

Van Ginkel, Rob: 'Foreigners' views of the Dutch: past and present.' In: *Dutch Crossing. A journal of Low Countries studies*, vol. 20, nr. 1, summer 1996. P. 117-131.

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FOREIGNERS' VIEWS OF THE DUTCH: PAST AND PRESENT

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Introduction¹

It is probably a truism to state that small nations are more curious about the way they are perceived by larger and more powerful nations with which they are closely related than the other way round. This goes especially for the Dutch, who are quite sensitive as to what foreigners hold of their ways. It is 'the touchiness of a small nation with a great past',² a nation still eager to play a role — albeit a very modest one — on the world stage. Perhaps that is why Dutch politicians and news reporters take careful note of whatever is said about the Netherlands and its people. And when a former prime minister does not get the NATO job he applied for, some Dutch politicians will not hesitate to attribute this failure to the image of the Netherlands abroad.

But even in the past, what was written about the Dutch did not go unnoticed. If necessary, works were translated. For example, Lodovico Guicciardini's *Descrittione di tutti i Paesi Bassi* [Description of all the Low Countries], originally published in 1567, was translated and published in Dutch in 1612.³ It is one of the earliest travel reports pertaining to the Netherlands, but certainly not the last. From the sixteenth century on, a steady flow of foreigners' views on the Netherlands and the Dutch people has been published. These travel reports, memoirs, and proto- and pre-ethnographic observations offer a kaleidoscopic image of the Dutch landscape, society and culture through the centuries. In this article I will focus entirely on what has been remarked concerning the so-called 'national character' (or national 'soul', 'spirit', 'mind') of the Dutch. That is, what struck foreign visitors in the norms

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and values, mores and manners, virtues and vices of the Dutch. Of course, given the multitude of texts — there are several hundreds of them — I can only briefly deal with these images and I will have to categorize and generalize. I will do so on the basis of a selection of the available literature. I should also emphasize that I am dealing not with the way the Dutch *were* or *are*, but with the way they were or are *seen*, or in other words: with the *perception* of their 'collective mentality'.

Older images of Dutch national character

Let me start with Guicciardini's book, which set an example for many others who visited the Netherlands. This Italian aristocrat perceived the Dutch as a calm, faithful, moderate, friendly, trustworthy and frank people, who were not ambitious, not presumptuous, not jealous, to mention some of the positive characteristics he presented. On the negative side, he deemed the Dutch greedy, curious, credulous, stubborn, and dipsomaniacal. On this last trait he added apologetically that drinking liquor served to drive away melancholy, which in turn was caused by the damp climate. (By the way, many travellers have established a link with some of the Dutch national characteristics — most notably phlegm — and the watery physical environment.) Guicciardini further devoted some attention to Dutch women in his book: among many other things, he thought they were good-looking, kind, skilful in trade, energetic, frugal, industrious, somewhat bold but at the same time respectable and virtuous. Guicciardini's travel report became an important source for seventeenth-century writers on the Netherlands and it even served as a travel guide *avant la lettre*.

The balance of positive and negative qualifications has changed over time, while there were often considerable differences between the views of for example British, French and German travellers-cum-writers on the idiosyncracies of 'the Dutch way of life'. These changing perceptions were inextricably intertwined with the internal developments in the nations of visited and visitor, but also with the changing balance of power between these nations. This is perhaps most apparent in the case of the Germans.⁴

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The Germans

In the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth centuries, the Germans were quite positive about their Dutch neighbours. They highly admired the wealth of the Netherlands and its achievements in science, art, and literature. In general, they praised the Dutch national character. But in the mid-eighteenth century, this flattering image faded away quite suddenly and was replaced by a rather critical view. The idea that in Holland everything happened fifty years later than in the rest of the world, an idea attributed to Heinrich Heine, originated in this time. The German opinion on the Dutch even became scornful, especially so in *belles lettres*. It must be said that the Republic's Golden Age was over and although the country was still wealthy, there was little to boast about. At the same time, the Germans experienced a period of self-confidence, and their writers glorified their own country and people. Johann Gottfried Herder, Goethe and others saw the Dutch as a decadent trading nation without poetry, with a culture which had not developed since Humanism, speaking a barbaric language, a rich but cold, rigid and narrow-minded people. The Dutch had gathered their wealth only because of their tremendous greediness and stinginess. The Germans nicknamed the Netherlands the China of Europe, petrified in its own antiquated cultural province. The country was little more than the alluvial deposit of German rivers. What had started as criticism had become ridicule. It was only towards the end of the nineteenth century that the image of the Dutch in German eyes gradually improved again (possibly because industrialization and modernization in the Netherlands began to take off in this period, much later than in Germany and England).

The French

French travellers were predominantly attracted to the Netherlands for its fame as a Republic and for its art. The image they produced of the Netherlands resonates with earlier views. The Dutch were portrayed as a wealthy, tolerant, virtuous and moderate people. And whereas German writers became quite critical in the second half of the eighteenth century, French

writers (*philosophes*) like Voltaire, Diderot and Montesquieu — who were critics of the French *Ancien Régime* — admired the Dutch republic for its tolerance, sense of liberty, relatively egalitarian conditions, quasi-democracy, cleanliness, the simplicity and purity of its mores, and so on. They even idealized the country, though

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they certainly were no 'hollandofiles'. For of course there was also criticism, especially about the people's rudeness, stinginess, greed, slowness and so forth. And the critique became louder when the French established their republic whereas the Dutch republic turned into a kingdom. For instance, Lepeintre denounced the Dutch for their national pride, their inhospitability, curiosity, and calculating minds.

The English

Perhaps the best known seventeenth-century report on the Dutch is ambassador Sir William Temple's book *Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands*, published in 1672.⁵ Temple pointed out that the Dutch were, among many other things, moderate, that is: they had little feeling for *savoir-vivre*, they were not spontaneous, they could control their desires and passions (except for their curiosity), they lacked a notion of romantic love, etcetera. Other seventeenth-century travellers and writers admired the industriousness and economy of the Dutch people. But traders thought differently, and by the second half of the eighteenth century the English perception was distorted by a mixture of admiration and jealousy. The pejorative connotations of the adjective 'Dutch' — as in 'Dutch courage', 'Dutch uncle', 'Dutch treat' and so on — originate in this era of competition over world trade hegemony. The English were perhaps the most critical (compared with the Germans and the French) in their view of the Dutch. In response to the negative representation in English publications, at least one Dutch author felt compelled to write a treatise in defence of the Dutch nation's 'honour'.⁶

Of course, these more or less impressionistic images are not only heavily influenced by the power balances between nations, but also by the writers' cultural background, their norms and values, beliefs and convictions. This can make for tensions between the images of foreigners and the self-images of those portrayed. The observer's personality, gender, age, religion, education and profession are also of consequence. Contacts were often established with persons of a similar background, which make generalizations hardly reliable, to say the least. Moreover, it is well-known that these travellers used older travelogues and often copied entire sections, at the same time reproducing certain images. Their main destination was usually the province of Holland and urban settings were visited more frequently than rural ones. Sometimes

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these travellers had not even visited the sites they nonetheless vividly described (there are several examples of these so-called 'imaginary voyages'). In addition, there are many examples of travel reports which are based on only a short visit of a couple of days or a couple of weeks. Even if the travellers did indeed base their writings on first hand information and a prolonged stay in the Netherlands, they still had to conform to style conventions, like all travellers who had been on a Grand Tour. For there were blueprints of the ideal travel report. The titles of two books on this genre are telling in this respect: *Travellers and Travel Liars* and *Travel Facts and Travel Fiction*.¹ Novelists, whether they were German, French or English, were particularly prone to create caricatures of their Dutch protagonists: Voltaire had

his Vanderdendur, Johann Peter Hebel his *Kannitverstan*, and in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* the Dutch captains are shrewd and unreliable.⁸ Of course, we are dealing here with stylistic devices. And luckily for the Dutch, Mary Mapes Dodge's *Hans Brinkers* is of a different calibre. This book has shaped the ordinary American picture of Holland more strongly than any guidebook.⁹ But on the other hand, Kathleen Verduin, who reviewed the stereotypical image of the Dutch in American literature, states that Dutch characters are usually presented as stolid and phlegmatic.¹⁰

The problems of travel reports and other such sources notwithstanding, Dutch authors in their turn to some extent began to copy what foreigners perceived as 'typically Dutch'. One of the first to do so was W.A. Ockerse, who in 1797 published a book on the national character of the Dutch.¹¹ Another well-known example is historian Robert Fruin's article on Dutch national character.¹² But it is perhaps even clearer after the turn of the century, when national character studies became popular in academe. But rather than devoting more attention to the foreign image of the Dutch in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries — an image which was, by the way, generally quite favourable¹³ — I will briefly say something about the Dutch self-image as scholars articulated it.

Images and Self-images in the 1930s and 1940s

In the 1930s and 1940s, many Dutch sociologists and historians have presented their views on Dutch national character. The character traits

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which dominate these images are as follows: spirit of liberty, individualism and particularism, critical attitude, aversion to selfglorification, penchant for irony, prudence, frugality, seriousness, peacefulness, tolerance, faithfulness, perseverance, diligence, honesty, religiosity, domesticity, malice, bourgeois mentality, cleanliness, reserve and sobriety.¹⁴ The list could be extended, since the terminology is not unequivocal. For instance, the notion of 'reserve and sobriety' is a condensation of a string of terms including a lack of emotion, a lack of passion and a lack of imagination, calmness, moderation, stiffness, dourness, reticence, modesty, self-containment, composure, coldness, dullness, conservatism, a penchant for routine and limited interest in the new, the unknown and the romantic. As the famous historian Johan Huizinga claimed, Dutch national culture was *burgerlijk* 'in every sense' that one could 'legitimately attach to that word' (and *burgerlijk* refers to both citizenship and a bourgeois mentality, to 'civility').¹⁵ For Huizinga, *burgerlijkheid* implied 'honesty, a scant receptiveness for rhetoric, an immunity to political extremes, and a minimum tendency, comparatively speaking, for national self-glorification that goes hand in hand with a certain urge for national self-abnegation and being open for appreciating what crosses the borders'.¹⁶ But Huizinga's remarks did not just reflect what the Dutch 'spirit' was, but how it *should be*: he made a moral statement in a time of rising fascism and national-socialism.¹⁷ Anyway, I think it is clear that there is a continuity with many of the characteristics foreigners mentioned earlier. This is not so surprising, since several Dutch authors used their observations to compose their portrait of the Dutch.

But there are also striking similarities between the mental dispositions they mentioned and those mentioned by an anthropologist working in the United States, but who did not have any first hand experience with Dutch people in the Netherlands. This anthropologist was Ruth Benedict. During the Second World War, she was employed by the Office of War Information, and in 1944 it requested her to write a memorandum on Dutch national

character. The Office of War Information wanted to avoid friction between American soldiers and Dutch civilians and felt the troops should have some notion of what kind of people the Dutch were. To this end, Benedict used all sorts of written material (such as folkloristic books, novels, newspaper clippings, and letters) and she and her assistants also interviewed twenty-five persons who

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were of Dutch origin or experts on Dutch society and culture. On the basis of the data gathered in this way, she produced four texts. One of these, entitled *A Note on Dutch Behaviour*, contains a sketch of the Dutch national character. She portrayed 'the typical Netherlander' as a moralizing, individualistic, liberty-loving, peace-loving, tolerant, self-assured, proud, ironic, puritan, tidy, prudent, thrifty, conservative, domestic, serious and somewhat melancholy person, very conscious of class and social distinctions. Even with limited information at her disposal, Benedict was apparently able to reconstruct the national character of Netherlanders in a way that was more or less congruent with what Dutch scholars considered 'typically Dutch'.¹⁸

Interestingly, in 1948 UNESCO organized a public opinion poll in nine countries, among which the Netherlands. The respondents had a limited choice of twelve words and could indicate which of these they deemed typical of other peoples as well as of themselves. The self-image of the Dutch was: peace-loving (68%), hardworking (62%), intelligent (49%), progressive (43%), brave (37%), practical (36%), and self-controlled (36%).¹⁹ There is some overlap with traits mentioned by Benedict and by Dutch scholars, but there are also some new ones, like intelligence and progressiveness. Taking the plethora of characterizations into account, one might wonder why certain attitudes are stamped as 'the Dutch national character'. Why are some traits mentioned, and others not? Why do some authors explicitly cite certain traits, and overlook others, which are in fact alluded to by their colleagues? Are they arbitrary enumerations, loose collections of qualifications, elements selected at will? I will return to these questions, but suffice it to say for the moment that a large part of these studies have an impressionistic touch.

Recent Images and Self-images

After the Second World War, national character descriptions and theories became highly controversial in the social sciences and history. Apart from the link often established between these notions and extreme forms of nationalism or racism, there are problems of an academic nature: such studies can easily lead to homogenization, reification, psychologizing and static descriptions; to reductionism, determinism, simplification, caricature and stereotype.

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Nonetheless, in popular descriptions by foreigners it is still common practice to present what are perceived as the Dutch national characteristics. However, the authors often explicitly state that they present their own, highly personal views, not to be mistaken for an objective description. They like to exaggerate, do not mention those qualities they consider well-known, and stress the peculiarities of the Dutch and the many façades, puzzles and paradoxes in their behaviour. And the Dutch audience loves these subjective accounts. Books like Duke de Baena's *The Dutch Puzzle*, Rentes de Carvalho's *Waar die andere God woont* [Where the other God lives], Derek Phillip's *De naakte Nederlander* [The Naked Dutchman] and more recently Colin White and Laurie Boucke's *The Undutchables*, Christian Chartier's *Het verdriet*

van Nederland [The Sorrow of the Netherlands] and Sylvain Ephimenco's *Hollandse kost* [Dutch Grub] have become bestsellers.²⁰ This is all the more remarkable, since the image of the Dutch they present is fairly critical. Apparently, the Dutch have a penchant for masochism because they like to take a look in this mirror, which sometimes turns out to be a carnival mirror: the blunter the remarks, the more popular the book, or so it would seem. The Dutch are so curious that they even ask foreigners to present their views in scholarly and other journals and compile collections of essays on such images.²¹ Newspapers often devote attention to 'image reports', i.e. reports concerning the way foreigners perceive Holland.

Why does this curiosity exist (and persist)? According to some authors, the Dutch are not very sensitive to criticism because they are not nationalistic or even dislike their own country. According to others, however, — most notably Chartier and Ephimenco — the Dutch are chauvinists who are convinced that they live in paradise. If the critique is quite harsh and concerns core values such as tolerance, the Dutch will be insulted and say the writers are ignorant, or so they claim. Both claims are valid. As the Dutch sociologist A.N.J. den Hollander wrote some decades ago about the Netherlands and other small nations: 'They can sometimes mock their own national traits and peculiarities, but self-irony is often a sublimated form of embarrassed vanity and in secret one admires one's own shortcomings, which in fact it is quite human to do.'²² And their harsh judgements notwithstanding, writers like Rentes de Carvalho, White & Boucke, Chartier and Ephimenco find an enthusiastic Dutch readership. Their books constitute a powerful antidote to

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Dutch complacency. They have even stimulated some Dutch authors to be equally critical; for example Henk Pröpper, whose *Waterlanders* was published recently.²³ Of course these works are ridden with stereotypes, clichés, and prejudices, and the authors readily admit that this is so. Let me present two examples.

Summarizing White & Boucke's *The Undutchables* in a few sentences, the authors first deny that the dominant image of the Dutch as an independent, freedom-loving, egalitarian, friendly and tolerant people is accurate, and subsequently contend that the Dutch are nationalists, moralists, faultfinders (especially concerning foreigners), but in their turn they cannot stand criticism uttered by foreigners; they are greedy, lazy and permissive, their children are spoiled and impudent, they brag about non-discrimination but still discriminate and so forth. All of this is illustrated with nice examples and anecdotes. The second example is Ephimenco's book *Hollandse kost*. Ephimenco writes that for a long time his image of the Dutch had been quite favourable, but he changed his opinion following the response of the Dutch to a few critical reports in foreign newspapers. He uses the words 'Homo hollanditis' to refer to 'the Dutchman's swollen ego which is hidden behind his image of sobriety and modesty' (*het opgezwollen ego van de Nederlander dat schuilgaat achter een imago van nuchterheid en bescheidenheid*). The impression the Dutchman gives differs completely from how he is in reality: 'His first character trait is hypocrisy, larded with a misplaced sense of superiority which makes him the most arrogant wise guy in the world' (*Zijn eerste karaktertrek is schijnheiligheid, gelardeerd met een misplaatst superioriteitsgevoel dat hem tot de meest arrogante betweter ter wereld maakt*).²⁴ Austerity and lack of national pride are fictions, self-criticism is unknown to the Dutch, but they like to criticise everything and everyone else (especially foreigners). Even the oft-heralded egalitarianism is based on nothing except jealousy, and Ephimenco characterizes Dutch society as a basket full of crabs who are all thinking 'if I cannot get out of the basket, neither will you'.

According to themselves, these and other contemporary authors have attempted to shatter the time-honoured and dominant image of the Dutch. But has there ever been a dominant image of the Dutch? Some character traits (for example, tolerance, phlegm and curiosity) have often been mentioned, but we could make lists with hundreds of other

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characteristics. The verses singing of the Dutch are polyphonic, not only those sung by foreigners, but those sung by Dutch writers and scholars as well. It would appear that the mirror is in smithereens and the myriad pieces provide a kaleidoscopic image. This is not surprising. We should not see national character as an objective phenomenon but as a subjective field: 'a product of representation rather than ... a datum of empirical reality', according to 'imagologist' Joep Leerssen.²⁵

Conclusions

Are these images only mythical constructions or do they reflect reality to some extent? Of course, this is hard to say, since the images are based on both personal impressions (with their concomitant simplifications and biased selections) and, *at the same time*, they are based on observable aspects of social life (that is, for example, cultural traditions, communication codes, political arrangements). This is what makes it impossible to falsify or to corroborate such images: one can always come up with examples which do either. In other words: the peril of circular arguments is always lurking. This is particularly evident in publications which claimed that the Dutch national character could be inferred from works of art, most notably paintings, which would mirror this character. In this case, presuppositions will almost always be confirmed. Perhaps it is therefore best to concentrate on the *function* of these images of national character. For these images help to order the social world, they help classify and explain social experiences and they help to give meaning to normative and emotional judgements.²⁶ They can do so precisely *because* they are simplifications. But these images are also relational. Ask immigrant Moluccans about the Dutch labour ethos and they will say that the Dutch are a hardworking, disciplined and ambitious people. But if you ask Chinese immigrants they will say exactly the opposite.²⁷ There are, in other words, many images of the Dutch, and any attempt to describe their national characteristics objectively is bound to become meaningless because they cannot be compared with abstract global citizens with a standard culture pattern. At best, we can compare members of a specific nation with members of another specific nation, but even then we would wrongly assume cultural homogeneity. That is also the reason why in recent scholarly publications the emphasis is on pluriform images of the nation, and on multiple identities.²⁸

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Does this mean that I am denying that the Dutch have an identity of their own? Of course not. For one thing, there is the Dutch language, although we share it with several million people across the national borders. And perhaps some conventions *are* more or less typically Dutch. But most importantly, it is the subjective feeling of belonging, the feeling of being Dutch which makes the difference (and of course this is not a uniquely Dutch phenomenon). In the confrontation with 'others', we experience other cultural realities. And in an attempt to grasp these realities, to make them intelligible, we apparently always use generalizations, simplifications, and value judgements. As long as we are aware of this, there is no need to worry. But if we think stereotypes are absolute truths, we are in serious trouble. A few years ago, the Flemish novelist Kristien Hemmerechts wrote an article on the Dutch which

concluded: 'Another culture, even a neighbouring culture, is a minefield' *{Een andere cultuur, zelfs een aangrenzende cultuur, is een mijnenveld}*.²⁹ In exploring this field, one has to move extremely carefully. At the end of the day, as an anthropologist I would feel on much safer ground if the business of national stereotyping would be relegated to the realm of fantasy. This would enable scholars to study images as mythology, rendering claims to truth obsolete.

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NOTES

1. This article is based on a presentation in the lecture series 'Decoding the Netherlands' (Instituut Clingendael/ACCESS), The Hague, December 4, 1995.
2. P.B.M. Blaas, 'The Touchiness of a Small Nation with a Great Past'. In: A.C. Duke and C.A. Tamse (eds.), *Britain and the Netherlands* (Zutphen, 1985) pp. 133-161.
3. M.L. Guicciardini, *Beschrijvinghe van alle de Nederlanden* (Amsterdam, 1612).
4. The following sections are based on secondary literature dealing with sixteenth century and later travelogues pertaining to the Netherlands. Some general surveys are J.S. Bartstra, 'Onze voorouders door vreemden beoordeeld. (Voornl. 18e eeuw)'. *Onze Eeuw* 1912, 12, pp. 58-89; G. Brugmans, *Holland's spectrum, hoe anderen ons zien* (Baarn, 1929); A.C.J. de Vrankrijker, *In andermans ogen* (Utrecht, 1942); P.J. Meertens, 'Ce qu'on a dit des Pays-

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Bas'. *Revue de psychologie des peuples* 1950, 5, pp. 11-32; J.H. Kruizinga, *Nederland door vreemde bril* (Assen, n.d.); P.J. van Winter, *De Chinezen van Europa* (Groningen, 1965); J.M. Fuchs and W.J. Simons, *Het zal je maar gezegd wezen. Buitenlanders over Nederland* (Den Haag, 1977); K. Boschma, *Reizen in Napoleons tijd. Een avontuurlijke en soms hachelijke onderneming* (Abcoude, 1992); M. Meijer Drees, 'Holland en de Hollanders in de zeventiende-eeuwse beeldvorming'. *Nederlandse letterkunde* 1996, 1, pp. 57-70. On the German image of the Dutch, see C.V. Bock, 'Deutsche erfahrung Holland, 1725-1925. Eine Sammlung von hundert Berichten'. *Castrum Peregrini* 1956, 27/28, pp. 15-126; H. Meyer, 'Das Bild des Hollanders in der deutschen Literatur'. In: H. Meyer, *Zarte Empirie. Studien zur Literaturgeschichte* (Stuttgart, 1963), pp. 202-224; S. Schmidt, *Die Niederlande und die Niederländer im Urteil Deutscher Reisenden. Eine Untersuchung deutscher Reisebeschreibungen von der Mitte des 17. bis zur Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Siegburg, 1963); J. Bientjes, *Holland und die Holländer im Urteil deutscher Reisenden (1400-1800)*. (Groningen, 1967); F. Petri, 'Vom deutschen Niederlandebild und seinen Wandlungen'. *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter* 1969, 33, pp. 172-196; M. van Ackeren, *Das Niederlandebild im Strudel der deutschen romantischen Literatur* (Amsterdam, 1992); M. van Ackeren, 'Heinrich Heine, de vliegende en andere Hollanders'. *De Gids* 1993, 156, pp. 236-241. Authors dealing with the French travellers' image of the Dutch are R. Murriss, *La Hollande et les Hollandais au XVIIe et au XVIIIe siècles vus par les Français* (Paris, 1925); M.M.C. Koumans, *La Hollande et les Hollandais au XIXe siècle vus par les Français* (Maastricht, 1930); M.M.G. van Strien-Chardonneau, 'Holland als Utopia. Reisverslagen van Fransen in Holland (1750-1795)'. In: W.L. Idema et al. (eds.), *Het beeld van de vreemdeling in westerse en niet-westerse literatuur* (Baarn, 1990), pp. 89-101; M.M.G. van Strien-Chardonneau, *Le voyage de Hollande. Recits de voyageurs français dans les provinces-unies 1748-1795* (Groningen, 1992); M.M.G. van Strien-Chardonneau, 'Flegmatische hel of burgerlijk paradijs?' *De Gids* 1993, 156, pp. 231-236.

On the perception of British travellers, see R. Fruin, 'De Nederlanders der zeventiende eeuw door Engelschen geschetst'. *Volksalmanak van het Nut* 1861, pp. 75-87; H. Dunthorne, 'British Travellers in 18th-Century Holland. Tourism and the Appreciation of Dutch Culture'. *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 1982, 5, pp. 77-84; R. Holmes, 'Boswell tussen de tulpen'. *Atlas* 1991, 2, pp. 67-99; C.D. van Strien, *British Travellers in Holland during the Stuart Period. Edward Browne and John Locke as Tourists in the United Provinces* (Leiden, 1993).

5. William Temple, *Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands* (Oxford, 1972 [1672]).

6. E.M. Engelberts, *De verdediging van de eer der Hollandsche natie* (Amsterdam, 1763).

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7. Percy Adams, *Travelers and Travel Liars 1660-1800* (Berkeley, 1962). Zweder von Martels, *Travel Fact and Travel Fiction. Studies on Fiction, Literary Tradition, Scholarly Discovery and Observation in Travel Writing* (Leiden, 1994).

8. F.M.A. de Voltaire, *Candide* (Paris, 1759); J.P. Hebel, *Schatzkästlein des rheinischen Hausfreundes* (Tubingen, 1811); J. Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (London, 1726).

9. Herbert Rowen, 'American Travelers in Holland Through Two Centuries'. *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 1982, 97, pp. 617-640.

10. Kathleen Verduin, 'Stolid and Phlegmatic', *Ons Erfdeel* 1985, 28, pp. 669-678.

11. W.A. Ockerse, *Ontwerp tot eene algemeene characterkunde. Derde stukjen, behelzende het nationaal character der Nederlanderen* (Amsterdam, 1797).

12. Robert Fruin, 'Het karakter van het Nederlandsche volk'. In: R. Fruin, *Verspreide geschriften. Deel I. Historische Opstellen* ('s-Gravenhage, 1901 [1871]).

13. See for example D.S. Meldrum, *Home life in Holland* (London, 1911); Demetrius Boulger, *Holland of the Dutch* (London, 1913) and Henri Asselin, *La Hollande dans le monde* (Paris, 1921). Only the Germans were critical, for instance Friedrich Koch-Wawra, *Hollander* (Berlin, 1925).

14. Bart van Heerikhuizen, 'What is Typically Dutch? Sociologists in the 1930s and 1940s on the Dutch National Character'. *The Netherlands' Journal of Sociology* 1982, 18, pp. 103-125.

15. Johan Huizinga, *Nederland's Geestesmerk*. Rev. ed. (Leiden, 1946).[^]

16. Quoted in Peter Brusse, 'Dutch Culture: Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?' *Dutch Heights* 1989,3, p. 18.

17. Henk te Velde, 'How High Did the Dutch Fly? Remarks on Stereotypes of Burger Mentality'. In: A. Galema *et al.* (eds.), *Images of the Nation. Different Meanings of Dutchness, 1870-1940* (Amsterdam, 1993) pp. 59-80.

18. Rob van Ginkel, 'Typically Dutch... Ruth Benedict on the "National Character" of Netherlanders'. *Netherlands' Journal of Social Sciences* 1992, 28, pp. 50-71.

19. William Buchanan, 'Stereotypes and Tensions as Revealed by the Unesco International Poll'. *International Social Science Bulletin* 1951, 3, p. 520.

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20. Duke de Baena, *The Dutch Puzzle* (The Hague, 1968); Jose Rentes de Carvalho, *Waar die andere God woont* (Amsterdam, 1972); Derek Phillips, *De naakte Nederlander* (Amsterdam, 1985); Colin White and Laurie Boucke, *The Undutchables* (Montrose, 1989); Christian Chartier, *Het verdriet van Nederland* (Amsterdam, 1992); Sylvain Ephimenco, *Hollandse kost* (Amsterdam, 1994). On the basis of their long or even permanent stay in the Netherlands and of their occupational backgrounds, these authors have acquired an intimate knowledge of Dutch society and culture. Duke de Baena served his country (Spain) as a diplomat in The Hague during three terms: in the early 1920s, between 1945 and 1948, and from 1958 to 1964. Portuguese Jose Rentes de Carvalho (b. 1930) arrived in the Netherlands in 1956 and initially worked as a 'guest labourer'. Later on, he became a linguist at the University of Amsterdam and a well-known publicist. He still resides in the Netherlands. The American sociologist Derek Phillips (b. 1934) was appointed professor at the University of Amsterdam in 1971. He has lived in Amsterdam ever since. Colin White and Laurie Boucke, an Anglo-American couple, have been living in the Netherlands for twenty years. They have left the country in the meanwhile. The French journalist Christian Chartier (correspondent of *he Monde*) arrived in the Netherlands in 1989. Currently, he is a spokesman of the Yugoslavia tribunal in The Hague. His compatriot Sylvain Ephimenco (who writes for *Liberation*, among other papers), lives in the Netherlands since 1981 and published a novel written in Dutch. Both Chartier (b. 1957) and Ephimenco (b. 1956) are married with Dutch women. All these authors reside or have resided in the Randstad, the strongly urbanized western part of the country. This may have had an impact on their views.
21. See, for example, the special issues of *De Gids* 1987, 150; *Etnofoor* 1990, 3; *Atlas* 1991, 2, and Arendo Joustra's compilation *Vreemde ogen* [Foreign Eyes] (Amsterdam, 1993).
22. A.N.J. den Hollander, *Visie en Verwoording* (Assen, 1968 [1946]) p. 2.
23. Henk Pröpper, *Waterlanders. Bespiegelingen over de moraal van Nederland* (Amsterdam, 1995).
24. Ephimenco, *Hollandse kost*, p. 7 (both quotations).
25. J.Th. Leerssen, 'Echoes and Images: Reflections upon Foreign Space'. In: R. Corbey and J. Leerssen (eds.), *Alterity, Identity, Image. Selves and Others in Society and Scholarship* (Amsterdam, 1991) p. 129.
26. Nico Wilterdink, 'Images of National Character in an International Organization: Five European Nations Compared'. *Netherlands' Journal of Social Sciences* 1992, 28, pp. 43-47.

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27. Compare Wim Willems and Annemarie Cottaar, *Het beeld van Nederland. Hoe zien Molukkers, Chinezen, woonwagenbewoners en Turken de Nederlanders en zichzelf* (Baarn, 1989).
28. See for example W. Frijhoff, 'Identiteit en identiteitsbesef. De historicus en de spanning tussen verbeelding, benoeming en herkenning'. *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 1992, 107, pp. 614-634; A. Galema et al. (eds.), *Images of the Nation. Different Meanings of Dutchness, 1870-1940* (Amsterdam, 1993).
29. Kristien Hemmerechts, 'Amsterdam retour, alsjeblijft'. *Atlas* 1991, 2, p. 45.