sold to the general public — the poet had now literally become everybody’s property.<sup>9</sup>

It is worth noting that Tollens was revered not merely by the literati but by the people at large, and this nationwide appeal would prove to last. Although some of the tributes were organised by friends and admirers, politicians were invariably involved. Tollens’ state decorations illustrate that literature had become an integral part of national politics, and they thereby underline the importance of literature as a medium of collective identity formation during the nineteenth century.

Tollens’ death in 1856 led to a new wave of commemorative publications and events. In countless brochures, poems, and dedicatory essays, Tollens was celebrated as a national poet, a true Christian, and a virtuous man. Several chambers of rhetoric organised special events in Tollens’ memory. The most noteworthy of these was held by *De Nieuwe Korenbloem* in The Hague and was chaired by the poet C. G. Withuys. Emulating Petrarch’s coronation on the Capitoline Hill, the *Korenbloem* members crowned Tollens’ marble bust with a golden laurel, and during the ceremony, one of the participants recited a poem that declared Tollens’ virtues to have been far greater than those of the famous Italian poet.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, Withuys started raising funds for a national monument in honour of Tollens’ achievements. Within a few days of the poet’s death, Withuys was already lobbying for the erection of such a monument, and three days after the poet was buried, Withuys rallied kindred souls by issuing a general petition to form a committee and undertake the necessary arrangements. Indeed, a group of like-minded individuals soon congregated and installed a general committee to oversee the erection of a national monument in Tollens’ memory. The board decided that this national monument should be sited in Rotterdam, Tollens’ place of birth, and that supplementary funds should go to placing a memorial stone on the poet’s grave in Rijswijk. The committee then took steps to co-ordinate various events and activities that would serve to raise the required funds.

Quite remarkably, this initiative was supported by several Belgian societies, who organised benefit performances and published brochures to bolster financial support for the monument committee. Prudens van Duyse, for example, explicitly petitioned for the creation of a monument to commemorate the Dutch national poet.<sup>11</sup> At first glance, it might seem surprising that the Belgians were seeking to laud a poet who had fiercely opposed the Belgian Revolt of 1830–1832, but their support of Tollens' posthumous cause shows that the common language that they shared with the Dutch rather instilled a sense of literary brotherhood and cultural unity. Tollens' poetry, then, was also very much part of Belgian collective memory.

In 1860, both monuments were ready to be unveiled to the public. On 24 September, King Willem III undraped the statue in Rotterdam, and a month later, the memorial stone on Tollens' grave in Rijswijk was unveiled. The Rotterdam ceremony was attended by several members of the royal family as well as many high-ranking officials. A huge orchestra of 260 members played a *cantate* with lyrics by the poet A. Bogaers, and that night an occasional piece titled 'The Tollens Festival' (Het Tollensfeest) was performed at the Rotterdam Theatre.<sup>12</sup> Published shortly before the opening of both monuments, G.D.J. Schotel's Tollens biography was another of those year's tributes to the great poet's legacy. This biography, too, had a 'royal touch' to it: the names of five members of the royal family, including the King, adorned the list of subscribers; in all, they ordered eight copies of Schotel's monumental work.



FIGURE 3 Statue of Tollens in Rotterdam, unveiled by King Willem III in 1860.

By 1860, then, Tollens' popularity had reached its zenith: his canonical status seemed to be unassailable. His work remained popular throughout the 1870s, and in 1880, his hundredth birthday was celebrated in the Paleis voor Volksvlijt in Amsterdam with an exhibition of paintings depicting scenes from the *Nova Zembla* poem. From that time on, however, his popularity decreased drastically. There were dramatic changes in literary sensibility, and Tollens' moralistic poems did not fit the new paradigms that came to dominate the world of letters. Whereas Rembrandt and Vondel remained powerful national symbols because they stemmed from the Dutch Golden Age, Tollens' poetry failed to withstand the ravages of time. His ever-waning popularity was underlined by the fact that, in 1932, the 'Wilhelmus' replaced Tollens' poem as the national anthem of the Netherlands. This only served to further undercut his popularity, and with the demolition of the memorial stone on his grave in 1970, Tollens might be said to have hit rock bottom. In this day and age, Tollens is a more or less forgotten hero, whose name only lives on through the many streets that were once named after him.

### Theoretical implications: Tollens as a model for the rise of Dutch nationalism

The celebrations and memorials that were organised in Tollens' honour clearly illustrate the importance of literature as medium of collective identity formation in the Netherlands during the nineteenth century. This case, however, is not unique, but in fact fits an international pattern: throughout Europe, writers were feted in an unprecedented way, to which such divergent cases as the Goethe (1849), Shakespeare (1864), Voltaire (1878), and Pushkin (1880) celebrations testify. Ann Rigney has aptly called this trend 'the cult of commemorations', and in her study on Robert Burns, she shows how the celebration of his hundredth birthday in 1859 created one of the greatest spectacles in literary world history.<sup>13</sup> Regardless of the international scope of this craze, each particular case was solidly embedded in national or even more local contexts. The Burns commemorations, for instance, were linked to the social and political background of the celebrators themselves.<sup>14</sup> I accordingly argue that the rise and fall of Tollens' reputation as a national poet can be used as a model to describe the various phases that Dutch nationalism went through over the course of the nineteenth century.

Concepts like 'nation' and 'nationalism' have been used in variable, erratic, and sometimes blatantly contradictory ways by scholars. For present purposes, I adhere to the definitions proposed by Joep Leerssen in his study *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (2006), which are based on relatively solid common ground as established by the main authorities in this field, such as Benedict Anderson, Hans Kohn, Elie Kedourie, Ernest Gellner, Anthony Smith and John Breuilly. Leerssen defines the nation as 'a subjective community established by shared culture and historical memories'.<sup>15</sup> This not only involves 'a sense of belonging together' but also of 'being distinct from others'. It can thus refer to local, regional and supra-regional communities, and in so doing places 'an emphasis either on the social, the cultural or



the racial aspects'. In addition, Leerssen distinguishes between 'nationalism' and 'national thought'. Nationalism refers to the political ideology or doctrine of nationalism, which first emerged during the nineteenth century and takes the modern nation state to demarcate constitutive unity. 'National thought', on the other hand, comprises 'all pre-nineteenth century source traditions and ramifications of the nationalist ideology' and consequently refers to 'a way of seeing human society primarily as consisting of discrete, different nations, each with an obvious right to exist and to command loyalty, each characterized and set apart unambiguously by its own separate identity and culture'. Hence national thought is conceptually wider and less specific than nationalist ideology, and thereby enables us to trace the idea that people belonged to the same 'nation' or 'national' community to earlier stages of their histories.

In uncovering the socio-political foundations of modern European nation states, there has been an increasing focus on the role of cultural media. Following the principles of John Hutchinson's *The dynamics of cultural nationalism*, Leerssen has convincingly argued that every form of nationalism is rooted in cultural traditions. His thesis is supported by the work of Miroslav Hroch, who divided the rise of nationalism in three distinctive phases. In phase A, some form of cultural consciousness is developed by a group of intellectuals who study the historical and cultural background of their nation. In phase B, the resulting national sentiments are disseminated across a wider population through the work of poets, writers, journalists, and the educational system. In phase C, nationalist thought is characterised by political ubiquity and can consequently shape an entire people's self-image.

The historian N. C. F. van Sas has applied Hroch's phases to Dutch history in the following way: phase A occurred during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when intellectuals studied the ancient Batavian roots of the Dutch people. From 1760 onwards, national awareness took a flight, as may be ascertained by studying the soaring figures of patriotic publications (phase B). During the nineteenth century, nationalism became an integral if not constitutive part of Dutch society, thereby marking phase C of Hroch's outline.<sup>16</sup>

Hroch's theory opens up new vistas for research in two respects. Firstly, overlooked episodes in a nation's history can now be reassessed when studying national identity formation. Whereas historical research on Dutch nationalism has hitherto focused mainly on the second half of the nineteenth century, the growth of national thought — the idea that the Dutch formed one and the same community — can accordingly be traced back to earlier stages in Dutch history.<sup>17</sup> Secondly, it has become clear that cultural media played a key role in the rise of national thought and nationalism in Early Modern Europe, with literature meriting special attention to its ways of propagating a nation's distinctiveness by referring to its unique history. Because writers often utilised a people's collective history as a way of affirming a set of national values, literature offered readers means of grounding nationalist identification in historical roots.<sup>18</sup>

The years 1806–1813 might well be crucial in our understanding of the various phases that the rise of Dutch national thought and nationalism went through. I have argued elsewhere that literature was a powerful means of spreading anti-French propaganda and was used to celebrate the moral and cultural superiority of the Dutch nation. The resistance literature of the Napoleonic period indeed shaped the Dutch national consciousness and seems to have paved the way for the emergence of nationalist ideology over the course of the nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup>

If we adopt Hroch's theory to assess the Tollens case, one could argue that Tollens' rise as a national poet took place during the Dutch transition from phase B to C. Tollens was one of the key figures who used poetry to transmit supposedly Dutch values to a wider audience. During French rule (1806–1813), he cemented his reputation as a national poet, expressing the feelings of a people whose national identity was being seriously undermined. In 1815, Tollens became part of a more official system of political propaganda: the King included him in his national canon of heroes by knighting Tollens for his patriotic fervour. From there, Tollens grew to become a true national symbol, his importance as the embodiment of Dutchness reaching its apex during the 1850s and 1860s (Hroch's phase C).

### Concluding remarks

Let us return briefly to the spring of 2011, when a new commemorative column was erected on Tollens' grave. Today, this *lieu de memoire* has an entirely different purpose than it had in the past. In 1860, the adornment of Tollens' grave served to honour one of the most popular Dutch poets of the nineteenth century, a man who was a symbol of Dutch nationalism and the superiority of the Dutch nation. In this day and age, it mainly induces a feeling of nostalgia: it commemorates a time and a culture that belongs to a long-gone past.

However, perhaps the new column still has special significance. As Ann Rigney has pointed out, memorial sites can only survive if they are able to generate new interpretations. They only work as sites as long as 'they have the power to mobilize people into investing in them'.<sup>20</sup> Apparently, a small group of people still considered it worthwhile to invest time and money into restoring Tollens' memorial site.<sup>21</sup> Their activities might be interpreted as an act of resistance against the current political climate, which makes little effort to acknowledge our cultural heritage and has been cutting down dramatically on cultural expenses.

I sympathise strongly with this relatively small group. I am not arguing that we should erect statues of once-famous writers all over the country, but I would like to stress the importance of seemingly marginal events like these. In a culture that is so obsessed with issues of national identity, writers such as Vondel and Tollens still deserve our attention. Their works, as well as the ways in which they are commemorated, offer crucial insights into issues of nationalism, the forging of national identities, and the rise and fall of historical consciousness, in the present no less than in the past.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> This article is based on a paper presented at the conference *Embodied Communities: Commemorating Writers in Europe, 1800–1914*, which was organised by Prof. Ann Rigney and Prof. Joep Leerssen at Utrecht University, 8–9 December 2011. I would like to thank Ruud van den Beuken voor editing this article.
- <sup>2</sup> For his biography, see: G. W. Huygens, *Hendrik Tollens. De dichter van de burgerij. Een biografie en een tijdsbeeld* (Rotterdam/s-Gravenhage 1972).
- <sup>3</sup> Huygens, *Hendrik Tollens*, 173.
- <sup>4</sup> *Die Holländer auf Nova Zembla; aus dem Holländischen von F. M. Duttenhofer* (Stuttgart, 1850); *The wintering of the Hollanders on Nova Zembla, during the years 1596 and 1597* (1860); *L'hivernage des Hollandais à la Nouvelle-Zemble, 1596–1597*, traduit de Tollens, par Auguste Clavareau (Maestricht, 1838, 4th edition: Utrecht, 1851); *Les Bataves à la Nouvelle-Zemble*. Trad. de Tollens par Auguste Clavareau; suivi de poésies diverses de Tollens; de Bilderdyk et du traducteur (Bruxelles 1828). On foreign translations of Tollens' work: G. D. J. Schotel, *Tollens en zijn tijd. Eene proeve van levensbeschrijving* (Tiel 1860), 299–319.
- <sup>5</sup> P. B. M. Blaas, 'Tollens en de vaderlandse herinnering'. In: *ibid.*, *De burgerlijke eeuw. Over eeuwendelen, liberale burgerij en geschiedschrijving* (Hilversum 2000), 46–58.
- <sup>6</sup> On resistance literature during the years of French rule, see Lotte Jensen, 'The Dutch against Napoleon. Resistance literature and national identity, 1806–1813'. In: *Journal of Dutch Literature*, 2012, 2(2), 5–26.
- <sup>7</sup> Hendrik Tollens, *Lierzang bij de verheffing van Zijne Koninklijke Hoogheid Willem Frederik, Prins van Oranje en Nassau, op den troon der Nederlanden* (Den Haag 1815).
- <sup>8</sup> 'Onder de mannen die Nederland tot blijvende roem verstrekken, kent de natie, de plaats der eere toe aan hem wiens voortbrengselen de krachtigste invloed op de volksgeest uitgeoefend hebben, wiens dichtwerken onvergankelijk zijn, niet slechts omdat de duizenden exemplaren daarvan, met graagte gekocht en gelezen, in de woningen der aanzienlijken en geringen zijn verspreid, maar meer nog omdat zij in de mond en het hart des volks blijven leven [...]'. Quoted in Marita Mathijsen, 'Laudatio Tollens'. In: Marita Mathijsen, *Nederlandse literatuur in de Romantiek, 1820–1880*. Nijmegen 2004, 289–90.
- <sup>9</sup> For a more detailed account of the festivities, see Schotel, *Tollens en zijn tijd*, 300–39; Huygens, *Hendrik Tollens*, 257–259 and Ruud Poortier, 'Tollens en zijn "bekoorlijk Rijswijk"'. In: *Hendrik Tollens, Cz. 1780–1856* (Rijswijk 2006), 15–45.
- <sup>10</sup> Schotel, *Tollens en zijn tijd*, 364–66.
- <sup>11</sup> Prudens Van Duyse, *Tollens herdacht in België* (Antwerpen 1857).
- <sup>12</sup> Huygens, *Hendrik Tollens*, 269–70.
- <sup>13</sup> See, for instance, the case of Robert Burns, as discussed by Ann Rigney in 'Embodied Communities: Commemorating Robert Burns, 1859'. In: *Representations* 115 (2011). 71–101, especially 78.
- <sup>14</sup> Rigney, 'Embodied Communities', 88.
- <sup>15</sup> All following quotations are derived from Joep Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe. A Cultural History*. Amsterdam 2008 (2nd ed.), 14–17.
- <sup>16</sup> N. C. F. van Sas, 'Nederland. Een historisch fenomeen'. In: *ibid.*, *De metamorfose van Nederland. Van oude orde naar moderniteit 1750–1900* (Amsterdam 2004), 46.
- <sup>17</sup> The construction of Dutch national identity both before and after the Napoleonic era is part of a large research project directed by Lotte Jensen and funded by NWO (The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research), titled 'Proud to be Dutch. The role of war and propaganda literature in the shaping of an early modern Dutch identity, 1648–1815' (VIDI-dossier 016.114.302). For a description of this project, see <<http://www.proudtobedutch.org/>>.
- <sup>18</sup> See for example Joep Leerssen, 'The Rhetoric of National Character: A Programmatic Survey', in *Poetics Today* 21 (2000) 2, 267–92; Brent O. Peterson, *History, Fiction, and Germany: Writing the Nineteenth-Century Nation* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005) and Manfred Beller & Joep Leerssen, *Imagology. The cultural construction and literary representation of national characters. A critical survey* (Amsterdam / New York: Rodopi, 2007).
- <sup>19</sup> Lotte Jensen, 'The Dutch against Napoleon'; also see Wyger R. E. Velema 'The Dutch, the French and Napoleon: Historiographical Reflections on a Troubled Relationship'. In: *Da Brumaio ai Cento giorni. Cultura di governo e dissenso politico nell'Europa di Bonaparte*, ed. by A. de Francesco, (Milan 2008), pp. 39–52. Velema argues that the work of resistance poets gave a voice to 'a renewed and powerful consciousness of a shared Dutch national identity' (45).
- <sup>20</sup> Rigney, 'Embodied Communities', 77.
- <sup>21</sup> There seems to be a new wave of events that memorialise Tollens: in 2006, an exhibition was held in Rijswijk to commemorate the 150th anniversary of his death, and M. Mathijsen and R. Poortier published a book on the poet's life titled *Hendrik Tollens, Cz. 1780–1856* (Rijswijk, 2006). A symposium held in Rotterdam may be counted among

the many festivities that were organised in 2010 to celebrate Tollens's 230th birthday; these also included the unveiling of a new statue, which was placed on the poet's grave in Rijswijk, and the release

of *Nova Zembla*, a film by Reinout Oerlemans. Although its director did not cite Tollens's poem as a source of inspiration, *Nova Zembla* continues to generate interest in the poet's life and work.

### Notes on contributor

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