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[Review of: L. Geever, V. Soen (2017) *Sacrale ruimte in de vroegmoderne Nederlanden*]

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DOI

[10.1017/rqx.2018.59](https://doi.org/10.1017/rqx.2018.59)

Publication date

2019

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Renaissance Quarterly

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[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Damen, M. (2019). [Review of: L. Geever, V. Soen (2017) *Sacrale ruimte in de vroegmoderne Nederlanden*]. *Renaissance Quarterly*, 72(1), 311-312.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/rqx.2018.59>

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Sacrale ruimte in de vroegmoderne Nederlanden. Violet Soen and Liesbeth Geever, eds.

Nieuwe Tijdingen: Over vroegmoderne geschiedenis 2017. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2017. 154 pp. €29.50.

Academic publishing in the Netherlands and Belgium has undergone some profound changes in the last twenty years. Until the year 2000 academics had a range of national journals at their disposal, in which they could publish in their own languages, Dutch and French; since then, they have diverted their production toward more internationally orientated journals, such as *Renaissance Quarterly*, for instance. This forced the editorial boards of the national journals to change their policies. Although most of them were already peer reviewed, they now opened up the possibility to publish in English and/or in full open access, as was the case for the *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, which changed its name into *BMGN: Low Countries Historical Review* (<https://www.bmgn-lchr.nl/>). In the field of early modern history, the leading journals *De Zeventiende Eeuw* and *De Achttiende Eeuw*, both in Dutch, merged into the peer reviewed open access journal *Early Modern Low Countries* (<https://www.emlc-journal.org/>) in 2017. Interestingly, the board of the Flemish-Dutch Society for Early Modern History chose a different course of action: it moved to an international publisher, Leuven University Press, but maintained a Dutch title for its yearbook, now called *Nieuwe Tijdingen: Over vroegmoderne geschiedenis*, which translates as “New announcements: On early modern history.” Moreover, Dutch remains the language of the yearbook, which means that early modern scholars from Flanders and the Netherlands now still have an outlet for articles in their mother tongue. Although the potential audience may seem somewhat limited, it is important to remember that most foreign scholars working on the early modern history of the Low Countries can read Dutch.

The central theme of the first issue of *Nieuwe Tijdingen* is sacral space in the early modern Netherlands; it offers five essays by both established and early career scholars from Flanders and the Netherlands. The articles include studies of the fifteenth-century cult of Saint Leonard in the Brabantine town of Zoutleeuw; the transformation of the funerary landscape in Antwerp and Bruges during the Calvinist republics; the continuity and change in the Protestant use and decoration of medieval churches in the Dutch Republic; the borders between private and public space in the religious topography of the Dutch Republic; and, finally, the uses of the religious past in early modern Amsterdam. The five essays are preceded by an introduction written by Violet Soen and Anne-Laure van Bruaene. They rightly stress that although the spatial turn has given a boost to historical research on urban space, relatively little attention has been paid to the analysis of religious spaces (both buildings and the spaces next to them).

For this reviewer, the essay by Ruben Suykerbuyk stands out especially for its original revisionist approach, in which traditional claims from the scholarly literature are

examined and questioned on the basis of the author's own findings. Suykerbuyk provides a thorough analysis of his sources (a combination of financial records, altar pieces, and the building of the Saint Leonard church in Zoutleeuw) and places his results in the perspective of a devotional boom around 1500, which was a European rather than solely a Netherlandish phenomenon.

The geographic balance of the volume favors the Northern Low Countries, which are the subject of three essays, as opposed to two concerning the Southern Low Countries. Although the metropolises of Bruges, Antwerp, and Amsterdam receive much attention, the sacral spaces in other less prominent towns are treated as well, which gives this collection a wide geographical scope. The essays also have a broad methodological range, incorporating sources used for religious, art historical, historical, and literary research. All are well researched, based on original archival and narrative sources, nicely illustrated (although the quality of the illustrations could be better), and well written. However, most of the authors stick to their case studies and do not really engage with recent debates on the spatial turn or on cultural and religious appropriation, though this latter concept makes a token appearance in almost every essay. Still, this first issue of *Nieuwe Tijdingen* is promising for the future: it provides a platform for research-based case studies on the early modern Low Countries and shows, moreover, that the use of Dutch and an international perspective are not mutually exclusive in academic publishing.

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doi:10.1017/rqx.2018.59