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van Amelsvoort, J.D.

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Communication and Media

"I Heard Homer Sing": Tsjêbbe Hettinga and the Paradoxes of European Multilingualism

Jesse van Amelvoort^{1 a}

¹ University of Groningen, Leeuwarden, Fryslân, the Netherlands

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Europe has always been multilingual, but since the Romantic era, this empirical truth has been denied, erased, or ignored. Contemporary globalization reconfigures the standard language ideology that has long been central to the continent's self-understanding and political organization. This article explores some of the paradoxes of European multilingualism in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries by way of the work and authorship of the Frisian poet Tsjêbbe Hettinga. Specifically, my focus is on the tension between the international geographies of his poetry and the uneven distribution of recognition in Fryslân, the Netherlands, and the wider world. Hettinga's career shows the difficulties authors writing in regional or minority languages face to become more widely known, yet it also makes clear the profound consequences of the kind of breakthrough Hettinga experienced during the 1993 Frankfurt Book Fair. Hettinga's career is reflective of the changing relations between language, people, and in contemporary Europe. This article is part of the *Global Perspectives* Media and Communication special issue on "Media, Migration, and Nationalism," guest-edited by Koen Leurs and Tomohisa Hirata.

INTRODUCTION

Frankfurt, Germany, a day in October 1993. A seemingly blind man takes the stage during the Buchmesse (Book Fair), pauses for a moment, and then starts to speak words rhythmically in a language almost nobody in the large hall understands. Quickly, the sense of noncomprehension makes way for an appreciation of the rhythm of the poetry, its affective force, and its emotional resonance. Who is this poet, many wonder, this blind bard, this modern-day Homer? Only some of those in attendance know that his name is Tsjêbbe Hettinga, that he is from Fryslân, and that he represents the regional Frisian language as part of the program developed by the Dutch and Flemish guests of honor.

Tsjêbbe Hettinga is the central figure in this article and the prism through which I will explore some of the paradoxes of European multilingualism as the continent has started to become more aware of its "postmonolingual condition," in the words of Yasemin Yildiz (2012). His career, from his first steps onto the Frisian literary scene during the early 1970s to a blossoming career at international festivals after his performance in Frankfurt in 1993, shows well the tensions of regional or minority languages within the nation-state framework, as well as their potential flourishing in an international environment. Throughout the article, I will be attentive to the overlappings, contradictions, and negotiations between the subnational, the national, and the international in both Hettinga's poetry and his trajectory and career as an author. That is, I will be tracing what we can call Tsjêbbe Hettinga's significant geographies: here, I am

inspired by the work Karima Laachir, Sara Marzagora, and Francesca Orsini (2018) have done to rethink the category of world literature as well as generalized references to "the world" and "the global." Rather than making an argument for including Hettinga in an imagined world literary canon, then, my aim in this article is to make visible what I consider to be the structuring paradoxes of his authorship: while his mature poetry expresses an international outlook, incorporating references to islands, cities, ports, and landscapes throughout the world, as an author he was confined to the Frisian literary field until Frankfurt. Only when international recognition started to come his way, post-1993, did the Dutch literary field start to respond; only then was his poetry translated into Dutch. This, finally, led to the increased status of Hettinga's work within Fryslân itself and, in the years just before his death in 2013, the commission of a different kind of poetry. It is my contention that by thinking through various spaces and spatialities—the subnational, the national, and the trans- or international—we can make better sense of Hettinga's authorship, as well as of the place and the mediating role of multilingualism in contemporary Europe.

Hettinga is my central figure and empirical starting point, yet throughout this article, I will embed his work in and connect it to wider theoretical considerations. In the first section, I read one of Hettinga's poems, the Dylan Thomas-inspired "De blauwe hauk fan Wales," as an early but representative instance of the international imaginative geography of Hettinga's poetry that is one pole of the paradoxes defining his authorship. I then return to Frankfurt to give a rough sketch of his career trajectory. After these

introductory sections, I will place Hettinga and his poetry in the larger European multilingual—or postmonolingual—landscape. Because of various events that converged and reinforced each other in the 1990s, the boundaries of Europe's languages and states are changing. In concluding the article, I return to Hettinga's work and career in the light of this theoretical discussion to discuss what his example makes visible about the shifts currently occurring in multilingual Europe.

IMAGINATIVE GEOGRAPHIES: ANALYSIS OF A POEM

"De blauwe hauk fan Wales" (The blue hawk of Wales), first published in the 1992 collection *Under seefûgels De kust* (thus a year before his breakthrough performance in Frankfurt), is a typical example of the epic poetry Tsjèbbe Hettinga started to write in the 1980s. It is an ode to the Welsh poet Dylan Thomas, some of whose work Hettinga also translated into Frisian, and filled with references to Wales. The poem's rhythmic qualities remind the reader—or, in many cases, the listener—of Thomas's style of reading his poetry out loud. "De blauwe hauk fan Wales" shows well the international outlook of Hettinga's poetry: the "imaginative geography" (Laachir, Marzagora, and Orsini 2018, 301) of his work not only consists of Frisian soil but also extends to such ports, islands, and foreign lands as Wales (in this poem) and New York, Bremen, the Caribbean, and Greece (to name but a few examples from his other poems). The inspiration drawn from many different spaces constitutes one of the poles of the paradox of Hettinga's work and authorship, which can to some extent be generalized into the paradox of European literary multilingualism more broadly, which I will come back to throughout this article.

Later, we will see that as a poet, Hettinga is rooted in the Frisian language and embedded in the Frisian linguistic and political context. At the same time, however, "De blauwe hauk fan Wales" shows well that his poetry never took much notice of national boundaries, imagining just as easily a scene in distant lands across seas and oceans. In this particular poem, Wales forms the backdrop; yet here, too, the imagery presented far exceeds that particular place. This is how the poem starts:

It is slim simmer,
 En de sinne winkt dizze middei mei it ljocht dat earst
 Op de griene harpen fan 'e heuvels syn grûntoan fynt
 (Hettinga 2017, 310)

In the English translation by James Brockway (cited in Van Oostendorp 2016, 246–47), these lines read: "It is cruel summer, / And this afternoon the sun beckons with the light, finding / Only now on the green harps of the hills its true key-note." The image is that of a warm summer's day and the land basking in the heat. Soon, the lyrical voice speaks to a "do," a "you" later revealed to be a woman, and the poem becomes a passionate description of a love affair amid the natural beauty of the surrounding hills and valleys. This is a common feature in Hettinga's poetry: except for a small number of odes dedicated to specific women in the poet's life, the "you" never refers to a particular woman and instead calls to mind a universalized, mythical womanhood.

Thus, on the one hand, like so much of Hettinga's poetry,

"De blauwe hauk fan Wales" is grounded in the poetic affordances of the Frisian language (the subtle alliteration in rhyme in "slim simmer," for instance), while, on the other hand, the images that are conjured up far extend the scope and limits of that language. In addition, the intertextual dialogue with Dylan Thomas places this particular poem—and, in fact, all of Hettinga's poetry—in a long and international tradition stretching back to poets such as Thomas himself, W. B. Yeats, and Homer. The Frisian language is the tool through which the poet expresses himself, but the poem's lyrical imagery moves beyond any strictly localized surrounding and thus generalizes itself. Where in other poems harbors may function as universal places of arrival, departure, and longing, in this poem the local specificities of Wales are transfigured into a similarly mythical, if not eternal, space. "Slim simmer is it, / En slimmeroan wurdt de hing nei dy tusken himel en / Ierde, do," we read later on (Hettinga 2017, 312) (Cruel summer it is, / And crueler becomes the desire to you between heaven and / Earth, you).¹ Here, the lyrical voice has transcended all references to places on earth: speaking instead of heaven and earth themselves, his desire becomes almost cosmological.

As this analysis of "De blauwe hauk fan Wales" shows, Hettinga—who, during his career, went from being a promising Frisian poet to an internationally acclaimed poet—already before his breakthrough was writing epic poetry that expressed this transnational spatiality and imaginative geography. As he moved from subnational to international spaces, his imagery moved between heaven and clay—that is, between down-to-earth, almost banal images and transcendent evocations of love and being-in-the-world. Hettinga needed the Frisian language to express himself, but those expressions always established connections with larger themes and traditions.

BREAKING POINT FRANKFURT

Back to Frankfurt. Every year, one country or language area serves as the guest of honor at the Frankfurter Buchmesse, or Frankfurt Book Fair. In 1993 it was the turn of the Netherlands and Flanders to be in the spotlight at one of the literary industry's main international events. The organizers saw their chance to promote the literature from Europe's Dutch language area to the international audience of publishers, agents, and journalists that gathers every year in the German city. Especially more well-known Dutch and Flemish authors, such as Hugo Claus or Cees Nooteboom, were set to benefit from the publicity generated during the event—and in Nooteboom's case, the positive effect of his presence at the Buchmesse on his career has been especially well documented (Zajas 2014). The delegation, however, was also to include writers from the Dutch province of Fryslân; Tsjèbbe Hettinga was approached to represent the province and its literary culture, and he did indeed travel to Frankfurt in October 1993.

By the early 1990s, Hettinga had made a name for himself within the province as one of the most recognized poets of his generation, who during the decade before had moved on from shorter, modernist poetry to long, epic poetry in the tradition of Homer, Yeats, and, as we have seen already, Dylan Thomas. Outside the small Frisian language area, however, he remained virtually unknown. West Frisian, as the language is officially known,² is spoken by around

¹ My translation. I do not do justice to Hettinga's strict rules for meter and rhythm.

450,000 people living in the north of the Netherlands. Since all Frisian speakers are at least bilingual, speaking as they do both Dutch and Frisian, outside the province the Dutch are unlikely to encounter the language in any structural way. Frisian therefore occupies an ambivalent position within the Netherlands, as a little encountered but often exoticised language (Corporaal 2018). In the case of Hettinga's performance in Frankfurt, this meant that not only did many of the Dutch participants not understand the poetry he recited, they also did not understand why he was present at all.

At around the same time, Hettinga, who suffered from a progressive deterioration of his eyesight,³ was no longer able to read his poetry in the conventional sense. Instead, he learned his poems by heart—no simple task, as the decade before, he had started to write longer, complex poetry that in print could run for multiple pages. Onstage he would recite the poems, sometimes accompanied by music, thus further reinforcing the associations with the mythical Homer. Hettinga's performance in Frankfurt served its purpose, as in the twenty years afterward his status in Fryslân, the Netherlands, and abroad reached new heights. By the time of his death, in 2013, he had become the internationally known face of Frisian literature: "King Tsjèbbe," he was called (Hettinga 2017, 807–18).

In a way, he did not attain this position because of his poetry; most people would only hear what he had written and would not read it—and whatever sounds they heard, they could likely not comprehend them. Even for many Frisian speakers, his orature remained largely unintelligible; at most, they could grasp some words out of the many a typical Hettinga poem from this period features. The poet and writer Benno Barnard, who was present in Frankfurt and would soon afterward become Hettinga's translator into Dutch, put it as follows (cited in Bruinsma 2007, 125): "In Frankfurt I experienced what others would later experience: I heard Homer sing, blind, his head slightly edged towards the sky, the sea at his feet, singsong, baffling melodies." In smaller, lesser-known languages, poetry can be interpreted and made sense of when printed; when heard, one is touched by the sounds, the rhythms, and their emotional pull (Rumbold and Simecek 2016). Before I elaborate further on Hettinga's career, let us take a closer look at the shifts in Europe's sociolinguistic and political situation as they emerged from the 1990s on.

IMAGINING COMMUNITIES, MULTILINGUALLY

My introductory reading of Hettinga's poetry and scrutiny of his career just reveal the productive tensions of the work and authorship of this multilingual author. Thinking in terms of significant geographies, it becomes clear that his poetry presented in Frisian an imaginative geography that stretches across at least three continents. Concurrently, Hettinga's "real geographies" (Laachir, Marzagora, and

Orsini 2018, 302) as a poet—meaning his travels because of his work and thus excluding holidays and other personal journeys—were at first mostly regional and only after 1993 took to other spatialities. In other words, the international space that had already been accessible to Hettinga imaginatively was unlocked as his professional working terrain only much later; this, in turn, created new possibilities at home. I will return to this point later in this article.

Every author's career is unique, yet the case I explore does provide opportunities to think through some of the developments concerning language, culture, and politics in Europe in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Hettinga's international career speaks to and is reflective of the erosion of long-held beliefs about the relation between these three poles. In other words, this particular case shows well the loosening in recent decades of a long-held language ideology. The concept of language ideology I take from the linguistic anthropologist Susan Gal (2006, 14; see also Woolard and Schieffelin 1994); I use it to expose language as a "culturally specific concept, taken for granted in everyday understandings." Since the Romantic era, the language ideology dominant in Europe was that of standard language, which was closely intertwined with the idea of the nation-state as developed and propagated by Johann Gottfried von Herder and other German Romanticists. This combination resulted in the empirical truth that Europe has always been multilingual, only for that fact to be denied, erased, and ignored. Monolingualism became the—at least discursive—norm until well into the twentieth century, to the extent that Yildiz in her exploration of contemporary developments speaks of a postmonolingual paradigm, rather than a truly multilingual one.⁴

Ideologically, a trinity was built of a culturally homogeneous, monolingual nation in its own state sharing a standardized, nationalized language. In the process, nationalist thinking would suppress differences within nation-states while playing up differences between them. Already in Benedict Anderson's (2006) famous articulation of these processes, in the form of print capitalism, top-down language, and education standardization, language moves to the fore as the tool through which nation-states can see themselves as singular "imagined communities." For the nationalist, multilingualism exists when one looks at multiple states, but not within one and not within individuals living in those states.

It is worth staying with Anderson for a while longer. As a type of polity that demands, creates, and is based on an attention that exceeds an awareness of one's immediate surroundings, a nation-state generally stretches across a larger area than the city-states, kingdoms, and other polities it superseded. That is to say that it is impossible to get a sense of all fellow nationals or to gather them all in one space to visualize the group. The nation-state thus has to rely on the creation of imaginative bonds between its citizens: people have to be made to care about each other and

2 This to distinguish it from East and North Frisian, which are spoken west of Bremen and just south of the German/Danish border. In the Netherlands, the language is known simply as Frisian; for the Dutch, West Frisia is a region north of the capital, Amsterdam. I will refer to the language as Frisian, although always intending West Frisian.

3 Hettinga had had normal eyesight during his childhood. In his adult life, he was able to see only light and shapes. He disliked being called blind, instead preferring to say he had bad eyesight.

4 As Yildiz herself remarks in *Beyond the Mother Tongue*, the "post" in postmonolingual signifies "the struggle *against* the monolingual paradigm" (2012, 4, emphasis in the original). It is, thus, a break as much as it is a rupture. In other parts of the world, such as India, the relation between language and politics was different. I am, thus, in this article explicitly confining myself to Europe and its relationship to language, in order to engage with this relationship's historic contingency and specificity, without wishing to universalize this particular arrangement.

their goings on. (As the popular riff goes, France was created before the French.)⁵ Anderson argues that this happened through print capitalism and language standardization and education; thus, throughout Anderson's work, language in its standardized form moves to the fore as the tool through which citizens inhabiting nation-states can imagine their collectivity. And as Gal (2009, 33) reminds us, standard language is part of the language ideology of nation-states.

This vein of thinking has not been challenged by scholars building on Anderson's work. There are justified reasons for thinking that, in our current moment, this model has become outdated and fails to capture the complexity of group formation and new arrangements of the social that are shaping contemporary Europe. The type of thinking that Anderson captured in *Imagined Communities* is nationalist and monolingual in nature. Consequently, it asserts a particular relationship between people, place, and politics that in the period of globalization since the 1990s has become unhinged. Cultural globalization, accelerated by the rise of the internet and digital technologies as well as continued migration, has made Europe's linguistic landscape more fluid and diverse (Appadurai 2006). The result is that the borders that for a long time regulated the linkages between people, place, and politics have been loosened or, in some cases, erased. The particular understanding of which people constitute a "we" and who belongs to "them" that was created by nationalist thinking and sustained and perpetuated by nation-states has been rapidly changing, creating, in Appadurai's analysis, a fear or an anxiety that can become violent toward migrants and minorities.

Thus far, the notion of "imagined communities" has referred to and been applied to monolingual groups. I would, however, argue that multilingual communities also have to be imagined, as the underlying impossibility of gathering all members of the community in one space still is in force. If the printing press generated "wholly new ideas of simultaneity," as Anderson (2006, 37) put it, and in the process created a (proto)national awareness, digital media surely enable wholly new ideas of simultaneity once again. Multilingual communities can exist within states or, through social media, can span different states. In the latter case, time can be suspended, elevating the particular group from spatial as well as temporal constraints. Koen Leurs (2015, 2016) has, for instance, convincingly shown how young Londoners with a migration background make use of social media to stay in touch with family and friends all over the world. Platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Skype make the hundreds or even thousands of kilometers between countries of origin and countries of destination less absolute and daunting. Google Translate, in turn, might facilitate interaction between speakers of very different linguistic repertoires, a phenomenon known as translanguaging (Lewis, Jones, and Baker 2012). In such a "culture of connectivity" (Van Dijck 2013), time and space do not matter the way they did before. At the same time, many online platforms also offer individuals the opportunity to represent themselves and their culture(s) as they wish and in a bottom-up fashion, although their posts there are obviously mediated through the design of the chosen platform (Thumin 2012), these also serve as a stage for people to broadcast what they want, without being constrained by the

gatekeepers and institutions that keep traditional, "offline" media more top-down businesses (Rinehart 2016).

Language and society are connected: this is the premise upon which Gal's notion of language ideology is built. Language ideologies govern the interactions between language, culture, and society, meaning that when linguistic practices change, as is happening in Europe and across the globe, the role and place of language in society will inevitably also change. Thus, the current transition to a postmonolingual paradigm and the increased appreciation of multilingualism call for a new understanding of how groups are formed and how the social is arranged. This requires acknowledging that the national is no longer the only or the most relevant space to look at, if it ever was.

In contemporary Europe, multilingualism has become a marker of changes brought to society, as well as a contested sign of otherness and difference that threatens to violate the supposed sanctity of nation, state, and territory—of, in other words, people, place, and politics. Language can now be a difference that matters. In the past thirty years, a number of trends have converged that, together, have fundamentally changed Europe's linguistic landscape, certainly in comparison to the paradigm shaped by Romantic thought two centuries ago. These changes and developments have led to a set of paradoxes, which I explore in this article. In the next section, I will try to synthesize my readings of Tsjèbbe Hettinga's poetry and career with the theoretical concerns outlined here.

THE CLAY AND THE ALBATROSS

In 2018 Fryslân and its capital Leeuwarden were a European Capital of Culture.⁶ This stint, which Hettinga did not live to see (he died in March 2013), although he did contribute a poem to the original bid book, offers a good point to take up again the discussion of Fryslân's place within the Netherlands. The national broadcast of the opening festivities, which inaugurated the year dedicated to "*iepen mienskip*," or open community, was criticized within the province as a "caricature" (Van Westhreenen 2018). The broadcast resorted to the usual images and figures to represent Fryslân, including ice-skating, *fierljeppen* (a sport in which participants have to jump over a ditch by climbing up a pole), and a well-known soccer coach. Combined with a relative lack of engagement with the content of the cultural year, which aimed at initiating a new social program that would recast a traditionally conservative notion of community as an outward-looking, modern society, the program showed stereotypical representations and the exotic premise of a quiet and peaceful province and a minority culture close to nature and physical activity.⁷ This social imaginary, in other words, was everything the organizers of the cultural year hoped to transcend and incorporate into a new Fryslân. Instead, the broadcast presented a province consisting of strong but simple links between its people and the land, which stands in stark opposition to the urbanized and metropolitan center of the Netherlands.

As Renata Wasserman (1994, 14) writes, the exotic "mediates between the defining self and a more radical otherness, which at the limit would fall outside the grammar of defining discourse." The exotic thus serves to domesticate

⁵ Eric Hobsbawm (2012, 60) offers some data for this statement.

⁶ Every year, two cities are usually designated as European Capital of Culture. In 2018 the other city was Malta's capital, Valletta.

⁷ Fryslân is home to many lakes and four of the five major Dutch Wadden Sea islands, all of which are major tourist destinations.

the strangeness of Fryslân. In a minority context, it is political, used "to unsettle metropolitan expectations of cultural otherness" (Huggan 2001, ix). Exoticism and exoticization are minority practices par excellence, as they are derived from cultural margins or, in Graham Huggan's (2001, 20) words, "from a commodified discourse of cultural marginality." This discourse operates, of course, both in the center and at the peripheries.⁸ Edward Said's (1994, 2003) work on Orientalism gives some of the most powerful analyses of how cultural others are represented and exoticized in European art and culture and, moreover, how Western self-understandings to some degree depended on these discourses. Relevant to this discussion as well is Sandra Ponzanesi's (2006, 139) application of these insights toward the realm of literature and writers, specifically the elevation of particular individuals to spokespersons for the community they are perceived to represent.

The Frisian language plays an important role in processes of exoticization by the dominant Dutch culture. Frisian words are similar enough to their Dutch counterparts to be somewhat intelligible to Dutch speakers, but not to such a degree that no translation is necessary. This creates the impression that the language is a failed or inferior version of Dutch, spoken only in a province known mostly as a tourist destination and with little economic or political power. Its language and literature are therefore peripheral, in the sense that both Pascale Casanova and Abram de Swaan use this word in their taxonomies of the world literary system and the world language system, respectively (Casanova 2004; De Swaan 2001). Although in recent years a small number of literary works, including anthologies and a concise literary history, have been translated from Frisian into German and English in an attempt to make them more visible internationally, it is still most common for Frisian literature to interact and engage with Dutch literature in the first place.

If the broadcast of Fryslân's start as European Capital of Culture reminds one of traditional (mis)perceptions of a minority language and culture within a given nation-state, the case of Tsjêbbe Hettinga's post-Frankfurt career shows how this subservient status within a particular nation-state carries little to no importance outside that state. Outside the Netherlands, Frisian is but one language out of many: at an international poetry festival, the audience is likely to listen to poets reading in many languages they cannot understand. Here, Hettinga's powerful and unique style is, in fact, the more important element in his performance, as it is the emotional and rhythmic qualities of his readings that continually impressed his audiences across the world.⁹

Linguistic comprehension is relevant only when it appears attainable; noncomprehension then leads to frustration.¹⁰ In international settings, this illusion of comprehension is absent, leaving room for audiences to open themselves up to the strict rhythms and emotional intonations of Hettinga's poetry. Moreover, as we have seen, Tsjêbbe Het-

tinga's epic poetry is international in scope: his poems can just as well be set in foreign harbors as in Frisian ones. As David van Reybrouck (2013) put it in his eulogy, referring to Hettinga's fusing of small, local images with wide, transnational ones: "He was as fond of the clay as of the albatross."

EUROPE, THE CULTURAL INDUSTRY, AND TSJÊBBE HETTINGA

Before I proceed, I want to pause for a moment to consider the various references to European policies—such as the Capital of Culture program, initiated in 1985—and cultural events such as the Frankfurter Buchmesse, which carry important symbolic weight in Europe. It is these forums that a small language community such as Frisian attempts to leverage, in order to become more well-known. In my reading, which is inspired by work by Laachir, Marzagora, and Orsini (2018) on significant geographies and Francesca Orsini's (2015) work on the multilingual local, the Capital of Culture program and the Buchmesse are not seen as "centers" in a supposedly global literary or cultural industry. Instead, I view them in Latourian terms as more well-connected, or connected in ways that are viewed as more important or prominent (Latour 2005; see also Felski 2015 and Alworth 2016). Fryslân's language and its culture, in this model, are connected differently. If the question is, Does a culture's (relative) invisibility in the so-called "center" mean that it is a peripheral culture?, my answer is "no." The Buchmesse's dominance in the European literary scene, then, is not a given but rather an effect of discursive and social practice. Nevertheless, it is clear that in recent history, Fryslân has sought recognition from and through these internationally recognized bodies. As such, it participated in the culture industry, which itself has Europeanized in the last few decades (Brouillette 2007; Huggan 2001; Ponzanesi 2014; see also Toor 2000).

We can question, however, whether these Frisian efforts achieved the desired effect. Fryslân's bid was notable for—unsuccessfully—trying to capture the Capital of Culture title as a *province*, rather than as a city: the aim was to open up and reinvigorate the entire language area. Looking at the perpetuation of stereotypical representations of Frisian culture such as the one described in the opening paragraph of the previous section, one can wonder if this effort was successful. For even if it was not Fryslân but Leeuwarden that became Capital of Culture, people and companies throughout the province still participated. The well-publicized disagreement over the design of celebratory fountains in the province's cities similarly reduced complex negotiations of the position of Frisian culture in the early twenty-first century to a nationalist caricature.¹¹ Similarly, Hettinga's presence at the book fair in Frankfurt seems to have made his individual persona more famous than Frisian literature as a whole. In both cases, we see certain aspects (stereotypes) or individuals (Hettinga) rise to the surface,

8 Laachir et al. would not use this terminology of "center" and "periphery," opting instead to refer to differently connected spaces. I return to his point later in this section.

9 Some recordings of Hettinga reading his poetry can be found here: <https://www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/poet/item/4039/6/Tsjebbe-Hettinga>.

10 In fact, the situation might be a bit more complicated than this still. Although no large-scale study has been conducted, and evidence thus remains anecdotal, it seems that many Frisians themselves do not comprehend Hettinga's poetry either when presented only with an audio recording. Goffe Jensma, professor of Frisian language and culture at the University of Groningen, has run brief experiments in his classes with his Frisian students. They were not necessarily frustrated, however, if they could only pick up the occasional word.

11 The documentary film *11 Friese fonteinen* (11 Frisian fountains), by Roel van Dalen, documents the difficult trajectory of building the fountains.

crowding out other images, writers, and possibilities.

Whatever one makes of the broader consequences of participation in such events as the Capital of Culture year and the Buchmesse, it is clear that Hettinga's career profited immensely from his performance in Frankfurt. Although I have not been able to find a definitive overview of Hettinga's appearances at international festivals, in an interview his friend Henk Deinum spoke of the many travels they went on together.¹² Deinum would accompany Hettinga to performances in Fryslân, the Netherlands, and abroad. "We've been on extensive travels to the United States, Canada, Gabriola [Island], Toronto, Portland, and to South America. To Italy, Spain, Paris, Sicily. We've been everywhere," Deinum said. Later in the conversation, we came to talk about Hettinga's performance in Medellín, Colombia, which is said to have been especially exciting.¹³ To be this far away from home, with an audience listening captivatedly, was quite the experience for both men.

All of these performances took place in the last twenty years of Hettinga's life. It is, then, fair to say that Hettinga's performance in Frankfurt in October 1993 paved the way for many more of these performances all over the world in the years and decades that followed. At the same time, many of the Dutch poets and writers in attendance in Frankfurt were similarly mesmerized by Hettinga's performance there. One of them is the already mentioned Benno Barnard, who soon afterward began translating his poetry into Dutch. "Frankfurt" thus not only marked the moment in which Hettinga's career took an international turn, it also started the spread and further recognition of his poetry within the Netherlands. This process culminated in 2017, four years after his death, when Amsterdam-based publishing house De Bezige Bij published Hettinga's collected poetry. Although both the Frisian originals and Dutch translations of his poems were included, overall the collection is decidedly monolingual: the paratext, the notes, and the biographical sketch are all in Dutch. The publication of this collection, then, symbolically marks Hettinga's transformation from being an eminent Frisian poet to being a poet included in the canon of important Dutch poets, whose collected work is published by one of the leading national publishing houses. It also marks postmonolingual tensions, as the collection can be said to reduce Frisian to a status subordinate to that of the more prominent Dutch translations and accompanying information.

As Hettinga's name grew both internationally and in the Netherlands, the recognition bestowed on him there also flowed back to Fryslân, where, throughout the 1990s and the 2000s, he rose to a position discursively framed as "King Tsjêbbe."¹⁴ In 2001, for instance, he won the Gysbert Japicxpriis, the most important Frisian literary award. Shortly before his death, he wrote two poems for important political moments in Fryslân. The first poem, "It lân, it lân" (The land, the land; see Hettinga 2017, 720), was collected in the coalition agreement of the new provincial government,

while the second, "De stêd" (The city; see Hettinga 2017, 736), was written for the ultimately successful bid book with which Leeuwarden hoped to secure the title of European Capital of Culture in 2018. Neither of these poems was collected during his lifetime, perhaps because they stand out so much from his other work, in which harbors, small villages, and the countryside form the dominant settings.

On the one hand, Hettinga's contributions to the coalition agreement and the European Capital of Culture bid book speak to the interrelations of art and culture as mediating contemporary politics (Sassatelli 2009). This is especially the case in the context of minority or small languages, in which writers become the carriers of tradition and language vitality and thus play an outsize role in the survival of the language (Broomans et al. 2015). On the other hand, it is remarkable that in both instances it was Tsjêbbe Hettinga who was approached and who lent his poetic power to these political projects. Although there are biographical explanations,¹⁵ it nevertheless remains remarkable that in both instances it was Hettinga who was asked to write a poem for the occasion. It speaks to profound effects of Hettinga's performance at the Frankfurter Buchmesse in October 1993 on his career: not only did it enable him to travel the world, visit many international festivals, and jump-start his recognition in the Netherlands as a major poet, it also moved him definitively to the center of the Frisian cultural, intellectual, and political world.

There is an extent to which Hettinga's post-1993 career was defined by more or less arbitrary coincidences: firstly, the decision to send him and not another Frisian writer or poet to Frankfurt; and, secondly, his friendship with a man who happened to be able to expend his political capital in Hettinga's favor. However, at the same time and despite these contingencies, the recognition bestowed on his authorship via complex and interlocking spatialities also speaks to the possibilities created by the trends converging in the 1990s that reconfigured national borders, group identities, and language hierarchies. The emancipation of the Frisian minority in the Netherlands, materially marked in the eight-hundred-page-long collected works of one of its leading poets, which itself was the result of a successful international career, happened through the transnational space beyond. Hettinga benefited maximally from the possibilities offered to him to break away from the constraints put on him as a poet writing in a minority language in a monolingual nation-state.

CONCLUSION

In this article, I have discussed how Tsjêbbe Hettinga's position in the Frisian and Dutch literary fields was formed, his breakthrough in Frankfurt, and subsequent international career, while my brief discussion of "De blauwe hauk fan Wales" shows how well his poetry fits with such a career. In his writing, Hettinga incorporated an international out-

12 Interview by the author, December 10, 2018. Quotations from this interview are my translation.

13 A short video clip of Hettinga's readings there is available on YouTube. Search online for Tsjêbbe Hettinga, Colombia, and "El Cántaro."

14 This position did not go uncontested. In my interviews with Hettinga's friends, colleagues, and family, many referred to often sneering remarks from Frisian colleagues. As Kees 't Hart said in our interview, referencing subsidies and other honors given to Hettinga: "The Frisian poets always were like, 'Everything always goes to Tsjêbbe, it all goes to him.' I can still hear them saying, 'Tsjêbbe again.' Yes, again Tsjêbbe, goddamnit." Interview by the author, October 23, 2018.

15 The parameters for such explanations would be something like this: between 2008 and early 2019, Hettinga's friend Henk Deinum was alderman in Leeuwarden. Between 2007 and 2015, his wife Jannewietske de Vries, was a member of Fryslân's executive body. Both would have been able to get him on board for these projects.

look already before he himself as a poet and public figure toured internationally. The recognition he got abroad entailed a great amount of symbolic capital (Bourdieu 2010), which flowed back to cement and augment his status at home. In the above sketch of Hettinga's post-1993 career, I have suggested that, toward the end of his life, he moved closer to political projects such as the new provincial government program and the European Capital of Culture bid book. It is probably fair to say that only Hettinga could bestow a certain kind of legitimacy and gravitas on these projects by having one of his poems included.

Hettinga's career was strongly embedded in a local minority language and concomitant cultural framework, and launched with the help of the possibilities of a global circuit of literary festivals and gatherings.¹⁶ The Dutch national level of recognition was initially absent, as Hettinga's poetry was available only in the not widely read Frisian language, but it kicked into gear after his breakthrough at the 1993 Frankfurter Buchmesse. Thus, analyzing closely the trajectory of Hettinga's career makes clear how his poetry and his authorship traversed linguistic barriers and geographic borders in the post-1989 globalizing moment.

If modernity's political project after 1789, and certainly after the advent of various European nationalist movements in the nineteenth century, was to merge the nation with the state, to unite the latter with the former—in other words, to converge *ethnos* and *demos*—then multilingual, localized, and migrant minorities are a perpetual thorn in the side of those propagating nationalist homogeneity. A continuous reminder that "here" and "there" (to borrow Paul Gilroy's [1993] terms), "us" and "them," are inextricably mixed, minorities' presence in modern society reminds us of complex relations, mediations, and connections that nationalist projects wish to forget, neglect, or undo. Tsjêbbe Hettinga shows how languages can travel across those spaces: the beauty of poetry can transfigure the imagination of communities.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

No competing interests are reported.

DATA ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

The interviews recorded for this article will be stored in the DANS archive of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) after the end of the research project in 2021. Before that time, the recordings are available through the researcher.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Jesse van Amelsvoort is a PhD candidate at the University of Groningen/Campus Fryslân. His research project is on how the changing sociopolitical situation in Europe affects the role and position of multilingual minority writers there, and engages notions of European identity, minority writing, and literary multilingualism. He has published in *Interventions*, *Journal of European Studies*, *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, and the *Dutch Review of Books*.

16 The ubiquity of poetry festivals nowadays can itself be interpreted as a sign of cultural globalization. For more on the cultural dimensions of globalization, see Appadurai (1996).

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