

## Bookshelf 2021

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Covid-19 has continued to affect book reviewing this year, as reviewers whom we had to remind wrote us back saying everything from “I’m stuck in Dakar” or “I crushed my right index finger in an anchor mishap two months ago [and] ... typing was problematic for a number of weeks” to “in the midst of the pandemic I fell and broke my leg in two places,” not to mention people’s frequent child-care/remote learning challenges (for some books, we had to identify and ask as many as nine potential reviewers before one agreed) or the difficulties of getting books from publishers to reviewers in pandemic-bombed Brazil. But once again, we express our gratitude to all the reviewers who have, collectively, provided such a rich resource for keeping up with writing on the region.

At the same time, we must lament the fact that a few of the people who accepted a book and promised to review it have, despite a long series of gentle reminders over the past year or two, never shared their reactions to the book. With our apologies to the authors of books that have not been discussed in these pages for this reason, we simply list them here:

*Une écologie décoloniale*, by Malcom Ferdinand (Paris: Seuil, 2019, paper € 24.50) [Fortunately, an English-language translation was published in January 2022 and will be reviewed soon.]

*V.S. Naipaul’s Journeys: From Periphery to Center*, by Sanjay Krishnan (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020, cloth US\$ 35.00)

*Cuba at the Crossroads*, edited by Philip Brenner, John M. Kirk & William M. LeoGrande (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2020, cloth US\$ 79.00)

*Celia Sánchez Manduley: The Life and Legacy of a Cuban Revolutionary*, by Tiffany A. Sippial (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020, paper US\$ 29.95)

*Staging Discomfort: Performance and Queerness in Contemporary Cuba*, by Bretton White (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2020, cloth US\$ 85.00)

*The World That Fear Made: Slave Revolts and Conspiracy Scares in Early America*, by Jason T. Sharples (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020, cloth US\$ 45.00)

erudition with deeply personal recollections of her family and her own history, illustrated with many striking photographs. This is a beautifully written, profoundly moving, and deeply reflective book.

We also signal the publication of the annually-issued journal *IDEAZ*, the latest volume (No. 15) of which is *A 2020 Vision of the Rastafari Movement: Revisiting the Field and Taking Steps Forward*, edited by Michael Barnett, Giulia Bonacci & Erin C. MacLeod (Kingston: Arawak, 2020, paper US\$23.00)

In *Sunshine Kitchen: Delicious Creole Recipes from the Heart of the Caribbean*, by Vanessa Bolosier (London: Pavilion, 2021, cloth US\$19.95), the “heart of the Caribbean” is Martinique and Guadeloupe, so the book contains (different versions of) recipes for many of the dishes that we’ve made in our own Martiniquan kitchen over the years. The one for “Breadfruit Migan” adds no lemon and oil at the end—which we’ve always considered essential for its oh-so-creamy consistency. And the “Colombo” expands possibilities for our (much simpler) goat curry, adding potatoes, eggplant, and yam and suggesting that it can be made with chicken, pork, mutton, goat, prawns, shark, and even skate. There are many interesting riffs on both everyday and holiday foods from the French Caribbean. Overall, we give the book an enthusiastic thumbs up (despite the fact that it confuses calabashes with gourds—see *NWIG* 56:69–82).

Once again, Rosemarijn Hoefte has kindly provided an overview of recent Dutch-language books that may be of interest to our readers. Here it is:

Let’s start with a splendid volume: *Nola Hatterman: Geen kunst zonder kunnen*, edited by Ellen de Vries (Zwolle, the Netherlands: **Waanders**, 2021, paper €27.50). The gorgeous reproductions alone make this book worth having. De Vries has managed to gather many of Hatterman’s unknown works, surely not all of the same quality, but they give a much-needed overview of the artist’s development. Now her oeuvre consists of more than 500 drawings and paintings. The 11 essays show how specialists grapple with explaining the individual and the artist and placing her work in existing traditions. Nola Hatterman was controversial during her life time, and this volume attests to the fact that she still is. Was she a courageous transracialist (Stephen Sanders) or a white dominant woman in a colonial setting who reduced individuals to the color of their skin (Lizzy van Leeuwen)? As so many artists, Hatterman cannot be pigeonholed. This book is a great way to get to know her and her work, that is an important example of the shared Surinamese-Dutch (post)colonial cultural heritage.

Shared (post)colonial heritage is also addressed in twin volumes on cultural heritage in Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao edited by Gert Oostindie and Alex van Stipriaan. *Antilliaans erfgoed 1: Toen en nu* and *Antilliaans erfgoed 2: Nu en verder* (Leiden, the Netherlands: **Leiden University Press**, 2021, paper €29.50

each) are the outcomes of the Traveling Caribbean Heritage project, financed by the Dutch Science Foundation, on the development of Antillean heritage and its relation with nation building and nation branding. In 18 chapters, the authors—from the three islands and the Netherlands—discuss topics such as (the lack of) cultural policies, transnationalism, museums, language and literature, and cultural expressions. It is trite to say that contributions in edited volumes are uneven, but here too there are thorough, engaging chapters alternating with rather predictable and bland essays. Nation branding seems an afterthought; only a few authors (Rose Mary Allen & Gregory Richards on Carnival; Artwell Cain on museums, monuments, and Aruban identity; and Luc Alofs on heritage education) do more than pay lip service and actually engage with the concept. Reflections by 11 Antilleans in and from the three islands and the Netherlands on such topics as slavery, identity, festivals, traditions, language, stories, rituals, the nation, and connections intersperse the chapters. When reading the last intermezzo in Part One on connections: “there is no fruitful interaction between the six Antillean islands” (Felix de Rooy) and “there is consciously or not a strong connection between the islands because of language or familial ties” (Tibisay Sankatsing Nava) I wished that the contributors had engaged more with these different voices.

The debate on the Dutch colonial past doesn't show signs of abating. For the Caribbean that means that slavery, its aftermath, and remembrance are the foci. The debate has turned into a war of words as it is closely connected with extremely charged political issues of citizenship, belonging, identity, and racism. Two new books illustrate this trend: Henk den Heijer's *Nederlands slavernijverleden: Historische inzichten en het debat nu* (Zutphen, the Netherlands: WalburgPers, 2021, cloth €29.99) is a comprehensive historical and historiographical overview of slavery in the Dutch Caribbean colonies, reflecting decades of research and teaching. In *Slavernij en beschaving: Geschiedenis van een paradox* (Amsterdam: Ambo Anthos, 2021, paper €20.99) Karwan Fatah Black offers a more mundane overview of what he calls the European meta-narrative of slavery during antiquity, in the Islamic world, and in the Atlantic, arguing that this narrative overstates the deep roots of western zest for liberty and obscures the recent cultural legacies of colonialism and slavery. Both authors carry the slavery debate to the present: Den Heijer's final chapter is titled “The slavery past, racism and identity politics” (my translation) while Fatah-Black's title is “Historians and White identity politics.” Two examples: Fatah-Black underlines the racialization of the status of both African enslaved workers and White owners, while Den Heijer argues that there is no historical proof of the relationship between slavery or colonialism and racism in the Netherlands and that slavery belongs to the past, current-day racism to the

present. Not surprisingly, these two authors take very different views of the Black Lives Matter protests in various Dutch cities in 2020. To Fatah-Black, who calls them a movement of “unparalleled magnitude,” it is an example of racism finally taken seriously and recognition of the “unique and rich intellectual tradition of the Afro-Atlantic diaspora.” Den Heijer sees them as an American phenomenon with little or no relevance to what he sees as a different situation in the Netherlands. The debate will continue, but the ad hominem attacks by both scholars, in these books and Dutch media, do not seem particularly helpful in fostering a greater understanding by listening to different perspectives.

Dirk J. Tang's *Met Hollandse bedaardheid: Hoe Nederland tussen 1800 en 1873 slavernij in de koloniën afschafte* (Zutphen, the Netherlands: WalburgPers, 2021, paper €14.99), is a matter-of-fact booklet about the abolition process in the Dutch colonies and the limited discussions of the topic in the Netherlands. Tang identifies four influences that determined the outcome of the debate: external (read: British) political pressure; legal, philosophical, and Christian/Biblical arguments, including the influence of the Enlightenment; liberal economic considerations in an industrializing Dutch economic landscape; and emancipatory influences, as women played a prominent role in the abolition movements. This clearly written volume, taking a Dutch perspective, is intended for a nonacademic audience; it lacks notes and an index.

The “rediscovery” of Anton de Kom continues to inspire more publications. *Antonlogie: Verhalen over het gedachtegoed van Anton de Kom* (Amsterdam: Atlas Contact, 2021, paper €20.00) focuses on Anton de Kom's life and ideas as a source of inspiration in our own times. Introduced by Mitchell Esajas, this not overly exciting volume includes an essay by Liang de Beer (winner of a contest on the writer's relation to De Kom's ideas) on the impact of colonial history on her family. The jury also selected a poem by Rudy Mena, “To Anton de Kom, to Activists Then and Now.” Other contributors are Nina Jurna (on the memories of activists De Kom and Louis Doedel), Guno Jones (De Kom and citizenship), Ianthe Sahadat (on her personal memories of being introduced by her father to De Kom's life and work), Humberto Tan (on Oneseimus, the African man who mitigated the impact of a small pox outbreak in Boston in 1721), and Vincent de Kom (reconstructing Anton de Kom's return to Suriname in 1933).

Anton de Kom's Surinamese perspective on the history of his country of birth was unique in Dutch colonial historiography, but his indictment of stifling Dutch colonial policy was not. Partially inspired by Marcus Garvey, Pedro Pablo Medardo de Marchena in 1929 wrote a fierce indictment in Papiamentu against racism and other humiliations suffered by people of color on account of the colonial state, the Roman Catholic Church, and big business on Cura-

çao, for which he was prosecuted and jailed. Aart G. Broek has now for the first time translated Medardo de Marchena's important pamphlet into Dutch, with a lengthy introduction on its historical context as *Medardo de Marchena: Staatsgevaarlijk in koloniaal Curaçao* (Haarlem, the Netherlands: **In de Knipscheer**, 2021, paper €17.50).

Suriname-born Louis Doedel was another activist, in both Curaçao and Suriname. Nizaar Makdoembaks's *Journalist Louis Doedel kaltgesteld in Wolffenbuttel: Politieke psychiatrie in de kolonie Suriname* (Leeuwarden, the Netherlands: **Elikser**, 2021, paper €59.50) is a work in progress. In 1937, Suriname Governor J.C. Kielstra had Doedel committed to the colony's mental hospital Wolffenbuttel. Out of sight, he became a nonperson, often presumed to be dead; only after political pressure he was released in 1979. A physical and mental wrack he passed away soon after his release. Despite the volume's uneven balance between primary and secondary issues, it includes valuable information, also in the form of facsimiles of archival records. Physician Makdoembaks not only wants to record Doedel's life and suffering, but also to rehabilitate him as a writer and publicist. In the end it is a call for rehabilitation of not only Doedel, but other, often forgotten, victims of the Suriname colonial regime as well.

More history. A doorstopper is *Krijgsgeweld en kolonie: Opkomst en ondergang van Nederland als koloniale mogendheid 1816–2010*, by Petra Groen, Anita van Dissel, Mark Loderichs, Remco Raben & Thijs Brocades Zaalberg (Amsterdam: **Boom**, 2021, Cloth €55.00). The last part of this handsomely illustrated three-volume Dutch colonial military history focuses on Dutch imperialism and military actions in the Caribbean. In four chapters Groen and Van Dissel discuss how Suriname during slavery was the theater of a permanent colonial war with different levels of violence. The authors compare the inside threats of marronage and other forms of resistance to a permanent peat moor fire that could be contained but not extinguished. After abolition, the military was the last resort to suppress rebellions and slowly but surely the colony became a police state. In contrast, the six island colonies faced external threats, from Venezuela in particular. But the Caribbean possessions were changelings in Dutch colonial policy and received little support. During World War II, U.S. military presence was much needed to protect the oil refineries on Aruba and Curaçao and the Suriname bauxite mines. After the war, it was U.S. protection that enabled Suriname and the islands to find their bearings again. In the twenty-first century the colonial military legacy continues to be visible in the Dutch presence in the Caribbean Sea, still under the wings of Washington.

A mysterious episode of Dutch military presence in independent Suriname was the role of Colonel Hans Valk during the 1980 coup d'état. In *Hans Valk: Over een Nederlandse kolonel en een coup in Suriname (1980)* (Zutphen, the

Netherlands: **WalburgPers**, 2021, paper €24.95), Ellen de Vries tries to reconstruct the Valk-affair and determine whether he helped the 16 sergeants led by Desi Bouterse to gain power, as has often been alleged. She has no clear answer, except to say that Valk did not perform his task with due caution and tact. A precise reconstruction turned out to be a mission impossible.

Chan E.S. Choenni's *Geschiedenis van Hindostanen 1873–2015: India—Suriname—Nederland* (Zoetermeer, the Netherlands: **Sampreshan**, 2021, cloth €29.50), intended for a nonacademic audience, includes hundreds of b/w photographs, but no bibliography or extensive references. Based on four previous books by Chan Choenni and the late Gharietje Choenni, this volume celebrates the socioeconomic, cultural, and political integration of (indentured) migrants from British India in Suriname and later the Netherlands in the period 1873–2015. In 2015, the so-called Hindostani community in the Netherlands was larger than the group living in Suriname.

*Papieren paradijs* by Marlies Medema (Utrecht: **KokBoekencentrum**, 2020, paper €21.99) is a bit of an outlier. This historical novel on the disastrous colonization attempt by Dutch farmers in Suriname is written from the perspective of Anna Pannekoek, the wife of pastor Arend van den Brandhof, the controversial initiator of the plan. It relates the social-cultural background of the couple and the plan to start a colony along the Saramacca River to improve the perspectives of dirt-poor farmers in Holland. Anna is more than reluctant, but in 1845, halfway through the 400-page book, the family finally makes the Atlantic crossing. Instead of paradise they find misery; the colonial government has allotted them a plot of land unsuited for agriculture, and an epidemic decimates the population. Within months Anna dies, leaving behind eight children. In 1854 Van den Brandhof and seven surviving children return to the Netherlands. The book is based on archival material, including a few letters by Anna and Van den Brandhof's correspondence, and secondary literature. In 2021 the National Archive in Suriname received two authentic letters from 1844 and 1848 regarding this so-called *buru* colonization.

Three family histories that differ in approach and scope. Marcel van Kantens's *Wortelzucht: De geschiedenis dat ben ik* (Volendam, the Netherlands: **LM Publishers**, 2021, paper €24.50) is a search for his roots in Suriname, the Dutch East Indies, the Netherlands, and beyond. Van Kantens counts 13 different ethnic backgrounds in his family tree. The best parts are when he presents his research on location; less convincing are the fragments in which he imagines himself as one or another of his ancestors. *De Doorsons: Op zoek naar een Afro-Amerikaanse slavenfamilie in het Caribisch gebied* (Amsterdam: **De Arbeiderspers**, 2021, paper €25.99) is a labor of love and far more than a family chronicle. In her role as *griot*, anthropologist Roline Redmond relates a fasci-

nating, meandering social history of Suriname since the nineteenth century. In the search for her family, who left few paper traces and aren't particularly interested in reading, her encounters with family members and other interlocutors are crucial. Redmond has a great ear and a felicitous writing style, and has produced a must-read for anyone interested in Suriname. Autobiographies or biographies by family members are often congratulatory from rags-to-riches accounts. In contrast, *De goudsmid: Marginalisering en veerkracht van een Hindostaanse familie* (Zutphen, the Netherlands: WalburgPers, 2021, paper €19.99) is a tabu-breaking account of author Ruben Gowricharn's father, Parmeswar Gowricharn, a successful goldsmith in pre-independence Paramaribo whose business faded after moving to a different neighborhood. It is not only a story of loss, alcoholism, and ultimately suicide, but also his family's ostrich behavior and *tapu sjén* (Sarnámi-Hindostani for covering your shame), and of resilience. In the words of mother Soersati Gowricharn, son Ruben, with his Dutch PhD in sociology, would uphold the family honor. She did not live to see her son's promotion to full professor. In *De goudsmid* the academic couldn't contain himself, larding the narrative with sociological and anthropological theories, but this doesn't obscure the gripping story of his father and his family.

Two (auto)biographies by Surinamers in the Netherlands. Paramaribo-born Stanley Menzo, former Ajax goalkeeper and now manager of the Suriname national team, is portrayed by Mike van Damme in *Menzo: Het gevecht onder de lat* (Amsterdam: Nieuw Amsterdam, paper €20.99). The legendary Johan Crujff chose Menzo as Ajax's goalkeeper because of his field playing skills. His popularity in Amsterdam didn't save him from racist abuse, and Menzo occasionally struck back at such abusers. That was in the 1980s, but research shows that in 2021, 40 percent of the professional soccer players in the Netherlands consider that racism is common on Dutch soccer fields and stands, and one fifth say that racism is still a tabu. Maybe less well known is Joyce Sylvester, constitutional lawyer, civil servant, and consultant, who published *Bent ú de burgemeester? Autobiografie van een pionier* (Amsterdam: Atlas Contact, 2021, paper €19.99). The first woman of color in the Netherlands to be appointed mayor, Sylvester is regularly listed as one of the 200 most influential persons in the Netherlands. In a rather prosaic style she tells about the many obstacles, including racism, she had to overcome in her way to the top. Illustrative is the anecdote that provides the book's title: at a reception at the city hall of the town of Naarden a man looked at her and said "Are **you** the mayor? No, I can't believe it!"

On to politics: André Haakmat was a key but short-term political player in Suriname in the hectic period between the military coup of 1980 and the December murders in 1982. Back in the Netherlands he supported (now vice-



president) Ronnie Brunswijk in his guerrilla war against commander Bouterse and the National Army, only to declare his renewed support for Bouterse a few years later. Haakmat's *Late oogst: Politiek-staatkundige en economische beschouwingen* ([Amsterdam]: **Novum Publishing**, 2020, paper €15.90) follows two interesting earlier publications: *De revolutie uitgeleden* (1987) and *Herinneringen aan de toekomst van Suriname* (1996). In 19 chapters, Haakmat covers a lot of ground from nation building to constitutional law to land policy, finishing with a tribute to poet Michael Slory. This work, marred by typos, jumbled foot notes, and a general lack of editorial care, seems written for specialists. *Hoe wij hier ook samenkwamen: Pleidooi voor menselijkheid, nieuwsgierigheid en de verbindende kracht van verhalen* (Amsterdam: **Uitgeverij Balans**, 2020, paper €12.50) is an accessible essay by Kathleen Ferrier, the chair of the Unesco Commission of the Netherlands on the role of narratives, language, and the meaning of words in Latin American dictatorships, Hong Kong, and the Netherlands. Ferrier calls for inclusive democracies that give a voice to women and people with a bicultural background. It is based on Ferrier's 2019 Anton de Kom Lecture on Discrimination and Tolerance at the Resistance Museum in Amsterdam.

Next literature and poetry: *De nieuwe koloniale leeslijst*, edited by Rasit Elibol (Amsterdam: **Das Mag**, 2021, paper €21.99), consists of 22 essays by established authors, poets, and critics on how to (re)read, (re)discover, and rethink Dutch colonial classics. Some are well known, such as *Max Havelaar* by Multatuli, others may be hidden gems—I discovered Frans Lopulalan's *Onder de sneeuw een Indisch graf* (1986) on Moluccan experiences in the Netherlands. Ten chapters cover nine novels and one volume of poetry on the Caribbean published between 1931 and 2018: *De Stille plantage* by Albert Helman (Xandra Schutte), *Mijn zuster de n\*\*\*\*\** by Cola Debrot (Stephan Sanders), *Sarnami, hai* by Bea Vianen (Warda El-Kaddouri), *Dubbelspel* by Frank Martinus Arion (Kees 't Hart), *Kollektieve schuld* by Edgar Cairo (Rasit Elibol), *Over de gekte van een vrouw* by Astrid Roemer (Basje Boer), *Schilden van leem* by Boeli van Leeuwen (Yra van Dijk), *De morgen loeit weer aan* by Tip Marugg (Michiel van Kempen), *Badal* by Anil Ramdas (Manon Uphoff), and *Habitus* by Radna Fabias (Alfred Schaffer). Despite the (deliberately?) awkward title, this is a rewarding read.

*Because* is the 1979-debut volume of Carla van Leeuwen (1955–80). The current edition (Haarlem, the Netherlands: **In de Knipscheer**, 2021, paper €17.50, with a brief epilogue by Klaas de Groot) presents poems (some in Dutch, some in English) from the original volume as well as 22 from an unpublished volume, "Interval," and seven found in the Van Leeuwen family archive. One of the main themes is the difficulty, or even inability, of belonging, with fantasy as the only escape. Saya Yasmine Amores's *Bāṅsurī ke gam: Het verdriet van de fluit* (Haarlem, the Netherlands: **In de Knipscheer**, 2020, paper €17.50) came



out about a year before her death in 2021. Previously known as Cándani, she was the first female poet who wrote in Sarnámi-Hindostani (1990). Her latest volume includes 35 poems in in Sarnámi, with Dutch translations, from a dreamy teenager who, like Van Leeuwen, also struggles to belong in times of uncertainty and hardship.

Michiel van Kempen & Effendi Ketwaru compiled an anthology of poems by Jit Narain (Djietnarainsingh Baldewsing), *Een mensenkind in niemandsland* (Haarlem, the Netherlands: *In de Knipscheer*, 2020, paper €19.50). Selected from ten volumes published between 1977 and 2019, the poems in Sarnámi-Hindostani and Dutch (with translations by the poet) highlight Hindostani life and culture in Suriname, but also the importance of remembering. “Poetry can’t heal what is broken, but it can keep the memory alive and express the longing for what used to be.” *Demerararamen*, by Antoine de Kom (yes, the grandson of) is a volume of poems in Dutch and some in English (Amsterdam: *Querido*, 2021, paper €16.99). In nine segments he shares his wide-ranging observations, from a nine-page charge against former military dictator and president Desi Bouterse (without mentioning his full name) to a reflection on Anil Ramdas and his suicide, to the loneliness of human beings in the current world. I assume that the title, “demerara windows,” refers to the constructions that partially keep the world (and the heat) out, and yet let part of the world (and the wind) in. Invites you to read again and again.

Finally, edible delights. *Paramaribo: Een culinaire smeltkroes* by Judith Cyrus (Amsterdam: *Fontaine*, 2021, cloth €34.99), a richly illustrated cookbook, doubles as a rudimentary travel guide highlighting Paramaribo as a culinary melting pot. Many recipes include the origins of the dish, different ethnic influences, and the occasions when it is served.

Thank you Rosemarijn!

We end this year’s Bookshelf by listing information on titles that we have noticed but have not read (and often not requested from publishers)—in some cases because their Caribbean content is restricted to a chapter or two, in others because they didn’t seem sufficiently compelling given *NWIG* space limitations, and in some cases because, despite our multiple requests to publishers, the books never reached us. Taken together, these titles testify to the large number of books being published that at least touch on the Caribbean.

*Balai de Sorcière*, by Lawrence Scott (Montreal QC: Mémoire d’Encrier, 2021, paper US\$45.60) [the translation of the *Witchbroom*, first published in 1992 and recently reprinted by Papillote Press.]

*The Marvellous Adventures of Mary Seacole*, by Cleo Sylvestre (Twickenham, U.K.: Aurora Metro Books, 2021, paper US\$16.99)