



## REDACTIONEEL

Beste lezer,

Voor u ligt het derde en laatste nummer van de 36e jaargang van *Historisch Tijdschrift Aanzet*. Dit nummer is online tot stand gekomen, maar zal als eerste nummer in bijna anderhalf jaar weer te vinden zijn op de rekken van de Drift. We hopen dan ook dat de gevarieerde inhoud een welkom aanvulling op of afleiding van de startende colleges biedt. Laat dit nummer verder een aanmoediging zijn voor alle geschiedenisstudenten, van eerstejaars- tot MA-studenten, om ons essays en opiniestukken toe te sturen voor publicatie. Voor en door jullie vormen wij de *Aanzet!*

Het nummer wordt geopend door Stuart Duncan, die in zijn artikel een kritische beschouwing van het begrip ‘Afropolitanisme’ biedt, waarbij hij onder andere kijkt naar globalisering en de ontwikkeling van het Afrikaanse zelfbeeld. Het tweede artikel, geschreven door Dimitris Mitakos, richt zich op de wijze waarop het publieke debat over de islamitische hoofdbedekking in het Verenigd Koninkrijk beïnvloed wordt door het kolonialistische verleden van het land.

Robin Schurink blijft op het Britse eiland en onderzoekt in het derde artikel de achtergrond van de Commonwealth Immigration Act die in 1962 werd ingevoerd. Hij argumenteert dat de onderbouwing hiervoor niet zo zeer economisch van aard was, maar eerder sociaal en gebaseerd was op onjuiste, discriminerende vooroordelen. In het laatste artikel analyseert Samantha

Sink archeologische overblijfselen en grafresten uit Atheense waterputten om antieke Griekse rituelen voor perinataal overleden kinderen bloot te leggen.

De uiteenlopende onderwerpen zijn voortgezet in de rubrieken. In de Beeldspraak bespreekt eerstejaarsstudent Aoife Tilleman een tabakszakje uit het Museum Volkenkunde in het kader van globalisering. Het interview met de recentelijk gepensioneerde UU-docent Maarten Prak leert ons meer over zijn passie voor het poldermodel en de impact hiervan op de hedendaagse maatschappij. Omar Bugter en Corine Gerritsen gaan in de Hoe Geschiedenis Jij in op de historische waarde van videogames. Onze nieuwe opinierubriek de Inzet wordt afgetrapt door Roald Bakker die kritisch reflecteert op het slavernijverleden in het Nederlandse geschiedenisonderwijs. Tot slot bevat het nummer een drietal recensies, over boeken van Rutger Bregman en Tom Buijtendorp, en de Netflix-film *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*.

Veel leesplezier!

Namens de redactie,

Fabienne Maraite  
Wieger Lagerveld  
*Hoofdredacteurs*

## EDITORIAL

Dear reader,

This is the third and final edition of the 36th volume of the *Historisch Tijdschrift Aanzet*. Although the edition was made online, it will be the first in nearly one and a half years to be found on the bookshelves of the Drift. We hope that the vast variety of themes in this edition are a welcomed addition to, or diversion of, the starting lectures. Furthermore, let this edition be an encouragement to all history students, from first years to MA-students, to send us essays and opinion pieces to publish. For you, and because of you, we make the *Aanzet!*

Stuart Duncan launches the edition by introducing and offering a critical reflection of the concept ‘Afropolitanism’ in his article. He then discusses its intellectual foundations and the ramifications the concept has on the way Africans perceive themselves. The second article, written by Dimitris Matakos, centers around the way the colonial past of the United Kingdom influenced public discourse about the Islamic veil.

The research into British politics and public discourse continues as Robin Schurink researches the background of the Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962 in the third article. He argues that the foundation for this law was not as much economic in nature, but rather social and was formed by inaccurate, discriminatory prejudices. In the final article, Samantha Sink investigates archaeological and funerary remains from Athenian wells and how they reveal

ancient Greek rituals for perinatal children.

This wide range of subjects continues into the rubrics. In the Beeldspraak, first year student Aoife Tillemen discusses a tobacco pouch from the Museum Volkenkunde in the framework of globalisation. Recently retired UU-professor Maarten Prak talks about his passion for the polder model and the impact of this model on contemporary society. Omar Bugter and Corrine Gerritsen analyse the historical value of videogames in the *Hoe Geschiedenis Jij*. Our new opinion rubric, the Inzet, is started by Roald Bakker, who reflects critically on the transatlantic slave trade in the Dutch history curriculum. Finally, the edition contains three reviews, on books by Rutger Bregman and Tom Buijtendorp, and the Netflix-movie *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*.

Have fun reading!

On behalf of the editorial board,

Fabienne Maraite  
Wieger Lagerveld  
*Editors-in-chief*



# U H S K

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Willem Roelofs, *Polderlandschap met windmolen bij Abcoude*, ca. 1870.  
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Wieger Lagerveld en Fabienne Maraite

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# Afropolitanism: A Case of Coconuts?



Fig. 1. Source: Vladimir Yelizarov on Unsplash.

## **Stuart Duncan**

In this article, Stuart Duncan introduces the concept of Afropolitanism and discusses its intellectual foundations and the ramifications the concept has on the way Africans perceive themselves. Relying on thinkers such as Achille Mbembe, Duncan explores the intellectual roots of Afropolitanism as well as its real world development, emerging in a globalised world relying on social media and the internet. The concept is not without its critics and the purpose of this paper is to highlight those arguments from authors who argue that the concept does not reflect the experiences of the majority of Africans.

Since Afropolitanism's take-off in the mid-2000s there has been fierce debate as to how applicable and inclusive the term really is for Africans. Following Taiye Selasi's essay "Bye-Bye Babar" and its adoption by Achille Mbembe, the term has gained traction in the mainstream and cropped up in academic and public debates. For Mbembe the term describes "an Afro-cosmopolitan ethos of transcending national differences in order to forge multiracial communities".<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Selasi uses the term to describe an affluent and mobile generation of the African diaspora. Afropolitanism, therefore, presents an Africa Rising narrative - one that counters Afropessimism, the idea that the African continent and its populace are hopelessly held hostage by the past, trapped in a cycle of underdevelopment and imprisoned by corruption.<sup>2</sup> However, the more positive and cosmopolitan narratives that have emerged in recent years are embedded with problematic tropes.

The tongue-in-cheek title highlights the anxieties at the heart of this debate. An African who is described as a "coconut" is someone who conforms to White/Western culture at the expense of their ancestral culture. The idea here is that although they are brown on the

outside, like a coconut, they are white on the inside. Indeed, the very structure of the term Afropolitanism speaks to a larger issue of the African's place in the world. The very need to qualify one's cosmopolitanism portrays the sense of non-belonging in a Western-dominated world. For example, you would never hear of a Europolian or an Ameropolitan. Afropolitanism then consists of an 'African lite' - someone with a toned-down 'Africanness' that is palatable to the Global North; an African without the "unhealthy" or "intoxicating" baggage of Africa.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, this paper will consider to what extent Afropolitanism conforms to a Western narrative rather than the complicated narrative it seeks to promote. Is it simply a case of "black acting white," a case of Afropean wanting, or is it a practical philosophy for Africa – one that leaves Afrocentrism and Pan-Africanism to the annals of history?

The following analysis outlines and traces the developments and conceptualisations of Afropolitanism in the years since its take off as a cultural buzzword. The question of what Afropolitanism is and who can claim to be Afropolitan is important. Achille Mbembe, Taiye Selasi and Sarah Balakrishnan's arguments will form the foundations of the term. These scholars will then be contrasted with critiques raised by Emma Dabiri, Grace Musila and Chielozona Eze. It will become apparent that although these scholars implement the term "Afropolitan" and utilise a similar vocabulary to describe the Afropolitan, the

1 Sarah Balakrishnan, "Afropolitanism and the End of Black Nationalism," in *Routledge International Handbook of Cosmopolitanism Studies*, ed. Gerard Delanty (New York: Routledge, 2018), 575.

2 Jennifer Wawrzinek and J. K. S. Makokha, *Negotiating Afropolitanism: Essays on Borders and Spaces in Contemporary African Literature and Folklore* (Amsterdam, Netherlands, The Brill, 2011), 9, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uunl/detail.action?docID=617746>.

3 Grace A. Musila, "Part-Time Africans, Euro-politans and 'Africa Lite,'" *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 28, no. 1 (2016): 110.

conceptions of the term differ drastically. Nevertheless, these constructions create a narrative that seeks to describe African modernity, one that jettisons an essential “Africanness,” to dissolve “Africa” into the world.<sup>4</sup>

### What is Afropolitanism?

Afropolitanism is a neologism combining African and cosmopolitan. It transcends national differences and embraces multiracial communities. Afropolitanism is the reference to the pluralism of African cultures in one geographical space. Mbembe states that Afropolitanism is an “interweaving of here and there, the presence of the elsewhere in the here and vice versa [...] It is a capacity to recognize oneself in the face of another, to domesticate the unfamiliar, to work with all manners of contradictions”.<sup>5</sup> It is through this description of Africa’s worldly entanglements, as well as an ethic against preserving “native” identities over diversity, that Afropolitanism challenges the dominant politico-intellectual paradigms which have characterised African emancipatory discourse. Since the 17th century, a central question of Black emancipatory thought has concentrated on the connection of Blackness to Africa. Until recently, Afro-liberation campaigns had upheld a politics of reclamation that viewed re-embracing Africa to be

foundational to Black resistance. These struggles took many forms in the 20th century; among them Garveyism, *Negritude*, Pan-Africanism, and Afro-centrism. Nativism pulsated heavily within the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) in South Africa, with Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe claiming South Africa is for Africans, as opposed to the African National Congress (ANC) that claimed South Africa is for all.<sup>6</sup> Afropolitanism questions these anti-colonial nationalisms that define African identities along racial lines and racial boundaries.<sup>7</sup> Afropolitanism, therefore, describes the modern African as a hybrid product of globalisation, recognising the complicated multiple origins of those who describe themselves as “African”. In contrast to Black nationalisms which claim Africa is for Africans, and which have sustained epistemic violence in postcolonial Africa because their premise is the exclusion of the other, Afropolitanism argues that solidarity should no longer be defined by blood and soil.<sup>8</sup> In other words, one’s race no longer becomes the primary determinant of an African identity. Instead, new ways of being African in a globalised world are conceived through Afropolitanism.

### The Afropolitan Debate: A Question of Space

Afropolitanism is a conceptual space in

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4 Sarah Balakrishnan, “The Afropolitan Idea: New Perspectives on Cosmopolitanism in African Studies,” *History Compass* 15, no. 2 (2017): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12362>.

5 Achille Mbembe, “Afropolitanism,” in: *Africa Remix: Contemporary Art of a Continent*, ed. Simon Njami (Jacana Media, 2007), 28.

6 Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, ‘Africa for Africans or Africa for “Natives” Only? “New Nationalism” and Nativism in Zimbabwe and South Africa’, *Africa Spectrum* 44, no. 1 (2009): 61–78.

7 Mbembe, “Afropolitanism,” 26.

8 Chielozona Eze, “We, Afropolitans,” *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 28, no. 1 (2016): 116.

which African heritage is both interrogated and understood with the tools and nuances of modern-day globalisation.<sup>9</sup> Importantly, the Afropolitan debate is firmly rooted within the internet. Like the term itself, it transcends the “traditional zone” of academic interrogation - that is, universities and scholarly publishing houses. Afropolitanism instead finds its voice in atypical spaces, generating debates in cultural magazines, fanzines, cultural reviews and importantly through virtual discussions on blog posts. It is this space of the ‘Afropolitan archive’ that reflects the kind of Africa being invoked through the deployment of the term Afropolitan.<sup>10</sup> As Afropolitanism’s archive is largely situated on the internet, those that can claim to be Afropolitan are those with access. Although Afropolitanism is finding a voice through online literary forms in Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa, there is still a limit to its cross-continental reach. During the Zimbabwean International Book Fair Indaba that discussed “The Book in the Digital Era”, it was noted that only about 1 million Zimbabweans (in a population of about 13 million) have access to the internet. Of those who are connected, most use it primarily for email and Facebook.<sup>11</sup> Therefo-

re, access to the term through its online forums is limited to a smaller subset of these privileged few. However, even those who are privileged enough to have greater access to the digital world find it challenging to identify and find Afropolitan archives.

## Importantly, the Afropolitan debate is firmly rooted within the internet.

### Who is Afropolitan?

It is important to note from the outset that Afropolitanism, in its traditional form, is arguably a metropolitan concept of self-representation and black agency, but only amongst a small percentage of the intellectual, creative, artistic and sometimes professional sections of a black metropolitan population that is either exiled, migrant or diasporic.<sup>12</sup> These limitations of who is Afropolitan are raised in Selasi’s description of them. For her, the term describes a generation of the African diaspora whose parents left the continent in the 1960s and 1970s. These Afropolitans consequently grew up between several global metropolises, speaking multiple languages, engaging in both African and non-African cultures. Selasi’s description of the Afropolitan suggests a privi-

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9 Minna Salami, “32 Views on Afropolitanism,” *MsAfropolitan* (blog), October 7, 2015, <https://www.msafropolitan.com/2015/10/my-views-on-afropolitanism.html>.

10 Clive Gabay, *Imagining Africa: Whiteness and the Western Gaze* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 188, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108652582>.

11 Stephanie Bosch Santana, “Exorcizing Afropolitanism: Binyavanga Wainaina Explains Why ‘I Am a Pan-Africanist, Not an

Afropolitan’ at ASAUK 2012,” *Africa in Words* (blog), February 8, 2013, <https://africainwords.com/2013/02/08/exorcizing-afropolitanism-binyavanga-wainaina-explains-why-i-am-a-pan-africanist-not-an-afropolitan-at-asauk-2012/>.

12 Amatoritsero Ede, “The Politics of Afropolitanism,” *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 28, no. 1 (2016): 89.

leged and affluent grouping of Africans. Selasi gives a hint of this prosperity and access in her representation of the Afropolitan; speaking as an Afropolitan herself, she describes the Afropolitan in the following way:

Like so many African young people working and living in cities around the globe, they belong to no single geography, but feel at home in many [...] The newest generation of African emigrants, coming soon, or collected already at a law firm/chem lab/jazz lounge near you. You'll know us by our funny blend of London fashion, New York jargon, African ethics, and academic successes [...] We are Afropolitans: not citizens, but Africans of the world [...] What distinguishes this lot and its like (in the West and at home) is a willingness to complicate Africa... Rather than essentialising the geographical entity, we seek to comprehend the cultural complexity; to honour the intellectual and spiritual legacy; and to sustain our parents' cultures.<sup>13</sup>

In the above description, it is clear that these Africans are being measured against a Western standard, or are tainted by a Western worldview. It appears that to be an Afropolitan you need to engage in the same pastimes that one could enjoy in the Western world. Afropolitanism, therefore, becomes an "Instagram-friendly Africa" – with African cities replicating versions of American or European cities that can be found on the continent. But why does Lagos, Johannesburg, Nairobi or any other cosmopolitan city in Africa



Fig. 2. Source: Aude-Andre Saturnio on Unsplash.

need to replicate those in the West? It is because the Afropolitan falls into age-old tropes of seeing Africa as secondary to the West. This is exhibited through the Afropolitan's individual self-empowerment that ideologically mutates into an ironic and symbolic collective black self-negation, touted as a celebration of cultural hybridity and transnationalism.<sup>14</sup> These subtleties of Afropolitanism pander to the White Metropolitan Gaze because its audience is to be found there.

Through Afropolitanism, Africa has emerged as a site where transnational and global similarities may be found, but only those that conform to, and confirm, the universality and vitality of White social codes concerning individuality and the commodification of creativity. In a much-shared piece from 2012, "Young, urban and culturally savvy: Meet the Afropolitans", journalist Mark Tutton proclaimed that "Afropo-

<sup>13</sup> Taiye Selasi, "Bye-Bye Barbar," *Callaloo* 36, no. 3 (2013): 528.

<sup>14</sup> Ede, "The Politics of Afropolitanism," 90.

litanism implies a certain type of cool”, where “coolness” becomes a recurring motif in how this Afropolitan moment is commodified for majoritarian Western audiences.<sup>15</sup> These kinds of representations, channeled through a variety of fashion features, food, film and literature festivals – and not the reflexive, self-interrogating narratives of authors and popular culture bloggers, are what enters the mainstream of a metropolitan White discourse of Afropolitanism in the West. One needs only look at the following pronouncement from Vogue magazine that “Chic Afropolitan shoppers are never too far from their must-have handbags”, to understand how Afropolitanism has been tainted by consumerism.<sup>16</sup> The Afropolitan, then, at least in Selasi’s initial conception, is anyone with a stake to an African identity who embraces Western consumerism with an African flair.

### A new type of Afropolitan?

Afropolitanism is largely shaped by people who have time for ideological ruminations and cultural expression. People who are struggling for food, or fleeing wars, or struggling with other disabling structures, rarely have the luxury to partake or even lay claim to an Afropolitan identity.<sup>17</sup> Such conceptions of Afropolitanism have led many to criticise it for being out-of-touch with the reality of lived experiences for the majority of people living in Africa. In “The Afropolitan Must Go,” Marta

Tveit questions the term, asking: “What about the non-affluent African diaspora? What about hideously brown-skinned people?”<sup>18</sup> To her, Afropolitans are exclusive, elitist and self-aggrandizing. Through Selasi’s Afropolitan lens “travel is easy” and “people are fluid”.<sup>19</sup> However, despite the international lifestyle and globe-trotting nature of the Afropolitan, most Africans are rendered immobile in a contemporary world that works very hard to keep them in the African continent.<sup>20</sup> The Afropolitan may be the African rising; however, in the Mediterranean, despite being highly mobile and multicultural, Africans are drowning. Could these marginalised peoples be considered Afropolitan?

### Afropolitanism envisioned the positive future of Africa in a globalized world.

Unlike Selasi, who focuses on the global African, Mbembe seeks to foreground the world in Africa and how this has defined Africa’s belonging in the world over time.<sup>21</sup> In Mbembe’s presentation of the term, the Afropolitan does not need to be a part of the African elite; migrants between rural and urban centres *within* Africa can also be considered

18 Marta Tveit, “The Afropolitan Must Go,” *Africa is a Country* (blog), November 28, 2013, <https://africasacountry.com/2013/11/the-afropolitan-must-go>.

19 Bosch Santana, “Exorcizing Afropolitanism.”

20 Dabiri, “Why I Am (Still) Not an Afropolitan,” 106.

21 Gabay, *Imagining Africa*, 189-190.

15 Gabay, *Imagining Africa*, 200.

16 Ibid, 200.

17 Minna Salami, “32 Views on Afropolitanism.”

Afropolitan. These are people who, “due to their material exclusion, are rendered inadmissible to the clubs and ‘chem labs’ and, indeed, the territories of the West, but through their smartphones know about events happening in Europe or the USA sometimes before people living in those places do. These are people who live in and between worlds, but do not physically travel in the same way that the second, more elitist group do.”<sup>22</sup> For Simon Gikandi, it is the former who are potentially more interesting, while it is the latter who write and are written about. It is the former who offer a new narrative, whilst the latter simply rehash Western narratives. This reconceptualization of Afropolitanism, which includes the mobile masses within Africa, has the potential to shed its Western narrative.

### Conclusion

The analysis above has outlined the debates being raised around the appropriateness and applicability of Afropolitanism to the large majority of Africans on the continent and beyond. Traditionally, the Afropolitan represented an elite portion of the African population that conformed to Western worldviews. However, in recent years the term has been recast along the lines of Mbembe’s Afropolitan philosophy. It is through this update to Afropolitanism, that is more inclusive and sensitive to lived experiences of Africans and the diaspora, that the term can be rescued from a constant wanting to be modern in the Western sense of the word. This Afropolitan idea is emancipatory; claiming Africa as

the future while simultaneously letting go of its colonial past. The emphasis here of letting go of the colonial past is vital; this new configuration of the term challenges the appropriateness of measuring progress in Africa against Western standards.

With internet access becoming more widespread, the ability to claim an Afropolitan identity is increasing daily. As Eze states, “One does not need to have crossed geographical boundaries to be Afropolitan; one only needs to cross psychic boundaries erected by nativism, autochthony, heritage and other mythologies of authenticity.”<sup>23</sup> With the audience-driven debate finding a voice on online forums, the traditional (Western) standards of philosophical and scholarly discussion are upended – Africans can increasingly access and contribute to the narrative of their continent and these are the new Afropolitans. By offering a narrative that embraces diversity and the complicated history of Africa as a whole, Afropolitanism envisions the positive future of Africa in a globalized world. The term needs to be reconfigured to address the relevant critiques raised – lest it remain an elitist utopia that few can comprehend, let alone enter.

*Stuart Duncan is a third-year history student who specializes in Globalization and World Order. He is a Zimbabwean and through this link he has focused on African history and decolonisation. Throughout his studies he has been particularly drawn to postcolonial theories and the need to decolonise academia.*

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22 Ibid, 190.

23 Eze, “We, Afropolitans,” 117.

# Carrying Tobacco



Afb. 1: "Tabakszak," Online NVWM collection, Museum Volkenkunde, accessed January 14, 2021, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/653055>.

## **Aoife Tilleman**

In this Beeldspraak, Aoife Tilleman analyses a tobacco pouch from the Museum Volkenkunde. Tilleman uses the tobacco pouch as an example of a globalizing world, as she discusses how different cultures and influences can be traced back to this one tobacco pouch.

A world without tobacco is almost unthinkable, when nearly a fifth of the world's population uses it.<sup>1</sup> However, before Columbus' arrival in 1492, the tobacco plant grew and was used exclusively in the Americas. European

travelers of the sixteenth century have reported that at least fifty distinct native peoples used it, mostly for official or religious practices.<sup>2</sup>

A tobacco pouch dating back to the 1870's, currently residing in Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden, offers an interesting insight into the significance

1 "Tobacco," Newsroom, World Health Organization, last modified May 27, 2020, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/tobacco#:~:text=Over%2080%25%20of%20the%201.3,illness%20and%20death%20is%20heaviest>.

2 Peter C. Mancall, "Tales Tobacco Told in Sixteenth-Century Europe," *Environmental History* 9, no. 4 (2004): 651.

of tobacco for many native inhabitants of the Americas, and its role in Europe from the sixteenth century onwards.<sup>3</sup> It originates from the Northern Plains, which approximately covers Montana, Wyoming, North and South Dakota in the present-day United States of America, part of which is inhabited by the Yanktonai people to whom the pouch belongs.

Although many Native Americans have a centuries-long habit of using tobacco, the influence of European colonists has not escaped this pouch. This leads to a broader question of how this specific object represents globalization - the development of increasing connectivity between separate countries or peoples - which will be examined by contextualizing, describing, and analyzing this primary source.

### Analysis

The use of tobacco in early native societies appears versatile. Many Native Americans used tobacco mainly for religious practices, believing that they could communicate with their deities when burning or smoking tobacco. Archaeologists of North America have found pipes shaped like various animals and warriors, affirming that tobacco's religious importance was paramount. Tobacco was also often prescribed as medicine for those facing health issues. Even important events such as celebrations, peace treaties and consolidating alliances called for ceremonial smoking,

often done in groups.<sup>4</sup>

This copious amount of smoking and its great significance meant that carrying tobacco was also of utmost importance. Originally, the native peoples made pouches of small animals like otters and prairie dogs, decorated with quills, a precursor to the pouch residing in Museum Volkenkunde. Made from textile, leather, and quills, the pouch from earlier times has evolved from animal skin to newly developed materials, big enough to carry tobacco, a pipe, flint, and a piece of metal.<sup>5</sup>

### The use of tobacco in early native societies appears versatile.

Geometric or naturalistic shapes were popular choices for the decoration of tobacco pouches, much like the circle made of beads on this one. Europeans introduced glass beads to the native population, part of which preferred those over quills and incorporated glass beads into tobacco pouches. The fringes on the bottom of this pouch, held together by quills, were a way to distinguish someone's status; the pouches with two or more triangular scraps of leather attached to the bottom, declared their owner to be a special person within

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<sup>4</sup> Joseph C. Winter, "Introduction to the North American tobacco species," in *Tobacco Use by Native North Americans: Sacred Smoke and Silent Killer*, ed. Joseph C. Winter (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), 3-4.

<sup>5</sup> Museum Volkenkunde, "Tabakszak." ; "Ceremoniële pijp." Online NVWM collection, Museum Volkenkunde, accessed January 14, 2021, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/653055>.

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<sup>3</sup> "Tabakszak," Online NVWM collection, Museum Volkenkunde, accessed January 14, 2021, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/653055>.

their society.<sup>6</sup>

From 1850 onwards, carrying a tobacco pouch became a trend among native peoples of the Plains, going as far as almost everyone owning one, another example of its cultural and social significance. Women wore smaller pouches. Men usually attached them to their belt, unless there was something to be celebrated; in that case they put it on their left forearm or attached the pouch to the pipe to showcase it more prominently.<sup>7</sup>

The most interesting aspect of the pouch is the red fabric called “stroud”, which was either blue or red. The color red represented power for many Native Americans and was often used for important objects.<sup>8</sup> This signifies the major role of the tobacco pouch. The fabric was named “stroud” after the British city Stroud, which was the center of textile production at that time, though certainly not the only city that produced textile.<sup>9</sup> It was made of wool and was part of a great trade system, covering Britain, parts of Asia, and North America. Many natives preferred stroud textile to animal hide, because stroud fabric did not need as much maintenance, though both offered about the same level of protection.<sup>10</sup>

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6 Museum Volkenkunde, “Ceremoniële pijp.”

7 Museum Volkenkunde, “Ceremoniële pijp.”

8 Sue Giles, “Wrapping the World: British South West Trade Cloth Around the World,” *Journal of Museum Ethnography*, no. 17 (2005): 256.

9 Museum Volkenkunde, “Tabakszak.”

10 Giles, “Wrapping the World,” 256–58.

## Conclusion

The story of this tobacco pouch is fascinating when studying grand processes like globalization. It gives concrete evidence for a development that spans across great space and time, its story told in characteristics of a seemingly mundane object.

Tobacco pouches have existed for centuries, originally made from animal skin by the native inhabitants of the Americas. After the European colonization, glass beads often took the place of quills, and tobacco pouches became a trend among Native Americans. Stroud fabric from Britain replaced animal hide, because it was easier to manage.

The tobacco pouch from the Volkenkunde Museum is made of red stroud fabric, its color culturally significant to Native Americans and its fabric made across the world. It is decorated with both quills and glass beads, representing both the cultural history of tobacco pouches and additional materials brought along by the European colonizers.

In conclusion, this pouch represents globalization perfectly, not clearly. The true nature of globalization is complex more than it is clear, and this pouch represents globalization in all its complexity.

*Aoife Tilleman is a first year history student and a generalist (at least when it comes to history) so she loves to know a bit about everything. But she's mostly interested in world history and bigger themes, like globalization, that have existed throughout time, and countries outside of Europe.*

# Unveiling Orientalism

## Colonial Notions in British Public Discourse



Fig. 1: "Veiled woman". Source: mhrezaa on Unsplash, 2018, <https://unsplash.com/photos/pp6HQAE-T7rQ>.

### Dimitris Mitakos

In this article, Dimitris Mitakos analyses how public discourse about the Islamic veil in one of Britain's largest newspapers is affected by Britain's colonial past. By equating the Islamic veil as something un-Western and non-modern, women who wear it are often portrayed as rejecting British values and cultures. Mitakos discusses how the British colonial past has formed this portrayal and how Orientalist notions of the other are still present in modern day public discourse.

*Disclaimer: This article focuses on the language used by opponents of the Islamic veil in the United Kingdom. It is an analysis of colonial sentiments used in contemporary politics, and in no way*

*tries to make an argument on behalf of veiled Middle Eastern women. Aware of my western male privilege, I simply try to look at this in the broader scope of the decolonisation of thought.*

“A person wearing a garment or other object intended by the wearer as its primary purpose to obscure the face in a public place shall be guilty of an offence.”<sup>1</sup> This is the first point made in the “Face Coverings (Regulation) Bill 2010-2011” which was sponsored by British MP Philip Hollobone on the 25th of November 2010. Although this bill never made it to a second reading and thus was never really debated within the British parliament, it is just one example of a trend that has swept across Europe. Countries such as France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Italy and Spain all have banned some form of the Islamic veil. The bans include all sorts of veiling, but target veils such as the headscarf, the burqa and the niqab specifically. They range from local prohibitions to outright national outlawing of full body coverage veils.

An exception to this trend is the United Kingdom, which has not placed any national or local bans on the Islamic veil. And yet the United Kingdom does not disappoint when it comes to the debates surrounding the veil. Even though the public itself might not be entirely against any sort of veiling, there are certainly voices that express their discontent when faced with a veiled woman. These expressions of displeasure and disagreement with the act of veiling are quite evident in British public discussions. Even though they have not led to any legislative prohibitions, there is still merit in engaging in discourse analysis, and examining closely the arguments made against the Islamic veil within

the public sphere. The language used by some alludes to the fact that even though the years of colonising the world are over, imperial notions might still persist today, which indicates that the process of decolonisation is incomplete.

## How Britain perceives Muslim women has a very intricate past.

Therefore, this article aims to answer the question of whether outdated imperial perceptions of Muslim women still affect the public discourse surrounding the Islamic veil. In particular, how does the British colonial past affect contemporary public discourse when it comes to the Islamic veil, and more specifically the arguments against it? In order to answer this question, one must first indicate precisely what the arguments being deployed are. The focus lies on articles written for the *Times*, published between the 1990s and 2010s. The *Times* is a popular and widespread newspaper in the United Kingdom. It has politically varying affiliations, since it has endorsed different political parties for elections throughout the last century and therefore serves as a good source of varying opinions. For the sake of gaining a more accurate view of present day arguments and setting the focal point on current discourse, the most recent thirty decades have been picked for analysis.

How Britain perceives Muslim women has a very intricate past, a highlight of which are the British colonial efforts in the Middle East. The British, extremely successful at colonising the world,

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<sup>1</sup> Face Coverings (Regulation) Bill, House of Commons of the United Kingdom, session 2010-12.

entered the Middle East in the nineteenth century when the “sick man of Europe”, the Ottoman Empire, began a process of centralisation and came very close to losing control of its Eastern provinces.<sup>2</sup> In their attempt to answer what was promptly named the “Eastern Question” the British began their involvement initially as a diplomatic force that occasionally tried to balance out French meddling and the Ottoman strive to survive.<sup>3</sup> They extended their involvement in 1882 when they seized Egypt, gaining control of the jugular vein of transport to the eastern colonies, the Suez Canal.

It is during this time that what Edward Said, one of the founders of the academic field of Postcolonial Studies, calls “Orientalism” developed fully and a certain perception of the Orient was created. The British brought over academics whose job was to document life in the Middle East, and provide the people back home with information about its inhabitants.<sup>4</sup> This “tradition of colonial administrators, a formidable scholarly corpus and Oriental experts” is what one could call the production

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2 Stuart Laycock, *All the Countries We've Ever Invaded: And the Few We Never Got Round to* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: History Press, 2013), 2; Erik-Jan Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 137.

3 Ozan Ozavci, *Crossing the Mediterranean: The Eastern Question before the Nineteenth Century, Dangerous Gifts: Imperialism, Security and Civil Wars in the Levant, 1798-1864* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 11.

4 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, Penguin Classics (London: Penguin, 2003), 4.

machine of imperial knowledge.<sup>5</sup> This “machine” is the source of the British colonial perception of the Middle East and by extension Muslim women.

### Oppression and Subjugation

When discussing veiled women and the purpose of the Islamic veil, most of the arguments used against it focus on the fact that it is merely a tool used in order to oppress and subjugate women. This notion, that any sort of veil is oppressive, is quite prevalent in opinion pieces written for the *Times*. One example is an article published under the title “Still the World’s Outcasts”, referring to women who wear the Islamic veil. The article, written in 1992 by Matthew Parris, begins with asking the reader to imagine a traveller going to a foreign land, and witnessing the oppression of “leemafs”, an anagram for females. The reader does not need to put much effort into imagining this land, it already exists in the Middle East. And indeed, the sad “reality” of the veiled woman presented by Parris is that:

[they] don’t count. They do not make a noise. Usually, they lack even the confidence to complain. From birth, their subjection is so complete that they cannot imagine, and therefore cannot desire, a different life. So, we tell ourselves that they are content with their lot.<sup>6</sup>

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5 Ibid.

6 Matthew Parris, “Still the world’s outcasts.” *Times*, August 10, 1992, 10. The Times Digital Archive (accessed June 11, 2020). <https://link-gale-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/apps/doc/IF0501945309/TTDA?u=utrecht&sid=TTDA&xid=809abddc>.

There is a lot to unpack in these short but very telling sentences. First, the position of the woman herself is portrayed to be at the lowest of the low. They do not matter, and “they make no noise”, statements which further the argument that the veil erases the woman it covers. Second, the woman lacks the ability to express her discontent, implying that the article is doing it for her. That is then followed by a condemnation of not only the veil itself but the culture and religion that is behind it, figuratively and literally. The veiled woman has been subjugated and suppressed so much that not only can she not want or desire anything else, she even is “content with [her] lot”. Matthew Parris wrote a second article in 2005 titled “Never mind what the woman thinks, wearing a veil is offensive to me”, which contains many memorable quotes. According to him “whether or not she felt oppressed, the veil oppressed her. It should not be seen in the West”.<sup>7</sup> The narrative created by Parris and countless other opponents of the Islamic veil not only depicts it as a symbol of oppression, but also positions Westerners, and the British in particular as the defenders of the women it subjugates.<sup>8</sup>

When looking at the language used by

<sup>7</sup> Matthew Parris. “Never mind what the woman thinks, wearing a veil is offensive to me.” *Times*, 27 Aug. 2005. (accessed June 11, 2020) *The Times Digital Archive*, <https://link-gale-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/apps/doc/IF0502918967/TTDA?u=utrecht&sid=TT-DA&xid=f9f96284>.

<sup>8</sup> Lila Abu-Lughod, ‘Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others’, *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 3 (September 2002) 3, 787.



Fig. 2: ‘Fully veiled woman in Tehran’. Source: Fakurian Design on Unsplash, 2019, <https://unsplash.com/photos/TZkjisrfOw8>.

Parris, it is impossible not to think of Gustave Flaubert, the French orientalist who when talking about an Egyptian courtesan, Kuchuk Hanem, created “the model of the Oriental woman”, according to which “she never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence, or history”.<sup>9</sup> According to this model, the pressure to wear the veil does not come from the values of Muslim women, as she is ordered to wear it and not requested.<sup>10</sup> The woman in this case is a subaltern by Chakravorty Spivak’s definition. She is not only the subject of her coloniser but also the inferior of the men colonised. Her veil is to be torn away with complete disregard to her will by the British, just like Spi-

<sup>9</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 6.

<sup>10</sup> John E. Richardson, *(Mis)Representing Islam: The Racism and Rhetoric of British Broadsheet Newspapers* (John Benjamins Publishing, 2004), 92.

vak's example of the Indian woman who is pulled away from the pyre burning her dead husband by her coloniser because he does not understand her customs.<sup>11</sup>

The idea of "white men saving brown women from brown men" was established by an "androcentric colonial establishment committed to male dominance".<sup>12</sup> One could argue that the "white saviour" complex is not driven by a need to liberate oppressed women, but is rather a product of the colonial male gaze, which intended to break into and "penetrate" the walls of the fictional oriental harem.<sup>13</sup> The coloniser, so accustomed to being able to view everyone through his position of power, is angered when faced with a veiled woman, for she expresses her agency in the most obvious way: denying him her image.

The most integral part of this discourse analysis is not examining what drives the fight against the Islamic veil, but rather how it is justified. The claim that the veil is oppressive is made from a position of power. It is based on Orientalist perceptions and notions of Middle Eastern cultures produced in a period when Britain had to subjugate its colonial territories. The claim is passed

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11 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. *Can the subaltern speak?* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988).

12 Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* and Leila Ahmed, 'The Discourse Of The Veil', in: *Women and Gender in Islam, Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (Yale University Press, 1992), 145.

13 Malek Alloula et al, 'Women's Prisons', in: *The Colonial Harem*, NED-New edition, vol. 21 (University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 17–26.

off as absolute knowledge, to the point where no matter what the subaltern women themselves identify the veil with, the coloniser knows best.<sup>14</sup> The second article written by Parris mentioned earlier is a clear example of this.<sup>15</sup> The opponent arguing against the Islamic veil claims to know its nature, as simply oppressive. Because he is the one that defines it as such, that is the only relevant interpretation of it. And thus the veil loses any other function it has, without even taking into consideration the agency of the women wearing it today. As Said's model dictates, it is the knowledge constructed by the relation of power that produces these claims, and it is the acquisition of this knowledge that justifies them.<sup>16</sup>

### Integration and the British Identity

Deploying colonial notions of the Orient and making clear use of the model of the oppressed Middle Eastern woman serves a much larger purpose than just accommodating the colonial male gaze. The opponents of the Islamic veil draw connections between the veil and the religion of Islam. Although it is a cultural practice present in all major religions in the Middle East, the veil is tightly associated with religious fundamentalism. An opinion piece written by Anthony Browne in 2004 criticised the government and the then Mayor of London for backing a conference that supported the Islamic veil, which was organised by the Assembly

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14 Parris, "Never mind".

15 Ibid.

16 Said, *Orientalism*, 40.

for the Protection of the Hijab.<sup>17</sup> The issue here was not the supporting of the hijab itself but that the guest of honour was a known radical Islamicist. And yet, drawing subtle parallel lines between those two is very common, as shown in the article written by Matthew Syed, in which he says “they [extremists] see the suppression of women as a moral imperative”.<sup>18</sup> This sort of framing of the veil relates to the bigger argument made here. Being British in these cases is defined as a static, given and steadfast culture that cannot be redefined.<sup>19</sup> The veil’s symbolism is taken and altered, transformed to fit the narrative drawn of a movement against modernity, western ideals and therefore Britain.

## Orientalist notions are weaponised within the context of ‘othering’.

Orientalism as an ideological structure functions as a “defining” mechanism.

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17 Anthony Browne, “Anti-Jewish? Anti-gay? Welcome to Britain.” *Times*, July 6, 2004,  
18. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed June 15, 2020). <https://link-gale-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/apps/doc/IF0502684434/TTDA?u=utrecht&sid=TTDA&xid=72da9073>.

18 Matthew Syed, “Muslims must tackle the misogyny in their midst.” *Times*, August 29, 2014, 27. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed June 12, 2020). <https://link-gale-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/apps/doc/JSAUCE399030441/TTDA?u=utrecht&sid=TTDA&xid=f6e251dc>

19 J. W. Duyvendak, M. Hurenkamp, and E. Tonkens, *Culturalization of Citizenship in the Netherlands* (New Brunswick, NJ:Rutgers University Press, 2010).

With the production of knowledge through power comes the production of an identity, in this case of the Orient. But in order to create an identity, one needs to first compare it to oneself. It is the juxtaposition between the “familiar” and the “strange”, the British and the Orient, that leads to the second argument made against the veil. This argument claims that the veil separates Muslim women from the rest of the British and at the same time stops them from fully integrating or assimilating. This is evident in a speech given by Lord Tebbit against multiculturalism in 1997, during which he said “youngsters of all races born here should be taught that British history is their history, or they will forever be foreigners holding British passports and this kingdom will become a Yugoslavia”, alluring to the notion that the Muslim minority of Bosnia and their refusal to convert was what lead to the humanitarian crisis.<sup>20</sup>

Wearing the veil is inherently a symbol of division, since it is oppressive and thus has no place in British society. One does not need to ask the opponents of the veil what British identity is, all it takes is to read how they describe the veil. If it is oppressive, backwards and exclusively a Muslim practice, then not wearing one makes one free, “evolved” and British. Therefore, if a woman in Britain wears one, she must be rejecting the British identity, is thus dangerous to

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20 Magnus Linklater, “Who are the true Brits?” *Times*, October 9, 1997, 20. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed June 15, 2020). <https://link-gale-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/apps/doc/IF0500858763/TTDA?u=utrecht&sid=TTDA&xid=68d7db9b>

British society and should be prohibited from wearing it.

In addition, by equating it with religious fundamentalism, while also relating it to the overall oppression of women, wearing a veil is evidently presented as a threat. The added insecurity that the veil signifies a double allegiance between two identities, being British on the one hand and Muslim on the other, “a subjugation of women to a non-national” patriarchy, adds to it being presented as a threat.<sup>21</sup> This leads to the process of “othering”, which uses “the other”, in this case a notion of the “Occident” to define the “in-group” or more precisely what it means to be “we”. Being British means you do not wear a veil, are not Muslim and you are not the close descendant of Muslim immigrants.<sup>22</sup> This process shows that Orientalist notions are weaponised within the context of “othering” in order to create a rigid version of the British identity to which one only conforms if they buy in to the sense of insecurity this narrative of the veil creates.

## Conclusion

The Islamic veil symbolises for some the oppression of women and the complete erasing of their rights. Although valid in some areas where the veil might be imposed by law, in most cases it is a

notion heavily influenced by imperialist mythmaking. In order to subjugate the Middle East, the British made use of Orientalism and produced notions such as the oppressive notion of the veil from their position of power as colonisers. The veil is also presented as a threat to the coherence of British society, since it implies that the woman wearing it does not adhere to the social rules set in place by tradition, and has a second allegiance to her religion.

By characterising wearing a veil as inherently opposite to the West, and at the same time defining the West itself, they place the oriental woman in the position of subaltern, and therefore with no will. This is still very apparent in the language used by contemporary politicians and political commentators, who not only claim that the veiled woman cannot choose to conceal herself, but also allude to the orientalist frustration of not being able to view behind the veil and into the culture or woman that is being subjugated. It is in this specific way that the British colonial past affects public discourse. Although it is quite clear that Muslim women have agency, most opponents of the veil default to the colonial habits of disregarding them completely, and branding the veil as divisive.

*Dimitris Mitakos is currently doing his History BA specialised in Cultural History and has a strong interest in postcolonialism and the region of the Middle East. He has written several papers related to Orientalism, ‘othering’ and the Middle East. He also has focused on the agency and effect of colonised people.*

<sup>21</sup> Ghassan Hage, *White Nation: fantasies of white supremacy in a multicultural society*. (Annandale, Australia: Pluto Press, 1998), 251.

<sup>22</sup> Maykel Verkuyten, “Justifying Discrimination against Muslim Immigrants: Out-Group Ideology and the Five-Step Social Identity Model” *British Journal of Social Psychology* 52, no. 2 (2013): 345–60.

# Eenzijdig is de representatie van het slavernijverleden op school al lang niet meer

**Roald Bakker**

In the past 25 years, the curriculum on the Dutch transatlantic slave trade has been subject to revision. Yet, post-colonial criticism persists. To what extent is this just? In this article, Roald Bakker argues that education on the slave trade is no longer taught from a colonial perspective and that an increasing number of perspectives are taken into consideration. Despite this development, the curriculum still lacks satisfactory post-colonial insights in the representation of the slave trade.

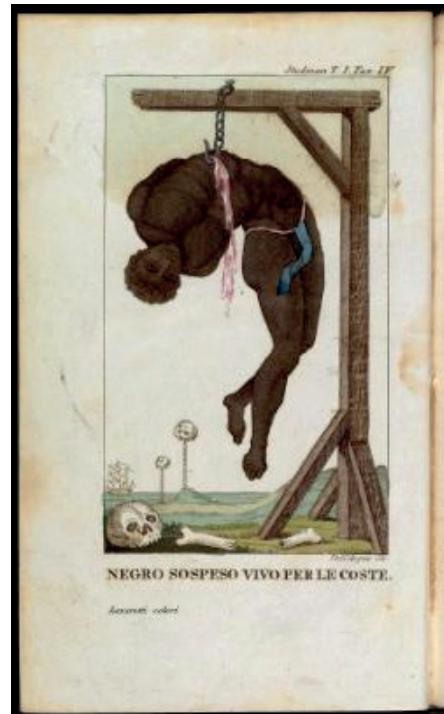
Het trans-Atlantische slavernijverleden van Nederland is een betwiste geschiedenis. Dat is bijvoorbeeld te zien in de representatie van het trans-Atlantische slavernijverleden in het geschiedenisonderwijs in het voortgezet onderwijs. Al sinds de eeuwwisseling spreken postkoloniale activisten en ‘niet-activisten’, zoals studenten, docenten en uitgevers, zich uit voor een meer inclusieve behandeling van het slavernijverleden in het geschiedenisonderwijs. Volgens deze activisten speelt het onderwijs, en daarmee schoolboeken, een belangrijke rol in de erkenning en het bespreekbaar maken van het slavernijverleden. De waarde die deze postkoloniale activisten hechten aan het geschiedenisonderwijs is niet vreemd, gezien het feit dat het (geschiedenis)onderwijs een belangrijke functie vervult in het vormen van ideeën, kennis en het wereldbeeld van jongeren. Welke geschiedenissen

en hoe deze geschiedenissen worden behandeld heeft invloed op de perceptie van de wereld van jongeren.

Hoewel postkoloniale activisten de representatie van het hele Nederlandse koloniale verleden in het onderwijs in twijfel trekken en bekritisieren, speelt in deze discussie het trans-Atlantische slavernijverleden een expliciete rol. Vanuit een postkoloniaal discours wordt gesteld dat in het onderwijs het slavernijverleden wordt gebagatelliseerd of eenzijdig, en daarmee eurocentrisch, wordt weergegeven. Een voorbeeld hiervan is het VN-rapport uit 2020 waarin werd geadviseerd om in het Nederlandse onderwijs het slavernijverleden op een meer accurate en representatieve manier te behandelen. Ook tijdens de BLM-protesten van vorig jaar doorklonk de wens voor meer aandacht voor het slavernijverleden. Om te oordelen in hoeverre de kritiek

op de representatie van het slavernijverleden in het onderwijs terecht is, is het belangrijk om de ontwikkeling van deze representatie te bekijken. Dan blijkt dat hoewel sommige kritiek terecht is, de werkelijkheid genuanceerder ligt.

De representatie van het slavernijverleden in het onderwijs is de afgelopen twee decennia duidelijk veranderd. Tot de eeuwwisseling werd de maatschappelijke herinnering aan het slavernijverleden gekenmerkt door een oorverdovende stilte. Ook in de kerndoelen voor het geschiedenisonderwijs werd het slavernijverleden niet genoemd en werden docenten niet verplicht dit onderwerp te behandelen. Desalniettemin werd het slavernijverleden wel in schoolboeken behandeld, al kan de representatie van het slavernijverleden in deze schoolboeken bagatelliserend en eenzijdig genoemd worden. In de meeste schoolboeken van voor de eeuwwisseling werd het slavernijverleden met een paar regels afgedaan en was geen ruimte voor het perspectief van de slaafgemaakten. Zo worden slaafgemaakten vooral beschreven als ‘goede arbeidskrachten’ voor op de plantages. Niet vreemd dat postkoloniale activisten zich stoorden aan deze inhoud van het geschiedenisonderwijs en deze bekritiseerden, zoals de Surinaamse vrouwenbeweging Sophiedela deed. Het idee dat het hedendaagse geschiedenisonderwijs het slavernijverleden ook op deze manier representeert, is problematisch. Uitgevers van schoolboeken en de wetgeving in Nederland zijn met de tijd meegegaan. Toch stellen diverse postkoloniale activisten, zoals Melissa Weiner en *The Black Archives* dat de representatie van het slavernijverleden



Afb. 1: Dergelijke afbeeldingen worden tegenwoordig veel gebruikt in schoolboeken om de gruwelen van het slavernijverleden visueel te maken. Bron: Allard Pierson, Universiteit van Amsterdam, NOK 95-158.

nog steeds eenzijdig of beperkt is.

## De representatie van het slavernijverleden in het geschiedenisonderwijs is veranderd.

Sinds 2006 is het geschiedenisonderwijs fundamenteel veranderd, doordat er nieuwe kerndoelen werden ingevoerd. In deze kerndoelen staan tien tijdvakken (van 25 eeuwen vooral westerse geschiedenis) centraal, die zijn ondersteund door kenmerkende aspecten. Het slavernijverleden is hier onderdeel van. Ook in de Nederlandse canon, die sinds 2010 onderdeel is van de kern-

doelen, is het trans-Atlantische slavernijverleden opgenomen. Docenten zijn hierdoor verplicht dit onderwerp te behandelen. Dat het slavernijverleden tegenwoordig niet wordt behandeld in het onderwijs is niet meer mogelijk.

Daarnaast is ook de manier waarop het slavernijverleden wordt behandeld duidelijk veranderd, waarbij de invloed van het maatschappelijk debat duidelijk merkbaar is in schoolboeken. Er is expliciete aandacht voor het Nederlandse slavernijverleden, dat wordt beschreven vanuit verschillende perspectieven. In tegenstelling tot oudere schoolboeken worden slaafgemaakten niet beschreven als handelswaar, maar als personen met een eigen cultuur en identiteit. De leefomstandigheden op de plantages en slavenschenpen worden beschreven, evenals het verzet en marronage van slaafgemaakten. Ook wordt in recente schoolboeken duidelijk dat de slavernij een belangrijk onderdeel was van de Nederlandse economie. Het idee dat het slavernijverleden in het onderwijs tegenwoordig op eenzijdige of koloniale wijze wordt behandeld is simpelweg ontrecht.

## Diverse postkoloniale inzichten zijn niet opgenomen in het onderwijs en schoolboeken.

Dit wil echter niet zeggen dat de representatie van het slavernijverleden perfect is en op bepaalde punten is postkoloniale kritiek op het geschiedenisonderwijs wel degelijk terecht. Een belangrijk kritiekpunt is dat

diverse postkoloniale inzichten niet zijn verwerkt in het onderwijs en schoolboeken. Zo wordt er in schoolboeken geen verband gelegd tussen racisme en het slavernijverleden en wordt het slavernijverleden telkens buiten Nederland gepresenteerd, terwijl slavernij zich ook in Nederland zelf heel concreet afspeelde. Vooral het thema racisme en het slavernijverleden is belangrijk om in relatie tot elkaar te behandelen omdat mogelijk hedendaags racisme te wijten is aan het slavernijverleden. Deze thema's zijn van groot belang in het behandelen van het slavernijverleden en in het daadwerkelijk (er)kennen van dit verleden.

Als de balans wordt opgemaakt, kan worden gesteld dat de representatie van het slavernijverleden zich op een positieve manier heeft ontwikkeld. Toch is bepaalde postkoloniale kritiek wel degelijk terecht en ontbreken er nog postkoloniale inzichten in de representatie van het slavernijverleden. Desondanks wordt de belangrijke rol die postkoloniale activisten toewijzen aan het geschiedenisonderwijs voor de erkenning en het bespreekbaar maken van het slavernijverleden, tegenwoordig al waargemaakt. Hoewel de representatie van het slavernijverleden zeker nog verbeterd kan worden, wordt het slavernijverleden tegenwoordig belicht vanuit verschillende perspectieven en is er niet langer sprake van bagatellisering van het slavernijverleden in het onderwijs.

*In 2021 Roald Bakker completed his pre-master at Utrecht University. During his study he focused on cultural and public history. He wrote his bachelor thesis about the representation of slavery in Dutch secondary school textbooks.*

DE PASSIE VAN...

# Maarten Prak



Afb. 1: Dr. Maarten Prak in de Utrechtse Universiteitsbibliotheek. Bron: Universiteit Utrecht.

## Gijs Toussaint & Beau Visser

On the 2nd of July, the notable and renowned Professor Maarten Prak ended his tenure at Utrecht University. For years, he has been committed to the meticulous study of history and high-quality education. We talked about Maarten Prak's passion for the polder model during this interview. Moreover, we discussed its history and the effect of the phenomenon on contemporary society.

Maarten Prak is een bekend individu, niet alleen binnen de academische wereld, maar ook als geschiedkundig expert bij publieke programma's zoals 'De Wereld Draait Door' of 'Universiteit van Nederland'. Ook was hij wetenschappelijk adviseur voor de televisieseries 'De Gouden Eeuw' en '80

Jaar Oorlog'. Hij wordt vaak omschreven als 'een wandelende encyclopedie op het gebied van de Gouden Eeuw', en zijn gevoel voor humor is beroemd. Maarten Prak werd geboren in Middelburg, en hij deed in Rotterdam het voortgezet onderwijs. In 1992 werd hij aangesteld als hoogleraar Economische

en Sociale Geschiedenis aan de Universiteit Utrecht, waar hij eerder ook zijn doctoraal (voorloper van MA) en PhD had behaald. Zijn expertisegebied is vroegmodern Nederland, met een focus op instituties van burgerschap en vakbonden. Hij is nauw betrokken bij de Bachelor Geschiedenis, waarin hij onder andere het eerstjaarshoorcollege Vroegmoderne Tijd geeft en eindscripties begeleidt, en de MA Geschiedenis van Politiek en Maatschappij. Deze zomer verlaat hij helaas de Universiteit Utrecht om met pensioen te gaan, na meer dan dertig jaar hier gewerkt te hebben. Voor vele studenten vormt hij een bron van inspiratie.

Na enig twijfelen bespreken we in deze rubriek de passie die dr. Prak heeft voor het poldermodel. De twijfel ontstond door zijn grote liefde voor de Engelse popgroep The Beatles, die niet onopgemerkt kan blijven. Het poldermodel heeft echter een grote rol gespeeld in zijn carrière. Het is het hoofdthema van zijn publicatie *Nederland en het Poldermodel* uit 2013, geschreven samen met collega Jan Luiten van Zanden. De interesse die hij in het nut van draagvlak en inspraak heeft, ontstond jaren geleden. Nadat hij gepromoveerd was, schreef hij een boek over het tijdperk van revoluties (*Republikeinse Veelheid, Democratisch Enkelvoud*, 1999). Het onderzoek begon hij met het idee dat door de Franse Revolutie misstanden uit de achttiende eeuw werden verbeterd. Wat hij echter ondervond, was dat vele burgers toenertijd de oude gang van zaken niet los wilden laten. Mensen voelden zich gehoord door de hoge mate van inspraak die ze lokaal hadden en de gilden waren

een steun en toeverlaat. Lokale inspraak en de gilden verdwenen echter door toedoen van de Franse Revolutie en de inspraak die er voor in de plaats kwam, was zeer beperkt. Maarten Prak herkende hierin het poldermodel. ‘Ik ben dus niet geboren als polderaar,’ concludeert Prak. ‘Ook al ben ik niet in de polder geboren, maar het water is ook niet zo belangrijk voor het poldermodel als mensen soms denken.’

Nederland, merkte hij al vroeg op, was een van de landen die succes hadden ondervonden met het poldermodel van de late middeleeuwen. Wat maakte dat Nederland succesvol was en is, en dat lang niet alle landen zich op dezelfde manier ontwikkeld hebben? En hoe zouden andere landen ook zo welvarend als Nederland kunnen worden? Hij vertelt: ‘Ik ben vanaf mijn studententijd al een wereldverbeteraar.’ Het poldermodel zag Prak als de beslissende factor in de welvaart van Nederland.

### **Nederland en het poldermodel**

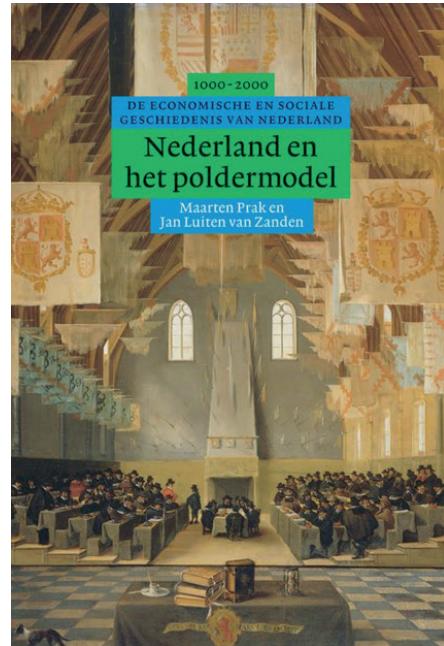
Vaak wordt het begin van het poldermodel als een consensus gezien dankzij het Akkoord van Wassenaar (1982) tussen Nederlandse werkgevers en werknemers. Het compromis dat gesloten werd, betrof een combinatie van loonmatiging en arbeidstijdverkorting. Maarten Prak gelooft echter niet dat het Akkoord van Wassenaar als beginpunt van het poldermodel gezien kan worden. Het poldermodel is niet alleen een term die vaak gebruikt wordt voor het concept van overleg tussen sociale partners, maar ‘in het boek behandelen we polderen als een uitdrukking van een veel breder patroon dat uit de middel-eeuwen komt.’ Prak en Van Zanden

redeneren in hun boek *Nederland en het poldermodel: Sociaal-economische geschiedenis van Nederland, 1000-2000* dat het poldermodel drie gedaantes heeft gehad: agrarisch, commercieel en industrieel. De instituties die het poldermodel dragen zijn door de tijd heen hervormd, wat het proces van polderen ook veranderd heeft.

‘We behoren al sinds de middeleeuwen tot de meest welvarende landen ter wereld.’ Dit zien Prak en Van Zanden als gevolg van het poldermodel. ‘Mensen hadden het idee dat hun werk beloond werd en dat ze gehoord werden. Dat spoorde aan tot hard werken en innovatie.’ Critici trekken dit causale verband in twijfel, en draaien het om. Volgde het poldermodel niet juist op de toegenomen welvaart, in plaats van andersom? Prak geeft toe dat dit een interessant punt is en verwijst naar Scandinavië als voorbeeld. ‘Vroeger was het zeer autoritair, maar nu is het welvarend en zijn de inwoners gelukkig.’ Hoe kan een land de kopgroep bereiken waar Nederland en Scandinavië in verkeren? Er zijn ook landen in de kopgroep zonder poldermodel. Zo zijn de Verenigde Staten welvarend, al wijst Prak op problemen. Ongelijkheden in de verdeling van materiële rijkdom, gebrek aan toegang tot gezondheidszorg en toename in misdaadcijfers zijn symptomen. ‘Ze laten zien dat de samenleving er niet goed vanaf komt.’ Deze problemen zijn minder prominent in Nederland of Scandinavië.

### Het Poldermodel nu

Wordt er tegenwoordig nog een beetje gepolderd in de politiek? De coronacrisis maakt dat moeilijk, vindt Prak. ‘De



Afb. 2: Maarten Prak en Jan Luiten van Zanden, *Nederland en het poldermodel: de economische en sociale geschiedenis van Nederland, 1000-2000*. Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, Amsterdam, 2013. 328 pagina's, € 35,99.

kracht van het poldermodel zit ‘m in een breed draagvlak en veel inspraak, in een crisis heb je daar geen tijd voor.’ Dat beslismodel waar eerst iedere partij zijn plasje over mag doen verhindert soms het maken van snelle beslissingen, met dat probleem kampte de hele Europese Unie tijdens de pandemie. ‘Soms is het beter om alles militair te doen, met strakke leiding, maar dat gaat niet in ons systeem.’ En in normale tijden is een autoritair regime op de lange duur contraproductief.

Andere landen kunnen veel van het Nederlandse poldermodel leren volgens Prak. Dat blijkt bijvoorbeeld uit de lage stakingscijfers in Nederland. ‘Staken kost geld, en je voorkomt het door te praten.’ Dat het vinden van consensus in andere landen moeilijk gaat, ligt vol-

gens Prak vaak aan het politieke stelsel. ‘Consensus is lastig te vinden in een tweepartijenstelsel, dat systeem beloont polarisatie.’ Dat systeem is problematisch, maar kan niet zomaar omgegooid worden. ‘Dat vereist vaak een hele nare fase’, zegt Prak, ‘Kijk naar Duitsland. Ook in de Nederlandse geschiedenis zie je dat soort overgangen, maar die gaan wel vaak gepaard met revoluties en oorlog.’ Toch zijn er mensen die zeggen dat grote systeemverandering met kleine stappen bereikt kan worden, en daar is ook Prak positief over. ‘Dat komt ook door mijn geloof in de sociaal-democratie, kijk bijvoorbeeld naar de positie van vrouwen of onze levensverwachting. Daarin is veel vooruitgang bereikt, maar juist die grote institutionele veranderingen zijn moeilijk en nemen veel tijd.’

Prak noemde de polarisatie in de Verenigde Staten en het Verenigd Koninkrijk als mogelijke gevaren voor het poldermodel, dreigt dat gevaar niet ook in Nederland? ‘Op een indirekte manier wel.’ Prak ziet een risico in polariserende partijen die niet willen samenwerken, maar alleen uit zijn op eigen zetelwinst en voor hun polariserende gedrag beloond worden door de kiezer. ‘Dan hebben we een probleem. Niet omdat de populisten zo groot worden, maar omdat de polder dan versnipperd raakt.’

### Conclusie

Ondanks zijn waarschuwingen voor polarisatie blijft Prak optimistisch over de toekomst van zijn passie. ‘Buiten corona gaat het de laatste jaren juist beter, kijk maar naar het klimaatakkoord van Parijs of het pensioenakkoord. We zien in de Verenigde Staten en het Verenigd

Koninkrijk wat de prijs is van polarisatie en polarisatiepolitiek. Ik denk dat dat zorgt voor een hernieuwde waardering voor het poldermodel.’

Het poldermodel is geen wondermiddel zegt Prak, maar wie hem erover hoort praten zou toch bijna denken van wel. Zo benadrukt hij nog eens dat het poldermodel niet alleen voor welvaart, maar ook voor gelijkheid zorgde. De voordelen van het poldermodel liggen dieper dan alleen in de welvaart van een land vindt Prak. Dat is volgens hem bijvoorbeeld goed te zien in de Verenigde Staten. Op papier is de welvaart daar groter dan in Nederland, maar mensen zijn minder gelukkig, de misdaadcijfers zijn hoger en de welvaart is ongelijker verdeeld.

Wie de komende jaren over de geschiedenis van het polderen wil leren zal bij een andere docent moeten aankloppen. Na bijna dertig jaar les te hebben gegeven in Utrecht gaat Maarten Prak na dit jaar met pensioen. Gelukkig is daar nog altijd *Nederland en het poldermodel* voor zij die het onderzoek van Prak nog eens uitgebreid willen lezen. Ondertussen heeft Maarten Prak dan genoeg tijd voor zijn andere passie: The Beatles.

*Prof. Dr. Maarten Prak, emeritus professor of Economic and Social History, is alumnus of Utrecht University himself. Beside his position as professor he was also a board member of the KNAW between 2016 and 2020, and scientific expert and commentator for historical series like ‘The Golden Age’ and ‘80 Years of War: The birth of the Netherlands’.*

# 'It is the colour problem that has come to Britain'

## The Underlying Causes of the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act



Fig. 1: Propaganda used by the UK to advocate for the idea of a culturally and racially united Commonwealth. Source: US National Archives.

### Robin Schurink

The Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962 marked a change in the attitude of the British government towards immigration. While since 1948 citizens of the Commonwealth were allowed to live and work in the UK, in 1962 this policy of free immigration came to an end. Colored immigration was said to negatively influence employment. However, according to Robin Schurink, that was not the real driving force behind the act. In this article, he states that the legislation had discriminatory roots. He does so by making use of secret memorandums and an interdisciplinary approach, combining the fields of history, sociology and psychology.

On the 21st of May 2020, amidst a global pandemic, new migration statistics for 2019 were released by the United Kingdom's Office for National Statistics. The data showed that 600,000 non-UK citizens moved to the UK, while EU net migration reached a low of 49,000. These numbers undoubtedly were impacted further in 2020 and now in 2021 as countries around the world have closed their borders, blocking travel and immigration, in their battle against COVID-19. This is not the first time the spread of a disease was involved in public and political debate about legislation surrounding travel and immigration. At the start of January 1962, the *Daily Mail*'s front page saw the headline: "KEEP OUT THE GERMS", followed by an editorial stating that:

Even those who oppose immigration control for people will agree that there should be better methods of keeping out deadly microbes. We are thinking of the two Pakistanis who recently arrived here suffering from smallpox. They came to Britain by air, walked in without any trouble and were at once a peril to the population.<sup>1</sup>

The editorial advocated for immigration control because of health concerns that were present at the time. However, this editorial is part of a larger debate that took place during the late 1950s and early 1960s. The debate concerned the question of Commonwealth immigration.

In 1948, the United Kingdom decided to redefine its relations to its colonies and the Commonwealth at

large. Through the British Nationality Act the UK allowed every citizen of the Commonwealth to live and work in the country. The following years, Britain, as the head of the Commonwealth, became increasingly multicultural, multilingual, and multiracial. However, this liberal attitude would not last. With the introduction of the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, the UK government took away the right of free immigration and instead introduced an employment voucher system. What was the driving force behind this changed attitude, which caused the creation of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962, and why was it introduced at that time?

It is of importance to understand what led to the creation of the legislation, as it has affected millions of people even until today. The 1962 Act was the start of a series of immigration acts, so knowing what caused the initial shift from a liberal open bordered society to one that closed its borders is significantly useful in grasping immigration policy in post-colonial Britain and possibly for "western" nations in general. While historians have written on the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962, I argue we can learn much from an interdisciplinary approach. Therefore, this paper will branch out and combine the fields of history, sociology, and psychology.

The 1962 Act was one that was ultimately based on employment, in the form of a voucher system. So, the first part of this article will be used to understand why this decision was made. Next, this article will shed light on the cause of the implementation of legislation with the use of secret memorandums

<sup>1</sup> 'Keep Out the Germs,' *Daily Mail*, January 3, 1962, 1.

written by governmental organs and individuals influential in its creation. The last part, with the use of psychology and sociology, will take this cause and use social identity theory, research into ethnic demographic changes and racial discrimination to understand why this development induced the creation of the 1962 legislation. Through this framework the answer to the question posed above will be one that is multifaceted and multi-layered, creating a more in-depth grasp of what happened during the 1950's and early 1960's.

### **Justifying the Wrong Reason**

The two most important actors in the creation of the legislation in 1962 were the so-called Committee of Ministers, made up of various high officials who informed the Cabinet, and the Interdepartmental Working Party who supported and created reports for the Committee. The recommended system of control ultimately introduced by the Working Party in the 1962 Act was one based on employment. They argued that because the “coloured” immigrant was thought to be largely unskilled, they would be disadvantaged in the labour market and during a time of recession would experience increased unemployment creating a considerable financial burden on the country.<sup>2</sup> With the bill in place, immigrants would now need to apply for a work voucher, which would be evaluated based on the applicant’s labour prospects. Thus, the 1962 Act was ostensibly created because of an employment problem.

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<sup>2</sup> Report of the Interdepartmental Working Party (July 1961), 3-7. CAB134/1469.

The best method of controlling immigration had been debated since the creation of the Committee of Ministers in November 1955. From its formation onwards its objective, opposed to deciding on if legislation should be introduced, was when it should be introduced. The underlying reason for this will be addressed shortly. The committee argued that legislation had to be non-discriminatory to be justified to Commonwealth countries, the public, and parliament, because it could be “used against us by those who are anxious to prove that the Commonwealth is no longer a unity” and would “seem to cast doubt on the idea of the Commonwealth as a multi-racial society”.<sup>3</sup> The government, specifically the Committee of Ministers with support from the Working Party, was thus tasked with creating legislation, which was non-discriminatory and, if implemented, could be justified to itself and abroad.

The 1962 Act would ultimately be based on employment, so a sensible conclusion would be that this factor played the major role. However, based on the Committee’s own secret memorandums, this seems to not have been the case. A secret June 1956 report by the Committee stated that “coloured immigration has become an ominous problem which cannot now be ignored”,<sup>4</sup> while in the same report

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<sup>3</sup> Report Committee of Ministers (June 1956), 5. CAB-129/81/45; Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Home Department and Lord Privy Seal (June 1958), 1. CAB/129/93/32; Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Home Department (November 1960), 2. CAB/129/103/15.

<sup>4</sup> Report by the Committee of Ministers (June

the Committee stated that coloured immigrants had had little difficulty in finding work, had been making a useful contribution to the labour force, had eased rather than exacerbated the labour situation and did not create any problem regarding employment.<sup>5</sup>

## It was a non-discriminatory way to mask its hidden objective.

By 1960 calls for legislation started to intensify, while the argument was pushed that employment prospects were likely to deteriorate sharply with the onset of the ending of National Service, industrial automation and the entry of the post-war population into the labour market.<sup>6</sup> The Working Party was expected to provide the evidential basis on which the Cabinet could decide to legislate and attempted so in their reports which were released every four to six months.<sup>7</sup> It is clear from these reports and memos that the expectation of growing unemployment among coloured immigrants would justify legislation and provide a mechanism to regulate with. However, as their reports also reveal, coloured unemployment from 1959 until 1961 never rose above

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1956), 6. CAB-129/81/45.

5 Report Committee of Ministers (June 1956), 2.

6 Iain Macleod to Governors and Administrators in the West Indies (January 1961), CO 1031/3933.

7 Ian Spencer, *British Immigration Policy Since 1939: The Making of Multi-Racial Britain* (Taylor and Francis Group 1997), 109.



### CHAPTER 21

An Act to make temporary provision for controlling the immigration into the United Kingdom of Commonwealth citizens; to authorise the deportation from the United Kingdom of certain Commonwealth citizens convicted of offences and recommended by the court for deportation; to amend the qualifications required of Commonwealth citizens applying for citizenship under the British Nationality Act, 1948; to make corresponding provisions in respect of British protected persons and citizens of the Republic of Ireland; and for purposes connected with the matters aforesaid.

[18th April, 1962]

Fig. 2: The Act's title page which reads that the Act would control immigration and authorise deportation. Source: Free Movement.

5 percent and sharply declined while in the same period immigration increased from 21,000 to 136,000 a year.<sup>8</sup> On top of that, the UK Colonial office and Treasury expressed their distaste at the push for legislation, showing the flaws in the pushed employment arguments and instead advocated for the economic advantages immigration was providing.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless the Cabinet, based on the Working Party's reports presented by the Committee of Ministers, pushed legislation based on the proposed labour voucher system.

In 1954, before the creation of the Committee, a prescient warning had already been made in *The Economist*, which stated that "If a committee is set up to consider this problem [coloured immigration], it will have plenty of precedents for reaching the wrong

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8 Spencer, *British Immigration Policy Since 1939*, 114.

9 'Unemployment position among West Indians,' (September 1961), CO 1031/ 3933 and Spencer, *British Immigration Policy Since 1939*, 115.

decision.”<sup>10</sup> The voucher system was both flexible and non-discriminatory and could thus keep political criticism to a minimum. Consequently, the idea of the Commonwealth as a multi-racial community was intact and legislation could be pushed. The 1962 Common-

	<i>W. Indies</i>	<i>India</i>	<i>Pakistan</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>Total</i>
1953	2,000				2,000
1954	11,000				11,000
1955	27,500	5,800	1,850	7,500	42,650
1956	29,800	5,600	2,050	9,350	46,800
1957	23,000	6,600	5,200	7,600	42,400
1958	15,000	6,200	4,700	3,950	29,850
1959	16,400	2,950	850	1,400	21,600
1960	49,650	5,900	2,500	-350	57,700
1961	66,300	23,750	25,100	21,250	136,000
1962	31,800	19,050	25,080	18,970	94,900
Total	272,450	75,850	67,330	69,670	484,900

Fig. 3: Estimated Net Immigration from the ‘New’ Commonwealth, 1953-62. Source: Zig Henry, *The Politics of Immigration: Immigration, Race and Race relations in Post-War Britain* (Oxford 1992), 3. Note: 1962 are the numbers of the first six months.

wealth Immigrants Act was thus not the result of employment problems that triggered its creation, instead it was a non-discriminatory way to mask its hidden objective.

### A Numerical Debate

Racial discrimination in domestic legislation would have been disastrous in a time when the government was advocating the righteousness of multiracialism and multiculturalism. As mentioned, one of the main challenges for the Committee was deciding not if, but when the time for legislation was ripe. So, why was the bullet ultimately bitten at the end of 1961?

The creation of the Committee to consider colonial immigration was not spontaneous, ostensibly being a direct response to the increase of coloured immigration numbers in 1955 (Table

<sup>10</sup> The Economist, “Colour Bar at the Gate?” November 13, 1954, 538.

1). This is seen in their consequent reports which have a strong pathological approach. The reports would consistently start by providing the amounts of immigrants in the current and prior year, followed by measurements of the results of this increase for public order, housing conditions, employment, diseases, criminal activity etc. It was assumed that the underlying origin of each hypothetical problem that could arise was founded in non-white numbers.

This is supported by both the absence of debate in times of falling coloured immigration as by the increase in debate when numbers rose. In 1956 the urgency of legislation had somewhat disappeared when it became clear the increase would be no greater than the year prior, however the debate returned in the first months of 1958 when immigration started to increase.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, swift measures were taken, however not in the shape of immigration law. Instead, actions were made to tighten controls in India and Pakistan themselves, with noticeable effects (Table 1).<sup>12</sup> Large hesitation could be seen by many officials, such as Sir Henry Lintott, the Deputy Under-Secretary of State at the Commonwealth Relations office, who exclaimed:

‘If we take powers of control over immigration, it will appear that we are doing so

<sup>11</sup> Oscar Gish, “Color and Skill: British Immigration, 1955-1968,” *The International Migration Review* 3, No. 1 (Autumn 1968): 23.

<sup>12</sup> D. Dean, “Conservative Governments and the Restriction of Commonwealth Immigration in the 1950s: The Problems of Constraint,” *The Historical Journal* 35, No. 1 (March 1992): 176.

because the British people are unable to live with coloured people on tolerable terms. This could be immensely damaging to our position as leaders of the Commonwealth which [...] largely draws its strength from its multi-racial character.<sup>13</sup>

When immigration to the UK rose, the liberal and multi-racial Commonwealth as a whole started to see cracks.

In the following years immigration fell and, synchronically, the debate faded. The falling numbers of immigrants were so strong that advocates of immigration law could hardly press their arguments and consequently, the Cabinet did not discuss coloured immigration for almost a year and a half after their February 1959 meeting.<sup>14</sup> However, by 1960 coloured immigration was back on the rise, reaching a peak in 1961. Publicly, voices became louder with Cyril Osborne, a conservative politician, paralleling contemporary Britain with the fall of Rome as a direct result of increasing numbers, stating in *The Economist* that ‘the Romans became fastidious and refused either to work or to fight. They imported strangers to do their dirty work – and Rome fell!’<sup>15</sup> The increasing urgency for legislation is mirrored in the Committee’s 1961 report which stated that ‘unless action is taken this country may well be confronted in the space of a few years with a colour

problem approaching that of the United States.’<sup>16</sup>

As much as the Committee would have wanted to bite the bullet for legislation right then in May of 1961, they patiently waited half a year so their party of interest would win the election in Jamaica first.<sup>17</sup> In November 1961 the Commonwealth Immigrants Act was announced, which would lead to its introduction in 1962. The sporadic debate which eventually created legislation on immigration was directly fuelled by increasing non-white immigration which peaked in 1961. The catalyst which pushed the 1962 Act was, thus, directly linked, not to employment problems, but to the increasing amounts of coloured immigrants. This would also be the straightforward answer to this paper’s question, however, why did these increasing numbers warrant legislation?

## **The prospect of ‘losing ground’ many saw as a threat.**

### **An Underlying Psychological Fear**

I want to start this part with some nuance to avoid generalisations. It is never implied that the whole of the UK thought synonymously. On the contrary, many were opposed to the Act. This part should be seen as a social psychological interpretation of how the developments and consequences, with regard to immigration, took place and

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13 Minute by Sir H. Lintott (September 1958) DO35/7987.

14 Spencer, *British Immigration Policy Since 1939*, 107.

15 Cyril Osborne, “Immigrant Workers,” *The Economist*, July 1, 1961, 29.

16 Memorandum by the Lord Chancellor (May 1961), 1. CAB 129/105/17.

17 Memorandum (May 1961), 2.

gained increasing influence. That being said, according to social psychologists Henri Tajfel and John Turner's social identity theory, people are motivated to create and maintain a positive identity and do so by comparing the status of their groups with that of other groups. When they feel that their group's superior status is slipping away or is unstable, they experience a 'group status threat', that is an anxiety that their own group's status, position, and influence in the hierarchy is under threat.<sup>18</sup> For many Brits, their sense of race switched, from what social psychologists Maureen Craig and Jennifer Richeson call dormant to salient.<sup>19</sup> Meaning, the increasing numbers of coloured immigrants made the white British population increasingly recognise their white identity and all historical privilege that comes with it, which was likely only amplified in a decolonising world.

The prospect of 'losing ground,' potentially even becoming a minority, many saw as a threat which was powerful enough to change thoughts and behaviour.<sup>20</sup> This fear was based on

18 Henri Tajfel and John Turner, "The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior," In *Psychology of Intergroup Relation*, ed. S. Worchel and G. Austin (Chicago: Hall Publishers, 1986), 7-24.

19 Maureen Craig and Jennifer Richeson, "Majority No More? The Influence of Neighborhood Racial Diversity and Salient National Population Changes on Whites' Perceptions of Racial Discrimination," *The Russel Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 4, No. 5 (August 2018), 143.

20 Craig and Richeson, "Majority No More?" *The Russel Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 4, No. 5 (August 2018), 141-155.



Fig. 4: One of the last immigrants before the implementation of the Act arriving at Waterloo station in London. Source: Own work Howard Grey

both a material threat, in the sense of being perceived as a risk to a group's physical resources and socio-political standing, and on a cultural and societal threat, which took shape as a perceived risk to their position as a 'prototypical Brit'.<sup>21</sup> This anxiety was recognised throughout the memorandums written by the Committee, who put an incredible focus on estimated future numbers. Expressing in 1956 that 'at this rate it will take ten years for the coloured population of this country to rise to 1 percent of the white population,'<sup>22</sup> that

21 Felix Danbold and Yuen Huo, "No Longer 'All American'? Whites' Defensive Reaction to Their Numerical Decline," *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 6, No. 2 (2015), 210-211.

22 Report by the Committee of Ministers (June 1956), 3. CAB-129/81/45.

‘a different racial strain’ could not be absorbed,<sup>23</sup> and that changed circumstance had created a ‘danger of coloured invasion’.<sup>24</sup> The concern for ‘interbreeding’ is another facet through which the concern of a slipping majority status can be seen, arguing that ‘if such a trend [interbreeding] were to occur it would be an important factor’.<sup>25</sup> The coloured immigrant thus threatened the prototypicality of various white British groups and their insecurity caused the concept of diversity, in the form of a liberal and open-bordered multiracial Commonwealth, to be challenged.

Additionally, social psychologists Brenda Major, Alison Blodorn and Gregory Blascovich found that the fear of changing demographics will also take shape in the greater endorsement of conservative political ideology, political parties and candidates.<sup>26</sup> This is observed with the creation of the White Defence League in 1957, the Conservative Monday Club in 1961, and many other expressions of conservative ideology, as groups feared and looked for ways to stop the consequences of hypothetical demographic changes. Important to note is that it should not be assumed that after the 1962 Act this development stopped. Instead, by 1971 the Monday Club had 35

23 Report by the Committee of Ministers (June 1956), 6.

24 Report (June 1956), 6.

25 Report (June 1956), 3.

26 Brenda Major, Alison Blodorn and Gregory Blascovich, “The Threat of Increasing Diversity: Why Many White Americans Support Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election,” *Group Process and Intergroup Relations* 21, No. 6 (2018), 931.

members of Parliament of which 6 in government.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the Conservative Party gained a majority in 1955 with Anthony Eden, again in 1957 with Harold Macmillan, and after the Act was passed in 1963 with Alec Douglas-Home.

## Conclusion

‘In short, if their skins were white there would be no problem. What trouble exists is mainly racial; it is the colour problem that has come to Britain’ is what was already written in *The Economist* in 1954.<sup>28</sup> The 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act was a reactionary symptom as a consequence of an underlying psychological fear of what increasing coloured immigration would hypothetically do to the societal status quo. Based on employment to appear non-discriminatory, it showed a conflict with a conservative view of British identity on the one hand and the UK’s position as leader of a multiracial Commonwealth on the other, all playing out within a radically changing decolonising world.

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27 Monday Club “Newsletter” (May/June 1971).

28 The Economist, “Colour Bar at the Gate?” November 13, 1954, 538.

# Spelen met het verleden: wat kan een historicus met een videogame?



Afb. 1: Mediabeeld voor *Ryse: Son of Rome*, Crytek (2013).

## Omar Bugter & Corine Gerritsen

Video games are a huge business, and historical video games are extremely popular to the extent they outperform blockbuster movies in sales. In this article, Corine Gerritsen and Omar Bugter discuss what a historian can do with video games. Games are often regarded as ahistorical, but whilst recognizing that they cannot approach an academic work, games are not worthless to historians. Gerritsen and Bugter discuss how historians can use video games in different kinds of historical research.

Overal ter wereld moesten mensen het afgelopen jaar meer tijd binnenshuis doorbrengen dan ze lief was. Een deel zocht toevlucht in videogames, een industrie die al flink groeiende was, maar door de pandemie nog groter werd. Daarbij heeft een aanzienlijk deel van de nieuw uitgebrachte games een historische invalshoek. Hoewel Game Stu-

dies al in de jaren negentig een eigen onderzoeksgebied werd, lopen historici achter in onderzoek naar videogames. Lange tijd werden games niet gezien als relevant onderzoeksobject. Pas grofweg de laatste tien jaar is de academische interesse in historische videogames op gang gekomen. Het aantal spelers van historische games onder-

schrijft dat meer mensen in aanraking met het verleden komen via videogames dan via academische werken, maar vaak krijgen videogames de kritiek niet historisch correct te zijn. Wat kan een historicus dan met een videogame?

## Waarheidsvinding is niet de primaire drijfveer voor een videogame.

Om eerst maar de olifant in de kamer benoemen: videogames zijn niet historisch accuraat. Wanneer je als historicus videogames bestudeert krijg je vrijwel altijd de vraag: ‘maar hoe waarheidsgrouw is het nou echt?’ Hoewel het antwoord natuurlijk genuanceerder is, kunnen wij hier kort over zijn: niet. Een videogame is niet historisch accuraat, in ieder geval niet volgens de academische standaarden, en het is geen historisch onderzoek. Waarheidsvinding en onderzoek zijn niet de primaire drijfveren voor een videogame. Dit zijn entertainment en economisch gewin.

Videogames worden gemaakt om mensen te vermaken. Vermaak en economisch gewin komen op één, de correcte weergave van het verleden op twee. Dat ontwikkelaars historische waarheid links laten liggen om het spel vermakelijker of beter speelbaar te maken is logisch. Gezien vanuit het perspectief van een ontwikkelaar is het voordehandliggend om twee spelers die tegen elkaar spelen een gelijke kans te geven, terwijl de geschiedenis niet altijd een baken van gelijkwaardigheid

is. Sommige ontwikkelaars kiezen er ook voor om eerder een historische atmosfeer te creëren dan de geschiedenis daadwerkelijk waarheidsgrouw te weergeven. In beide gevallen klopt de weergave van de geschiedenis niet helemaal, maar is het vanuit het entertainment-oogpunt logisch om een game zo in te richten.

Naast het vermaken van de speler, moeten de ontwikkelaar en uitgever ook geld verdienen aan het spel. Dat zorgt ervoor dat bepaalde historische gebeurtenissen niet altijd worden verwerkt in videogames. Het gaat dan vooral om ‘moeilijke’ geschiedenis die mogelijk tot veel discussie leiden, zoals de Trans-Atlantische slavenhandel of de Holocaust. Dit is wat onderwijskundigen Scott Metzger en Richard Paxton de *Historical Boundary Structure* noemen.<sup>1</sup> Toch lijkt deze terughoudendheid iets te verschuiven aangezien er steeds meer indie-ontwikkelaars, onafhankelijk van grote studio’s of uitgevers, games maken over dit soort moeilijke geschiedenis zoals *Attention 1942* (2017), *Through the Darkest of Times* (2020). Zelfs in de wereld van de AAA-games, de blockbusters van de game industrie, lijkt bijvoorbeeld de Holocaust een meer bespreekbaar onderwerp te worden daar het in grote games als de *Wolfenstein*-serie (laatste in 2019) en *Call of Duty: WWII* (2017) is verwerkt.<sup>2</sup> Dat neemt niet

1 Scott Alan Metzger & Richard Paxton, ‘Gaming History: A Framework for What Video Games Teach About the Past’, *Theory and Research in Social Education* 44 (2016) 4, 532-564.

2 Laurens Bleukens, ‘Oorlogje Spelen’, *VPRO Gids* (2021) 18, 10-15. Via: <https://www.vpro.nl>.

weg dat studio's nog steeds waakzaam zijn in het opnemen van controversiële kanten van de geschiedenis en dit liever vermijden.

Als het antwoord op de vraag of een videogame historisch correct is vrijwel altijd ‘nee’ is, en er dus duidelijk grenzen zijn aan de historische waarheid van videogames, wat kan je er dan wel mee als historicus? Veel! Videogames bieden historici op verschillende manieren nieuwe mogelijkheden. Allereerst hebben videogames een enorm bereik en zullen dus veel spelers een bepaald verleden zien wat zij misschien eerst nog niet kenden. Hiernaast bieden videogames de mogelijkheid om op een andere manier naar het verleden te kijken, en hier zelfs een completer beeld van te presenteren. De Engelse mediëvist Robert Houghton stelt dat een game als *Crusader Kings II* uitstekend is om een model van de middeleeuwse samenleving te maken, en dit te gebruiken in historisch onderzoek.<sup>3</sup> Hoewel het spel zelf niet (altijd) historisch accuraat is - mede door een gebrek aan bronnen - wordt dit met fictionele data aangevuld. Hierdoor is het mogelijk om een breder, en dus completer, beeld te geven van bijvoorbeeld middeleeuwse huwelijkspolitiek en familierelaties. Het is dus juist de historische inaccuracy die de historicus in staat stelt

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vprogids.nl/2021/18/inhoud/artikelen/p10-Oorlogje-spelen.html.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Houghton, ‘Ahistorical Games: Abstraction and Fabrication for Research through Play’. Lezing tijdens *The Interactive Past Conference Online 2*, november 2020 via: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Ty06-aF7V0>.

het verleden op een andere manier te verkennen dan met academische werkwijzen.

Daarnaast is het interessant om te bestuderen waar de verschillende elementen uit een game vandaan komen. Hierbij kan bijvoorbeeld worden gedacht aan onderzoek naar primaire bronnen, zoals het gebruik van Caesars verslag van de Gallische Oorlogen voor games als *Ryse: Son of Rome* (2013) en *Imperator: Rome* (2019). Ook interessant zijn (soms foutieve) ideeën uit de negentiende eeuw, denk bijvoorbeeld aan hoorns op de helm van een viking, die nog steeds hun weg vinden naar populaire media en games.<sup>4</sup> Dit soort elementen zijn interessant voor een historicus om te analyseren, want geeft ons niet alleen inzichten in wat de ontwikkelaars zien als ‘de geschiedenis’, maar ook in wat zij verwachten dat het publiek zal accepteren als ‘de geschiedenis’.

## Videogames bieden een andere manier om naar geschiedenis te kijken.

De ontwikkelaars moeten namelijk ook rekening houden met wat in de algemene zin wordt geaccepteerd als ‘de geschiedenis’. Als er te sterk van gevestigde conventies wordt afgeweken, ook als daar historische reden voor

<sup>4</sup> Roberta Frank, ‘The Invention of the Viking Horned Helmet’, in Michael Dallapiazza, Olaf Hansen, Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, en Yvonne S. Bonnétain (red.), *International Scandinavian and Medieval Studies in Memory of Gerd Wolfgang Weber* (Trieste 2000) 199-208.

is, dan bestaat de kans dat de spelers dit zouden verwerpen.<sup>5</sup> Dus niet alleen economisch gezien beperken ontwikkelaars zichzelf, maar zij worden ook door de doelgroep gelimiteerd. Dit heeft als gevolg dat ontwikkelaars hun game vormen naar wat het publiek verwacht. Neem als voorbeeld de game *Imperator: Rome*. In deze strategiegame krijgen de Romeinen veel bonusen bij aanvang in vergelijking met hun onfortuinlijke buren. Dit is niet alleen gedaan omdat historisch gezien de Romeinen inderdaad militair zeer potent waren, maar ook omdat er van hun digitale versie wordt verwacht dat ze een enorm rijk stichten. De verwachtingen die spelers hebben op basis van geschiedenis worden zo verwerkt in de game.

Een laatste waardevolle bijdrage die videogames kunnen leveren aan de academische wereld heeft te maken met de interactiviteit van het medium. Dit geldt zowel voor de ontwikkelingsfase, maar ook wanneer het spel is uitgebracht. Steeds vaker is te zien hoe ontwikkelaars de spelers betrekken in het maken van de game. Dit kan bijvoorbeeld door een videogame te crowdfunden, of door het uit te brengen als *Early Access*. Spelers krijgen dan eerder toegang, en de ontwikkelaars gebruiken de input van de spelers om de game te verbeteren. Daarnaast kunnen videogames nadat ze zijn uitgebracht, in tegenstelling tot bijvoorbeeld films en boeken, door de spelers zelf worden aangepast. Door

het gebruik van *modifications* kunnen spelers de game naar eigen inzicht veranderen. Dit kan op een oppervlakkige manier, door het wijzigen van bijvoorbeeld kleuren in de game, maar ook diepgravend door hele concepten uit de game aan te passen. Videogames zijn voor publiekshistorici daarmee een uitstekend onderzoeksobject: er zijn weinig culturele uitingen over het verleden waar de lijn tussen producenten en consumenten zo kort zijn, en waar de consument zelf invloed kan hebben op hetgeen hij of zij ziet en speelt.

Dit alles maakt dat videogames een bijzonder onderzoeksobject voor historici zijn. Ze bieden niet alleen de mogelijkheid tot het betrekken van een breed publiek, maar zijn ook nog eens een goede graadmeter van een publiek idee over de geschiedenis en bieden daarbij de historicus een nieuwe manier om met het verleden te spelen.

*Corine Gerritsen and Omar Bugter research historical video games. Corine focusses on Ancient History in video games. Omar takes a public historical approach to researching video games. Both are active in the VALUE Foundation, an organisation promoting research into video games and using video games for science communication.*

## De verwachtingen van het publiek worden verwerkt in een videogame.

<sup>5</sup> David Serrano Lozano, ‘Ludus (Not) Over: Video Games and the Popular Perception of Ancient Past Reshaping’, in Christian Rollinger (red.) *Classical Antiquity in Video Games: Playing with the Ancient World* (Londen 2020) 47–62, aldaar 55.

# Well-a-Bye Baby

## Infant Rituals in Ancient Greece



Fig. 1: Rodney Young began excavating in the Agora in 1934. The photograph above was taken in 1947 for an article entitled “Pot’s Progress,” published in the first issue of Archaeology Magazine (vol. 1, no. 1, 1948, p. 13). Young was posed sitting amidst stacks of pottery removed from a well (Deposit A 17:2) that were ready for sorting.” Source: Agora Excavations. The American School of Classical Studies at Athens.

### **Samantha Sink**

In her article, Samantha analyses the burial sites and accompanying archaeological evidence from different wells in Athens, in order to investigate the often obscure and fascinating ceremonies and rituals performed by the Athenians for their perinatal infants. Through Samantha's investigation, astonishing insights can be gained into the every-day life of the polis of classical antiquity - she puts forth the argument that the burial of infants in these wells was a common practice in Ancient Greece, and that the oikos exhibited special care for their dead infants, which they expressed through efforts towards protection and purification. Samantha Sink also uncovers possible new associations of the rituals with the goddess Hekate.

Religion was universal to Ancient Greeks and foundational in forming the Greek polis. They had rituals and ceremonies for every occasion, including adolescent rituals and coming of age rituals. But what about the children who did not make it past infancy? This article investigates if the Ancient Greeks had specific burial sites dedicated for perinatal infants, explores the ceremonies performed for perinatal children, and examines what ritual items were used to honor their infants. This article uses archaeological evidence from the Agora Bone Well in Athens as well as evidence from three other wells in the ancient Mediterranean to answer these questions.

This research takes a comparative approach, and the methodology relies heavily on archaeological evidence from Maria Liston's et. all *The Agora Bone Well* because the findings are thorough, profound, and immense in quantity.<sup>1</sup> Primary literature of ancient Greece is lacking for the deaths of infants and the burial practices associated with them; nevertheless, Aeschylus, Pausanias, Plato, and Plutarch are used to supplement the archaeological evidence.

The main primary sources scholars have regarding these rituals are from Plutarch and Pausanias. Susan Wise also attempts to answer this research question in her PhD dissertation.<sup>2</sup> However, her research focuses on votives

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1 Maria Liston is a Classicist, Anthropologist, and Skeletal Biologist, who excavated The Agora Bone Well with Lynn M. Snyder and Susan Irene Rotroff.

2 Susan Wise, "Childbirth Votives and Rituals in Ancient Greece", PhD dissertation, (University of Cincinnati, 2005).

and epigraphical evidence and does not mention nor use archaeological evidence of infant bones or infants buried in wells, upon which this research and analysis heavily rely.

There are several other works regarding children, childbirth, and ancient rituals in classical antiquity, yet, none of them address the archaeological findings of Liston's (et. all) excavation. Thus, this research offers an addition to the discourse by combining the latest archaeological evidence with primary literary sources in order to gain a better understanding of rituals associated with perinatal infants.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Agora Bone Well Findings**

The findings at the Agora Bone Well in Athens are extensive. In 1938, Dorothy Burr Thompson and John Lawrence Angel found 175 infants in the well.<sup>4</sup> After further analysis, it was determined that there were 459 infants in the well (13,018 bones in total).<sup>5</sup> The archaeologists also identified 150 dogs in tandem.

While the well itself dates to the fifth century BC, its usage ceased between 175-150 BC. After that time, remains, such as infants, dogs, and pottery were discarded in the well. When the well was in use, it was used by the local artisan shops nearby.<sup>6</sup> Archaeological evidence

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3 Works by Robert Parker, Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow, Susan Guettel Cole, Leslie Preston Day, Lewis R. Farnell, Mark Golden, and several works by Nancy Demand.

4 J.L. Angel, "Skeletal Material from Attica," *Hesperia* 14 (1945), 311-312, 279-363.

5 Liston, et. all, *The Agora Bone Well*, 40.

6 Liston, et. all, *The Agora Bone Well*, 5.

shows that the shops and houses nearby were abandoned before the well was used as a burial place.<sup>7</sup>

The well is over twenty meters deep and infant and dog bones were found between 18.45 to 20.05 meters.<sup>8</sup> Researchers tested the infant bones and confirmed that the majority of the individuals died of natural causes, birth defects (cleft palate), or disease (possibly meningitis).<sup>9</sup> About 15% of the infants died between 24 to 34 weeks *in utero*, and the majority of the infants were 30 weeks *in utero* to 42 weeks.<sup>10</sup>

### Eretria Well

Similar to the evidence in the Agora Bone Well, both infant and dog bones were found in the Eretria well, which dates to the first half of the third century BC, and measured 1.20 meters in diameter and 5 meters deep.<sup>11</sup> Eretria is southeast on the mainland of Greece. Nineteen infants and 26 dogs in total were discovered. The age range of the infants and that of the dogs were comparable.<sup>12</sup> Testing has moreover shown

<sup>7</sup> Liston, et. all, *The Agora Bone Well*, 14.

<sup>8</sup> Liston, et. all, *The Agora Bone Well*, 3.

<sup>9</sup> Liston, et. all, *The Agora Bone Well*, 108; Maria A. Liston and Susan I. Rotroff, “Babies in the Well: Archaeological Evidence for Newborn Disposal in Hellenistic Greece,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Childhood and Education in the Classical World*, ed. Judith Evans Grubbs and Tim Parkin, (New York 2013), 73.

<sup>10</sup> Liston, et. all, *The Agora Bone Well*, 41.

<sup>11</sup> P. Ducrey and S.G. Schmid, “Les activites de l’Ecole Suisse d’archeologie en Grece 1996”, *AntK* 40 (1997), 103-108 in Liston, et. all, *The Agora Bone Well*, 107.

<sup>12</sup> Liston, et. all, *The Agora Bone Well*,

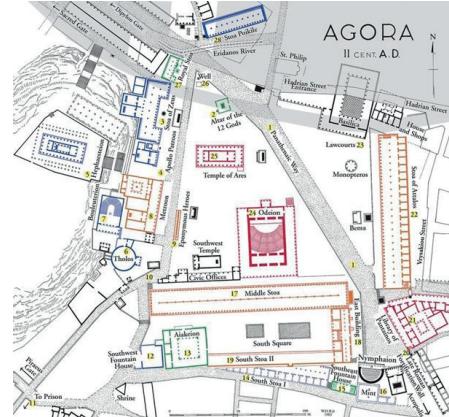


Fig. 2: Reconstruction map and grid of the Ancient Acropolis and Agora of Athens. The Agora Bone Well is marked as no. 26.

that the infants died in similar ways to those in the Agora-disease, birth defects, and natural causes.<sup>13</sup>

A Roman well in Eretria, dating to 300-250 BC, also uncovered archaeological evidence of infant burials. Thus far 23 infants have been identified.<sup>14</sup> The age range of these infants are also similar to those found in the Agora Bone Well and the third century BC Eretria well.

### Messene Well & Ashkelon Well

The Messene Well, which is from the Hellenistic period, contained dog bones and additionally, faunal bones. Messene is southwest on the Peloponnese of Greece. A staggering 262 infants were discovered here.<sup>15</sup> What is unique about

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<sup>13</sup> Liston, et. all, *The Agora Bone Well*, 107.

<sup>14</sup> Ducrey and Schmid, “Les activites de l’Ecole Suisse d’archeologie en Grece 1996”, in Liston, et. all, *The Agora Bone Well*, 108.

<sup>15</sup> Ducrey and Schmid, “Les activites de l’Ecole Suisse d’archeologie en Grece 1996”, in Liston, et. all, *The Agora Bone Well*, 109.

Messene is that the infants were buried in *amphorae*, unlike those in the Agora Bone Well. *Amphorae* are jars created from clay that were used to store and transport items, such as olive oil and wine; on occasion, they were also used to bury the deceased in. This well was not their first resting place; the infants in Messene are thought to have been reburied in the well because they were found in *amphorae*, which signifies transportation from another area. This may be due to a change in burial grounds.<sup>16</sup>

In Ashkelon (present-day Israel), a hundred infants, along with “animal bones, potsherds, and coins,”<sup>17</sup> were found in a sewer below a bathhouse. “The sewer was built in the third century AD and [its usage ceased] during the fifth century.”<sup>18</sup> Ashkelon might be considered a stretch to use as an example since the evidence is centuries apart from the other wells, but, if anything, it shows that these ancient practices were not confined to one century in particular, but rather, were common practices in the ancient world.

16 Chryssa Bourbou and Petros Themelis, “Child Burials at Ancient Messene”, in *L’Enfant et la mort dans l’Antiquité I Nouvelles recherches dans les nécropoles grecques Le signalement des tombes d’enfants*, eds. Anne-Marie Guimier-Sorbets and Yvette Morizot (Paris 2010), 115. Liston, et. all, The Agora Bone Well, 109.

17 Patricia Smith and Gila Kahila, ‘Identification of Infanticide in Archaeological Sites: A Case Study from the Late Roman-Early Byzantine Periods at Ashkelon, Israel’, JAS 19 (1992), 669, 667-675.

18 Smith and Kahila, “Identification of Infanticide in Archaeological Sites: A Case Study from the Late Roman-Early Byzantine Periods at Ashkelon, Israel,” 667.

## Conclusion to the Well Findings

From a brief overview of these wells and the archaeological evidence within them, commonalities appear, such as the use of a well for debris, the burial of infants, a high concentration of infants, the infants’ age range and causes of death, dog bones, and evidence of pottery sherds. For the world of classical antiquity, this practice does not seem to be unusual. Five wells may seem modest in the scope of the ancient world. However, five is also enough to infer a pattern of ancient practices within the every-day life of the polis.

## It was a part of life to experience perinatal death.

### Infant Rituals and Ceremonies: the *Amphidromia* ceremony

In the Greek poleis, the ritual ceremony *Amphidromia* took place between the fifth and tenth day after the birth of a child.<sup>19</sup> This ritual determined if a child was in good health and capable of becoming a functioning member in the polis. In Plato’s *Theaetetus*, Socrates said:

Shall we say that this is, so to speak, your new-born child and the result of my midwifery? [...] Well, we have at last managed to bring this forth, whatever it turns out to be; and now that it is born, we must in very truth perform the rite of running round with it in a circle [...] and see whether it may not turn out to be after all not worth rearing, but only a wind-egg, an imposture. But, per-

19 Lesly A. Beaumont, *Childhood in Ancient Athens: Iconography and Social History* (London 2012), 68.

haps, you think that any offspring of yours ought to be cared for and not put away; or will you bear to see it examined and not get angry if it is taken away from you, though it is your first-born?<sup>20</sup>

This ceremony was a way for the family to introduce the child to the polis, and it served as a way for Athenian children to be accepted into Greek society.<sup>21</sup> Infants were not named by the family until the *Amphidromia*.<sup>22</sup> If a child passed the *Amphidromia*, then the ceremony was celebrated with a feast.

### **Infant Rituals and Ceremonies for the Deceased**

The *Amphidromia* ceremony was for the living, but what about those infants found in the wells? The majority of the infants found in the aforementioned wells were stillbirths, infants with visible birth defects, or died within ten days of birth; thus, they did not live at all or live long enough to attend the *Amphidromia*.<sup>23</sup> Infants who had deformities, were unwanted, or had illnesses and were not thought to recover, were most likely handled by the parents *before* the ceremony.<sup>24</sup> As such, were there any burial rituals for these perinatal infants?

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20 Pl. Tht. 160e-161a.

21 Aesch. 3.216.

22 Liston and Rotroff, “Babies in the Well: Archaeological Evidence for Newborn Disposal in Hellenistic Greece”, 77.

23 Liston, et. al., *The Agora Bone Well*, 132.

24 Beaumont, *Childhood in Ancient Athens: Iconography and Social History*, 68; Liston and Rotroff, “Babies in the Well: Archaeological Evidence for Newborn Disposal in Hellenistic Greece”, 76.

I propose the Ancient Greeks conducted ceremonies for these infants.<sup>25</sup> I suggest this because at each archaeological site, infant remains were found whole or at least intact, which shows that infants were not thrown into the well from above. Instead, infants were lowered into the wells and placed intact. This suggests a few things: the practice was not done hastily or in secret. The evidence shows that the burial of infants in wells was a common practice in the ancient world. Ancient women, unfortunately, lost children more often than in today’s world. It was a part of life to experience and see others experiencing perinatal death. Therefore, rituals and ceremonies to bury infants must have been a common practice because the deaths of infants were a common occurrence.

### **The burial of infants was done privately by the oikos.**

Pausanias indicates that the *oikos* (the immediate family in one household) not only practiced rituals and ceremonies publicly, but they also practiced rituals privately.<sup>26</sup> Thus, infants were not just ‘tossed’ into wells. The Greeks had public and private rituals for everything. The Greeks might have thought it baffling to perform a task (in this case, disposing of dead infants) without some reverence, sacrifice, or prayers given to the gods. Hence, when they lowered the infants into the well, they took the time

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25 My own idea and proposal.

26 Beaumont, *Childhood in Ancient Athens: Iconography and Social History*, 71.

to offer dogs as a sacrifice to purify evil and protect the children in the afterlife. They also took care to place infant items with the children to keep them comfortable and at peace in the next life.<sup>27</sup> All of these things together indicate a completed ritual.

Furthermore, many primary sources record how the birthing process causes pollution. Thus, after birth, the mother and baby could not leave the household for the first ten days, since time was needed to complete purification rituals.<sup>28</sup> Thus, I conjecture that the burial of infants was done privately by the *oikos*, not publicly—or else, this would have caused pollution within the polis itself—as it was forbidden to enter places of worship while unclean.<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps the *oikos* performed their rituals privately, and then went to the well to bury their infant and sacrifice a dog for purification and protection. It can only be conjectured, since there is not a ritual handbook on how the Ancient Greeks practiced their customs. We only get glimpses of daily life, not complete pictures. Written sources and archaeological evidence can only take us as far as the data allows. While sources are silent on whether this particular ritual was a private or public one, let us



Fig. 3: The Ancient Agora of Athens. Photo taken October 2015 by Samantha Sink.

turn to the ritual items used to honor the deceased infants. It can be inferred from one item in particular that burial rituals for infants were dedicated to a specific deity.

### Goddess Dedication

Not only do I propose that the *oikos* completed private rituals regarding the death of their infants, but I also propose the possibility that the infants were dedicated to the goddess Hekate because of the dog bones found in these wells.<sup>30</sup> Hekate is a goddess of many origins. She is first seen in Athens in the sixth century BC.<sup>31</sup> Iconography of Hekate exists on reliefs, coins, vases, and gems.<sup>32</sup> There is also written evidence from Pausanias of a three-headed Hekate sculpture in Athens made by Alcamenes.<sup>33</sup> Hekate is depicted most often with one torch in each hand and hounds by her side.<sup>34</sup> Each torch is said

27 Beaumont, *Childhood in Ancient Athens: Iconography and Social History*, 54.

28 Pausanias 2.27.1; IGII 2 1035.10; Thucydides 2.52.3, Xenophon, *Hell.* 5.3.19; Aristophanes, Lys. 742 in Susan Wise, “Childbirth Votives and Rituals in Ancient Greece”, PhD dissertation, (University of Cincinnati, 2005), 26.

29 Euripides, IT 380-384 in Wise, “Childbirth Votives and Rituals in Ancient Greece,” 26.

30 Liston, et. al., *The Agora Bone Well*, 137.

31 L. Farnell, “Hekate: Representations in Art”, in *The Cults of the Greek States* (Cambridge 2010), 549.

32 Farnell, “Hekate: Representations in Art”, 555-556.

33 Paus. 5.38.

34 Farnell, “Hekate: Representations in Art”, 550.

to represent each world: that of the living and that of the dead.<sup>35</sup> She has power in both worlds, overseeing each person's entrance to life and protecting them when they die before their time.<sup>36</sup> Like many deities in the ancient Mediterranean, Hekate has many characteristics and qualities: she is a goddess of the underworld, 'warder to the gate of the Acropolis,'<sup>37</sup> the gate of households, and the gates of hell.<sup>38</sup> Hekate is also a *kourotrophos* (protector of children).<sup>39</sup> As a result, these qualities and characteristics of Hekate allow us to associate a stronger connection to her with the burial sites where there are dog bones and infants. Her statues or shrines in ancient times were located at cross-roads.<sup>40</sup>

## Dogs were thought to purify pollution and ward off evil.

Not only was there a statue of Hekate by the Temple of Athena Nike on the Acropolis, but there was also a cross-roads shrine at the entrance of the

Agora.<sup>41</sup> This may have been for her too, although it is unknown. The shrine and the Agora Bone Well are not too far apart in distance. While she was a lesser-known goddess and used more in private households, this does not mean she did not play a big role in the Greek polis.<sup>42</sup>

### Dogs

As discovered in the aforementioned wells, dog bones were unearthed. I speculate dogs were sacrificed to Hekate by the *oikos* in order to request protection for their perinatal infants, and I agree with Plutarch, also supported by Susan Wise, that these dogs were sacrificed in order to purify the events surrounding these perinatal deaths within the private household.<sup>43</sup> As previously stated, dogs were thought to purify pollution and ward off evil—to the Ancient Greeks childbirth was seen as pollution.<sup>44</sup> There were many things one could do to purify a household and sacrificing to Hekate was one of them.<sup>45</sup>

### Conclusion

Historians may never know the rituals performed or words spoken when parents disposed of their perinatal infants,

35 L. Farnell, "Hekate", in *The Cults of the Greek States* (Cambridge 2010), 507.

36 Liston, et. all, *The Agora Bone Well*, 137.

37 Farnell, "Hekate", 517. Aesch. *Doubtfully Ascribed Fragments* 489c. Farnell, "Hekate: Representations in Art", 552. Paus. 2.10.

38 Farnell, "Hekate", 515.

39 Wise, "Childbirth Votives and Rituals in Ancient Greece", 34, 36, 45, 160.

40 Farnell, "Hekate", 504.

41 Wycherley, "Minor Shrines in Ancient Athens", 284.

42 Farnell, "Hekate", 512. "Hekate is classed with Pan by Artemidorus."

43 Wise, "Childbirth Votives and Rituals in Ancient Greece", 36-37; Plut. *Mor. Quaest. Rom.* 52.

44 Wise, "Childbirth Votives and Rituals in Ancient Greece", 36-37; Plut. *Mor. Quaest. Rom.* 52.

45 Plut. *Mor. Quaest. Rom.* 280c.

why wells were seen as an acceptable burial place for infants that did not survive long enough for the *Amphidromia* ceremony, or who the infants were dedicated to at time of death. However, archaeological evidence and scientific testing of the cranial bones have shown that the perinatal children were lowered into the well for burial, instead of tossed in, which indicates the special care the *oikos* had for their dead infants. These rituals may have been privately done by the household, as can be deduced from primary sources, and in turn, archaeological evidence supports that the practice was common in the Greek polis. There were rituals and ceremonies for infants that survived beyond ten days and for those that did not. The dogs in the wells indicate that sacrifices were made to purify both the event and household from the pollution of childbirth and the evil surrounding death, as well as protect the dead in the underworld.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, a new association was offered up, namely that these infants were dedicated to the goddess Hekate because of the findings of the dog bones and their association to protection and purification surrounding both birth and death.

### Further Exploration

For further exploration, it would be interesting to see what sacrifices were found in the Agora crossroads well near the Agora Bone Well, and to know how far apart they were. Perhaps discoveries can tell if perinatal children were placed in the Agora Bone Well because of its

location off the main road. Its location would have kept pollution out of sight of everyday citizens and the main cross-roads well clear for public use. Another thought for further exploration would be the practice of motherhood and midwifery as told from the perspective of ancient women, if any (even a few) sources exist. Another question for future research might include: Why would the Ancient Greeks bury perinatal children in unused wells within city walls?

Further study regarding why the Agora Bone Well ceased to be used for water and why the locals moved away could furthermore lead to fruitful research, especially because a cistern in the same vicinity also ceased to be used concurrently.<sup>47</sup> This may indicate a pattern, which could point to abandonment due to social or economic reasons.

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<sup>46</sup> Plut. *Mor. Quaest. Rom.* 280c.; Ibidem 52.

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<sup>47</sup> Liston, et. all, *The Agora Bone Well*, 19.

# Nederlands eerste Gouden Eeuw

**Fabienne Maraite**

Ongeveer negentien eeuwen geleden, in 121 na Christus, begon keizer Hadrianus aan zijn eerste buitenlandse reis die hem langs de Rijn door de Lage Landen zou leiden. Zijn beleid, in tegenstelling tot dat van zijn voorganger Trajanus, was gericht op consolidatie in plaats van expansie. Het zorgde voor een bloeiperiode in Romeins Nederland, waarvan steeds meer sporen worden teruggevonden. Onderzoeker Tom Buijtendorp heranalyseert enkele archeologische cold cases in zijn boek *De gouden eeuw van de Romeinen in de Lage Landen* om zo een nieuw perspectief op deze periode van voorspoed voor Romeins Nederland te bieden.

Met de recentelijke toekenning van een substantiële Nationale Wetenschaps Agenda-subsidie voor het onderzoeksproject ‘Constructing the Limes’, onder leiding van archeoloog en universitair docente aan de Universiteit Utrecht Saskia Stevens, is er verdere publieke en wetenschappelijke aandacht gevestigd op de Romeinse geschiedenis van Nederland. Buijtendorps onderzoek

sluit hier naadloos op aan, doordat hij bekende en onbekende vondsten uit Romeins Nederland toegankelijk maakt voor een breed publiek. Hierbij komt hij tot interessante conclusies en bevindingen, zoals de Romeinse fundamenteen van het Nederlandse poldermodel en een aangebouwde badvleugel van de villa van Simpelveld, die als verklaring zou dienen voor het opmerkelijke reliëf op de bekende sarcofaag van Simpelveld die te vinden is in het Rijksmuseum voor Oudheden te Leiden.

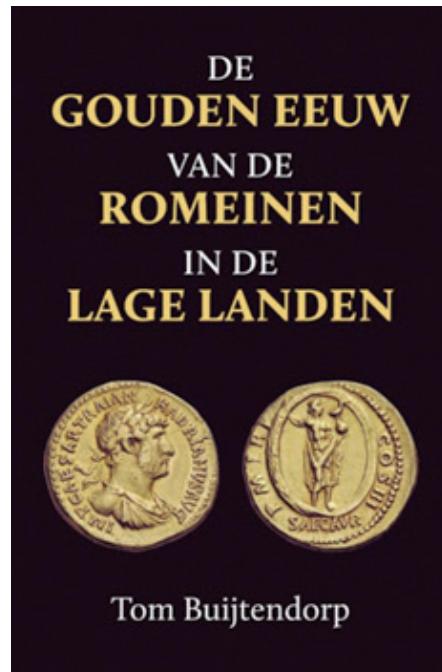
De inleiding bevat een beschouwing van het begrip ‘gouden eeuw’. Het begrip is door de tijd heen voor verschillende periodes en vakgebieden gebruikt, bijvoorbeeld de gouden eeuw van de klassieke literatuur in de eerste eeuw voor Christus. Buijtendorp zelf stelt dat het in zijn boek enkel als ruwe tijdsbepaling wordt gebruikt. Hij benoemt echter enkel terloops dat het moderne begrip sterk geproblematiseerd is in de afgelopen jaren en behandelt, in tegenstelling tot zijn voornemen ook ‘de roestige rand’ van de gouden eeuw

te belichten, op een luttele vijf pagina's kindersterfte, ongelijkheid en slavernij.

Buijtendorp stelt verder dat deze Romeinse gouden eeuw zich kenmerkte door welvaart in de Lage Landen. Ondanks zijn grondige onderzoek blijft het onduidelijk hoe deze welvaart zich verhield tot de voorgaande periode en waarom aspecten zoals infrastructuur, architectuur en landinrichting zijn gekozen voor de analyse. Het lijkt hierbij eerder een bundeling van losse onderzoeken binnen eenzelfde periode met vernieuwende bevindingen te betreffen, dan een veelzijdige analyse van de Romeinse gouden eeuw in de Lage Landen. Als gevolg hiervan bevatten enkele hoofdstukken diepgravende uitleg van archeologische bevindingen, waarbij de lezer verloren raakt in de vele details.

Dit alles neemt niet weg dat *De gouden eeuw van de Romeinen in de Lage Landen* zeer interessante bevindingen presenteert, op basis van innovatief eigen onderzoek. Daarbij vormt de uitgebreide literatuurlijst een goede ingang voor iedereen die verdieping zoekt binnen een specifiek onderwerp. Ondanks dat het boek dus wat balans en nuance mist, biedt het interessante perspectieven voor geïnteresseerden in de Romeinse geschiedenis en archeologie van Nederland, waarbij voorkennis niet vereist is.

Hij komt tot interessante bevindingen, zoals de Romeinse fundamenten van het poldermodel.



Afb. 1: Tom Buijtendorp, *De gouden eeuw van de Romeinen in de Lage Landen*. Uitgeverij OmniaBoek, Utrecht, 2021. 239 pagina's, €22,50.

# Onmogelijk mens of nationale held?

**Famke Telman**

Wat maakt een verzetsheld? Over die vraag buigt Rutger Bregman zich in zijn nieuwe gelijknamige boek. Na het succes van *De Meeste Mensen Deugen* toont Bregman deze keer aan dat misschien juist het tegendeel waar is. Bregman geeft ons in het boek een inkijkje in het leven van verzetsheld Arnold Douwes. Wanneer je tegen Douwes gezegd zou hebben dat de meeste mensen deugen, zou hij je volgens Bregman ongetwijfeld hebben uitgelachen. De meeste mensen waren juist lafaards, vond hij.

In het boekje, dat slechts 61 pagina's telt, duikt Bregman in de Nederlandse geschiedenis van de Tweede Wereldoorlog en zoekt antwoord op de vraag wat verzetshelden dreef. Waarom gingen sommigen in het verzet, terwijl anderen liever binnen de gestelde grenzen van de bezetter bleven? Het zijn vragen die al vaak gesteld zijn bij onderzoek naar de Tweede Wereldoorlog en dat maakt het boek ook niet vernieuwend. Een volhardend antwoord op deze vraag komt er dan ook in het werk van Breg-

man, zoals te verwachten valt, niet. Het verhaal van verzetsheld Douwes geeft echter wel een mooi kijkje in het leven van een lid van het verzet en laat daarnaast zien hoe een verzetsheld ook een mens is met gebreken. Douwes bleek al op jonge leeftijd een onmogelijk mens, maar in tijden van crisis deed hij wat de meeste Nederlanders niet deden.

Het verhaal van Arnold Douwes is daarom bewonderenswaardig. Douwes was er al vroeg van overtuigd dat de Duitsers de joden wilden uitroeiën en wist dit zijn omgeving duidelijk te maken. Hij was goed in het overtuigen van potentiële helpers om onderduikers in huis te nemen en accepteerde zelden nee. Als iedereen onderduikers had, kon niemand elkaar verraden. Wat zorgde er verder voor dat sommige Nederlanders hier wel toe bereid waren en anderen niet?

Nieuw onderzoek naar de motivatie van verzetshelden doet Bregman zelf niet, maar hij maakt gebruik van andere grote onderzoeken naar het verzet.

Deze onderzoeken hebben hetzelfde doel als Bregman, namelijk erachter komen wat men aanzet tot verzet. Bregman laat in zijn hoofdstukken de uitkomsten van deze onderzoeken door het verhaal van Arnold Douwes lopen, wat Douwes de perfecte casestudy maakt. Het verhaal van de verzetsheld, waarvoor Bregman diens dagboek als bron gebruikte, geeft een menselijk randje aan de onderzoeken die bestaan uit data analyses en statistisch werk. De interesse naar het verzet lijkt in lijn te liggen met Bregmans interesse naar het goede in de mens.

*Wat maakt een verzetsheld?* is een kort essay dat een glimp van het verzet geeft aan iemand die weinig kennis heeft over deze geschiedenis. Vernieuwende inzichten geeft het echter niet. Nieuwe conclusies worden in dit boek niet getrokken, maar het geeft een overzicht van bestaande werken die dezelfde vraag als Bregman trachten te beantwoorden. Voor hen die op zoek zijn naar laagdrempelige informatie over het verzet is *Wat maakt een verzetsheld?* de perfecte inleiding.

## Als iedereen onderduikers had, kon niemand elkaar verraden.



Afb. 1: Rutger Bregman, *Wat maakt een verzetsheld?* De Correspondent Uitgevers B.V., 61 pagina's, €10,-.

# Moeder van de blues

**Wieger Lagerveld**

Op een warme dag in 1927 komt blueszangeres Ma Rainey met haar entourage en bandleden naar een muziekstudio in Chicago om onder andere het nummer *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* op te nemen. Dit is de setting van de gelijknamige film die is geproduceerd door Denzel Washington en is geregisseerd door George C. Wolfe, gebaseerd op het beroemde toneelstuk van August Wilson uit 1982. De film vertoont slechts een paar uur aan vertelde tijd en speelt zich vrijwel volledig af op dezelfde locatie: de muziekstudio. Juist deze opzet is de kracht van de film doordat het de mogelijkheid geeft om onderwerpen die de muren van de studio overstijgen, zoals ongelijkheid en racisme, te behandelen.

Die onderwerpen worden met name verteld vanuit de twee hoofdpersonen. Allereerst Ma Rainey zelf, gespeeld door Viola Davis. Gertrude Rainey (1886-1939), dus ook wel 'Ma Rainey' genoemd, was een van de eerste echte blueszangeressen en wordt door haar invloed op een volgende generatie blues-artiesten ook wel de 'moeder van de blues' genoemd. In de film legt Ma Rainey haar zangtalent niet zomaar in handen van de producers in Chicago. De relatie tussen haar en de witte pro-

**Gerecenseerd werk:** George C. Wolfe, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. Netflix, 2020.

ducers laat zien dat een eerlijke behandeling voor zwarte artiesten in die tijd verre van zelfsprekend was: 'They don't care nothing about me. All they want is my voice.' De koppige manier van onderhandelen werkt voor Ma Rainey en hier wijkt ze gedurende de film dan ook niet vanaf.

De andere centrale figuur is de jonge



Afb. 1: Gertrude Pridgett 'Ma' Rainey. Bron: Donaldson Collection.

talentvolle trompettist Levee, die veelal in de inspeelruimte met de andere bandleden aan het repeteren is. De eigenzinnige Levee, gespeeld door de inmiddels overleden Chadwick Boseman, probeert op zijn eigen manier verder te komen in de muziekbusiness. Hierin laten de makers echter een nog problematischere kant van die wereld zien. Levee probeert eigen gemaakte nummers geproduceerd te krijgen maar wordt daarin, zo blijkt later, afgezet door de producer. Als de bandleden hem vragen waarom hij toch zo vriendelijk deed tegenover de ‘white folk’ raakt hij geïrriteerd en vindt dat ze hierover niet mogen oordelen. Wat volgt, is een steeds aan intensiteit en emotie toenemende monoloog waarin Levee verteld over de gruweligheden die witte mannen hem en zijn familie in het verleden hebben aangedaan en waarom hij dus zijn eigen manier heeft om om te gaan met de ‘witte man’.

Het lukt Levee niet zich te uiten in de muziek die hij gevraagd wordt te spelen. Gecombineerd met de reeds

opgekomen emoties uit hij zijn woede op de band. Na eerst een bandlid met een mes te bedreigen zorgt die extreme frustratie, ingegeven door trauma’s uit het verleden, tot een zeer heftig einde van de film. Hoewel een dusdanig einde naar mijn mening niet nodig was om het verhaal te vertellen, gaat de film hierdoor in ieder geval niet als een nachtkaars uit.

Vanuit een opnamesessie in een muziekstudio in Chicago weet Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom je met sterk acteerwerk te boeien en de ongelijke verhoudingen tussen artiest en producer en zwart en wit weer te geven. Een echte aanrader, voorzien van de nodige muzikale blues intermezzo’s.

## **Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom weet je te boeien.**



Afb. 2: Ma Rainey met haar band in 1923. Bron: Michael Ochs Archives.

