



A present day celebration of Pinkster in the United States

name, Dutch slaveholders were considered among the cruelest in the world, Cooper interpreted the treatment of slaves owned by Dutch-American families as a reflection of the tolerant and community-oriented Dutch mentality. The English refusal to consider slaves to be part of their own community, on the other hand, reflected the same problem that was at the heart of the Anti-Rent War: the evolution of the United States into a nation where citizens do not perceive themselves as brothers and sisters of one and the same community but rather act as self-ish individuals.

Cooper's *Satanstoe* stands, as such, at the beginning of what would become a tradition in American literature—from Mary Mapes Dodge's *Hans Brinker* (1865) to Russell Shorto's *Amsterdam* (2013)—to idealize the Netherlands as a nation characterized by a strong commitment to tolerance, diversity and solidarity and to use this image as a mirror for readers in the United States. Due to New York's Dutch heritage, this strategy did not simply have a comparative value but rather served as a vision of what America could have been. No other Dutch tradition better represented this utopian vision of a harmonious society than New York's Pinkster festival.

JEROEN DEWULF

Language

A Biography of the Dutch Language

In the introduction to his new history of the Dutch language Roland Willemyns boasts that his is the first such history written in English. A few pages later he corrects himself, however, and acknowledges the publication of Bruce Donaldson's *Dutch. A linguistic history of Holland and Belgium* (1983) exactly thirty years earlier. This contradiction is a rare hiccup in an otherwise excellent book. Actually, Willemyns is full of admiration for Donaldson's work, just as he is for the Frenchman Brachin's *La language néerlandaise* (1977) and its English translation by Paul Vincent (1985). Why have we had to wait thirty years for a new linguistic history of Dutch in English? Lack of expertise amongst Anglo-Saxon *neerlandici* or, more likely, lack of time? Reluctant publishers? A combination of these? Whatever it may be, the need for an updated history of Dutch has been keenly felt in the Anglo-Saxon world of Dutch Studies since Donaldson went out of print. But it is not just for that reason that the appearance of Willemyns' book is a cause for celebration.

A great deal has changed over the last thirty years, not only in the Dutch language itself, but also in our knowledge of its history. Yet Willemyns goes much further than charting that history in all its facets: he also sketches a contemporary portrait of the language and discusses possible scenarios for its future development. In all this, his angle is clear: "The story of Dutch is predominantly a story of language contact and conflict." The Dutch standard language emerged through contact between and with other languages, and contact with other languages has always influenced it. Inherent in that contact is conflict, which remains a characteristic of Dutch today. This thread is the recurring theme of Willemyns' linguistic history of Dutch, and what emerges is a sympathetic portrait, without value judgements, of a language that continues to develop.

Contact and conflict are even reflected in the names for Dutch through the ages and in other languages. The first chapter is about these names,

including the interesting English word *Dutch* itself. It is also about the geography of the language and its border with the surrounding languages: German and Frisian, and especially French. This is followed by five historical chapters covering, respectively, the precursors and contemporaries of Old Dutch (or Old Low Franconian, up to 1100), Middle Dutch (1100-1500), Early Modern Dutch (1500-1800), the nineteenth century and the twentieth century. The next two chapters investigate the colonial traces of Dutch and the history of Afrikaans. Willemyns concludes his book with a careful and measured reflection on the future of Dutch in the 21st century in the light of a number of recent developments.

The five historical chapters do not follow a set pattern, but allow their structure and focus to be determined by the matters in hand. Thus, the chapter on Middle Dutch stresses literary production in the context of the first careful steps towards a standard language, whereas the Early Modern Dutch chapter tells us about the first grammars and dictionaries that appeared in the 16th century. Sometimes the focus is on the north, at other times on the south, for example the steps towards further standardisation in the Dutch Republic and the 19th-century emancipation of Flanders. Such a balance between the Netherlands and Flanders is often absent from more superficial descriptions of Dutch. This is very helpful for students of Dutch outside the Low Countries who are often unaware of the wider context of the language, including the fact that it is not just spoken in Holland. And Willemyns clearly has these students in mind, given his criteria for the selection of his material. Not only does he want to give the best possible description of the development of modern Dutch, but he also wants to highlight those aspects of Dutch that are most interesting “for non-native speakers having learned Dutch as a foreign language and for other foreigners taking an interest in Dutch”.

In over 40 years of research into the history of Dutch, Willemyns has studied many of its aspects, but perhaps not so much the colonial heritage of the language. Nevertheless he rightly dedicates

two chapters to it, but they necessarily depend more than other chapters on the work of other scholars. Sometimes this results in a noticeably different, more noncommittal tone in these chapters, whereas elsewhere he tells a more inspired story and readily sounds a critical note. One example: the comment that “Creoles have generally been regarded as degenerate variants” begs for more discussion of the concept of Creole languages, and this would also have provided an opportunity in the penultimate chapter to investigate the extent to which Afrikaans can be called a Creole. However, Willemyns’ inspiration is back in full flight in the final chapter where he discusses the concepts *Poldernederlands* and *Verkavelingsvlaams*. The former refers to changes in the pronunciation of standard Northern Dutch, especially widening of the diphthongs /—i/ (written <ij> or <ei>), /œy/ (written <ui>) and /—u/ (written <ou> or <au>). The latter, which is also known as *Schoon Vlaams* or *Tussentaal*, refers to colloquial speech in Flanders that takes an intermediary position between standard Dutch and dialects (hence the label *tussentaal*, ‘in-between language’). It is characterised by a wider range of features than is *Poldernederlands* in the Netherlands, including pronunciation, morphology, lexis and syntax. Willemyns subjects these concepts, which are seen by some people as two completely new, divergent varieties of standard Dutch, to deservedly critical examination.

Oxford University Press, Willemyns’ publisher, has recently also published two linguistic histories of German: Ruth Sanders’ *German. Biography of a Language* (2010) and Joe Salmons’ *A History of German* (2012). This calls for a comparison, not least because of the almost identical titles of Sanders and Willemyns. However, Willemyns’ book is much better and much more balanced than Sanders’. On the other side of the comparison, Willemyns’ focus is explicitly on external linguistic history, whereas Salmons concentrates on internal linguistic history. The two books do not refer to each other, but they should. After all, Dutch and German have a large part of their history in common and Salmons

therefore provides excellent insights into the internal linguistic history of Dutch. Moreover, many Anglo-Saxon students of Dutch tend to learn the language after they have already acquired German. For that reason it is to be hoped that Oxford University Press, unlike Donaldson's publisher in the 1980s, will soon allow a second edition of Willemyns' book to appear which can refer to Salmons. That would also provide an opportunity for a number of editorial improvements, for example in the use of English tenses. A number of maps and illustrations are not clear enough (e.g. on p. 95, where the difference between the Spanish Netherlands and the Dutch Republic has got lost), require an English version (e.g. the legend of the table on p. 136 is in German), and/or need an acknowledgement. An extensive list of recommended websites would be a further improvement.

Despite such imperfections, *Dutch. Biography of a Language* brilliantly closes a 30-year gap. It is required reading for students of Dutch not just in Anglophone countries but all over the world, even in Flanders and the Netherlands.

ROEL VISMANS

ROLAND WILLEMYS. *Dutch. Biography of a Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. ISBN 9780199858712. 289 pp.

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Cees Nootboom as Nomadic Writer

For a British scholar to have produced a major monograph on a prominent, internationally known Dutch writer would be a coup in itself. However, Jane Fenoulhet's ambitions extend much wider than the establishment of Cees Nootboom's 'national canonical status'. (As is well known, until comparatively recently Nootboom's critical acceptance in the Low Countries lagged behind international recognition, notably in Germany.)

What this book seeks to do, and does with admirable clarity, is examine the 'transnational nature' of Nootboom's literary presence. The key concept of 'nomadism' is defined with reference to such literary and sociological theorists as Gilles Deleuze, Rosi Braidotti and Michael Cronin. Focus is on the increasing porousness of national literatures and the role of translation in cross-border transfer.

Part 1 of the text concludes with the key chapter 'Nomadic Subjectivity and Identity, Or Cees Nootboom and Dutchness'. It includes a wide-ranging contextualisation of the author's position as a national outsider, a condensed biography and a brief discussion of the autodidacticism he shares with his contemporaries Mulisch and Claus. Fenoulhet writes of her own approach to Nootboom: 'I portray him as fundamentally nomadic with a multiple, shifting identity, emphasising the effect of his extreme mobility on his subjectivity – his sense of himself and his sensibilities.' A little later he is characterised as being 'without a trace of nationalistic pride' and adopting 'a firmly cosmopolitan position'.

In Part 2 the major components of the oeuvre are surveyed. In particular, the somewhat neglected poetry is reinstated at the core of his writing, as representing a 'home base' in language. Nootboom's consistent production of verse from the 1950s on is given the attention it deserves. Here, though, one is struck by the absence of any mention of Nootboom's predecessor Jan Jacob Slauerhoff (1898-1936), surely the archetypical