

trialisation had resulted in a veritable exodus from the Canadian countryside. In particular the young people and the war veterans, who had initially been allocated their own farms, made for the rapidly-growing cities. As a result, agriculture was in urgent need of new immigrants. Dutch farmers, often praised for their energy and great capacity for work, flocked in their thousands to the Canadian prairie provinces. The fact that the United States had tightened its conditions of entry for immigrants only added to Canada's appeal. Semi-official bodies such as the Netherlandic Emigration League and the Central Emigration Foundation of Holland endeavoured to inform and direct the flood of migrants so as to reduce the chances of the venture misfiring. These bodies, however, were not always successful in their efforts, as is sometimes harrowingly apparent from Ganzevoort's collection of letters.

While *The Last Illusion* lays bare the emotional life of the migrants, Frans J. Schryer's *The Netherlandic Presence in Ontario. Pillars, Class and Dutch Ethnicity* is more a theoretical work. Schryer, professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Guelph, is mainly concerned with the large numbers of Dutch people (not only from Europe, but also from the former Dutch East Indies) who arrived in Ontario between 1947 and 1960. Schryer endorses in part the general picture of the Dutchman who integrates quickly and easily into his new environment. Partly because of the speed with which they mastered English, the Dutch are described as the group with 'the lowest ethnic identity retention'. Consequently, it is difficult to present them as a homogeneous entity, and yet it would be wrong to play down typically Dutch customs and practices. While the Netherlands underwent what might be described as a social revolution in the 1960s and 1970s, the Canadian Dutch kept up their traditions, many of them closely linked with their Calvinistic (or Catholic) faith. We are reminded here of the much greater resolve, described by (among others) Joan Magee (in *The Belgians in Ontario. A History*, 1987), with which Flemish immigrants in Ontario continued to organise processions and each year commemorated a medieval victory in battle.

Apart from the tell-tale physical indications of Dutch origin, Schryer believes there is also a 'silent' Dutch ethnicity that should not be underestimated, an inconspicuous but deep-rooted form of Dutch individuality. He is referring here to the maintained beliefs or values of the Dutch-Canadian population, which are not immediately apparent to outsiders. Interestingly, too, many immigrant children continue to read Dutch, though English is now their only language of communication. This explains why Canada still has three Dutch-language newspapers. And as consumers the Canadians of Dutch origin have their own behaviour patterns and preferences (such as typical wall tiles, posters and copper trinkets).

All in all, we are given a complex picture of the Dutch in Canada (or more specifically, in Schryer's case, Ontario), in which diversity and uniformity seem to go hand in hand. These two studies are important

pieces of the jigsaw puzzle that represents Dutch migration to Canada. A large part of the puzzle, however, still awaits completion. For instance, much research remains to be done into the various migration movements to the West of Canada. Moreover, the most recent influx of highly-qualified people to growth cities like Calgary and Vancouver provides further material for socio-historical analyses.

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*Translated by Alison Mouthaan-Gwillim.*

Herman Ganzevoort. *The Last Illusion. Letters from Dutch Immigrants in the 'Land of Opportunity', 1924-1930*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1999; 238 pp. ISBN 1-55238-013-0.

Frans J. Schryer. *The Netherlandic Presence in Ontario. Pillars, Class and Dutch Ethnicity*. Waterloo (Ontario): Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1998; 458 pp. ISBN 0-88920-312-1.

## Women in the Dutch colonies

A fascinating but little known aspect of Dutch colonial history concerns the role and position of women in the Dutch East Indies (present-day Indonesia). During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – as was shown by Jean Gelman Taylor in *The Social World of Batavia* (1983) and by Leonard Blussé in *Strange Company* (1986) – Indonesian concubines, Chinese go-betweens and rich mestizo wives were often indispensable to the Dutch colonisers in running their empire. It is a theme one also finds in literature, in the nineteenth-century Indonesian folktales of Nyai Dasima and again in the strong female characters portrayed by Indonesia's most important writer of today, Pramoedya Ananta Toer.

Dutch women, on the other hand, made their appearance on the colonial stage mostly after the opening of the Suez canal in 1869, and were then usually dependent on the status, income and career of their husbands. A remarkable number took to writing, and beginning with Mina Kruscman's feminist novel *An Indies Marriage* (Een Indisch Huwelijk, 1872), there is a significant line of Dutch women writers advocating emancipatory ideas for the colonies – from Augusta de Wit, Carry van Bruggen and Marie van Zeggelen in the early decades of the twentieth century, via Annie Salomons and Madelon Lulofs in the 1930s through to Hella Haasse and Beb Vuyk after the war.

Meanwhile, though, Indonesian women had already begun to develop emancipatory ideas of their own. The most important figure was Kartini (1879-1904), who fought for the education of women and their liberation from the shackles of Javanese feudal traditions as much as from Dutch colonial paternalism. Her posthumous *Letters of a Javanese Princess* (1921, originally published in Dutch in 1910 as *Door Duisternis tot Licht*) have continued to inspire Indonesian women in their struggle for emancipation.

The central theme of Elsbeth Locher-Scholten's new book on *Women and the Colonial State* is how, es-

pecially and increasingly during the first half of the twentieth century, Dutch and Indonesian women, despite their shared aspirations, were kept apart by their diverging interests and by the colonial conditions of Dutch East Indies society. Her book offers a wealth of new data and archival materials, and many interesting illustrations and maps. There is a helpful glossary of Dutch and Indonesian terms, and a good five-part index (of names, geography, population groups, institutions and subjects) which, however, only covers the main text of the book and not the very extensive notes and the 20-page bibliography at the end.

In the six essays collected here Locher-Scholten discusses a number of key aspects of the struggle for racial and sexual emancipation and equality under colonial conditions. Her perspective is informed both by feminist theory and by the post-colonial views of Edward Said. As she puts it: *'Writing about gender in a colonial context reveals the iniquities and inequalities of the colonial system at its most uncompromising.'*

After a general introduction on 'Gender, Modernity and the Colonial State', Chapter 2 discusses the colonial debate about female labour in the 1920s, in which European notions clashed with Indonesian practices. The analysis is supported with important statistical data on Indonesian women, their professions, wages and work, both in indigenous agriculture and on the large colonial plantations in Java. Chapter 3, on the representation of Javanese domestic servants, sets out how instruction manuals and colonial children's literature defined the role of the Dutch woman as that of a wise but firm teacher of her servants. Chapter 4, on the western lifestyle of European women, documents how *'an illusionary Netherlands in the tropics'* was constructed and promoted through western models for women's clothing, food and manners.

The last two chapters are, to my mind, the most innovative. Chapter 5, on the struggle for women's suffrage in the colonies, reveals how European women carried their 'white woman's burden' and considered themselves part and parcel of the Dutch colonial project; how they fought for their own voting rights, and kept a safe distance from the Indonesian women's movement. The final chapter makes an important contribution to the history of the women's struggle in Indonesia in the colonial era by describing the fierce verbal battles and political demonstrations of 1937, when the colonial government attempted to regulate family life through a new ordinance on marriage. The debate focused – and foundered – on the conflicting views of marriage and monogamy of the colonial government, of the Indonesian women's movement, and of the Islamic religious leaders who scored a memorable victory here.

What emerges from these essays is a detailed picture of the cultural battles that went on in the colonies – over marriage, manners and morality, over relations, intimacy and sexual affairs just as much as over work, education, democracy and the law. Again and again we see Western ideals and conceptions of womanhood in



Djermi, a Javan woman married to the Dutch NCO Piet Scholte, and her daughter Helena ('Lin'), who later became a writer. Early 20th century.

conflict with Indonesian views and colonial realities. And with hindsight, we can see striking and unsettling parallels between the suppression in the thirties of Indonesian nationalists, and the tightening of regulations for women, European as well as native. It is a parallel hinted at in Hella Haasse's novella *Forever a Stranger* (Oeroeg, 1948), where she describes how the Dutchwoman Lida sides with the young Indonesian nationalist Oeroeg against the Dutch colonial establishment.

Back in the thirties, however, *'female solidarity across the colonial divide did not exist'*. For this reason alone, it would be extremely interesting to try and continue Locher-Scholten's history of women's struggle in the Indonesian archipelago up to the present. This would cast an interesting light on the ongoing exploitation of Indonesian women in the sweatshops that produce cheap commodities for global companies. It would also, finally, bring out the common ground between the Dutch historian Locher-Scholten and the Indonesian feminist, poet and philosopher Toety Herati Nurhadi, who – together with her fellow feminist activists – was arrested under the Suharto regime simply for daring to hand out milk to the poor in Jakarta.

REINIER SALVERDA

## Language

### **A Gigantic Dutch-Flemish Language Project** The Corpus of Spoken Dutch

2001, the first year of the third millennium, is the European Year of Languages. This has been decreed by the European Union and the Council of Europe. In the course of 2001, via the Internet, the media and numerous organised events, the attention of millions of Europeans will be focused on the wealth of language that has made Europe's cultural heritage unique in the world. Everyone, young and old, will be encouraged to learn at least one other language. Language opens doors to people, cultures and employment. Every language spoken in the European Union, whether by many people or by few, will play an important role in the project, and obviously a dynamic language like Dutch is also involved.

Dutch is a medium-sized language. Numerically it ranks sixth in the European Union, in which there are currently eleven official languages: Danish, German, English, Finnish, French, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Swedish and Dutch. The latter is the mother tongue of nearly 22 million people: 16 million Netherlands and 6 million Flemings. Through this language they experience the 'world'. They express themselves, they think, dream and communicate. Dutch is a language with a rich history that has produced great literature and an impressive number of scientific publications. A growing number of foreigners want to learn the language for business, literary, cultural and personal reasons. Dutch is taught in about 250 universities around the world.

The concept of 'Dutch' is a complex one, just as is that of English, German, French etc. As well as Standard Dutch, the general language used within the Dutch-speaking area, there is a wide range of variation: dialects, regional patterns, social varieties (vulgar and posh, for example), specialist languages, group languages and the numerous types of jargon that one finds, for instance, among the young or among computer freaks. Added to that, some leading philologists distinguish two variants of Standard Dutch: those spoken in Belgium and in the Netherlands. The norms applied to Standard Dutch in these two areas are slightly different, particularly in respect of pronunciation and choice of words.

A medium-sized language like Dutch cannot stand still in the rapidly expanding world of speech and language technology. This is the domain of machine analysis, the synthesis of voice and speech patterns and artificial language production. To fall behind at this technological level would ultimately have a damaging

impact on the culture and economy of the Low Countries. It would also have a negative effect on the democratic quality of the European Union. Every citizen in the EU should be in a position to participate fully and equally in European society – certainly in respect of his or her language. In the long term, automatic speech recognition and other techniques will facilitate fluent communication between man and machine. However, for the time being technical stunts like that of the science-fiction character Captain Kirk in *Star Trek*, who regularly converses with his spaceship's super-intelligent computer, lie in the (distant?) future. As indeed does machine translation of the subtleties of one natural language into another, such as from Dutch to Spanish and vice-versa.

In multi-lingual Europe, Dutch has to compete with other languages, and particularly with English, which is far and away the dominant language of the digital era. English plays a major role in the development and application of information and communication technology. To some extent this is because for some years English has had the necessary resources for research, such as large databanks of the spoken and written language. As early as 1991-1994, the British National Corpus (BNC) was set up: a huge collection of one hundred million British-English words, spoken and written in context. Taken together they provide a good idea of English as used by speakers of Standard English at the end of the twentieth century. The BNC, however, has not been considered appropriate for American English. There are so many differences in language usage between the two variants that a separate corpus for American English is now being compiled, the so-called ANC, American National Corpus. The design and the goals are similar to those of the BNC.

The BNC is also the inspiration for the Corpus Gesproken Nederlands (CGN: Corpus of Spoken Dutch), a large-scale Dutch-Flemish project that began in 1998. It runs for five years and it is expected that the complete corpus will be available by mid-2003. It will then be possible to apply to the Dutch language the technology developed for English.

The initiative came from Professor Willem Levelt, director of the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen. The project is financed by the Dutch and Flemish governments and the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research. There are two co-ordinating centres: Ghent for Flanders and Nijmegen for the Netherlands. A management committee, chaired by Professor Levelt, bears the final responsibility for this gigantic project. Dozens of experts from North and South are involved, as well as government officials and interested parties from trade and industry. All rights remain in the hands of the Dutch Language Union, an intergovernmental organisation set up by the Belgian and Dutch governments in 1980. Its purpose is to promote close co-operation between Flanders and the Netherlands in the fields of language and literature. Dutch-speakers must continue to play their full part in the concert of the European Union. It is in their own interest as well as that of Europe.