Stuck in a revolving door: secularism, assimilation and democratic pluralism

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Acknowledgments

One of the things that kept me going while writing this thesis was the promise that the book would one day be finished and that then the acknowledgments could be written, in which it would finally be possible to mention the ‘team’ that sustained me.

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encouraged me to start writing immediately after beginning my research, a very important advice. I am grateful that when it became clear that political philosophy was definitely going to be a central focus in my work, she let me go and remained supportive until I finished the book. Mieke is also the motor behind the theory seminar and the Ph.D. conferences organised every year by ASCA, the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis. I can only mention a few of the people with whom I shared the opportunity to be an ASCA Ph.D.-candidate, or the floor where the ASCA office was located: Marie-Aude Baronian, whose combined philosophical interest and relentless intellectual efforts towards the recognition of the Armenian genocide always impressed me. Stephan Besser, who is a meticulous, patient scholar tracing German colonial history around World War I. I am proud that, together, the three of us managed to edit the book collection that came out of the ASCA-conference about Diaspora and Memory that we organised, while being occupied with our own Ph.D. work as well. My long-time neighbour Murat Aydemir helped me through some difficult moments with his dry and clever sense of humour. The company of Sudeep Dasgupta, Maaike Bleeker, Esther Peeren, Begum Firat, Joy Smith, Anikó Imre, Anette Hoffmann, Ihab Saloul, Carolyn Birdsall, Joost de Bloois, Ginette Verstraeete, Inge Boer, Ineke van der Valk, Marleen Rensen, and my two easy-going roommates Saskia Lourens and Guido Snel also meant a lot to me. They are all people interested in what other people are working on, while being passionately devoted to their own projects as well; two character traits of which many people possess one, but which are quite seldom found together. A great friend is Nicolas Beger, with whom I discussed my ideas many times, and whom I admire as a courageous person in dealing with the political, personal and also physical aspects of transgender identity. Two persons were not on the ASCA-floor but they were around quite often, helping all of us to deal with our computer troubles. They lived up to the name ‘service-desk’ to a greater extent than their official tasks required: Matthieu Uittenbogaard and Jeremy Jongepier.

An institution whose management forms part of the team and functions as a source of inspiration is a fortunate one. ASCA is managed by Eloë Kingma, whom all the ASCA Ph.D.-candidates thoroughly admire (or should I say love?), and whom I was so lucky to have as a neighbour across the corridor for several years. When Jantine van Gogh arrived to strengthen Eloë’s office, the three of us together must sometimes have made passers-by wonder whether some giggling schoolgirls had been let loose in the university building. I greatly admire Jantine for never losing her sense of irony, even after her brother was killed in such a horrible way, and for never mixing up her sorrow, anger and pain with what I was writing about in my dissertation, which I often discussed with her and Eloë.
Last October, I received the following e-mail: ‘Dear Yolande, we have just come back from the jungle (I am exaggerating) and we are now in Lima, so that I can finally give an extensive comment of your chapters. I will start with chapter one.’ What followed were a range of precise comments, typed in a café in Lima. This e-mail was from René Gabriëls, and it could not have come from anyone else. René has been supportive of my work from the very first time we met, and he has read versions of practically all my chapters. In the last stage of my writing, he meticulously read my first two chapters and I regret that I have not yet been able to process all of his critical comments. René’s e-mail was not only characteristic of the wonderful person he is, but also of the atmosphere among the editorial team of *Krisis: tijdschrift voor actuele filosofie*. I would like to thank the other members of the editorial team, with whom I shared numerous hours of debate and many new ideas: Hans Harbers, Noortje Marres, Ruth Benschop, Peter-Paul Verbeek, Frank Rebel, Niels Cornelissen, Maartje Schermer, René Boomkens, Tsjalling Swierstra, Ruth Sonderegger, and Irena Rosenthal. Odile Verhaar, a former member of the editorial team, read large parts of my work and commented very accurately and supportively. Ido de Haan, another former member, gave me some important reading advices about French-Jewish history.

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The lively ‘Marcel Proust Vereniging’ hosts people who share an exceptional love of Proust’s work, some of whom I owe special thanks: Sabine van Wesemael, Annelies Schulte Nordholt, Manet van Montfrans, Sjef Houppermans, and, once again, Ieme van der Poel. Jacques Dubois and Edward Hughes were among the guest speakers whose work I learnt most from. Edward Hughes was one of the first to encourage me to try to take lessons from Proust’s work for today’s questions around cultural diversity and migration, and he put me on the track of various aspects of Proust’s work that I analyse in chapter three. I first met Edward Hughes through Jo Labanyi, who was the congenial host of a summer school about cultural memory organised for University College London. Jo gave me the opportunity to publish the first version of what has become the chapter about ‘the red shoes’.

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but courageous person with images of extreme violence and memories of great
fears inscribed on his body and his retina. I am very happy that he has found
the strength to help Feroza come to the Netherlands, to study Dutch, to pick
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important source of inspiration for what I write in this book.

My parents have been very supportive over years of finishing subsequent
master’s theses, a theatre play, and then a Ph.D. When I suffered from RSI, my
mother even typed my entire M.A.-thesis and also long quotes from Proust for
the current study. Moreover, my parents’ financial help has been substantial
and together they deserve to be officially baptised the ‘B.C.P. Jansen and Hiske
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to feel that she was proud of me, even though our opinions do not always
converge.

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After I finished writing my chapters, they were not really finished. From my own file they were moved to two other files. First, after the folder called ‘Af’ [finished], they went to the folder ‘Aestimated’. Esther Peeren meticulously corrected my English from A to Z, sometimes rereading texts she had already seen as articles at least once, and she also checked all my translations from the French. She never forgot to correct anything, sometimes adding, at crucial moments, precisely the right small advices about content as well, and especially about how to keep relaxed in stressful moments. I really hope that academia is going to provide her the place she deserves.

Yet after the folder ‘Aestimated’ came the folder ‘Afhuub’. When the documents reached this folder, they were totally transformed, suddenly looking like real book pages with headers and footers, cartoons in the right places, and with all the references double-checked. I cannot say how grateful I am to Huub, my long-time beloved partner, for not having to do this all alone. All the credit for the lay-out and the index goes to him; all the remaining mistakes must be the result of my sometimes being too slow or unorganised. (A word of thanks should also be addressed to Fred Zurel from ‘F&N Eigen Beheer publishers’ in Amsterdam, who designed the cover in a way sensitive to my preferences, and who printed the book carefully).

Huub has appeared several times in these acknowledgments already, and this is because our lives are interwoven at all levels. Love, topics of interest, jobs, hobbies, help, people we like, we share all that. This may sound a bit odd and a little romantic, and indeed, we are not like sorb-apples. But we learnt to write together when we were editors of the student magazine in the philosophy department; we share a love of the same kinds of literature and music; an interest in critical political debate; a love of travelling, of Paris and Prague, of discussing our ideas during long walks in the Flevopark, the dunes and elsewhere. I am proud that Huub has asked me to take pictures while he
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