Educating the Nation: Jo Spier, Dutch National Identity, and the Marshall Plan in the Netherlands

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Introduction

In the visual history of the Marshall Plan, the image of a Dutchman climbing the U.S. Dollar sign to a more prosperous future is well-known and holds a prominent place in the history of the Marshall Plan to the Netherlands. The iconic image (see figure 1) appeared on the cover of a small booklet, *Het Marshall-Plan en U* (*The Marshall Plan and You*) which had been designed and illustrated by Dutch artist Jo Spier, a well-known and highly popular illustrator in the Netherlands in the period before WWII, and regarded by many as one of the best, if not the best, illustrator of his time (Van der Heyden 13).

Published in November 1949, the booklet saw a second edition in March 1950, a third one in May of the same year, and reached an estimated 2,5 million Dutch people (one-fourth of the Dutch population at that time).¹ Also, after its successful appearance in the Netherlands, the booklet was translated into English² and was used in the United States to a very similar purpose: while the Dutch were being educated about the benefits of accepting American aid and the necessity for European cooperation, the American people, many of whom were opposed to the project, likewise needed to be educated on the goals and practices of the Marshall Plan and persuaded

1 The booklet's success is also illustrated by the fact that an exhibition on the Marshall Plan in the Netherlands, which opened in Amsterdam in early 1951, was entitled "Het Marshall-Plan en U" (See for instance *IJmuider Courant*, 5 maart 1951, 2. Krantenviewer Noord-Hollands Archief, <http://nha.courant.nu/issue/IJC/1951-03-05/edition/null/page/2>).

2 There are two different versions of *Het Marshall-Plan en U*, in both the Dutch and the English edition. Contrary to what Tity de Vries has written, however, this was not a matter of the English version differing from the Dutch (De Vries 44). In the second edition of both the English and the Dutch version, two errors from the first edition were corrected. First, the original edition had mentioned Switzerland as one of the beneficiaries of Marshall aid; the second error involved the representation of Turkey.

FIGURE 1

Front cover of *Het Marshall-Plan en U*.

that their tax money was being spent to a good cause: “Winning the hearts and minds of fellow Americans ... meant circulating more than a million pieces of pro-Marshall Plan publications—booklets, leaflets, reprints and fact sheets. The primary focus was on elite opinion, but the grassroots were cultivated too” (Machado 20). One of these publications, then, was *The Marshall Plan and You*. The Americans’ appreciation of the booklet as well as its popular success are evident from its continued usage by the Library of Congress and The Marshall Foundation (both, for instance, have the booklet on their website) and by the United States Missions abroad (the United States Mission in Italy, for example, used several images from the booklet in their 2007 brochure “The Marshall Plan at 60”).

This article will discuss Jo Spier’s contributions to Dutch-American cultural diplomacy, *Het Marshall-Plan en U*, as well as another Marshall Plan booklet *Als We Niet Hélemaal van de Kaart Willen Raken* (“Lest we Fall off the Map Entirely”), a promotional booklet about the Technical Assistance Program in the Netherlands. Specifically, this essay will consider Spier’s representation of Dutch national and cultural identity. The deployment of “Dutchness” is shown to have been a prominent strategy in the promotion of the Marshall Plan in the Netherlands, not just in the official governmental narratives that Spier helped produce but in other media as well, including the “Marshall films” by the famous Dutch filmmaker Herman van der Horst.

Jo Spier

Joseph Eduard Adolf Spier, born in the city of Zutphen on June 26, 1900, became known to the general public first through his journalistic illustrations for *De Telegraaf*, a leading newspaper in the Netherlands and Spier's employer for 16 years. Starting in 1924, at a time when photography was still cumbersome and time-consuming, the young art school graduate accompanied reporters on their assignments and produced illustrations of news reports on a wide variety of events ranging from political debates to court cases, accidents, natural disasters, personal interviews, theatrical performances as well as a variety of human interest assignments (Wolf 192–93; 205–6). In the view of Mariette Wolf, the importance of Spier's visual contributions can only be underestimated: the illustrated reportage became the *Telegraaf's* trademark to no small part because of Spier's work (Wolf 189). In the course of the 1930s, his drawings increasingly appeared as a *Telegraaf* category of its own: Spier developed a personal and recognizable style in which drawing and text, usually printed in the characteristic hand-written style that Spier became known for, worked together to provide mildly amused or ironic commentary on current events (Van Gelder 1994, 41–42). Indeed, Spier thought of himself more as a journalist than an artist (Van Gelder 1994, 25) and, as will be discussed below, Spier's Marshall Plan booklets reveal Spier's talent at creating "crossover[s] between a column and a cartoon" (Van Gelder 1992, 3).

Spier's work, whose style shows the influence of developments in that field in American magazines such as *Punch* and *The New Yorker* (Schöffers 1), is characterized by the use of fine yet sharply drawn lines, great precision, a radical economy, an impression of ease, and a distinct lightness of tone. Equipped with an eye for local color and the characteristic significant detail, as well as a loving attention for the trivialities of everyday life and the idiosyncrasies of individual people, Spier's genius lay in his ability to capture and convey essential qualities of the people, situations and places that he portrayed. As the director of the National Academy of Fine Arts in Amsterdam, the artist Richard Roland Holst, wrote in his foreword to the first collection of Spier drawings of 1933:

He fully grasps the very art which is the sign of mastery: the art of omission, the art to sacrifice everything that does not contribute to the picture. Spier achieves endlessly more with three, four lines than a mediocre draftsman does with a whole battery of technical manoeuvres. To arrive at so strict a limitation, one needs to think deeply and feel purely. (Qtd. in Van Gelder 1994, 37, translation mine)

The sharp clarity of his message, and the often humorous and original way in which he presented his observations to his audience were universally praised. Spier, as a 1946 review in the *IJmuider Courant* put it, was as “a wizard in black and white” whose drawings “tell of the whole of our multi-colored life as Spier’s brain has transformed it into grotesque or sparkling little portraits, with the sole purpose of pleasing the eye” (2). Although often animated by a sense of middle-class well-being—a characteristic also of the *Telegraaf* which began as a publication of the Amsterdam elite and became increasingly right-wing in the course of the 20th century (Wolf 2009)—his refined work was nevertheless marked by a sense of irony and humor, and not infrequently, a certain frivolousness. At its best, Spier’s work succeeds in temporarily defamiliarizing the known and rendering the ordinary extraordinary—a quality that Jo Spier himself aimed for: “[I wish I had more] insight,” he once reflected, “into why we consider the things that we normally do ... so normal, while they are really very strange. I hope that you look upon my drawings not as ordinary jokes— [but] that you can find some criticism in them at the folly that sometimes characterizes our society” (qtd. in Van Gelder 1994, 42, translation mine).

Spier’s work for *De Telegraaf* began to draw national attention as early as 1926 and a first exhibition of his newspaper illustrations was organized in 1932.³ A first anthology of his newspaper drawings, simply entitled *Jo Spier*, was published in 1933; many more exhibitions and publications were to follow. From the mid-1930s onwards, Spier additionally developed a career as an extraordinarily productive advertisement illustrator and rapidly obtained an important place and a high reputation in the world of Dutch advertising; Spier’s work was favorably discussed in practically every issue of *De Reclame*, a professional magazine for advertisers, throughout the 1930s (Van Gelder 1994, 47). The number of companies that Spier worked for was immense. What stands out from the list of employers is the number of large national firms; Spier illustrated promotional materials and publications for KLM, the Dutch Steam Company, the Dutch Postal Service, The Dutch-Indian Coal Trading Company, the Royal Dutch Salt Industry, the Dutch Shipbuilding Company, the Dutch Publishing Association (see figure 2), and many more.

3 For a detailed description of the praise and the positive responses that Jo Spier’s work received in magazines and newspapers in the Netherlands and the former Dutch Indies, as well as an outline of his fame and reputation in the decades before WWII, see Henk van Gelder, 1994, 34–59.

FIGURE 2

Het Nederlandsche Boek 1940 (The Dutch Book 1940, a publication of the Dutch Publishing Association). Amsterdam: Nederlandsche Uitgeversbond, 1940. COVER ILLUSTRATION BY JO SPIER.

Spier's public association with national cultural identity was strengthened further by the artist's strong preference for iconography associated with "Dutchness," a term that I use in the definition provided by historian Willem Frijhoff. Emphasizing the movability and changeability of definitions of national identity depending on time, place, context and point of view, Frijhoff defines Dutchness as "a general concept encompassing all those aspects of Dutch life and culture that were considered, at a particular moment and in a specific context, as characteristic and distinctive of the Dutch" (Frijhoff 328). In the case of Dutch national identity, he argues, most of these aspects are cultural in nature. Rather than identifying as a political nation as many European countries do, according to Frijhoff

[The Dutch] look for their unifying principles much more horizontally, in the cultural performances of the actual community itself: i.e. its emblems, like the House of Orange (which is not at all the same as the Crown), or the big Dutch multinational firms like Royal Dutch Shell or Philips, its symbols (like the national anthem, the city of Amsterdam ... or the major football teams), its shared social practices (like Saint Nicholas's Eve, the elaborate birthday festivals, coffee meetings with neighbours, and a host of everyday gestures that identify a Dutch citizen), its heroes (like founding father William of Orange ... the painters Rembrandt and Van Gogh, or football player John Cruyff), and above all its perceived or imagined values, such as the claim to be a really democratic, tolerant, consensual, open and utterly peaceful society. (336)

When seen in this light, Spier emerges as an artist who focused on exactly those aspects and features of the Netherlands that functioned as the “engine of national sentiment” (Frijhoff 335).⁴ Whether designed for national firms or other employers, many of Spier’s promotional materials reference Dutch culture: he often referred to the Dutch connection to water and water management; frequently alluded to fishing, sailing and skating; depicted fishermen, sailors and farmers (see Figure 3), Dutch customs or goods; and produced many picturesque drawings of landscapes and townscape. Also,

FIGURE 3

1001 Manieren om u te Beveiligen (1001 Ways to Obtain Security), a promotional booklet of an insurance company). Amsterdam, H. van Veen N.V., 1941. COVER AND ILLUSTRATIONS BY JO SPIER.

4 Ironically, Spier, who was Jewish and lived in concentration camp Theresienstadt from April 1943 to May 1945, was suspected of having collaborated with the Nazis due to his forced involvement with the infamous Nazi propaganda movie *Theresienstadt*. Although Jo Spier was pronounced innocent of collaboration with the Nazis in September 1945 following intense investigations in both Czechoslovakia and the Netherlands, he continued to be viewed with suspicion in his home country—a state of affairs that may have contributed to his emigration to the United States in 1951, where he acquired US citizenship in 1957 (van Gelder 130).

Spier regularly accepted assignments from well-known manufacturers of typical Dutch food and drink, such as *jenever* (Bols), cacao (Droste), *ontbijtkoek* (Peynenburg), salad oil (Calvé), and Dutch beer (Amstel, as well as Heineken's beer brewery in the Dutch Indies, Mij Soerabaja). Surveying Spier's work in Dutch advertising, it is clear that Dutchness represented a very important selling strategy.

Het Marshall-Plan en U

Het Marshall-Plan en U, which appeared in November 1949, was one of several government initiatives to explain and promote the Marshall Plan to the Dutch population. As a unique foreign aid program, the Marshall Plan also represented an extensive exercise in cultural diplomacy that was accompanied by an elaborate publicity machine which produced brochures, images, stickers, booklets, newsreels, films; organized exhibitions, colouring contests, poster contests, parades and more to bring the American assistance to the people's attention. As Charles L. Mee, Jr., wrote: "In pursuit of higher productivity, the Americans would badger, wheedle, scold and humor the Europeans to a frazzle" (Mee 248). In the Netherlands, there was communication via brochures, leaflets and newsreels in cinemas, there were so-called "truck days" (when Marshall trucks, imported from the United States, drove through Dutch cities), there were parades, activities and fairs that were themed to the Marshall Plan, and the ERP logo was made visible in many places, starting with the distribution of 30,000 posters to Dutch bakers in November 1948 which announced that "over half of your bread is produced using Marshall grain" (De Vries 41).

In general, these activities enlisted but little enthusiasm from the Dutch, who, as the proverbial rule has it, tended to respond with suspicion at everything they considered conspicuous, flashy, or exaggerated (De Vries 43, Van der Hoeven 113). The archives of the Dutch Press Service at the National Archives in The Hague contain repeated calls to the Americans to take the Dutch soberness and dislike for pomp and circumstance into account in designing their propaganda; repeatedly, the correspondence regarding the required promotional activities contains warnings that the Dutch have "a different mentality" from the Americans, and displays worries that any form of "opzichtige" (flashy) American-style propaganda would simply be countereffective. With regard to the labels that were put on bread and other goods, the Press Service archive contains a typical response: "[We have accepted this] to increase our goodwill in America because it turns out that

the Americans are very proud of their help to Europe. And they wish to give expression to this by putting labels on goods.”⁵

In the face of this national resentment at intrusive promotional materials, a reassuring affirmation of Dutch identity may have struck the Press Agency of the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs—in charge of informing the population of the Marshall Plan—as the most persuasive strategy by which to attempt to sell the Marshall Plan. Approaching Jo Spier in this regard was an understandable and excellent choice: although the war had interfered, Spier’s drawing style continued to be nationally known and greatly appreciated. More importantly, perhaps, his reputation as a charming chronicler of Dutch common culture and national identity was strong. In addition, he was an excellent advertiser and salesman. *Het Marshall-Plan en U* became the Press Agency’s most successful Marshall publication (Van der Hoeven 101).

The first noticeable way in which *Het Marshall-Plan en U* catered to the Dutch commonsensical sensibilities is the booklet’s style: the reader is not confronted with a knowledgeable and didactic expert but is addressed by a direct and personal talking voice whose everyday common sense is underscored by Spier’s characteristic use of handwritten rather than typed words. A second feature is the booklet’s strong emphasis on Dutch national identity; in fact, I argue, it is this dimension that represented the most important marketing strategy and selling point in persuading the Dutch to accept the Marshall Plan and, by extension, to embrace the prospect of building a more cooperative Europe. Jo Spier’s visual representation of Dutchness contributed much to this strategy; indeed, the emphasis on Dutch national identity was carried not so much by the text as by the illustration of the cheerful little man on the ladder whom Spier chose as his central message man.

Volendam

Although the Marshall Plan sought to bring modernization, technological innovation and increased industrial productivity to Dutch business and society, the protagonist of *Het Marshall-Plan en U* is a fisherman from the idyllic village of Volendam, a well-known icon of traditional Dutch values, which

5 National Archives, The Hague, Ministry of Economic Affairs: Press Service and External Relations, 1941–1987, access number 2.06.085, box E20114, inventory number 110, 23 August 1948.

was long regarded as the very “anchor of Hollandishness” (Van Ginkel 3, translation mine).

In representing the Netherlands as a Volendam fisherman, identifiably dressed in the accompanying regional costume, Spier followed a tradition established in the 19th century when cultural nationalists embraced the inhabitants of farming and fishing communities as “national icons” who represented the true and “authentic” Dutch identity that was rapidly disappearing under the influence of modernization, urbanization and the rise of technologies (Van Ginkel, 4). In the second half of the 19th century, which also saw the rise of fisherfolk genre painting among the visual artists of the “The Hague School” (for instance Jacob Maris, Hendrik Willem Mesdag and Jozef Israëls), Dutch fishermen and fisherwomen were increasingly associated with the national character of the Dutch as a whole, and their values of industriousness, reliability, virtue, frugality and piousness were made exemplary to the nation at large (Van Ginkel 2009, 5; De Nijs and Beukers 2003, 627–28). Especially Volendam, whose picturesque aspects were discovered and described by the French cultural historian Henry Havard in the 1870s, became a magnet for painters from England, France, Italy, Germany and the United States. In the United States, the discovery of Dutch genre painting strongly contributed to the phenomenon of “Holland Mania,” the American celebration of all things Dutch in the period between 1880 and 1920 (De Nijs and Beukers 628; see also Stott 1998).

Although always already nostalgic, the fisherman’s symbolic representation of Dutch national identity became even more a manifestation of nostalgic desire after 1932, when the Zuiderzee, the sea that Volendam’s fishing identity was built upon and strongly associated with, was “lost” as part of the Zuiderzee Works. The target of one of the greatest 20th-century land reclamation project in the Netherlands, the Zuiderzee was partially transformed into land and partially into a sweet-water lake, Lake IJssel, by means of a 20-mile dam, the so-called Afsluitdijk (“Closure Dike”). The Zuiderzee’s disappearance drastically reduced the number of fishermen and further threatened their culture. As the catalogue of a large exhibition on the disappearing Zuiderzee fishing culture wrote in 1930: “Much of what has given Holland its particular charm will irrevocably be lost ... When the Afsluitdijk is completed, all of that beautiful life which constitutes the fame of ‘typical Holland’ will have been surrendered to extinction” (cited in Wieringa 56, translation mine). But fears over the disappearance of the fishing-culture around the Zuiderzee stemmed from an earlier date: the region’s material culture was documented by writers, painters and photographers (see figure 4) and incorporated into museums as early as 1918 (Van Ginkel 13).

FIGURE 4 "Contemporary travelers in Volendam regional costume," *Fotograaf Volendam* 120, 'Reisblog Liefde voor Reizen,' <https://www.liefdevoorreizen.nl/bestemming/europa/nederland/zaandam-en-volendam>. Used with permission.

Spier, who himself had lived in Volendam from 1921 to 1923 while studying at the Academy of Art in Amsterdam (Van Gelder 1994, 18), was no doubt fully aware of the village's iconicity and the legacy of the "The Hague school." In *Het Marshall-Plan en U* Spier recognizes and ostensibly returns to this tradition, but with a crucial difference: far from working in a social realist or sentimental romantic style, Spier designed a fisherman with decidedly cartoonesque, even caricatural characteristics, showing unmistakable joy but also an ironic awareness of both the stereotypical nature and the datedness of this definition of Dutchness. Less a stereotype than a caricature of the stereotype, Spier's utterly inoffensive, charming, pipe-smoking fisherman possessed a strong "feel good" quality. Because of the fisherman's iconicity, this quality easily transferred to Dutch national identity as a whole. At the same time, the fisherman's cartoonesque character made the appeal to nationalism—taking place immediately after a vast historical tragedy in which nationalism had assumed a particularly destructive shape in the form of Hitler's national-socialism—seem equally inoffensive.

Selling the Marshall Plan: Dutchness as Marketing Strategy

Het Marshall-Plan en U first introduces all participants to the Marshall Plan in the form of 17 healthy-looking and well-dressed men (16 in further editions);

FIGURE 5

"[The men representing the participating countries] would look like this without Marshall aid," Het Marshall-Plan en U. In further editions, Turkey was represented without the fez.

on the next page text and image work together to inform the reader that all would look terrible without the Marshall Plan (see figure 5).

Reflecting the dire situation of Europe in 1947, when economic stagnation, a poorly functioning market, failing crops and a severe shortage of funds threatened what post-war recovery had been achieved, the brochure next warns of several dangers: without the Marshall Plan, the booklet argues, there will be a shortage of food, postwar reconstruction will come to a standstill, and factories will stop their production of goods. The essentially depressing messages were considerably lightened up by the narratives that were provided. Also, these macro-economic concerns were made relevant to ordinary citizens by a humorous translation into recognizable Dutch daily concerns. Strikingly, although couched in humor, the message seemed to be that Dutchness itself was at a danger: a low living standard, the booklet shows and argues, represents an assault on the Dutch desire for neatness (one would not be able to make one's children presentable, see figure 6). Likewise, low productivity would rob the Dutch, somewhat surprisingly, of the satisfactions of frugality (one would not be able to mend one's socks, the booklet warns the reader).

In addition, the booklet actively preaches and thus asserts a variety of what were seen as typical Dutch traits of character: the audience is told to hold

FIGURE 6

“Without the Marshall Plan your bread would not be ‘dressed,’ and nor would your children!”
 Het Marshall-Plan en U.

FIGURE 7

“Hold your head up, put your shoulder to the wheel, roll up your sleeves, stand on your own two feet, do not live beyond your means. That’s the way!” Het Marshall-Plan en U.

their heads up, put their shoulders to the wheel, roll up their sleeves, stand on their own two feet, and not live beyond their means. Accepting American money, the author thus reassures the readers, does not imply a loss of initiative, responsibility or national honor. To stress these national values, the fisherman no longer wears his regional colors, but dons trousers in the colors and stripes of the Dutch flag (see figure 7), a clear encouragement to identify national pride as a source of confidence and optimism as well as a great help in overcoming the crisis.

United States help, in short, poses no threat to Dutchness: Uncle Sam, who is portrayed as larger of body, is amiably helping the Dutchman cycle uphill, or rather, *updyke* (see figure 8). The reference to these two quintessentially Dutch elements—bicycles and dykes—creates a view of Uncle Sam as supportive of the Dutch culture and lifestyle: he simply helps the Dutch “be” and “do” whatever it is they want to be and do. This, in turn, helped deepen the Dutch people’s association with the United States not just as liberators but as benefactors to whom they should be grateful.

It is only on the last page that the booklet turns to the theme of European cooperation; the sixteen men representing the participating countries, the Volendam fisherman among them, are shown plodding up a mountain (and into a fairly mountainous terrain ahead), holding a life line which forms the

FIGURE 8 *Spier's Volendam fisherman and Uncle Sam cycling up a steep dyke, Het Marshall-Plan en U.*

FIGURE 9

The sixteen participating countries trudging uphill, holding a line that spells “European cooperation,” Het Marshall-Plan en U.

words “European cooperation” (see figure 9). The accompanying caption (which was omitted in the English edition) reads: “If Europe pulls together on this one, we will succeed!”

This message notwithstanding, the booklet’s main argument in favor of accepting Marshall help is that US money will allow the Dutch to hold on to their core values, as embodied in the Volendam fisherman. Anyone who wishes the Netherlands to once again become “the good old land,” the booklet writes, had better accept Marshall aid. Visually, the prospective future of the Netherlands is pictured as follows (see figure 10):

The house of Holland, waving the Dutch flag, is quiet and comfortable, a cow is grazing in the meadow, flowers are in bloom, and the fisherman quietly continues his fishing. Strikingly, the Volendam inhabitant is fishing *on the wrong coast*: that of the North Sea, rather than the inner sea where Volendam is situated. This occurs despite the even more remarkable fact that the former Zuiderzee is still there: the Afsluitdijk—the 20-mile dam which, from the perspective of the older generation “robbed” Volendam of its sea—is omitted from the drawing altogether. Nevertheless, the fisherman, though still wearing his regional costume, has moved elsewhere. The

FIGURE 10

Spier's visualization of the Netherlands as "the good old land" ("het goede oude land,") Het Marshall-Plan en U.

temporal paradox in fact emphasizes the timelessness of the Volendam figure; his displacement to the North Sea coast likewise contributes to the revival of the Volendam fisherman as a *pars pro toto* for Dutch national identity.

Als we niet Hélemaal van de Kaart Willen Raken

A second product of cultural diplomacy that Jo Spier contributed to was *Als we niet hélemaal van de kaart willen raken* ("Lest we Fall off the Map Entirely"). It was published at the request of the Dutch "Contactgroep Opvoering Productiviteit" (Productivity Committee, COP), an agency which coordinated and encouraged Dutch interest in the Marshall Plan's "Technical Assistance." The Technical Assistance program aimed "to stimulate greater efficiency in industrial production through the introduction of American production techniques, styles of business organization, and labour-management partnerships" (Inklaar 1997, 33), and brought thousands of European professionals to the United States to learn about the latest techniques in management, technology and marketing. *Als we niet Hélemaal van de Kaart Willen Raken* contributed to the COP's goal of generating "the maximum amount of awareness of and publicity about the productivity concept" (Inklaar 2009, 758). The booklet did so by presenting a case study of a Dutch factory owner who ponders travelling

to the United States on a study-trip, or sending his staff, to meet American experts and learn how his firm could successfully increase productivity.

Spier's Volendam fisherman plays no role during the narrative proper. However, he is crucially evoked in the opening pages of the booklet to counter Dutch distrust of America's intentions which, as a 1949 poll conducted by the Bureau for Foreign Opinion and Market Research in New York and Zürich revealed, continued to be a reality in the Netherlands: 41% of those familiar with the Marshall Plan, for instance, were of the opinion that America was interfering in Dutch business and politics.⁶ Responding to the Bureau's recommendation that the Dutch needed to be convinced of America's honest intentions, the brochure emphasized that America was "in the same boat" as the Netherlands: as in the case of *Het Marshall-Plan en U*, the Volendam fisherman is joined by a large Uncle Sam to perform another typically Dutch activity: rowing a boat (see figure 11). Again, accepting

FIGURE 11

"[This booklet is intended] for those who know that the Americans are helping us because they are in the same boat as we are," Als we niet Hélemaal van de Kaart Willen Raken.

6 Roosevelt Study Center Middelburg, microfilmed at the National Archives Washington. Record Group 469 "Records of the Agency for International Development and Predecessor Agencies. Mission to the Netherlands, 1949–1953." Reel 7 Information Division, 1948–1954, Box 3 "Polls and Public Opinion," 295. Dutch newspapers gave detailed reports of the poll's results. See for instance, "Nederlands volk goed bekend met Marshall-Plan," *Haarlem's Dagblad*, 14 December 1949, 2. <http://nha.courant.nu/issue/HD/1949-12-14/edition/o/page/2>

American aid is construed as the one way for the Netherlands to “remain itself,” as the booklet literally writes, by dispelling the threat of totalitarianism: specifically, the booklet promises that the Dutch will continue to be allowed to insult their mayor by calling him a “suffert”⁷ (an “oaf”) without landing in jail.

Dutch distrust of American aid is most effectively depicted as uncalled-for with the help of two prelapsarian Volendammers. Cracking a joke at the expense of Volendam’s traditionally strong religiosity, Spier shows two hesitant Volendammers, half-naked, but donning their regional headgear and their clogs (and even the pipe, in the case of the male figure), pondering the dollar sign as the snake in the Garden of Eden (see figure 12):

The image of prelapsarian Volendammers once more reveals the caricatural dimension of Spier’s use of the Volendam fisherman. Stretching the limits of the supposed timelessness and essentialism of this “Dutchness” to the point

FIGURE 12

“This booklet is not intended for the man who believes that this is what American help is all about,” Als we niet Hélemaal van de Kaart Willen Raken.

7 Rather cleverly, Spier misspells the word “sufferd,” thereby implying that those who would insult their mayor are likely to be poorly educated.

of absurdity, Spier's representation displays the element of mild mockery that was so characteristic of his work. Designed to make the reader smile, it also functions to depict Dutch distrust of American aid as an equally quaint and charmingly innocent error of judgement. As in *Het Marshall-Plan en U*, Spier discredits the truthfulness of the charming Volendam fisherman as an icon of Dutchness. At the same time, the stereotype is upheld to get strategically useful messages across: whereas the appeal to national identity becomes harmless and inoffensive in *Het Marshall-Plan en U*, in *Als We Niet Helemaal van de Kaart Willen Raken* distrust of U.S. intentions is transformed into a naïvely anti-modern sentiment.

Accepting help, the booklet argues at its close, is not shameful or dangerous but smart: with American aid, progress will be inevitable. If *Het Marshall-Plan en U* depicted the future of the Netherlands through the modernization of the Volendam fisherman by having him fish on a different or new coast, the second Marshall Plan booklet more strongly emphasizes technological progress. At the booklet's close, the Volendam fisherman is no longer to be seen. Instead of a humble rowing boat, the last page shows a large seaship, a ladder dangling from its side to facilitate the entry of a "pilot," a specialist of the local waters who advises the captain of a ship how to navigate these waters. Once more tapping into Dutch culture and using a maritime metaphor, the booklet drives the point home to the proud sea-faring nation: "even the very best captain will accept a pilot to come aboard when he enters difficult waters! The Netherlands is in difficult waters!!!" Participating in the Marshall Plan, both booklets argue, is not just smart, but will pose no threat to the persistence of Dutch culture.

Linking Dutch National identity and the Marshall Plan: Other Media

The two booklets illustrated by Spier were not unique in making a strategic linkage between Dutch cultural identity and the acceptance of Marshall-Plan aid. Several artists, for instance, incorporated the Marshall help into an acceptable narrative of national identity by linking George Marshall to the mythical figure of "Sinterklaas" (Saint Nicholas), a kindly and insightful father-figure who brings joy to those children who have behaved well enough to deserve a gift. A complex figure of historical, legendary and folkloristic origins combined, Sinterklaas has become so central a part of Dutch cultural tradition over the last few centuries that the celebration of his saintly life, on the eve of December 6, was recently placed on UNESCO's

list of Dutch immaterial cultural heritage.⁸ In the political cartoon below (see figure 13), Franco's Spain, the only major Western European country that was excluded from the Aid Program, is depicted as the naughty child who would be excluded from the gift-giving ceremony, as determined by Sinterklaas's alleged great wisdom. The other nations (we see France, the Netherlands, Belgium, England and Italy, dressed in regional costumes) come running in much the same way that Dutch children would on December 5. Drawn by the Dutch political cartoonist Leendert Jurriaan Jordaan in April 1948, the cartoon is entitled "Late Sinterklaas: wie de koek krijgt, wie de gard" ("A Late Sinterklaas Celebration—who gets the goodies, who gets the stick?"):

FIGURE 13 L.J. Jordaan, "Late Sinterklaas—Wie de koek krijgt, wie de gard" 06-04-1948, Bron 738, Atlas van Stolk, Het Geheugen van Nederland, <http://www.geheugenvannederland.nl>

8 See Nationale Inventaris Immaterieel Cultureel Erfgoed Koninkrijk Nederland, "Sinterklaasfeest," <http://immaterieelerfgoed.nl/tradities/details/sinterklaasfeest/61>. Accessed July 1, 2016.

An even more striking example of an association between George Marshall and Sinterklaas is provided in a song by Lodewijk Dieben, a then popular Dutch singer and performer, who, following the practice of Dutch musicians to Americanize their names (a practice that Walter van de Leur discusses in his essay), was known as Lou Bandy. Together with the Dutch swingband The Ramblers, Bandy recorded his so-called “Marshall-liedje” (“Marshall-tune”) in 1948, a song whose seemingly unimaginative title in fact places it in the category of the so-called “Sinterklaasliedje.”⁹ In contrast to Jordaan’s political cartoon, Bandy imagines a much more liberal Sinterklaas. The decidedly frivolous song depicts Marshall as “the modern replacement of Saint Nicholas,” refers to him as Saint Marshall (even “Sint Marshall kapoentje” after the well-known name for Sinterklaas as “Sinterklaas kapoentje”), and implores him to please “throw something in our shoe,” as Dutch children traditionally request of Sinterklaas in their songs. Eliding the pedagogical matter of punishment and potential exclusion altogether, Bandy is provocatively “naughty:” the song strongly suggests that the traditionally money-loving Dutch would be foolish not to use this opportunity to get free money: as the song puts it, “wherever there’s money, life’s a ball!”—a line that is repeated twice before it climaxes in “wherever there are dollars, life’s a ball!” Taking the promise of a higher standard of living to its limits, the song hopes that “the Dutch lion will be given a golden dress” and looks forward to the Dutch reliving its “Golden Age.” In addition, the song (which takes the form of a medley and provides adaptations of several popular Dutch traditionals) even encourages the traditionally proud Dutch to flaunt their poverty if that is what it takes to get the money, in the same way that the original song encourages Dutch boys to show off their spiritedness because that will help them to attract girls: the original “en dat we toffe jongens zijn dat willen we weten!” (“we sure want to insist that we’re great guys!”) becomes “en dat we arme mensen zijn dat willen we weten!” (“we sure want to insist that we’re poor people!”) because that will help to attract (more) money. Despite the indecent comparison that Bandy draws between the desire for girls and the desire for money, he still hopes “Saint Marshall” will fill his shoe. All in all, the song promotes accepting Marshall help, but does so through a provocative celebration of Dutch shrewdness and recalcitrant “naughtiness.”

9 I wish to thank Lisa van Kessel, Master student of North American Studies at Radboud University Nijmegen, for alerting me to this parallel.

More praise of characteristics that are traditionally ascribed to the Dutch can be found in Herman van der Horst's high modernist documentaries *'t Schot is te Boord* (*Shoot the Nets*) of 1951 and *Houen Zo!* (*Steady!*) of 1952. Commissioned and funded by the Dutch mission of the Economic Cooperation Agency (ECA) and the Mutual Security Agency (MSA) of the Marshall program respectively, both films present Dutch culture in strongly positive terms. Like Jo Spier's Marshall booklets, *'t Schot is te Boord* is centred around the Dutch fishing communities, but this time on the coast of the North Sea (not Volendam). Donning regional costumes as well, the Dutch men and women depicted in this prize-winning documentary provide a powerful view of Dutch traditional values, culture and lifestyle (see figure 14). Intended to convey the importance of intra-European cooperation, the film shows the Dutch fishing boats to be travelling to Dogger Bank, then an important fishing area east of Northern England. "Eight different nations send their ships to these hunting grounds," the narrator tells the viewer. "Here there are no borders. While the rest of the world merely talks about peace and integration, these simple fishermen provide an example of peaceful cooperation on a daily basis." Throughout, however, the film presents the power, strength and validity of Dutch culture through the traditional lives of "authentic" Dutch fishing communities as they determinedly and courageously wrest a livelihood from the potentially life-threatening water.

Houen Zo! was one of several initiatives to draw public attention to the ways in which Marshall money was being employed for important public projects, in this case the rebuilding of the harbor and city of Rotterdam. Strikingly, the opening of this highly successful 20-minute film in which "the city becomes a rhythmic composition of machines and people" (Paalman 193), starts off with the following quotation by Clarence E. Hunter, the head of the ECA mission in the Netherlands:

FIGURE 14 Stills of Herman van der Horst's *'t Schot is te Boord*.

May the resurrection of bombed-out Rotterdam be a symbol of the recovered strength of the entire Netherlands. The recovery that has been achieved is due in the first place to the willpower of the Dutch themselves. The Marshall Plan has contributed only in the sense that the prosperity of previous times could be regained with less loss of time and money, and with a minimal lowering of the living standard. – Clarence E. Hunter

Another clear tribute to the Dutch nation, its culture and its willpower, *Houen Zo!* celebrates the Dutch solid work ethic, as well as the workers' principles of cooperation, solidarity and determination, as having been instrumental in rebuilding the city. American money, Hunter publicly insists, merely helped to speed up a process of recovery that the Dutch themselves achieved.¹⁰

Conclusion: Dutch National Identity and the Power of Hope, Optimism and Encouragement

Boosts to national morale such as can be found in the “official” works of Jo Spier and Herman van der Horst can be seen as a logical outcome of the Marshall Plan’s underlying premise, as expressed by George Marshall in his famous 1947 speech, that European economic recovery could only be achieved by the Europeans themselves. As Machado summarized Marshall’s point of view: “Recipients had to be centrally involved in planning for their own assistance. Only Europeans could reconstruct and save Europe. The US had to perform as a catalytic agent in the process” (Machado 2007, 7). At such, the cultural materials analyzed above powerfully illustrate the psychological dimension of the Marshall Plan—a dimension which some historians have argued should in fact be considered one of the Plan’s crucial characteristics (Inklaar 1997; Machado 2007; Judt 2001, 2005). As Tony Judy put it, the Marshall Plan was “not just economic and political; it was also and perhaps above all psychological” (Judt, 7). The promise of aid, the prospect of stability, and the restoration of public confidence that the Marshall Plan suggested to many were of utmost importance against the background of the many financial, social and political

10 Hunter’s statement ties in with the observation by Hueting (2008) who likewise found that European Marshall Plan films frequently emphasized and praised Europe’s own efforts and importance. Also, they pointed out that although the financial contribution made by the United States was probably indispensable, it was only one factor in Europe’s recovery (Hueting, 210–11).

uncertainties of the postwar situation, especially those of 1947 (Judt 1994, 7). What the present study of these well-known and celebrated Marshall materials reveals, however, is the extent to which post-WWII confidence, ambition and determination were fueled by means of an affirmation of core elements of Dutch national identity, nationalist sentiment and the promise (implicit and explicit) to the Dutch nation that they could “remain themselves” despite a projected future of European cooperation. Portrayed as something to treasure and defend, as something potentially changeable but nevertheless “real,” Dutchness was used as a strategy to help persuade and “educate” the nation that the Marshall Plan should be seen in positive terms and represented no threat. In the case of *Het Marshall-Plan en U, Als we niet Helemaal van de Kaart Willen Raken*, *‘t Schot is te Boord* and *Houen Zo!*, the messages of hope, optimism and encouragement were brought to the Dutch in the form of an affirmation of Dutch national culture and identity.

The type of “Dutchness” that was advertised in these productions, moreover, implied a consolidation of a traditional monocultural national identity that was anchored in conservative traditional imagery (regional costumes, life-styles and customs), traditional traits of character (high work ethic, pride, resilience, resourcefulness, level-headedness), as well as a traditional separation of men and women into different spheres and an affirmation of the connection between descent and national identity: the employment of the traditional Dutch fishing communities contributes to this in the sense that they represent what Mac an Bhreithiún refers to as “place identity” which, because of its rootedness in a specific local history and its aura of authenticity, typically carries a vision of a monocultural Dutch identity (Mac an Bhreithiún 266). A larger corpus of Marshall Plan-related cultural productions would have to be considered to assess the full extent and intensity with which (traditional) Dutch identity was brought to the fore in response to the Marshall Plan. The promotional materials by Spier and van der Horst discussed in this essay, however, invested though they were in creating a more unified and cooperative Europe, are strongly reassuring of the validity and staying power of traditional Dutch identity and markedly lack a more open, transnational narrative that might have been expected in the light of the Marshall Plan’s ambition and agenda for intra-European integration.

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