

# Foreword

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Anniversaries are part and parcel of modern Western societies. We celebrate national anniversaries, such as independence days or constitution days, life-anniversaries, such as birthdays and marriage anniversaries, and we celebrate the anniversaries of institutions and businesses, ranging from cities, towns and universities, to multinational companies and small academic journals. As ethnologist Konrad Köstlin writes, anniversaries belong to the “genre” of remembrance (13). They are a performance in which we recall the origins of something,

reflect on what was learned, and which holds the promise for continuity and betterment into the future (12). To celebrate an anniversary is to carve out a moment and a space for such reflection to occur and to mark it, in some way, as important. This year marks *FRAME*'s 40-year anniversary, an opportunity we take to *celebrate*. This is done by dedicating time and space to the topic of celebration in this current issue, as well as by hosting a special anniversary fundraising event. With this issue of *FRAME*, we celebrate by featuring critical essays that each explore, in different ways, the link between literature and celebration. Together, the essays in this issue shed light on how literature can be read as a celebratory practice, how literary texts act as critical vehicles that examine what it means to celebrate one thing over another, and how art and literature circulate within specific celebratory social contexts.

In this issue of *FRAME*, literature takes on a broad definition, as the featured articles reflect on a wide variety of literary genres, ranging from novels and essays to film and poetry. Within the featured articles, a link between different genres and their relation to celebration becomes foregrounded. As is clear from *FRAME*'s interview with Dr. Kila van der Starre "Between Odes and Silences: An Interview With Dr. Kila van der Starre," the generally short form of literary texts like poetry and song lyrics affords wide circulation in society, especially in our current digital climate. This makes poetry an especially potent vehicle to use in the context of celebration, as it can enable moments in time and space where individuals can assemble and experience the affective charge of such literature together. In her PhD dissertation, Kila van der Starre argues for the relevance of poetry outside of the poetry book, emphasising the way people interact with non-book poetry in their everyday lives. A significant part of this interaction happens in celebratory settings, be it the use of poetry on happy occasions, such as weddings, or on mournful ones, such as funerals. Poetry is also used, however, as a celebration of one's identity, and as a way to construct identity. For example, Van der Starre describes that people get tattoos to remind them of something they cherish, to celebrate a milestone in their personal development, and to serve as a life motto.

As Van der Starre argues, tending to the social role of poetry necessitates a different methodology of “material” or “affective” reading to explore the materiality, tropes, and clichés of a poem over its ambiguity and “complexity.”

The interview with Dr. Kila van der Starre highlights literature as an intensely social phenomenon. At the same time, literary texts can often draw on frameworks of deeply intimate relationships to evoke celebratory affects, such as love, joy, and devotion. Sara Ahmed writes that emotions are mediated through language and culture. They have affective power in creating social structures of insiders and outsiders, whereby emotions dictate how people respond to situations. According to Ahmed, emotions are performative and involve speech acts that hold power in commencing a celebration (15). This is exemplified regularly in everyday life, for example when colleagues say: “Let’s celebrate the end of the workweek by going for drinks.” The decision and speech act that these are celebratory drinks is as relevant to the celebratory aspect as the act of going for drinks itself. When a particular subject or event is said to be celebrated, it becomes imbued with a ‘positive’ affective charge that shapes how different people relate to this subject or event. Events such as Pride teach us that celebration has the potential to be liberatory, increasing visibility, and diminishing the social stigma surrounding diverse sexual orientations and identities. On the other hand, celebrations can also perpetuate and normalise structures of oppression. This is something we know all too well in the Netherlands, where one of the celebrated national holidays, “Sinterklaas” — a celebration traditionally held in the period leading up to Saint Nicholas Day — is deeply rooted in colonialism and has for centuries normalised the public display of racist stereotypes through the controversial figure of “Black Pete.” Tending to emotions and affect, including joy, excitement, shame, and discomfort, is therefore a powerful means through which to learn how celebrations can be either liberating or oppressive, and to learn how celebrations shape and structure the social.

The social force of celebration is especially evident in large-scale celebrations, particularly in those that constitute national and communal identities, which often take the form of ceremonies (inaugurations,

national days of importance, and more). In order to foster a sense of community, it is very productive to have a common object to love or hate (Ahmed 42-43). While the regimes in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, for example, used propaganda and false promises to proliferate their ideologies and control the population, they also relied on the love for, and the celebration of, the leader and the accompanying hate of the other to persist as long as they did.<sup>1</sup> While statues that celebrate these historical figures are toppled today, for a long time they served as a reminder and pinnacle of cultural identity, and inspired a strong sense of nationalism in people. Forces of nationalism result in strong us versus them dichotomies, which not only shape people's identities and social environment, but which are also passed on through large-scale celebrations and rituals, such as victorious election parades. Essentially, what is celebrated publicly and nationally can create pockets of belonging and un-belonging through its inclusion of certain aspects of identities and its exclusion of others. Dr. Kila van der Starre also comments on this in *FRAME*'s interview with her, agreeing with us that the perpetuation of poetry in the public space can foster a sense of community, but can also alienate groups that do not identify with the publicly displayed poem, and therefore neither with any nationalist sentiments or value-judgements the poem represents.

While these historical examples are well-known and affected all members of society in tangible ways, the effects of celebratory practices can also occur insidiously and out of plain sight. An example of a celebratory practice that has been steadily built over centuries to ultimately yield harmful results is the literary canon. The novels and authors chosen and hailed in the canon are considered to be representatives of national culture and importance, and entry to the canon is often paired with ceremonial acts, such as the handing out of literary prizes to these authors. However, the literary canon is notoriously limited and one-sided, resulting in a skewed representation of national identity, especially in today's multicultural world. Generally,

<sup>1</sup> For more information on the use of celebratory practices in fascist regimes, see this article pertaining to fascist Italy: Berezin, M. "The Festival State: Celebration and Commemoration in Fascist Italy." *Journal of Modern European History*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2006, pp. 60-74.

the voices represented in the canon are primarily male, white, Western, Anglophone, and of a higher social class, leaving out many other equally important, but non-hegemonic, contributors to literature. While there is increased attention for the problems inherent to the current process of canonisation, especially in academic circles, many people remain unaware of the biases embedded in the materials they are taught to appreciate and celebrate in the course of their schooling, thereby contributing to the state of perpetuity currently held by these nefarious processes. In order to address the lack of an inclusive representation of identity, Carmijn Gerritsen writes in our masterclass section about a “new Britishness,” by critically examining the lack of Black literature present in British literature’s perpetuation of what it means to be British (Upstone 4). Through an exploration of identity and belonging, Carmijn Gerritsen foregrounds the experience of Black Britons as they seek to generate recognition for those whose identities often go uncelebrated and unrepresented. Her analysis of Roger Robinson’s 2019 poetry collection, *A Portable Paradise*, and Natasha Brown’s debut novel *Assembly* (2021), highlights the ways in which contemporary Black British literature functions as “a mode of political intervention,” which seeks to construct a kind of ‘new’ Britishness in the face of hostility (Upstone 4). Through a close reading of both texts, Gerritsen emphasises the importance of identity politics, which stands at the heart of contemporary Black British literature. Drawing attention to these works as forms of counter-discourse, Gerritsen illustrates how Robinson and Brown challenge hegemonic conceptions of quintessential Britishness by centering Black minority perspectives. As such, this article aims to demonstrate how these literary interventions are paving the way for a future where Britain is celebrated for its cultural diversity.

Throughout history, religion has been incredibly influential in fostering community feeling and identity through celebratory ritualistic and ceremonial practices. Religion has been at the core of pivotal life events, such as marriages and funerals, for centuries. Through the ceremonial practices that colour these events, they provide guidelines by which to live one’s life. While in secularised societies, religion has lost its prominence for many people, religious holidays continue to

be celebrated as a time to be with family and loved ones, whether one adheres to the religious or spiritual beliefs of that holiday or not. Dr. Kila van der Starre also describes how poetry has taken the place of religious sermons in contexts like funerals and marriages, suggesting this may be a result of the secularisation of Western society and the continued need for spiritual guidance. This shift in Western society, from religion-based guidance to art-based guidance, goes hand in hand with changes in what and whom we celebrate. Today, secularism thus influences many of our celebratory practices. In this issue, however, we also feature historical notions of celebration, in particular a discussion of one of the most well-known celebrated moments in religious history: the moment when archangel Gabriel comes down to Mary, mother of Jesus, to announce her immaculate pregnancy. In his article, Dr. Andries Hiskes subverts the celebratory nature of the annunciation, particularly through the power of poetry itself. In “This Is Only Delay: The Celebratory Epideictic and the Act-Like in Mary Szybist’s Annunciations,” Hiskes explores the way in which American poet Mary Szybist reinterprets the annunciation in her poetry collection *Incarnadine* (2013), specifically focussing on the poems “Conversion Figure” and “Annunciation in Play.” Drawing on Jonathan Culler’s argument that the poem itself can be seen as an event rather than the representation of an event, Hiskes argues that these annunciation scenes depicted in the poems seek to suspend the celebration heralded in the annunciation’s message when performed through the genre of the lyric, hereby focusing specifically on the agency of Mary in the poems. In so doing, Hiskes addresses Szybist’s emphasis on the fatalistic nature of actions that evolve around Gabriel and Mary, the way in which future actions are preemptively foreclosed in the annunciation scenes, and what the poems, through their performative and epideictic nature, can do in the world regardless of this fatalistic outcome.

Celebrations are often linked to big life events, such as births, birthdays, graduations, and career changes. Similarly, celebrations are central to the heteronormative and mononormative structuring of intimate relationships, ranging from yearly anniversaries and wedding ceremonies to wedding anniversaries, including those that celebrate

milestones, such as the silver, golden, or platinum wedding. In this celebratory structure, the longer a marriage lasts, the more valuable it becomes, and marriages can move from cotton or paper to silver, gold, and granite over the span of ninety years. By equating a longer lasting marriage with increasingly valuable materials, these celebrations not only affirm that marriage is valuable in and of itself, but also that the longer one stays within a marriage, the more valuable it becomes. This structuring of relationships as an “escalator,” much critiqued from within polyamorous and non-monogamous circles, fails to acknowledge that the value in relationships may not lie in how long they last and in how far they are ‘progressed,’ but rather in what they can contribute to each member of the relationship, and to the world at large. To counter the exclusivity of the heteronormative structuring of intimate relationships, queer people have historically had to find alternative and creative ways to perform and celebrate their relationships in order to unlock the promise of the future that comes with celebrations, or to evoke the utopian sense of “queer futurity” (Muñoz).

Unlike marriage, death, in the Western world, is not often considered to be an occasion worth celebrating. Whilst death, like marriage, is acknowledged within a religious and ceremonial setting, the feeling of *loss* so central to death is seen as anything but life-affirming and worthy of celebration. In non-Western cultures, however, death and celebrations often appear as a sensible pairing. In the miscellaneous section, Julia Ferry’s “Celebrating with the Dead” seeks to explore what a celebration of the dead, with the dead, might entail. Weaving together personal reflections with academic theory on the role of the dead in our lives, the author takes as a starting point the fifth anniversary of her grandfather’s death, as celebrated with her Japanese-Brazilian family. This sparks an investigation of this experience as it challenges traditional Western conceptions of mourning, loss, and death. To understand how it does so, the author draws on theoretical propositions by several theorists who rethink the Cartesian separation of the realms of the living and the dead. Specifically, she draws on Vinciane Despret and Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing’s conceptions of collaboration and contamination; Judith Butler’s assertion of mourning as a political resource that

ensures the value of all life; the method of critical fabulation developed by Saidiya Hartman, and the care for the dead as a gesture of celebration supported by Christina Sharpe. Key to the argument is the relationship established by Psychoanalysis between the subject and the processes of mourning, loss, and absence. Through her reflections, Ferry shows how the celebration of the deceased's death becomes an occasion of collaboration between the living and the dead, inscribing a gesture of tension between acceptance and reclaiming, past and present, joy and pain, end and continuity.

While the examples outlined above are rather apparent about what they celebrate or rebel against, celebration can also work in more subtle, insidious ways, as has been suggested before as well in the section on the literary canon. Several articles in this issue deal with more subtle processes of celebration, in which celebration can be understood more as a metaphor than as an event. These articles connect erased perspectives from the culture of celebration to identity construction, and to both personal and collective celebrations of these identities. In line with living in a globalised world with a colonial history and present, many of these expressions of identity focus on marginalised groups and identities that do not fit in just one box; voices that have often been excluded from celebrations in favour of the more straightforward, one-dimensional identity of the white, Western coloniser. An example of a take on how to celebrate identity, and an argument for which identities are worthy of celebration, can be found in J. Bernabé et al.'s Creole Manifesto, titled *In Praise of Creoleness* (1990), which argues that the entangled world of today rejects the "Universality" with which Western thought regards identity and culture (903), and instead celebrates the "Diversity" this entanglement brings (903). Creole identity essentially defies notions of "false universality, of monolingualism, of purity [of culture]" (Bernabé et al., 892), and instead realises that "complexity is the very principle of our identity" (892), thereby celebrating the entangled identities so prevalent today.

In the masterclass section, Dewi Kopp discusses creolization in the Curaçaoan context by focusing on *Buladó* (2020), a movie that won a prestigious award, thereby emphasising the need to celebrate

all identities, rather than merely a set of them. Kopp reads the movie *Buladó* through the lens of its relation to, and its representation of, creoleness. Drawing on the work of Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant, Kopp argues that Creoleness, which is a kind of artistic aesthetics that arises out of “the brutal interaction, on either insular or landlocked territories [...] of culturally different populations” (Barnabé et al. 893), is key to understanding the film’s relationship to Curaçaoan identity, as well as Curaçaoan identity at large. The movie represents a larger scale conflict on the island, one which, Kopp argues, can be understood through language: Dutch and Papiamentu are both present on the island, yet their relationship is unequal. Kopp argues that *Buladó* makes present “the many Curaçaoan dimensions of Creoleness” through its celebration of the island’s creolized culture (a culture characterised by “perpetual bilingualism” (Bernabé et al. 899), which acknowledges the undeniable presences of both Creole language and the language of the coloniser), its focus on language and orality, and its “interior vision” (Bernabé et al. 890), which Kopp defines as an outlook that centralises the Caribbean reality without exterior involvement or orientation. Finally, Kopp investigates the circumstances of the movie’s creation by looking at its status as a diasporic work. With the limitations and possibilities that diaspora brings with it, Kopp argues that Janga has managed to make a film that represents Creoleness and a journey towards it, which has opened a door for more works that explore and celebrate Curaçao’s Creoleness. Similar to the appreciation for Creole as evident in *Buladó*, so does Édouard Glissant say, in his work *Poetics of Relation* (1997), that Creole is “genius” in the way it embraces openness and rejects one universal system, and, as an extension of that, in how it celebrates “multilingualism” and the “incredible explosions of culture” (34). What we decide to celebrate, and how we do it, is of the utmost importance to the narratives we spread, whereby we perpetuate notions about what does and does not matter, and about what is worthy of mention and consideration. In this vein, the authors in this issue make space for identity practices that are not always valued by literary institutions, and by the public.

Through the articles in this issue, we hope to shed light on both the fruitful and harmful effects of celebratory practices, and the surprising but significant ways in which literature contributes to this process. What else can be questioned about what and how we celebrate, and the narratives these celebrations perpetuate? By understanding the emotions and affirming or exclusionary practices that lie at the heart of celebratory rituals, we may further discover and question the biases in our thinking and work to understand the way both personal and collective celebrations and commemorations influence our sense of identity, our memory, and our perception of social events and circumstances. Returning to the topic of the literary canon, by providing a space for more metaphorical and critical perspectives on celebratory practices, *FRAME* hopes to celebrate the often overlooked with this issue. Additionally, by paying specific attention to the concept and practice of celebration, we wish to draw attention to our own anniversary. During its forty years of existence, *FRAME* has managed to grow into a respectable journal that has worked with many international theorists and budding young minds. We have been a fully peer reviewed journal since June 2023, and continuously work on delivering cutting-edge research in (comparative) literary studies and adjacent fields. Especially in recent years, we have had to work hard to survive as a print journal, something we remain committed to. In honour of these forty years of work, of *FRAME*'s history, and to gain support in these trying times, *FRAME* is hosting an anniversary event on the 25th of June 2024, to which you are all warmly invited. The event will feature a keynote lecture on our 36.2 "Writing Sex" issue, a panel discussion with some of the authors of this celebration issue, and a small fair where several journals can display their work. If you are interested in attending this event, you can register via the form on our website ([www.frameliteraryjournal.com](http://www.frameliteraryjournal.com)). With the publication of the first issue of our fortieth year, *FRAME* also has the pleasure of working with a new designer, Grace Boehlke, who will carry *FRAME* into a new era together with the editorial team. Our next issue, 37.2 "Between the Lines" (out in December 2024), explores marginalised perspectives and approaches to literature. The call for papers for the issue after that,

38.1 “Page to Planet,” can be found at the end of this issue. Thank you, readers and subscribers, for your continued support. We hope this issue is a celebratory surprise on your doormat.

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