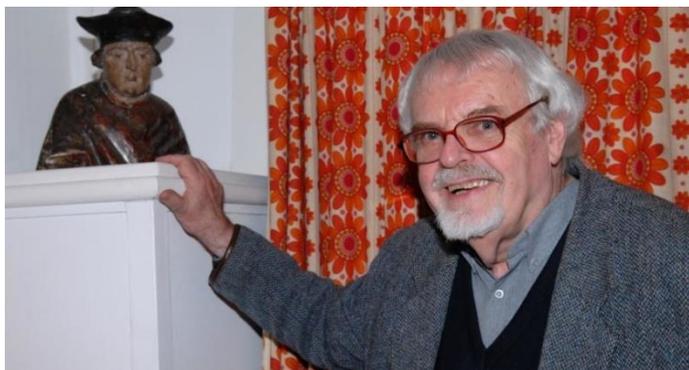




WRITERS IN CONVERSATION



Joost Daalder with a polychrome wood carving of English Renaissance philosopher and statesman Sir Thomas More, c. 1560.

Renaissance Man: An Interview with Joost Daalder

Gillian Dooley

Professor Joost Daalder taught in the English Department at Flinders University from 1976 until his retirement in 2001, mostly in the area of English Renaissance literature. Prior to that, he taught at the University of Otago (New Zealand) from 1966 to 1976. He has an impressive list of publications, including several scholarly editions of Renaissance literary texts and many journal articles, book chapters, and reviews. See <https://www.flinders.edu.au/people/joost.daalder> for more details.

*Joost was born in the Netherlands in 1939, and studied at Amsterdam University and Edinburgh University before moving to New Zealand with his wife Truus in 1966. Joost and Truus have an interest in collecting fine arts, and in 2017 donated the Daalder Contemporary Jewellery Collection to the Art Gallery of South Australia. They also often lend art objects to other institutions for exhibitions. Truus is known for her books on the visual arts, notably her *Ethnic Jewellery and Adornment* (2009).*

I first knew Joost as a lecturer when I was studying Honours in English in the mid-1990s – he was an inspiring teacher of Shakespeare's plays and poems. Since then we have become friends and colleagues and it seems fitting to mark his 80th birthday with an in-depth conversation about his professional career. The interview was conducted via email in September and October 2019.

GD: I know you intend much of your scholarly work for 'general' readers – not only fellow specialists. Do you write explicitly for different audiences or do you aim to convey scholarly complexity in readable form in all your work?

JD: I have since the time I was a young child been accused of 'sounding like a book', which is probably due to a natural (not affected) intellectual/scholarly inclination, and also the

Renaissance Man: An Interview with Joost Daalder. Gillian Dooley.
Writers in Conversation Vol. 7 no. 1, February 2020.
journals.flinders.edu.au

ARCHIVED AT FLINDERS UNIVERSITY: [DSPACE.FLINDERS.EDU.AU](https://dspace.flinders.edu.au)

environment in which I grew up. Both of my parents were intellectuals, and quite naturally spoke that way, but they would have hated – as do I – to have been thought of as speaking some kind of ‘specialist’ or ‘professional’ language, leave alone jargon (which I see as an important curse in much modern academic writing). I think we all believed that education, and intellectual conversation (whether written or oral), should in principle be ‘for everyone’, so that accessibility was a virtue and any undue complexity a vice. Hence I try – and have always tried – to make anything that I say or write, no matter the audience, as simple and clear as possible. So in principle I do not write – or at least not consciously – for scholars at any time, but try to be as simple and clear as I can be about even highly scholarly – or very complex – matters.

GD: You say that you do that in principle. How do you approach the practical problems involved?

JD: I must admit that it is easier (to my mind) to be clear about complex matters than those for which scholarly knowledge on the part of the addressee would be an advantage. For example, if you write about (say) bibliographic matters in the Renaissance (the term I still prefer to ‘the early modern period’), technical terms soon tend to surface, but even those I usually explain when I use them for the first time, in any of my writings. I therefore think that probably even a first year student could understand what I say about the text of *The Honest Whore*, Part 1, though at times that sort of thing may be somewhat challenging. Even so: I avoid technical terms wherever I can, explain them when I do, etc. So I emphatically try as often as I can to remain comprehensible even to people with little scholarly knowledge, and always try to bear in mind that one’s writing should ideally have a social purpose or at least not be self-indulgent, affected, or confined to a small coterie. I come from an old-fashioned socialist background that believed that education was a great good and in principle should reach as many people as possible – and in this respect, at least, I have stayed loyal to what I grew up with. The short answer to your question is that in principle, at least, I do not write for different audiences and that I do aim to convey scholarly complexity in readable form in all my work. That said, some of my work is so ‘technical’ on, say, bibliographical, linguistic, or historical matters that likely enough at times I lose some of my audience – and probably unavoidably so. But I eschew this situation as much as I can.

GD: Although I know you mainly as a scholar of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, you have many publications in modern Australian and New Zealand literature. How did this come about?

JD: Going by your own experience – in the main – with me during the time you have known me, you would not have been aware that I actually first blossomed forth – became internationally known – as a scholar, by my work on the poetry of Thomas Wyatt (1503-42). It is certainly true that I have not only edited that poet for Oxford University Press, but also written many articles on his poems. For long (too long, really) people were often inclined to pigeonhole me as a ‘Wyatt man’, and they therefore were not necessarily particularly at home with my published work in the area of Renaissance drama. I am delighted, in that

sense, to see that you mainly know me as a scholar of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. And it is by now the case that definitely my contribution to the drama quantitatively far outweighs that in poetry! But, in truth, the Renaissance has been my favourite period since about age 20. I have also written extensively on modern 'British' authors (including Yeats and Wilde), as part of my general – main – interest in the literature of Britain (and Ireland). I wrote on New Zealand literature in part as a retrospective look at a country where I had lived for 10 years, and where I worked in a department that paid too little attention at that time to what are actually very good NZ writers. In the case of Australian literature, I felt that in general I should leave that to my colleagues, though I did write with pleasure on *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (the novel plus Peter Weir's film, at that time). I also ended up publishing work by Australian writers when I had assembled that as one of the editors of a journal that ran into financial difficulty! But I think that in the area of modern literature my contributions to both British and New Zealand literature are of about equal weight. And I also wrote on ONE American novel: *The Age of Innocence* – a brilliant book. I wrote that essay for Jocelyn Harris.

GD: You have written many book reviews during your career. Some might regard this as a lesser form of scholarship. Why do you think it is important to review the work of other scholars?

JD: First I should point out that my reviews, taken together, form only a very small portion of my total publishing output. As for your question: it is an interesting one, but not, I feel, a particularly hard one to answer. At the highest level, a review could, at least in theory, overturn someone else's work and substitute something better for it. Where I have been in that situation (and I have), I have written what might have been a review in the form of an article – for example showing how someone had produced a completely unintelligible version of a Renaissance poem through ignorance and miscomprehension. So a review – if it does something similar – can actually itself make a significant contribution to research. A review can also provide solid reasons for regarding a book as really good, and be of genuine importance that way. Reviews are needed for such reasons. Most often, a review plays a secondary but valuable role in indicating what is good or bad and why, and always – in the hands of a good reviewer – with use of fact and reason.

The level of the review is determined by what the reviewer writes, therefore, rather than by the form of writing, although I admit that on the whole – even if done well – a review is in principle a publication of a 'secondary' level. I would, for example, never promote or appoint someone only on the basis of their reviews (if these are reasonably short journal pieces).

GD: Do you think writing book reviews can be useful, even from the point of view of reputation and career?

JD: Take this statement, and I quote Gordon Campbell as an Editor for *The Review of English Studies (RES)*, written on 2 March 1998 for submission to Flinders when it was considering me for promotion to professorial status: '*The Review of English Studies* is the central British journal of historical scholarship in English Studies, and its authoritative reviews section is

routinely used by promotions committees attempting to assess the standing of scholarly publications. Reviewing for *The Review of English Studies* is thus a professional activity of very considerable importance, and we choose our reviewers with great care with a view to ensuring that judgements are fair and well-informed.'

What Campbell says is right. Even today *RES* is regarded as probably the leading British journal in the field of English studies (notably historical scholarship, such as most of mine has been). As a reviewer, I did not immediately graduate to reviewer status with *RES*, but I remember with great pleasure that I was asked to review for it. My first review with *RES* appeared in 1984. I think that probably I was then chosen because, apart from many articles, I had published two truly significant and highly praised scholarly editions. In 1983 I was promoted to Reader (alternative title 'Associate Professor') at Flinders, on the same basis. You can see from this that the standard of quality for reviews is to a significant extent hierarchically determined: high standard reviewing is in principle reserved for people of high academic standing. Thus, even though no doubt I could have written some of my *RES* reviews in 1975, I was not yet invited – and, with a journal like this, you cannot ask to be given books to review.

GD: So it depends to some extent on the particular journal and its editorial policy?

JD: We can judge from what Campbell says how such a situation as he describes differs from that of some other journals. I am on the International Board of *Parergon*, and value the journal highly, but I am not entirely happy with its reviewing practice in that in essence it invites any readers (if subscribers) to come forward to offer a review of any book sent to the journal for review. Of course those supervising the distribution are not disabled from saying no to a volunteer, or to reject what they consider an inadequate review when submitted, but neither is there a guarantee that the writer has been carefully chosen. For this reason, although my reviews for *Parergon* are no doubt as good as those which I wrote for *RES*, I would give them a low rating in assessing myself if I were an outsider required to do so.

The *RES* reviews would, if I had to choose between two candidates who are otherwise equal, just be the thing that would make me feel safer with a person who has through such reviews a very solid status as an internationally accepted 'quality' academic. I would also, because of the existence of my *RES* reviews, regard the additional *Parergon* reviews in a case like mine as 'probably OK'. And in my case, as most of my reviews are the result of invitations to write them, I see them as confirming – though not primarily establishing – a high international standing.

As for *English Studies*: that is a well-established international journal, and again you only get the chance to review for them when they ask you. So that journal's reviews really somehow 'count'. Those for *AUMLA* I'd see as safe but hardly very prestigious – although many in Australia and New Zealand perhaps would. I'd rank them lower than the ones I wrote for *English Studies* because *AUMLA* is more restricted and globally less well known than *English Studies*. Even so, I think that my *AUMLA* reviews are respectable pieces of academic writing showing knowledge and insight.

You are right to say, by the way, that I have done a lot of reviewing (even though as I said before my reviews form only a very small portion of my total publishing output). My attitude has on the whole been that I should keep up with my subject anyway, and that as one cannot read everything I would not knock back requests for reviews. As I hope I have made clear, all my reviews except those for *Parergon* have been the result of editorial requests, and the journals are very respectable, with *RES* outstandingly respectable.

GD: But writing reviews is still not quite on a par with original academic work, is it?

JD: Writing a review is not the same as publishing something original of its own, but one does take part in ‘academic discourse’ at a high level and does contribute to what is the effort of many people doing research in an attempt to increase knowledge and insight. So it is not a negligible or superficial activity to be a reviewer for serious academic journals. This includes *Parergon*. My reviews for that have been as scrupulous and fair as always, but anyone interested in ‘metrics’ and such things might know that one is not selected by an editor specially to do a review, so that there is no great honour in reviewing books for that journal, per se. By contrast, the very first review I was asked to do, for *AUMLA*, resulted from my publishing my very first article there. The editor could clearly see that my (refereed) article was the result of newly acquired knowledge and understanding – an original contribution to scholarship – and thus must have felt I’d make a good reviewer. As a result I wrote several reviews for him. I am still very grateful to that editor, for the process forced me to engage in good writing for scholarly publication in a journal, and I learned a lot as a result.

GD: You are an expert and experienced writer in English. I’m interested in the relationship between your ‘mother tongue’ and English. Has it always come naturally to you to write in English? Does Dutch sometimes intrude?

JD: An interesting question, but more in a historical sense than with respect to the present. You wisely ask me not only whether Dutch intrudes sometimes today, but also whether it has always come naturally to me to write in English – over (in theory) a very long time.

The simple answer would be just to say: (1) Dutch NEVER intrudes at present and has not done so for a very long time, while (2) of course when I still had to learn English I could not express myself immediately in it (who would?). While I have myself always liked the idea of direct expression, my education in the Netherlands originally went right against that, and was totally based on the – to my mind fallacious – assumption that best results would be achieved by translation from Dutch. Vice versa – and equally fallaciously in my view – one’s knowledge of English was also, in the Dutch educational system, tested by getting students (even at university!) to translate from English into Dutch.

There are people – my wife Truus is markedly one of them, as an excellent translator – who have that particular skill: one of making two languages match as closely as possible. I am largely without it, and have always hated the process of translation.

What this means in practice is that I did not really get the opportunity to THINK in English, which I believe is the only proper way of speaking or writing it, until I spent a year in

England learning English there, and without any use of Dutch. This occurred when I went to a school for foreigners in Cambridge, in what one might describe as a ‘gap year’ after having finished at the Gymnasium where I was taught with a view to going to university (in Germany and the Netherlands, a Gymnasium is a school which has that explicit purpose).

GD: What was the advantage of learning English at Cambridge? What did you learn there that you couldn’t learn in the Gymnasium?

JD: I did not like the Gymnasium at all, but in Cambridge was immediately happy to be taught in English and to be encouraged to hear it and speak it, as well as to read it without having to translate, and also to write directly in English. The situation which I was thrown into was demanding, but quite liberating, and I learned an awful lot during that year. At the end one sat an exam which had some real standing, and which if one passed it was held to prove – with some considerable justification – that one was proficient in English.

I also discovered during that year that I was in effect ‘born’ to interpret literature written in English – in fact (as I was taught in Cambridge!) *English* literature (though probably including some material written in Ireland, if I remember correctly). I analysed a poem by Thomas Hardy for the importance of its content but defective expression of that content, and got something like A++ as a result. All in all, I was set to study English, and so I did. With Truus, who had one might say ‘followed’ me to Cambridge, but at that stage just as a school friend and who was also very happy with her choice of this school, and the idea of studying English at university. Neither of us was actually looking forward to doing this in Holland, where we chose the University of Amsterdam to go to.

GD: Tell me more about Amsterdam University. Do you feel you learned much about the English language studying there?

JD: I shan’t go into detail about our studies at Amsterdam University, and will concentrate on the question as to whether our teachers actually taught us English in the sense of making one proficient. In the event, that was clearly meant to occur largely through one’s own efforts. Teaching was in English, and if you could not keep up that was YOUR problem. Exams were also conducted in English. The only ones that weren’t were those in which one had to translate. I always did well when having to deal with English only, and did poorly when having to translate.



We did learn an awful lot – far more so than was common in Britain – about the history of English (i.e. its historical development), and one read a huge number of texts on which one

Renaissance Man: An Interview with Joost Daalder. Gillian Dooley.
Writers in Conversation Vol. 7 no. 1, February 2020.
journals.flinders.edu.au

was examined, from 'Old English' on, with Chaucer (who wrote 'Middle English') being examined as a subject on its own, etc, etc.

But ... if one heard one's fellow students speak English, they were not actually on the whole very impressive. Truus and I got another chance to learn more in practice when after obtaining what was the equivalent of a B.A. we were each given the opportunity to spend a year at a British University – Truus in Southampton, and I in Edinburgh.

I did, at that time, have a perfect 'Cambridge accent' (somewhat affected). In all seriousness, in Edinburgh I was at first mistaken for an English student who came from Cambridge or somewhere near – at least 'from the south'. I have never pronounced English so well since, and deteriorated when I adjusted my English to people from the north of England and indeed Scotland while in Edinburgh! The result was that my Dutch accent actually became more marked, as I had no clear consistent role model. This remained a problem afterwards, but I was very fluent and accurate, even then, as a speaker, and during the year only got better. The key point I wish to make in narrating all this is that while in Cambridge and Edinburgh I did not speak, write, or indeed hear or read, Dutch.

Once our studies (which took six years) were completed, I did – as did Truus, speak excellent English – and when I was interviewed for a lectureship in Dunedin (at the University of Otago) those interviewing me (in London) reported to Otago that my English was excellent and entirely good enough for me to teach at an English-speaking university. I would add to this, though, that while I did learn a lot about English in Amsterdam, and got a very good knowledge of the best British literature written from its very beginnings, I was not particularly well taught to express myself in the language, and I learned that mostly, I feel sure, from the two years spent in Britain.

Once at Otago, I of course had – there at least – to think in English all the time. You could not have thought first in Dutch sentences which you then translated, and indeed I had already stopped doing so in Cambridge.

GD: Did you continue to speak Dutch? Do you still think of it as your 'first language'?

JD: While in Dunedin, we had our first child, a daughter. We tried to bring her up bilingually. The poor child did not know when to speak what, and clearly spoke Dutch when she should not. She was in great distress when we picked her up from a creche, and we decided that from there on ONLY ENGLISH would be spoken at home. So that did mean that initially Truus and I would still speak Dutch to each other, but we gradually stopped doing that and spoke just English all the time.

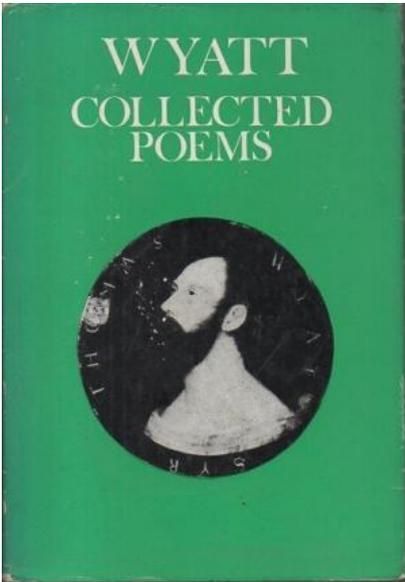
This last situation developed around 1972. As from there on I did not have to concern myself with Dutch – which was actually a relief rather than a loss – I increasingly came to think in English only, and I had in any case for a long time directly expressed myself in English anyway when writing it as well as speaking it.

The key is not to translate. I can say quite honestly that from 1972 English very decidedly became my first language and my Dutch deteriorated greatly. With Dutch relatives, we of course continued to speak Dutch only, but Dutch people hearing us often had two

comments. Some felt that we sounded ‘vaguely English’, while younger members of our families thought we sounded like people ‘from the 50s or 60s’.

In Australia, from 1976, we and our children have spoken English only, except occasionally to Dutch people who preferred Dutch only. But in effect it is now to us very much a second language. Hence, in teaching at Flinders, or when writing English of any kind, I never translate, and Dutch never intrudes. In effect this is a situation which has existed since 1972, once we became an English-speaking family even at home. And I am VERY happy with this situation. I much prefer English to Dutch as a language, and literature in English has been my absorbing interest during my professional life and afterwards. As well, we feel primarily Australian, not Dutch, and take hardly any interest in what happens in the Netherlands, though we do keep in touch with some relatives.

GD: How have you negotiated a balance between your prolific editorial work and your own scholarly work? Do you differentiate between them in an intellectual sense?



JD: Editing of literary texts from the English Renaissance, on which I have spent a significant portion of my life, is generally seen entirely as scholarly work, as it needs to be the result of a great deal of painstaking original and specialised research rather than anything in the nature of a derivative activity such as the copying of an existing text or explanatory comments on that text. Each text that I have edited results from a de novo approach to the earliest and most authoritative texts. Each of my editions has required careful (knowledgeable and intelligent) examination of the surviving texts and modernisation of the spelling and punctuation which only expert knowledge and understanding of sixteenth/seventeenth-century English can responsibly and successfully produce. As well, I need to stress that the primary 16th/17th century literary sources – whether written by hand or printed – usually contain many

errors, as texts in the original author’s own hand have usually not survived. The editor should not only recognize the errors made but try to interpret them so as to establish what the writer actually wrote originally. I shall proceed to illustrate the kind of work involved with respect to (Sir) Thomas Wyatt, whose work appeared first in manuscripts and which, when later printed and wrongly modernized in spelling and misleadingly punctuated, has provided a prime example of mishandling by most of his editors, with errors – particularly in understanding – abundant in unbelievable quantity. Indeed, at almost the same time as my Wyatt came out (published by Oxford University Press in 1975) – but a bit later – R.A. Rebholz’s appeared for Penguin with (once again) many errors. I had been asked by his head of department to read his text in manuscript, and reported something like 50 significant errors in an early part of the work. My task was to read the edition in order to decide

Renaissance Man: An Interview with Joost Daalder. Gillian Dooley.
Writers in Conversation Vol. 7 no. 1, February 2020.
journals.flinders.edu.au

whether Rebolz should be promoted to full professor. I pointed out the errors, with explanations, so as to show that his work as far as I was concerned did not make the grade. This clearly created some alarm, and particularly once I refused – when requested – to let Rebolz read my report. One idiotic result would have been that he would have corrected the errors I listed, but not the many others that he made in his book; and I also did not want him to benefit – in a sense at my expense – from using my intellectual property (so to speak). Indeed, when his edition appeared I noted many more errors, and his publication provided me with an opportunity to write yet more articles on Wyatt than I had already done.

GD: That's interesting – in a sense your editing work feeds into what would be regarded by many as your more orthodox scholarly output – journal articles and so on.

JD: In the case of Wyatt, certainly I make no important distinction between my edition and my articles, in terms of the intellectual work and knowledge required. And this applies to all the articles, both those published before the edition appeared and those which I produced later. To someone not familiar with the kind of work needed for the text, it may superficially seem that no doubt the text in my edition was simply 'copied out' while the articles are the result of arduous 'scholarly' work 'of my own'. This view would be totally mistaken.

I already had had a strong interest in Wyatt before I published anything. Many of his poems survive in a manuscript which he controlled, though most are not in his own hand. One aspect of those in his own hand is that he corrected and re-wrote quite a bit. I first published an article on this creative work, for *AUMLA*, in 1969. I later wrote an article about the way Wyatt's text was shamelessly 'updated' by his first publisher, Tottel (1557 and later), and that article appeared here in Adelaide in what was then (in 1972) *Southern Review*.

My big 'break', however, came when Kenneth Muir, whose text for the Muses Library (1949 and after) had contained numerous errors, decided, with Patricia Thomson, to produce a *Collected Poems* in 1969. I had hoped to see a better edition, but what appeared was real rubbish. I chose a number of examples, and wrote an article about them for *Notes and Queries*, which appeared in 1971 (I chose *N&Q* deliberately both for speed and its wide distribution). That article, short though it was, demonstrated very successfully just how bad the edition was. And, more importantly, that fact enabled me to approach Oxford University Press with a suggestion that I do a new edition for them. My reasoning was immediately – and totally – grasped by John Buxton, who – with OUP consenting – commissioned me to proceed. When I had done the work it was decided that it would appear at a more prestigious level than had at first been contemplated. OUP was in the process of deciding that 'Oxford Standard Authors' would henceforth be an annotated series, and that is how my book came to be published in that series.

I had meanwhile also written on Wyatt for F.W. Bateson, the editor of *Essays in Criticism*. He edited that journal completely on his own, and today that would not 'wash', for he operated without referees. Notwithstanding that fact – or perhaps because of it! – publication in that journal was hugely prestigious, and ensured that one's stuff would get widely read. He accepted two articles on Wyatt from me, which were published in 1971 and

1973, and additionally commissioned me, as a Wyatt editor with knowledge of editions by others, to write an extensive review article, called 'Editing Wyatt', also published in 1973. This publication – I can safely say – made a huge impact, and really 'established' me internationally. My own edition was published in 1975.

GD: What is required to produce a really good quality edition of a poet like Wyatt?

JD: You cannot produce a responsible text of Wyatt's poems featuring modernised spelling and punctuation without having expert knowledge of the many manuscript and early printed versions of the poems; their vocabulary (often misunderstood today); and their syntax, which modern readers regularly misconstrue. There are eight early manuscripts containing poems by Wyatt, and at least five printed texts. All of these need to be studied and used. In addition to a sound text, once that has been produced, the editor also needs to explain much in explanatory comments, and he or she cannot do that without specialised knowledge which takes long to acquire. You need to be thoroughly familiar with the kind of English used c. 1530 and how that has changed, i.e. what the meaning is of what you read. Muir – and not Muir alone – lacked the grasp of syntax that is required. I love syntactical problems, and solving them. This is an area, I must admit, in which my Dutch training really has frequently helped me. If you read a number of languages, including Latin and Ancient Greek, you come to realise how you should analyse sentences, and how languages differ. And, most importantly, I was thoroughly trained in Old English as well as Middle English. So my knowledge of early sixteenth-century English rested on a very solid basis. Additionally, interpreting difficult English is in any case something that appeals to me personally, and which I am good at. Anyway: yes, editing Wyatt is certainly a very scholarly job. I provided annotation in notes wherever I felt the need existed. And I explained, later, several poems in separate articles – all of which were accepted by a significant number of different scholarly journals.

Wyatt's poetic work had been very seriously mishandled by editors until I published my edition. My next edition, that of Seneca's *Thyestes* as translated by Jasper Heywood, was my next major project, suggested to me by Brian Morris and Roma Gill as (then) general editors of the New Mermaids series (for which I later edited *The Changeling*). This is possibly the hardest edition which I have ever done, as I first had to work out which edition of Seneca – and there were several – Heywood had used for his translation. This matters, as the editions available to Heywood differ considerably from each other. I discovered that Heywood chose the edition by Gryphius – which later scholars have agreed with. It thus became possible for me to see that Heywood's translation is very exact, while someone working from e.g. the Loeb series today would not feel the same. The text in Latin is very difficult, as is Heywood's translation, but it would appear that I understood both correctly: there have been subsequent editions of Heywood's text, and one of the editors told me just the other day just how much she had benefited from my work.

GD: That's very gratifying. But did you find that this translated to appropriate recognition from a career point of view?

JD: Here, I feel, I must jump ahead somewhat from a strictly chronological order, and first move on several years in time. Brian Morris, when he had read my *Thyestes*, considered me well qualified for a full professorship. This was in 1983, but for many years after this, my career made no progress whatever. This was due to the fact that the rank of a reader/associate professor was seen as the highest 'career grade' at Flinders. One could not count on more, or apply for promotion to professor.

Much later, well after finishing my highly successful edition of *The Changeling* (published in 1990), I applied for promotion to full professor in 1997. At that time, it did at last become possible to apply for such promotion. Astonishingly, and to my mind quite unforgivably, the *Thyestes* was an edition which Flinders felt it could not judge as it was unable to obtain professional judgement in Australia (sic!). So this was a major reason why I was not promoted. For the next round (1998) I of course asked Brian Morris to write a comment on the book's importance, and as well two other scholars – the famous Jonathan Bate, and an American Seneca expert, who among other things wrote:

I was stunned to learn that Dr Daalder was not a professor. Without question with his publication record and international reputation in several fields he would have been made full professor years ago in this country. I hope very much that something may soon be done for what to an American remains a gross injustice.

Sic! I have a group of such letters on various aspects of my work, and they were not written as 'confidential' statements, but by way of advice to Flinders. I especially asked two noted Australian professors to provide 'open' references. Here is a telling statement by one of the two: 'His list of publications is substantially superior to that of any of the last half-dozen people appointed to chairs of English in Australia; it may be superior to the last dozen or even twenty, but I have not had time to check.' The other professor wrote: 'I am convinced that in a North-American university of comparable stature to Flinders Dr Daalder would by now have been awarded a distinguished professorship.'

Flinders' failure to promote me in 1997 – to my mind a gross injustice – was not only offensive to me, but also cost me money, as when I was promoted the year after, the financial reward which I received was much smaller than it would have been in 1998.

But I return to other works for consideration.

To mention another fact that I am very pleased with: those writing about my work on modern literature in English (mostly from Britain and New Zealand) are just as unstinting in their praise as those commenting on my work in the area of Renaissance literature.

However, I have not really referred to *The Changeling* (my best known edition, judging from the sales) or my editions of *The Honest Whore, Part 1* and *The Honest Whore, Part 2*: these last two editions are by far the most thorough I have ever done.

GD: You mention your work on New Zealand literature. I'm interested in how that came about, and your creative writing set in New Zealand.

JD: My academic work on New Zealand authors is connected with the very small 'creative' part of my writing, and – more importantly – because both that 'creative' work and my essays on NZ literature are closely related in my mind, I feel an urge to write on this the more as most of what I have written for you to 'consume' so far is related to what – admittedly – is the dominant part of my work as an academic, i.e. the study of literary works from the English Renaissance.

I concentrate particularly on New Zealand as my writings on modern canonical authors like Yeats and Lawrence can be seen as less than really odd departures from my work as a Renaissance scholar. All in all, I have – perhaps as a teacher rather than as a scholar, though also in the latter capacity – worked in a way any British scholar of my generation might have done or indeed has done in similar circumstances.

My 'academic home', one might say, is Oxford rather than any other place. Insofar as Dutch universities clearly looked at what the British had done or were doing at my time as a student (in the late 1950s and the first half of the 1960s), Oxford was the most congenial example. This is not just because of Oxford's recognised excellence, but also because of its traditional attitude to the past, which made – in a way which is entirely in tune with typical Dutch academic thinking – history of paramount importance, and meant starting no later than with 'Old English' – the very earliest period of language and literature which can be recognised as (ultimately!) 'English'. In Amsterdam, we were even made to do Gothic, because part of the Bible survives in that language as the earliest surviving document written in any Germanic language (though Gothic is East Germanic, not West Germanic, as English is).

The professor who appointed me to a lectureship at Otago was himself, although a New Zealander, heavily taught at Oxford and saw that, as did many NZ-ers of his generation, as the centre of English studies. He was well aware of the advantages I could offer him as a Dutch-trained academic. Without exaggeration, it can be said that the Dutch have traditionally studied the earliest surviving languages seen as important in the West with uncommon thoroughness. Otago needed a second person who could teach Old English, and this thus became part of my task.

The Otago Department taught entirely in the Oxford mould, and I must confess that this was for much of my time there something with which I could strongly identify. I do see myself as a cultural conservative, in my subject (and partly outside that), and it is the tradition 'from Beowulf to T.S. Eliot', as it was at times called, with which I strongly identified, and indeed still identify.

Thus initially I was happy to teach just what the Otago Department taught, and largely that remained the case, but I must confess that as time went on I came to feel that there was too little of an effort made to make sure that students felt truly involved in the Oxonian world, and for one thing I especially came to think that there was too little attention paid to New Zealand literature (only the odd token text was taught). I also increasingly felt that in any case the Department was getting more 'fossilised' in its educational methods, and this

overall development over time began to make me quite uneasy. With a very congenial and senior US academic (Lawrence Jones) I fought for changes, and we managed to introduce several important ones, but not altogether without harmful consequences. As I was the better organiser of the duo, and more ‘aggressive’, several of my colleagues began to turn against me, which eventually led to my departure for Flinders in 1976. I add to this, though, that it was in particular my publishing rate which intimidated my colleagues and which some quite openly described as the product of undue ambition (disturbing the peace, so to speak). As a matter of interest, I add that Jocelyn Harris and I got on very well! (She had her own problems – as a woman and a hugely impressive scholar.)

GD: Yes indeed – of course I know her work on Jane Austen. So, you have written at least one short story: ‘Published in 1976, “Requiescat in Pace” is Professor Daalder’s only work of fiction. This short story, set in New Zealand, paints a somber portrait of the final, mundane, days of the elderly protagonist’s life in Dunedin.’¹ What made you write this one rather desolate short story? Have you done any more so-called ‘creative’ writing?

JD: My feeling about ‘fossilisation’ was not confined to my workplace, but extended beyond it to New Zealand at large. Coming to that country from Britain and the Netherlands in 1966, Truus and I immediately felt that New Zealand was very old-fashioned and ‘behind the times’. This sense was damaging to efficient functioning, of course, but it eventually became really problematic as I lost faith in the Otago English Department and then could link what happened there – or, rather, failed to happen there – to my overall environment, i.e. New Zealand as a country. (Do realise that I am writing about the country *as it was*.)

Truus and I had decent New Zealanders as neighbours. Indeed, the person whom I describe in my story was a very, very decent man. But ... he was one of those New Zealanders who in effect had no real knowledge of any world outside New Zealand, and he had extremely restricted interests. He – though this sounds insensitive – was in some ways ‘New Zealand writ large’, totally conformist, dull, and in essence lacking in life even while alive. His death inevitably touched me (I had known him for several years), but it occurred at a time when I also felt that New Zealand, at the rate it was going, in its utter complacency, was in a way itself ‘a lost cause’ – a place falling further and further behind the rest of the world. And at this point I can add that especially in Dunedin (far south) the economy was indeed dying, and that at the time we sold our house the place was described as ‘a dying city’ – not without cause – both in Dunedin itself and outside it (with Auckland always inclined to see itself proudly as ‘ultra modern’).

So the story expresses a range of emotion on my part, which I was the more keen to express because I could do it ‘fictionally’, as a real experience, rather than through analysis. It

¹ This summary is taken from the Flinders Academic Commons. The story was published in *New Quarterly Cave*, vol. 1, no. 3, 13-15, and is available online at <https://dspace.flinders.edu.au/xmlui/bitstream/handle/2328/347/Requiescat%20in%20Pace.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

was accepted by an editor who was NOT a New Zealander, and who readily saw the implications of what I had done.

And yes, I also wrote some other stories about New Zealand people, but – not surprisingly – even the very first one I sent off was knocked back by the journal to which I sent it. I have not persisted with trying to get any of them published.

GD: And your scholarly work on New Zealand literature? Did that arise at the same time?

JD: I had become increasingly interested in exploring New Zealand literature. I did lecture (as a foreigner!) on New Zealand poetry, and my US friend Lawrence Jones lectured on fiction and eventually became a really BIG name as someone covering the field of New Zealand prose fiction. He remained in New Zealand – always underrated and always under-rewarded – until eventually Otago HAD to make him a professor, and now (long since retired) he is getting something like his due as a crucial scholar in a field where most New Zealand academics during ‘my’ time dared not tread.

By now, my essays on New Zealand writers are highly regarded. I did not write them until I had well and truly left New Zealand and could take a detached view. Not surprisingly, I had difficulty getting them published – with one editor at one stage accepting TWO essays, and then saying he would not publish them because they posed a ‘risk’ to him! I insisted that he could not go back; he published; he survived; and at present I am seen as a good – and early! – writer on New Zealand authors.

The current opinion is probably well expressed by Vincent O’Sullivan, whom I expect you probably know. I say ‘current’, but I quote a testimonial which he wrote for me in 1998 (more than 20 years ago ...). However, his name in New Zealand is very big and influential, and I am sure that most New Zealand judges would currently agree with what he wrote. This is short, and to the point, I feel: ‘I think it is appropriate to note that he [i.e. Joost Daalder] was one of the five critics to first seriously engage with the poetry of R.A.K. Mason, and his essays on Mason from the early 1980s, as well as those on Charles Brasch, and even more, on Frank Sargeson, are still essential reading for anyone seriously interested in these authors, or in New Zealand studies generally.’ Vincent kindly – and without a request from me – proceeded also to write about other work of mine that he knew. He winds up with the statement ‘In brief, Dr Daalder’s publishing career has been unusually impressive for its range and its quality.’

It is good to have supporting scholars during a career often recognised as obviously exceptional by people who were determined to hold me back, or could not get themselves to express their admiration even if they felt it ... I have certainly been (perhaps still am) a controversial academic, but I the more value those who have helped me.

GD: What do you regard as your most successful publications? Do they match up with those that ‘rate’ highest in the various publication metrics systems in academia over the years?

JD: I am not actually aware of what ‘metrics systems’ would be – or have been – applied to it.

Of my various publications, I think that my editions are the most important as shall we say ‘for the long term’, certainly in general the best known, and all of high quality, though I should here add that this has been most confirmed by others (a significant criterion!) for the first three (i.e the Wyatt, the Seneca-Heywood *Thyestes*, and *The Changeling*), while the editions of *The Honest Whore* (Parts 1 and 2), which are digital, have (probably because they are digital) attracted fewer reviews – though very positive ones. I also have received positive reactions in emails from a number of scholars, but in an ‘official’ assessment these might not count. I am still hoping for more reviews, and they *may* surface as yet, as the editions were published in 2015. Still, that is by now a few years ago ...

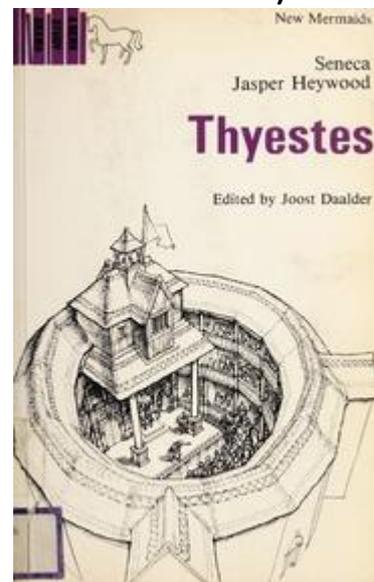
Paradoxically, if you allow me to stay for the moment with these two *Honest Whore* editions, they could from any academic point of view be argued to be potentially my most significant and substantial publications. Never have I produced work as extraordinarily thorough, and as far as I am concerned as ‘full’ and ‘complete’, as went into the monumental publication which the two plays together represent. The digital format helped in that the editions really would be too long for a commercially responsible very long book (somewhere between 700 and 800 pages). A great advantage of the digital format is that, pretty well uniquely, original quartos are included as part of the offering, which enables those interested in the complex bibliographical questions to understand and examine the argument about those much better than would otherwise be the case. The plays themselves, I would admit, though very good, and deserving of the lengthy two-part edition, are not as outstanding as the top-ranking ones of the time such as were written by Shakespeare, Marlowe, Middleton, and Webster. But, all in all, I imagine that posterity will probably – even if only gradually – see this as a very ‘definitive’ edition, and one of the two reviews indicated as much. As I struggled with this huge task for years, and am myself happy with the achievement, it to me personally is arguably my most remarkable accomplishment, and I like the degree of thoroughness and the extent of the ‘coverage’ of matters. So I certainly see this as a to me personally successful publication (perhaps more so than any others), and it does meet very exacting academic criteria, but it has received too little attention to stake one’s reputation on it, so to speak!

GD: Editing can sometimes be a somewhat thankless task, I know! But some of your editions have become very well known, haven’t they?

JD: Yes, the situation is VERY different for my much read edition of Middleton and Rowley’s *The Changeling*, published in 1990. In terms of popularity, that is certainly my most successful book, with at least 50,000 copies sold. I was already a well-established publishing author before, but this no doubt made me very well known in both the UK and the US, and to a smaller extent elsewhere. One reason was no doubt that my interpretation of the play was radically innovative. Currently (almost 30 years later) there is a considerable backlash against my thesis among academics, but – ironically – in the theatre it remains very popular. My approach, I emphatically must assert, was NOT, as is often thought, inspired by Freud, but I could only interpret the play fully and satisfactorily in what is, for sure, ultimately a Freudian

way. This is to many an anachronism, but such critics do not understand that (as Freud himself admitted) psychoanalytic understanding is apparent in several literary works that precede him. One cannot, I firmly believe, read a play like Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* as not containing an important Freudian strand: Ferdinand is in love with his sister, but will not admit that, hence 'repressing' that feeling, which leads to both her death and his subsequent fantastic belief that he is a wolf, which prompts him to try to dig up her dead body. If this is not a psychoanalytical scenario, I wonder how else one would describe it, and I see it as a 'textbook' example. In the case of *The Changeling*, it is my interpretation of its overall meaning which I feel is both very successful and very important, and I am sure it will last. The notes are for the first time attentive to the many sexual puns that run through the play: no editor had preceded me in that area, and I think that by now most people would agree that they are not dreamt up on my part. The standard of editing is high in all respects – but nowhere near as thorough and detailed as for the *The Honest Whore* plays. That was simply due to the restrictions of the format (a book to be used both by scholars and students).

Hugely well known though *The Changeling* is, as an edition, on purely scholarly grounds one could argue that possibly my edition of Jasper Heywood's edition of Seneca's *Thyestes* is as good as, and probably more 'important', than that of *The Honest Whore* plays. It required more knowledge of different fields than anything else I have ever done, as I for one thing needed to work out which, out of several different Seneca texts available to him, Heywood chose to translate. I did work that out (which no one had yet done). It was Gryphius's text; and thus I could prove that Heywood's translation was very accurate (something not obvious, of course, to those who relied on any text that he had *not* chosen to translate!). This also helped me in annotating Heywood's English version. Additionally – and this is for many the most important issue – I had to consider Seneca's creation in its time, and Heywood's in his, thus having to compare their societies, arguing from such a comparison that there were definite similarities, which is one thing explaining why Seneca mattered to Heywood's English contemporaries and later Renaissance readers. In this area, I took issue with those who had been arguing that Seneca's influence had not been important. Very satisfyingly, my work encouraged others to probe the matter, and now Seneca is once again recognised to have been an important influence. Scholars have greatly praised this book, but its limit is that Heywood's English is really too hard for most undergraduates. Still, this book is arguably my best 'highly academic' publication although that could also be claimed for *The Honest Whore* editions on rather different grounds. On balance, the case could more easily be made for the *Thyestes*, I feel. I have an email from Jessica Winston, an American professor who has done specialised work on Seneca's influence in the Renaissance and who pointed out (on 3 September 2019), about activity in this field currently, that 'None of this work would be possible without your milestone edition'. THAT is the kind of thing Flinders did not realise



Renaissance Man: An Interview with Joost Daalder. Gillian Dooley.
Writers in Conversation Vol. 7 no. 1, February 2020.
journals.flinders.edu.au

when it made no effort to find a referee after it had found none in Australia, and partly for that reason failed to promote me – to my very tangible disadvantage - in 1997!

My Wyatt is a good edition, and I for the first time explained the meaning in many places where people had not understood it, which I continued to do also in articles. I know it is rated highly, and I do like it – but to me personally it is not as remarkable a thing to have succeeded in doing as either the *Thyestes* or *The Honest Whore* plays.

GD: Do you have a final statement you would like to make about your career as a teacher, writer, editor and scholar?

JD: I have enjoyed being a very active teacher and scholar in my subject. The impact or achievement of one's teaching is not easy to measure, but it would seem to have been very positive. My performance in research is actually easy to judge, and without any boasting I think I can say that it has been highly productive, and of widely recognised excellence. I am glad about the writings I am leaving for posterity, but thoroughly disappointed and irritated by the belated appreciation that Flinders University has shown towards my publications, and which even now does not seem to me nearly as generous as I deserve. For example, it has never made me a 'distinguished' professor, although that is how I am widely seen both in Australia and – not least – outside it.

Gillian Dooley is an Honorary Senior Research Fellow at Flinders University, and a co-editor of Writers in Conversation.