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INTRODUCTION

CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE DUTCH-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP SINCE 1945

JAMES C. KENNEDY

Since 1945, the Netherlands is not only one of the most strongly pro-American countries in Europe, but also a country with demonstrably strong cultural ties to the United States. Its notable Anglophone cultural orientation, while obviously not aimed exclusively at America, has nevertheless drawn much of its inspiration from American influences and American examples. This orientation seems part and parcel of its postwar geopolitical position and culturally "open" tendencies. The Netherlands is, after all, a small decolonized maritime country that historically has had more confidence in a transatlantic American political leadership than in that of its larger continental rivals. It is a country, moreover, historically disposed to extensive cultural borrowing from the most dominant of its geographical neighbors — France, Britain, Germany and, after 1945, from a country farther off: the United States. Perhaps the Netherlands is, in its American cultural orientation, not unlike other countries on the northwestern edges of Europe, like Norway or Britain, though perhaps some eastern European countries have surpassed them in looking to the U.S. for political leadership. But for the last two-thirds of a century, there has been — to varying degrees — a Dutch fixation on the United States that has helped create a society that is, perhaps in all of continental Europe, the one that feels the closest culturally to the United States. The U.S. embassy in The Hague, Giles Scott-Smith reports in this volume, suggested back in 1952 that the Dutch were "perhaps closer ideologi-

cally to the United States than any people in Europe”—an assertion that may be as true today as it was then.

But which contours did the cultural dimensions of this relationship take? Scholars no longer subscribe to the notion of an American cultural juggernaut crushing everything European (or Dutch) before it, or of an American government powerful enough to assert a form of cultural imperialism over its Western European subjects. We understand now that Europeans (including the Dutch) did not swallow American cultural products hook, line and sinker but “mediated” them, “creolizing” American products and making them identifiably Dutch.¹ The United States may have been, as Mel van Elteren has noted, “the society of reference” for the Netherlands, but that did not, of course, mean that all things American were accepted; Europeans often found America most arresting as counterpoint, a society they were not, and would never want to be.² Indeed, the mediated acceptance of American products being anything but guaranteed, the appropriation of “America” varied from country to country, from decade to decade, from cultural sector to cultural sector. “Americanization”—understood here as the conscious borrowing of American cultural products³—was moreover a process that began at various levels, both “top down” (government) and “bottom up” (from the grassroots),⁴ and I would argue, from the middle: cultural brokers in charge of important institutions.

These insights and others, articulated by scholars in the last twenty years, have made it more difficult than before to trace Dutch-American cultural relations in straight lines, in which ideas and practices emanating in the United States were culturally transferred to the Netherlands to be applied there. The reception of American cultural products is simply too uneven a process to be described this way. Moreover, postwar cultural relations were not only a one-way street; in a modest way Dutch cultural products traveled in the other direction, and in any event, European and American institutions came to cross-pollinate one another. In some cases one could speak of a “double creolization”: the diary of Anne Frank was Americanized (as David Barnouw shows below) for U.S. theater audiences in the 1950s, only to be imported back to a rather different Dutch context, which would in turn develop its own relationship to her legacy. Cultural refraction, the multiple transfer of ideas, and the diffusion and fragmentation of cultural sectors have made it all the more difficult to trace patterns of influence.

Given all of this, it has become, furthermore, problematic to discuss transatlantic cultural relations in bilateral terms. Cultural ties between the two countries were often enough linked to other parties, and over time it has become more difficult to talk about ties between the Netherlands and the United States without talking about Europe as an entity with its own cultural policies and its own transnational cultural institutions.

INTRODUCTION

CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE DUTCH-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP

Having said all of this, however, it is important to offer a sketch of postwar Dutch cultural relations, at three distinct levels: government policy, “high” culture, and broader forms of cultural expression, from rock ‘n’ roll to religion. This is important for several reasons. In the first place, it is illuminating to see in *concrete* form how cultural ideas and practices traveled the Atlantic. Many of the subsequent essays offer relatively short sketches of how American cultural expression came to be appropriated in the Netherlands, offering us critical insights into the when, how, and where of cultural exchange. In a word, these contributions are a critical antidote to the amorphousness of cultural interaction that one sometimes encounters in broader overviews of the subject.

Second, and more important, is another pattern that emerged out of the postwar relationship: the strong but uneven presence of American cultural influence has always depended on the good offices of organizations, networks, and persons—sometimes the conscious product of government policies, sometimes not—that to a very significant extent have determined the vitality of cultural exchange between the two countries. Nor is this vitality simply dependent on American cultural products being adopted by Dutch artists and by Dutch consumers; it also has, in the widest sense, necessarily relied on Dutch cultural investment in the United States. The exchange has not been—could not be—exclusively one-sided, but has depended on cross-border traffic moving in both directions. Without active Dutch initiatives in the cultural sphere, whether on the governmental level or through private initiative, the American cultural presence in the Netherlands would have been more superficial and less culturally significant than it has been. In a word, even an asymmetrical relationship such as the one between the United States and the Netherlands has depended to a significant extent on mutual investment and reciprocity, not only through impromptu and personal channels of cultural exchange, but through the structured policies of institutions.

Third and last, it is important to track this cultural relationship over the decades since World War II to show critical changes over time: the level of acceptance and appreciation for American cultural products, the forms in which they were mediated, and the kinds of sponsors involved. It seems true enough that Dutch society “Americanized,” as it consciously took its cue from the United States on a broad range of cultural, economic, and political tastes and practices. This process was most clearly seen in the first half of the postwar period, especially in the period from the late 1950s until early in the 1970s, the period between an initial inertia and skepticism toward the legacy and more critical distance from America in the wake of the Vietnam War. In this “golden age” of American influence, it is often not very hard to point to American ways of thinking that were consciously adopted by the Dutch. Indeed, one could argue—on the basis of the contributions offered in this section—that the 1960s roughly

6

THE
OLD WAR
AND
BEYOND
145 2009

CULTURE

constituted the decade when discernibly *American* cultural products had their most demonstrable impact on Dutch cultural life. Since then, American cultural influences may be said to have declined, at least in relative terms, or perhaps better said: they became more diffuse. For example, the European (including the Dutch) cultural life, having drawn earlier from American sources for inspiration and revitalized from it, no longer needed to look much to the United States at all in the search for new vistas. In a more multipolar cultural world, the U.S. simply counted for less from the 1970s on; it has become just one player, although an admittedly still important one, in a global cultural field. But the relative decline may not in fact express the most important trend of the last thirty years in Dutch-American cultural ties. Seen this way, American influence in the Netherlands has remained significant but is less likely to be experienced as such, and, indeed, the initial influences have often become so “Dutchified” that one could not speak easily of them as American.⁵

The diffusion and fragmentation of transatlantic cultural relations may characterize the current situation as impossibly fluid, a swirling mix of currents and eddies that defies any rational ordering. It may then seem that the Dutch-American relationship will sustain itself by the countless connections that travel, the market, and the new media afford. But that may be too facile a conclusion. The constantly changing dynamics of the cultural relationship between the Netherlands and the United States raise at least one pertinent question for the present: who can and who will sustain vital cultural ties between the two countries in a time of cultural fragmentation and of, it seems, political indifference? As noted above, the ability and the willingness of various actors to sustain the cultural relationship in the past has played a decisive role, and this may be true even now.

This introductory essay will explore these themes, systematically drawing on the fifteen essays written by a wide assortment of experts who, in their respective studies, have observed and analyzed aspects of the Dutch-American cultural relationship. The arts are relatively well represented in this section; sport, unfortunately is not, and aspects related to the media, effectively covered elsewhere, are, with the exception of film, not analyzed here. But the range is wide and varied enough to sketch a picture of a relationship that has changed much since the first years after World War II.

934

The Cultural Initiatives of Two New Allies (1940s)

Neither the Americans nor the Dutch were prepared for the closer cultural, economic, and political relationship they were to develop in the course of World

War II. Yet both the Dutch and American governments soon felt the need to solidify the ties between the two nations; both thought they politically had much to gain from proactively seeking to shape public opinion in the other country in a favorable way. In one case, government policy would, in the postwar period, be employed to save a threatened colonial empire; in the other, it would be to create and sustain a new alliance system headed by an emerging superpower.

The Dutch government in exile was the first to act, establishing in 1941 — before the entry of the United States into the war — the Netherlands Information Bureau (NIB), which sought to channel the right kind of information of the Netherlands into the American media. After 1945, the NIB would vainly seek to gain, through the funneling of information and through traveling exhibits to mobilize American opinion in support of the Dutch presence in Indonesia. But even after the Dutch recognized Indonesian independence in 1949, the NIB (now the Netherlands Information Service) would seek to familiarize Americans with Dutch culture through the sponsoring of visits of Dutch artists to the United States. American initiatives in Europe — including the Netherlands — started later and would also reach their height of engagement in the 1960s. But already in 1946, the American government funded through the Fulbright Educational Exchange Program the beginnings of a cultural program that included the dissemination of information about the United States and enabled scholars from Europe and the United States to make transatlantic visits. Prewar programs for European scholars to visit the United States had existed, of course, but this was the first time the government made a structured commitment to cultural exchange. It would turn out to be a long-term commitment in the first decades of the Cold War, when the political and military ties of the Atlantic Alliance seemed to require parallel cultural ties.

None of this should suggest, however, that the government had the monopoly on cultural ties between the two countries in the 1940s. There were “natural constituencies” that helped strengthen contacts between the two countries. Starting in the 1920s but culminating in the 1940s and 1950s, Dutch artists like Willem de Kooning, Piet Mondrian, and Karel Appel would be active, among elsewhere, in New York, where they had a profound influence on other artists, on modern art museums, and on the world of the art dealers, as Gail Levin shows. In doing so, they internationalized the art world and also ensured for a time that that world had its center in New York. Not only Dutch artists would feel the pull of New York and of America, but Dutch museum directors would as well. Willem Sandberg of the Stedelijk Museum was relatively early in developing contacts with the American art world; Jan van Adrichem suggests that Sandberg may have developed contacts with Peggy Guggenheim as early as 1948, and advised her in setting up her first traveling exposition, which included American

6

THE
COLD WAR
AND
BEYOND
1945-2009

CULTURE

art. The shift toward a more American orientation among Dutch artists and observers was already evident by the 1940s, and was not chiefly the result of either the war or of government policy.

But in other areas the war did serve as a catalyst for new transatlantic ties. That was the case not only in new forms of economic, military, or political cooperation, but in the religious sphere as well, where new forms of American cultural entrepreneurship were developed. American missionaries found in Western Europe a new field for activity, and this included the evangelical Youth for Christ (YFC). The early postwar presence of YFC in the Netherlands (1946) was made possible by Dutch Protestant immigrants in the American Midwest, who were keen to see "revival" in the Netherlands as much as in the rest of Europe.

In summary, the desire by both the Dutch and the American governments for new cultural ties between the two countries was partially sustained by a collection of other parties who in their way strengthened these ties after the war, from missionaries to artists. But these people were, in the 1940s, only harbingers of things to come. The Netherlands in the 1940s was not yet ready for an extensive counter for America, and the vehicles for American cultural influence were not yet fully developed. To be sure, American cultural influences that had made themselves felt long before World War II, such as Hollywood and jazz, also reasserted themselves after 1945. But the war did not result in a sudden cultural reorientation by the Dutch toward the United States. The elite of the country retained a deep ambivalence about America, not least on the cultural front. The level of cultural contacts between the countries remained modest. The Dutch knew nothing of nor cared for American literature, for instance. Intellectuals, including those in the social sciences (as Tity de Vries shows), paid little attention to American intellectual developments, and many Dutch clergymen and laity remained suspicious of American evangelism techniques. And even someone like Sandberg was not really a seer when it came to American art; he was slow, as Van Adrichem shows, to recognize the value in the work of someone like Jackson Pollock in particular or American abstract art in general. In this, he was like other Europeans who only by the late 1950s came — rather suddenly — to an appreciation of such art. Indeed, as the Sandberg example shows, attention to American cultural products would grow only in the course of the 1950s, partly as the conscious result of American policy, partly through important private initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE DUTCH-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP

The Take-Off Period of Cultural Exchange (1950s)

It was not until the 1950s that American influences made more of a systematic impression on the Netherlands. That had something to do with government policy; the American government helped establish an American library in the Netherlands, and the United States Information Agency systematically presented material about the United States for the Dutch public. By the early 1950s, too, the Netherlands-America Institute had become the primary organization for educational exchange between the two countries, according to Scott-Smith. But it had even more to do with the rising interest among Dutch artists and intellectuals in cultural and intellectual developments in the United States. American influences probably made themselves most felt in areas where the Dutch (or the Europeans) had the thinnest traditions. This is exemplified, perhaps, in the postwar history of Dutch dance. As Onno Stokvis has illustrated, Dutch dance really needed to be built from the ground up after the war, and the founder of the Nederlands Ballet, Sonia Gaskell, looked to the United States for both inspiration (in the persons of Balanchine and Graham) and for her dancers. But in the Dutch social sciences, too, American influences were consciously copied from the mid-1950s on. Dutch sociology had been relatively weak as both a separate and socially influential discipline, taking much of its cue from Germany. But as the discipline was increasingly employed to assist in policies guiding the modernization of Dutch society, it developed the functionalist approach of the American social sciences, a trend that would continue until the end of the 1960s, according to De Vries. In more traditional fields, such as literature, poetry and, as noted above, art, a structural and sustained interest in American developments would have to wait until the end of the decade, when leading journals began to devote systematic attention to American writers and artists. In art, New York became, in the third quarter of the twentieth century, the center of the world, and this was recognized by Dutch artists and museums.

American cultural influences made themselves felt earlier in less highbrow forms of culture. The cinema and jazz have already been mentioned, but the same can be said of rock 'n' roll, which made quick inroads from its inception in the mid-1950s. The electric guitar bands in particular became popular, largely in the first years through the inspiration of "Indo-bands," as Lutgard Mutsaers summarizes here. Even though it would not be until the 1960s that this new musical form would find a place in Dutch media, it was an early indication of youth interest not only in American music but in (ostensible) American ideals of freedom and of individualism. American cultural forces, then, could also be regarded as subversive in their significance, undermining the structures of authority. This was a fear expressed not only of rock music but of American

6

THE
COLD WAR
AND
BEYOND
1945-2009

CULTURE

evangelical religion. The coming to the Netherlands of the Billy Graham Crusades in the mid-1950s heralded a new kind of religious engagement — more individualistic in its piety and less beholden to the former structures of the church than had traditionally been the case in the Netherlands, as Hans Krabendam shows in his article.

But American cultural influence was not only for those seeking, in their own way, to subvert the moral or the religious order. It also expressed itself in commercial terms, in which American goods — and American tourists — became an increasing part of the Dutch economy (see the section on economics). The American tourist came over in increasing numbers — and often by commercial airplane — in the course of the 1950s; American travel to Europe doubled between 1953 and 1959, as Marc Dierikx outlines in his contribution. This number swelled after the introduction of the economy fare in 1958. Transatlantic travel and tourism thus brought the two countries closer together as millions of Americans experienced firsthand the sights of Europe, and of the Netherlands.

Transatlantic travel, incidentally, went not only in the direction of Europe, but included the some seventy-five thousand Dutch citizens who immigrated to the United States in the period from 1947 to 1963. That was a modest 18 percent of the total emigration in those years, Enne Koops has determined, but these immigrants often served to revitalize the bonds between the Dutch communities in the United States and those at home, particularly in the religious enclaves of the Midwest. For a time, and on a more modest scale, Dutch immigration to the United States provided another important set of ties between the two countries.

In the 1950s, then, the United States and the Netherlands were, culturally speaking, bound more closely than they ever had before. But convergence, of course, obviously had its limits. This is poignantly exemplified in the diary of Anne Frank, published in Dutch as early as 1947 but destined to become more popular in the United States, where it was transformed into a Broadway play in 1955. A year later, the play was performed in Amsterdam and served as the basis for the diary's continued publishing success in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, the "American" Anne Frank generated some resistance among Dutch commentators, as David Barnouw has observed, and her hiding place would largely attract foreign visitors until the 1990s. Anne Frank had become, already in the 1950s, a shared heritage of the Americans and the Dutch (not to mention others), but Dutch appropriation of Anne Frank was slower in coming. And even as the two countries drew closer to each other culturally, the Dutch would necessarily negotiate the legacy of Nazi occupation somewhat differently from the liberators of Western Europe.

The Heyday of Americanization (1960s)

In hindsight, American cultural influences in the Netherlands were at their visible height during the 1960s. This was true at the level of popular culture, where American tastes in film, popular music, clothes, and other consumer items were widely appreciated and imitated. And it was true at the level of "high" culture as well, where the Dutch looked more to the United States than ever before for inspiration. Growing political criticism of the United States as a result of its superpower policies in general or its role in the Vietnam War in particular did not preclude a cultural appreciation of the country, as Rob Kroes notes in his contribution. Indeed, this attitude of cultural esteem and political critique became part of a predictable leftist stance toward the United States (in contrast to a more right-wing "anti-Americanism," which appreciated America's political role but decried its cultural philistinism).

Nowhere was the American cultural presence more evident, of course, than in rock music — the dominant British influence of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones in the mid-1960s notwithstanding. As Mutsaers sketches developments in her article, American music made its mark on the dance floor in the early 1960s but was especially influential through rising Dutch interest in American folk music and, by the end of the decade, a variation on this folk music — West Coast rock. Dutch bands began, she writes, to produce their own English-lyrics music influenced by the blues and by folk rock. But in contrast to the early 1960s, she continues, Dutch makers and lovers of rock 'n roll no longer looked exclusively to the United States for inspiration. It was a sign that the genre had been internationalized and that the Dutch could increasingly build on their own musical traditions.

American literature and poetry had begun to draw the systematic attention of Dutch literati by the end of the 1950s, a development that would discernibly continue until the early 1970s, as Jaap van der Bent and Bertram Mourits make clear in their contribution. The American Beat writers of the 1950s strongly influenced Dutch 1960s writers like Simon Vinkenoog, Jan Cremer, and Cornelis Vaandrager, and Dutch literary journals like *Barbarber* were strongly oriented toward American poets. At the Stedelijk Museum of Amsterdam, the tenure of director Edy de Wilde in the 1960s and 1970s would generate an extensive buying program of American modern art (made possible by Dutch prosperity) and some forty exhibitions of U.S. contemporary artists, as Van Adrichem has shown. By the 1960s, Stokvis writes, Dutch dance "came into its own," but its gaze remained fixed on international — and particularly — American developments, not least in fields such as show and jazz dance. In sociology, too, American influence would reach its greatest level of influence in the 1960s, when in-

fluential works like Johan Goudsblom's *Dutch Society* would show, among others, an American approach to social science.

The breadth of American influence obviously had much to do with developments within Dutch society. Not only were the Dutch exposed to more and more elements of American culture on television, but they were, like other Europeans, increasingly experiencing the United States firsthand. A decade later than Americans, in the course of the 1960s, Europeans began to explore the United States in large numbers. More important, this had to do with the consciously democratizing and individualizing trends in Dutch society. Both American rock music and American religion, most notably its evangelical form, challenged the social order, as noted above, and this was a trend that only grew during the 1960s. The creation of the Evangelische Omroep in the late 1960s, borrowing from American ideas and American advice, was one sign of a new religious dynamic in the Netherlands, as Hans Krabbendam shows. The civil rights movement made a great impression and would inspire new forms of political protest like civil disobedience, first evident in protests against the Vietnam War but later to be employed in a variety of different progressive causes. Dutch parliamentary politics, too, would find American inspiration: in founding the new party D66 Hans van Mierlo consciously looked to the United States, for both its personality-driven politics and for its, as Van Mierlo then saw it, more democratic electoral system.

In summary, the 1960s constituted the high-water mark of American influence in the Netherlands. A modest part of that influence had to do with a conscious American government policy, which — in addition to maintaining its information programs — systematically established and funded chairs in American studies in the course of the 1960s, as Scott-Smith reports. But American influence, of course, went further and deeper than any government policy could direct. In respect to both its high culture and pop culture, to both commercial and to what one might call counterculture, to ideas associated both with the radical Left (such as new protest repertoires) and with conservative Christianity (the new evangelicalism), American influences changed Dutch society through Dutch actors consciously emulating American examples. That the Dutch increasingly became divided in the course of the 1960s over the political legacy of the United States did little as such to reduce American influence; the models that the country offered were so wide and so diffuse that the Dutch could utilize these models as they themselves chose to do.

INTRODUCTION

CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE DUTCH-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP

Political Ambivalence and Cultural Fragmentation (1970s)

The cultural influence of the United States remained strong in the Netherlands, but after 1970 began to suffer from a series of partially unrelated factors. Taking the articles of this section into account, it seems safe to say that Dutch-American cultural relations entered a new phase in the 1970s, in which American examples were less consciously and eagerly incorporated by the Dutch. There are various discrete, if related, reasons for this development: the background was the decline, real and perceived, of American power and prestige, visible not only through the Vietnam War and its aftermath but in the decline of the dollar and the rise of Europe (and Japan) as economic competitors with the United States.

In this context, both the American and Dutch governments saw less need to maintain intensive cultural programming in the other country. This was evident in Dutch cultural policy in the 1970s, which ended the Netherlands Information Service in 1974. Although not very anti-American, Dutch elites distanced themselves from the United States in ways perhaps reminiscent of their earlier reticence toward American culture. But the American government, too, was disinvesting in the Netherlands; the Netherlands-America Institute, too, closed its doors in 1974. Both David Snyder and Giles Scott-Smith see the 1970s as a time when formal, government-sponsored exchange was at low ebb, even as exchange and cultural programs were continued in other organizational forms. Anti-American sentiments did make a difference in diminishing student interest in American studies and in study in the United States. Both governments saw the value of celebrating the American Bicentennial of Independence in 1976. But in a period where détente had temporarily eased the tensions of the Cold War, where the U.S. was investing in more strategic alliances elsewhere, and where Western Europe felt less beholden to the United States, both governments did not give cultural exchange the same high priority as previously had been the case.

But the reason why the United States did not enjoy the same level of cultural interest in the 1970s as it had in the 1960s probably chiefly had to do with reasons other than anti-Americanism or the retrenchment of government policy. Two related factors must also be considered. In the first place, Western European cultural life in general and Dutch cultural life in particular had been revitalized after the war, partly through American inspiration. Now Europeans could contribute again on the same level as the Americans on the cultural world stage — or surpass them. This is an essential point that Stokvis makes. By the 1970s, it had become clear that European governments — including the Dutch one — were far more willing to financially support dance than their American coun-

6

THE
COLD WAR
AND
BEYOND
1945-2009

CULTURE

terparts, resulting in talent moving from the United States to Europe. Dutch dancers and choreographers looked to West Germany, not to the United States in the 1970s.

Accompanying this reason was a second and related factor: cultural life had become too diffuse and too fragmented for any cultural actor to draw from just one or two traditions of from primarily a single country, even an influential one like the United States. In the first place, the age of grand theory and “great movements” (to cite Van der Bent and Mourits) was over; Dutch social scientists did not look for an overarching model to understand the world, and Dutch writers and poets no longer sought a vision, modernist or otherwise, to inspire them. The move toward a greater eclecticism meant that Dutch — or, for that matter, American — artists, writers, musicians, and intellectuals drew their information and inspiration from an increasingly wide range of sources and material. “New York” was still the “normative” center of modern art in the 1970s, Van Adrichem writes, but not for much longer. In a cultural field that had become more diffuse and polycentric, American influence competed with other sources, and was itself increasingly influenced by these sources: If the lines of influence had been relatively unidirectional and relatively straightforward, that was no longer the case. American influences continued apace — in music, in the media, in scholarship and the sciences, and to a lesser extent in the arts — but at the same time they seemed to have lost the leading role that many Dutch had once assigned to them. Seen one way, American cultural expressions had become so internalized that they were experienced as universal or belonging to one’s own nation.⁶

Cultural Reconvergence (1980s)

These factors were for the long term, and the Dutch fascination with the United States, and willingness to be inspired by American influences culturally, never returned to what they had been in the 1960s. Nevertheless, there were reasons the Dutch-American relationship revived, also culturally, in the 1980s. Here, too, larger political developments played a role. The intensification of the Cold War and the NATO decision to place cruise missiles on Dutch soil generated much opposition among the Dutch public. That required a more intensive cultural diplomacy on the part of the United States, and, as Scott-Smith outlines, led a series of new initiatives to cement the cultural relationship. The celebration of two hundred years of Dutch-American relations in 1982 had already enjoyed the support of both governments, but with the arrival of Ambassador Paul Bremer in 1983 a number of new initiatives were taken to, above all, solidify ties in the humanities in general and American studies in the Dutch

universities in particular. The Dutch government also undertook new, more focused initiatives in the United States during the 1980s (such as the not very successful Texas Project, as Snyder relays). One could very well argue that, as in the 1940s and 1950s, the need to (re)seal the Atlantic military and political alliance helped relaunch cultural ties between the two countries.

For the first time, too, Americans in the 1980s became interested in Dutch society and culture as an alternate model to their own. Their first motivation for doing so was the cruise missile debate, in which critics like Walter Laqueur saw a neutralist, pacifistic “Hollanditis” returning to the Netherlands — and to Western Europe. Through the course of the 1980s and 1990s, Americans would become fascinated with the vicissitudes of Dutch tolerance, with its acceptance of homosexuality, its soft and hard drug approaches, and, by the mid-1980s, euthanasia policy. Dutch needle policy and forbearance toward cannabis drew the most attention, though later, in the 1990s, conservatives became concerned with what they saw as the “culture of death” in Dutch euthanasia practice. These were highly controversial topics about which Americans thought differently, but for the first time ‘liberal’ Dutch society functioned for some Americans as an alternative vision to the one offered by their own country. This emergent image of a freewheeling, libertine Holland came to exist uneasily next to the more traditional American view of the country that celebrated Dutch tulips, cheese, and windmills, and which — presumably — continued to attract the lion’s share of the 570,000 Americans who came annually to the Netherlands in the 1970s and the 1980s (Dierikx).

By the mid-1980s, Dutch public opinion was no longer as critical of the United States. Many Dutch had developed a critical but real appreciation of American culture, which found an important outlet in tourist travel: since the late 1970s, about 9 percent of Dutch travel has been directed toward American destinations, Dierikx reports. People’s particular travel choices had much to do with the media images of the United States, most preferring New York and the West Coast. Media impressions and tourist travel thus came mutually to reinforce Dutch cultural visions of America, generating in their own way an important nexus with the United States.

The third focal point of Dutch travel to the United States was the Great Lakes region, which, in addition to West Coast settlements, was home to many Dutch immigrants. Émigré ties between the United States and the Netherlands began to fade in the 1980s, as the immigrating generation gave way to a more Americanized generation. In some Calvinist circles, a transatlantic divide also became apparent in a theological sense, as the once orthodox Reformed churches in the Netherlands adopted stances (perhaps most notably in respect to sexuality) that alienated their more traditionally minded coreligionists in North America. Dutch communities in the Midwest — and elsewhere — continued to celebrate

their ethnic heritage, and Queen Beatrix celebrated with them in 1982. But the absence of any new influx of Dutch immigrants served in effect to diminish the importance and vitality of these ties.

Yet, this gradual distancing could not counter a larger trend in American-Dutch cultural relations. Precisely because of the extent of cultural Americanization in Western Europe and in the Netherlands more particularly, the Dutch and Americans increasingly shared discourses about social and cultural ideals, largely shaped by democratic ideals, consumerism, and individual notions of freedom — however much some Americans viewed Dutch drugs and euthanasia policies with suspicion. As the Cold War faded away, in fact, the Dutch arguably became even more influenced by American cultural ideals, though less in “high” cultures of the arts, literature, and the social sciences than in more popular outlets such as media and tourism.

A Sustained but Diffuse Interaction (1990s)

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union had profound effects on Dutch-American cultural relations, for it also meant, though not so dramatically, a slow implosion of the Atlantic Alliance. The energy that the American government had given to strong cultural ties with the Netherlands in the Reagan years now had lost its rationale; the common enemy had been defeated. As Scott-Smith notes, the USIA was disbanded in 1999, and American cultural diplomacy in Europe flagged as Americans cast their eyes on China and the Pacific Rim. The creation of the European Union in 1992 further prompted the Dutch, for all their continued Atlanticism, to invest more in Europe.

At the same time, the end of the Cold War removed many of the tensions between the United States and Western Europe. The slow receding of the welfare state, coupled with a neoliberal embrace of the market in many countries of Western Europe, helped bring the Netherlands and the United States even more closely together, politically, economically, and culturally. McDonalds and Disney, two symbols associated with America, made further inroads into European societies in this decade. The end of the Soviet Union further enhanced the use of English in commerce and intellectual life, a trend in which the Dutch, already used to speaking English, actively participated. Within the Netherlands, English became more pervasive than ever before, not only on television and in new media such as internet, but also in the literature that the Dutch purchased. Hollywood became even more dominant than it had been; American films took some 80 percent of the Dutch movie market in recent decades.

But these two examples — the widespread use of English and the dominance of Hollywood — illustrate the problem in identifying the cultural trends of the

last two decades as *American* influences. “There is hardly a non-English-speaking country where as many English-language books are sold as in the Netherlands,” Van der Bent and Mourits conclude, “[but] it is the *language* that is the factor, not the country of origin.” American authors have had to compete with other Anglophone writers in the Dutch market. In a similar vein, Dutch film in particular and European film in general should not be seen in opposition to Hollywood, but as a cinema that views “Hollywood [as] its principal frame of reference,” Jaap Kooijman writes, a reference that “can be mimicked or mocked, reinforced or challenged.” Seen this way, Dutch film is itself transnational or, for the sake of this volume, transatlantic, itself selectively appropriating “Hollywood.” Like Dutch pop music, Dutch filmmaking produced its own sort of music all the while relying on American elements.

In summary, one may say that American influence has come to take a central place in Dutch artistic and commercial culture, as is certainly evident in the mass media. But what did this mean in fields where ideas and practices could no longer identifiably be tied to a point of origin? At the very least, the Dutch had appropriated forms of thought and practice that were amalgams of concepts drawn from multiple sources.

And none of this meant that the cultural convergence was total, of course. Americans remained astonished at what they saw as freewheeling Dutch ways; Jonathan Blank’s *Sex Drugs and Democracy* (1994) was lyrical over libertine Holland; more conservative critics were just as critical. There were a couple of ways in which the two countries were particularly estranged from each other in the 1990s, namely in the role of religion and ethnicity. Until the 1960s, Dutch church-going rates had been somewhat higher than those of the Americans, but the rapid decline of religion in the Netherlands and other parts of Western Europe thereafter led to the broad perception that Americans were too religious, a critique that had existed for longer among secular leftist intellectuals. “Christian America” was not a part of the United States that most Dutch felt much sympathy for, particularly its more political manifestations. But Dutch orthodox Protestants, now long influenced by American evangelicalism, continued to look to the United States for models, including those of “church growth,” which some hoped to apply in the Netherlands. But here, too, as in cinema, Dutch evangelicals were developing their own paths and their own styles, borrowing not only from American but from British evangelicalism as well — an indication that American sources of inspiration had become more diffuse.

Race and ethnicity long had been preoccupying concerns for Americans, and the eruption of “culture wars” in the 1980s but especially the 1990s was a seemingly unending debate over the merits of “multiculturalism,” as Jaap Verheul outlines. It was also a debate that did not in those years find much resonance in the Netherlands, Verheul remarks, showing that “multiculturalism”

in the Netherlands looked very much like the pillarization of foregone years, in which each subgroup was accorded subsidies to maintain its own subcultural life. The conflicts in the United States over such matters were hardly attractive in the Netherlands, where—at least in the eyes of many—immigration and integration were better regulated. There was, however, growing dissent over the Dutch approach, but the political and cultural effects of this dissent would largely express themselves in the new century.

*A Relationship Requiring Reinvestment
(Early Twenty-First Century)*

The attacks on the Pentagon and on the World Trade Center in 2001 seemed initially to galvanize Western Europe and North America together, bound together in the War on Terror. But soon political divisions erupted over the course of that struggle, and though there was an intensified intergovernmental cooperation, many Americans and many Dutch saw the political divisions as rooted in a cultural divide. As Kroes argues, the Dutch could not be classified in the early years of this century as “anti-American” though their disapproval of the United States went beyond their dislike of George Bush; they thought, for example, the Americans too religious—an increasing and structural cultural source of attention between the United States and Europe.⁷ Americans in turn had their suspicions of Dutch resolve in the face of radical Islam, as Verheul outlines in his contribution. The murder of Theo van Gogh by an Islamic radical and perceived Dutch indifference toward the plight of Ayaan Hirsi Ali, the Dutch parliamentarian who warned the public about the ostensible dangers of Islam, seemed to underscore this suspicion among many Americans.⁸

In some ways, the new century seemed to usher in a new isolationism in both countries, as both the Dutch and the Americans focused on problems within their societies. Certainly it seems plausible to argue that the Dutch, more than they had for a long time, chose to focus on social and moral cohesion in their own country, and on the question of how to order Islam within Dutch society. At the same time, many Dutch felt that they might have something to learn from the United States, where, at least in the view of influential observers like Paul Scheffer, immigrants had been successfully “integrated” into society.⁹ Now uncertain of their own model, Verheul notes, the Dutch looked to American models for answers. But Americans were not only critical of the Netherlands, but interested to see whether European countries—and perhaps most particularly the historically “tolerant” Netherlands—would successfully be able to negotiate the new social challenges that beset them. More than had been the case in the 1990s, when Dutch drugs and euthanasia policy drew the attention, Ameri-

can social scientists poured into the Netherlands, eager to investigate how the Dutch were coping with these challenges.

One might well wonder how important this new interest was in a context where the two countries (and the two continents) seemed to be drifting further apart. Immigration to the United States had for some decades no longer primarily come from Europe, but from other parts of the globe. Dutch towns in the American Midwest received plenty of new immigrants, but they were now not from the Netherlands, but from Mexico or further south. The focus for most Americans, Latino or non-Latino, was not aimed at Europe; the arrival of immigrants to the Netherlands from Asia and Africa arguably had the effect of making the Dutch cultural gaze less transatlantic. At the very least, it was another important indication that the cultural exchange between the United States and the Netherlands was itself subject to new influences and traditions that extended far beyond the relationship as defined by Western European and European-American cultural exchange.

In any event, this continental drift was also expressed by other developments. The European Union offered financial inducements for international cultural activity within Europe at a scale that dwarfed cultural ties across the Atlantic. This dynamic was worsened by the continued lack of American government support for cultural exchange; U.S. government cultural programming for Europe was slashed, and the American studies programs were ever more degraded them with some ambivalence, as Scott-Smith notes. But the problem of maintaining a healthy cultural exchange was not only dependent on American foreign policy. As Stokvis shows in his essay on dance, the unwillingness of the American government to financially underwrite its own cultural institutions (such as dance ensembles) has made it difficult for better-financed Dutch organizations to maintain structured ties with their American counterparts. In this way, the problem of maintaining close transatlantic cultural ties is a deep one, dependent as it is on the willingness of government and private donors to support cultural initiatives in general. The arrival of the Henry Hudson year in 2009 was impetus to renew cultural and economic ties between the two countries, but the more important question is to what extent such an impetus will lead to lasting, revitalized cultural connections.

No one can deny that American cultural influence on the Netherlands has been significant, and no one can deny that the cultural ties between the two countries have generated a long legacy. But who, or what, will carry these ties into the future? In some ways, both nations are less interested in sustaining the old transatlantic connections, an ambivalence possibly heightened by critical Dutch views of their American ally. Perhaps the Dutch have Americanized enough on their own without necessarily having to look to the U.S. for further

6

THE
COLD WAR
AND
BEYOND
1945-2009

CULTURE

inspiration, even if "America" as a cultural ideal remains alive. In any event, the financial supports for giving structure to the cultural relationship have fallen on hard times, certainly in respect to American investment in transatlantic exchange. The relationship will continue to be forged by countless networks, by the popular media, by millions of travelers, and by an Anglophone Dutch society. But the tight, structured relationship of a superpower and a willing ally seems a thing of the past.

- 1 See, for a discussion of both Ulf Hanerz's notion of creolization and Reyner Banham's notion of mediation Rob Kroes, *If you've Seen One, you've Seen the Mall: Europeans and American Mass Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 162-178.
- 2 Mel van Elteren, "Werken op zijn 'Amerikaans.' Anglo-Amerikaanse invloeden op de arbeids- en organisatie-wetenschappen in Nederland (1945-1980)," *Sociale Wetenschappen* 4 (1993): 7; David W. Ellwood, "Introduction: Historical Methods and Approaches," in David W. Ellwood and Rob Kroes, eds., *Hollywood in Europe: Experiences of a Cultural Hegemony* (Amsterdam, vU University Press, 1994), 13.
- 3 Frank Inklaar, "Veramerikaniseert Nederland?," in Frank Inklaar et al., *Kijken naar Amerika. Twintigste-eeuwse Amerikaanse cultuur in de Verenigde Staten en in Nederland* (Heerlen: s.n., 2000), 98.
- 4 Natalie Scholz, "The "Modern Home" during the 1950s: West German Cultural Reconstruction and the Ambivalent Meanings of Americanization," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 121.3 (2008): 298-299.
- 5 Inklaar, "Veramerikaniseert Nederland?," 111.
- 6 Tity de Vries, "Hoe Nederland in de ban van Amerika raakte," in Inklaar et al., *Kijken naar Amerika*, 90-91.
- 7 Ronald Havenaar, "Religie en moraal. Amerika en Europa van de 20ste naar de 21ste eeuw," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 121.3 (2008): 271-283.
- 8 Bruce Bawer lived in Amsterdam for a while and became alarmed at what he saw as the soft stance of the Dutch toward radical Islam; See his *When Europe Slept: How Radical Islam is Destroying the West from Within* (New York: Random House, 2006).
- 9 Paul Scheffer, *Het land van aankomst* (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2007).