

DUTCH IDENTITY AND ASSIMILATION IN AUSTRALIA:  
AN INTERPRETATIVE APPROACH

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by

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This thesis is my own work and all sources have been properly  
acknowledged.

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## ABSTRACT

The following ethnography is a study of Dutch identity and assimilation in Australia. Dutch migrants have been and still are known as an assimilated people who came to Australia and voluntarily abandoned their culture just as they abandoned their fellow countrymen. Because of this they are considered as among the most successful of migrants, almost a non-ethnic group. Drawing on a variety of texts including the research literature, government publications and newspaper reports about Dutch migrants as well as the life histories of Dutch migrants living in Canberra this study challenges the apparent self-evidence of Dutch assimilation. It argues that assimilation or "invisibility" has become a symbol of Dutch identity in Australia and asks, why was it that Dutch migrants equated migration with assimilation? The answer lies, in part, in the history of Dutch migration to Australia, specifically, Dutch and Australian migration programmes which were aimed at solving respective population and labour problems and valued Dutch migrants in terms of their assimilability. This study also looks at how people make sense of that migration, in particular the different meanings for men and women of migration and how those meanings shaped their relationships with their "Australian" children.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	
DUTCH IDENTITY, MEANING AND DISCOURSE.....	1
De Onzichtbare Nederlanders van Australie.....	12
History and Life History.....	18
<b>CHAPTER I</b>	
ETHNIC STUDIES: WHO IS AN ETHNIC?.....	23
The Growth of Ethnic Studies.....	24
Ethnic Studies in Australia.....	30
An ethnic is a migrant.....	36
Abos, bog Irish and Pommies.....	37
Migrants and their children.....	41
<b>CHAPTER II</b>	
FIELDWORK AND DOING LIFE HISTORY WITH DUTCH MIGRANTS.....	50
Fieldwork.....	54
The Interviews.....	62
Using Life History in Ethnography.....	75
<b>CHAPTER III</b>	
HISTORY OF DUTCH MIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA.....	88
The Netherlands: The Emigration Climate and Government Policy.....	89
The Subsidy System.....	93
"The best people are leaving".....	95
Dutch Migration to Australia.....	97
Those who came.....	110
Summary.....	115
<b>CHAPTER IV</b>	
LITERATURE REVIEW: THE REALITY OF DUTCH ASSIMILATION.....	122
Geographic Distribution.....	123
Inter-marriage.....	125
Return Migration and Naturalisation.....	127
Occupational Distribution.....	129
Language Shift.....	132
Religious Distribution in Australia.....	134
Religious Denominations and the Zuilen in Australia.....	139
Community Organisations.....	141
Summary.....	150
<b>CHAPTER V</b>	
THE DUTCH IN CANBERRA.....	155
Work.....	157
Religion.....	160
The Canberra Dutch Club.....	163

<b>CHAPTER VI</b>	
MIGRATION STORIES, DEPARTURES AND ARRIVALS.....	174
The Decision to Emigrate.....	175
Leaving Home.....	181
How We Came.....	185
Paying Your Own Way.....	186
Being Assisted.....	190
First Impressions.....	193
Summary.....	205
 <b>CHAPTER VII</b>	
INSIDE-OUTSIDE: THE PARADOX OF DUTCH IDENTITY.....	209
"Migration/Assimilation".....	210
"Going Home".....	218
Discussion.....	235
Conclusion.....	247
 <b>CHAPTER VIII</b>	
LEAVING HOME: THE LOGIC OF MIGRATION.....	252
A Morally Suspect Act.....	253
Leaving Parents.....	259
Men Make Their Lives.....	266
It's Their Own Fault.....	272
A Going Away Situation.....	285
Conclusion.....	292
 CONCLUSION.....	 296
 REFERENCES CITED.....	 301

## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
TABLE 2.1 Informants: Mode of Contact.....	59
TABLE 4.1 Men employed as Tradesmen, Production Workers or Labourers (as a % of birthplace groups in the labour force).....	130
TABLE 4.2 Religious Affiliation of Dutch Migrants in Australia (in %).....	134
TABLE 5.1 Dutch migrants in the ACT, 1947-1981.....	155
TABLE 5.2 Occupational Distribution of Dutch Migrants (Male) in the ACT.....	157
TABLE 5.3 Occupational Distribution of Dutch Migrants (Female) in the ACT.....	157
TABLE 5.4 Informants: Areas of employment.....	159
TABLE 5.5 Religious Affiliation of Dutch Migrants in the ACT..	160
TABLE 5.6 Informants: Religious Affiliation.....	161

## INTRODUCTION

### DUTCH IDENTITY, MEANING AND DISCOURSE

This ethnography is a cultural analysis of Dutch identity in Australia. Taking as its focus the widely held belief that Dutch migrants are an assimilated people, the following study explores personal and public meanings of Dutchness, and considers how these meanings are connected and constructed in various discourses. It asks, how is it that Dutch migrants have come to be defined by their (apparent) lack of identity or "invisibility", and what are the consequences of being so negatively defined? While these are not the only questions which might be posed about the Dutch in Australia, as I endeavour to show in this ethnography, the notion of Dutch assimilation is fundamental to understanding the situation of Dutch migrants in Australia and, by implication, Australian society generally.

My approach to this ethnography has been influenced by Berger's work (1973, 1977) on the nature of modern society and modern consciousness, arguments which seem particularly appropriate when applied to the migrant experience. Migrants must be, in Berger's sense of the word, amongst the most "modern" of people, for not only do they live in a pluralistic, technological and bureaucratic world, that is, the modern world (Wuthnow et al 1984:56), but their very circumstances conspire to make them more aware than other people of their situation. By this I mean, they

have become modern in their lifetimes and more importantly, on the face of it at least, through their own actions. They are the ones who left, who did this thing. They have left traditional, known worlds and relationships where they belonged and which helped shield them from their anonymity (which is a by product of modern society cf, Berger 1973:37). In exchange for this, they find themselves in new "homelands" where they are, by definition, subject to numerous bureaucratic interventions in their lives (as are all of us. The difference lies in the extent and explicitness of these interventions, for example, in the migrant camps, in job placement and so on. This is taken up at greater length in subsequent chapters). Their private lives, part of what Berger refers to as the "private sphere" (1977:9-11), are no longer private. As I argue in later chapters how they came to Australia, what language they speak at home, their children's school performance and so forth have become matters of public interest and discussion. In this sense, migrants can be seen as doubly "homeless" (Berger 1973:165); they have left old homes for new and now are at home nowhere.

It would appear that the Dutch are more modern than most other migrants, who are still somewhat traditional and "unassimilated", for Dutch migrants have accommodated themselves to their new situation and apparently share no ethnic identity (see Chapter IV). However, while this ethnography is informed by the "critique of modernity" perspective I am concerned not so much with discussing the Dutch in terms of their relative modernity or alienation as with exploring connections between personal

experience and public identity or ethnic stereotypes, and at another level with how individuals make sense of the external realities which impinge on their lives, in this case, the realities of (modern) migration.

Cultural analysis is ... guessing at meaning, assessing the guess, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses, not discovering the Continent of Meaning and mapping its bodiless landscape. (Geertz 1973:20)

Geertz's "interpretive" approach to meaning and cultural analysis, his eclectic style of writing and detailed "thick" analysis inform this ethnography and my approach to the question of Dutch identity in Australia. In the Geertzian framework, culture is conceived of as "an assemblage of texts" (cf Keesing 1974:79) to be read or interpreted by the ethnographer. Culture is not something "out there" waiting to be discovered, as assumed by traditional, positivist social science, it is the product, the "invention" of the ethnographer (Wagner 1975). Following from this, ethnography is seen here as a problem of meaning, a question posed, rather than the description of an entire way of life (what Marcus and Cushman 1982 term the "realist" paradigm); ethnography is unavoidably "partial" (Clifford 1986) and should be read and discussed as such.

Not surprisingly, given the challenge posed by the interpretive approach to the notion of a scientific anthropology, opinions differ as to both its significance and the merit (cf Keesing 1987, Shankman 1986). In their review of ethnographic texts, Marcus and Cushman (op cit:37-38) credit Geertz with

inspiring numerous "experimental" ethnographies in which authors employ various unconventional modes of presentation such as the inclusion of autobiographical material in the text, organisation of the text around an explicit narrative presence rather than an abstract schema ("religion", "social structure", "economy" etc), joint authorship with subjects and so forth. At the same time, the authors of these texts are trying to move beyond the culture-as-text formulation, which is seen as an extension of ethnographic realism precisely because of its emphasis on text at the expense of context (op cit:43). That is, Geertz takes insufficient notice of the various ideological, political, economic and situational contexts which give rise to cultural and ethnographic texts, including his own (Keesing op cit, Scholte 1984). In Tedlock's words (1983:337), "Geertz preaches conversation and practices monologue". Of course, Geertz is hardly alone in being caught up in his own rhetoric, this is a dilemma which besets and enriches anthropological discourse generally. However, by breaking away from traditional, "safe" ethnographic genres, Geertz and others like him help bring that dilemma to our consciousness (cf Hutnyk 1987).

There has been within anthropology a tradition of "confessional" writing (cf Bowen 1954, Levi-Strauss 1975, Malinowski 1967, Powdermaker 1966) in which fieldwork experiences and autobiographical details are discussed. However, rather than being integrated into the main text where they belong, these accounts are published well after the fact, in a separate volume or chapter away from the "real" text, the ethnography proper,

where they cannot threaten the author's supposed objectivity and, by extension, professional authority and status (Pratt 1986). It would seem that fieldwork is too personal, too unscientific, too embarassing to bear close examination; yet, ironically, it is fieldwork from which anthropology draws identity, vitality, even mystique. In a similar vein, ethnographers have been loathe to consider how they write their texts (Bateson 1936 is an important exception; see Marcus 1982). Critics of traditional "Other" oriented anthropology argue that this kind of enquiry faces a moral and epistemological crisis (cf Clifford 1980, 1983; Crapanzano 1977; Crick 1982; Parkin 1982; Rabinow 1982; Scholte 1974). By failing to confront their own "vulnerability" (Dwyer 1982), anthropologists overstate and distort their knowledge of a particular way of life:

The ethnography comes to represent a sort of allegorical anti-world, similar to the anti-worlds of the insane and the child. The ethnographic encounter is lost in timeless description; the anguished search for comprehension in the theoretical explanation; the particular in the general; the character in the stereotype. (Crapanzano 1980:8)

The purpose then of these "experimental" texts is not just to tell a better, more colourful story but to find a way of communicating a nuanced, open-ended understanding of the Other. To some extent, this involves abandoning one's priveleged status of neutral observer and including one's self "reflexively" (Myerhoff and Ruby 1982) as fieldworker and author within the text (rather than in some kind of appendix). Thus, experimental ethnographies are characterised by varying degrees and kinds of



self consciousness, be they textual, political or autobiographical (see Marcus and Cushman op cit for an evaluation of these text's).

However, even the most fervent exponents of reflexivity would not claim that reflexivity is a panacea for anthropological quandaries (although it may, in practical terms, help sell books, ibid). When all is said and done, one can only ever be imperfectly reflexive; eventually the text must be set. Taken to its logical extreme, reflexivity lands us in an infinite regress: how "far back" does one go in accounting for Self before "personal" ethnography slips into auto-biography, more about Self than Other? Clearly the answer depends on what your purposes are; what you want to write. A second, related issue is that of ethnographic authority: How many "risks" does one take, how much ambiguity and polysemy will our readership(s) tolerate, not to speak of ourselves? Is the risk real or are we just playing with trendy notions of vulnerability and reflexivity for our own, rhetorical purposes? The same approach can be used, after all, to construct or de-construct anthropological knowledge, legitimate or discredit ethnographic authority, assume or retreat from responsibility. Finally, it remains a matter of interpretation. The answer, such as it is, lies in striking a balance between the demands of Self and Other, and striving to be explicit about the nature of that balance. However, no one is really sure or more importantly in agreement as what that balance should be. Resolution of this conundrum, even if that were possible or desirable (Tyler 1986), is outside the scope of a single ethnography. My immediate interest lies in discussing the

text-and-context question as it relates to the following ethnography.

The text of this thesis is Dutch identity: generalised Dutch identity as well as the personal identity of Dutch migrants, whose meanings are negotiated in a series of dialogues between Self and Other about "who" the Dutch are. The participants in these dialogues include the Dutch and their observers professional and otherwise. In practice and for specific (ideological, rhetorical, analytical) purposes the connection between text and context is often ignored, even denied. Like other stereotyped groups and categories of people, this has happened popularly and in the research literature (which is the subject of Chapters I and IV) to Dutch migrants viz in statements such as "the Dutch are ... hardworking, clean, opinionated, (and above all) assimilated". (I return to the Dutch stereotype in the following section.)

As a consequence Dutch identity, as it is publicly defined at least, has become de-personalised and fixed. By re-drawing the connection between text and context, I offer a re-interpretation of Dutch identity as it has been constructed. Given that there is no absolute distinction between public and private spheres or identities (although they may be experienced as such and thus must be accounted for) these inter-related dialogues are referred to here as a kind of loosely defined "conversation" involving a wide range of people and ideas. Similarly, who Dutch migrants are (to themselves and others) is related to other questions such as "who" is an Australian, a migrant and so forth. In particular, one cannot talk meaningfully about Dutch identity in Australia without

first examining what it meant to be a Dutch migrant in the 1950's both in the Netherlands and Australia. These questions are explored in Chapters I and III, with particular emphasis on "the power of discursive formations" (Crick 1985:71), that is, how these definitions served to mask and legitimate specific economic and population policies, and in turn how they were communicated to Dutch migrants themselves.

Part of my motivation for undertaking this project was a desire to get behind the apparently, impenetrable Dutch mask and talk "off the record" with Dutch migrants about their experiences. I write this aware that ultimately these are illusory goals. The so-called mask and subjective reality are somehow connected (if only by being aware of how Dutch migrants are perceived by Australians). No matter how determined or persuasive I was, reality or identity would not unpeel onion-like; there was no final "real" experience to excavate. Equally, what I would write was my construction of reality. It was not a collaborative effort except in terms of the effort put in by informants during the interviews, of which their words are the visible product. And similarly, no matter how informal, all the interviews were "on" the record. Informants would not be talking to themselves, they were being recorded for a research project; there was no way of getting away from the "public" nature of our conversations. At the same time and as indicated earlier (see page 3) the connection between public and private meanings or, more specifically, how ethnic stereotypes impinge on and are understood by the individuals who are so defined also interest me. In terms of

these questions, I see the idea of the Dutch as an assimilated people as a form of ethnic stereotype and one which is crucial to understanding Dutch identity and experience in Australia. What does it mean to be publicly defined as assimilated? In the interviews I wanted to explore the meaning of assimilation in Dutch migrants' lives or as it is "articulated" (Crapranzano 1980) in life history interviews. And, in order to do this, one has to "make room" for informants' subjective experiences by recognising the dialogical nature of life history (Watson 1976). This involves being explicit about fieldwork methods and persona. People were not talking to an anonymous recording device, they were talking to "me" (or who they perceived me to be) and I responded similarly. For the interviews to be, in my terms, successful (for people to "open up" and talk freely and at length about their lives), "we" - the informant and myself - had to share for a few hours at least a relatively intimate relationship. How does this come about? Who I was to my informants, how I presented myself, my "field" behaviour (the field usually being people's living-rooms) affected what people told me and thus need to be accounted for.

The question of self-disclosure extends, as I have already noted, beyond a discussion of methods, however detailed that might be. As Frank notes (1979:89):

The life history can be considered a double autobiography, since it is to the investigator's personal experiences that the subject's accounts are first referred. A question underlying life history work generically is: How is it possible to know or understand another person?

However, as Frank and numerous other writers point out, including Crapanzano (1980, 1984), Langness (1965), Langness and Frank (1981), Watson (1976) and Young (1983), a serious weakness of life history research has been lack of awareness of this very issue. It is as if one just does life history. I suspect that this is largely a result of the siren appeal of the life history, which offers the observer the prospect of supposedly getting inside people's lives through their unmediated words. In any case, that is how much life history material is presented, that is, as raw data whose meanings are "self evident".<sup>1</sup> However, life histories contain no single meaning, they are the product of a series of dialogues between Self and Other, beginning with the person the subject once was and is now trying to understand, between the subject and interviewer who are seeking to understand each other, and finally between the author and the various audiences for whom the text is written. Bearing in mind this chain of dialogues, the life history material is presented rather unconventionally, that is, instead of organising the ethnography around several lengthy case histories, excerpts from interview transcripts have been used to develop and deepen my arguments. The traditional case history seems to me inappropriate in an ethnography about migration, implying as it does that such a complex experience, involving many thousand's of people, can be illustrated and contained by one or at the most several lives, when the underlying theme here is one of ambiguity and fragmentation. Beyond this, my intention is to "evoke" rather than typify or describe experience (Tyler 1986) and to this end, I include many and different "voices", including my

own, in the text. That I depart from life history traditions by not relying on several key informants raises questions about how the material was organised, who spoke when, who did not and so forth. These questions are addressed more specifically in Chapter II as well as throughout the ethnography. However, I would first like to suggest that as a method, this is no less true or more biased than the standard case history which involves similar editorial decisions only appears not to do so. There are no "typical" informants or lives, this cannot be a valid reason for writing about a particular person, just as there are no unmediated life histories.

For these assorted reasons and bearing in mind the proviso that there are limits to reflexivity, this is a somewhat personal ethnography. Stylistically, I use the authorial "I" rather than the less intrusive and "safer" third person. I do this to locate myself in the ethnography, and to account for the development of my thinking about the Dutch in Australia. I include where relevant (in my judgement) autobiographical details and discuss my reactions to issues raised by myself and my informants in the ethnography. Rosaldo (1984) argues that anthropological studies of death and ritual in particular have been weakened because anthropology generally has failed to recognise the "force" of emotions in cultural experience. I would suggest that migration evokes many of the same emotions as death perhaps because it represents a kind of "little" (social) death and that as a migrant, as well as an anthropologist, writing about Dutch migrants it behoves me to not only acknowledge but explore these

emotions.

De Onzichtbare Nederlanders van Australië<sup>2</sup>

The first Dutchman one meets is that well known, immediately recognisable individual known as the "typical" Dutchman.<sup>3</sup> This person is blunt spoken, arrogant, materialistic and a hard worker. He is "strong willed, fast thinking, often stubborn and possessed with a fanaticism to succeed" (The Adelaide Advertiser, Feb 3, 1978). Above all, he has fitted in, he is assimilated. This Dutchman, I suggest, is a social fiction. He exists only within a body of "common sense" knowledge, that "lies so artlessly before our eyes it is impossible to see" (Geertz 1983:92) which tells us who "we" are as well as who "the Dutch" are. Who then is this Dutchman and where does he come from?

First of all, one meets this person everywhere: in jokes about the Dutch, such as "Do you know how to get 25 Dutchmen into a Volkswagon? No? Throw 25 cents in";<sup>4</sup> in expressions such as "Dutch treat", "Dutch courage" and "Dutch uncle" where the adjective "Dutch" invariably has a mildly perjorative, perverse connotation;<sup>5</sup> and in the almost predictable response by people to the news that I am doing an ethnography about the Dutch. That is, they are somewhat bemused by my "perverse" subject choice: the Dutch are so well assimilated that they cannot really be considered an ethnic group (or of any serious anthropological interest), and then they almost always ask if I don't find them a rather difficult people to work with. Aren't the Dutch pretty arrogant and opinionated? This same Dutchman turns up in magazine

and newspaper articles purportedly about the Dutch such as the following one, appropriately entitled "The assimilated but unusual Dutch" (The Canberra Times, May 13, 1978):

There are no Dutch ghettos here or elsewhere in Australia, no "typical" Dutch trades or professions, no accepted or ascribed collective social traits or standing. Except, of course, that the Dutch are generally perceived to be a hardworking lot perhaps a bit intolerant of sloth-traits that in these antipodes are sometimes and unfairly translated as meanness ... The Dutch and particularly the first post-war waves have been peculiarly willing to "assimilate" ... "They were the best of the lot at playing the game" as one Dutch-Australian put it". (my emphasis)

In these days of "multi-culturalism" and of official acceptance/encouragement of cultural difference (see Chapter I), the reporter does not want to give offence either to the Dutch who "sometimes and unfairly" are perceived as "mean" or to the Australians who might be seen as "slothful". Neither does the author want to detract from the fact that the Dutch were good at assimilating - or at simulating assimilation? - even though assimilation is no longer politically fashionable. Yet, despite these equivocations, we are being told the same story: the Dutch are assimilated but they are still very Dutch.

One finds evidence of this same enigmatic Dutchman in the research literature, which Cox concludes in the Commission of Inquiry into Poverty in Australia (1975:101) gives

the general impression that the Dutch people settle fairly easily; that they tend to identify to a reasonable degree with the host community in language and social life; that they are not over-concerned about the preservation of the Dutch language or community; but that they also remain very Dutch in the cultural minutia.



In other words, it would seem that the Dutch are virtually invisible, they have been successfully assimilated.<sup>6</sup> Substantially, for all practical purposes, they are no different from Australians - in where they live and work, whom they marry, the language they speak, the groups they join.<sup>7</sup> However, inside they are still Dutch, in how they live inside their homes, in their personality and motivations for assimilating.<sup>8</sup>

While the research literature emphasises the reality of Dutch assimilation rather than the popular notion of Dutch character<sup>9</sup> I would argue that the two concepts are closely linked. This is best illustrated by the notion of "assimilability" whereby some kinds of people are more prone to being assimilated than are others, by virtue of their cultural similarity and their willingness to be assimilated. According to this logic, the Dutch character helps make Dutch migrants more assimilable, character being confounded here with culture. That is, the Dutch are an individualistic, hardnosed materialistic people, with little interest or affection for their culture or each other (no wonder, given their character!), who would therefore choose to assimilate.<sup>10</sup>

The notion of Dutch character also helps explain - or, more accurately, provides a way of explaining - why Dutch migrants, even though they are assimilated, might still be seen as different (peculiar/unusual/mean) and not be entirely accepted by Australians. Implicit here are a number of ideological statements about the kind of place Australia is: first of all and most

basically, there is an identifiable, shared Australian way of life for migrants to be assimilated into. Secondly, Australia is a "land of opportunity" where individuals (like the individualistic Dutch) can get ahead materially and are not forced to assimilate (no matter "who" they are inside) because they choose to assimilate. And lastly, Australians are a friendly open-hearted people who accept or reject people on the basis of personal characteristics rather than, for example, because of their race, culture or class.

Let them think you're assimilating and they'll shut up and leave you alone. (informant)<sup>11</sup>

For all that the assimilated Dutchman is well known, he is an enigmatic character. His invisibility is ambiguous; somebody is there, we just cannot see him. Sloughing off his cultural skin for all his very Dutch reasons, one conjures up the image of a creature which offers itself up for sacrifice yet who somehow remains intact. It is as if he is devouring or assimilating himself. We still do not know which "game" the Dutch are so good at playing or why the Dutch informant chose the game analogy in the first place. Is the Dutchman telling the Volkswagen joke saying that he would run after 25 cents and make a fool of himself too, or is his tongue firmly in his cheek when he tells his little story? No one, it seems, bothers to ask his meaning just as remarkably little curiosity is expressed about why Dutch migrants should subscribe to and even encourage the notion of their "invisibility" (the very fact that Dutch migrants say they are assimilated being taken as proof that they are assimilated).

However, this Dutchman and his Dutch character are more than the product of Australian imaginings about the Dutch, I would argue that they are a joint creation arising from a series of discourses between Dutch and Australians about who Dutch migrants are. "Invisibility" and Dutch "character", it seems, are nothing new to the Dutch. Dutch writers such as Goudsblom (1967), Huizinga (1968), Lijphart (1968) as well as Shetter (1971) all assert that the Dutch are especially accomplished at making themselves invisible. It is their "characteristically" Dutch way of protecting the individual's "inner inviolability" in a society, in this case the Dutch verzuiling system which stresses social conformity to institutionalised difference. (The verzuiling system in Australia is discussed in Chapter IV.) I am not suggesting that the Dutch are the quintessential game-players their chroniclers claim them to be (anymore than they are inherently materialistic, opportunistic or mysterious), what I am suggesting is that they seem to see themselves in these terms. The notion of Dutch character or Dutchness seems also to be a central feature of Dutch discourse about who they are as a people and why their society is the way it is. For example, Huizinga (1968) traces Dutch history and civilization to the pragmatic, unheroic, "bourgeois" character of the Dutch people (cf van Heerikhuizen 1982). Of immediate relevance to this study is the emphasis placed by Dutch scholars and the Dutch government on "character" as a way of explaining Dutch emigration (cf Beijer et al 1961, Hofstede 1958, 1964 and Elich 1985:45).<sup>12</sup> Some, such as Blok and Boissevain [1984:341], go further and suggest that this

type of explanation reflects "the soberness and parsimony of Dutch culture at large" (my emphasis; again culture is being reduced to character). I would suggest, instead, that this emphasis on individual character or essence as an analytic category is at least partly ideological in that it avoids addressing such issues as social inequality and power in the Netherlands (as well as in Australia).

As might be expected, Dutch reading of their "character" is more detailed and sympathetic than the Australian version, nevertheless, there are strong similarities between the two. At times the Australian "character" comes off second best, for example, informants stress the honesty and fair-mindedness of the Dutch compared to Australians' hypocrisy and intolerance. Australians, they say, do not accept people or opinions different from themselves but never say "to your face" what they are thinking. Dutch people do say what they think and, therefore, are labelled, mistakenly, as arrogant or rude. The Dutch stereotype then is in their terms a distortion of who they really are, that is, it is a misreading of their "character". Also, whereas Australians seem to recognise a single Dutch type, Dutch migrants can draw a virtual taxonomy of personalities: fun-loving, gregarious Southerners (who are mainly Catholic) versus restrained, Calvinistic northerners: the hardworking, independent people who came "earlier" to Australia compared to opportunistic, less reliable "later" arrivals (see Chapter III); honest, decent country people (or "small-minded" peasants, depending on who is speaking) and dishonest city folk and so forth. In a similar

vein, informants claim that in Dutch organisations conflict is centred around personality rather than on class or religious differences which are "not" talked about, especially religion. As Taylor (1983) demonstrates in his historical ethnography of a Dutch American community, personality becomes an idiom for social conflict as well as identity.

My second point is that the Netherlands is not the only society to place a premium on conformity. The Australia confronted by migrants in the 1950's with its explicitly assimilationist policies would have been - even more than now - a place where a migrant either conformed and belonged or was rejected. It seems that Dutch migrants were more prepared to conform, or to be seen to conform, than other more "visible" migrants who did not assimilate so successfully. A game playing strategy, whereby inside is differentiated from outside and one appears to be outside something which one is not inside, would be a means of assimilating yet preserving one's self somewhat intact, especially if such game-playing is part of a rhetorical Dutch identity. However, such a strategy would not be without its own problems, including managing the transition between inside and outside and in particular maintaining the integrity of the inside given the overwhelming pressures from the outside; hence, I suggest, the ongoing cultural preoccupation with character and Dutchness.

#### History and Life History

The Dutch have been in Australia in any numbers for less than

40 years. They came to Australia during the 1950's, an era of unprecedented government organised mass migration and, one could say, of government interference in people's lives. The 120,000 Dutch (approximately) who migrated to Australia were part of an even larger movement of almost half a million Dutch from the Netherlands to Canada, the United States, New Zealand and South Africa as well as Australia. This movement of Dutch people was encouraged and largely orchestrated by the Dutch government. It coincided also with a change in Australia's immigration policy when, for the first time in its history, Australia was encouraging non-British immigration to its shores (see Chapter III). In that it signalled a shift in Australia's national identity the arrival of the Dutch in Australia along with migrants from many other countries was historic not just a personal event.

I would argue that the typical "assimilated" Dutchman who came to Australia and became an Australian for his own personal and individualistic reasons is presented as if he were a man without and out of history when clearly his histories (personal and public) contribute to where he is now. On one level, this is symbolised by the fact that his migration was encouraged and largely paid for by the Dutch and Australian governments. Why is his history being denied, his story "muted" (Ardener 1972, 1975)? In order to answer this question and understand him (this typical Dutchman), we need to know why the Netherlands did not want him and why Australia did. More specifically, I am interested in the debates which developed in both the Netherlands and Australia during the period of Dutch migration to Australia about the nature

and purposes of migration, and in Dutch-Australian negotiations over who should come and who should stay. Traces of these debates, which I attempt to reconstruct, are to be found in the public record: in Emigratie, the official mouthpiece for Dutch emigration policies during the 1950's: in Immigration Advisory Council and Planning Council proceedings and reports which were concerned with Australian immigration policies and their implementation;<sup>12</sup> in newspaper reports and political speeches on migration; and in research on Dutch migration and Australian immigration generally which contributed to and often reflected government policies and were part of "common sense" discourse about who migrants were. Dutch migrants, the focus of these discussions, would have been to some extent (that remains to be determined) aware of their place in the scheme of things, for example, why they were being encouraged to leave the Netherlands, how they were treated in Australia, how people reacted to them as Dutch migrants, just as they now know they are "assimilated". Indeed, much of what was said about Dutch migrants would have been directed towards them so as to encourage them to behave appropriately, that is, to leave or stay as well as to assimilate. I am exploring, then, the connections between personal and public meanings; how public definitions of Dutch migrants were communicated to the people involved and what sense Dutch migrants made of those definitions which, I argue, denied them their individuality and their histories.

## FOOTNOTES

- 1 Some researchers have gone further, dissecting life history material and using these "bits" to test theories about human nature and society. This "violation" of the integrity of the life history (Watson 1976:98) is ironic when one considers that it is this very integrity which attracted their attention in the first place.
- 2 "The invisible Dutch in Australia", Dutch newspaper article which describes how well assimilated Dutch migrants in Australia are (Wijnen 1983a).
- 3 I deliberately use the masculine gender here. While the typical Dutch person can be a woman (who is very "clean") such statements generally refer to Dutch men largely because they would be more visible being out in the workforce. At the same time, I would suggest that they are primarily known as workers, that is, how they work, what they are like to get on with, their motivation for working (so hard) rather than more intimately, for example, as friends.
- 4 This joke (told by a Dutch migrant) is meant to illustrate how penny pinching and individualistic the Dutch are. He is suggesting that this is why the Dutch do not support their community organisations. It is unclear whether or not he is including himself in this generalisation (from The Bulletin, The Australian Family, part 7 "The Dutch"). See Lucas (1955:580) for a more complete list of "Dutch" epithets.
- 5 A "treat" where each person pays his own score, false or fictitious courage often inspired by stimulants, to be sternly candid (rather than "avuncular") from The Concise English Dictionary, pg 353.
- 6 Assimilation being equated with "invisibility" (Borrie 1959).
- 7 The empirical evidence for Dutch assimilation is critically reviewed in Chapter IV.
- 8 I am indebted here to Pauwels (1980), whose analysis of the inside-outside distinction with respect to Dutch identity in Australia has stimulated my own thinking about the meaning of assimilation for Dutch migrants.
- 9 An exception is Unikoski (1978) who equates Dutch character with assimilation and quotes Hofstede to support her argument that Dutch immigrants are generally unfavourable to other Dutch migrants. Hofstede (himself Dutch) compared intending and newly arrived Dutch migrants whom he found (predictably) were more isolated and individualistic than non-migrants confirming, he argues, the "essentially" individualistic character of emigration (Hofstede 1964:107).



- 10 Overberg (1978) and Pauwels (op cit) challenge the choice analogy, arguing that Dutch assimilation was a response to external assimilationist pressures.
- 11 Dutch migrant describing "typical" Dutch attitude towards Australians.
- 12 This is consistent with the stance taken by the Netherlands government in the 1950's that emigration was an individual responsibility even though emigration during that period was almost entirely government organised and sponsored. In this sense the emphasis on the individual was a disavowal of public responsibility (implications of this displacement of responsibility are discussed at length in the ethnography).
- 13 Henceforth referred to as IAC and IPC respectively.

## CHAPTER I

### ETHNIC STUDIES: WHO IS AN ETHNIC?

As well as capturing the popular imagination, ethnicity and ethnic groups have attracted considerable interest and controversy in the research literature. Advocates of what has been described as "the new ethnicity" (Bennett 1975) claim that it is part of a paradigmatic shift, a recognition of cultural and social realities which for too long have been denied in the social sciences. Critics of "the ethnic industry" claim that it is nothing of the sort: trivial, trivializing, opportunistic and theoretically naive it may well be, a step forward it certainly is not. In all the rhetoric, where lies the truth? This chapter presents a critical overview of ethnic studies generally as well as in Australia, with special emphasis placed on the contexts and uses of ethnicity and ethnic studies. As such, it is not intended to be a comprehensive review of the ethnic literature, which is far too voluminous and disparate to be contained meaningfully in a single chapter, and most of which is theoretically and methodologically outside my ethnographic concerns. An underlying purpose of this discussion, then, is to explain why I have placed this study outside the ethnic studies tradition, and treat terms such as ethnic and ethnicity as members' "common sense" understandings (see Introduction) rather than as analytic categories. The first part of the chapter briefly summarises the

growth of ethnic studies in anthropology, with some mention of their counter, assimilation theory. This is followed by a more lengthy discussion of ethnic studies in Australia and their close relationship with assimilationism. Two issues are explored here: how "ethnics" have been defined in Australia, and the re-definition of the parent-child relationship in the ethnic literature. Following from this, I argue that as "assimilated" migrants, as ethnics who are not quite ethnics, the Dutch represent a special and crucial case which has been used to prove the success of assimilationist migration policies.

#### The Growth of Ethnic Studies

Until the 1960's it was generally assumed in anthropology and sociology (but for different reasons) that because of the overwhelming impact of modernization cultural minorities would eventually disappear. Cultural variation was the result of isolation; in effect, only borders and distance could inhibit the flow and borrowing of cultural traits. This kind of thinking was epitomized in anthropology by the ethnographic convention of describing social groups as if they were identifiable, isolated tribes when they manifestly were not (being involved in trading, marriage and other exchange relationships with other groups and so forth). Borders and cultural identities were treated as synonymous even when those very borders, tribes and definitions were colonial constructs. Leach's (1954) analysis of political and cultural systems in Highland Burma is a significant exception. (See Cohen 1978 for critique of the "tribal" paradigm.) It was

evident also in the stance taken by anthropology towards modern society. As well as being the enemy of traditional society - and hence of anthropology - modern society was not considered ethnographically interesting or accessible because it was so massive and culturally undifferentiated. Modern society unlike traditional society had no "real" culture or cultural boundaries (beliefs which are still current in anthropology, I suggest, and to anthropology's cost).

Like anthropology, sociology (which I discuss here because so much of ethnic research in Australia has been done by sociologists) accepted the notion of cultural homogeneity and the modern-traditional opposition. However, perhaps because sociology has been associated primarily with the study of modern society, it has tended to identify with the values of modernity and assume that traditional societies not only will but should be absorbed by modernity. (Conversely, anthropologists have been accused of over-identifying with the groups they study and exaggerating the salience of culture and ethnicity, and denying assimilative pressures and benefits; see Yinger 1985). This attitude is exemplified by the considerable sociological literature devoted to the study of the assimilation of cultural minorities, and according to Hirschman (1983:401) it remains the dominant sociological paradigm for the study of cultural minorities.

Assimilation theory, like the tribal concept, is premised on an organic model of society, with well defined boundaries and functions where meaning is transparent. In its most extreme version, being assimilated is very much like being eaten:

When that nutriment ultimately becomes an integral part of the physical body of that organisation it is said to be assimilated. Any part of the food which creates disturbance with reference to the body is not assimilated. (Borrie 1959:89-90)

The immigrant is new food for the host society; stripped of nasty foreign appendages, digested and recombined (hopefully causing his host no indigestion or illness) and emerging "emotionally dead" (Taft 1953:46) to his old homeland. The model of assimilation proposed by Gordon (1964, 1978) demands less of the migrant, but it still assumes that assimilation is mutually beneficial for the individual and the larger society. Gordon distinguishes here between "cultural" and "structural" assimilation. He argues that it is possible for narrowly defined cultural differences such as language, cultural identity and values to co-exist within a framework of structural assimilation whereby members of different ethnic groups are distributed across social classes, occupations, religious groups and so forth. Structural assimilation is desirable because it supposedly helps reduce inter-community conflict as well as ensuring individuals with equality of opportunity. "Cultural pluralism" and "multi-culturalism" are both derived from Gordon's formulation (see Martin 1981a for a comprehensive critique of this model).

As well, neo Marxist sociologists predict the dissolution of cultural minorities, which they see as inherently conservative. In this framework, social class is the fundamental organizing principle of society and determinant of identity, all else is derivative. Ultimately and ideally, national/cultural loyalties

are to be absorbed into the class structure and struggle.

Barth's analysis (1969) of ethnic groups and boundaries stressed the voluntary and strategic aspects of group membership. This was a landmark work in the development of ethnic studies, challenging basic assumptions about the unitary nature of society and the inevitable demise of cultural minorities. It was published at a time when isolated tribal peoples were becoming increasingly scarce, and anthropologists were trying to understand more complex field situations and questioning traditional anthropological ideas about ethnography and cultural interpretation (see Cohen 1978, for summary). At the same time, there was an apparent resurgence of vocal cultural/political minorities in the modern world and researchers such as Glazer and Moynihan (1963) were drawing attention to the multi-ethnic character of the American "melting pot". These developments were followed by what could be described as a reaction against - or re-definition - of modernity. Literally a plethora of studies set in modern and traditional (non-Western) societies were published, to varying degrees all stressing the dynamic, adaptive "primordial" aspects of ethnicity (see Cohen op cit and Yinger 1985 for literature reviews). Compared to race and social class, ethnicity as an analytic category stressed the positive, voluntary, strategic nature of minority group status.

Ethnicity became so popular that as Cohen notes (op cit:378):

Almost any cultural-social unity, indeed, any term describing structures of continuing social relations or sets of regularized events now can be referred to as an "ethnic" this or that ...

Conceptual imprecision is just one of numerous criticisms levelled at the field of ethnicity. McKay and Lewins (1978) review the evidence and propose a typology of ethnic terms which they argue will help to alleviate confusion. However, I consider that its problems are more fundamental than this and require a more radical solution. Further on in his review, Cohen (op cit:399) makes the point that "pluralism" is a perspective on culture and society, that is, meta rather than descriptive. Used descriptively, it implies - incorrectly - that there are societies which are not ethnically diverse. The same argument can be made, I suggest, for the abandonment of "ethnic" and "ethnicity", because they suggest similarly that there are "non" ethnic cultures. Where is that dominant, unitary culture to be found? Or conversely, reductio ad absurdum, one concludes that all cultures are "ethnic". In that case, "ethnic" as an adjective is clearly redundant; all we have said is that everyone has a culture (see also Eipper 1983). Furthermore, I would argue that little is gained analytically, and a great deal may be lost by arbitrarily labelling people from diverse, often ill-defined cultures as "ethnics". What do they demonstrably share in common with other ethnics, other than a label? Ethnicity, it seems, is beset by the same epistemological problems as "tribe", which it sought to replace. That is, it encourages us as observers to think we know more than we do, and to ignore cultural process and diversity

through being asserted rather than demonstrated this basic notion [ethnicity] serves an ideological function of condensing independent features of descent, economics, praxis, political organisation, language and culture -

into a single symbol of generalized identity,  
an anchoring of collective selfhood. (Galaty  
1982:17)

Following this argument, I do not refer to my informants as ethnics nor to the Dutch in Australia as an ethnic group. In some specified contexts they may be defined as a group sharing a common Dutch culture, an interest group mobilizing around a particular issue, as members of a social class, age cohort, family and so forth. Claims regarding ethnic status - made by or about the Dutch - are treated in this ethnography as a cultural rather than analytic construct.

Another longlasting issue to be considered here, albeit briefly, is the nexus between culture and power and the function of cultural analysis. Marxist critics of "the new ethnicity" argue that its emphasis on culture as an explanatory device rather than on social class is hegemonic; coming about at a time when colonialism is being replaced by neo-colonialism and when, through international migration, people defined as racially inferior are being incorporated into the working class. Racist theories of social inequality, which emphasise physical and social distance, are now inappropriate because they inhibit the co-option and incorporation of minority groups. They have been replaced by ethnic theories which attribute economic exploitation to inherent cultural difference. (See de Lepervanche 1980 for a more complete exposition of this argument.) To a large extent I am in agreement with this argument, especially in terms of how ethnicity and multi-culturalism have been manipulated and institutionalized by government (cf Jakubowicz 1981, Martin 1981a and Lewins 1984).



However, I reject the underlying premise that cultural analysis is false per se and that social class is the sole organizing principle, all else including culture being derivative. The problem with ethnic research, as I see it, is that it tends to confuse ideology and rhetoric with behaviour, that is, it is not cultural enough. Cultural analysis of meaning and identity need not be at odds with Marxist arguments or at least with a critique of knowledge and power (cf Foucault 1980) and may help to explain how people come to espouse a particular set of beliefs, ideology or "false consciousness" regarding themselves and their socio-economic situation.

#### Ethnic Studies in Australia

So far I have argued that ethnic studies as a body of literature is based on the (false) premise that societies are normally homogeneous, and that in practice ethnic and ethnicity are euphemisms for culture. In short, everybody and nobody is an ethnic. The same general criticisms may be made about the Australian literature, although here the definition of ethnicity or who is an ethnic is more restricted because, I argue, government policy and ethnic research have been primarily concerned with the assimilation of migrants rather than with cultural difference. I have already mentioned in the opening to this chapter that this is not a comprehensive review of ethnic studies either overseas or in Australia, one reason being the sheer volume and heterogeneity of that literature. (For more comprehensive and up-to-date discussions of Australian ethnic

studies see Bullivant 1984, Burnley et al 1985, Phillips et al 1984, Wilton and Bosworth 1984). In terms of the Australian literature, the Dutch have attracted very little interest in recent years (cf Pauwels 1980) and mainly only in terms of language loss and the "ethnic aged" problem, which I discuss here and in Chapter IV. Dutch migration to Australia ended effectively - and successfully, we are told - by the early 1960's (see Chapter III) and the Dutch themselves are no longer the subject of debates about Australian immigration or the future shape of Australian society. They are not represented by a community liaison officer in the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (although there are quite a number of officers of Dutch origin in the Department) and, unlike other ethnic groups in Australia, the Dutch are deemed not to have any special needs or problems (cf Cox 1975, Hearst 1981). Indeed, in terms of the ethnic literature, the Dutch are passé, as are (at least on the face of it) the assimilationist policies with which they are so closely associated.

I am interested then in exploring the assimilationist underpinnings of the Australian ethnic literature inasmuch as they shape our understandings of who the Dutch are and by implication who migrants are generally. Drawing on the ethnic literature to develop particular arguments about "the migrant presence" in Australia (Martin 1978), this section considers how ethnicity or cultural difference are equated with migration, the ideology of racial or cultural purity underlying this logic and some of its implications with reference to cultural minorities which are not

considered to be ethnics and the re-definition of the parent-child relationship. These last are of special relevance to the Dutch in Australia, who are almost not ethnics being on the borderline between British migrants and "real" migrants, and who are known for raising English-speaking children. I begin with a brief discussion of Australian immigration policies, namely, the White Australia policy and the assimilation of migrants.

Australia is basically and fundamentally a  
British community and must remain so.  
(H V Evatt in Wilton and Bosworth 1984:27)

Historically Australia adopted a rather defensive identity, seeing itself as a "white" British nation surrounded by over-crowded Asia (not to speak for the moment of the "black" aborigines already in its borders). As a consequence, Australia has looked toward Britain as a natural source of population and promoted British migration as a way of preserving and protecting its identity. At the same time, under the White Australia policy, which was adopted in 1901 and not abandoned officially until the early 1970's, the "black" races (Asians, Africans and Pacific Islanders) were allowed to work in Australia but were prohibited from settling permanently (and breeding) in Australia, because they were considered to represent a threat to Australia's racial purity. However, after World War II, it was decided that Australia risked being invaded by Asia's millions unless it increased its population at a much faster rate than it was. For the first time in its history Australia sought to encourage non-British (but white) migration to its shores. As a result, definitions of "whiteness" were expanded to accommodate the new

national groups now considered desirable, and there developed a hierarchy of whiteness with the British still at the top, followed by northern Europeans who like Britons and Australians were defined as blonde and fair skinned, then the "darker" eastern and southern Europeans and so on down to the excluded "black" races. (It is worth noting that census material is still organized under these archaic headings; "northern", "southern", "Europeans", "Asians" etc.)

This racial hierarchy was reflected in various public opinion polls (Jupp 1966), and also in the assistance offered by the Australian government to different migrant groups. For example, under the British-Australian assisted migration agreement (1946-73) British migrants were offered passage to Australia for ten pounds sterling providing they were of good health and character (Richardson 1974:2), whereas other assisted migrants had to meet existing labour requirements. It is perhaps most obvious when one compares the proportion of different migrant groups actually receiving financial assistance from Australia; 86% of British migrants (arriving between 1947-71, *ibid*) compared to 61.5% of Dutch as "northern" Europeans and 19% of Italian "southern" Europeans (between 1947-72, Cox 1975). Compared to northerners, southern Europeans had to pay their own way to Australia. In other words, Australia did not want them badly enough to pay for them to come. As a result, southern Europeans (and later Asians) arrived in Australia at a severe economic disadvantage compared to groups which received assistance.

The Australian government made no apologies for such blatant

discrimination, rather it sought to assure or reassure the Australian public that it would do everything possible to ensure that the majority of migrants were British. (This included launching a highly publicized, expensive and largely unsuccessful "Bring out a Briton" campaign in 1957.) And if worse came to worse and large numbers of non-British migrants did come (because British migrants would not) the government sought to convince Australians that Australia would remain forever British; the status quo would remain unchanged. (This, I discuss in the next section.)

Finally, I would like to add that, despite the gradual demise of the "White Australia" policy in 1966, with the acceptance of skilled "non-Europeans", for example, Lebanese and Egyptians, and in 1971, the official repudiation by the Labour Party which formulated it initially in 1901, these old racist beliefs about white superiority and the Asian hordes still hang on in Australia. One has but to consider that only 1% of the population belong to this previously restricted category (Jupp 1984:181), recent controversies about Asian migration and the still disgraceful position of Australian aboriginals to realize how enduring these beliefs are.

The Australian government used the concept of assimilation or "Anglo-conformity" (Gordon 1964) to sell non-British migration to a public still convinced of Australia's essential Britishness. Accordingly, migrants would be absorbed so completely into Australia that they would disappear without a trace causing no inconvenience to Australia or Australians. It would be as if they

had never come (Martin 1978). This proposition was consistent also with the myth of Australia as a classless "land of opportunity" where anybody, providing they worked hard enough, could get ahead. Intending migrants were accepted or rejected on the grounds of their "assimilability" or cultural similarity without making clear just what culture people were being assimilated into (other than a "British" culture). In this framework "culture" meant "race" and "assimilability", being as "physically like Australians as possible" (Bullivant 1981:172) or as "white" as Australians imagined themselves to be.

In reality, this did not happen; two million migrants did not disappear. Despite a great deal of research which appeared to confirm the success of migrant assimilation and of government policies (see Chapter IV for a critique of research on Dutch assimilation) there was evidence that in reality migrants were not assimilating; migrants were dissatisfied with life in Australia and leaving Australia in higher numbers than expected, they were poorer than the average Australian and their children were educationally disadvantaged, and so forth (see Martin 1978). As Martin (ibid) documents, migrants were redefined first as a "social problem" whose main problem was their failure to assimilate and then as cultural minorities in a "multi-cultural" society. While the second definition is somewhat more accommodating of cultural difference than the first (the problem being that "cultural differences" were largely trivialised and taken to mean folk customs, and so on) both definitions are essentially assimilationist in that they ignore connections

between culture and power, and re-define migrants' problems in narrowly cultural terms, diverting attention away from their social and economic exploitation and placing the onus on migrants, individually or as a group, to change.

#### An Ethnic is a Migrant

Who then is an "ethnic" in Australia? Can anybody be an ethnic, as numerous writers have noted, or is it limited to a specific category of people? In Australia, the conventional wisdom seems to be that an ethnic is a migrant or the child of a person from a non-English speaking country (Martin 1978:16). "Ethnic" and "migrant" are used pretty well interchangeably in the literature (cf Bullivant op cit, Encel 1981, Hearst 1981, Jupp 1984, Wilton and Bosworth op cit). Extrapolating from this, it would seem that ethnic status in Australia is determined by whether or not one was born in a "British" country (including Canada, the United States, New Zealand as well as Britain but not including "black" Commonwealth countries), and that ethnicity is taken as synonymous with the migration experience. Indeed, ethnic studies in Australia might be better described as the study of non-British migrants.

Some would argue that this narrow focus is nothing more than an accident of history; a response to the arrival after World War II of unprecedented numbers of non-English speaking people in a country in which almost 90% of the population were of British-Irish descent (Jupp 1984b:180). Because of the "need to know" and plan for such large numbers of people, researchers

turned to the only readily available source of information, census material and primarily birthplace statistics. Unlike other countries such as Canada and the United States, in Australia people are not asked in the census to declare their "ethnic origins" (cf Bullivant op cit:43,105). (Significantly, Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders are the only Australian born people to be categorised separately.) While it could be argued that ethnicity and country of origin were collapsed together as categories simply out of expediency, I would suggest that this emphasis on birthplace and Britishness as markers of cultural identity derive from and affirm an ideology of race and culture which underpinned the immigration policies which brought so many "ethnics" to Australia in the first place. The extent of this relationship becomes more apparent when one considers some of the people who might reasonably be described as cultural minorities but who according to this definition are not. First, I briefly discuss why Australian Aborigines, Irish Catholics and British migrants cannot logically be considered ethnics in Australia. This is followed by a more lengthy discussion of the assimilation of migrant children and why this was so necessary, with particular emphasis on the Dutch and their children.

#### Abos, bog Irish and Pommies

In her preamble, Martin (1978) acknowledges that Aborigines really are an ethnic/cultural minority - how could she do otherwise? - but excludes them from further consideration because (ironically) they are not of "recent" migrant origins. This distinction seems to have been generally followed; Aborigines are



rarely if ever mentioned in the ethnic literature and are administered by a separate Aboriginal, that is to say, non-ethnic, government department. Unlike ethnics who are by definition assimilable (otherwise they would not have been allowed to migrate) Aborigines have remained a "race" apart. In a nation which has banned black immigration because it supposedly would threaten Australia's racial purity, their presence is an embarrassing reminder that Australia has never really been British and that the British were just the first of a series of migrants. Until the 1930's, the Australian government practised a policy of containment with the expectation being that Aborigines as an "archaic" race would soon die out. This was exchanged in 1951 for a policy of forcible assimilation whereby, for example, Aborigines could only gain the vote providing they "associate[d] with no natives except kin of the first degree" (Maddock 1982:10). In turn this was replaced by a policy of self determination (in the multi-cultural 1970's), but again the changes in policy towards Aborigines, as with migrants, have been more apparent than real. Essentially Aborigines have remained an anomaly in "white", assimilationist Australia who do not fit the ideology of ethnicity.

The remaining three groups - Irish Catholics, British migrants and descendants of migrants - are all "Australians" but the mechanics of their inclusion are different. Irish Catholics were politically co-opted for as Lewins (1978) shows, historically Irish Catholics were an underclass in British-Protestant Australia. They managed to secure a degree of power and

acceptance for themselves through parallel institutions, that is, the Catholic Church and the Labour party but, in return, they "bought into" the myth of a British Australia and used these same institutions to defend that myth and themselves against non-British migration. They did this through the Labour party, which formulated the original "White Australia" policy, and the Irish Catholic Church which enforced the policy of migrant assimilation by prohibiting the development of migrant parishes in Australia (as happened in the United States).

British migrants, by virtue of their Britishness, are most definitely not "ethnics"; calling them "ethnic" would throw into question the notion of a British Australia. As I have already noted, British migrants were offered preferential terms in order to attract them to Australia and this continued after their arrival in Australia. They were given first priority in terms of government housing, being accommodated as families in Commonwealth hostels whereas European migrants and their families were housed initially in Migrant Reception centres and then were split up as soon as the men got work. In 1957 this distinction was relaxed and "northern" Europeans became eligible for family accommodation in Commonwealth hostels (IAC 1957) with, I suspect, the traditional proviso being that they were not already full of British migrants. Another sign of their special status was that until 1983 British migrants had automatic voting rights in Australia (Jupp 1984:182).

Although they are not "ethnics" British migrants have received some attention in the literature; primarily in terms of their disappointingly high rate of return (see Martin 1978:30-31), their

psychological assimilation, and their economic motives and achievements in migrating (Appleyard 1964, Richardson 1974). Compared to non-British migrants, who are almost invariably referred to as ethnic groups or communities (despite the fact that only a small minority of migrants are "communally" organised, Unikoski 1978), British migrants are presented overall as self-motivated individuals who do not need to hearken back to national associations. This distinction between British and non-British migrants is part of the "ideology of settlement" (Martin 1981b), namely, the idea that national groupings of any kind are undesirable because they inhibit migrant adjustment and threaten national unity. (The Dutch as northern European are a transitional category here in that it is a "Dutch" characteristic not to like or mix with other Dutch; see Chapter IV.)

It is interesting - given a great deal of power is still vested in the British Protestant charter group (Jupp 1984b), and presumably some British migrants in Australia would have access to that group through, for example, "old boy" networks or university associations - that, as far as I am aware, British élites in Australia have not been studied. I would suggest that this is part of a general denial of the relationship between culture and power, in which British migrants serve as a benchmark of success and status relative to other migrants yet the means by which they achieve that power are ignored. At the same time, British migrants are, as Jupp remarks (1966:109), the most sought after and resented of migrants. Why should this be so? They are resented precisely because they are so sought after (because they

are British). "British migrant" as a category is paradoxical and as a result arouses strong and conflicting emotions. Migrants/ethnics are people who are "lucky" to be accepted by Australia: British migrants are a privileged chosen people whom Australia is "lucky" to get. They represent what Australians can only aspire to; they were born in Britain. And after all this, still they reject Australia and "whinge" or even leave. Are they just "ungrateful" migrants or is it that Australia is not quite good (that is, British) enough? Either way, their rejection is an obvious affront.

#### Migrants and their children

As migrants became visible and were re-defined as problems, it was generally conceded that the first generation might never be fully assimilated, but it was still assumed that the second generation would be Australian. The first generation could be sacrificed, they would not live forever; however, it was essential to the assimilationist argument that the second generation be transformed from ethnics/migrants into English-speaking, undifferentiated Australians. The children were the linch-pin of the whole enterprise. If they remained visibly different, not assimilated, not only would Australian immigration programmes have failed, they would have delivered up a socially and culturally heterogeneous country, and betrayed the government's commitment to keep Australia British. Somehow birthplace must be made to take precedence over parentage. I would argue that this, rather than conceptual methodological problems associated with defining

ethnicity, is the underlying reason why in the census Australian residents declare their country of birth and their parents' birth place (their parents' "migrant" status) instead of their cultural/ethnic origins. Because of the wave-like character of Australian immigration (that is, the migration of different national groups beginning and ending in discrete time periods) individual ethnic groups, so defined, must become "extinct" and ethnicity disappear empirically in one, at most two generations. Let us look at the case of the Dutch.

Dutch migration was one of these "waves" (which were not, as the imagery suggests, natural but were the result of government policies and negotiations; see Chapter III). It followed the movement of almost half a million displaced people through the International Refugee Organisation (1947-51) and in turn was followed by migrants from southern and eastern European countries. Between 1948 and 1961 approximately 120,000 Dutch arrived in Australia as permanent settlers. The suddenness of the influx is reflected in the census figures: in 1947 there were only 2,147 Dutch (Netherlands born) resident in Australia, whereas by 1961 the Dutch were the third largest "migrant" (non-British) group in Australia with a total of 102,083. The discrepancy between arrivals and residents is due mainly to what is known as "settler loss". By 1962, 12.9% of Dutch migrants had returned to the Netherlands (Beltz 1964:130a). Their rate of return was to continue to climb so that by the late 1970's almost 30% of those who arrived between 1947-74 had left (Unikoski 1978:141). Largely as a result of this and the fact that very few Dutch have migrated

to Australia since 1961 (according to the 1981 census, only 25,105 or 26.4% of Dutch living in Australia have arrived since 1960) the number of Dutch migrants in Australia dropped to 96,044 in 1981 (then the fifth largest migrant group). Their numbers will continue to drop as this generation ages and dies unless Dutch migration to Australia revives. Of course, I hasten to add, these birthplace statistics are not a measure of their size as an ethnic/cultural group. These figures do not include the 16,000 Dutch speakers born in Belgium and Indonesia. More significantly, they do not include the 120,651 second generation Dutch born in Australia to one or both Dutch parents (not to speak of the uncounted grand -children of Dutch migrants) which yield a considerably larger (and more meaningful) total of approximately 232,000.<sup>1</sup> That is not to say that all or even the majority of these people would identify themselves as Dutch. My point is that given the arbitrary way ethnicity is defined in Australia, we do not know even how many people in Australia consider themselves culturally Dutch. (It is interesting to note here Pauwels' comment [1980:204] that many of her Dutch informants seem to attach significance to birthplace statistics and would describe Dutch culture as "negligible" compared to more "sizeable" Greek, Italian and Eastern cultures in Australia. This, I interpret as an example of bureaucratic definitions impinging on members' meanings, a relationship which is explored throughout the thesis.)

What is at issue then is much more than how "ethnics" are counted. In part, it is about the parent-child relationship being

re-defined, even severed, so that the children of migrants might become Australian. I am interested particularly in how this was accomplished in the area of migrant education and more recently with regards to the ethnic/migrant aged issue.

As already noted, the government became aware that migrant children were, contrary to expectations, not fitting into the Australian education system. This realisation was one of the factors which brought about a change in how migrants generally were perceived. Indeed, the possibility that migrant children were not assimilating was taken very seriously as Martin (1978:84) outlines:

Education [was] the only clearly identifiable area in which there has been a comprehensive nation wide response to the presence of non-English speaking migrants.

As Martin and others note (see Bullivant 1981) migrant education in Australia was primarily about assimilation and, in my terms, re-defining the parent-child relationship. Essentially, migrant education involved English language teaching to migrants and the children of migrants, nothing more. Later, with the advent of multi-culturalism, there was added to this a rather perfunctory emphasis on teaching "community" (migrant) languages and multi-cultural education. Like their parents, migrant children were being identified as a problem, "special" group and again the problem, learning English, was theirs. That is to say, their learning problems were not the result of an inadequate educational system nor were they the outcome of the disruptions and trauma of migration. The source of their problems was

un-assimilated parents who persisted in speaking their native language at home and thus impeded their children's progress towards assimilation. The standard solution was to instruct parents and children to speak English at home (Martin *ibid*). In other words, not only were parents to have no say in their children's education, they were being defined as the cause of their children's lack of education. In being instructed how to behave with their children, home and family relationships were subordinated to official priorities. In effect, parents were being asked to facilitate the assimilation of their own children. This was certainly the case of my informants, many of whose children came home from school having been instructed not to speak Dutch with their parents (see Chapter VII).

Judging from the negligible research interest taken in these children after they left school and home, presumably English-speaking, it would appear that they were no longer considered a problem group or, one might add, "ethnics". The larger problem of "undigested" cultural minorities apparently was solved; for all intents and purposes, these children were assimilated, but into what? (This issue is discussed in relation to second generation Dutch in Chapters IV and V.) However, twenty years on, their parents have again become newsworthy, as a "problem" group in the current debate about the special problems and needs of the ethnic/migrant aged in Australia (*cf* ACT Council of the Ageing 1981; Australian Institute of Multi-cultural Affairs 1986; Cox 1975; Hearst 1981; Moraitis 1981; Overberg 1984a, 1984b; Stilwell 1983. For a more comprehensive bibliography, see AIMA



1986). As well as attracting outside, academic interest, the ethnic aged issue is becoming a political issue with various ethnic groups organising and competing for government funding to meet their particular needs (cf Hearst op cit). In fact, the needs of the ethnic aged is becoming such a pressing issue that, according to Overberg (1984b:1), it is forcing even the "assimilated" Dutch to "come out of the closet" and reclaim their cultural identity. (These developments are discussed at greater length in Chapter V). However, what I find more interesting about the ethnic/migrant aged debate is that despite being avowedly critical of assimilationism it perpetuates assimilationist expectations, in particular, the way migrants' children have been excluded from the discussion.

The special problem of ethnic/migrant aged seems to be that they are becoming less assimilated socially as they retire from the workforce and their children leave home. At the same time, they are reverting psychologically and culturally back to the past; the best evidence of this being Clyne's work (1977a, 1982) where he finds that old migrants generally are reverting to their first language and becoming less competent in English.<sup>2</sup> This contains two sets of implications: ethnic/migrant aged are unlikely to use Australian services for the aged which only cater to English-speaking Australians, which might explain why non-British migrants are statistically under-represented in long-term care institutions for the aged, for example, nursing homes, hostels (cf Hearst 1981, Nathan and Howe 1986). A second assumption, which for various reasons may not be spelled out so

explicitly, is that ageing migrants are more alienated from their children than are aged Australians generally, because their own children are assimilated Australians and cannot speak their mother tongue. This argument would apply with special force to the situation of Dutch migrants as they and their children switched to regular English use more rapidly than other migrant groups (cf Overberg 1984:41). Accordingly, it is argued, special culturally differentiated services should be provided for these people who cannot or do not use Australian agencies and who can no longer rely on their families to help them as they would have traditionally. (The question of language use is taken up in later chapters.)

Yet, are the problems of the ethnic aged all that different from those of aged Australians who also suffer from social isolation and alienation not attributable to "cultural" differences? Where is the evidence? So far, most of the Australian research on family life in old age has been quantitative (cf Kendig 1986, Howe 1981; some exceptions are Day 1985, Russell 1981, Walker-Birckhead 1983). We have no empirical basis for comparison, especially regarding such a complex process as communication patterns within families. Obviously, people make themselves understood in a variety of ways including, as Clyne (1977b) shows in his study of Dutch families', by switching between English and Dutch, and in the case of many children understanding but not speaking the home language. Conversely, is anything gained by labelling such a diversity of peoples and situations as ethnic or migrant when the real issue, I would say,

is the individual's right to appropriate care in old age?

These issues are largely ignored in the literature, which relies heavily on birthplace statistics to prove the urgency and validity of its case. In what has become practically a truism, we are told repeatedly that ethnic communities are ageing at a faster rate than the Australian community generally and, therefore, cannot hope, even if they wish, to care for their own old people. This is quite misleading: of course they are ageing faster because these "ethnic communities" are really loosely defined "age cohorts" (Schaie 1977) who, in the case of the Dutch, came to Australia primarily as families, that is to say as young adults and children in the 1950's (see Chapter III). Then they were a relatively "young" group, now twenty years later they are "older" and eventually (as they are defined) there will no longer be any - or many - Dutch in Australia. What is missing from all the statistical computations and the rhetoric are the children and grand children born in Australia. If their numbers were added to all the statistics, the age pyramid would not be so distorted nor apparently so convincing.

## FOOTNOTES

- 1 Source: Elich 1985:8.
- 2 The concept of language reversion has yet to be proven. Clyne's evidence is suggestive but still largely circumstantial being synchronic (based on members' self reports and/or observation of a small number of subjects) rather than diachronic or longitudinal. A more recent study (Australian Institute of Multi-cultural Affairs 1986:312) questions it, pointing to a greater degree of stability with age than the language reversion hypothesis would lead us to expect.

## CHAPTER II

### FIELDWORK AND DOING LIFE HISTORY WITH DUTCH MIGRANTS

This chapter presents a summary of fieldwork which, in keeping with the "reflexive" tone set by the Introduction, describes fieldwork activities and links what I did with the development of my thinking and writing about Dutch identity. After arguing for a broader definition of "the field" and "fieldwork", the rest of the chapter concentrates on doing life history, which I see as the focus of this ethnography. Some critics would argue that life history is a very limited type of fieldwork and moreover, one that does not involve true participant observation. As a consequence this juxtaposition could well appear contradictory, and the same critics could go on to argue that an ethnography based on life history is similarly limited. However, as Watson (1976) shows, a proper hermeneutical understanding of life history entails far more than simply writing down words. As I endeavour to show in this chapter, it involves confronting a wide range of issues, including the central problem of ethnographic representation (cf Marcus and Fischer 1986). How does one go about summarising a life? In particular, this chapter discusses who my informants were and how I went about finding them, my relations with informants in the context of the life history interview, and how life history material was organised and used in this ethnography. But, before discussing fieldwork proper (a problematic term) and

by way of background to this chapter, I outline some of my reasons for doing this kind of life history based ethnography in the first place.

Previously I carried out fieldwork with old Australian women living in a country town (Walker-Birckhead 1983). As is generally the case in modern society (because women out-live men in the first place and tend to marry men older than themselves) most of these women were widows: a category of person who by virtue of her age, sex and marital status is defined as needy, pathetic and unattractive (cf Giesen and Datan 1980, Lopata 1979). Yet these same women in their "world of women" revealed themselves to me as powerful and nurturant people. This was due, I argued, to the significant continuities in their lives, especially in their life-long relationships with other women. Such continuities seemed to out weigh the losses of old age that, in the case of women, include above all the loss of their husbands.

My findings contradicted the popular orthodoxy regarding widows because my data was based on members' words and meanings rather than on outsiders'. As well as realising how much the life history can reveal about personal identity and experience, this research made me aware of how intellectually and emotionally engrossing such work can be. In talking to women about their lives, I found myself comparing my life with theirs and wondering what my own widowhood might be like. I asked myself, would I enjoy the same sense of personal continuity and liberation? I doubted it.

Unlike myself, these women were "locals". They had lived in

the same rural district all their lives, whereas I came from not just outside the district but from another country (and since then I have moved away from that district too). What about more "modern" people - people more like myself, one might say - who have lived in different places in their lives and so have left friends and family behind? What is old age like for them? Migrants, particularly those who came to Australia during the 1950's, seemed to provide the contrasting case I was looking for. Many of these people would have come to Australia as young and middle-aged adults, and would have left behind home, family and friends. Now these same individuals were in their 50's and 60's, at the end of their working lives, and their own children have left home. How do they handle the major discontinuities which migration implies? What sense do they make of their lives? I was interested also in the fact that aged migrants like widows are now being depicted as a special needs group (see Chapter I). Do aged migrants perceive themselves as especially needy?

I should like to interject here that, although intellectually I realised these same questions could be asked of me, I was unprepared for the strength of my own emotional reactions when I started asking such questions and tried answering them for myself. Initially, old migrants were to remain the Other for me (as had the country widows); their experiences and especially their emotions did not belong to me. This changed as I came to realise that understanding their life stories involved my acknowledging that someday I too would be an old migrant, whatever that might mean ( a realisation which is explored throughout this

ethnography).

So why (of all people) did I choose to study the Dutch? Like other post-war migrant groups, Dutch migrants constitute an ageing cohort (see Chapter I). I found them especially interesting in the way they had been represented in both the popular and research literature (see Introduction). To recapitulate, Dutch migrants in Australia have been depicted as being expert assimilators: as people who are less connected to their pasts and with each other, and who are, therefore, capable of anonymously and rapidly fitting into a new way of life. It would seem that, chameleon-like, Dutch migrants are capable of being Dutch in one time and place, and Australian in another. This is a reputation of which the Dutch are quite proud (if one believes what one reads) and yet, recently there is some evidence of a Dutch cultural resurgence in Australia which is centred on the special, unmet needs of these same "assimilated" Dutch migrants (cf Hearst 1981, Overberg 1984, Unikoski 1978). What is going on here? Are the Dutch finally rebelling against the assimilationist dogma (as Overberg op cit suggests) or, as other Dutch have intimated to me, are they cynically climbing on a multi-cultural band-wagon? In particular, I was interested in how ageing Dutch migrants themselves perceived these issues. At the same time, I surmised that older Dutch might be more forthcoming about the effect of migration and assimilation on their lives now that such questions were being publicly canvassed.

While Dutch assimilation and assimilability has been lauded, our picture of "Dutch character" - opportunistic, materialistic,



arrogant, inauthentic - is essentially unsympathetic both in content and stance. They are supposedly harder, less emotional than other people and harder to know because they are so assimilable. The effect is paradoxical: the Dutch are "known" and yet they remain unknowable. In a superficial way, from a distance, they are well known; yet, because of their "Dutchness" and inconstancy they are inscrutable. Caught up in the rhetoric and imagery of assimilation, Dutch migrants are not identified with as a people, they remain the Other - distanced, different, stereotyped - in much the same way as widows have been. My main motivation then in doing such an ethnography was to change perspectives, in a sense to come up close, by asking Dutch migrants to tell their stories, not as representatives of "the" Dutch or the Other, but as individuals with stories to tell. Also, given their public invisibility, inaccessibility and home-centredness (see Chapter IV), it seemed to me that the life history interview would be an appropriate method as it involves talking with informants in the privacy of their homes.

### Fieldwork

Given that part of my data is what I term "common sense" knowledge about who or what kind of people the Dutch are, it seems inappropriate here to speak of entering or leaving "the field". I found that I was gathering data, not only with people formally designated as informants, but with acquaintances, friends and colleagues at dinner parties, shops and university common rooms:

everyone, it seemed, knew what the Dutch were like. Similarly, before I entered the field, as soon as I spoke of my research intentions, opinions were proffered to me and now, when fieldwork is long since over, I still find myself making mental notes about "who" the Dutch are. While the problem of slippage seems to apply with special force to works such as mine which are conducted in modern society, I would agree with critics of traditional anthropology who argue that fieldwork has been represented, wrongly, as a unitary different kind of experience (cf Crick 1982:22-3 on the "immersion" analogy as applied to fieldwork, also Pratt 1986) and that this is part of a positivist anthropology which studies and renders the Other, exotic (see Introduction).

Bearing in mind this stricture, fieldwork or formal interviewing of informants commenced in May 1983 and continued on until March 1985. During this period I carried out life history interviews with 48 informants. These yielded approximately 1,000 pages of edited, transcribed material as well as more general fieldnotes. There are several reasons for this relatively slow rate of interviewing (at most one or two per week). First, interviewing and transcription were done by myself rather than, as is so often the case with this sort of life history work, by field assistants and secretarial help. While unavoidably time consuming, this slow pace brought me, I feel, closer to understanding my informants as individuals with stories to tell rather than as disembodied data. An average transcription took about two days (some, much longer). This involved listening to the entire tape and transcribing most of it; notes were taken of

parts not of immediate relevance (for example, lengthy descriptions of life in New Guinea, Senior Citizens' Club activities or of the financial details of a particular business). My policy was to carry out transcriptions as soon as possible after the event so as to keep up, for practical reasons, with tapes as they came in and not face later an enormous (and discouraging) backlog of tapes. This way I would know what I had and, just as importantly, what I did not have. Equally, I wanted to "re-immense" myself in the interview and do the transcription while it was still fresh in my mind. If left until some later date and done "in bulk" with other tapes (or if someone who had not done the interview did the transcription) the immediacy and individuality of the interview would be, I feel, largely lost, and as a consequence interpretation of the material would suffer.

Usually the entire interview was not taped. The main, "serious" part when informants talked mainly about themselves would be recorded; however, frequently this was preceded by a half hour or so when I introduced myself, conversation was more general and a cup of coffee might be served. Once we got down to the "real" work of the interview, the life history, the tape recorder would be turned on and the mood often shifted as our focus narrowed. This tended to be followed by a kind of de-briefing when the recorder was turned off, we withdrew from our mutual engagement and enjoyed another cup of coffee. Of course, I was interested in what happened before and after the interview; these details were part of the context which produced the eventual text. I took down fieldnotes as soon as possible after the interview,

for example, the seating arrangement, who was present, house decorations, the mood of the interview, how we got on, if food or beverages were served and so on. These notes were married to the transcripts to yield a summary of what had happened in the interview. (See final section on how material was organised and used in the writing of this ethnography.) In conclusion, I was generally happy with my slow rate of interviewing. The interviews were simultaneously rich and demanding; I was getting plenty of interesting material on Dutch identity and experience, but it also took a great deal of energy and preparation on my part to do a "good" interview (again, see next section).

I found my informants through a variety of informal and formal social networks. It was not my intention to come up with a composite picture of the "typical" Dutch migrant; indeed, one of my stated aims (see Introduction) has been to break away from that stereotyped type of thinking about the Dutch and about identity generally. In keeping with this approach, I have not attempted to interview a random sample of Dutch in Canberra. I approached all the obvious sources (see footnote #1 for list of formal contacts) and as far as I am aware there is no complete list on which to base such a sample, certainly not one which includes Dutch migrants and their descendants. The only list I did come up with was one of the 90 or so individuals and couples who are invited to a Christmas party organised for "old Dutchies", which is organised by a local committee and held in the Canberra Dutch Club. (I attended one of these parties and used this list to contact some informants with, as I describe on page 59, only mixed success.)

In any case, my intention was to do intensive life histories on 45 - 50 people of Dutch origin<sup>2</sup>. There are approximately 4,000 first and second generation Dutch in the ACT (not counting Indonesian-Dutch) so, in any case, the number involved in this study would not be statistically useful. But, more fundamentally, I did not attempt to do so because such a strategy would have been inconsistent with the opportunistic, open-ended character of fieldwork, which to a large extent involves hanging about and talking to people who might prove interesting (and equally importantly are available), following natural social networks and so on. At the same time I wanted to interview as wide a range of people as possible, for example, I did not want to interview only Catholic Dutch or members of the Dutch Club. Both groups were relatively easy to find, being formally organised with identifiable spokespersons, but this very attribute meant that they were "atypical" for, as I too found, Dutch migrants in Canberra generally do not belong to communal ethnic organisations nor to organised religion (see Chapter V). In a formal sense, most Dutch are hard to find; they are as I have said "invisible". Nevertheless, one must start somewhere and initially I did approach potential informants through formal Dutch groups and networks,<sup>3</sup> that is, through the Canberra Dutch Club, a women's coffee morning which met at the Club, my Dutch language class at the University, the Catholic Dutch Migrants' Association in Canberra (CDMA), and the local Reformed Church. These efforts yielded 33 informants and through these individuals I contacted another 15 informants (see below):

TABLE 2.1 INFORMANTS: MODE OF CONTACT

Dutch Club	6
Coffee morning group	8
CDMA	10
Reformed Church	6
Language class	3
Other informants	15

All of those people approached face-to-face agreed to be interviewed. A few (all men) agreed to my request but only nominally, that is, they said that they would be willing to talk about themselves, but in fact were not. I always tried to make clear what the interview would involve; the type of personal questions I would be asking, how long it would take and so on but it became obvious during these interviews that they were unwilling to talk other than in a "public" mode. Each, I felt, defined the interview as some sort of public relations exercise and refused to talk about himself as other than a typical or "assimilated" Dutchman (for example, there was nothing much to say, they resisted talking about their families or personal feelings, migration had been "easy" for them, they had done well in Australia).<sup>4</sup> Anything else was none of my business. The only people to actually refuse were some whom I had randomly selected through the CDMA and written to, introducing myself and my research, and then telephoned. One half of those so approached were either unavailable to be interviewed or simply refused my request with no explanation whatsoever. (This bore out my earlier feelings about the problems of randomly and anonymously approaching people for personal interviews; see footnote #3.)

As my research focus sharpened and I became increasingly

interested in the impact of migration on family relationships, I decided to interview, where possible, members of the same family. This decision came partly out of the fact that informants were tending to treat the interviews as family rather than individual interviews and included as a matter of course other family members in the discussion.<sup>5</sup> At one level, I was simply accepting members' definition of the situation but it was also appropriate in view of the fact that Dutch migration was primarily "family" migration (see Chapter III). However, I was circumspect in my approach here and did not contact other family members without first assuring myself, where possible, that my original informants would be in agreement with such a decision. Having in a sense "introduced" me to their families, I felt that they had a veto right; to say that they did not want to allow me any further inside their families. Similarly, I was concerned that my request might be construed as an invasion of their family and thus might threaten our still developing relationship. Therefore, I did not ask their permission until I was fairly confident that such permission had already been given implicitly, for example, informants mentioning how they had told children about the interviews and how "interested" their children were. Equally, I did not approach one informant about interviewing other family members after she insisted that her husband not be present during the interview, because his English was poor and besides, she said, he talked "too much". Clearly, she did not want his point of view included in the interview or in our relationship.

The net result of this was that 34 of the 48 informants were

related to at least one other informant. Included in this total are five married couples,<sup>6</sup> three families where I interviewed both parents and a child, two mother-daughter pairs and 11 members of three extended families. Most of the couples were interviewed together as I felt that it would have been awkward to deliberately ask people to leave the room. In such cases, where other family members were present, as well as asking each person to individually tell me their life history, I would ask those present to comment on what was said. Children who were not formally interviewed sometimes sat in on part of an interview and participated if only by their presence (but most took a more active role in the interview).

As well, I interviewed official spokespersons of various organisations associated with Dutch migrants: The Catholic Dutch Migrants Association, the Canberra Dutch Club, The Royal Netherlands Embassy, the Reformed Church, Ethnic Communities Council and students of the Dutch in Australia, most of whom were Dutch themselves (see footnote #1). Some of my most fruitful interviews were with expert informants who talked in both personal and official modes; as Dutch migrants talking about other Dutch. However, most resisted this mixing of perspectives and spoke only in generalities about Dutch migrants. As well as interviewing individuals (which involved participant observation) I was involved in more traditional fieldwork activities: I attended the annual Holland Festival in Fairfield; women's coffee mornings in private homes; coffee mornings, Christmas parties and other social gatherings at the Dutch Club; a church service at the Reformed



Church; and Dutch language classes offered through the Dutch Club and also as a part-time student at university language classes. These last were opportunities to develop some reading competence in Dutch (I had no expectation of learning Dutch in one year, my interviews were carried out in English; see next section). Also, they were culturally interesting situations, as in both cases the teachers were Dutch migrants and most of the students were children of Dutch migrants. In my university classes especially, we had many lively discussions about issues raised in this ethnography. These classes became a kind of forum where I could try out my ideas (similarly in follow-up interviews, I would offer my interpretations of what I thought was happening; see next section). Also, as already noted, three informants were contacted through this class.

### The Interviews

Fieldwork then has involved approaching and asking people to tell me their life stories; to talk personally and at length "on the record" about their lives before and after migration. Unlike more traditional anthropologists - who as a result may endure insults and worse - I could not hang about public places (as the Dutch generally do not congregate publicly) or sit outside informants' houses waiting for them to talk to me: I had to be invited "inside" literally and metaphorically. It could be argued that once in, I intruded into informants' lives only as far as they permitted (and thus they share responsibility in what I write). I do not agree with this interpretation; I consider that

I have taken an active role in getting my foot inside the door, so to speak, by presenting myself as a non-threatening, sympathetic intruder (and certainly I like and identify with most if not all of my informants). As an anthropologist one prefers to see oneself in such positive terms, thereby reducing the ambiguities of one's role. However, like the "friendly burglar", this is a contradiction in terms. When all is said and done, I wanted to get in (like a burglar) and run off with the family treasures. Hopefully, my informants will like this ethnography but this is not its purpose and it does not cancel out the fact that I, by definition, have invaded their privacy. At the same time, I have had only very limited control over how far I got in the interviewing. This is most obvious when people refused outright my request for an interview or agreed, but refused to divulge anything very personal about themselves, and thus refused to define our relationship as personal. Under such circumstances, all I could do is hazard a - barely - educated guess to explain my failure to get the interview or kind of interview I wanted. Even when my efforts have been apparently more fruitful, informants confided in me and our relationship was more developed, I can still only draw inferences about why this happened. Our interests as interviewer and informant may be sometimes complementary but our points of view and priorities are different.

Usually I have asked informants to start at "the beginning", that is, the time when they (or their parents) first thought about migrating and made the decision to migrate. With this as a starting point, most informants were able to discuss, with little

prompting on my part, their migrations and their lives generally. I taped all but one informant (who I felt would not only refuse my request but might well cancel the entire interview), and this was an invaluable help. Not only did it mean that I had a more complete ethnographic text to work with, it freed me from copious note-taking allowing me to pay more attention to the immediate situation. Most informants seemed to enjoy our long dialogues; some commented on how much they enjoyed "a good conversation" and how they were hard to find in Australia. Good conversation interspersed with cups of coffee and cakes seems to be culturally valued by the Dutch, that is what gezelligheid<sup>7</sup> is all about. I cannot say that all my interviews were gezellig but there were many which felt that way for me - sociable, cozy, civilised. This was due to the hospitality and generosity of my Dutch hosts.

In some sense the life history may represent a personal portrait of the investigator as well. This portrait would take the form of a shadow biography, a negative image, for which the missing text could be found in the investigator's private thoughts, interview questions, field notes, dreams and letters home. (Frank 1979:85)

In my theoretical introduction, I characterise the life history as comprising a series of dialogues between Self and Other. While this ethnography is more concerned with understanding Other than Self, part of my methodology was myself and, at risk of appearing "subjective, biased, involved and culture bound" (Myerhoff and Ruby 1982:26), should be included here. I embarked on this study conscious that - to some extent - I would be a migrant interpreting other migrants' experiences.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, there are also many differences between my informants and myself; the most obvious being that I am not Dutch nor am I a "typical" migrant.<sup>9</sup> I am middle class, English speaking and from a Commonwealth country. Unlike many of my informants, I had not stayed in a migrant hostel nor did I travel to Australia in a refurbished troop ship. I was a relatively recent migrant, having arrived in Australia in 1976 whereas most informants had migrated as adults or children in the 1950's. In a sense, I was somewhere between them and their children: like the first generation, my husband and I had migrated to Australia; the decision was ours. But I was the age of their children and, like them, my life had been (materially) easier. In these terms at least, I felt that I could understand or identify with both points of view and conversely, with neither.

Because my informants all speak English and because I am not a fluent Dutch speaker, all the interviews were carried out in English. One of the reasons Dutch migrants were attractive to me as subjects was their relative fluency in English compared to other migrant groups in Australia (Clyne 1982). Whereas ideally I would have preferred to be fluent in Dutch, their competence in English meant that I could interview informants at length and in detail about their experiences in a common language. Other options would have been to conduct interviews in a language of which - at best - I could have only partial mastery or through an interpreter (common fieldwork strategies). Linguistic competence in the field is much more than a practical issue - and perhaps that is why it is often only alluded to in ethnographic texts. It

brings into question the epistemological status of the study, or as Crick (1982:19) puts it:

At the end of his research, if only for lack of linguistic skills, an anthropologist is likely on a number of subjects to know far less than a small child from that culture.

Dutch migrants' fluency in English has been taken as primary evidence of their assimilation but recently there has been some suggestion that like other ageing migrants, the Dutch are reverting back to their mother tongue (see literature review, Chapter IV). This casts doubt on the reality of Dutch assimilation, but more immediately it could have made my research quite difficult as my informants included those same ageing Dutch. However, as far as I am aware, English language loss is not a serious problem for my informants.<sup>10</sup> A few people said that they preferred to speak Dutch whenever possible (I took this to mean that they would have preferred to be interviewed in Dutch), however, no one refused an interview on these grounds. The one situation where my not speaking fluent Dutch became a problem was with a group of women who met regularly for coffee and chat and - as I was to learn - to speak Dutch. I explained to them that I was learning Dutch (which I was) and, as I was entering their territory, I assumed that they would continue to speak Dutch in front of me. However, after about seven visits in which they had spoken Dutch and a mixture of Dutch and English in front of me, I was taken aside and it was explained that my presence as a non-Dutch speaker was "changing" the mornings. They felt that they had to translate what was said (even though by then I could understand a fair amount of Dutch).

These mornings were one of their few opportunities, they said, to "let their hair down" in Dutch, to tell jokes, gossip and so forth, and they felt that they could not do so in front of me. In effect: would I please stop coming? Perhaps, they were tired of me or felt that I was spying on them, however, this is how their request was phrased. In the same conversation the group's spokeswoman assured me that it was not me personally that they disliked, they would all be happy to be interviewed by me (and none of those so approached refused).

Personally, I found their rejection traumatic, but it was also analytically most interesting. It was the first time anything like this had happened to me. I had spent numerous mornings and afternoons with groups of older Australian women who were similarly "letting their hair down", aware of my relative youth and wondering when someone would ask me to leave, but it had not happened, until now. I suspect that one of the main differences between this group and other groups of older women was that the Dutch women had a polite way of getting rid of me, that is to say, it was a "language" issue rather than a matter of casting out an interloper. This incident also suggested that there were limits to Dutch assimilation and that there are well fortified domains where accommodation to the outside Australian reality (where Dutch is not spoken) is resisted. And, it is not insignificant that it was a group of women who chose to resist such "Australianisation" (see Chapter VII). Seen in this light my presence in the group would have been intolerable.

Part of the reason that speaking English was not a problem in

the interviews was that the interviews themselves were lengthy and at times rather free-wheeling. Essentially I was following where my informants took me (as well as my own loosely defined agenda of questions<sup>11</sup>). There was quite a lot of questioning back and forth (not always of course) and in that sense we were both engaged in making ourselves understood to the Other. Older and younger informants sometimes used Dutch lexemes, syntax or colloquialisms instead of English forms and these I have retained in the transcripts. That is how they made themselves understood. Generally the substitutions were not all that problematic. Some cultural nuances may have been lost in translation, people may not have expressed themselves as precisely in English as in Dutch, or I may have misunderstood them, but it remains a moot point as to in which language they are more proficient. Most of my informants claimed that they do not speak "pure" Dutch (when they actually speak Dutch); they speak a mixture of Dutch and English known as "double Dutch" or "migranto". In fact, the problem can become one of determining which language is being spoken at a given time (cf Clyne 1977:19). For the Dutch who insist that they "never" speak Dutch in front of non-Dutch, in contradistinction to other less "assimilated" migrants, such confusion can present social problems (as well as analytic difficulties for their observers). Also, the range of domains in which Dutch is spoken is generally very limited, being almost exclusively a home language (see Chapter IV on Dutch language use. This is taken up again in Chapter VII.) From comments made by informants about their reading habits and letter writing to family in the Netherlands (how difficult it is

to write in Dutch, disparaging comments made by family members in the Netherlands about the quality of their written Dutch), I would hazard a guess that many Dutch migrants are no longer literate in Dutch. For some ageing Dutch migrants the real problem may be one of no longer being fully proficient in either English or Dutch, spoken and written, rather than language reversion. According to one informant illiteracy has been the "tragedy" of migration:

I mean both my parents - and this is the same for most migrants - they've lost their literacy. The tragedy is not my parents only. I think of all the refugees; people who were writers, lawyers, artists, poets. They've lost their creative ability and a person to stop being creative is to die an emotional death. I mean you are asking me to be honest, well that's my honest opinion.

Certainly very few Dutch who arrived as children in Australia or second generation Dutch born in Australia, even if they speak Dutch, can read or write Dutch. Various informants have said that they see this as unfortunate as it cuts off such people from the Dutch cultural heritage.<sup>12</sup>

It might have been more gezellig if we could have spoken Dutch together but that assumes we would be speaking the same Dutch (the same dialect or the same standard educated Dutch). The problem is that most Dutch migrants speak plat (dialect) while Dutch researchers by definition speak standard Dutch; certainly this was the only version of Dutch available for me to learn. This linguistic difference connotes and creates social distance, it does not enhance cosiness or intimacy (gezelligheid). Plat is not considered respectable, and conversely people who speak Nederlands are considered "stuck-up". Shetter's (1982:4) short, dismissive



summary of plat, is informative:

People of lower classes or who have enjoyed less education usually use certain pronunciations and grammatical features which are frowned upon and avoided by those of another social sphere. Thus the Dutch readily 'place' their fellow countrymen not only regionally but also socially: A house painter, taxi driver or labourer who aspires to an official or responsible position has little chance of success if he fails to eradicate painstakingly the imprint which his origin has left on his speech. (my emphasis)

In a similar vein informants have told me that they can and do "place" other Dutch as soon as they open their mouths by province of origin, religion, and social class, and thus "know" if they have anything in common, and respond accordingly. One woman went on to explain, by way of contrast, that after living in Australia for more than 20 years she still could not place Australians. Australian society was very "amorf" (amorphous) to her. Many of the Dutch I have interviewed say that one of the things they like best about Australia is its classlessness (compared to the Netherlands which they describe as class-ridden). What seems to be happening at least in part is that "amorphousness" is being (mis)taken for classlessness. This relates I suggest to the fact that the majority of Dutch like other migrants and contrary to popular belief are working class (see Chapter IV). Based on that relatively limited range of experience and in the light of their understandings of Dutch society, they make generalisations about Australian life which - not accidentally - are also consistent with the working class ethos of Australian egalitarianism. At the same time, informants are saying how very class conscious other

Dutch in Australia are of each other. (I discuss this in relation to the history of Dutch migration to Australia in Chapter III.)

Not being Dutch or Australian has been, I think, somewhat of an advantage in this study. Not being Dutch meant I was not so readily "placed". I am not Catholic or Protestant Dutch, and there has not been that element of distrust or competitiveness which for various reasons seems to characterise relations between some Dutch migrants. In introducing and explaining myself to informants I have mentioned that my interest is personal as well as academic and that I migrated to Australia from Canada. Canada was the other major destination for Dutch migrants and most informants either know someone who went to Canada or they almost went there themselves. This has served as a relatively safe talking point which has allowed informants to question me rather than I, them. It also has meant quite predictably, although I cannot prove this, that informants have spoken in a less guarded fashion about their experiences in Australia. (Taft 1965 comes to similar conclusions with respect to Dutch and Australian interviewers.) As another and more recent migrant, structurally I could not tell them to go back home if they did not like Australia.

Informants asked me about my experiences as a migrant - was it like that for me? - and I also volunteered information about myself. Of course, as interviewer and informant, we were both more interested in what the subject had to say and our "conversations" as a result were decidedly lop-sided. However, if there is to be a relationship, one which is premised on

self-disclosure, then there needs to be some reciprocity. If one expects informants to talk about sensitive issues such as family and marriage one cannot, in effect, rule one's own personal life as off-limits. I would take this argument further and suggest that those informants who made no effort to "know" me (either in the interview proper, before or afterwards) were also signalling that I was not to come too close to them.

In talking about myself and filling in some of my biographical gaps I was trying to seem less like a stranger and, one could say, more like them. This was not entirely a deliberate act; identifying with one's informants is an integral and necessary part of life history work. And despite our differences (which I have already discussed), we shared - I think - some important similarities. As migrants we had both left parents and family behind (and all that implies) and have had to construct new lives in Australia, and like many of the women I interviewed I "followed" a husband to Australia. We could talk much of the same emotional language. Yet in the final analysis I remained a stranger - what kind of "normal" person would spend her time listening to people talk about their lives, doesn't she have a life of her own to live? No one ever came out and actually asked these questions (or conversely told me to mind my own business) but it was best summed up by the question, Did I not have children of my own? (how could I be away from home so much, what was wrong?) For almost all these women, children and family life was the (stated) centre of life. My answer, in the negative, set me apart as someone "different", as someone with an emptier life, I

suspect. Even though I did not (usually) see myself in such terms, this could be uncomfortable, especially as the distance between Self and Other lessened, categories blurred and I became more aware of myself as a migrant. Perhaps they were right (and the fact that I now have a child might be seen as testimony to the persuasiveness of their argument). However, I felt this way not so much during interviews as when I was doing what sometimes seemed like interminable transcriptions. Then I would sometimes be overwhelmed by all the words and stories about lives which seemed more defined, more real than my own. Who was I? How would I answer my own questions?

What I am suggesting then is that I included myself in interviews partly in order to relieve my anxieties about being a "stranger", anxieties engendered by doing fieldwork and by being a migrant. However, a more practical reason was that it was a way of developing and testing my interpretations of their stories as I went along. By taking an active role in the interviews - volunteering information about myself, drawing comparisons, asking informants if this is what they meant - I could check out my ideas and also collect more ethnographic data based on informants' responses to me. Similarly, treating my responses as data has aided my own understanding of how my questions might affect informants and by implication the meaning of their answers and my questions. As I argued earlier, the interests of informant and interviewer are different, even antagonistic, and here I must do more than just follow informants' verbal leads. I must push limits and get informants to say more than they otherwise might.

This is done in part by posing "difficult" questions, questions which necessitate further explication, and perhaps pointing out inconsistencies in previous accounts. Potentially this is a hazardous undertaking, for the interviewer can push too far and sacrifice the relationship for the sake of a good question. I am not aware of actually doing this, although there were times when I feared that I might have caused offence by my line of questioning and pulled myself back rather than follow it further (for example in asking people "how" they came to Australia; see Chapter VI).

As my own involvement increased, I became more aware of how touchy and emotive a subject migration is. Informants have described migration as the central event in their lives while a few, usually quite vehemently, have said that no, it did not affect their lives; it has been a non-event. Some all but say that it has been a mistake whereas others claim (despite the evidence sometimes) that it was the "best" thing they ever did. For many, the early years in Australia were an emotionally charged time in their lives - exciting, humiliating, frightening, traumatic - and when they talk about those years, those same emotions still come through. Talking about migrating and understanding migration seems to lead almost inevitably to other sensitive topics. For example, in explaining why they left the Netherlands people might end up talking about why they were never close to their mothers or never fit into the family. Or, in assessing the success of their migration, they talk about how their children turned out. At times I have felt overwhelmed by other people's lives and wondered if I have transgressed too far

into personal, emotional realms; yet, all along this has been my purpose.

This is more than a problem of fieldwork etiquette or tactics, it is a matter of how one defines one's relationship and responsibilities towards informants as opposed to one's readership. This becomes all the more pressing when anthropologists work in modern societies and their informants become their audiences, and I write this ethnography conscious of the fact that at least some of my informants will read it. While much of the material presented here is, by definition, personal and to varying degrees private, I have been concerned at the same time to protect informants' anonymity. As well as changing informants' names and altering or deleting identifying biographical details (hopefully without doing too much damage to the original text) this issue has influenced how I have handled the narrative material generally, as I shall now discuss.

#### Using Life History Material in Ethnography

Rather than organising this ethnography around several case histories (however fascinating they might be) I have constructed what could be described as a collage using the words and accounts of 48 informants to develop a particular interpretation of Dutch experience and identity in Australia. I have several, related reasons for approaching the material in this way. First, there is the problem of ensuring informants' privacy. This would be impossible in the traditional life history genre, given the small number of Dutch migrants in Canberra and the fact that specific

biographical details contained in the life histories (eg number of children, year of arrival in Australia, province of origin, occupation) would by definition identify people. This is compounded by the probability that some informants will eventually read this work. There are two issues here. I did not want to invade informants' privacy by including details of their lives with which they do not want to be publicly associated but equally I did not want to write another "sanitized", public testimonial. There are already plenty of such migration stories, usually about people who have "made good" in Australia and never want to live in the Netherlands again. As I argue in the Introduction, Dutch migration has been generally typified by Dutch and non-Dutch as the individual act of (thousands of) "individualistic" Dutchmen when it patently was not the case. Dutch migration involved women and children, also, at another level, it involved governments which encouraged, paid for (and determined) Dutch migration to Australia (see Chapter III). In this context, the traditional case history seemed to me an inappropriate genre; I did not want to construct another, typical Dutch story told again in the single voice. So, instead, many and varied voices are heard from here - husbands, wives, sons, daughters, white collar workers, tradesmen, Catholics, Protestants and so forth. Approximately, three quarters of my informants are directly included in the text. Sometimes this means simply borrowing a few words or sentences from an informant, because they convey an idea especially well and also help explain other people's experiences. In such cases, the informant remains truly anonymous; they are known only by their

words and I include no biographical details. At other times, the quotations are more lengthy and I am interested in how this person interprets their particular situation. In such instances I have included what I consider to be pertinent biographical details, and have given the informant a pseudonym which remains theirs throughout the ethnography. Depending then on how I have used the material, a person has been "named" and sometimes, not. Because I have not wanted, inadvertently, to construct case histories, the transcripts have not been dated or annotated. Instead, they have been organised around particular themes which I see as central to Dutch identity and assimilation in Australia.

As already mentioned (see footnote #11) I am primarily interested in how people understand their lives rather than in determining if an informant is telling the truth, whatever that might be. It would be practically impossible to check out every event described by an informant, first, if it actually happened and, then, in the manner described. One can turn to the published literature for confirmation of some accounts, for example, of life in wartime Holland (cf Warmbrunn 1965); however, these can not prove, for example, that someone was a resistance fighter or was dishonourably discharged or that family life in Holland really was the way they describe. Often the informant and perhaps their spouse are the sole witnesses to an event; the others - the brothers, sisters, childhood friends who might know - are not there. They are still back in Holland or are in some other country, or they have died. Of course, the problem of bearing witness about the past is not restricted to migrants, it is part



of ageing, but it is one which is exacerbated by migration. (I return to this theme in Chapter VIII.) In any case, the official published literature is itself incomplete; another kind of account, told for specific purposes within particular social and ideological contexts (see Introduction. This idea is taken up again in Chapter IV with reference to how the Dutch in Australia have been presented in the research literature). Inevitably, there will be disparities, just as there are differing points of view. I have tried to take as given what individuals tell me about their lives; this is the sense (or otherwise) they make of their lives in this situation (see Watson op cit on phenomenological approach to life history). At the same time I am interested in the meaning of a particular historical event (Dutch migration to Australia), rather than in everything which could be said about a particular life. Therefore, analysis of the life history material has involved searching out patterns and themes within and between individual accounts as well as relating those meanings to the public record of Dutch migration to Australia. For example, when a person, usually a man, says that he is "assimilated", whether or not he is or can be objectively assimilated is beside the point. What is the meaning of such a statement: what is such a man saying about his life? Conversely, where does the idea of assimilation come from in the first place, and why are so many Dutch men apparently so susceptible to that idea?

The life history material was examined, re-examined and compared along various dimensions until I felt, at the very least,

that I knew these voices and stories well. Such re-working inevitably involves, at one level, moving away from the interviews and texts (which were themselves distillations of experience) to a more generalised, abstract understanding. Unchecked, this could have wrecked any integrity these life histories might possess (cf Watson op cit), however, the kind of questions being posed here forced me to return to the particularities, to listen again to the tapes, re-read the transcripts, and contemplate my role in all this. After transcribing tapes and compiling case histories, various biographical details were noted on individual filing cards which were designed in the course of fieldwork. Some items included could be described as objective, demographic "facts" (although, as I have indicated, this is a problematic distinction) and these serve to locate my informants sociologically. Others are drawn from informants' self reports and serve as a summary of topics and themes which were explored in our conversations. They are:

a) Informant's age (at time of interview and on arrival in Australia). This indicates, among other things, how long an individual has lived in Australia, and for what proportion and part of their life. Most of those informants who came to Australia as adults were between 25 and 45 years when they migrated (in keeping with Australia's restrictive immigration program; see Chapter III) and, predictably, most are now in their 50's and 60's. That is, they have spent what might be described as their middle adulthood in Australia. They have worked and retired here while their children grew up, went to school and

married in Australia. Now they are contemplating old age in Australia.

b) Occupation in the Netherlands and in Australia, noting any job-related problems in migrating. It was government policy to encourage particular labour categories to migrate (see Chapter III), how was this translated into individual experience? Did people find the same type of work in Australia as in the Netherlands? Again, and I would say typically (see Chapters IV and V), most informants came in migrations involving men who were tradesmen or semi-unskilled workers.

The following points (c, d and e) and the questions which arise from them are the focus of Chapter VI:

c) stated reasons for migrating. These usually had to do with there being "no future" in the Netherlands or finding work and opportunities in Australia. The patterning of these reasons were often a re-statement of government migration propoganda.

d) Assisted or independent migrant. This distinction is one I initially considered to be relatively straight-forward (ie objective). People either were or were not assisted, and 30 years later, it hardly mattered. Instead, I found that it was an issue about which many informants still had strong feelings and seemed somewhat confused. Many more than might have been expected claimed that they paid their own way. What were they really saying?

e) Words used to describe adjustment to life in Australia. The word that especially interested me was "easy". That is, life in Australia was easy, it was easy to find work, it was easy to

adjust to life here and, in particular, the way so many men used this imagery. Most women talked about how difficult the early days in Australia were.

f) Personal and familial contacts in Australia and other "emigration countries" (terminology used in the Netherlands to characterise main migration destinations - Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa; see Chapter III). Until the 1950's few Dutch migrated to Australia, which was perceived as a distant, exotic land on the far side of the globe. At the same time in describing their decision to migrate to Australia, most informants (about two thirds) mention knowing someone in or from Australia who told them what kind of place it was (usually big, full of opportunity, warm). This would have been just one source of information, the other major one being government publications and newspaper articles; however, it is these personal contacts which informants mention most. Presumably these tales would have influenced not only their initial decision but also their expectations of life in Australia.

It has been well documented that the Dutch came mainly in (nuclear) family groups rather than, as was the case with other migrant groups, in extended migration "chains", where earlier arrivals helped pay for and house later arrivals (reasons for this difference are discussed in Chapter III). This is borne out by my informants; very few say that they followed family members to Australia (generally these are women who had sisters or children already in Australia). However, on closer examination, the difference between independent and chain migration seems more

relative than absolute. Initially the overwhelming desire seems to have been to leave the Netherlands rather than go to Australia. When the decision was made, Australia was often not the first or even the second choice. This is how Australia as a country was depicted, that is, as a place where people could go who were not acceptable to other countries (see Chapter III), and a number of informants make mention of this point (that they applied to another country but were rejected before applying to migrate to Australia). In a positive sense, knowing someone in Australia, someone who might provide (above and beyond what the government offered) a place to stay and perhaps a job may have helped tip the balance in Australia's favour. And similarly, hearing positive reports about Australia from someone whose opinion supposedly could be trusted (or at least queried) would have taken precedence over official reports. Predictably, no one mentions hearing the obverse, that Australia was a bad place to live, although as I mention in Chapter III such reports did travel back to the Netherlands.

g) Religious affiliation in the Netherlands and Australia. The general pattern is that many Dutch migrants, including my informants, left organised religion since arriving in Australia. There is no obvious single reason for this disaffection, possible explanations are canvassed in Chapter IV.

h) Province of origin. Almost one half of the 35 individual/family migrant groups interviewed came from the major western cities in the Netherlands and include Rotterdam, The Hague and Amsterdam, which together are known as the Randstadt and

comprise almost one half of the total Dutch population. The other half is almost evenly split between those who came from the northern and southern provinces and Indonesia.

The following categories all relate to the meanings of family and migration, which are explored in Chapters VII and VIII:

- i) Children (number, gender, names, marital status, grandchildren, special features or problems in parent-child relationships).
- j) Family in the Netherlands (parents, siblings still alive, those who have died since migrating, letter-writing patterns).
- k) Language(s) spoken at home and elsewhere, and with whom.
- l) Trips back to the Netherlands (dates, reasons, outcomes).

A genealogy for each informant was drawn, which usually extended to four generations (the migrant generation, their family of origin, and children and grandchildren of migrant). I was interested in exploring ideas raised in interviews about the effect of migration on family relations (and vice versa), in particular, emotional and physical closeness and distance in families. In these diagrams I note which family members migrated to Australia (and elsewhere), those who are still in the Netherlands, those born in Australia, birth order of children, family members described as "close" (or otherwise), and immediate family members who speak Dutch.<sup>13</sup> One pattern that emerges here is the way that women interviewed (characteristically) describe their families of origin as close while the men (often these same women's husbands) say that they were not close to their families. It seems to me that this apparent difference is related to the

different language used by men and women to describe migration. Migration, assimilation and family are somehow conceptually inter-related. Returning to the transcripts, I pull out statements made about assimilation, family, family closeness, homelife and Dutchness. I consider that at some level all are about identity, both personal and cultural. They are issues about which most informants talk freely and animatedly. Of special interest here are what women have to say about migration and their relationship with their mothers. What about the exceptions; those women who say that they were not close to their families? Did that make migration easier for them or are they simply borrowing men's language and, therefore, by definition migration is "easy"? More generally, I am interested in the parent-child relationship as it is perceived by the migrants who left the Netherlands and by their children, the grandchildren of those distant grandparents.

Another set of related themes I explore here have to do with taking responsibility for migration. This is a question which occupied both the Dutch and Australian governments: who finally is responsible for migration? (See Chapter III.) When informants discuss the relative worth of early versus late migration, paying one's way and making a success of migration, it seems that they are seeking to address this same issue, but from quite different perspectives (see Chapter VI). Bearing in mind the small number of informants and the relative subjectivity of my sampling methods, I have organised the 35 individual and family migration stories chronologically to see if the early/late distinction is reflected materially, comparing them according to stated reasons

for migrating, occupation and religion in the Netherlands, whether or not they received government assistance and so forth. There is almost an even split (25 to 23) in terms of the number of informants who came before and after 1955 (when migration from the Netherlands was made "easier". The implications of this change are explored in Chapter III.) However, whether people came before or after 1955, most came, they say, for similar "masculine" reasons and have experienced many of the same physical and emotional hardships. Social class and occupational fit (that is, between available work and individual skills) rather than date of arrival largely determined what those early experiences were like as well as their material outcomes, although relative earliness or lateness seem to have remained important symbolic markers. (These ideas are taken up in Chapter VI.)

But first, and persisting with the conversation metaphor, I look to another larger conversation which has helped shape Dutch experience and identity in Australia and one to which I have already alluded. That is, the conversation or negotiations which went on between the Dutch and Australian governments about the meaning of Dutch migration to Australia, which are the subject of Chapter III.



## FOOTNOTES

- 1 The following individuals and organisations were contacted formally during fieldwork and I am grateful for their assistance:  
  
Mr J Alberto  
Mr R van Arkel, social worker, Canberra Dutch Club  
J Bakker, Canberra Dutch Club  
Mr C Beltz  
Mr W Blom, Netherlands Embassy  
Mr J Elich  
Mr B Groothuis, Catholic Dutch Migrants' Association  
Mr J Hengst, Canberra Dutch Club  
Rev B James, Canberra Reformed Church  
Mrs B J de Jonge  
Prof H Mol  
Father de Mooy, St Patrick's Church, Braddon  
Mr H Overberg  
Ms W Smulders, Canberra Dutch Club  
Ms F Steen, Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs  
Mr H Stefanik, Ethnic Communities Council  
Mrs I Stilwell, ACT Council on the Ageing  
Mrs L Voorhoeve
- 2 As discussed in my Introduction, I am using here the more inclusive, culturally meaningful criterion for Dutchness so that I count as ethnically Dutch, people born in the Netherlands (who are identified as Dutch in the Census), Indonesian Dutch, and the descendants of both groups. Nevertheless, the majority of informants were born in the Netherlands (42), two were born in Australia to Dutch migrants and four are Indonesian Dutch.
- 3 Another option was to contact people with "Dutch sounding" names through the telephone directory. I was loathe to do this primarily because I felt that people would consider this an invasion of their privacy and be more likely to refuse than grant my request. Such a refusal would be all the easier because it would be made to a faceless stranger over the telephone. I preferred to approach people personally.
- 4 "Dutchman" (as in Dutch stereotype) compared to an individual Dutch man.
- 5 A few informants made it clear that they wanted to be interviewed alone and would not commence the interview until family members' had left the room. Again, I followed informant's lead on this.
- 6 8 individuals (3 men, 5 women) are married to non-Dutch partners. 2 of these men were interviewed with their wives present and both women participated and commented on what

their husbands said.

- 7 Companionable, sociable, cosy (Nederlands Engels pg 98). The concept of "Gezelligheid" is discussed at length in Chapters V and VI.
- 8 When I describe myself as a migrant to Australians, they almost invariably correct me. It seems that I am in error but being a newcomer this is taken for naivety (or perhaps stupidity) and people will then endeavour to explain why Canadians/ Britons/Americans are not "migrants" (see Introduction on who is a migrant in Australia). This involves some amount of obfuscation which I interpret as embarrassment because their explanation gives the lie to the idea that Australians are not race or class conscious. In part, I am "making trouble" (Garfinkel 1967) by defining myself as a migrant, but I also consider myself to be one and feel rather affronted by what amounts to a denial of my experience.
- 9 Some informants have been at pains to point out that they were different from other Dutch; they were not typical migrants (see migration narratives, Chapter VI). They paid their way or were brought out by private employers, they spoke excellent English before they arrived and they never lived in a migrant hostel or in a garage. Like me, they are middle class.
- 10 In fact, my eldest informant, a woman of almost 90, was still taking private English lessons in order to improve her English!
- 11 While I was primarily concerned with members' meanings rather than biographical facts, that is the "imaginary" rather than the "real" (Crapanzano 1980:7), I asked informants (if they did not already tell me) about where they were born, their family background, age, the year they migrated and whether or not they received government assistance, their marital status, employment history, children, language use etc.
- 12 This issue was raised in the Canberra Dutch Club newsletter The Courier, March 1978, and evoked a strong reaction from club members, re-awakening the continuing debate over how much English should be spoken and written in the Club.
- 13 I do not include any "sample" genealogies for reasons of privacy and representation just as I have not presented any individual case histories. These reasons are explained at length in the Introduction.

### CHAPTER III

#### HISTORY OF DUTCH MIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA

In Holland, they have an agreement with the countries who accept migrants that they (take) all types of people ... not only the people that they like to get rid of. In Holland at that time they like to get rid of - farmers' labourers and gardeners ... They like first to make rid of that type of people. A tradesman in Holland - in that time it was not so sound as now - but still they are not so often without work and they need them more. Every country needs tradesmen ... And I may say that I was that. (Assisted migrant, speaker's emphasis)

This chapter presents an abbreviated history of Dutch migration to Australia between 1946 and 1961. It focuses on the roles played by the Dutch and Australian governments in encouraging and controlling the flow of Dutch settlers to Australia, and how their involvement helped shape Dutch experience and identity in Australia. The first section, which is intended as background to my analysis, outlines the development of post-war emigration from the Netherlands when, according to Hofstede (1964:97), 323,500 Dutch left the Netherlands at least supposedly for good. Of particular interest here is the question of taking responsibility for emigration, that is, how the Dutch government used emigration to further its own economic interests. Yet it would not take responsibility for the consequences of emigration programmes, maintaining that emigration was a personal matter. While this stance was challenged by the private emigration agencies, which were concerned about the long-term effects of

emigration, the government view was to dominate throughout this period. I argue that this placed Dutch migrants in a most difficult position, especially with regards to receiving government subsidies towards the cost of migration, and more generally in terms of determining who was responsible for their migration. Having already summarised Australia's post-war immigration policies (see Chapter I), the remainder of the chapter details the bilateral negotiations and agreements which were to provide a framework for Dutch migration to Australia. While their interests were, as we shall see, often diametrically opposed, both governments saw Dutch migrants as especially assimilable. The latter section examines how each side used the concept of migrant assimilation for its own purposes and considers some of the implications of their strategies particularly in relation to the question of Dutch identity in Australia.

The Netherlands: the emigration climate and government policy

Numbers of Dutch people believe that there are better opportunities for them in the immigration countries than an overcrowded Holland can offer. The problems in Holland are alleviated by this emigration. This is why we help them to find a good future elsewhere.  
(Emigratie 1955:77)<sup>1</sup>

This bland statement made by the Dutch Minister for Social Affairs to the Inter-government Commission for European Migration (ICEM) illustrates the Netherlands "rationalistic" approach to migration (Petersen 1955) which conflated national and personal good, asserting that both could be met by government organised emigration. This emphasis on the social benefits of emigration represented quite a departure for the Netherlands which

historically had not considered itself an "emigration" country (a source of emigrants); quite the contrary, it had been a nation of seafarers, merchants and colonialists whose language and nationality conveyed power and privilege throughout the world. As Hofstede notes (1964:33) "Emigration was not generally looked upon as a commendable activity". It was something akin to "letting the side down", and only criminals and misfits would do that. The other category of people to emigrate were those with strong religious beliefs, and during the 1800's and early 1900's a large number of Calvinist and Catholic farmers did migrate to the United States (see Lucas 1955). However, it had remained a private, religious matter, being a matter of conscience rather than something in which the government became involved. Yet by 1948 one third of the Dutch population claimed that they wanted to leave the Netherlands (Petersen 1952:10) and the government was actively encouraging Dutch emigration. What happened to bring about such a radical change?

What has been diagnosed as "emigration fever" seems to have been the culmination of various traumatic events: Germany's invasion of the Netherlands during World War II, the poverty of the 1930's and 1940's, the loss of Indonesia, and also the widely publicised jump in the national birthrate, which was already well above the rest of north-west Europe. This "fever" was symptomatic of a profound loss of confidence in the Netherlands' future or in its capacity to take control of that future. Poverty aggravated by over-population became the national nightmare (Hofstede op cit:57). On a personal level, many young adults who had grown up during German occupation and experienced social and educational

dislocation would have felt that there was little future for them in the Netherlands. (Certainly this was the case for a number of my informants; see Chapter VI. See Warmbrunn 1965 on life in the Netherlands under the Germans.) At the same time, the government decided that emigration and industrialisation would be the joint cure for the Netherlands' woes (according to Petersen 1952 a national programme of birth control would have been more appropriate but was politically unacceptable to the Calvinist and Catholic sectors). Industrialisation was seen as a long-term, difficult proposition while emigration had an immediate appeal, more in keeping with the unsettled temper of the times. Thus, personal and official views of the solution to Holland's problems dovetailed - at least for the time being - neatly and conveniently.

The government set about identifying who was "surplus" to the economy and should be encouraged to emigrate. In 1948 the mainly Roman Catholic southern provinces were deemed to be overpopulated and it was these farmers' sons who were identified as a "burden" to the community (Hofstee in Hofstede op cit:39). However, while there was an emigration tradition among northern Protestant farmers (where previously there had been an over-population problem) these southern farmers were generally not interested in emigrating, preferring to take their chances in the Netherlands rather than elsewhere. So, in 1949 unskilled and unemployed workers (now defined as surplus) were offered assisted passage to Australia, and later that same year a group of about 100 adults arrived in Australia (IPC 1950). The problem with the government's emigration programmes was that they were too tightly

tioned to domestic economic conditions. This meant that in the early years when emigration "fever" was at its height, there were literally thousands of people ready to emigrate who were discouraged if not prohibited from emigrating, because they were not "surplus" to economic recovery. Later, the government broadened its eligibility criteria to include almost all workers but by this time, as the Netherlands' economy improved, people were generally less interested in emigrating. Externally, it caused problems for the Netherlands in terms of finding countries prepared to take its "surplus" workers, for example, Australia wanted many of the skilled tradesmen which the Netherlands wanted to keep (see next section).

From the very beginning the private emigration organisations (The Central Catholic Emigration Foundation and The Protestant Emigration Board, which had played an active role in emigration prior to World War II, and The General Emigration Board which represented various "secular" groups such as trade unions, agrarian groups and liberal religious groups) were critical of the government's labour market orientation to emigration. Whereas government interest virtually ceased "as soon as the emigrant (had) been properly delivered in his new country" (Hofstede op cit:94), the private organisations took a longer view of emigration and of their responsibilities to the migrant; in the case of the religious organisations sending priests on the migrant transport ships and to the immigration countries, to minister to the spiritual and welfare needs of new migrants. As well, they were concerned that emigration be a voluntary act and not the result of government propaganda or pressure.

In effect, the private organisations were challenging the right of the government to be the sole organiser of Dutch emigration. Such a challenge was inevitable given the pluralistic nature of Dutch society, known as the verzuiling system; see Chapter IV on the verzuiling system in Australia; also Lijphart (1968), Moberg (1961). The various zuilen or columns - Roman Catholic, Protestant, Calvinist and "unchurchly" groups - cut across the class structure, functioning effectively as distinct communities with their own schools, newspapers, political parties, trade unions, elites as well as emigration offices. It was inevitable also that their challenge be somewhat successful and in 1952 the government included the private organisations in emigration planning and programmes. From that time onwards, the private registration offices became increasingly active until by 1956 the majority of Dutch emigrants were registering with them rather than the government labour offices (Beltz 1964:42). However, the private organisations were never adequately funded for the after-care of migrants as the government still considered that this was not Dutch responsibility. This continued to be a bone of contention between the government and the Catholic and secular emigration organisations; the Calvinists saw no need for government assistance being already well established overseas (Hofstede op cit:94).

#### The Subsidy System

The peak year for Dutch emigration was 1952 when 48,690 people departed from the Netherlands (Emigratie 1957:14). In an effort to further stimulate emigration the government increased the range



of occupations eligible for travel subsidies. As a result, the proportion of emigrants receiving government assistance rose, from 18% in 1950 to 69% in 1954 (Emigratie 1954:77); however, the actual number of people emigrating continued to drop after 1952. While clearly there was no single cause for this decline (which I discuss later in this section) the very restrictive terms of the subsidy system did not encourage migration, except - as we shall see - among the very poor (precisely the people the Netherlands wanted to get rid of, but not the "type" of people other countries wanted). For in order to be eligible for government assistance, migrants first had to contribute everything they owned towards travel costs and under close government supervision (Beltz op cit:45). This meant that subsidised migrants arrived at their destination virtually destitute with only their landing money<sup>2</sup> and their packing crate of household possessions (which could only measure one cubic metre, Petersen 1952:44).

The almost punitive severity of this scheme was based on the strongly held belief that people should pay for their migration (even though the government was encouraging them to do so). The more a person had, however little that might be, the more s/he should pay. There were those in the Netherlands who felt that this was not tough enough, who opposed subsidised emigration on principle because they saw emigration as contrary to the national interests (Hofstede op cit:170-172). In this sense, emigrants should pay not only for their travel costs but for the loss which their migration represented to the community.

Nevertheless, in 1955 a new, more liberal subsidy system was introduced. It was designed to encourage emigration generally,

but also to facilitate what was known as the Netherlands' policy of "spreading" migrants over as many countries as possible.<sup>3</sup> Canada had been the main migration destination, attracting approximately 46% of all Dutch migrants between 1946 and 1954 (from Emigratie 1957:14); however, by late 1954 interest in Canada was waning, primarily because of domestic economic conditions, and the Netherlands government wanted to encourage migrants to travel further afield to what had been under the old scheme more expensive destinations. Under the new scheme the most any migrant would contribute would be the cost of travelling to the nearest migration country, Canada or the United States, or f900 per family with a minimum set at f100 (Emigratie 1955:60).<sup>4</sup> Within these limits, contributions were calculated based on the amount of income tax paid the previous year, and multiplied by a factor of one and one-half, two or three depending on whether or not the receiving country was a member of the ICEM and contributed to travelling costs (ibid).<sup>5</sup> (The question of subsidies is discussed at greater length in relation to Australian immigration in the next section.)

"The best people are leaving"

The latter phase of Dutch emigration (1955 onwards) was characterised by a number of developments: a marked drop in the number of agricultural workers emigrating (a serious embarrassment for a programme designed to alleviate agrarian unemployment);<sup>6</sup> Australia becoming the primary destination for Dutch migrants, largely due to the new subsidy scheme which advantaged Australia in comparison to other countries; and organised migration itself

coming under increasing attack in the Netherlands. Clearly these developments were inter-related. The largest proportion of migrants going to Australia were Catholic industrial workers,<sup>7</sup> travelling through government registration offices (Hofstede op cit:101-103) and after 1955, virtually all were government assisted (Beltz op cit:108a. Reasons for this are discussed in the next section.) To a very great extent, Australia was competing for the same workers the Netherlands wanted to keep. This was further complicated by the fact that by late 1950's the Dutch economy was expanding and foreign labour was being imported at the same time that the Dutch government was subsidising the export of its own workers through the subsidy system. It is no wonder then that "organised" (Australian) migration was so unpopular: "The best people are leaving" and Australia wanted them.<sup>8</sup>

The pro-emigration lobby in the Netherlands argued that the present prosperity was only temporary and that organised emigration would contribute to long-term national (as well as international) prosperity. Dutch emigrants were being re-defined; no longer were they "surplus" population, they were potential, neo-colonialists contributing to a new kind of Dutch empire (discussed in the next section in relation to Australian immigration). However, this argument did not sway the critics of subsidised emigration. By 1960, total emigration had dropped to approximately 24,350 (Emigratie 1960:18), half its 1952 peak, and would decline still further in 1961. As well, in 1961 the United States, which financed 46% of the ICEM operational budget and approximately 16% of assisted emigration from the Netherlands

(Beltz op cit: 26,49), announced that it would no longer contribute financially to voluntary emigration from Europe and the Dutch government abandoned its "active" emigration policy for a "positive" one. That is, the government stepped back from its prominent, ideological role in relation to emigration, in effect, handing back responsibility for emigration to the private emigration agencies (who had traditionally been responsible for emigration). Ideologically, emigration had become once again a purely personal matter.

#### Dutch Migration to Australia

"An attempt to discuss the future possibilities of emigration from the Netherlands must include the point that the Dutch, as Dutch, are usually second only to the British as welcome immigrants ... So long as the dominion governments continue to foster a larger immigration than can be supplied from British alone, however, this policy will benefit especially the Dutch who are everywhere rated second-best". (Petersen 1952:58-60)

At the end of World War II there were, as I have already mentioned, very few Netherlands born Dutch people in Australia (according to the 1947 Census, less than 3,000). Australia wanted to encourage Dutch immigration, the Dutch being "blonde" northern Europeans who had been on the right side in the War (unlike the Germans). The Netherlands, as we have seen, had "surplus" population and was it seems prepared to accept such second class status on behalf of its emigrants if this would help solve its domestic problems. Given the complementarity of their interests it was hardly surprising that the Commonwealth and Netherlands Emigration Foundation renewed their 1939 agreement (which had been

invalidated by the War). However, while both sides wanted to encourage Dutch migration per se, they were to some extent operating at cross purposes: the Foundation sought to encourage agrarian migration (at that time the only "surplus" labour category) while Australia wanted skilled tradesmen to aid in her industrial development. This was a difference which was to continue to bedevil Dutch-Australian relations.

Under the terms of this first agreement, the Foundation was responsible for selection, reception and placement of the Dutch migrants who paid their own fares (IAC 1947). Really all Australia did was allow them come. It was hoped that up to 10,000 Dutch migrants would come to Australia under this scheme (IPC 1950), but predictably, given that no financial assistance was offered to intending migrants, only 584 had come out by the time the agreement ended in 1951 (Beltz op cit:101).<sup>9</sup> As well, Australia offered assisted passage to Dutch ex-servicemen and resistance workers under the "Empire and Allied Ex-Servicemen Scheme" (1948-1955). As was generally the case with Australian immigration programmes, it had been originally intended for British servicemen and was then extended to countries of north-west Europe. In the end, Dutch migrants, mainly from Indonesia, comprised over three quarters (16,830) of those who came under this scheme (Beltz op cit:101). Consistent with the "White Australia" policy Eurasian Dutch were not accepted under this or subsequent schemes (IAC 1963), although as I have earlier discussed this "racial" distinction was never clearly spelled out (see Petersen 1952:8 on the tacit nature of this distinction with relation to Indonesian Dutch).

Australia's problem in attracting Dutch migrants (aside from a chronic shortage of boats in the post-war years) was that it was too far away, too expensive and too unknown as a destination. In 1950, Australia entered negotiations with the Dutch government over a bilateral assistance scheme.<sup>10</sup> In doing so, Australia was recognising that it had to offer more substantial "bait" than the promise of wide open spaces in the form of assisted passage (Borrie 1949) if Australia were to get the people it wanted (despite the fact that the Dutch were "second best", not British). Australia had to enter into negotiations at a governmental level and actively compete with other countries which wanted Dutch migrants and were not so far away (especially Canada). As well, Australia must have a say in the kind of people the Netherlands sent, otherwise it would get mainly farm labourers and unemployed people who were "surplus" to the Netherlands' needs.

The Netherlands Australian Migration Agreement (NAMA) came into effect 1 April 1951. The Netherlands was responsible for recruitment, initial selection and transportation of emigrants, and Australia carried out final selection and medical examinations. Young adults, men between 18 and 35 years, and women between 18 and 30 years, and families where the husband was under 45 years were all eligible for assistance. Family size was restricted to four children under age 16 until 1953 because of the housing shortage in Australia (Beltz op cit:104). All categories of workers were eligible for assistance but the Commonwealth did establish immigration targets based on current labour market conditions, with special emphasis on the building trades (IAC 1951). Under this agreement workers signed an undertaking that

they would remain in their designated category for two years (presumably to simplify economic planning and reassure Australian trade unions that Dutch migrants would not take over their jobs.)

On their arrival Dutch migrants like all "assisted" European migrants were to be housed in government reception centres, unless they had made other private arrangements, until the "breadwinner" was placed in work by the Commonwealth. Then, unless there was a vacancy in a suitable Commonwealth hostel ("where possible"), like other Europeans the family was split up; men proceeded to the work site and dependents were sent to the nearest holding centre.<sup>11</sup> British migrants, on the other hand, were accommodated, as a matter of course, as family units in hostel accommodation (which had been built for them). In other words, as "surrogate" British (Harney 1983) the Dutch got superior accommodation as long as British migrants did not need it. Over the years, various "special" privileges were granted to the Dutch; privileges not normally granted to other European migrants, for example, in 1950 Dutch migrants were allowed to stay in migrant reception centres although they were not subject to the mandatory two year work contract, and in 1953 Dutch arriving with "landing permits" were offered government accommodation, something normally not available to "landing permit" migrants (IPC 1950,1953. Also see Beltz op cit:102,110).<sup>12</sup>

I would argue that these privileges spelled out to the Dutch migrants themselves their status as surrogate or "second best" British. That is, they were being accepted for what they were not, British, and secondly, that they would be better off the more they distanced themselves from other migrants. Certainly my own

informants were well aware of gradations of housing and what those gradations meant in terms of relative status vis-à-vis other migrants and British migrants. What I would like to comment on more specifically is the attitude of the Dutch government towards this situation. It seemed to be well aware of what was going on, for example, the government publication Emigratie comments (1954:23):

The increased emigration from the United Kingdom means that hostel accommodation has become more difficult for Dutch families to obtain. For many families who enter Australia through the reception centres this means that breadwinners must first of all endeavour to find housing for their families from the workplace. After a relatively short period of time most have been successful ... (my translation)

Why would the Netherlands tolerate, let alone defend such discrimination being practiced against its own migrants? The answer is, I think, twofold. As Peterson suggests above, the Netherlands was prepared to use to its own advantage the "fact" that Dutch migrants were everywhere "second best" to British. It would accept such a definition for its migrants in exchange for ridding itself of excess population. Secondly, the Dutch government considered that its responsibilities ended with emigrants' successful departure from the Netherlands. It was not concerned with conditions in immigrant countries except as they might affect the continued emigration flow. Dutch migrants were to be assimilated not in the second or third generation but in the "first generation" (Emigratie 1955:79), therefore, whatever happened to them in their new homeland was not the concern of the Dutch government. Furthermore, by allowing Dutch migrants to be



treated as surrogate British, the Dutch government was communicating to Dutch migrants that they were no longer Dutch and that they had no choice but be assimilated. In keeping with this logic, Australia was responsible for the after-care and assimilation of Dutch migrants in Australia (Australia, Department of External Affairs 1951). For, while other aspects of the Agreement may have been open to interpretation financial obligations were spelled out clearly. The Australian government contributed £stg37.10/- per adult migrant, migrants were to contribute as much as they could afford (discussed in previous section), a minimum of £stg10, and the Netherlands contributed the balance which in all cases was to be at least equal to what the Commonwealth paid.

Relations between the two governments are repeatedly described as being most cordial and co-operative (cf Beltz op cit:106),<sup>13</sup> and throughout Emigratie it is repeatedly stressed how excellent and appropriate their "partnership" was. Literally this was quite true; Australia and the Netherlands were migration partners, one giving and the other receiving. Unlike other countries such as South Africa (Hofstede op cit:44) Australia accepted unskilled as well as skilled workers "without discrimination" (which certainly suited the Netherlands). And, like the Netherlands, Australia was committed to the concept of family rather than individual migration. Both countries saw "organised" migration as a solution to strategic and economic problems, and both saw assimilation as the natural and desirable outcome of migration.

Nevertheless, I would suggest that such talk of "partnership" was primarily rhetorical, and that it was more a Dutch than

Australian definition of the situation. For the Netherlands, the relationship was enacted primarily at a governmental level, between the sending and receiving countries, however, their interests were as I have already mentioned quite different if not opposed. For Australia, the focal relationship was not between countries but between the (to-be-assimilated, undifferentiated) individual migrant and the government institution; obviously an unequal relationship (see Chapter I on Australian immigration policies). At the same time, the notion of partnership was variously useful. In the Netherlands it reassured intending migrants of continuity of care (something the government stressed throughout Emigratie), contradicting the governments "hands-off" policy (see above) as well as strengthening the Netherlands' negotiating position vis-à-vis Australia. In this sense it was another kind of Dutch "game" (see Introduction), masking the fact that Dutch and Australian interests were in many ways quite different. As I have discussed in the previous section, throughout the 1950's the Netherlands continued to be concerned mainly with effecting agrarian migration (and this was a major reason why "organised" emigration was judged a failure) and with the logistics of keeping "indispensable" workers and shedding itself of "surplus" workers. While it is true that Australia accepted unskilled and unemployed Dutch workers (except during periods of economic recession), it wanted as many skilled workers as possible. It was over these "critical" groups - farmers, skilled tradesmen, unemployed and unskilled workers - where their conflict of interests was most obvious, and predictably these labour categories were the focus of much of the negotiations which

went on between the "partners" during the 1950's, which I shall now outline.

From the very beginning the Dutch government was concerned that Australia was not doing enough to attract Dutch farmers (which was quite true as Australia did not particularly want farmers). The Netherlands argued that Dutch farmers needed tangible assurance (of financial assistance) that they would eventually own a farm in Australia, otherwise they would not come to Australia. A land settlement scheme such as Canada's, would offer them such assurance but, although Australia accepted the logic of this argument (IAC 1952, IPC 1952), no such scheme was ever proposed. However, Australia did recognise two sponsorship schemes organised to house and place agrarian workers with Australian farmers; the Pater Maas Scheme, which fostered the migration of large Catholic farming families under the auspices of the Australian Catholic Rural Movement, and the Netherlands Government Sponsorship Scheme which had no such religious affiliation.<sup>14</sup>

During 1952-3 Australia experienced a recession and for the time being unskilled Dutch workers were ineligible for assistance under the NAMA. Overall, this had a drastic effect on applications and departures from the Netherlands and an even more drastic effect on the numbers coming out under the NAMA (2,321 in 1953 compared to 7,134 in 1952, Emigratie 1956:19). The Netherlands blamed overly pessimistic press reports for this decline and claimed that Dutch emigrants and emigration officials had coped extremely well with this ("temporary") economic set-back (Emigratie 1953:20). Such assurances proved inadequate and the

Netherlands moved in 1953 to set up a unilateral assistance scheme to counteract the impact of the NAMA (Australian) restrictions. Under the Netherlands Government Agency Scheme (known as NGAS) emigrants were assisted who were ineligible under the terms of the NAMA because they were unskilled but whose "general fitness" (geschikteid) recommended them for emigration (in the opinion of the Dutch government). The Netherlands' government guaranteed work and accommodation through the Netherlands Emigration Foundation so that intending migrants could meet "landing permit" criteria (see footnote #12). As already mentioned, Australia made an exception here and provided temporary accommodation in government reception centres.

This scheme proved quite attractive to Dutch migrants. Between 1954 and 1955 when it ended, 5,699 or almost one quarter of all Dutch migrants coming to Australia came under it (Emigratie 1954, 1955), primarily because it did not involve a two year work contract.<sup>15</sup> It was not so popular with the Australian government, which expressed concern about the proportion of unskilled relative to skilled workers coming into Australia (presumably under the NGAS) and argued that the Dutch government must take some responsibility for this situation. If something was not done Australia feared that it would end up receiving mainly unskilled Dutch migrants (IPC 1955). Reading between the lines, the "partnership" was at risk.

The Netherlands blamed the subsidy system for this situation. Because it selected against people with capital, such as skilled workers (see above), and because such a high proportion of migrants travelling to Australia were assisted migrants rather

than self-financed, it effectively discouraged skilled workers from emigrating to Australia.<sup>16</sup> People with capital would prefer to travel independently, to less expensive destinations such as Canada, and have something left over, rather than be moved by subsidised passage to an expensive destination like Australia and arrive with nothing. In other words, people without capital (or skill) were more likely to migrate to Australia.<sup>17</sup> The new subsidy scheme (outlined above) was aimed at redressing this situation by removing the financial dis-incentive on skilled people migrating to Australia (IAC 1955). An immediate consequence was that from 1956 onwards virtually all Dutch emigrants were subsidised, although the proportion travelling to Australia under subsidy continued to be fractionally above even this high figure (Beltz op cit:47,108a).

In the same year the unilateral NGAS programme was ended and Australia broadened NAMA occupational criteria, raised age limits and established a trade certification programme for Dutch metal workers. These adjustments combined with the more generous subsidy system seem to have succeeded where previous restrictions had failed, and the percentage of skilled workers increased by about ten per cent after 1957, from 41.8% to 45.9% (Beltz op cit:49) and, as noted in the previous section, Australia became the number one destination for Dutch emigrants.<sup>18</sup>

Although the new subsidy system proved effective in terms of "spreading" emigration, and especially directing people to Australia, it was not without its problems (assisted migration being unpopular in the Netherlands). The government itself wondered if too much was being done for Dutch migrants in

Australia; suggesting that they were becoming too dependent on government and citing instances of the "regrettable mentality" of newcomers, who complained and were ungrateful for what was done for them, compared to Dutch migrants who came out under the old subsidy and were more independent and hard-working (cf Emigratie 1955:118-119). The distinction between "old" and "new" migrants was one that Dutch migrants came to make amongst themselves.<sup>19</sup> As Beltz notes (op cit:133):

Virtually every emigrant became entitled to substantial assistance. Thus, the 'new' migrants did not have to make the same sacrifices as their forerunners had made. According to the 'old' migrants, the 'new' migrants were spoiled before they arrived in Australia.

(I discuss some of the implications of this distinction later in this chapter and in Chapter VI.)

The need for long-term housing was another issue which divided the two governments. Dutch migration to Australia was primarily family migration, something which both governments actively encouraged chiefly through the NAMA housing arrangements. Dutch migrants were known not to like "migrant" style accommodation (IAC 1957), and in any case government housing was not intended to be a long-term solution to migrant housing needs; quite the contrary. The problem was that private housing in Australia was scarce and prohibitively expensive, and many Dutch migrants were ending up living in garages, caravans and shared living arrangements. News about Australia's housing problems travelled back to the Netherlands, and the Netherlands' government was worried that this might hinder not only the assimilation of Dutch migrants into

Australia but Dutch emigration generally (cf Emigratie 1956:20-21). Dutch migration to Australia had declined in 1956 by 20% compared to 1955 as well as a proportion of total emigration. The government blamed this diminution on "over-sensitiveness" (overgevoeligheid) in the Netherlands to "unfair" press reports on the economic situation in Australia (the same argument as in 1953), migrants' "unreliable" reports and the still unresolved housing shortage, which was aggravated by the Australian government's credit squeeze.

For the remainder of the 1950's Dutch migration to Australia followed the general decline in emigration hovering between seven and nine thousand per year, dropping to about five thousand in 1961. The Netherlands continued to blame the housing crisis for the situation, claiming that it especially handicapped Dutch migrants because they tended to migrate as families rather than as individuals (Emigratie 1957:30), and again approached the Australian government about setting up a loans scheme. The Department of Immigration turned the idea down, explaining that it alone could not enter such an agreement and that other government departments opposed it. More to the point, the Australian government was not prepared to set a "precedent" by offering one particular migrant group financial assistance (IAC 1958). As it had done in the past (when Australia imposed stringent entry requirements in 1953, and when problems cropped up with the old subsidy system) the Netherlands took matters into its own hands in 1957 and approached the United States with Australian support and applied for money from the Economic Loan Fund. This was eventually successful. In 1959, three million dollars were

released through this fund for housing loans through co-operative building societies. Combined with contributions from Australian and Dutch banks and some state governments, 2,300 houses were financed (Bakkers 1963). The Dutch government approached the Commonwealth again in 1961 about co-guaranteeing house and business loans, explaining that politically it could not continue to offer unilateral assistance to people who as emigrants were "lost" to the Netherlands as taxpayers and citizens. In the then anti-emigration climate in the Netherlands, it was essential that Australia and the Netherlands be seen to act bilaterally on this matter. Not only would such assistance help Dutch migrants in Australia, it would also strengthen the pro-emigration argument in the Netherlands and help ensure the continuation of Dutch migration to Australia. Again, Australia refused on grounds of "precedence" (IPC 1961).

Yet at the same time that Australia was refusing to act as co-guarantor to Dutch migrants because it could not treat some migrants differently than others, the Commonwealth mounted in 1957 a "Bring out a Briton" campaign in which individuals and organisations were asked to act as guarantors for British migrants. Emigratie (1958:21) reports that the "first resident" to do so was a Dutchman. This accomplishment, and the straightforward way it is reported, encapsulate for me the peculiar position of Dutch migrants in Australia; being instructed by both governments not just to accept but to enjoy their second class "surrogate" status.

As mentioned in the previous section, by the mid 1950's as the Dutch economy improved, the Dutch government started to talk about



emigration as a kind of "capital export", not just as a way of getting rid of "surplus" labour (cf Emigratie 1955:15 and in an article entitled "Australie en de Nederlanders" where there is a description of the commercial impact of Dutch migration to Australia<sup>20</sup>). The following year, 1960, when the NAMA treaty came up for renewal, the Netherlands pressed this point of view, asking Australia to recognise the important link between migration and economic development by entering an economic partnership with the Netherlands. The Commonwealth was well aware that organised emigration was under attack in the Netherlands but - if it was not prepared to involve itself in securing housing loans for Dutch migrants obviously - obviously it would not be prepared to undertake such an all embracing agreement. The Commonwealth was willing to make some sort of symbolic gesture in order to appease Dutch public opinion but it would offer nothing of substance (IPC 1961). Even if Australia had responded substantively this probably would not have altered the final outcome as organised emigration came increasingly under attack domestically (see previous section). However, the NAMA was extended for one year ostensibly to allow time for further negotiations (although their differences appeared to be irrevocable), during which time the Netherlands abandoned its policy of encouraging Dutch emigration and emigration to Australia effectively ended.<sup>21</sup>

#### Those who came

Out of all this what can we say about the people who were being negotiated over? Almost one half or 44.7% of Dutch migrating to Australia (Beltz op cit:69) were Roman Catholic,

which was well above the proportion of Catholics in the population during the 1950's (38.5%, Hofstede op cit:97). The relative lateness of Catholic emigration generally coincided with the years when Australian immigration was in full swing but that correlation does not explain how so many Roman Catholics out of the total number of Dutch emigrants ended up in Australia. The Catholic Church in the Netherlands was strongly committed to Catholic family emigration (Kampschoer 1954), and considered that Australia with its well established system of Catholic parishes and schools was a good receiving country where Catholic Dutch could continue to practice their faith (Hofstede op cit:125). A number of Catholic Dutch chaplains came to Australia but the Church expected that they and Dutch migrants generally would join pre-existing parishes. (What it did not reckon on were the cultural differences between the "Irish" Australian Church and the Dutch Catholic Church which presented problems in adjustment for Dutch migrants; see Chapter IV.) However, only about 40% of Dutch Catholics came to Australia through the Catholic emigration offices; most came through the government organisation. Interestingly (in light of my previous discussion of "character" as an analytic concept; see Introduction), Hofstede (op cit:107) blames this on the "essential characteristic of emigration, namely the fact that (aspirant) emigrants are often people with little social participation" (my emphasis), implying that it would have been better had they been the "kind" of people who went through the Catholic agencies. I would suggest that the explanation is more structural than psychological, that is, it is due to the fact that there were only four Catholic emigration offices in the

mainly Catholic south compared to 17 public labour offices (Beltz op cit:43). Also, Dutch emigration to Australia was primarily organised by government rather than private agencies or religious organisations (as it was, for example, in Canada). Nevertheless, over the course of organised migration to Australia, the private organisations increased their share in Dutch emigration overall by 19% (from 37% to 56%, Hofstede op cit:101). The non-denominational General Emigration Centre which represented trade unions and smaller "liberal" interest groups did particularly well, increasing its share by eight per cent to 12 per cent between 1953 and 1962 (ibid).

The second, obvious characteristic of Australian immigration is that almost one half of Dutch men were employed in secondary industry, primarily the building trades. About 40% were "skilled" workers while 20% were "unskilled" or "semi-skilled" (Beltz op cit:190), which would help explain the relative prominence of the trades-oriented General Emigration Centre. It is these workers who, as I have argued, were the focus of all the negotiating and bargaining which went on between the Dutch and Australian governments.

However, these same workers brought their families with them to Australia; on average the size of Dutch families coming to Australia was larger than of those migrating to other countries (cf Emigratie 1955:16,66) and they came to Australia in larger family groups than did other migrant groups.<sup>22</sup> This did not happen by accident nor was it a reflection of the Dutch "character". It came about because the Dutch and Australian governments wanted it to happen. The Dutch government saw

organised emigration as a way of solving its pressing population problems. The concept of family migration was the logical extension of this type of thinking.<sup>23</sup> By encouraging family migration through assisted passage and offers of government accommodation (as well as promises of a "better future" for children), more people would leave the Netherlands at a time (or, in the language of Emigratie, per "unit") and presumably their departures would be more permanent; men with families being considerably less mobile than single men. This argument would apply with extra force to Catholic (farming) families who had been identified along with Calvinists as having the highest birth rates in the Netherlands (Hofstede op cit:54), and who were the focus of organised emigration. In their case, family emigration was also advocated in moral, Catholic terms. To the Church, it was crucial for men's spiritual welfare that they migrate with wives rather than alone, and this meant actively encouraging Catholic women to emigrate (it was assumed that women were less "emigration minded", being more tied than men to their immediate environment). For example:

Attempts should be made to achieve a disposition of the female youth of such a nature, that it is looked upon as a higher vocation to depart as the wife of a man from an emigration-country to an immigration-country, to perform in the latter country the role of mother to children who help in the development of a young society and in the expansion of the Church in the immigration-country where one lives. (van Campen 1954:132)

Australia encouraged Dutch family migration for similarly ideological reasons. As I have discussed in the Introduction, Australia considered the Dutch as "blonde" northern Europeans to

be culturally/racially superior to southern Europeans. Their large families would not be a threat to Australia's racial purity. Indeed, as "surrogate" Britons, their large families would be a kind of racial counter-balance to all the other less desirable migrants (Italians, Greeks, Maltese etc) who were coming to Australia, but who were not being offered the same preferential treatment offered to the Dutch (particularly with regards to housing).

Finally, while it was generally regarded (by the Dutch anyways) that women stood to lose more by migration and thus would be "naturally" opposed to it, women had to be made to accept migration if family migration as a policy were to succeed. Women were to encourage and accompany those workers who came, and make homes for their families in the reception centres, hostels, garages, caravans and eventually houses in which they were to live and they were not to complain of homesickness. This last, wives' homesickness, has been blamed as a major cause of "unsuccessful" return migration (cf Beijer 1961, Blauw and Elich 1984, Hofstede 1964) or, I would add, it is a "common sense" reason given by informants for returning. Yet, little is known about these women who made family migration possible. They were not negotiated over and are mentioned statistically only as "dependents" and as part of family units. We have some idea about who the men were and why they came - if only in economic terms. The women remain shadowy and incidental figures. With apparently so much to lose, why ever did they come? This is one of the questions I hope to explore in the ethnography to follow.

Summary

Several themes emerge from this chapter, each touching on possible connections between government policy and Dutch identity in Australia and, in particular, how these policies could have resulted in a confused sense of identity on the part of Dutch migrants. This is best summarised, I suggest, by the double meanings associated with assisted migration which, in the case of the Dutch, meant being paid to leave one country and being bought by another, Australia. That is, as a commodity Dutch migrants had both a negative "surplus" value as well as a positive value. As individuals, which were they - in the words of my informant quoted at the beginning of the chapter - "gotten rid of" or "needed"?

One theme arising from this chapter is that of responsibility, or more precisely in terms of my present argument, misplaced responsibility. That is, the Dutch government used organised emigration (just as Australia used assimilationism) to further specific national interests while disavowing responsibility for the consequences of those policies, effectively making the individual migrant responsible for their success or failure. Whereas Dutch emigration had been defined as a personal responsibility, personal and national priorities were merged for the purposes of organised emigration, and as a result emigration became a morally ambiguous act. I argue that this could give rise to confusion about whose responsibility migration was, not because (as the Dutch government suggested) too much was being done for migrants, but because the government itself was confused about the question of responsibility, at some level deliberately so. That is, the government chose to deny responsibility for encouraging,

for its own reasons, people who otherwise might not have migrated. My interest lies in how Dutch migrants handle the question of responsibility for migration; if they distinguish between levels of responsibility, how they apportion credit and blame and so forth.

The problem of responsibility is especially pertinent with regards to subsidies. The whole idea of public subsidisation of emigration ran counter to the idea that emigration was a personal responsibility; nevertheless, the Dutch government used them to encourage and channel Dutch emigration. The original subsidy system managed to incorporate this contradiction by taking away from people everything they possessed in exchange for the subsidy, thus, making people as responsible as they could afford to be for migration. However, as the Dutch economy improved, the incentive to emigrate lessened so in order to stimulate emigration, a more generous subsidy was offered (which also would send Australia more people with capital). As a result virtually everybody, not just the poor and "surplus", could afford the price of the subsidy and Dutch migrants became divided into two categories: the "old" migrants who paid more and were poorer but were judged to be more responsible for their migration, and the "new" ones who paid less, were more prosperous and correspondingly less responsible for their migration. However, both groups have, I suggest, paid for government policy; the first by their "poverty" (and its connotations), the second by being morally suspect, and perhaps ultimately by the way this "difference" has helped to divide Dutch migrants amongst themselves. Based on this, I would infer that "how" (assisted or unassisted) and "when" (under what terms) one

came would be significant features in migration narratives. I would add that "where" one migrated also matters; namely, there is a special stigma attached to being a Dutch migrant in Australia rather than in some other less subsidised destination because Australian migrants were so highly subsidised and, therefore, would be judged as less responsible and valuable than migrants to other countries.

A second theme which also relates to the question of confused identity is that of surrogacy, or being taken as a substitute for what one is not. As surrogate British, Dutch migrants were valued for being "almost" British, and by implication for their special capacity to assimilate, but not for who they were, that is, Dutch migrants. In exchange for this, they received preferential treatment compared to other (non British) migrants in terms of the proportion of Dutch who were assisted and quality of housing. Such an identification suited both the Dutch and Australian governments. For the Dutch government, which drew a clear distinction between Dutch residents and Dutch migrants, it offered a lasting solution to its population problems, assuring Dutch migrants of a favoured position (behind the British) in the immigration queue, and confirming the hope that Dutch migrants would be speedily assimilated into their new homeland and not return to the Netherlands. For Australia, the notion of surrogacy provided a degree of slippage between British and non-British migrants. It meant that when there were not enough British migrants, Dutch migrants could be encouraged without threatening the idea of a "British" Australia, because the Dutch were already "almost" British. However, when it came to matters of precedence,



for example, British migrants needing family accommodation or special financial assistance, the Dutch were still only migrants, who happened to be at the top of the hierarchy because they resembled the British. In this sense, Dutch migrants occupied a sort of "nether" world between the British, to whom they aspired, and other lower status migrants. What are the consequences of such a series of denials for the cultural and personal identities of Dutch migrants in Australia? I would hazard that being different from other migrants, or being assimilated, would be one way out of this dilemma and rather paradoxically of asserting a Dutch identity in Australia.

## FOOTNOTES

- 1 Published by Director of Emigration, for the Minister of Social Affairs (see Bibliography).
- 2 In Australia this was £25 per single person, £30 per head of family and £20 for the first family member and £10 for each successive member (Emigratie 1953:68).
- 3 This was a central plank of Dutch emigration policies ("Second Emigration Memorandum 1952", cited in Emigratie 1954:80; see also Hofstede op cit:91). By spreading migrants over as many countries as possible, the Dutch government avoided becoming overly reliant on any one country as an emigration destination. As already mentioned in my introduction, it also sought to "spread" Dutch migrants within countries partly for economic reasons but also to ensure their rapid assimilation into their new homeland.
- 4 fA = f7.50 (Beltz op cit:46-48).
- 5 Because Australia was a member of the ICEM and shared travel costs, people coming to Australia multiplied their income tax by one and one half. Because of these conditions, migrants going to other countries, except for New Zealand, had to multiply their tax by a factor of three (ibid).
- 6 Between 1948 and 1954, 20,715 agricultural workers left the Netherlands compared to 5,186 for the 1955-61 period. Proportionally, agrarian emigration had declined from 25% of total emigration in 1951 to 6% in 1961 (Hofstede op cit:164).
- 7 Only 6.4% Dutch migrants in Australia were agrarian workers compared to 32% in Canada (Beltz op cit:63-64).
- 8 As Hofstede notes (op cit:170) this is how employers and industrialists saw emigration, while "intellectuals" (as opposed to "scientific" sociologists) considered that the poorest types emigrated.
- 9 This would have also been due to the fact that during this period Canada was the primary destination for Dutch migrants.
- 10 The "first" with a non-British government according to the Australian Financial Review May 25, 1968, although assisted passages were also signed with Malta in 1948 and Italy in 1951, both "southern" nations.
- 11 It was not until 1957 that hostel accommodation was made officially available to northern Europeans, Dutch and German migrants (IAC 1957).

- 12 "Landing permit" migrants were not assisted by the Australian government. They came independently and had to furnish proof of suitable housing and employment in Australia. As a rule they tended to be single people with friends or relatives already in Australia who would act as their sponsors for the first two years. Some were sponsored by religious organisations such as the Pater Maas Scheme or unilaterally by the Netherlands Government (which I discuss later in this section).
- 13 Beltz himself was an emigration officer in the Netherlands during this period.
- 14 The Dutch government was concerned that such a programme not be limited to one religious group (zuil) as this would be seen as discriminatory by other groups in the Netherlands, and eventually Presbyterian and Calvinist sponsorship schemes were set up although they were not agriculturally oriented (Emigratie 1954).
- 15 The NAMA work contract was a bone of contention with Dutch spokespersons in Australia (Beltz op cit:104) as well as with the Dutch government. It remained unpopular but was only abrogated by Australia in 1959 in an effort to increase flagging immigration numbers (IPC 1959).
- 16 By 1954, 88.1% of all Dutch migrants travelling to Australia were assisted compared to an average of 70% (Beltz op cit:47,108a).
- 17 I can find no evidence to support this assertion, because the statistical material is organised under very wide categories (agrarian workers, miscellaneous etc). Nevertheless the general consensus among Dutch people seems to be that Australia was an "easy" place to get into, where "quantity" rather than "quality" mattered (cf Wijnen 1983c). (This is taken up in the summary.)
- 18 The cost of the new scheme was split three instead of two ways with the ICEM becoming the third partner. Funded largely by the US, this was done according to the Dutch Minister for Social Affairs for strategic reasons, to populate "under-populated" Australia (Emigratie 1955:78), which was as I note in Chapter I was one of Australia's main reasons for encouraging European immigration.
- 19 For a variation on this theme see Wijnen (1983d).
- 20 In Emigratie (1959:45-70).

- 21 Between 1960-81, 25,105 Dutch migrants have come to Australia (based on period of residence statistics, Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs 1983, Table 3) and Elich reports (1985:18) that from 1982-84 3,723 Dutch have migrated to Australia (Netherlands Emigration Bureau Statistics).
- 22 42.5% of Dutch migrants were 0-14 years of age compared to 25.7% of all post-war migrants (ABS figures cited in Emigratie 1957:30).
- 23 Indeed, Hofstede (op cit:65) quotes Steigenga who argued that the emigration of adults with small children should be encouraged as a way of solving future unemployment problems.

## CHAPTER IV

### LITERATURE REVIEW: DUTCH ASSIMILATION IN AUSTRALIA

By accepting the Dutch as model immigrants, scholars, like government authorities, have accepted stereotypes for typology, generalisations for nuanced truth. (Harney 1983:ix)

During the 1950's immigrants were expected to assimilate into the Australian way of life (see Chapter I); they were to become "invisible" as quickly as possible. The Dutch as northern Europeans were considered to be highly desirable as immigrants, because, even though they were not quite British, they were "more like us" and thus were more assimilable than, for example, southern Europeans. These expectations were, it seems, soon realised for within a few short years of their arrival, Dutch assimilation was being documented by the research literature (cf Beltz 1964; Gough 1963; Hempel 1960; Lodewyckx 1956; Price 1960; Taft 1961, 1965; Zubrzycki 1964) as well as in the pages of Emigratie (see below). Later, their children's successful assimilation was also documented (cf de Jonge, personal communication; Harvey 1970; and Wiseman 1974). Overall, the Dutch were found to be less assimilated than the British but more assimilated than other non-British migrants, comparisons which confirmed the traditional hierarchy of "whiteness" (see Chapter I). And even now, when assimilation is no longer government policy, their reputation for assimilation largely endures, constituting I argue a cultural knowledge about the kind of people

the Dutch are (as well as the kind of place Australia is). Otherwise, other than as a test case for government policies and in comparison to other migrant groups, the Dutch are little known. This chapter surveys the evidence for Dutch assimilation - their geographic distribution, intermarriage, return migration and naturalisation, language shift, religious distribution and their low level of communal organisation - and argues that this identity masks a more complex reality, aspects of which are explored here and in later chapters.<sup>1</sup>

#### Geographic Distribution

From the early days of Dutch immigration to Australia, Dutch migrants have been found to be geographically well distributed. They have not settled in large numbers in particular states or regions in Australia (Beltz 1964, Cox 1975, Emigratie 1954:28), they are generally less residentially concentrated than most non-British migrant groups (excluding Germans, Burnley in Cox op cit:98) and unlike other migrant groups such as Italians and Greeks, which tend to live in the urban centres, approximately one third of Dutch migrants live in the country, which is the Australian norm (Elich 1985:12).

The widespread geographic distribution of Dutch migrants is generally taken as an indicator of their assimilation into Australia (cf Cox op cit), when in fact very little is known about factors influencing Dutch settlement patterns in Australia. I would argue that their distribution reflects, at least in part, the history of Dutch migration to Australia (as opposed to their assimilation). Certainly this is evident in local concentrations

of Dutch migrants in industrial centres such as Geelong and Woolongong, towns like Albury-Wodonga which adjoined large migrant camps such as Bonegilla and dairy farming areas in Victoria (Beltz op cit:143, Elich op cit:13). These were areas where Dutch migrants could find work and some sort of housing, and presumably later arrivals could join friends and relatives already established there. However, I would suggest that the widespread distribution of Dutch migrants is also related to their migration history in that, as I have discussed in previous chapters, almost all Dutch migrants (unlike other non-British migrants) received government assistance from either the Netherlands or, in most cases, from both governments through the Netherlands Australia Migration Agreement. This entailed being directed to particular parts of Australia where government housing and employment were available. In this sense, most Dutch migrants had very little choice about where they settled in Australia at least initially, and I suspect that for many arriving in Australia with young families (Dutch migration being primarily "family" migration,<sup>2</sup> see Chapter III) the cost of moving elsewhere would have been prohibitive. As well, it was the Netherlands stated policy to "spread" Dutch migrants across and within countries (Hofstede 1964). According to Rose (in Beltz op cit:145) one of the reasons for doing this was to discourage the development of Dutch "ethnic" enclaves in immigration countries such as Australia.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, unlike other migrant groups such as Italians and Greeks, the Dutch have not congregated in inner city neighbourhoods (or "ghettos") but have tended to live in outer, semi-rural suburbs where land is less expensive and there is room

to have a vegetable garden and some animals (Beltz op cit:161, Cox 1975, Hempel 1960:18). Unikoski (op cit:142) refers to these outer suburban areas as "Dutch" belts, which I think is an apt reference, because where they live represents at least in part a cultural choice that is consistent with a "Dutch" orientation towards housing and family life which stresses "privacy, concern for respectability, orderliness, discretion, seclusiveness" (Goudsblom 1967:139). In these leafy, quiet, relatively inexpensive areas they can achieve this genteel lifestyle.<sup>4</sup> And so, because they have not conformed to the traditional "migrant" way of living as extended families in crowded urban living, these Dutch settlers have been less obviously "visible" and are judged to be assimilated.

#### Inter-marriage

Marrying outside of one's ethnic groups has long been taken as a significant negative indicator of ethnic cohesion, that is, the breakdown of cultural boundaries and norms and as an indicator of assimilation when it involves marrying into the dominant culture particularly in terms of the children resulting from such "mixed" marriages. Certainly, this is how out-marriage or inter-marriage has been seen in Australian research (see Wilton and Bosworth 1984:123). Compared to other non-British migrants in Australia, the Dutch have married "out" at a consistently high rate<sup>5</sup> (between 1947-1960 57.7% of first generation Dutch men and 38.3% of Dutch women married non-Dutch partners compared, for example, to 33.8% Italian men and 9.6% of Italian women. Between 1974-1978, the proportions were 91.5% and 87.4% (respectively) for first



generation Dutch men and women compared to 62.9% and 34.4% for Italian-born men and women. During the same period, the proportion marrying Australian-born partners has steadily increased from 44.5% of first generation men and 20.2% of women (1947-1960) to 72.6% and 63.0% respectively (1974-78), which is as high or, in some cases, even higher than the figures for British-born migrants and certainly well above those for southern European migrants. However, it is worth noting that during the 1947-78 period almost one fifth of Dutch men and one quarter of Dutch women have married members of other migrant groups (well above the proportions for British and Australian-born populations). Indeed, the proportion of Dutch migrants marrying other migrants has increased over this period.<sup>6</sup>

What do such marriage patterns actually mean for the transmission of Dutch culture in Australia? Because of the general belief that Dutch culture will not survive the first generation, let alone be passed onto the second, this question has attracted little research interest. What research there is on Dutch families (Clyne 1977b, Pauwels 1980 and Wiseman 1974) is based largely on survey methods (primarily members' self reports), methods which are inadequate to understand such complex processes. All three studies point to very little Dutch language use in Dutch families and a low level of involvement in Dutch "ethnic" organisations (compared to other migrant groups). Pauwels' research (op cit), which is concerned with the question of in and out marriage, finds that language use is affected by mixed marriages. Whereas the home seems to be the last place where Dutch is spoken (see later section), Pauwels concludes that Dutch

is not spoken in homes where only one partner is Dutch. Interestingly, it would appear that this is enforced in some cases by the Dutch spouse; Australian wives being more interested in the Dutch language than their Dutch husbands (op cit:144).

#### Return Migration and Naturalisation

As I have mentioned in my overview of ethnic studies in Australia, the increasing rate of migrant departures in the 1960's combined with a drop in arrivals, especially amongst British and northern European migrants, served to disturb public complacency about the success of government immigration programmes. In particular, they challenged the widely held belief that migrants were being assimilated into Australia and, furthermore, that these people (Britons and northern Europeans) were inherently assimilable. The consequences of this were that the government started to look further "south" and "east" for suitable migrants, and migrants became defined as people with problems (see Chapter I).

Dutch migrants certainly conformed to this disturbing pattern. Jupp goes so far as to characterise them as "reluctant to come and very inclined to leave" (1966:118). By 1966, 18% of Dutch settlers arriving since 1947 (approximately 22,000) had left Australia; this is similar to British departure rates and well above the rate of departure of 13% for the supposedly less assimilable Italians (see Price in Martin 1978:31). Why were so many "assimilable" and "assimilated" Dutch leaving Australia? In their 1984 study<sup>7</sup> of Dutch return migration Blauw and Elich come to the interesting conclusion (interesting in light of how the

Dutch have been defined) that "culture shock" was a major factor:

Even though the countries of immigration are superficially similar to the Netherlands ... there were enough nuances in the conduct of everyday life which our returnees found difficult to adjust to ... The open friendliness displayed was often difficult to translate into genuine friendship. As one respondent put it: "Australians are friendly but they don't like to make friends". ( m y emphasis, op cit:231).

Many of my informants who have elected to remain in Australia have voiced similar complaints about Australians in almost identical terms, that is to say, they feel that they have no close Australian friends or that Australians do not want their friendship. This suggests to me that significant cultural differences between Dutch and Australian people are being tapped regarding friendship and intimacy, and that in some subjective ways disaffected returnees are not so very different from "successful" migrants; both groups experience "culture shock" in Australia. As well, this casts doubt on the usefulness of "settler loss" statistics as a measure of the degree of success of migration programmes, that is, as a measure of assimilation.

If "settler loss" was seen as the failure of government policies of migrant assimilation, then naturalisation was the ultimate, visible goal of these policies "sealing the act of assimilation" (Jupp 1966:145) - and here again Dutch migrants proved disappointing (Jupp op cit:130). Compared to other migrant groups, the Dutch have been relatively slow to change their citizenship; especially compared to those from east European countries, many of whom would have been refugees or no longer have a country to return to.<sup>8</sup> The Dutch, on the other hand, as

"voluntary" migrants may well see no compelling reason, in the words of some informants, to "renounce" their Queen in favour of a British Queen. Others, in receipt of the Dutch pension, would forfeit it if they became Australian citizens. People give a variety of reasons for not taking out Australian citizenship. Beltz (op cit:297-301) discusses some of the many personal reasons people have or at least are prepared to articulate. I suspect that the reasons for taking out citizenship are just as mixed, as inchoate, as for not becoming Australian citizens; for example, wanting to have the same citizenship as their children, their spouse decided to so they thought they might as well, it was more convenient while travelling overseas if the entire family had the "same" passport and so forth. Clearly, as Jupp argues (ibid), naturalisation is no measure of assimilation. As several informants have remarked to me, becoming an Australian citizen does not stop you from being a migrant.

#### Occupational Distribution

You can't help meeting Dutch everywhere in Australia.

With this comment Emigratie (1959:68) goes on to list all the various occupations where Dutch migrants can be found: as interpreters, airline employees, taxi drivers, hotel waiters and so forth. The message being conveyed is that Dutch migrants have found all kinds of occupational opportunities in Australia, and that on the whole they have done very well for themselves. This is stressed throughout Emigratie; it is an essential feature of the Dutch view of their success story, that is, if nothing else

they have done well for themselves materially. This is also, as I argued in my Introduction, how Australians "see" the Dutch - as materialistic, hardworking, successful people.

I would suggest that the Dutch success story (like most success stories) is more myth than reality, and that the real message is that the Dutch have done well considering that they are migrants, compared to other non-British migrants although not compared to British migrants or Australians generally. Dutch men like non-British migrants generally were brought out to Australia to do skilled and semi-skilled work in large industrial and construction projects (see Chapter III) and so were not to be assimilated into the Australian labour force generally. As the following statistics indicate, there they and their children have largely remained, bringing into question the supposed assimilation of not only the first but the second generation:

Table 4.1 MEN EMPLOYED AS TRADESMEN, PRODUCTION WORKERS OR LABOURERS  
(as a % of birthplace group in the Labour Force)

<u>FIRST GENERATION</u> <sup>i</sup>	<u>SECOND GENERATION</u> (15-29 years) <sup>ii</sup>		
	BOTH PARENTS	MOTHER	FATHER
Overseas born	48.0		
Netherlands	44.4	53.6	52.9
Germany	49.8	57.9	48.5
Italy	59.4	47.0	44.7
Greece	54.2	38.1	42.0
Australia	37.0	45.2	

i based on Australia, Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, n.d. (d), Table 1.

ii based on ABS 1983c.

Because most second generation Dutch would have been born since 1951 (when Dutch immigration started in earnest) second

generation Dutch are by definition a "young" group; 93.1% of those in the workforce are between 15 and 29 years compared to 39.6% of those with Australian-born parents. Therefore, I have compared the 15-29 years age group in the workforce, rather than the entire workforce, on the assumption that their relative youthfulness would affect their employment. What these figures suggest is that like the previous generation, second generation Dutch are concentrated in the blue collar, trades sector. It would also seem that, while Italian and Greek migrants have been more concentrated in this sector than Dutch migrants, their children are moving out of this occupational area at a faster rate than second generation Dutch.

Overberg (1984b) argues, based on his Melbourne study, that many Dutch migrants have actually experienced downward mobility in Australia. However, 70 of his 100 informants are women and he does not distinguish outcome according to sex. The drop in occupational status may be due more to sex related factors such as the effects of marriage and children on women's career paths than on emigration alone. There is some evidence that middle class, educated Dutch migrants have been disadvantaged because of migration. According to Beltz (op cit:181) many men who were professionals or administrators in the Netherlands (mainly in the civil service) have not found similar work in Australia, and as a result have gone into real estate and insurance sales. This has been the experience of several of my informants also, and I would say that such men have experienced a drop in status in terms of work security and prestige. On the other hand, I have interviewed men who were unskilled workers in the Netherlands who found work

here as skilled tradesmen - house painters, brick layers and gardeners - because these were jobs Dutch were considered by Australians to be "expert" in.<sup>9</sup>

It is the differential outcomes of migration which intrigue me, and the way those outcomes are so visibly (materially) scrambled, especially for people who, I argue, hold themselves responsible for those outcomes and who have been taught to measure their value as migrants in material terms (see Chapter III). Furthermore, I would argue that tradesmen constitute a kind of working class élite amongst the Dutch, because of the way they were selected for by Australia and because of their relative economic success. This would tend to engender class jealousies and conflict amongst Dutch migrants as it flouts the traditional status hierarchy (an integral part of the verzuiling system). This is one reason, I suspect, why middle class Dutch avoid Dutch clubs which, I am told, are largely run by successful tradesmen. (This point is developed in the section on Dutch community life in Australia.)

#### Language Shift

The Dutch, it seems, are famous for not letting their language "get in the way" of getting ahead in Australia. Dutch settlers' rapid adoption of English has been repeatedly documented (cf Clyne 1982, Harvey 1970, Lodewyckx 1956, Lucas 1955, Nijenhuis 1967, Pauwels 1980, Unikoski 1978, Wiseman 1974, Zubrzycki 1964). Indeed, Zubrzycki (op cit:130-1) found that almost all his Dutch informants in his La Trobe Valley study were actually opposed to their children being taught the Dutch language. The general

consensus amongst researchers seems to be that the shift to English was a rational and, therefore, easy decision on the part of Dutch migrants. Harvey (1970) finds that most informants preferred to speak English so as to improve their children's educational chances (a decision made by many of my informants; see Chapter VII) while Unikoski (op cit:161) suggests, in a rather emotive fashion, that their "unusually early abandonment and corruption of their native language"<sup>10</sup> (my emphasis) reflects Dutch realism and pragmatism or "Dutch character". Pauwels (op cit:215) concludes that the Dutch language is of 'peripheral' cultural significance to the Dutch, being less important, for example, than "family life", and thus is easily sacrificed.<sup>11</sup>

Notwithstanding, some research has been done which suggests that the Dutch language has not been entirely lost. Older Dutch like older migrants generally are speaking less English and are reverting back to Dutch (Clyne 1977a, 1982), and Dutch is still being spoken, to some extent, within Dutch families (Clyne 1977b). In his study of 40 Dutch families living in the Dandenong Ranges and the La Trobe Valley, Clyne (ibid) finds that in over half the families interviewed they speak Dutch or a mixture of Dutch and English to each other, but are only half as likely to speak Dutch to their children. It is half as likely again that their children will answer in Dutch and children generally speak English to each other. Clyne concludes that, like many migrant languages, Dutch is a "grandmother" language, that is, the presence of older Dutch speakers, especially grandparents, is the most important factor determining language maintenance (cf Harvey 1970). It would appear that Dutch speaking parents are not "enough" to ensure more



than a passive understanding of Dutch on the part of their children, presumably because these parents understand and accept English from their children, and do not insist that they speak Dutch.

Distancing himself from the idea of Dutch language learning and Dutch language maintenance assured the Dutch migrant of his privileged position as a well integrated, assimilated migrant among Australians. (Pauwels op cit:170)

I would agree here with Pauwels, that Dutch linguistic behaviour should be understood as a reflexive act vis-à-vis an Australian audience rather than as a character trait. That is, speaking English may, in some situations, be a symbol of Dutchness and of being a successful migrant, compared to all those "other" migrants who cannot speak proper English. There are other situations where speaking Dutch well is valued as an identity marker (however, if one cannot speak good Dutch, it would be preferable to speak English). I suspect that differential language use in Dutch families is related to these different definitions as to who is Dutch and who is Australian, in particular how Australian/assimilated one's children should be (see Chapter VII).

#### Religious Distribution in Australia

Table 4.2 RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION OF DUTCH MIGRANTS IN AUSTRALIA (IN %)<sup>i</sup>

DENOMINATION	1961	1971	1981	NATIONAL AVERAGE
Roman Catholic	40.4	38.5	34.2	25.3
Church of England	2.8	2.9	3.3	28.2
Presbyterian	14.4	11.4	7.3	4.8
Uniting Church			3.0	5.9
(Free) Reformed <sup>ii</sup>	2.8	4.2	6.0	5.7
No religion/unknown	27.6	30.8	37.5	20.8

- i Based on ABS (1961a, 1961b, 1974a, 1974b, 1983a, 1983b).
- ii Classified as "Protestant other" in the Census.

Unlike other migrant groups such as Italians or Greeks, Dutch migrants in Australia do not belong to a single "ethnic" church nor to a particular religious denomination; they are "distributed" between the Catholic and Protestant churches. Indeed, their sole distinguishing feature appears to be the very high proportion of Dutch migrants who report that they belong to no church or give no answer at all (37.5%, which is almost twice the Australian average).

Their religious heterogeneity and low level of religious affiliation are generally interpreted as indicating how unimportant religion is to Dutch migrants,<sup>12</sup> and by implication how assimilated and assimilable the Dutch are; traditional religious loyalties do not get in the way of their getting ahead in Australia (Cox 1975, Unikoski 1978). Such a view simplifies what is really a very complicated situation. It ignores the fact that since 1961 virtually no Dutch migrants have belonged to the Church of England, still the largest and most dominant church in Australia, and that in the same time period approximately fifteen per cent of Dutch Catholics have left the Catholic Church - and judging from the above figures - do not go to any church in Australia. It also ignores the key role played by the verzuiling system in Dutch migration to Australia (see Chapter III) and its ongoing role in Dutch socio-religious life in Australia (Elich 1985, Overberg 1981), which I shall now discuss.

To reiterate, Australia was the main destination for Catholic Dutch leaving the Netherlands. The Dutch Catholic Church took an

active role in emigration and Dutch migration chaplains accompanied migrants to Australia. However, on their arrival in Australia, like Dutch migrants the chaplains were expected to fit in or assimilate and not retain any separate "ethnic" identity in the Church.<sup>13</sup> As Overberg (1981) recounts this set the stage for disaffection and tension within the Catholic Church on the part of both Dutch clergy and parishioners. For many Dutch migrants, the Australian Catholic Church is very different from the Church they knew in the Netherlands; informants tell me that it was the overwhelming "Irishness" which struck them most forcibly. Some never did feel that they belonged in the Australian Catholic Church and eventually left; certainly a significant proportion of people who left the Netherlands registered as Roman Catholic did leave the Church in Australia. As early as 1952 concern was being expressed in the Netherlands over the fact that 60% of unmarried non-agrarian emigrants in Perth had left the Church (Hofstede 1967:129).

Nevertheless, migration and assimilationism cannot be entirely blamed for this situation. Clearly, some would have been nominal Catholics before they left the Netherlands. This is borne out by the fact that only about 40% of Catholic Dutch coming to Australia were registered with the Catholic emigration office (Beltz 1964:43). According to Hofstede (op cit:111-113) these people tended to be less traditional in their religious behaviour, and presumably would have been more likely to leave the Church whether or not they emigrated. In the intervening years, many Catholics have left both the Dutch and Australian Churches; indeed, several informants have said that they only decided to stop going to

Church after discovering that their once devout families in the Netherlands had left the Church. As one woman put it:

Nobody goes to Church anymore. My family still goes but his family doesn't ... So I was there and I stopped going too. We were there for three months so when I came home I thought "what's the use?". I still believe - but I go to Church when I feel like it. (speaker's emphasis)

Despite pressure to assimilate, several Catholic Dutch organisations have come into existence in Australia (one might say that they are a reaction to the assimilationist pressures). Several thousand Catholic Dutch farming families were brought out to Australia through a sponsorship scheme set up in 1952 and administered by Father Maas, a Dutch-migration chaplain in Melbourne (see Chapter III regarding private sponsorship programmes). In the early 1960's the Catholic Dutch Migration Association (CDMA) was established in several centres in conjunction with local Dutch migration chaplains. Relations with the Australian Catholic Church have been predictably somewhat strained because (by its very existence) the CDMA challenges the Church's assimilationist policies. Originally the CDMA was set up to meet the needs of young migrants, but with the virtual cessation of Dutch immigration and the "ageing" of the Dutch migrant population the CDMA has involved itself in the "Dutch aged" issue. However, the CDMA speaks for Catholic Dutch, not for all Dutch (a problem which besets many Dutch organisations; see next section). This became an issue when the Melbourne CDMA's application for government funding was turned down because it represented only a sector of the Dutch "community", and because the Dutch were too well "settled in", that is assimilated, to need

"ethnic" funding (Hearst 1981:76-7). More pressure was exerted on the government through a series of public "community" meetings, thereby refuting the claim that the CDMA was not community based. A joint application with the non-denominational associated Netherlands Societies representing a federation of social clubs was eventually successful.

In 1981 Census Protestant Dutch comprised about one fifth of the Netherlands born population (roughly their 1961 size; see above). They are broken up into two main groups—one half who originally would have belonged to the Netherlands state church, the middle-of-the-road Hervormde Kerk, who now belong to the Presbyterian Church (later the Uniting Church although some separate Presbyterian congregations still exist) and one third, who belong to the Reformed and Free Reformed churches, who have come primarily from the more orthodox Gereformeerde churches in the Netherlands.

Those who joined the Presbyterian Church in Australia faced many of the same pressures to assimilate as the Catholics, but they were in a sense even more beleaguered, having, in fact, also lost their nominal identity (Overberg 1981). Since 1961, the proportion of Dutch in the Presbyterian/Uniting Church has dropped by about one third. Some left these churches for the Free Reformed and Reformed Church, and others simply stopped going to church at all. Among their number would be those liberal Protestants who like liberal Catholics belonged to the "humanist" zuil.

Originally the Reformed Church was closely linked to the Dutch Gereformeerde Kerk, and a majority of its members still are Dutch

(Overberg op cit:31).<sup>14</sup> However, the Reformed Church defines itself as an evangelical Australian church, not as what it would see as an introspective "ethnic" church (Wilkinson n.d.). Accordingly, church services are conducted in English, because it is an Australian church and because it wants to attract and convert English-speaking Australians (including second generation Dutch). In other less tangible ways, the Reformed Church in Australia has remained a Dutch church. Church members speak more Dutch at home than do other Dutch migrants (Beltz op cit:242, Pauwels 1980). As a group it is highly clannish, similar to the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerk (Zubrzycki op cit:292) and also, I think, in the emphasis it places on being "assimilated" rather than different (see Overberg op cit:30-31 on the paradoxical character of the "Dutch" Reformed Church).<sup>15</sup>

The Free Reformed Church is a separatist Dutch church whose 2,000 members came mainly in series of chain migrations to Australia, settling in Albany WA, Armidale NSW and Launceston Tasmania (cf Watt 1980). Like the Reformed Church, its interests and membership are quite removed from other churches and other Dutch migrants (Elich 1985). That is, its members do not patronise Dutch social clubs, because of all the gambling, drinking and hilarity which goes on inside their walls. As well, neither church is interested in fostering a generalised Dutch identity in Australia, religious priorities and theological differences being far more important than any kind of ethnic identity.

I would first like to mention that religion is but one dimension in the Dutch verzuiling system. The others are social class and political power, and they have also played a role in the situation of Dutch migrants in Australia, in particular, the absence of a unified Dutch community. In the Netherlands, each of the zuilen incorporate all the social classes and it is the élites within the zuilen which span group differences and serve to integrate the system (Moberg 1961:333-334). However, these traditional élites with their integrative functions seem to be almost entirely absent in Australia. I say this because almost all the Dutch who came to Australia travelled with government assistance (see Chapter III), which would indicate that they were mainly poor and working class and, by definition, did not come from the élite groups. As I have earlier argued (see Chapter I on migrants and social class in Australia), their working class, non élite status would only have been re-affirmed in Australia. Whereas in the Netherlands church membership provided people with at least indirect access to political/economic power, in Australia it would have been a reminder of their low status as migrants. This may be another reason why so many Dutch in Australia left both the Catholic and Presbyterian churches.

The only zuil which seems to have retained any of its integrative functions are the Catholic Dutch who, although they have been incorporated into the Australian Catholic Church, retain some separate identity chiefly through the CDMA. Presumably, this has come about partly through the sheer weight of numbers combined with the presence of Dutch migration chaplains in Australia. However, by definition, the Catholic zuil cannot alone claim to

speak for all Dutch (as the case of the Melbourne CDMA illustrated; see above). It remains to be seen, I suggest, if the Catholic zuil can strike an enduring alliance with the secular Dutch social clubs, which may comprise a loosely defined secular zuil, and if together they can convince their Dutch constituency and Australian audience that they speak for a unified Dutch community in Australila. Nevertheless, I would argue that so far the partial breakdown of the verzuiling system has contributed to Dutch "invisibility" rather than identity in Australia; partial in the sense that Dutch migrants are still divided by religious difference but also because the connection between group affiliation and power has largely disappeared.

#### Community Organisations

Dutch societies generally are not prospering, which may partly be seen as evidence of how rapidly the Dutch are being absorbed into Australian society. (Emigratie 1955:20, my translation)

It is typical, a Dutchman affiliate better in this community - the best they say of all the migrants. Well they can't form their own community. They can't keep een bond between their own community. (informant)

Another truism about the Dutch in Australia is they do not support their own community organisations, their clubs, newspapers, choral societies and so forth, and that as a result these organisations are weak, ephemeral and ridden with factionalism (cf Beltz 1964, Unikoski 1978, Zubrzycki 1964). A perennial complaint of the leadership and members is that there is too much in-fighting and not enough co-operation in Dutch organisations. As the previous quotations illustrate, their



disaffection with each other is seen as both cause and symbol of their assimilation; like assimilability, avoiding other Dutch has become another "Dutch" trait.

So how does one explain the frequently reported phenomenon that Dutch people's closest friends tend to be other Dutch and that they have made few intimate Australian friends? (cf Overberg 1984, Pauwels 1980, Jupp 1966.) Certainly this is what many of my informants have said to me. At the same time, I would agree with Unikoski's comment (op cit:165) that many Dutch immigrants have looked "deliberately to Australians for friendship" (my emphasis), because (I would say) they saw it as part of being assimilated. But for many this has not happened, which some see as a kind of mutual failure. Conversely Dutch informants have often been at pains to explain that their friends "happen" to be Dutch; that is not why they are friends. On one level, this is quite an accurate statement. It is our uneducated, outsider's viewpoint that would assume that being Dutch is a sufficient basis for friendship. An informant expressed her position thus when I asked if her friends were Dutch:

You see (laugh) I don't care one bit to meet the people here that I wouldn't care meeting in Holland anyhow. My friends, yes, my good friends are Dutch people, yes. (speaker's emphasis)

These disclaimers also reveal, I think, a discomfort about such selectivity; that it might offend Australians who are mistrustful of any sort of ethnic exclusivity. It serves the same protective function as Dutch migrants insisting that they would never speak Dutch in the presence of Australians, although, of course, this does happen accidentally and intentionally (for example, when

something private is being communicated).

Certainly most Dutch do not belong to Dutch clubs. Estimates of participation range from less than one per cent (Unikoski op cit:137) to ten per cent to 15% of all Dutch immigrants (Pauwels op cit, Elich op cit). Participation seems to increase with age (cf Bell 1981). Overberg (1984:27) reports that 27.65% of Dutch migrants in Victoria aged between 60 and 70 years belong to Dutch clubs. I would estimate that roughly one quarter of Dutch migrants in Canberra belong to the Canberra Dutch Club. Such statistics, however, tell us nothing about relative involvement in the clubs. Only a small minority it seems regularly visit such clubs; most only go once or twice a year to special nights such as the national Queen's Day festivities and St Nicholas celebrations. I have been told by informants that this is because the Dutch are not "club"-oriented; they prefer to do their entertaining and celebrating at home with their families. Goudsblom (1967:137) makes a similar observation "that the Dutch seek comfort, first of all in the family, that they cherish the private rather than the public sphere". (This theme is developed at greater length in relation to the "Dutch home" in subsequent chapters.)

The number of members involved in running the clubs is smaller again, which also seems to cause problems. Various informants have said that Dutch clubs tend to be "one man shows", run by small cliques, and that - again - this is "typically Dutch":

So you had committees which were looked upon as, by some as good workers, by others, as bloody upstarts or "what do they know?" Or "they're putting it in their own pocket". The distrust was incredible, really incredible ... That's a very strong thing. I think that's particularly Dutch. They only trust themselves and then only when the lights are off and doors

shut (laugh). (informant, speaker's emphasis)

This "distrust" tends to lead to long standing feuds and a rapid turn-over of leadership, weakening such clubs as many highly capable (but defeated) leaders "disappear" from the club and many of those who remain, suspicious of the new leadership and of each other.<sup>16</sup> However, this distrust is not endemic to the Dutch "character", I suggest, it is a reaction to the difficult position such clubs find themselves in, which I shall now summarise.

Where there are two Dutchmen there are three clubs.

Get three of them together [the Dutch] and they disagree on politics, religion and clubs.

(informants)<sup>17</sup>

Dutch clubs as "ethnic" clubs try to avoid socio-religious differences, and thus to serve and represent a unified Dutch community which, as I have earlier argued, does not exist. The clubs themselves, which are officially non-denominational, are in fact part of the verzuiling system, if indirectly, in terms of which groups do not belong to them, orthodox Protestants and the educated élite. Orthodox Protestants avoid them, primarily because such clubs are secular organisations, which not only permit but make a profit from gambling and drinking. Similarly the educated élite, I am told, feel that they have "nothing in common" with the clubs' mainly working class clientele. Some do act as club patrons and attend special events; however, my impression is that the active club leadership is not drawn from their numbers (see also Elich op cit:27). These élites have set up their own exclusive clubs in most larger Australian cities - Brisbane, Perth, Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney (cf Elich op cit:27,

Unikoski op cit:181-185). Generally they do not wish to be identified with the majority of working class Dutch migrants (and vice versa). Such splintering along class lines is symptomatic of what I described (above) as the partial dissolution of the verzuiling system. As a result, Dutch social clubs have had to align themselves with "established religious blocs" (Overberg 1981:19), and it is my impression that these have primarily been the Catholic groups.

However, by endeavouring at the same time to set themselves above sectarian differences, Dutch clubs are perceived as trying to take on the traditional role of the élites. This is one reason, I presume, why there is so much distrust of club leadership. Other Dutch, in and outside of the clubs, tend not to recognise the explicit and implicit status claims of a leadership drawn primarily from successful tradesmen rather than the educated middle class because, while they might be financially well off, they are still essentially working class. "Who do they think they are?" The club leadership are seen as putting on airs - talking above their station, entertaining the Dutch ambassador, attending embassy functions, pretending to represent the Dutch community (which, in any case, does not exist) - when their "betters", that is the educated élite, should by rights be performing this role. One informant expressed the feeling thus:

They put it on themselves, It's the way they spoke and you listen to them and you go "you come from there, you shouldn't speak like that" (laugh) ... They probably felt that they were above their station somehow ... (speaker's emphasis)

Participation rates are somewhat misleading because they

indicate only how many Dutch belong to Dutch clubs at a particular point in time, whereas a much higher proportion have belonged at some time to these clubs. The president of one such club (quoted in Zubrzycki op cit:153-154) says that this discrepancy is due to their rapid assimilation, "It takes approximately two years for a Dutch family to settle in and once they get settled in they join Australian clubs and associations". While this may be true in some cases, it is my impression that some Dutch decide to leave these clubs because of the conflict, often because they have been on the losing side in some struggle, and afterwards refuse to become involved again in club life. Whether or not there is more conflict in Dutch clubs than in other ethnic clubs generally, I cannot say. (However, I doubt it.) Their histories are certainly complicated and colourful, with a rapid succession of leaders, allegations of corruption, name changes and so forth. At the same time - and this is sometimes lost sight of - there is the excitement and sheer involvement of such conflict for people who pride themselves on their argumentation and the seriousness of their opinions.

This behaviour has been labelled as Dutch arrogance or rudeness (see Introduction). A number of second generation Dutch have commented on how much their own parents enjoy criticising and fighting with other Dutch; behaviour which - again - could be mistaken for a dislike of other Dutch but which is, I suggest, something quite different:

There's nothing like the Dutch as far as he is concerned ... but the minute they're not there I find him talking about them in critical terms ... too scroogeey with his money ... or too dirty in the house. Silly things, to my way of thinking.

Such pettiness, if it is to be effective, is based on an intimate knowledge of each other, and an ability to contain antagonism and "play" with it, which the daughter quoted above does not entirely understand.

They play cards and they run each other down - from what my mother tells me: I hate it! I tell Mum I feel like a referee or like - a manager of a boxer ... She tells me all these horrible things that they say to each other when they play cards ... One of the ladies there won't talk to Mum unless she has to, and tells Mum that she is an old whinger. (my emphasis)

This second informant goes on to say how her mother has known these people for a very long time and how important such relationships are to her. They know each other so well, their histories go way back. What horrifies my informant is how much her mother looks forward to evening the verbal "score", and saying something more horrible back. Her comment that she is "like a referee" to her mother is very apt; her mother is playing an enthralling social game which she does not entirely understand or like. The daughter finds her mother's "brawling" embarrassing because it is so petty, but also because what is said, by people who have known each other for so long, is so "close to the bone". Her mother probably is an old whinger, sometimes. Such insults tread unerringly on cultural and personal sore points for Dutch migrants, - cleanliness, stinginess, being a whinging migrant - and here, with other Dutch migrants, they are an acceptable part of social discourse.

The crux of the matter, I think, is such "brawling" is embarrassing because of what non-Dutch might think if they knew

about it (and of course they do). During an excruciatingly public fight in the Adelaide Netherlands Society, over the control of the club and the club's substantial assets, a Dutch observer complained:

We've been made a bit of a laughing stock. No matter how fairly the Press reports the events the inference is that Dutch people are unable to settle their problems amicably. Our reputation as a people that fit in easily to this society and work diligently is also being questioned. (my emphasis)<sup>18</sup>

The Dutch are made to look like brawlers and buffoons, but more importantly their reputation as assimilators is harmed. Why would this be so? Because, I suggest, that it draws attention to the Dutch as a corporate group, with a separate history of its own, however stormy, whereas the Dutch "typically" have been represented as a collectivity of individuals rushing headlong towards assimilation. Indeed, argues Martin (1981b:44-45), although migrants may not understand assimilationism in its entirety, what they do share is:

the conviction that official policy and individual behaviour towards migrants were explicable only in terms of distaste for cultural differences and a fear of ethnic organisation. (my emphasis)

And, I suggest, none would have known this better than the Dutch, who have explicitly defined themselves as assimilable and as people who do not seek out each other's company.

Projecting an acceptable Dutch identity vis-à-vis a generalised Australian audience is, I think, a fundamental issue for Dutch clubs. This situation is complicated still further by the fact that many Dutch clubs have not only accepted but sought out a non-Dutch Australian membership: "It is easy for Dutch to

join any interest group and so Dutch interest groups recruit from beyond the ethnic group" (Cox op cit:102). That is, including non-Dutch in a Dutch club is a way of demonstrating Dutch assimilation and assimilability, and also of allaying Australian fears of ethnic organisations. It is also good for business and we all "know" what good businessmen the Dutch are. (This point is taken up again in Chapter V.)

Will Dutch clubs endure? The general expectation was that Dutch clubs would quickly disappear because Dutch people could or would not get on together, and that as they "settled in" and immigration ended, there would no longer be any need for such clubs. This did not happen. Indeed, the 1970's were a period of growth and consolidation for Dutch clubs in Australia, or at least in Victoria (Clyne 1977a, Overberg 1984, Unikoski op cit). During these years a new club in Canberra was established, grew in size ten-fold and built a long awaited Dutch clubhouse in 1978 (see Chapter V). The retrospective and widely accepted explanation of these developments is that older Dutch migrants "are returning to the 'Dutch world' and seeking Dutch forms of social life (gezelligheid)" (Clyne op cit:3). That is, Dutch clubs are meeting the personal and "cultural", that is to say, nostalgic needs of ageing migrants and by implication, as this cohort dies out, so will the clubs. The time scale and need have changed (now it is homesick, old Dutch who get together rather than young recent migrants) but the assimilationist expectation has not. Dutch clubs, like Dutch culture, will still die out in one generation.

The efflorescence of Dutch clubs coincides not only with the



ageing of Dutch migrants but also with a shift in public attitudes and policy towards migrants where cultural pluralism and, more specifically, the special needs of the "ethnic"/migrant aged are acceptable subjects of discourse. As interest groups Dutch clubs have responded to this changed climate by going more public and identifying themselves with the aged issue in the same way that they have responded to the changing needs of their older membership. One cannot say where political opportunism leaves off and resurgent ethnic identity starts in all of this. The analytic mistake is differentiating between the two and defining the former as false and the latter as authentic. What seems to be happening in all this is that the Dutch are questioning the value of assimilation as both a political strategy and as a cultural identity. It will be interesting to see if the second generation continues that debate.

### Summary

The Dutch have been generally described as people who left their culture behind and who were assimilated into Australian society and way of life so completely that they were indistinguishable from other Australians. In this chapter I examine research done on Dutch assimilation and argue that when the findings are placed in a wide socio-cultural context quite a different picture of the Dutch in Australia emerges. While there clearly were pressures on the Dutch to assimilate, the Dutch were not passively absorbed into Australia. The Dutch made choices which reflected their own cultural values and circumstances, and which accommodated those pressures, for example, about where they

lived and in what kind of life style. Occupationally they have not been assimilated: they came primarily as tradesmen and labourers and there, they and their children have largely remained. Their religious heterogeneity is in part a legacy of the Netherlands verzuiling system and is also one reason why there is not a "unified" Dutch community in Australia (if such a community exists anywhere). While most choose not to belong to Dutch organisations, their closest friends tend to be other Dutch and at home, amongst older Dutch migrants, Dutch is still spoken.

The Dutch have become "invisible" in Australia for several reasons. They came to Australia in the 1950's "forever", with no future in a homeland which had gotten rid of them, and divided amongst themselves by the stigma associated with being assisted migrants. They came as individuals; they had to look to themselves. In Australia, the Dutch were ideologically somewhere between "real" migrants who were dark complexioned and allowed into Australia, and the British who were the same race/culture as Australians and were invited to come. It was to their advantage, as well as the policy makers, that Dutch cultural differences be minimised and they be assimilated as quickly as possible or, at least, more quickly than other migrants. Otherwise the racial hierarchy would be toppled and, from the point of view of Dutch migrants, the Dutch would be relegated back to the ranks of other migrants. I have endeavoured to show in this chapter that the way they have been studied has meant that superficial resemblance such as geographical dispersion or religious heterogeneity is mistaken for cultural similarity or assimilation (there being some confusion about whether the Dutch are inherently similar or

whether they have become similar to Australians). Cultural differences or "nuances" are largely ignored.

I am primarily interested in determining the extent to which Dutch migrants have collaborated, directly and indirectly, in their invisibility. To the extent that they are people who do their living (literally and metaphorically) inside, not being visible to the observer outside makes cultural sense. This also suggests that invisibility would be a culturally appropriate strategy setting them apart from other more visible migrants but allowing them to remain "typically" Dutch inside. Interestingly, their invisibility is often attributed by the Dutch and their observers to their very Dutchness - their pragmatism, business orientation, suspiciousness and so forth which allow them to sacrifice the luxury of a cultural identity. I would suggest that cultural rhetoric is being confused with analysis and that we need to explore the semantics and contexts of such explanations rather than take them at face value, in particular, the notion of inside versus outside realities and how those realities are mediated.

## FOOTNOTES

- 1 Australia is not the only country where Dutch migrants (as opposed to Dutch colonists) have been characterised as successful assimilators. They are described in similar terms in other predominantly Anglo Saxon countries such as Canada (Ganzevoort and Boekelman 1983, Ishwaran 1977), New Zealand (Thomson 1970) and the United States (Lucas 1955).
- 2 Very few Dutch (compared to other migrant groups, especially southern Europeans) came to Australia as a result of chain migration, presumably because they received so much government assistance and did not need family help in order to migrate. Two exceptions are Free Reformed Church groups which settled in Tasmania and West Australia (Elich op cit:25).
- 3 Beltz (ibid) disputes this interpretation, arguing that the Dutch authorities were primarily concerned with economic conditions and ensuring that Dutch migrants found work. Based on my reading of government publications such as Emigratie and discussions with government representatives I would tend to agree with Rose, that the Netherlands government was actively pro-assimilationist (see Chapter II) and that it would have discouraged the development of Dutch communities in Australia.
- 4 As I discuss in Chapter V, it seems that many Dutch considered that Canberra offered many of these same features.
- 5 This discussion is based on Price, Pyne and Baker (1981:40-41).
- 6 No information is given by Price et al as to which particular migrant groups they are inter-marrying with.
- 7 In an earlier study (personal correspondence) Blauw and Elich found that 38% of Dutch migrants arriving in Australia in 1970 had left within ten years compared to 36% and 29% (respectively) of Dutch migrating to New Zealand and Canada.
- 8 In 1976, 72.3% of Dutch migrants had taken out Australian citizenship compared to 93.6% of people from the Baltic States, 88.6% from Poland and 90.4% from Hungary. Dutch rate of citizenship is similar to that of other post-war, "voluntary" (non refugee) migrant groups (Italians, Greeks and Germans), from Price in Jupp (1984:182).
- 9 This is borne out by McAllister and Kelley (1984) who find that eastern, southern and northern European migrants who are well educated are disadvantaged in terms of job status compared to similarly educated Australians, whereas unskilled migrants are actually advantaged.

- 10 Presumably because so many Dutch speak a mixture of Dutch-English, what is somewhat affectionately referred to as "Double Dutch" or "migrants".
- 11 I would disagree with Pauwels here. Based on my fieldwork experience, my impression is that a great deal of significance is attached to the kind and quality of Dutch spoken as an indicator of social class, province of origin etc and that many Dutch regret the fact that their children cannot speak or read Dutch. (The language issue is discussed at greater length in subsequent chapters.)
- 12 Zubrzycki (1964:279) is an exception, citing Dutch sociologist Hofstee who argues that "the relatively high percentage of people [in the Netherlands] who at the census do not want to be counted among the members of any church does not prove a lack of interest in religious matters but on the contrary, is a proof of seriousness about them".
- 13 This was expected of all migrants not just the Dutch (Lewins 1978).
- 14 Church spokespersons dispute this and claim that the majority of their members are Australian (presumably they define second generation Dutch as "Australians").
- 15 While both are part of the Calvinist tradition, the Australian Reformed Church is very different from the South African Reformed Church in terms of history and identity. The Australian church is an immigrant church but it is avowedly non-Dutch and assimilationsist in outlook. On the other hand, the Reformed Church in South Africa is a dominant force (Mol 1972, van den Berghe 1978), playing a key role in that country's history and providing Afrikaaners with "a divine mandate" for their privileged position in the apartheid system (du Toit in Perry 1986:16).
- 16 This is based on informants' accounts and my reading of the assorted club newsletters where much of the conflict is detailed.
- 17 Dutch proverb quoted in Taylor (1983:141): "One Dutchman - a theologian. Two Dutchmen - a Church. Three Dutchmen - a Schism".
- 18 Quoted in The Adelaide Advertiser, Feb 3, 1985.

## CHAPTER V

### THE DUTCH IN CANBERRA<sup>1</sup>

TABLE 5.1 DUTCH MIGRANTS IN THE ACT, 1947-1981<sup>i</sup>

	No	As % of ACT population
1947	2	-
1954	377	1.3
1961	1161	2.0
1966	1470	1.5
1971	1679	.9
1976	1804	.9
1981	1714	.8

<sup>i</sup> Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics figures for the A.C.T., see Bibliography.

As the above table indicates the number of Dutch migrants living in Canberra peaked in 1976 at 1804 and, as a proportion of the total population in 1961, at 2% (which was twice the national average of 1%). There are now, according to the 1981 Census, 1714 Dutch migrants in Canberra. They comprise .8% of the total population, a relatively high figure (compared with .5% for Sydney and .7% for Melbourne and nationally).<sup>2</sup> As well there are 2,360 second generation Dutch in the ACT<sup>3</sup> (where one or both parents is a Dutch migrant) so that, excluding grandchildren and Indonesian Dutch, there are approximately 4,100 people who could be described as of Dutch origin in Canberra (or almost 2% of the total population).

Based on the statistical evidence then it seems that Canberra has been relatively attractive to Dutch migrants. This is despite

the fact that there was no migrant (family) accommodation in Canberra which meant that Canberra would not have been designated as a destination for assisted migrants arriving in Australia. This would have applied with especial force to Dutch migrants who, as I outline in Chapter III, were almost all government assisted and travelled in family groups. Like almost everyone in Canberra it would seem that Dutch migrants came from somewhere else in Australia. This is borne out among my informants; Canberra was the original destination in only nine of out 35 migrations (as individuals or family groups). What brought these people to Canberra? Two men had work contracts and private housing arranged and the other seven (five families and two single adults) had family already there who helped them out with housing and jobs. Another group of arrivals (seven) came to Canberra from reception centres or hostels elsewhere in Australia having heard, usually from other Dutch migrants, that there were work opportunities in Canberra. In most cases, men went ahead, started work, and then organised temporary housing for their families. However, most of my informants came to Canberra after living elsewhere in Australia for quite a number of years. Many indicated that having relatives or friends already in Canberra (usually from the same province) was a factor in their decision. People also comment how much they liked Canberra with its garden suburbs and large house blocks which offered them the prospect not only of a house of their own but room for a garden and some animals (a style of living preferred by many Dutch migrants; see Chapter IV). As well there was the probability of obtaining a house through the government

housing programme, which was designed to attract people to Canberra.

TABLE 5.2 OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF DUTCH MIGRANTS (MALE)

<u>IN THE ACT</u> <sup>i</sup>		Austn born
Tradesmen/Production Workers/Labourers	31.2	17.7
Professional/Technical	18.3	19.7
Administrative/Executive	16.3	18.0
Clerical	1.0	20.7
Service	.7	5.8

TABLE 5.3 OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF DUTCH MIGRANTS (FEMALE)

<u>IN THE ACT</u> <sup>i,ii</sup>		Austn born
Clerical	43.2	47.3
Professional/Technical	16.6	23.1
Service	12.0	7.6

i,ii Based on Table 106B, pp 1-2, Australia, Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs n d (b).

### Work

Canberra has been attractive to immigrants generally because of the work opportunities in the large public building projects. Dutch migrants like other migrants came to "build" Canberra, which helps account for why they arrived in Canberra ahead of its main population growth, during the late 1960's (see above). In 1961 almost one half (46%) of Dutch men in the Canberra labour force were employed in the building and construction industry, more than double the ACT average (Beltz 1964:183-184). By 1981, a considerably smaller proportion (14%) of Dutch migrants were employed in this sector<sup>4</sup> but this was still almost twice the ACT



average.<sup>5</sup> Like many post-war migrants in the ACT and in Australia generally Dutch migrants have been employed mainly as tradesmen/production workers/labourers (see Chapter III). According to the 1981 Census, 31.2% are in this sector compared to 17.7% of Australian born workers (see above). The majority of Dutch men coming to Australia were originally employed in this sector, however, this figure also includes first generation Dutch who migrated as children and initially entered the workforce in Australia. Even more interesting is that 40% of second generation Dutch men are similarly employed (compared to 24.4% of those born to Australian born parents).<sup>7</sup> The same applies to the offspring of other post-war migrants, for example, from Germany (33.6%), Italy (35.5%), Malta (50.6%).<sup>8</sup> I would suggest that the continuation of this employment pattern has to do more with social class than with cultural difference. (This argument was put forward with reference to the Dutch in Australia generally in Chapter IV.) Presumably, the trades area would have been more accessible to men whose fathers were already employed there. They would have known people who could offer them apprenticeships and jobs, and they would have perceived it as offering greater opportunities, rather than, for example, more middle class jobs (in particular, clerical jobs; see above) which would have involved undertaking higher education.

48.1% of first generation Dutch women in the ACT are in the workforce, well above the Australian average of 40.9% for first generation Dutch women<sup>9</sup> but still below the ACT average of 54.7%.<sup>10</sup> Their occupational distribution is similar to the

general female pattern in the ACT (see above). Almost one half, 43.2%, are clerical workers, the main difference being that they are less likely to be employed as professional/technical workers (16.6% of first generation Dutch women are in this area compared to 23.1% of Australian-born women) and they are half again as likely to be service workers (12% compared to 7.6%). The occupational distribution of second generation Dutch women aged 15-29 years corresponds to the general pattern for that age group in the ACT with approximately one half employed as clerical workers (49.1%). The proportion working in service industries is similar to that of women with Australian-born parents, 8.7%.<sup>11</sup> Amongst my informants, the women are almost evenly split between (in descending order) those who have not worked in Australia and those who have been service and professional/technical workers. Most of the men have worked as either tradesmen or professional/technical workers (see below). Eight men and three women are presently retired from the workforce, and a man and women are both unemployed.

TABLE 5.4 INFORMANTS, AREAS OF EMPLOYMENT

	Men	Women
Professional/technical	6	7
Executive	1	1
Clerical	2	4
Sales	-	-
Tradesmen	6	-
Services	1	8
Never worked in Australia	-	9
Student	1	2

TABLE 5.5 RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION OF DUTCH MIGRANTS IN THE ACT<sup>i</sup>

		ACT <sup>ii</sup> average
Catholic	35.6	30.5
Church of England	.4	23.9
Presbyterian	8.4	4.2
Uniting	3.4	3.7
No religion	28.2	13.8
Protestant (other) <sup>iii</sup>	.3	1.2

<sup>i</sup> Based on Australia Bureau of Statistics 1983b

<sup>ii</sup> Based on Australia Bureau of Statistics 1982a, Table 13

<sup>iii</sup> Including Reformed Church members

### Religion

As I discuss in Chapter III, Australia was the main destination for Catholic Dutch leaving the Netherlands (the next category being Dutch who practiced no religion). The Canberra Dutch have fitted this pattern, being if anything more Catholic than the Australian average. According to the 1954 Census, 49% of Dutch migrants in Canberra were Roman Catholic compared to 37.4% in Australia generally. By 1961, when Dutch immigration was effectively over, the proportion of Catholic Dutch had dropped to 44.4% but this was still above the national average of 40.4% and the proportion of Catholic Dutch in Canberra continues to be slightly higher than the national average (in 1981, 35.6% compared to 34.2%). At the same time the proportion of Dutch migrants in the ACT declaring no religion has steadily climbed, from a low in 1954 of 21% to 28.2% in 1981. (This is above the national average of 23% for Dutch migrants and well above the ACT average of 13.8% see above).

There is, as far as I know, no major single reason why Catholic Dutch tended to come to Canberra, except that knowing people already in Canberra seems to have been a selective factor. This would have been important anywhere but it was especially relevant in terms of Canberra which, as I have already said, had no migrant housing. People had to decide to come to Canberra, presumably because they had a job (or the prospect of a job) and perhaps had housing arranged, and this would have entailed knowing someone. In the mid 1950's the odds are reasonably high that this person would have been Catholic.<sup>12</sup> Canberra, I suspect, was not unique in this respect; the traditional religious cleavages played a role in organising Dutch emigration to Australia generally. Based on my interviews, it is my impression that the zuilen also helped shape settlement patterns in Australia just as they continue to influence Dutch community life in Australia (see Chapter IV).

TABLE 5.6 INFORMANTS: RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

Roman Catholic	13
Protestant	6
No religion	26
Inadequate information	3

All the active Protestants belong to the Reformed Church as opposed to the Presbyterian or Uniting Churches, even though according to the 1981 Census some 12% of Dutch migrants in the ACT belong to one of these denominations. This came about by accident. I was aware that Reformed Church members tended not to associate with other Dutch (see Chapter IV) and approached

potential informants through official channels, however, I expected that I would meet other Protestant Dutch through the Dutch Club and informally (my first preference), but this did not eventuate. This may be due to the relatively small numbers involved in this study, but based on my fieldwork practices I suspect that practising Protestant Dutch tend not to belong to Dutch social clubs and that, in general, Dutch clubs are patronised by Catholic and "unchurchly" Dutch (which, as I discuss in Chapter IV, are two of the Dutch zuilen. This issue is taken up again later in this chapter.)

The Reformed Church in Canberra is a young church. Established as a mission in the 1960's, it has only become a self-supporting church in the last four or five years. Compared to other Reformed congregations it is, I am told, very "Australian" with an Australian pastor and a large non-Dutch membership ("non-Dutch" here is taken as including the children of Dutch migrants; all of which is in keeping with the avowedly pro-assimilationist stance of the Reformed Church as a whole, see Chapter IV). Most of my informants came to the Reformed Church via other Australian Protestant churches, which they generally found to be too unorthodox, and several claim that they found their faith in Australia, that is to say, they had only been nominal Protestants in Holland.

However, many more of my informants have left organised religion since coming to Australia, which is in keeping with the general trend among Dutch migrants away from organised religion. Among the 26 informants declaring no religion, 19 had been church

goers in the Netherlands, nine were Roman Catholic and ten Protestant, in mainly the State Dutch Reformed Church. Informants offered a variety of reasons for non-attendance, such as lack of time, disillusionment with a particular church in Australia and disinterest. Several lapsed Roman Catholics commented on the unacceptable "Irishness" of Australian Catholicism.

#### The Canberra Dutch Club

The Canberra Dutch Club was incorporated in 1973 with about 150 members. It was successor to a series of Dutch clubs in Canberra including the Canberra Soccer and Social Club, Hollandia and the Dutch-Australian Club in the 1950's; and the Netherlands-Australian Society in the 1960's. Each of these clubs started out ambitiously with a formally elected leadership, a club newsletter and plans for future expansion. However, despite repeated appeals to club membership for support and statements about the need for a unified Dutch community in Canberra, they all ended up complaining about lack of support and factionalism amongst the Dutch.<sup>13</sup> The clubs, and to an even greater extent their leadership, became increasingly isolated and weakened by their isolation. As one informant explained, eventually they "all fell apart because they bickered" (speaker's emphasis). That is, they became "petty minded" and started fighting about small things and the clubs, as a result, became smaller and smaller ("smallness" supposedly being a Dutch characteristic). As I argue in Chapter IV, such bickering should be seen as a normal even mundane part of social life; what is remarkable is that such behaviour is taken by the Dutch and

their observers as something extraordinary and "typically" Dutch.

If other nationalities could do it, so could we. (President, Canberra Dutch Club)<sup>14</sup>

The present club is different from its predecessors in several ways; it has a much larger membership (of about 1,100), in its relative longevity, and the fact that in 1978 it finally succeeded in building its own clubhouse (previously, clubs had relied on rented premises). It seems that to be a genuine ethnic group one needs to have an ethnic club (social and physical) and by 1978 most other "ethnic" groups in Canberra had already built their own clubhouses. This event then was a significant achievement for the club leadership and membership, both as an identity marker and as a status symbol vis-à-vis other ethnic groups in Canberra. It seems that it also helped to stabilise the Canberra Dutch Club:

It's here (the building) and thank God it's here. So you make it work. And to do that you've got to have a business first and then try to fit social bits into it somewhere along the line. (informant)

Because now, not only did the club have a "home" of its own, it had a substantial long-term financial commitment in the form of a mortgage. This meant that a great deal more was at stake if the club were to split apart and disappear (as had its predecessors). Members stand to lose more publicly if the club fails but there is presumably also more to fight over. As well, the club needs to attract more members if it is to succeed as a business. Dutch clubs generally seem to have made a point of welcoming non-Dutch members (as part of the logic of assimilation). Now, with a mortgage, there are financial reasons for doing so as well. It

seems to have been generally agreed that Dutch clubs cannot survive solely on Dutch patronage (because the Dutch are not "club minded") and the Canberra Dutch Club is no exception. Also only a minority of Dutch migrants belong to the club and those who do belong visit the club infrequently. Reading the club newsletter, The Canberra Dutch Courier, one is repeatedly informed about "disappointingly" low attendances at special "Dutch" evenings (where Dutch is spoken, Dutch food served and so on), at annual meetings and so forth. Thus, for various reasons, the club has had to attract a non-Dutch clientele who would regularly patronise its facilities. About one half of the club's membership is not Dutch. Commenting on this fact (over the noise of the pokie machines) one man smiled and remarked something to the effect that, we Dutch, we'll take anyone's money! We laughed at his witticism but, as with other such witticisms about "we Dutch" (see Introduction), I was unsure who was the butt of the joke; the Dutch who supposedly take anyone's money and thus sell themselves to the highest bidder, or the people who give their money away?

Critics of the Dutch club, that is other Dutch, say that it is not really a Dutch club. Too much English is spoken (a recurrent issue in the Courier), and the club is more concerned about "business" than about serving the social and cultural needs of the so called Dutch "community" (but then, is that not a "Dutch" trait, being business minded?) Some club members to whom I have spoken see it as a kind of balancing act, catering to "business" and "social" needs. For example:

It is not always easy; for instance, at the Queen's Ball,<sup>15</sup> it goes completely in English



except when we sing one of the Dutch songs ... Maybe we get a typical Dutch night, which we call it, then the whole night goes in Dutch. We don't want to do that too often because you can't do it [financially] but we still want to keep one or two nights of the year to do that. Then you get certain people who hardly ever come and then they come, so they want that. (speaker's emphasis)

Self: May be they are staying away at other times because -

Informant: So they want that typical Dutch and we can't, we still have to run a business.

Many Dutch stay away, they say, because it is no longer a Dutch club or at least it is not Dutch enough. But people also stay away because of what happened in previous clubs:

And even now you meet people, they say "I'm not going to go to the Dutch club, all those Dutch people!" Then they get dragged in here and they join up in the end, because "it wasn't so bad after all". (my emphasis)

I would suggest that it is not "all those Dutch people" as a general category whom they wish to avoid (although it is often expressed in that idiom), rather it is particular Dutch of a different class or political persuasion, who probably belonged to a competing faction in some long ago dispute and won out, whom they are rejecting. The convention in Dutch organisations seems to be that losers in power struggles leave, taking with them their followers, perhaps to set up a rival organisation. (Of course this type of schism is not uniquely Dutch, although many Dutch would claim that it is.) As well, there are Dutch who avoid Dutch clubs as a matter of principle, for example, members of the Reformed Church and affluent, educated Dutch who might patronise the club on special "community" occasions such as the Queen's Day

Ball but who feel that they have nothing in common with its membership generally.

Because of the sheer size of the club membership (needed to support the facilities), the presence of Australians and concessions made to their presence, and the noise of the pokie machines which help keep the club solvent, it becomes increasingly difficult to create that special Dutch atmosphere, gezelligheid, in which Dutch clubs are supposed to specialise.<sup>16</sup> This, I am told, is what sets them apart from Australian clubs, what makes them "Dutch". Paradoxically, this is why Australians join the Dutch club; they like the "atmosphere". How does one create such an atmosphere if there are no Dutch in attendance or they attend so irregularly that they do not recognise each other as Dutch, let alone know each other?

It's a bit of an irony really. Even one of our board members said the other night on a Saturday he said "Look at this place, not a Dutchman to be seen". And unfortunately - for him - there were about 25 of them here. It was only a small crowd on that night but he doesn't know them. They are people who come to Canberra in the last ten years or prior to him coming here ... Or they're kids from Dutch parents and they come here ... He doesn't know them so, therefore, there are no Dutch people here. (my emphasis)

Self: And did you point that out to him?

Informant: Yes. He said "No, no, no. They're not Dutch". So that if you don't want to accept that well (laugh) what can I do about it? ... We've had nights here - it might have been St Nikolaas ... and there was a table of Dutch people ... totally unknown to the rest. You could see it because nobody really got into the act until they broke into a song and the two tables on either side [miming astonishment]. "What's this! This Dutch people sitting here?!" (laugh) They just didn't

know ... Wierd, damn difficult. (speaker's emphasis)

Who is the Dutchman in the Dutch club? Another informant suggests that the solution is to build "a club within the club" (which in some senses has already happened):

It's not really a club, it's open, but it would be Dutch - in there ... a big lounge-room with nice easy chairs, papers everywhere and real flowers and plants everywhere, Dutch things on the wall, Dutch music all the time. (speaker's emphasis)

This "living-room" would be mainly for old Dutch migrants because it is they who are really Dutch and who need this Dutchness. But this informant is describing more than a special geriatric service. It is a place, a way of life, which many informants recognise as embodying Dutch cultural values. (The "living-room" metaphor is developed in Chapters VI and VII.)

The Dutch club has not yet established such a room, I am told, because of the costs involved but also, I suspect, because of the problems involved in declaring a domain separate and Dutch in a club which strives to be non-controversial and assimilationist. However, in other ways the club does function as a Dutch club within a larger Dutch-Australian organisation. Its Dutch leadership, the Karnaval Club within it, koffie morgen's (women's coffee morning group) and klaverjas (cards) evenings, special Dutch nights, Queen's Day Ball, St Nicholas festivities and so forth: these are the heart of the club. It is here where decisions about the club are made and over-turned, and where gezelligheid is possible. Non-Dutch Australians are largely outside of all this; at most they are spectators, consumers of

that special Dutch atmosphere.

The Windmills Karnaval club functions in many ways as the public face of the club and Dutchness. Each year the Karnaval Club with 13-14 members puts on Karnaval for the Dutch club, and hosts and visits other Karnaval clubs in Australia. In 1984 they celebrated Karnaval in the Netherlands. The Windmills also organise special Dutch nights (entertainment, decorations) for the club. Originally Karnaval was a "pagan" spring festival, it was finally accepted by the Catholic Church and Karnaval became a pre-Lenten Catholic festival celebrated mainly (and best) in the Catholic southern provinces. More recently it has become a national tourist attraction. While Karnaval has become quite respectable (at least in most quarters, Calvinist Dutch disapprove of all the drinking which goes in and also of the general revelry), it retains its traditional reputation for merriment and outrageousness. Not only must Karnaval members have the time and skill to contribute towards all the pageantry, they must be gregarious and fun-loving performers. This applies even more so for the Prince of the Karnaval who, it is said, must be a "true Karnavalist". He must be Dutch-speaking and be Dutch and, I am told, he must also possess a great deal of stamina and wit. He must be capable of drinking a great deal without getting drunk (drinking without losing control of himself, I presume), be prepared to act the buffoon and generally be extroverted. The Prince presides over Karnaval in the club and travels with the Karnaval club to celebrate Karnaval with other clubs (which in Australia is organised chronologically so that clubs can support

each other's festivities). His annual reign comes to an end in November when he is (un)ceremoniously dethroned; however, he can be re-elected Karnaval Prince.<sup>17</sup>

Will there still be a Karnaval Prince when there are no longer any qualified candidates (first generation Dutch) and, by implication, will Karnaval clubs endure and, if so, in what manner? A temporary solution to the recruitment problem is to rely year after year on the same individuals, for example, re-electing the same Prince of the Karnaval. This involves re-defining the positions, especially that of Prince, which traditionally is much sought after and presumably would not be conferred more than once on the same individual. In a sense they are becoming hereditary rather than democratic positions. Unikoski (op cit:188) discusses this question in relation to the Limburger Kangaroos in Melbourne. The "Kangaroos" are one of the oldest and most active - and many would consider most authentic - Karnaval clubs in Australia. Their authenticity seems to derive at least in part from the fact that key positions are reserved for Limburgers, Limburg (along with Brabant) being the traditional home of Karnaval, where Karnaval supposedly is celebrated best. Members acknowledge that these rules will eventually have to be relaxed "in order to carry on the traditions for the next generation". Other Dutch will have to be recruited to fill these key positions. More problematic is the question of including Australians in Karnaval, not just as audience but as performers. In this context second generation Dutch seem to be considered as Australians; they are not Dutch-born and their Dutch (if any) is

not considered good enough for public performances. If Karnaval is to survive then these "Australians" must be culturally and socially included as active participants and eventual heirs to those Dutch traditions (an issue which I address in later chapters).

## FOOTNOTES

- 1 Canberra and the Australian Capital Territory (A.C.T.) are used here interchangeably although the former refers to Canberra City proper while the latter is the government territory.
- 2 Australia, Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs n.d. (a), pp 8-9.
- 3 Australia, DIEA n.d. (b), table 104.
- 4 Australia, DIEA n.d.(a), table 10a.
- 5 ABS 1982a, table 30.
- 6 Australia DIEA n.d.(b), table 106B.
- 7 Based on ABS 1982b, table 54. Because over 90% of the second generation labour force is 15-29 years I have compared them with Australians 15-29 years (as I did with national statistics in Chapter IV).
- 8 ibid
- 9 Australia, DIEA n.d.(a), table 8.
- 10 ABS 1982a, table 24.
- 11 ABS 1982b, table 54.
- 12 None of my informants have explained their decision to come to Canberra in these terms; indeed, most claim that they left the verzuiling system behind them in the Netherlands and that religious differences no longer matter. However, in practice I think that they still do. Certainly, in terms of coming to Canberra, the person they knew in Canberra tended to come from the same province and belong to the same religion.
- 13 Histories which are docu newsletters: Club Nieuws, Officieel Maanblad van de Dutch Australian Club; Club Nieuws, Maanblad van de Canberra Soccer and Social Club "Be Quick"; and Society News, Official Organ of the Netherlands Australian Society (see Bibliography).
- 14 In The Canberra Dutch Courier, Bi-monthly Issue of the "Canberra Dutch Club" Inc, Tenth Anniversary Issue (1983), pg 11.
- 15 Held the end of April to commemorate the Dutch monarch's birthday, it is a national event attended by the Dutch ambassador. At that evening a Dutch club queen is announced who will reign until the following year.

- 16 Friendliness, informality, playfulness, intimacy, coziness, Gezelligheid as a symbol of Dutchness is explored in later chapters.
- 17 The Dutch Club Queen is another ceremonial position. She is crowned at the Queen's Ball at the end of April which celebrates the Birthday of Queen Beatrix and reigns until the following year. Her role seems to be less defined than that of Karnaval Prince and she does not have to be Dutch.



## CHAPTER VI

### MIGRATION STORIES, DEPARTURES AND ARRIVALS

"There are three things in life - birth, death and migration."

"It was bigger than getting married or having children."

(Informants, Dutch migrants)

Dutch migration was a historical event, the product of government policies and negotiations, but as well it was an event in the lives of the many thousands of individuals who left the Netherlands during the 1950's, supposedly forever, for a country on the other side of the world. Given the epic nature of that journey, one cannot help assuming that migration would be a dramatic, focal point in people's lives: yet, for various reasons (considered in previous chapters) the migrants and their stories have been "muted" (Ardener 1972, 1975), submerged in the Dutch stereotype, as an assimilated, a-historic people without a story to tell. On one level then, this chapter sets out to redress the balance: by asking men, who have been known only minimally as workers, and even less well known women to tell their stories. What, as they say, was it "really" like?

This chapter is about departure and arrival and how people make sense of that transition, in most cases, some thirty years later. It is organised around the following themes: making the decision (to emigrate), how we came, first impressions of

Australia and getting settled. However, it would be misleading to suggest that Dutch migration was simply a personal experience. Both in the way it was engineered and defined, it represents a "politicised" life crisis (Cohen 1979). Of particular interest here, is how Dutch migrants, especially men, handle questions of personal worth and responsibility in their stories. Where does the idea to migrate come from, what roles do they take in their stories, how important is it to have "paid" one's way? As discussed also in Chapter III, Dutch women came to Australia as wives and mothers rather than as workers. It was their husbands' relative value which was being negotiated over: presumably responsibility would not be such an issue in their stories. Dutch women have been characterised primarily as "homesick". Is this all migration has meant to them, why ever did they emigrate?

The Decision to Emigrate: "It didn't make any sense ... and then I am going."

In Chapter III, the point is made that at the level of policy Dutch migration was about men, primarily men as workers. The men in this study certainly saw migration in these terms: the decision to emigrate was theirs and was made for work-related reasons. In most cases though it was a decision which actually involved a family (which, again, was "typical" of Dutch migration) 43 of the 48 people interviewed came to Australia in a family migration which they attribute to a man, be he husband, father or son. Like other immigrant women (Jupp 1966:33) Dutch women "followed" their men to Australia - literally and metaphorically - following them

and their ideas to new jobs and "new futures".

The five individuals, so far unaccounted for, include two men who came to Australia as single men and three women who were either single or divorced and had no sons either. By this last comment, I am suggesting that these women could not offer a culturally normal explanation for their migration, that they came because of a man's decision. Unlike most of the men I interviewed, none of the women offered an explicit reason for emigrating except that each described herself (or was so described) as a "different" sort of woman, different from the rest of her family. This, I interpreted as an indirect reason for her emigrating. For example:

I always had a feeling that I was an outsider in the family. I was born upside down - feet first - and my Mum had told me many times that - how difficult it had been, you know, with my birth and how ugly I was when I was born. I was such an ugly child. And there was always a tremendous gap between me and my parents from a very young girl onwards. It was always a tremendous gap. I never talked to them.

Now we shall look at the majority, the men who decided to emigrate,<sup>1</sup> by looking first at the case of Henk. Henk came to Australia "early", in 1950, when emigration fever was at its height (see Chapter III). At that time, he was 20 years old, an employed semi-skilled worker (an apprentice cook) who had had some trouble finding work. (As such, he would not have been categorised as an "indispensable" worker and would have been allowed to emigrate: see Chapter III on labour categories and Dutch emigration policies.) Henk does not mention applying for any government assistance (in any case, subsidies were not

generally available until 1951) and he decided to pay his own way because he thought that this would speed up his emigration. That is, he would be more independent in his movements. Nevertheless, it took a year for his application to be approved and the trip cost him all his savings, 3-400 guilders.

Henk: I started to think about immigration ... in '49 and they, you know, it was a fever, you know. They said we would migrate, not especially to Australia but everywhere.

Self: But you're saying it was a fever.

Henk: Yes. It was coming up, everybody want to leave because there was not enough jobs around, the conditions were poor ... It was miserable because of the War. It was for me because I was pastry cook and ... an apprentice. It was very hard to get a job ... Anyway, I worked in a kitchen and the chef said to us, they talk about we going to Brazil.. I never thought about going anywhere else ... Why should I go somewhere else? And he said to us, we go to Brazil. I said - if you like - I go with you. You know it was an adventure! You want to see something else.

Self: This was the chef you were apprenticed to? And you got the "bug" from him?

Henk: Yes, actually it's there it started but it [Brazil] never paid off ... but then Australia came into view in the newspapers. Canada, New Zealand and South Africa but I don't know, I never got - What did I know about Canada but what it was cold? ... But then I never thought about Australia ... And then my father came home one day and he said, somebody from Melbourne, cause I think he was a soldier from Indonesia and he settled down in Melbourne ... And I talked to him awhile and he said Australia is a beautiful country and then you are going and I started reading about Australia. It didn't make any sense ... and then I am going. I had

some English lessons when the Americans and Canadians came around. That was in '46 ... All those little things, it comes to a centrepoin ... It brings up the running of the well, the water hole. You can look now, you see? (my emphasis)

Henk touches on many of the reasons given by informants for emigrating: lack of prospects, fear of unemployment, restlessness and desire for adventure, knowing someone who was going to emigrate. Like many of the men (or family members) interviewed, Australia was not his first choice. Henk simply wanted to leave the Netherlands: he ended up in Australia largely by process of elimination (Brazil did not work out, Canada was too cold, he spoke some English, the clincher it seems was meeting a Dutchman from Melbourne). Later in the interview, Henk offers another reason for emigrating. Like many other male informants, he was a "loner" and this helped him decide to emigrate.

Yet, Henk tells his story in a singular way (which is why I have included such a lengthy excerpt). He manages to convey how it felt to be making such a momentous decision which, in another sense, was a non-decision; it just happened. As well, Henk gives us a sense of the development of his decision, the outside events which influenced him, the casual almost random way it all happened and how, retrospectively, he makes sense of it all. Unlike most informants, he seems comfortable with the shapelessness and the significance of his decision. He consciously takes responsibility for his actions (it was a gradual, careful decision not something he did on the spur of the moment, he decided to pay his own way for specific reasons) while recognising that he was also acted

upon (there was an emigration fever and he caught it). If things had worked out he could have gone to Brazil but instead he went to Australia (and later brought his wife out to Australia). Unlike most of the Dutch I interviewed, Henk found rather than lost his faith in Australia. Perhaps this is why he is so philosophical: he does not have to take full responsibility or find forgiveness within himself for what he did. At the same time, he never says to me that it was God's will that he should be in Australia although he does talk about the significance of religion in his life.

Most men emphasised the straight-forwardness and rationality of their decision. Some are so rational, it is as if the decision was a total non-event. For example,

I had been thinking of going overseas for a number of years [for no particular reasons, he says] ... Australia had the right climate and it was easy to get in there ...

When I did night shift, a colleague of mine - we started talking and he said, "I am going to Australia" and we talked the whole night about it. I came home about four o'clock in the night. She was awake, and I said, "What about going to Australia?" She said, "OK with me".

"Only a matter of distance", "it was easy", "OK with me": this kind of understatement recurs throughout men's emigration stories. Now, it could be that this is how they see emigration: emigration was not a significant event in their lives. However, I would suggest that these men are choosing to deny the place of emotion in migration. Such accounts mirror the "rationalistic" stance taken by the Dutch government towards emigration (see Chapter III). I would suggest that they are voicing the ideologically

correct answer. They are also, as various Dutch women have argued, protecting themselves against the full knowledge of what they have done and whatever doubts or regrets they might feel. (Men's denial of emotion is discussed at length in Chapter VII.)

W: We've gotten together sometimes with Dutchies and sometimes we talk about it. It's very funny. I've got a feeling that sometimes people don't say what they feel. And I don't know what it is. If that's somehow they wish they would have stayed there and it was especially that time when wages went up so much in Holland about '68 to '72, in between there. And the life there was a lot better there than here at that that stage, you couldn't believe it! And then they had second thoughts "gee, if we would have stayed there we could have had it all" ...

Self: Why do you think people don't actually say what they're feeling?

W: Well that's may be just me ... sometimes you see something in their face, a certain expression, and I've got the feeling that quite often somebody says "gee I'm so glad I don't live there", [and] their face is a complete different expression. I would say the other way. (my emphasis)

My informant does not distinguish here between men and women in terms of people saying what they mean. I draw such a distinction because the Dutch women I have interviewed have been, on the whole, more prepared to talk about the emotions associated with migration whereas few men have been. Also, such a distinction makes sense to me, men in this context being more responsible for migration than women. Did they do the "right" thing by migrating, did they come for the "right" reasons? Does it all add up? I

doubt that it is possible - ever - to lay such questions to rest, but one could pretend - to oneself even - that doubts and emotions no longer exist. Another woman suggested that Dutch men, in particular, confuse being emotional with being een aansteller (over emotional, a poseur, not very masculine) and tend to protect themselves against such accusations by being under-stated and overly rational in their self-presentation. Equally, some men may quite legitimately decide that their emotions are none of my business and thus offer a pat, "public" version of their story.

My own position is - to quote Henk again - that "all those little things, it comes to a centre point". People do not have a reason for emigrating, what they have are the meanings they construct out of all those "little things". As so many people have said to me, looking back on their lives, how could we know what it would all mean? How could a person have a reason for doing something so enormous and incomprehensible? However, the reasons people find for what they did are clues about the meaning of migration in their lives. I am interested in what might be described as the consequences of those reasons - for the men who stress the rationality of migration and the women who "followed". What about men who came - they say - to be farmers or self-employed businessmen and never achieved their ambitions. Does it matter? (These questions are explored further in Chapter VII).

### Leaving Home

When I asked people what it was like to leave home (the Netherlands) informants generally took home as meaning family,



parents, brothers, sisters. In general, men said that leaving home was relatively easy because they already had left their families behind before they left the Netherlands. Some examples are:

You leave your family at home but then I mean my ties with my family were not all that very strong either ... You see I was already out of the house ... The ties were not so close because we were only two [sons] in the family. Look I left my family at the age of 17 ... and I hadn't seen them back for nine years ... And we never got - say - properly acquainted anymore after that. No.

See - with our family, we're not that close ... we're not dependent on one another.

Not only do men describe themselves in this way, wives and daughters describe their husbands and fathers as "loners", not close to their families, somehow more detached from family life: and this has made emigration "easier" for them.

Most of the women describe their leave taking from their families in very emotional terms - how hard it was. Some say that their mothers have never really "forgiven" them for leaving, and one, how she refused to leave until her parents were both dead (see Chapter VII). Their "homesickness" was all about missing their parents and siblings (especially sisters). Here, Frederika who left the Netherlands in 1948 with her husband and two daughters, describes her parents' reaction:

Frederika: I felt good about it [coming to Australia] but I had a very hard time in the first years because my mother and father were terribly opposed to it. They couldn't settle their minds in their thinking - they were not

domineering - but the idea that I was so far away they couldn't get. My father offered my husband the business in order to have us stay. He said are you not satisfied with what you have? Well if you're satisfied with what you have here, why go and search so far away for the unknown? And it took years [to get them to understand].

Self: How did you answer that sort of question?

F: Well we had to tell them very diplomatically that - well we were married and adults and - we had to live our lives ... [Years later] she still couldn't get over it. She never - even to the point of nearly disliking my husband - he was the one who took me away ... (speaker's emphasis)

Her mother was correct; her husband had taken her away from them. This is what she and her husband were telling her parents when they said they were adults and married. Frederika was now someone's wife and this outweighed her loyalty to her parents.<sup>2</sup> This is how it "happened" for many of these women - they were "taken away" by husbands to Australia - but still, they had to make the hard choice to leave their parents. It is worth noting that many said how their parents "hated" their leaving but that they also accepted it, as another woman explains, because "it was their life ... there's a word for Dutch people - nuchteid - it means down-to-earth. It's their life, we have no right to interfere".<sup>3</sup> (This theme is developed further in Chapter VIII.)

Women describe how, as daughters, they had heavy responsibilities in their families, responsibilities which ranged

from caring for ageing parents to dropping by for coffee every morning after shopping:

When I was in Holland ... and went to the shop I had to go past my mother for a cup of coffee or tea because she would say "God! You went past and didn't come in!" And I missed that here. (my emphasis)

This woman's account captures the ambivalence various women felt about what was expected of them by their families. For at least some the severe post-war housing shortage (brought about by the combined effects of the Depression and the German occupation of the Netherlands when many houses, especially in the north, were destroyed) may have tipped the balance in favour of emigration. Another woman describes how she and her husband had to live with her mother because they could not find a house of their own:

So my mother said, "You can take the upstairs rooms and live upstairs". So we did ... and so that is how we got married but after four years and one baby you know we were still living upstairs and we still couldn't get a house ... and then he came home with [the idea] to go to Australia. (speaker's emphasis).

And she says, living above her mother was "no fun. They know everything and they see everything and you couldn't do anything [without them knowing]". This would have been much more difficult than living down the street and visiting regularly, as she might have "normally" expected to do.

About one quarter (five out of 21) of the women interviewed who left the Netherlands as adults were living with their parents or next door to their parents before emigrating. One woman describes how the prospect of such an arrangement made her feel:

You get married and you live in with Mum and Dad. Then as soon as you can, you make a baby

because then you get your own apartment ... By the time you get three kids you get a three bedroom apartment ... But what happens? They have a flat two blocks further down from Mum. So they have coffee with Mum every morning - and it's a closed circuit and I could see this happening - I could see myself being sucked in. And once things have gone too far, you can't get out. So I up and left because it scared the hell out of me. (my emphasis)

I am certainly not suggesting that this future, which she saw ahead of her, "scared the hell" enough out of all these women, so that they ran away to Australia or that they all even saw their lives in Holland this way. (Bearing in mind also that she is looking back on a decision she made over 30 years ago.) But I do think that their role in the family, combined with housing shortages, may have predisposed some women to view emigration as a way of freeing themselves from family pressures, at least to the extent of having a home of their own.

#### How We Came

How one came to Australia (unassisted/assisted, early/late) is more than a matter of fact. As I argue in Chapter III it was taken by the Dutch government and various commentators as an indicator of the relative value and responsibility of different categories of Dutch migrants. Being "assisted" had the connotation at least of being surplus or dispensable: the more one was assisted, the less one was worth and conversely the more one paid, the more one was worth. Following this logic, the earlier, less assisted migrants would have enjoyed a higher moral status than the more assisted, newer migrants. How one came to Australia

then could be construed as evidence of one's integrity as a migrant. I was interested to see if these differences mattered to the individuals involved and if they did, how they handled the question of personal worth in their migration stories.

In the interviews one of the first questions I asked people was if they came out as assisted migrants, and not surprisingly (now) I was soon made to realise that I was asking a very personal question. Some people answered quite specifically but most were vague (as well, it was a long time ago and the variety of schemes and assistance would have been quite daunting to understand even then). Most simply said, yes they were assisted or no, they paid their own way. After several failed attempts I chose not to press informants for further details (which scheme, how much "exactly" did they pay, and so forth), in any case, I was more interested in what they had to say about how they and others came.

#### Paying Your Own Way

About one third of the 35 migrations (most involving families) in which informants were involved are described as self financed, for example, "I was not an assisted migrant, I [just] came out and started work". This is a very high proportion compared to general Australian statistics which indicate that almost all Dutch migrants were assisted (see Chapter III). Clearly, my informants do not constitute a random sample, and this may explain the discrepancy. As well, my proportions are based on people's accounts rather than documentary evidence. I suspect that some people feel like they paid their way, because they had to pay so

much under the pre-1955 scheme, when in fact they were "assisted".

The "self payers" can be divided into three groups - those three families who came out before 1952 when only very limited assistance was available to ex-soldiers and to "surplus" workers, three people who came out as single employed adults and four relatively prosperous families who were ineligible for assistance. Clearly it is this early group of families which bore the highest financial cost, to which two children of such families here attest:

We knew people who threw everything across the fence in Holland - they had never, not one penny, saved. My poor old Dad worked his guts out - and mother - and we had to spend whatever he had on the fare ... But there you are. Well we've not been too worried about it now but we were very incensed afterward. Oh sure, well naturally ... (arrived 1950, speaker's emphasis)

[They] paid full fare including half fare for three children ... Paid full fare ... It was a matter of paying your own fare and in fact I believe that they had to borrow money to do so. (arrived 1950, speaker's emphasis)

Earlier migrants generally paid more than did later migrants - in all kinds of ways. They paid more under the old subsidy system, they were poorer generally due to conditions in post-war Holland, they had to put up with more discomfort travelling in over-crowded troop ships rather than flying out and they paid more emotionally because they were leaving Holland "forever" for a largely unknown land whereas later migrants could think about returning if things did not work out (see Chapter III). One early migrant, who arrived in 1952, is rather bitter about these inequities:

Later on they made it everybody got assisted passage ... And then we got (laughing) nothing

when we came here. We had the same than anybody else. We had to pay the whole fare and for our children so - a year later it changes - they had to pay a bit to it. After that - I think one or two years later [she is referring to the 1955 system] it changed altogether. Everybody got it free ... You could buy a house for it then ... Oh well if you come here you don't know the rules. You miss out on a lot of things - they don't tell you anything! Because ... as soon as you're here they don't want to know you (laughs). That is true. That is everywhere.

There is no answer to many of these complaints, other than to say that times changed and some people were luckier than others. It is this "luck" which is so baffling and so enraging that seems to me to be the heart of the matter. Why should some people apparently pay so little and do so much better than others? The different subsidy systems, changing selection criteria and conditions all ensured that some people would seem luckier than others; the "system" fostered such feelings.

In exchange some honour accrued to the early migrants, who paid so much to migrate:

Right in the beginning the people who are here for 35 or 36 years, they were very good together because everyone was poor. Everyone was in the same boat, renting a garage somewhere or in a hostel. They really needed each other and it seemed they had beautiful parties. (my emphasis, privately sponsored 1956)

They were so poor, apparently, and what they went through in the beginning - and first of all they were very poor when they left. It wasn't so good in Holland, I suppose [there] was a certain poverty, and especially the ones that left then were the ones that were poor. Cause the ones who had (it) better stayed. So they had a terrible time apparently. If you hear the stories, they came in those big centres ... oh it must have been terrible. (my emphasis, arrived 1979)

Like all "good old days" stories these are highly instructive. Those days were good precisely because they were so bad: Holland was poor and Dutch migrants were very poor. They contain within them strong criticism of those who came later - who have had it too easy and cannot get on together. They are, therefore, stories which exclude newcomers. But they also communicate the stigma of being poor and desperate, which those early migrants were. Later arrivals are quick to assert that they were never that poor. Similarly, people telling their own stories about the early days tend to distance themselves - through jokes, by emphasising how much worse it was for someone else or by re-counting how they beat the odds and succeeded. Children's stories can be more rounded, more complete than their parents because they are less committed to the meaning of the story and may see the migration in less heroic terms because they did not make the decision to migrate. (This issue is discussed at greater length in Chapter VIII.)

The other self payers - the single adults and the middle class travellers - do not enjoy the same heroic reputation, because they did not have to endure the same hardships nor were they so poor. Some hardly resemble migrants at all:

Oh, but we didn't go through all those experiences most of the migrants went through ... I took care that we had enough money with us as I said, "Well, migrating to Australia I don't want to go without money ... Within three months of our arrival we moved into our house ... The others lived in a tent or garage for years". (arrived 1954)

The other group which did not "really" migrate were people brought out to Australia by their employers. This small élite includes



skilled tradesmen and professional white collar workers:

We also did not in a sense come out as migrants because he had an appointment here ... so they paid the fare and all the rest of it. We were treated like VIP's: fantastic. (my emphasis, arrived 1964)

But you know when we were talking about all those camps ... We haven't the experience cause we just moved. We just moved house that was all ... We were thoroughly checked over, to see if the marriage was good and everything ... You have to be really good otherwise because there were about 1,000 applications and there were only 12 carpenters who they sent. (my emphasis, arrived 1952)

This group came out for the same reasons as other "real" migrants (the men came to Australia for work opportunities) but the important difference from other "real" migrants is that they were chosen, because they were so special: "We were treated like VIP's"; we were "really good" (our marriage was good, my husband was a good carpenter). Clearly these people came as individuals; they were "quality" rather than "quantity" people. Like people who (literally) paid their own way and unlike "assisted" migrants, one could not possible suggest that they in any sense had been "gotten rid of". They were bought and (they would insist) for a high price.

#### Being Assisted

We got assistance - 75 per cent - from the fare to Australia plus what they call "landing [money]" landensluit. You got #25 to get in this country, to start you off. But that was all included in the organisation with the Dutch government and the Australian government. We got nothing to do with it ... we just applied, they did the rest. (tradesman, arrived in 1951, my emphasis)

The majority of informants were assisted. Some of the more fortunate had friends or relatives in Australia who organised private housing for them, but for most being assisted meant staying for several weeks or more often months in one of the migrant reception centres, such as Bonegilla (an ex-military camp) near Albury and then, once the men found work, in a holding centre for women and children until permanent housing could be arranged. It was in these migrant camps where the reality of being an assisted migrant was spelled out. They were made to realise there that where they came from no longer mattered; Dutch, Polish or Russian, they were now all "migrants". As noted earlier (in Chapter III) Dutch migrants had a reputation for disliking migrant accommodation and for moving out more rapidly than other migrant groups. Several informants have suggested that this was the main purpose of migrant accommodation, that is, to be sufficiently uncomfortable so as to encourage a short stay.<sup>4</sup> I suspect that for many Dutch their time in the camps was a profoundly humiliating experience, which is why they left as soon as possible. Living in a garage, it seems, was preferable to the migrant camps. In general, informants have reacted one of two ways when I asked them about the camps - with little to say, good or bad, or volubly and negatively. No one said that they liked living in the camps. I interpret both reactions as an attempt to distance themselves from those experiences, in particular, what the camps revealed about "who" they were in Australia. Following - are two accounts:

Scheyville<sup>5</sup> isn't there anymore. Such a shame (sarcastically) ... When we came there it was

pouring rain and hele [all] Scheyville was built under a hill so we get all the water coming in the front door ... and the other side out ... Displaced persons and everything was there ... There were Germans and we just had come from Holland not so long ago and the camp police was German and they didn't like the Dutch (laugh) ... That is why the camps are so rotten for ... So they make them especial so rotten that you should get out as quick as possible. (arrived 1954)

And then they put us in Bonegilla and that was tinned roofs like that (gesturing) and it was hard board partitions between the next mob and you got one big room [for a family] ... The whole lot, we had Russians living next door to us and across the way we had Poles and they hated one another's guts ... That's what we thought - it was the end of the world - and my father looked at it and he said to me later on, "It was like going to the camps" [he had been a prisoner in Germany during the War] ... There were no paths, it was all mud and it had been raining. They [the residents] were just walking about in these big old army boots. He looked at it and said later, "It looked like a camp. I thought we would die in that place". But he didn't want to go back! ... My mother was crying all the time, she wanted to go back, "I want to go back! I can't - the children will starve and die. This place is full of disease ..." It was a miserable sort of existence cause they were taking it out one another as well as the people around them all the time ... My mother would say, "You and your looking for adventure all the time, look what you've got us into!" My father would say "Ja this is it, stick with it". But he was real stubborn but later on told me that he was very close to going back. (speaker's emphasis, son of Dutch migrants, arrived 1956)<sup>6</sup>

Other informants tell a similar story (see Wijnen 1983b for other such accounts): the initial, horrified reaction; how much they resembled concentration camps; being grouped with all kinds of persons; the dirt and primitive conditions and so on. What comes through is the feeling of incomprehension that they should have

left their homeland to re-live the very worst of what they thought they had left behind, and anger and mortification that they should be treated as if they were worthless, non-descript people.

No one was really very interested in their complaints. The Commonwealth considered that as surrogate British, the Dutch could not be expected to tolerate such conditions (by implication, other migrants would tolerate even like the camps) and let them stay in more "civilised" accommodation, when there was space (when the British did not need it). For the Netherlands, such complaints - if they got back home and were believed - threatened the continued emigration flow to Australia. The Dutch government protected itself against this possibility by claiming that such reports reflected on the "new" migrants, that is, those migrants who were in the camps complaining, thus placing responsibility for their plight squarely on the victims of the situation (see Chapter III). It was a charge which many Dutch migrants were prepared to believe; no one had forced them to emigrate, it was their choice. Or, as the wife (quoted above) said to her husband: "You and your looking for adventure all the time, look what you've got us into!" It would seem that the only way out for the hapless Dutch, the only way they could receive any consideration, was as surrogate British. After all, it was better than nothing.

### First Impressions

Getting a job was an urgent necessity for Dutchmen who arrived in Australia with their families and with no money: it was the first step towards leaving the camps and establishing their own

homes. It was in the workplace where they made their first real contact with Australia. Like other post-war immigrants they had been brought to Australia to work on far-flung industrial projects and most of these men - the semi-skilled, unskilled and tradesmen - found their first jobs there - at Geelong, Newcastle, Woolongong, the Waragamba Dam, and the Snowy Mountains as well as on farms and on the railways. These jobs were often quite isolating. The work took men from their families who remained in holding centres if there was no suitable housing, or it involved locating families in small rural communities where there were few if any other Dutch but there was a house available.

As discussed in Chapter IV, the greatest opportunities in Australia for Dutch workers have been in the industrial, building sectors. This has not been without its own problems. For example, several informants claim that their Dutch trade qualifications were not recognised in Australia, however, a more common problem has been adjusting to the way work was done or not done in Australia:

That was hard to adjust - and I don't call it an adjustment. I call it a bit of a degradation, work degradation ... the ding [thing] is slow, slow, slow ... That is not to put myself forward, but the tempo of work and quality of work is so much better overseas as here. And dat [that] is hard to get used to.  
(tradesman)

Most of the tradesmen interviewed consider themselves superior to Australian tradesmen, and say that this fact has caused them trouble on work sites. They tell stories about being ordered to slow down and "take it easy" (or lose their jobs), getting in

trouble with incompetent Australian bosses for telling them their business and - to add insult to injury - having to work with other non-English speaking migrants (whereas they could speak English). They are called "arrogant" Dutchmen just because they know what they are doing (and telling people so; see Introduction on the Dutch as "workers"). Some men I have interviewed avoided these problems by going into business for themselves but this has been, I suggest, only partly successful. It has proven to be financially risky. Judging by their backgrounds most would have had insufficient capital, and they still have had to work to some extent with Australian tradesmen. More importantly, it can involve isolation and non-recognition of their abilities. Such work "adjustment" has been for Dutch men one of the unexpected costs of migration - and a high one too - considering that their reputation as workers is one of the few effective rejoinders to the suggestion that, as assisted migrants, they were "surplus" (and not very good at what they did). I would suggest that this is one reason why the man quoted above (who ended up working as a self employed tradesman, for the reasons I have just outlined) calls his adjustment a "degradation".

The living is - everything is easier. You can do what you like ... [for example], you can open a butcher shop, you don't have to be qualified.

This rather back-handed compliment exemplifies how many Dutch men I spoke to see work, achievement and life generally in Australia. "Easy" seems to pretty well sum it up. This may reflect in part Australia's working class ethos, the popular

notion that Australia is a classless society where no man is your master (most Dutch migrants belonging to the working class; see Chapter IV) but they also voice this idea as outsiders. What they are articulating is the dream of migration, the promise of a new and better future in a new land. They came to Australia "knowing" that Holland held no future for them (they had been told that often enough) and knowing also that Australia was an "easy" country to get into (see Chapter III), where anybody - including themselves - could do well. However, this "easiness" (like the ease of assisted migration) contained its own pitfalls; one being the low value attached to being an Australian-Dutch migrant compared to other Dutch who went to other, supposedly more selective destinations. Another catch is the fact that despite its "easiness", many Dutch migrants have been, in their terms, failures. For example, among my informants, individuals have not made large amounts of money, their businesses have failed or they never even managed to set up a business of their own. How does one make sense of failure in a country which, unlike the Netherlands, supposedly has no standards; where, for example, any fool can set up his own butcher shop? Again, I am asking how Dutch men deal with responsibility, this time, their responsibility for realising the dream of "easy" success (see Chapter VIII).

The "easiness" masked other, harder realities, as one man learned after he became a professional, white collar worker:

In the beginning, we thought this was absolutely marvellous. Everybody was free, no class system to speak of. Fairly easy relationships could be established with

Australians, but then it proved it remained easy, we didn't become close ... and also the gradual realisation that there was a class system and a caste system. And you felt ... only accepted to a certain extent.

Life in Australia was "easy" providing one did not cross certain boundaries. It was easy (in the 1950's) to be accepted and find work provided one was a blue collar worker and as long as one took it "easy". Otherwise, it was difficult. Similarly, it was easy to get on "easily" (superficially) with Australians and much harder to get to know Australians personally, away from the work site. The Australian laziness actually limited relationships and possibilities; keeping them as migrants at a distance and in their places. Many informants suggest that it was based on a profound indifference as to who they were. One woman offered the following example:

Here, whether you go in the garden in your pyjamas with your dressing gown, nobody cares. In Holland ooh!

Life in Australia is easy because you can do what you like; "no one wants to know" not out of tolerance, they say, but because no one wants to know you. (This question is taken up further in Chapter VII.)

Dutch women's entry into Australia was more gradual than their husbands'. In the very early days, while their husbands were away working, they were often left behind in the migrant camps to care for and raise children under quite difficult conditions and later, most stayed at home with children (see Chapter V, for summary of informants' employment histories). What might be termed the



masculine "adventure" motif of migration as a new beginning has had little relevance for these women. What comes through in their accounts are feelings of loss and loneliness, and the need to overcome these feelings. They did not come to Australia as "workers"; their role, I suggest, was to compensate for the losses entailed by migration and re-build homes and families in Australia. For them, migration meant making a home, in particular, a "Dutch" home in Australia.

As already discussed, Dutch migrants did not like living in the camps because it meant being lumped together with all kinds of supposedly less desirable people. This meant, in some cases, eating what they considered inedible food surrounded by dirty, ill-mannered people and, as one informant recounts about a particularly bad camp, parents sleeping in one small room and children several huts away "running wild all over the place". Women describe their efforts to keep their families separate in their own cramped sleeping quarters and cooking their own meals over small primus stoves. Faced with such temporary and inadequate housing (whether it be in camps, sheds, garages or shared housing) the task of feeding their children "properly" and keeping them clean and disciplined would have taken all their energy, with little left over for "exploring" Australia.

As well, they had to cope with their own feelings of homesickness which turned them further inwards on their families.

(The problem of homesickness is discussed in Chapter VII.)

We didn't have money to pay the truck [to move house] but we borrowed the money from this friend and poor old chairs and all (laughs) put them on the truck and I was feeling so

poor, you know, I never felt like that in mijn [my] life sitting on that truck ... [and later] That [feeling] always stay. I remember when we were first here. I was sitting voor [in front of] the window every morning with the knitting and watching the mailman if he have a letter and I cried with every letter but I didn't want to go back. I said "I am here, I stay here". (speaker's emphasis)

I remember only in the beginning, when we moved to Canberra and life was getting a little more settled because we had a house ... and sometimes that, all of a sudden, it struck you to [the heart] the utter loneliness. Because everything was so different - and it made you sick. It really made you sick and the only thing how I could compensate was [to] get out and mix with the rest of the family. (speaker's emphasis)

Predictably, the first important milestone in their lives, when things started to improve and they felt more settled, was establishing their own home. This was premised on their husbands finding permanent work in Australia, which usually involved wives and children being left behind in a holding centre until accommodation was located and they could be sent for. Some women did not go through this stage and moved more or less directly (perhaps via a caravan park or after staying with relatives) into homes of their own. Again, this depended on the kind of work their husbands did, whether or not private housing and a job had been pre-arranged privately, and how long it took to save money for private housing. For some, the only way out of the camps was to find a job which also offered housing, sometimes pretty terrible housing at that. The "typical" story involved then a series of moves over several years (in combination with job changes), from migrant camps to caravan parks, garages, shared

flats etc. Hopefully, each move was an improvement on the last, more closely approximating the ideal of a home of one's own.

Once in a house, the next task was not just to furnish it but to make it as "Dutch" a home as possible. These women wanted their homes to be more decorated, more cosy, more homely than the Australian houses they saw. They wanted their houses to be gezellig, like a Dutch house should be.<sup>8</sup> Women I interviewed can readily explain what this means and why an Australian house is not gezellig. For example:

Because we are living more inside at home (in the Netherlands) the houses are smaller, the weather is bad, you've got to live inside. The house is tiny, always clean ... They're always ready (for visitors) by 10 or 11 o'clock, the housewife is always [ready] ... As soon as you come, about two o'clock in the afternoon, when you come we make a cup of tea and then have another cup of tea when you feel like it ... And then later on, we have a cup of coffee with a biscuit. And then after that, we go home and in the meantime, we talk (laugh) ... Also we have more in the surroundings of the house. We have a table in the middle. Really Australian people, they have everything along the side and may be an ironing board in the middle [I laugh and she joins in]. Of course, we've got ironing too, but we keep it away. We keep the ironing in the bedroom ... It's not there day in, day out, because that's something - an atmosphere - no, we don't like it.

Dutch homes are more "furnished" than Australian houses, especially in the living-room. The windows, typically, are framed by lace curtains and there is often a small rug on the coffee table which is encircled by large, comfortable arm chairs. There is a great deal to look at - copper miniatures, wall hangings, wall tiles, wall clocks, paintings and pot plants - much of which is miniaturised and hanging on the walls, as if otherwise the room

would be too small to hold everything. With its indirect soft lighting and armchairs placed invitingly around the coffee table, the living-room is the focal point of the house; to such an extent that the Dutch have been described as having a "living-room culture" (Taft 1961, Warmbrunn 1965). However, the "Dutch home" is more than a well worn assemblage of old fashioned memorabilia and clichés (which some "newer" Dutch have implied). A middle class woman whose home definitely does not conform to the stereotype of the cosy Dutch home still knows what a Dutch home - her home - should be like, and recognises the difference between this and an Australian home.

Although I'm quite severe [in my taste] - and not have little knick-knacks here and there, many things on the wall - for me, the Australian homes look a bit run-of-the-mill. As if they are bought at Norman Ross ... They had no sfeer [atmosphere], so bare. You see there is a difference between "severe" and "bare". Bare is, for instance, there are no plants in the house. There are a few of these formal pictures, chairs along the sides and nothing in the middle. It is all of a colour, has no colour whatsoever. Unlived in - a musty smell - and no lights! ... It is just as if you cannot do anything in that room but sit! And watch television but not read a book or play music ... In Holland, it's the living-room where you live. The living-room is never a room where you [do] not live (laugh). (speaker's emphasis)

She is describing the same "cold", bare, anonymous, unwelcoming room as compared to the room where one "lives" viz the living-room in the Dutch house.

My informants say that Dutch houses are gezellig because the Netherlands is so crowded and has such a cold climate whereas Australians live more outdoors. In other words Dutch people have

no choice, they have to live inside in small rooms. What they are really saying is that they like to live this way, and here they are making several kinds of statements. They are talking about matters of taste and aesthetics, and rejecting Australian homes as nondescript, even ugly. They are also speaking metaphorically; the "Dutch home" is how life should be (Bourdieu 1973). A Dutch home is "warm", with an inviting cosy atmosphere which is ready for and encourages sociability. Like the furniture lay-out, the household schedule accommodates visitors. Thus, more happens inside a Dutch home and socialising - parties, birthdays, anniversaries, Christmas (that is, Saint Nicholas day on 5 December), coffee mornings - is home and family oriented. They are describing what various observers claim is a distinctive Dutch family oriented culture (cf Keur and Keur 1955, Goudsblom 1967, Shetter 1971), but they are also talking about their perceptions of life in Australia or what it is like to be a Dutch migrant in Australia. "Really" Australian houses are "bare" and cold and not very hospitable (a common complaint being that Australians hardly ever invite them into their homes). Living-rooms are not for "living", they are for guests or for watching television. In Australian houses a distinction is made between the living-room/parlour which is for guests and the more intimate "family" room/kitchen which is reserved for family, close friends and everyday life, and they say that they feel excluded by this. In an Australian house, guests must wait until the middle of the afternoon, when the visit is almost over, for their cup of tea. Cups of tea are not pressed on guests to welcome their arrival;

there are no cups of coffee, chocolate and cakes to punctuate and prolong the visit; the table is not ready; the chairs are so far apart. It is all so bare, so unwelcoming. By rejecting the Australian house, they are saying that they do not want to be an anonymous, excluded kind of person: they do not want to be a migrant. They are also prescribing the cure to their predicament, which is to fill (even over-fill) their "Dutch" homes with cosiness, life and significance.

To accomplish this would have required a great deal of effort as well as cultural knowledge on the part of these women. It was very difficult in the early years to acquire the necessary props: the furniture, lighting, decorative bits and pieces, the coffee and cakes (let alone the people). Most started out their lives in Australia with what would fit into a packing crate and such goods, even, if they could be afforded, were not yet available in Australia. In those days, people arrived expecting to be "pioneers", to live in tents and build their own homes, and that must have been what it felt like. Just scraping together the necessary household effects (often second-hand) would have been a major accomplishment, let alone making a house cosy. More affluent, independent migrants (who were not restricted in terms of what they could bring with them; see Chapter III) arrived better equipped:

When my husband wanted to migrate I said "Listen the dining-room set is going with me or I am not going". I have heard so many stories, people living in chicken sheds and sitting on packing cases, fruit crates. Not me! Either the dining-room suite is going (laugh) or I am not going. So, we had a sideboard, table and chairs. (speaker's emphasis)

And not just "any" dining-room suite but a good Dutch one. In fact, the only furniture they have bought in Australia are their beds. She was not going to Australia as a poor Dutch migrant who had to "make do" with furniture made from packing crates or with poor quality Australian furniture. However, informants tell me, Australia gradually changed for the better. It became less Australian, thanks to all the post-war migrants, and they could eventually afford the nicer furnishings which were becoming available. However, I would say, that the best way to furnish one's house would still be to buy furnishings in the Netherlands while on a holiday. As well as ensuring that they were of the best quality and up-to-date, this was a way of symbolically undoing the original trip when they came with little more than the clothes they wore. It shows everyone, here and back home, that they have really made it.

As I have already alluded, food is an essential part of Dutch hospitality: good strong coffee, sweet rich biscuits, tender meat and vegetables. In the early days in Australia finding such good Dutch food to serve to family and guests was difficult.

Like the meat, we were used to refined meat, really nice cut, nice slice and everything and here when we went to the butcher well it was chops ... and all those little pieces of bone through it and everything. We couldn't stomach that in the beginning ... The meat here still - I do not like to eat it ... No the food in the beginning I could not [stomach] and then you started to get een [a] Dutch butcher and he came along the door ... and I just started ordering the meat bij [from] him ... That was an improvement. (speaker's emphasis)

Similarly, she did not like, "could not stomach", Australian

biscuits and cakes ("it was all that mock cream") and like other Dutch women she "straight away" started to do her own baking, although she had never baked in the Netherlands. It had not been necessary, because of all the excellent bakeries nearby: in the Netherlands, prepared food had been fit to eat. Also, to get more "refined" (delicate, tender) Dutch vegetables, seeds originally had been imported from the Netherlands, now it is possible to buy them locally from Dutch nurserymen.

### Summary

Two main ideas come out of this analysis of migration stories: how different men's and women's stories are from each other, and the significance attached to how one came to Australia. I shall discuss the latter theme first.

Based on this material, I would argue that "how" one came to Australia (whether or not one was government assisted and when one came, early or late) has many of the same connotations for informants as it had for the Dutch government, and to a more limited extent for the Australian government. Clearly, it was preferable to be an independent migrant and pay one's way or be sponsored by an employer than to be an assisted migrant, which seemed to carry the taint of being "surplus" rather than needed (in part, I suspect, because being needed by Australia was not perceived by informants as much of a compliment. Australia wanted "anybody"). However, only a small élite actually paid their way. For most it was a question of asserting their worth relative to other Dutch and other migrants generally. This is illustrated by



what I would describe as two classic stories; the first being how "certain", less deserving Dutch came later and were advantaged materially because they "paid" less towards the subsidy, and conditions in Australia had improved. On the face of it, the narrator is complaining about how unfair, how irrational it all is. The moral of the story is that they paid their way compared to later arrivals and are worth more as people in their relative poverty. After all, emigration is a private responsibility. The other story is about the dirty, less civilised people - the other migrants - they encountered in the migrant camps. It was in these camps where the full import of being an assisted migrant in Australia was revealed; there were no "private" arrangements or privileges to protect Dutch migrants from the knowledge that at rock bottom they were as anonymous and no more valuable than any other migrant. Understandably, they wanted to distance themselves as much as possible from that category of non-person, by cooking separate meals and by leaving the camps as quickly as they could.

My other proposition is that there are two different "models" (Ardener 1972:XI) of migration operating here: for men migration has been about "adventure" and going into the unknown, whereas for women it has been primarily about "home" and going inside. As a general rule men have initiated the action in migration stories, whether those stories are told by men or women. The migration originates with them; it was in their "character" (they were restless, not close to their families or they were by nature "loners"), and it was their decision to migrate. They take responsibility for migration, women do not. (The question of

responsibility is taken up again in Chapter VII).

Whereas men are defined as outsiders, women remain the "moral centre(s)" of their families (Beijer 1961:312) even though they are migrants. The Dutch housewife, we are told, is "world famous ... a shining symbol of cleanliness and order" (Haase 1958:90) and emigration, it seems, has only enhanced her bourgeois virtues. Without her a Dutchman cannot have a gezellig home: with an Australian wife, I am told, he most certainly will not. She has followed her husband's lead to Australia as a homemaker (but also as a home-breaker, having left her own family behind in the Netherlands; see Chapter VII). Her responsibility was to ensure that her children and husband stayed in Australia. Ironically, she was to do this by building a "Dutch home" in Australia, setting the stage for tension between inside/Dutch and outside Australian worlds (a dynamic which is explored in the next chapter). Finally, I would suggest that feeling so poor, alone and homesick made making a Dutch home a very real necessity for her and that rather than opening the door to adventure the overall effect of emigration has been to "envelope" (Goudsblom op cit:138) the Dutch housewife even more securely in what is left of the family circle. The notion of men as outsiders and women as insiders, and the relationship between masculine and feminine models are the focus of the following chapter.

## FOOTNOTES

- 1 This is meant figuratively. In terms of actual numbers only 13 of my 48 informants came to Australia as adult males. However, virtually all of my informants describe their father/husband's decision in similar terms.
- 2 This would be consistent with established dominance patterns in the Dutch family as described by Keur and Keur (1955:110).
- 3 Nuchteid; soberness, matter-of-factness (from Nederlands Engels, p 177).
- 4 I would agree with them. While not explicitly stated, such an attitude is consistent with a policy of migrant assimilation; the "problem" cases being people who like the migrant camps and over-stay their welcome rather those people who move prematurely into sub-standard housing.
- 5 Migrant holding centre near Sydney.
- 6 Later, he remarks how these experiences helped shape his own critical attitude towards Australia. His father, he says (who made the decision to emigrate) is not prepared to be so critical. I discuss children's attitudes towards their parents in Chapter VII.
- 7 They bought all their furniture second-hand in Australia with their £50 landing money. She "hated" this, especially having to buy old beds, and regretted leaving behind all her "nice" furniture in the Netherlands.
- 8 The concept of gezelligheid is discussed at greater length in Chapter VII.

## CHAPTER VII

### INSIDE-OUTSIDE: THE PARADOX OF DUTCH IDENTITY

The inside/outside distinction and going inside in order to find Dutch identity are recurring motifs in this ethnography. Assimilation, invisibility, home, character, the zuilen (see Chapter IV for discussion of the role of the zuilen in relation to Dutch religious groupings and Dutch identity in Australia) are all concepts closely associated with the Dutch in Australia and each is concerned with interiority and identity. They are, as I argue in my theoretical introduction, part of the rhetoric about "who" the Dutch are as a people. This chapter looks at how Dutch migrants use space, specifically Dutch versus Australian "space", to talk about Dutch identity in Australia. It sets out two contrasting models of identity which are entitled here as "migration/assimilation", where one travels from the outside into Australia, and "going home" where inside is Dutch. These models build on my earlier arguments about the "Dutch" home in Australia, and gender differences and meaning, namely, that for men migration meant "adventure" and going out into the unknown while for women it was about "home", homesickness and home-making.

The Dutch family, I argue, contains both these meanings in that it is a cultural symbol of Dutchness and assimilation; Dutch culture being a "family" culture (see Chapter IV), and the primary "channel" of Dutch migration and assimilation being that same Dutch family. I am interested then in what Yanagisako (1979)

refers to as the "interpenetration" of cultural domains, that is, how these different meanings are played out within Dutch families, in particular, between husbands and wives, and parents and children, and in turn, what this reveals about Dutch identity in Australia.

"Migration/assimilation"

So, they came here - "we are going to assimilate" - and they did that. They just virtually forgot that they were Dutch, as much as they could. For the sake of the children. Thinking that - because at that time if you think back to the late 50's and early 60's, the migrant still wasn't a nice person to be. He was put down, "You're a wog". Whilst I think the Dutch wouldn't suffer from that as much ... From physical appearance one can't tell - really - that they are sort of "wogs". I mean they don't have the sort of dark features of say the Spanish, the Italians or the Greeks ... A lot of these [Dutch] children, if they were brought up, speaking English, they would fit in very well; just straight-away on physical appearance. No accent; being accepted. (informant, second generation Dutch Australian, speaker's emphasis)

In "migration/assimilation", migration is equated with assimilation; migrants are to be absorbed or assimilated into the larger receiving society. The outside, where migrants come from (as in birthplace and culture) is to be taken into the inside or host society (see Chapter I for discussion of assimilation as social theory). In the case of Dutch migrants, the idea of "migration/assimilation" was negotiated by both the Dutch and Australian governments. It was a definition of migration and society which suited both their purposes (see Chapter III); it was also one with which Dutch migrants, for various reasons, were prepared to identify themselves. As the informant quoted above

says, "We (we Dutch) are going to assimilate". The net result was that Dutch migrants became identified as assimilated and assimilable (because they were already so racially and culturally like Australians and because they virtually offered themselves up for "consumption"). Their double identification raises a question which is central to all inside/outside constructs, that is, the problematic, permeable nature of boundaries (Barth 1969). In terms of the Dutch, is it that they have always really been "inside" or are they pretending to be something they are not, for their own "invisible" Dutch reasons and thus are really still "outside"? Are they in or are they out? From the perspective of Dutch migrants who strive to be assimilated one might ask, how do they know when they have gotten "inside" and are no longer Dutch? How does a person stop being Dutch?

I would suggest that many Dutchmen took a rather limited view of assimilation and becoming Australian. For many of my informants assimilating meant "getting ahead"; getting ahead materially of where they would have been had they stayed in the Netherlands (based on the belief that the Netherlands had no "future") and ahead of other less assimilated, more "backwards" migrants.<sup>1</sup> In order to get ahead, they had to find work and speak English; above all, they had to fit in. This meant taking whatever work was available (as earlier discussed), mainly in the industrial/trades area, and "never" speaking Dutch in front of Australians. Another sign of assimilation would be, I suggest, marrying an Australian woman. Although none of my informants actually came out and said this, many informants claimed that this made a big difference, especially to homelife which, given the

cultural significance attached to Dutch homelife, effectively meant Dutchness. By way of illustration and to develop these points further, I present here a case history of an "assimilated" Dutchman.

Mr D came to Australia in the 1950's as a single man and now describes himself as Australian "not" Dutch; so Australian that he evinced almost total disinterest in my research-topic, Dutch migrants in Australia. They had nothing to do with him. However, he agreed to the interview and despite his manifest disinterest, I persisted in my line of questioning because I found his stance so interesting.<sup>2</sup> His Australian wife was present throughout the interview and proved to be more interested in answering my questions about him than he was.

Mr and Mrs D are talking here about those Dutch migrants who have not assimilated and comparing them with Mr D who has assimilated:

Mr D: Well - see there are people that say, "Well I am saving because I go back", but they never really break the ties so they never assimilate ... People that have been here 30, 35 years and they still not assimilated. For the simple reason, well, they have so many contacts there and they still seem to think of -. It's the only thing they talk about. It's the only thing they read about. They read the Dutch papers and they -

Mrs D: They just don't live in Australia.

Mr D: Possibly both of them are Dutch so they've never really had an Australian life style ... I came to Australia and I - had to make a success of it so as I [was] a profession or technical man I had to get myself into the technology here and into the situation here so -

Mrs D: The first five months in Sydney he

boarded in a Dutch home with Dutch people from the church where they spoke Dutch totally and he didn't - and you had to - you just wanted to get English you said -

Mr D: It slows you down.

Self: You mean being in a Dutch environment at home?

Mr D: Because you don't make an effort to [speak English] ...

Mr D has lived up to his own words. He left a Dutch household in Australia because it "slowed him down", that is to say, it slowed down his assimilation. Judging from his "Australian" living-room (see Chapter VI on the difference between Australian and Dutch living-rooms), the instant coffee we drank (rather than strong, hot "Dutch" coffee) and his Australian wife, Mr D now lives in an Australian house "in" Australia (to paraphrase Mrs D). Mr D has "broken the ties" with his own family. He says that he did this before he came to Australia; according to Mr D, once a person leaves home it is no longer his to return to. (The issue of children leaving home is explored in this chapter and in Chapter VIII.) Like many men I interviewed Mr D was already "out" of the family before he migrated so that "whether I lived in one part of the country or overseas, it was only a matter of distance" (rather than emotion). I query him on this point, suggesting that it is quite a lot further to Australia than between points within the Netherlands (something other informants have emphasised). However, this does not alter his point of view. His family could not have understood what he was doing in any case, he says. Since coming to Australia, Mr D has been back to the Netherlands and predictably is not interested in making a return trip; he



considers that there is nothing there for him now that he is "out of the system". Mrs D has visited his family several times and seems to know them better than he does. She enjoyed the Dutch hospitality and comments that she cannot understand how "anybody" (by implication, her husband) would want to leave all that behind.

Like other Australian women married to Dutch men<sup>3</sup> Mrs D seems to be more interested in the Dutch language than her husband, although she cannot speak Dutch as Mr D refused to teach her. Not only is Mr D disinterested in speaking Dutch, he claims that he has "lost" his Dutch and is no longer competent in it; as if it were some thing that could be set aside or misplaced. "It" no longer has anything to do with him, except to the extent that being a Dutch migrant may have "slowed" him down a bit:

Dutch and English are two separate languages to me. There is no translation ... I'm not thinking in Dutch although there are still certain things that I don't get right ... sentence construction that sometimes don't come out the right way. People know from that I am [a migrant] or because I never lose my accent but I have no trouble with the language [English]. I fully understand it.

In fact, Mr D is so "Australianised", that is, non-Dutch, that when he visited his family in the Netherlands that he told them he was more comfortable speaking English than Dutch. His family found this hard to believe but apparently were convinced after his visit.

Just as Mr D is outspokenly critical of those Dutch (and migrants generally) who do not assimilate, other Dutch informants are critical of his "type" of Dutchman who (they say) pretends to be Australian. Informants describe how they show up such people by speaking Dutch to them and forcing them to acknowledge that

they still understand Dutch and are Dutch if not to speak Dutch. From the way they describe these encounters I conclude that such people take a certain pleasure in putting other Dutch in their place. For example:

Well I find it a bit of a pity. I usually get mad when I do. You see there's a group of people together. They're all Dutch and some of them, they always speak English: they never, ever speak Dutch. I usually go in Dutch on purpose. But they're all completely Dutch and some of them - oh God, it's incredible! They don't want to speak Dutch. Not one word ... They won't and they can. Oh, so some will say, "Oh, it's easy" [to retain the Dutch language]. It's not easy for everybody, which is - possible, say - when they are married to an Australian, and the kids. Oh, I suppose you forget a bit about it. If you're an adult [when you migrate] you will never forget your language. I'm sure you can't. (speaker's emphasis)

Whether such people cannot or will not speak English is a moot point. According to their critics, by refusing to speak Dutch - even when they are alone with other Dutch ("all completely Dutch") and there is no external pressure to speak English - they are denying who they are. Like Mr D, who thinks in English and lives in an Australian home, they are asserting that even inside they are Australian. They used to be Dutch; that is outside. Other Dutch do not believe them ("it's incredible") and as the woman above says, it makes them angry.

Informants are critical of other Dutch not only for refusing to speak Dutch but also for the quality of English they do speak. Mr D is quick to admit that his English is less than perfect (see above), perhaps for this very reason (to ward off criticisms of his English). Another informant, Mr L who, like Mr D, came to Australia in his early 20's "finally" said to such a man (who

refused to speak Dutch):

"Well look mate, you better start speaking Dutch again because your English is absolutely horrible" ...I thought it was ridiculous - trying to be more interesting. Trying to be with it all the time [ie assimilated]. This is a Dutch trait in a way<sup>4</sup> ... I don't know if you [as a non-Dutch person] notice that tendency - particularly lower class Dutch people who have become so Australianised, in the sense of "ockerised" that it is unbelievable. I find that disgusting, myself. Not disgusting but I find it annoying, that is a better word. (speaker's emphasis)

Needless to say, Mr L belongs to the middle class and speaks excellent English and Dutch. He is telling this man that he is a failure, even as an "ocker". Whom does he think he is kidding? Certainly not Mr L or Australians with his "horrible" English. In this context, a middle class Dutchman addressing a working class Dutchman (who claims not to be Dutch) as "mate" is a very effective put-down. Obviously, they are not "mates".

Mr L is blaming assimilation or "ockerisation" on lower class Dutch; middle class Dutch would not behave in such a way, an opinion shared I suspect by many middle class educated Dutch.<sup>5</sup> My own impression is that there are middle class Dutch equally prepared to "pass" as Australians for much the same reason, namely, to get ahead. However, the "average" assimilated Dutchman would probably be this "ocker" character, precisely because most Dutch migrants in Australia are working class, and this is the Australia and Australian English to which they would have access. Mr L is referring, I suggest, to two sorts of "ridiculous" behaviour; Australian "ockerism" which middle and lower class informants have said they find repugnant, and Dutch migrants' efforts to assimilate into Australia. By ascribing such

"ridiculous" behaviour to Dutch migrants, Mr L is blaming the victim in much the same way as the Dutch government did, that is, holding individuals responsible for the results of government policy.

In deriding the kind of English spoken by working class Dutch migrants, Mr L also reveals his own Dutch class prejudices. To amplify this point, I include here comments of another, middle class informant:

Mrs O: Some people are still speaking in [Dutch] very fluently. I tend to always speak Dutch [with Dutch migrants] and then it is a bit easier [getting other people to speak Dutch]. But the people that are my friends are generally the better educated [Dutch]. What irritates me is an uneducated Dutch person speaking English. I think that's the most horrible sound they produce. I find that horrible ... It's the sound that irritates me. I think that it's just not nice. It sounds coarse.

Self: Is it comparable to what their Dutch would be like?

Mrs O: I don't like that either; no, no (laugh) hmm.

In ideal terms, and from a middle class perspective, lower class Dutch migrants speak a vulgarised Dutch known as plat<sup>6</sup> and horrible sounding "ocker"; and middle class Dutch would speak standard, "nice" English and Dutch. The kind of English a Dutchman speaks is culturally and socially significant to other Dutch as is the kind of Dutch he speaks. It would seem then that speaking English, that symbol of Dutch assimilation in Australia (see Chapter IV) is part of a Dutch system of meanings. If speaking English is not a passport "in", if refusing to speak

Dutch or speaking "ocker" is typically Dutch, how does one get inside?

In summary, I would argue that "migration/assimilation" is a masculine paradigm which reflects and defines men's experiences in the same way that Dutch families came to Australia for men's reasons and at another level Dutch migration was organised around the relative need for male workers. Assimilation meant "forgetting" that they were Dutch and defining men's background, who one is, as expendable even exploitable, as a commodity.<sup>7</sup> The problem, as I see it, is that assimilation is defined in largely negative terms; a person is no longer Dutch, a migrant unlike other migrants. It does not provide a positive answer as to who one is, other than a Dutchman posing as an Australian or - as I suggested in my Introduction - the "invisible" Dutchman. (This argument is taken up further, later in this chapter.)

### "Going Home"

So coming here in this enormous country, I loved it from the moment I was here, as a country [as a landscape] but that doesn't mean you feel at home in all respects. I didn't, I didn't. I mean it was an empty country, completely empty, and we had to fill it with life and friends ... So we lived here just by ourselves and I was very much aware of the isolation. (speaker's emphasis)

"Going home" refers to the bundle of meanings and emotions attached to the Dutch home in Australia, and to going home to the Netherlands from Australia. Whereas in "migration/assimilation" Dutchness is ill-defined and half forgotten (or concealed), inside the Dutch home and family it is immediate, palpable and intimate. Inside - as my informants invariably say - is where the Dutch do

their living. However, as indicated by the above quote, by dwelling on the warmth and cosiness of life inside, they are also enunciating a personal and cultural response to the "enormity" not just of Australia but also of migration.

This is perhaps best summarised by the notion of gezelligheid (social togetherness, cosiness, intimacy) which Pauwels (1980:57) argues has become "a complex symbol to refer to a mixture of feelings about the position and situation of the Dutch people in Australia." Gezellig/gezelligheid is an ubiquitous term used to describe a range of "Dutch" situations - successful nights at the Dutch club, women's coffee mornings, birthday and anniversary parties, Dutch homes and so forth. While there are, it seems, degrees of gezelligheid, it essentially involves interacting in a playful and intimate manner with people one has known for many years. This is best achieved at home, where one can be most relaxed and hospitable and most oneself, with extended family and close friends, and in Dutch, which is the language of home (ibid). However, while the pre-conditions for gezelligheid may be readily met in the Netherlands, many Dutch migrants would have little or no extended family in Australia and their children generally do not speak Dutch nor live nearby as they would in the Netherlands. My second point is that, while gezelligheid is itself positively valued and aspired to, it is linked to other less positive aspects of Dutch culture or "character" (according to my informants), such as small mindedness, nosiness, competitiveness, argumentativeness, insularity, vulgarity and so on, which many informants say they reject. Unless one is satisfied with bogus intimacy, one cannot have one without the other. ("Negative" aspects of gezelligheid

are discussed in relation to Dutch clubs in Australia, see Chapter IV.)

By way of illustration of the difference between "going home" and "migration/assimilation", I include here excerpts from a conversation with a woman who is describing how their first trip home caused her husband to have doubts about his migration and how he resolved those doubts:

Mrs V: Yes, I think so, because most of the women stay home and the men are more in in the outside world. But, my husband was like that too until we went to Holland in '75. We were there for six months and when we got back he was homesick. Not me, but he was homesick ... [Before that trip] he was not talking about Holland. No. He was quite happy here. He had a beaut job, really what he liked. It was his hobby and his job. He didn't mind if he worked till ten or twelve at night ... But then we went back and he was homesick. (my emphasis)

Self: Any particular thing he was nostalgic about?

Mrs V: Ja, I think he - there is a sort of cosiness in Holland and he never had that because he was young when he was on his own. So he never really had a home ... and when we came back in '75, well - it was really nice ... (her emphasis)

Self: It was something he'd never had before?

Mrs V: Yes.

Self: But he saw it then -

Mrs V: And then he wondered why he ever came [my emphasis]. And when we came back, he said to people there, "We are back in five years' time." He was really - turned into himself ... (In the end Mr V decided not to return but Mrs V says she would have gone back if that was what he wished, despite the fact that they had grown-up children in

Australia, who did not want to return.)

Self: So in a sense it was your husband's initiative to come to Australia?

Mrs V: Ja, and I just followed (laughs) and also when he would have gone back, I would have gone too. (her emphasis)

Like many Dutch men, Mr V came to Australia because of the promise of better work opportunities and, like many Dutch women, Mrs V "followed" him. Unlike many others, his ambitions were realised ("he had a beaut job, really what he liked ... he didn't mind if he worked till ten or twelve at night"). "Migration/assimilation" worked out for him and in those terms Mrs V counts their migration a success:

Mrs V: I think we did the right thing. Yes. Because he was so good in his work that in the end he did the work of a University professor, doctor really [whereas in the Netherlands he didn't have the same opportunities].

Self: What about yourself - do you see that you came out also for yourself or that -

Mrs V: No, not so much for myself. I only wanted to see my husband happy because he had such a sad life [in the War etc] and I thought, "well, he is not - I am happy wherever I am." (her emphasis)

Yet, 20 years after their migration on their first visit back together, Mr V was homesick and "he wondered why he ever came". I would say that it was during this visit that Mr V discovered not only homesickness but the full meaning of "going home". Previously, in Mrs V's words, "he never really had a home [there]"; he never had a home to miss. Like many other men I interviewed, Mr V was characterised as a "loner" in the Netherlands and as not close to his family. This may be literally



an accurate description of his particular situation, but the fact that almost all the men in this study are described in such terms while the women generally are not causes me to speculate about what is meant by being and not being "close" to one's family, and the purpose of such accounts.<sup>8</sup> I would suggest that they are part of an emotional and rational disjunction made by men between life in Australia and life in the Netherlands. Such a disjunction is implicit in the "migration/assimilation" paradigm, where one is inside Australia and the Netherlands is somewhere out there. The Netherlands is something Mr V had left behind but this disjunction was breached during their visit home when Mr V discovered that the Netherlands could still be and feel like home "and he wondered why he ever came" (note the single pronoun). However, in the end, Mr V decided not to return, for the same kind of reason that he first left, thus re-affirming the original decision and resolving his crisis of meaning. He knew again "why" he came:

We travelled Europe but then he looked at people who were working and he said "we are only on holiday" and that's a big difference. And he really looked at people who were working and living and the attitude of the people and he said "no". He went back to his old job just to see what it was and he said "the same hypocrisy is there" and he said "no".  
(speaker's emphasis)

These were his reasons and his crisis, and Mrs V subordinated herself to them. Migrating, staying or returning - the outcome rested with Mr V; the decision and to some extent the responsibility were his. (I discuss the issue of responsibility in Chapter VIII.) I would suggest that this pattern of decision-making is quite typical of Dutch migrants. Harvey's (1980:12) description of Dutch returnees as "homesick" men and "complaisant"

wives (while homesick wives and complaisant husbands remain in Australia) supports my argument, that is, that not only men's voices but men's priorities count for more in relation to migration.

Like most of the women I interviewed Mrs V already knew about homesickness; she did not need a trip home to discover it (see Chapter VI for women's accounts on homesickness). She also knew that the cure to her homesickness was to make a home; to find a way of "going home" in Australia for "going home" is, as I have suggested an essentially female paradigm. Women's role was to nurture and protect the inside from the outside. Outside were Australia, a big empty "landscape", and Australians; people who live outside, who are casual in their behaviour and who are hard to know. At another level, outside is the "enormity" of migration. These are the coldnesses which heighten the gezelligheid inside. To amplify my interpretations I include here excerpts from a conversation I had with a Dutch couple who came to Australia about 30 years ago, on their perceptions of the Australian as opposed to the Dutch way of life:

Self: What do Dutch people mean when they talk about the importance of homelife? Can you describe it for me?

Mrs A: Well for instance when you come inside the home you will go to everyone there and say, "Hello". We say, "Dag" [good day] and you say that to everyone -

Mr A: You greet every person personally -

Mrs A: Here they come in, they "hallo" [casually] -

Mr A: And you say, "dag oma" [good day, grandmother], "dag tante" [good day, aunt]. You name them by their christian name if they are cousins. If

they een oude [elderly], you say "sir" or "madam" ...

Mrs A: Sometime they walk out without saying anything. I don't even know [if] they are in or out or if they are still there or if they have gone. That's terribly impolite in Holland [my emphasis] ... Here they say, "well that is our way of living"! ...

Mr A: ... Old age - there is nothing for the elderly people. Clubs exist, yes, but what do you find in a club? Poker machines ... but the only thing what you can do there is eat, drink and play the pokies and just go home. All other things, there is nothing here. Christmas, for instance, that's another thing we are used to - do something for Christmas, Christmas and New Year's Eve always a very important thing in Holland. Now, Christmas, itself, OK - it's partly English, that you could say. You've got your turkey and your plum pudding and you eat that, OK. You do some foolish, childish things - pulling a cracker ... That is perhaps a way of enjoying yourself but then the meal is over and then you go home and then that's the end of it. But there are left-overs, now they are doing with the left-overs. Then they get it again here in one of the parks ... and everyone brings his own left-overs and (laugh) you can join in and put it there ...

Mrs A: That seems to be very Australian. I read this week in one of the weeklies that - beautiful recipes - "and it's lovely to take the day after to the beach and have a party" ...

Mr A: Well, it is Australian but do you want that?

Mrs A: No (laugh).

Mr A: They enjoy themselves apparently but I can't see the enjoyment. I like to have a good chat with someone, a sensible chat ... This is another thing. If I have got an opinion or they ask my opinion about, say, a political matter ... I'm quite

surprised that they will never start to discuss your opinion with you! Why do you come such an opinion, could you explain yourself? But can't you see it dis [this] way ... The only answer what you will get is "hmm! I never thought about it that way" -

Mrs A: "That's interesting".

Mr A: "That's interesting", and that's all! Now when you very quickly finish een [a] discussion or a chat with each other that way ... because that's cutting it off. You can't go any further en [and] you never come to an idea what are his opinions. (speaker's emphasis)

Their list of complaints is lengthy: they do not like the way Australians rush in and out of houses (and later complain that few Australians have come into their house or invite them into their's); they find Australian people's casualness and general lack of ceremony rude; they accuse Australians of obfuscation. While Mr and Mrs A are not typical of other Dutch by virtue of the vehemence, volume and cogency of their criticisms, the gist of what they say is familiar. Like other Dutch who have said to me that none of their close friends are Australian and criticise Australians for not saying what they mean, Mr and Mrs A find the Australian way of life (as they know it) unsatisfying socially and seem somewhat at a loss to understand it. Whether it is a party, a conversation or Christmas celebrations, nothing much seems to happen. Like an Australian living-room, it is all so "bare" and unfocussed; over and time to go home - still "hungry" - before it has really begun. The boundaries are blurred, inside and outside merge. People eat Christmas dinner on the beach, ask questions but do not listen to your answers. Mrs A expresses their sense of

confusion and frustration rather well, I think, when she says: "I don't even know (if) they are in or out or if they are still there or if they have gone", let alone (she seems to be implying) if anything at all is happening. It must appear to such people, despite all the years of living in Australia and the promise of "assimilation", that they can never be absorbed into Australian life, that they are no closer to understanding or being understood by Australians. Are Australians as uncivilised and unfriendly as they seem?

Another woman, Mrs O, describes her own situation thus:

My needs are to have a real feeling of belonging [which she doesn't find often in Australia]. And there are stages of that feeling and the best feeling you can have - I think - one has with one's own family ... The highlights that we have in Holland are always these tremendous family gatherings and the more [people] there are - the happier I feel. They are Christmas and birthdays and Sinter Klaas ... I told you my parents just had their 40th [anniversary] and they invited all their brothers and sisters?

Like Mr and Mrs A, she is talking about "belonging" and like them she still has to "go home" to the Netherlands to really find that feeling. It is hardly surprising that people who as migrants cannot take for granted belonging anywhere, that they should be concerned about belonging somewhere. Both "migration/assimilation" and "going home" offer ways of belonging; the first, by becoming an Australian like all others and the second, within the "Dutch" home. I have already discussed why "migration/assimilation" cannot live up to its promise; it is the failure of "going home" which interests me here. First, I will present an informant's description of her grandparents' 60th

anniversary in the Netherlands and her feelings of belonging there.

Earlier in the interview, Yvonne has described how much migration has "cost" her mother who she says feels that she belongs "nowhere". If she could - if she had no children in Australia - her mother would return to the Netherlands to be near her own parents and siblings. Yvonne has just been comparing the "cosiness" of the typical Dutch house and the "bareness" of an Australian house. I ask if this difference extends to the realm of behaviour. Yvonne says, "Yes ...

I think, for example, of my grandparents' 60th wedding anniversary where I realised how much I'd grown away from Holland, when we celebrated that. Everybody did something. My grandparents themselves, they were the audience but their three children, all their grandchildren, their children-in-law, their grandchildren-in-law (if that's the expression?), their great grandchildren: everybody did something. The four year old sang a song, the seven year old did a few magic tricks - everybody belonged. An uncle made a song appropriate to the life of my grandparents with a well known tune. Everybody joined in with the chorus so everyone had a role to play. You never got this that you're just talking to people on either side of you, which may be very enjoyable but that it just becomes like another dinner. It wasn't a dinner, it was a celebration, a particular event, and that's how weddings are celebrated. That's how I remember my father's 50th birthday being celebrated. Everybody contributed. That is something that - I needed to be sort of away from [that is, living in Australia] to realise what an attractive way that is of joining in, of doing your bit - of belonging perhaps. (speaker's emphasis)

For Yvonne, it was like coming in from the cold. They were events with shape and purpose, they pulled her in. They were not just another anonymous dinner party like many Australian birthdays; it

was a "celebration", it had a name (her grandparents' wedding anniversary, her father's birthday). Young and old were present and participated in a structured way. As Yvonne repeats throughout this extract, everyone "belonged". Unlike Mrs A's description of "Australian" gatherings, everyone was in the same place, "inside".

Yet, Yvonne's brothers, sisters and parents all live in Australia and gather together regularly (grandparents, children and grandchildren) for Christmas and other family celebrations. Her mother, she says, keeps a Dutch house and is devoted to her children and grandchildren, so why has Yvonne "grown away" from this feeling of belonging, and why does her mother feel she belongs "nowhere"? Why does her own family not communicate this same feeling to its members?

One problem is that Yvonne's family, like most Dutch families, came to Australia as a nuclear family, rather than as an extended family or part of a chain migration, primarily because "family" migration was encouraged by the Netherlands. People did not have to rely on people already residing in Australia for financial assistance (see Chapter III). Yvonne has no aunts, uncles or grandparents living in Australia; her parents are the eldest members of the family living in Australia, and her brothers and sisters are her only collateral kin. Less than one half of my informants (20 out of 48) have any collateral kin in the migrant generation living in Australia and usually this has meant only one or two individuals with most of the extended family still in the Netherlands. As a result, most families are too attenuated to re-enact these big, crowded family celebrations in which

grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins all participate.

Some informants say that they look for "surrogates" amongst their close friends, but they are by definition not the same:

Mrs O: Well - there are a few surrogates for it, which we work [use] ... One of them, plus the wife, they were our first friends and that's the people I described earlier and a couple of others. They are just there and there and there - year after year after year - and although some you like better and some you like less - it feels like brothers and brothers - big brothers [my emphasis]. These men, they are all big heavy<sup>9</sup> men and they just feel like brothers. So when we are together with a Christmas dinner, which they have often done in the past, and all the wives. I have a very strong feeling of belonging when it's happening ...

They are not the same because the relationships and feelings are not so enduring ("I have a very strong feeling of belonging when it's happening"). Her surrogate brothers are not "uncles" for her children (they do not relate to them as such) nor are their children, "cousins". There is no sense of continuity. As Pauwels aptly puts it (op cit:60) the problem is of establishing gezelligheid between the generations; those in the Netherlands, the surrogates in Australia as well as between parents and children. (This is discussed at length in Chapter VIII.)

Another reason why Dutch families in Australia are small is, I suspect, that many families in the Netherlands put pressure on family members not to follow brothers and sisters to Australia who, in their turn, might have encouraged such an action.<sup>10</sup> Informants have alluded to the question of family cleavage (competing pressure between migrants in Australia to attract



family members and parents to keep children in the Netherlands) and a few have discussed it quite explicitly:

Mrs F: Ja, I enjoy [it] very much ... When we go away they give us a party, they make it beautiful for us! ... And straight away when we come here they stop with writing [the relatives had written before the trip]. I don't know what it is ... Maybe, they got the idea, we never see them anymore; why bother? We got enough in our family here. They always live on the lap of each other here [in the Netherlands]. They don't emigrate or nothing. His sister told me, she said, "Listen, never - when you go to Australia - never write that you got it good there. I don't want my children go emigrating". And she keep us on that. That is why not one of her children emigrate. One wanted to emigrate once, here, and I told him, I say, "Your mother know about that?" That was the finish ... (my emphasis)

Earlier in the interview Mrs F remarks how "close" family life is in Holland; there "you are in the family" (her emphasis). I would add the corollary, "or you are out of the family". It seems that Mrs F and her family were quarantined from the rest of the family so as not to infect its members with their emigration virus. They were seen, rightly, as posing a threat to its continued existence in terms of their potential to attract younger members away to Australia. Ironically, this was the upshot of their "going home"; they found out that they were outsiders and no longer fit in or belonged "inside".

Many other informants have come to this same realisation after going home; that it is "too small" there for them. Mrs S describes how she and her husband went back to the Netherlands to live but decided after a few weeks that they could not stay there:

Well the first two weeks were lovely, to see the family and all that ... but well we were supposed to live with mother-in-law but that didn't fit out because mother lived beneath and we had to live upstairs and we, then we realised how much freedom we had [in Australia]. I mean the child plays outside and it is much smaller back there. I used to say something out of the window to her and my mother-in-law got upset and all that. You don't do that because of the neighbours. So anyway, that ended up in a little bit of difficulty and so we went to my mother [where there were similar problems].

Mrs S had gotten used to more "space" in her life - a house of her own, a garden for her daughter to play in, opening a window and calling out without worrying about neighbours overhearing her. She had adjusted to living without a large extended family nearby (having only one brother-in-law in Australia) and would no longer accept being told how to behave by her mother or mother-in-law: and yet, like most informants she still yearns for those big, crowded family celebrations and organises trips home to coincide with such events (wedding anniversaries, birthdays).

"Going home" people are reminded of how "small" (physically and socially) Holland is and how "big" they have grown living in Australia. No wonder they say they no longer can fit in:

Mr P: I think that - visiting back to Holland last year - if I would have stayed in Holland, you would never have been so close. You are dependent on each other ... And in Holland - if we would have stayed back in Holland - your family, brothers and sisters are more important, making decisions.

Mrs P: See when we want to buy something we buy it. We are not interfered with. I have a sister-in-law and she is a nice girl. She had to buy curtains and she make so fuss about it ... She went to all the shops in the place for material and she could not decide. Now I mean when I buy curtains I'm going to shop

today and I will think I do not like it, I go to the next shop next week maybe or maybe in four weeks. And when I like it I take a piece home when I think so, "I don't know if Theo like it", en anders [otherwise] I buy it but it Holland - [speaker's emphasis]

Mr P: They're fussy, they're really fussy!

Mrs P: Oh, everybody involved met [with] those curtains. Everybody was sick of it.

Mr P: And here you have more independence: you make your own [decision] - because you've been doing it all the time ...

Mrs P: And we're not worried if somebody else have something. That happens ... where in Holland when one brother buys something the other one have too ...

Self: You mean competitive?

Mrs P: They not see it like that but we do.

Mr P: Yes, because we come from outside and have looked - you see it straight away ... Obvious ... (my emphasis)

Migration has made their marriage "closer", say Mr and Mrs P. There are fewer people between them (brothers, sisters, parents). Making decisions, they have to rely only on each other, whereas in Holland, like the "fussy" sister-in-law, everyone would be involved. Decisions become so diffuse, so fussy; in Australia they are more independent. To them, as outsiders looking in, it is all so "obvious". We talked then about why this sort of interference does not happen with friends and they say that it is because friends "know how far they can go"; that is, they do not come so close, they cannot "crowd" you.

Self: So does that make it easier to manage then, having friends rather than relations all near?

Mrs P: Oh, I love our relations -

Mr P: That's what we miss. We miss - we miss that part of birthdays, of Christmas-time and all different [things] - but then - slowly you get out of it. You don't feel it so much because through the years ... You don't take part of it anymore and so it wears out [that feeling] but then you come back to Holland. We were back in Holland last year and then ... it was nice ... It was nice to see, it was nice to have.

And yet, those feelings of belonging and smallness are "nice" to have. My interpretation is that this loss is harder for women to bear than men. This may be partly because men do not acknowledge the magnitude of their loss. As I noted in Chapter V most say that their families were not "close" while women say that they were. Perhaps, if they were to recognise migration as a loss (as happened with Mr V earlier in this chapter) their feelings would be equally intense. (That might explain why "homesick" men go home, see above.) However, I would argue that for most men allegiance to the rationality and responsibility of their migration - and by implication to "migration/assimilation" - overshadows such feelings.

For these women, the loss of mothers and sisters is the hardest to bear; they are what "going home" and home sickness are all about.<sup>11</sup> In the early days of severe homesickness (see Chapter VI), it was mothers and sisters - the emotional closeness, mutual visits and talk - which they missed. Indeed, a number of informants (male and female) have attributed a particular women's homesickness to the fact that she left a large number of sisters as well as a mother in the Netherlands. It is as if the loss were cumulative; the more women left behind, the greater the emptiness. It is these same people, mothers and sisters, that women go home

to (and men too, I suspect). They are "home". As one woman said, she has not been back to Holland since her mother died because she feels that she no longer has a home there. And besides, she would miss her mother too much. In effect, she would be too "homesick" for her mother.

Leaving all this behind would have meant a major re-adjustment in women's lives, not necessarily for the better. While many people, especially men, have said that it has given them more "freedom" (part of the adventure metaphor), I argue that it has increased women's isolation and dependence on their children to meet their needs for family and belonging. "Work" (paid work outside the home) has not played as big a part in their lives as it has for their husbands. Amongst my informants who migrated as adults nine out of 20 have not worked outside the home in Australia (see Chapter V); the most common explanation being that their husbands would not allow them to work, although they are not complaining about this. (Several others "defied" their husbands' wishes and went out to work.) Most who have worked, worked for a relatively short period of time, usually after their children went to school or left home. Few, if any, could be said to have had a career; their primary responsibility has been towards their families. The difference is that these families are much smaller than they would have been in the Netherlands.

Most of these women now in their 50's (and over) have children and grandchildren in Canberra, and my impression is that there is quite a lot of interaction between the generations, especially between mothers and daughters. In the early years they cared for young grandchildren and later, children and sometimes

grandchildren have helped them out as widows with shopping and domestic chores. None live with their children. Whether or not this actually happens, this pattern of helping seems to be the ideal. Those few women who have no children nearby or who face the prospect of children moving away or are estranged from them are considered unfortunate. However, at the same time that a good deal of pressure is put on children to be "close", these women are also implicated in the "migration/assimilation" of their children. The last section of the chapter considers this contradiction and the place of children in the Dutch family in Australia, specifically, the connection between "going home" and "migration/assimilation".

### Discussion

While on the face of it, "migration/assimilation" and "going home" offer quite separate definitions of reality, it should be clear by now that that the two are logically connected and to some extent compatible. The question is how are they connected? People go home from Australia and discover not only how "small" the Netherlands is, but how relatively "big" or Australian they have become. They can no longer fit in, they are outsiders. Similarly, one can be both assimilated and Dutch - assimilation being the sine qua non of the Dutch - with a Dutch wife "inside" and an Australian worker "outside". Each serves and keeps the other in their respective places, in the home and workplace, in the same way that a trip back to the Netherlands confirms how Australian one has become and the rightness of the original decision to migrate. Dutch "invisibility" is then but a logical

extension of this duality; Dutch inside/Australian outside. However, this comfortable relationship can readily break down along the margins. How far can one assimilate and still be Dutch? This becomes most evident in respect of the children because, according to the logic of assimilation, they are to be given over to the outside; they are the outside, they are Australians (see Introduction on relationship of parents to children). Yet, they are also integral to the Dutch home and family.

Where do the children belong? Mr G told me the following story:

"Hey man", a little boy says to me about ten years old. He said, "You're Dutch?" I said, "Yeah". Of course they can hear it on your accent. "My Mom and Dad too". "So what about you?" "Oh, no, not me mate, I'm born here mate. I'm an Australian". You know, they grow up together, these kids, as one nationality. That is fantastic. (speaker's emphasis)

Mr G then goes on to describe how his own daughter refused to be identified as Dutch in school. This is the obvious, first answer given to me by informants. Their children are Australians. They came to Australia the way they did, "migration/assimilation", so that their own children could be assimilated and speak accentless English. In order that their children might get ahead they assimilated their children. In effect, they sent their children out into Australia and encouraged their children to be different from themselves. Yet these same people talk about the importance of home and family. What does it mean to say that one's children are different from one's self? And how does one accomplish such a feat? Mrs O expresses her sense of bewilderment thus:

Oh they feel Australian, they feel 100% - I'm always wondering ... I always think to a certain degree they are not [Australian]. I

always think to a certain degree they are not but they say "no, no" and I ask my daughter's boyfriend whether he in anyway sees that she is not ... He says "oh well she is". She is 100% in his eyes ... I don't see them as Australian. I don't (laugh). Or may be I don't like to. No, I don't. It's just it's more that everything has come from home is different from what is coming in an Australian home ... What they carry with them simply because I educated them must be different. (speaker's emphasis)

They cannot be entirely Australian, no matter what they or anyone else says. They are, after all, her children, raised by her in a Dutch home. To say that they are entirely Australian is a denial of her connection with them: and like many Dutch, there is much about Australians she still does not understand and some that she does not even like. Did she raise a cuckoos' nest?

Perhaps the most obvious decision made by Dutch parents to encourage the assimilation of their children was the decision to speak English at home, where previously Dutch would have been spoken. While a minority of families continued to speak Dutch at home, the general pattern amongst the Dutch in Australia seem to be that the parents speak Dutch or a mixture of Dutch and English to each other and, whether they speak Dutch or English to their children, children speak English (see Chapter IV on language use). Amongst my own informants the same pattern seems to apply: In six families Dutch is the home language (it is spoken by parents and children), in 18 families some Dutch is spoken primarily by the parents and perhaps by some children, and in three families no Dutch is spoken (in all three, one parent is not Dutch).

Children's competence in Dutch seems to vary with birth order which again is consistent with the general pattern (see Clyne 1977a, cited in Chapter IV), but it also seems to be related to



gender. That is, first born children and daughters tend to be more competent and more interested in the Dutch language than their brothers or younger siblings. In 15 families where Dutch is spoken by some children, 11 first born children (seven daughters and four sons) and six younger daughters are identified as being more competent than their siblings. No younger sons are so identified. This apparent feminine bias in favour of the Dutch language<sup>12</sup> lends support to my position regarding the primary role of Dutch women in nurturing home and Dutchness; yet, it also draws attention to how limited that role is, for it seems that none of these daughters, many of whom are now mothers, are speaking Dutch to their children.

I would hasten to add that these results are only suggestive of a complex linguistic situation. Like other research done on Dutch linguistic behaviour (see Chapter IV), they are based on members self reports, what people say they do, not on actual behaviour. As I argue earlier, statements about language use are not just descriptive, they are also reflexive accounts given for particular social purposes. (As, for example, the woman who said in front of her daughter that she spoke "perfect" Dutch when earlier she had said to me that her daughter could speak Dutch, but "not properly".) As well, informants often half laughingly "confess" that sometimes they are unsure just which language they are speaking. For example:

Mr T: Cause mainly the wife talk Dutch, cause I don't even care whether I talk Dutch - actually you don't even notice anymore really sometimes. You only notice it when you talk Dutch to an Australian because they point [it] out to you. But I mean in between us whether it's Dutch or English you

understand both of it - same way. You accept it both ways too.

Mrs T: We start in English and then talk in Dutch or the other way around and you begin to laugh at yourself. (my emphasis)

Some informants even recount how their children correct them for unwittingly speaking Dutch (or how they corrected their parents for doing so).

In almost all the families where both parents are Dutch, Dutch was the primary family language until the children went to school:

Self: When you went to school did you continue speaking Dutch?

Adrian: Yes. My parents sort of made us speak Dutch for quite some time ... The first change happened when my sister, who is three years younger than I am, went to school and of course we were both going to school then and our main language then at that time suddenly turned from being Dutch to being English ... So we started to speak English between ourselves - occasionally. But of course if our parents heard us we were told - you know, speak Dutch! Now when my little brother went to school - that's four years later on - he started speaking much more English and my parents whilst they spoke to us in Dutch of course, we tended to speak back to them in Dutch, amongst ourselves we were speaking in English. I'm very grateful I learned Dutch. (speaker's emphasis)

Adrian is one of the first born children who grew up in a Dutch speaking home and who is still fluent in Dutch. His brother and sister were introduced to English at a much younger age, because he had already started school and was speaking English. As in many families, the push towards speaking English came through the children, however, parents' reactions varied. In Adrian's case,

his parents considered that speaking Dutch at home mattered. While they could not prevent their children from speaking English when they were by themselves, they insisted on speaking and being spoken to in Dutch in the family. For others speaking Dutch did not seem to matter and they simply accepted their children's terms as Mr T quoted above explains:

We never actually pushed on them that way - to learn Dutch ... As soon as they hit school they talk English. They don't want you to talk Dutch. It's only the exceptional one that keeps that language up. Unless the parents like the Italians ... I can't say it's (speaking Dutch) bad, not at all, but we never actually pushed them there. Everything English. (my emphasis)

Unlike Adrian's parents (and especially his mother) Mr T sees Dutch language maintenance in negative terms; he would not force his children to speak Dutch like, for example, the Italians. He went the natural, normal way, "everything English".

Parents who might have continued to speak Dutch with their children found the pressures towards English even more difficult to resist when it came directly from the school authorities (the role of the school in the assimilation of migrant children is discussed in Chapter I):

Before we left the Netherlands the Catholic Emigration Service<sup>13</sup> told us to speak Dutch so the children would have a second language ... So that is what we did - but it was a bit hard when the children went to school. They came home, but talking Dutch to them they answered back in English - hmm! - and then you can answer back in Dutch again and they answer back in English. That went on and on for a while and then all of a sudden the teacher of the school, she called us one day and she said, "You speak Dutch at home, isn't it?" I said, "Yes". She advised us not to do [that] because the children suffer of it. "I can see [she said] I find out every child that is here, if it is a migrant child, even if I don't know, if

only just on the way of the child acting and so on. And the way they are progressing and so - if they come from a migrant family or not, of [if] they are speaking English or that they speak their own language at home ..." She said I should [be] advised to speak English. Dat we have done but still - I don't know if that was the right thing. (my emphasis)

Confronted by such an "expert", who claimed to see and know all and certainly knew what was best for their children, how could any parent wish suffering on their children especially when it was their responsibility to help their children get ahead (or at least not hold them back)? Again, there is this question of responsibility. So, for their children's sakes, they spoke English at home, but still they wonder if they did the "right" thing.<sup>14</sup>

Looking back on the decision to "give away" Dutch, those people who do express any opinion say they now have some regrets. (Some such as Mr T, who claims not to care which language he speaks, treat it as a non-issue. It just does not matter.) Most of these couples speak Dutch or Dutch-English between themselves and to their children. As their children have left home (and it is no longer necessary to speak English for their children's sakes or because they demand that their parents speak English) Dutch has again become - rightly, I would say - the home language. Some writers (see Chapter IV) argue that this resurgence in the Dutch language is part of the biological ageing process. This seems to me at best only a partial explanation. I would suggest the departure of children from the home and the increasing respectability of bilingualism and multi-culturalism in Australia have combined to alter linguistic behaviour and the reporting of

that behaviour. However, because their children generally did not learn to speak Dutch and married non-Dutch speakers,<sup>15</sup> Dutch has become a home language in only a limited sense. Dutch speakers still have to differentiate within their families in terms of language use and would generally be limited to speaking Dutch "comfortably" (not in front of Australians) with their spouses and close (Dutch) friends. If they are "lucky" they will also be able to speak Dutch with collateral kin, and to or with their children (when their spouses and children are not present). In this sense, speaking Dutch becomes a divisive rather than unifying force in families because just as most close friends are Dutch, most would prefer to speak Dutch within the family.

The cost of "Australianising" their children (so that they might speak accentless English and at best accented Dutch) has been emotionally high. Extrapolating further it has been especially costly for mothers. Several women have described it as a kind of loss:

Mrs F: When I come here I was alone. I don't know the language. [My husband] don't want that I work. My children ... went away, I lost them. They were not close anymore. When they want to talk something in secret, they do it in English - really in Australian - and I cannot-understand it.

Self: You felt you were losing your children?

Mrs F: Ja, I lost the little ones in that time and I was very, very lonely: very lonely. (speaker's emphasis)

Mrs F was "alone" here; she had no family in Australia aside from her husband who went out to work and her children who also "left" her. Like most of the women interviewed her husband opposed the

idea of his wife being in paid work and so she has never worked outside the home. Mrs F has only known Australia indirectly, through her husband and children who have gone outside without her. Her life remains centred on people whom she feels are already largely lost to her. Mrs F's dilemma is one shared by many Dutch women who came to Australia and who have stayed here for their husbands' and children's sake, not for themselves.

Thus far, the discussion has centred on parents' perceptions of their children as "outsiders" or as Australians, and the difficult position of mothers as "insiders" in respect of their children. I would like now to change perspectives, to include the people who supposedly went outside, and consider a daughter's view of her mother's situation and how the inside/outside distinction has affected her family.

Wilhelmina recounts first how unsettled and difficult the early years in Australia were. The family moved several times as her father changed jobs and much of the time he was working at several, poorly paid jobs in order to make ends meet. As a result, they did not see much of him. Her mother was at home with four young children.

Self: And how was your mother during all this.  
Was she lonely?

W: ... At the time I didn't know but I feel now, looking back, those were really long years while we were children at home because - she used to go every Friday and do her shopping. That was her outing for the week. The neighbours were English speaking and she didn't feel that confident with her English to go over and have cups of tea with them. I don't know whether they invited her and she didn't go or - I know [speaker's emphasis] she wouldn't have invited them over because she just didn't feel her

house was good enough. I don't know how she got that opinion and she still has that opinion now ... Mum and Dad both belong to a bowling club - and Dad will invite people over for a barbecue or something like that but it won't be Mum to initiate an invitation. She almost feels "Oh, here they come again!" She still doesn't like having people coming in. (my emphasis)

Wilhelmina interprets her mother's lack of hospitality to outsiders as a sign of her own feelings of inferiority. In effect, Wilhelmina is interpreting her mother's behaviour as an outsider, as an Australian, when what her mother seems to be communicating is that she does not want outsiders in her home. I query Wilhelmina on this point, has she ever asked her mother why she feels this way? And Wilhelmina responds:

I've never really asked her. I feel if I ask her about it I am offending her. It's another fault that I'm pointing out. Like she probably feels "I'm not good enough again" ... (my emphasis)

"It's another fault I'm pointing out": apparently her mother was being judged as not good enough again, and again her children would be telling her so. It was too problematic a question to ask and so Wilhelmina has answered the question for her.

Another "fault" of her mother is that the older children went to school knowing very little English and were as a result "severely disadvantaged". Wilhelmina and her brothers and sisters took matters into their own hands:

W: I think it was about that time that we said to Mum and Dad "Look, no more Dutch because - we knew a great deal of Dutch and we didn't know much English. "So", we said - "We've got to learn English because we're doing school in English so - no more Dutch". And gradually the Dutch filtered out of the home talk. Mum and Dad used to speak to each other

in Dutch but we spoke to them in English and consequently they - it naturally came that they answered us in English as well ...

Self: Do you think the language issue affected closeness in the family? [Wilhelmina has stressed earlier how her's is not a "close" family.]

W: It would be interesting [to know] Wendy ... It might have been a resentment that Mum felt with us because we kept saying "No!" We were always correcting her with her English and may be she felt inadequate because we were the ones correcting her where probably she felt she was the mother ... And may be there she had to take our word for it rather than we take her word for it for a lot of things ... It must have been very stifling to be told by your children (laugh), "Don't speak Dutch". But by the same token, I think that they might have shown a bit more strength and said, "We'll make a rule, we'll have it [Dutch] then and we'll have English then ... I know we used to nearly fall through the floor with embarrassment when our friends came over and Mum spoke Dutch ... May be that's when Dad got this thing about migrants being inferior when we kept showing our embarrassment towards the language so he'd feel inadequate ... It's difficult to say.

In a subsequent interview Wilhelmina elaborates further:

Mum always had a big thing about speaking English and when we came home we'd say, "Don't speak Dutch because my friends are here". Because, of course, our friends were all English so Mum just didn't speak (laugh). Rather than speak poor English she'd rather not speak at all. (speaker's emphasis)

No wonder her mother did not like Australians coming into the house! Wilhelmina estimates that her mother is still more fluent in Dutch than she is in English. During her childhood her father, whose English was somewhat better, was always too busy or too tired to talk much. As a result it seems, her family got out of



the habit of conversation and communicating generally, and is much the poorer as a result. They have lost, Wilhelmina says, that "family feeling", which Wilhelmina finds in another Dutch family in Australia and with relatives back in the Netherlands. She describes what it is like with the old family friends whom she calls "aunt" and "uncle":

W: Every year they just always have a big family get together on Christmas Eve and they make a big celebration of the Christmas meal ... It was just like family [should be]. That's probably why I relate so well to those two ...

Self: What's the feeling like at that Christmas you went to? It's the feeling that's missing from other Christmases, isn't it?

W: Yes, it's the feeling. It was just laughter. It was just jovial laughter. The feeling that something was being celebrated ... My aunt and uncle, they make the dinner a celebration and you feel as if it is a celebration ... I suppose it's just the conversation that's carrying on and you feel that you're not being left out. Everybody can participate in the conversation. (my emphasis)

"You feel that you're not being left out". Wilhelmina is looking for the same sense of belonging described by other informants in the previous section. Like them, she finds it with surrogates, in big "family" celebrations, where there is lots of talk and laughter. She does not find it in her own immediate family.

An examination of her family's circumstances in light of issues raised throughout this chapter offers some clues to my earlier question: why does her family not communicate this sense of belonging to its members? Part of the answer lies in the isolation of her family which, like many others, has been cut off

by the act of migration from the extended family. There is no longer a web of lineal and collateral relationships framing the family and, I would say, legitimating and diffusing the parents' authority. Instead, they find themselves out of step in Australia, their authority challenged by outside authorities which include their own children. They are forced into a defensive position, even about what language is spoken in the family. Her father, says Wilhelmina, came to Australia in order to find work and was hardly ever home, and it seems that her mother has been virtually stifled by a situation not of her own making, not her responsibility. Whatever her desires may have been (and they are defined hardly at all), she subordinated herself to her husband's wishes: or at least this is how her daughter describes her. At the same time, she has been stifled by her own children who do not want to hear what she has to say. Given all of this and with parents unsure about where they or their children belong, it would be nothing short of a miracle if Wilhelmina were to feel that she belonged in her own family.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, I would argue that "going home", despite its psychological and cultural salience, has been subordinated and ultimately sacrificed to the demands of "migration/assimilation". The meanings of home and family have not been translated into a positive Dutch identity in Australia. They have remained essentially introspective and personal, nostalgic heartening back which eventually must be forgotten as primary family ties disappear. Neither, it seems have they been reproduced within the

family, in the next "Australian" generation. Children do not marry other Dutch nor do they speak Dutch, and even their own parents say they they are Australian. Indeed, one could well say that the primary function of the Dutch home has been to raise young Australians.

Why is there this disconnection between social spheres and generations? Dutch domestic orientation is often cited as a reason for the lack of community organisation amongst the Dutch in Australia (see Chapter IV); yet, in the Netherlands it seems that Dutch family life and introspection are not only compatible with but are cornerstones of the verzuiling system, which might be described as over organised and certainly very public.<sup>16</sup> I would argue, instead, that it is the partial dissolution of the verzuiling system in Australia (see Chapter IV), rather than the system itself, which has contributed to the isolation of the Dutch family. This has meant that traditional socio-religious differences have continued to divide Dutch migrants amongst themselves, yet at the same time there have not been the social contexts and structures (élites, political parties, trade unions) which bridge and organise such differences in the Netherlands and more importantly, in terms of this argument, draw the family into a larger community of meaning and action.

The answer lies also in the fact that the Dutch family in Australia is but an attenuated version of the family in the Netherlands. To a large degree it is a product of assimilationist migration policies, in that both Australia and the Netherlands saw family migration as a permanent solution to their respective population problems. Migration was, I suggest, not popular or

respectable enough to attract extended families and the nuclear family was seen as (and proved to be) a manageable and assimilable unit of migration (see Chapter III). Removed from the many relationships and contexts which gave the family meaning, it is diminished. In particular, the wife and mother, whose responsibility it was to cushion the impact of migration as well as nurture the family, was rendered largely powerless. However, more crucially, this same woman, who is a symbol of Dutch home, family and Dutchness, has become caught up along with her husband in the assimilation of her children into Australia. How has this come about? The following chapter explores the logic of this seeming paradox.

## FOOTNOTES

- 1 Some complain, in retrospect, that assimilation got them "nowhere". Their relatives in the Netherlands are comparatively prosperous and it has become fashionable and profitable to be an "ethnic", something they have worked hard not to be. It is unfair, they say.
- 2 Three men, from a total of 13 first first generation Dutch men, took a similar detached, disinterested attitude towards the topic; as if there was really nothing to tell about migration or being Dutch in Australia. All three claimed that they were assimilated and did not speak Dutch at home. None of the first generation women interviewed were so detached.
- 3 Pauwels 1980:114.
- 4 See Introduction on Dutch "character" as cultural construct.
- 5 It ties in with the generally held belief that less educated, more ignorant Dutch migrated to Australia than to other countries where there was less government assistance, and that this type of Dutch would be more prone to behave this way (see Chapter III).
- 6 The social significance of plat and Nederlands (standard Dutch) is discussed in Methodology section in Chapter II.
- 7 For example, the way informants talk about providing a special Dutch "atmosphere" in the Dutch club because it attracts a larger Australian clientele even though there are very few Dutch people actually present (see Chapter V).
- 8 Or as in the following case, when word and behaviour seem to be patently at odds. This man and his entire family came to Australia in a series of migrations. They helped each other to migrate and get on quite well yet he says "See - with our family, we're not that close ... We're not dependent [on] one another ... Everybody goes his own way". He describes leaving the Netherlands and his adjustment to Australia in the same low-keyed way.
- 9 These people are all Dutch.
- 10 In three cases (all men) this has happened, where the migrant has been joined by all his siblings and the parents, with no children left in the Netherlands, have also emigrated.
- 11 A few of my informants (four) who migrated as adults have sisters living nearby and consider themselves very fortunate as a result. They see each other regularly (several times a week) and are "close"; nevertheless, they still miss the sisters and mothers still in the Netherlands.

- 12 Clyne (1982) finds a similar difference in terms of language shift in the first generation.
- 13 The "private" emigration offices took a stronger interest in the after needs of Dutch migrants and would not have been as actively pro-assimilationsist as the larger government emigration service (see Chapter III).
- 14 While this tended to be the norm, in one family the opposite happened and an outside expert advised them to continue speaking Dutch as that would be educationally advantageous. (They did so.)
- 15 Out of 72 reported marriages in the second generation, only nine were with other Dutch. In these homes some Dutch is spoken, between the partners but not between parents and children.
- 16 By this I mean that the verzuiling system is full of structural redundancies with each "column" being served by its own schools, trade unions, churches, political parties, television stations (cf Schaasma 1966) and even, it seems, scholars who define and promote that particular world view. A person's identity is very public in the sense that once one knows to which zuil they belong, one knows a great deal about them, for example, which newspapers they read, how they vote and so forth.

## CHAPTER VIII

### LEAVING HOME: THE LOGIC OF MIGRATION

Only the ways in which his fathers and grand-fathers lived become for everyone elements of his own way of life. Graves and reminiscences can neither be transferred nor conquered. The stranger, therefore, approaches the other group as a newcomer in the true meaning of the term. (Schultz 1964:97)

At the level of experience, migration is more about departure than arrival; the migrant leaving behind all that is familiar in exchange for the unknown. It can be likened, in the imagery of Chapter VII, to going from the warmth, security and smallness of the domestic circle into the cold outdoors and never quite getting back inside. The home and family left behind, what was and might have been: these are images which engage the imagination, colouring life afterwards and demanding answers just as certainly as they separate the migrant from those who stayed at home and need not account for what they did. Yet these are imponderables, impossible ever to answer once and for all.

In this context, children leaving parents seems to be the archetypal departure; hardest of all departures to explain or forgive and representing, as it does, disconnection from the past. This chapter explores what it means for Dutch migrants to leave their parents and in so doing considers questions of personal responsibility, guilt and retribution for migration. My interest is also in how past experience shapes the future, for this event seems to be repeated in the next generation as the children of

Dutch migrants leave home, go outside and become Australians (see Chapter VII). Understanding the connection between these departures - Dutch migrants from their parents and in the next generation children from their migrant parents - helps explain why Dutch migrants "assimilate" their children and, related to this, can offer some clues about the non-generation of Dutch culture in Australia. As a background to this discussion, I first put forward the argument that emigration is generally perceived as a morally suspect act and (to use Schutz's phrase) emigrants seen as people of "doubtful loyalty". This, combined with the ambivalence of the Dutch towards organised emigration, I see as linked to the significance attached to children leaving parents.

#### A Morally Suspect Act

What kind of person would just abandon their parents? What are you running away from anyway?

These questions were put to me sitting in a crowded train compartment by an English woman I had only just met. Startled by her effrontery, at first I tried to defend myself - no, I had not "abandoned" my parents and I was not running away from anything (that I knew of). She continued to press me for answers and finally I said that it was not any of her business and anyway I scarcely needed to explain myself to her. Yet - here's the rub - her accusations did strike a chord in me. The questions she posed are ones I still ask myself and cannot always answer satisfactorily, that is, satisfactorily for my own peace of mind. Can anyone know their "true" motives for anything they do? As I argue in Chapter II, the researcher's life experiences - not just



"fieldwork persona" (an arbitrarily narrow term) - are integral to fieldwork and interpretation, and should be integrated "where practicable" (and this is where opinions vary) into the ethnography. Like many informants, I also left my parents behind, under different circumstances and more recently, but there is still an element of shared understanding of what it means and feels like to leave parents. This commonality has allowed me to take some liberties, I feel; to ask difficult questions about regrets and guilt, for example, which might otherwise seem impertinent or rude. I have been able to do this (and I felt I could) because these same questions can and have been asked of me. My involvement is more than intellectual, a fact of which I have tried to be aware as I write this ethnography just as I have endeavoured to use it to my advantage doing fieldwork. Following from this, I would argue that migrants as a category, not just Dutch migrants, share a morally ambiguous position. The onus is on them to explain themselves, to justify their lives. After all, they are the people who left when everybody else stayed. There must be something wrong with them or where they came from to behave in such an unnatural way. Having left once and by that act demonstrating that they are people of "doubtful loyalty", supposedly they could leave again. (By extension: "if they don't like it here, then they can always go back to where they came from".)

Broadly defined then, this cannot be described as a "Dutch" problem; only in its historical and cultural details, which I shall now discuss, can one speak of a peculiarly Dutch dilemma. As detailed in Chapter III, except for a short period in the late

1940's, following the dislocation and hardships of the War when "emigration fever" (an interesting analogy) was at its height, emigration has never been popular in the Netherlands. Historically, there had been no need to emigrate. One could seek fortune and adventure in the Dutch colonies, while retaining Dutch citizenship, language and identity. Emigration, on the other hand, was considered a private even anti-social act. This belief seems to have persisted despite the demise of the Dutch empire in Indonesia and the government's strenuous efforts during the 1950's to convince the populace that emigration, that is government organised emigration, was a public spirited positive act. I argue that this is because the government, despite its rhetoric, still saw emigration in traditional, negative terms. Organised emigration remained a means of getting rid of "surplus" (unemployed, unskilled) people. This did not always happen, many skilled and employed people did leave the Netherlands, and this is one reason why organised emigration eventually became politically untenable. The problem was that the government could not force people to leave nor could it impel receiving countries to accept its so called surplus (assuming such people wanted to leave). All the government could do was encourage and channel migration, while striking some sort of hopefully advantageous balance between competing national interests. This it did, through a system of subsidies which, as I have shown in Chapter III, were designed to encourage poor people to emigrate by penalising those who had more. This ran counter to the belief that emigration was an individual's moral and financial responsibility, or more generally that people should "pay" for their deeds. Interestingly, the same

government which designed and paid the subsidies criticised subsidy recipients for showing lack of independence and initiative. This tension between belief and practice would have further undermined the reputation of Dutch emigrants, most of whom were subsidised, confirming the old belief that emigrants were opportunists and parasites, and basically an undesirable sort of people.

Dutch migrants coming to Australia would have been, if anything, even more stigmatised than other migrants. I say this for several reasons: first of all, Dutch migration to Australia occurred comparatively late, when organised emigration was becoming increasingly unpopular in the Netherlands. The government was still committed to its pro-emigration policy and had had to liberalise its subsidy rules in order to attract emigrants, especially to a country as distant as Australia. As a category, emigrants to Australia received the highest rate of subsidy, and as well a greater proportion were subsidised. Australia became known as a "cheap" and "easy" destination; a destination for virtually anyone, however poor or unskilled. Equally significantly, people also believed that if they went to Australia that, unlike going to Canada or the United States, they would never see their families again.

My own informants seem to be aware of these beliefs, but are understandably quick to dissociate themselves personally from the slur on their honour. They stress how they paid their way or emphasise how they were specially selected and so forth (see Chapter VI). Other Dutch migrants in Australia might be, as one informant put it, "trash"; they definitely were not. By way of

example, I include Mr and Mrs G, who emphasise how different they were from the "typical" Dutch migrant to Australia (and migrants generally) in that they were financially comfortable before they emigrated and he was specially selected to work in Australia from "hundreds" of job applicants. In other words they were not "surplus" and yet, as the following excerpt illustrates, they are not entirely free of stigma; in this instance, insinuations are voiced, appropriately, by her mother about "good for nothings" who went to Australia.

Self: Your mother must have felt it, having her only daughter leave?

Mr G: Oh ja, but it is just the trouble -

Mrs G: She is so cranky you can't believe it.

Mr G: It looks like many times when you meet your parents again after so many years - they don't forgive you.

Mrs G: No, she never forgave me. No.

Mr G: [imitating haranguing voice] "Why did you have to go to another country? What is your homeland and - "

Mrs G: She would say, she would say before I left, "Only the lowest people go to Australia, you know, the lowest people". How can you say it? The, the - well -

Mr G: Good enough for nothing (laughing).  
(my emphasis)

Mrs G: Good for nothing, you know -

Self: Would a lot of Dutch people say that, in Holland? Would they have that belief?

Both: Ja.

Mr G: They can't believe that you left your homeland. The trouble is about three million left <sup>1</sup>for Canada, America, Australia. Ja.

Self: That is a lot of "low" people.,

Mrs G: Ja. But you know that is my mother's - feeling. That is her attitude.

Mr G: We are still -

Self: In a sense, it is like you are still outcasts?

Mrs G: Ja, ja. Sort of. Like here, that all convicts came here. Well my mother is from that opinion. You don't have to go away. Because you've got a good life over there, so why should you go away? But we did it because he went to Australia ...

Mrs G's mother still has not entirely forgiven them for being "good for nothing's", for going away from their homeland, for going to Australia and for leaving her. I suspect that neither Mr nor Mrs G have entirely forgiven themselves on either count, for leaving her mother (not his) and for being the kind of people who migrate. The problem is that the accusations - spoken or unspoken - stick. Is your life not good enough here, what more do you want? (What more have you found?) Only "good for nothing" people migrate to Australia: are you that kind of person? Of course, no one acknowledges that one is that kind of person (although informants do accept that there are such people). The accusations stick because they are unanswerable. Could one expect such a person (like the Cretan who is a liar, Bateson 1972) to give an honest answer? If one's virtue is already suspect, one cannot expect to be believed simply because one proclaims it. I will now consider what it meant for Dutch migrants to leave one's parents and why I see it as a central fact of migration.

### Leaving Parents

For many of my informants, leaving the Netherlands meant leaving parents forever (after all this was the explicit purpose of organised migration). As various informants have emphasised, in the 1950's, unlike now (or in my case), one left the Netherlands knowing that one would probably never see one's parents again. Most arrived with virtually nothing, after a long sea voyage, many with young children. By the time they were financially established and could save a return fare, their parents might well be dead. Many eventually did see their parents again, usually fifteen or twenty years later, but they were not to know this when they left. Then, Australia was on the other side of the world, so far away in time and cost they could never hope to return. They migrated forever, it was a life sentence.

For a fortunate minority, the situation was not so extreme. Some, more prosperous individuals or those who came later (usually one and the same, see Chapter III) came out temporarily and ended up staying permanently. They would have left expecting to see their parents again. Others did not leave parents behind; their parents were already dead or they (usually men) had already left their parents behind and were not, they say, "close" to them (see Chapter VI). As a result, their migration was easier and, in my terms, less portentous. To illustrate my meaning I present the cases of two women who did not have to leave their parents in order to migrate. The first is Mrs A, who like other women I interviewed, accepted her husband's decision to emigrate, but unlike them refused to leave her parents. The second is Mrs B who came to Australia as a young adult with her parents.

Mr A: But in that time she said - her parents were still alive, my parents too, her mother started crying. She was the youngest one in the family and she said, "If you are going to leave", and so on - "But OK [he said] I am not going" - (speaker's emphasis)

Mrs A: As long as my parents are still alive. I am glad I didn't. It was '49, in '50 my mother died. If I have gone, I would have always had the idea it was because of me. Now, I know it was her time ... So I stayed until my father died. That was '55 ... and I said to my husband, "Well now you can go wherever you want. I am going with you". That's how we came to Australia. (my emphasis)

Mrs A came to Australia, her conscience clear, following her husband, yet knowing that her parents had not died "because" of her. On the other hand, Mrs B's parents did the leaving for her; they spared her from leaving them and she is duly "grateful":

Mrs B: You could never see that [returning to the Netherlands] ... and that's why my father said to my mother, "If you go to Australia, you'll never ever come back to Holland. You've got to go with that frame of mind. (my emphasis)

Self: That's very tough -

Mrs B: Yes, it is because she had, I think, she had eight sisters and she was fairly close, and she had four brothers. But she had no father or mother in Holland. But my father still had a mother and she was in an old peoples home and she was - well - senile ... And she died fairly soon after we came to Australia. My mother always said she never would have gone to Australia if she had a mother, she never would have gone - (my emphasis)

Mr B: Well, I think, of course, well I suppose I could understand. (my emphasis)

Self: But that's something that many people have had to do, haven't they?

Mr B: Yes, that's right.

Self: To leave a mother -

Mrs B: Yes.

Self: - is a very -

Mrs B: That's right. That's a very hard thing to do ... That's another reason, I've been really very grateful for that. We came out with the family? And we had family here and we never had to go into expenses or any great hardship or anything because our parents were so far away that we would have to borrow money because they were dying: that, we would have had to do. Or they have had to leave small children here and fly over. My friend had to do that. She had to borrow money to go and see her father who was dying. I've always said that we were very lucky because we had our family here. (my emphasis)

Self: You parents, in a sense, did the most difficult part of the migration?

Mrs B: Yes, they did.

Mr B: That's right.

I would like to offer several observations here. Mrs B is grateful that her parents did the leaving for her and her husband, and in so doing giving them family in Australia. Neither of Mrs B's parents left parents behind in the Netherlands; her mother's parents were both dead and her father's mother was almost dead (senile). Like the previous informant, Mrs A, Mrs B's mother "always" said that she never would have migrated if her mother had been alive. Like most of the women I have interviewed, Mrs B considered that the "hardest" leave taking was between mother and daughter (and correspondingly, it is mothers whom daughters return to see followed by sisters). Amongst my informants who migrated



as adults, four women claim that they were not close to their mothers. Homesickness for their mothers does not figure in their accounts (three of the four say that they missed fathers or sisters very much). Nine women's mothers were already dead before they migrated (those who had sisters mentioned missing them especially). I would suggest in general that a woman's leavetaking is made "easier" (more like a man's) if she is not close to her mother or sister, or if her mother is already dead. The remaining eight made the most difficult departure, from living mothers. One returned with her husband to live in the Netherlands near her mother but this did not work out, and two say that they would have returned to the Netherlands if they could have. Overall, I would say that this group has been more homesick than the others.

Like other men I have interviewed Mr B "kind of" understands what Mrs B is talking about, however, he indicates this would not have been enough to stop him from migrating. Similarly, in the case of Mr and Mrs A (see above), his wife's refusal to accompany him to Australia until her mother was dead delayed their departure but when they did leave his mother was still alive. As he says, his family was not close. The "masculine" logic seems to be that the nuclear family, husband and children, should be "enough" for a woman. For example, I asked one man if his mother was homesick during the early months living in a migrant centre with her children while her husband worked in another town. He responded thus:

By the time that she had ten kids, cause one was born in Australia. If you get that many kids you can handle anything (laugh) I think. It didn't bother her a great deal.

As I argue in previous chapters, such logic or "rationality" seems to have won out over feminine priorities viz all the women who left parents and family in the Netherlands to follow their husbands to Australia, and also symbolically in the subordination of the femine "inside" to the masculine "outside" (see Chapter VII). However, I consider that this masculine logic represents a denial of reality or "forgetting" and that, by way of example, the man quoted above would probably not even know if his mother was homesick during those early days. Those feelings and priorities were just not all that important.

Again, there is death imagery associated with leaving parents. Returning to Mr and Mrs B, Mrs B suggests that leaving parents means that eventually one must return to their death bed or funeral and "pay" for what one has done (see above) with borrowed money or more significantly by leaving children in Australia. The migrant, it seems, is caught between two generations and can have neither. However, before pursuing this argument I would like first to discuss how people were made to pay for leaving their parents.

Various informants describe how their parents "punished" them for leaving (for example, Mrs G's mother who told them that they were "good for nothing"). Here, Mrs J describes how her parents refused to farewell her and her husband:

I didn't feel guilty [about leaving] but I felt bitterly hurt because - Mum was ill on the day I went and she made herself ill [so she could not see them off] and Dad went to bring us to the boat but he might as well have - only his presence was there. He had lost his voice completely, he couldn't talk. (my emphasis)

Note how Mrs J says that her mother "made herself ill" and how her father absented himself by losing his voice. Although Mrs J says that she did not, I would suggest that Mrs J did feel guilt about leaving parents who loved them "so terribly"; so guilty in fact that the first years in Australia were "very hard" and as she explains, she became ill as a result. Mrs J was also angry at her parents for the way they punished her and her husband (and more her than him) for leaving. As I have reiterated, like most women, Mrs J came to Australia because of her husband (and they blamed him for this). However, she bore the brunt of parental disapproval; there is no mention of any strong reaction on the part of his family. Although Mrs J remained loyal to her husband, she was, in effect, torn between her loyalties to her husband in Australia and her parents in the Netherlands.

Another woman's mother warned her "you'll die in that country". Presumably she is warning her daughter that she would die prematurely or in some horrible manner (or both), or perhaps it was enough of a punishment that she live out her life in Australia! Her daughter seems to have remembered her mother's words well for, according to her son:

My mother was crying all the time, she wanted to go back. I want to go back, I can't - the children will starve and die. This place [Bonegilla migrant camp] is full of disease! (speaker's emphasis)

Mr and Mrs N recount how her mother warned them that they would be "really sorry" if they left the Netherlands:

Mr N: Tell her what your mother - in about, in de, weet je wel (you remember) -

Mrs N: I can't remember, I don't know -

Mr N: Like Ruth and Boas -

Mrs N: I can't remember!

Mr N: In the Bible they said - Ruth and Boas  
- and they went out and then she said  
that we would be really sorry like Ruth  
and we come later on back.

Mrs N: Like Naomi ...

Obviously Mrs N does not want to talk about it but she does remember what her mother said, in fact, she corrects her husband's inaccurate Biblical reference. Like Naomi, who left her homeland with her husband, she would return "empty":

I went out full and the Lord hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me and the Almighty hath inflicted me? (The Book of Ruth, Chapter 1, Verse 2)

In a sense her mother's prophecy/curse has been fulfilled. Mrs N has returned home to find that her family has changed in ways she does not like and, since the death of her mother, she no longer feels that she has a home there. Other women went home to find that they no longer "fitted in" and that they too no longer had a home in the Netherlands: Mrs F who was defined as an "outsider" and instructed not to tell younger relatives about life in Australia because they might be encouraged to migrate; Mrs S who discovered that she could no longer live with either her mother or mother-in-law (these incidents are discussed in Chapter VII); and Mrs V who describes how on her first visit home, alone with her children, she was excluded by her "close" family from a family Christmas and encouraged to move her departure date ahead. (Other, subsequent visits in Australia and the Netherlands were better, but clearly this first traumatic visit was a watershed for Mrs V).

The "crime" they committed for which they are being punished is that of leaving or abandoning parents. But whose crime is it precisely? Judging from the punishment being meted out, I would say that it was the women/daughters who sinned against their parents/mothers. Men had already left their natal families before they migrated. They were, by definition, not "close" to their parents and not all that much could be or was expected of them. On the other hand, daughters could be expected, for example, to visit their mothers regularly as part of their daily rounds and eventually to care for parents in their old age. No wonder that their loss, in effect, devastated the family. Daughters were irreplaceable.

Nevertheless, however much parents opposed their daughters' departure, they were remarkably unsuccessful in preventing it, just as these same daughters were, it seems, powerless in the face of their husbands' decision to emigrate. (Mrs A is a partial exception here. She emigrated on her own terms, after her parents were dead, but she still emigrated according to her husband's wishes and as a result left behind several sisters of whom she was and is very fond.) I now would like to discuss why it was that parents and daughters accepted the decision to emigrate, if grudgingly, and some implications of this kind of acceptance.

#### Men Make Their Lives

They are old and we are young - we are still young then - and they thought, if you can make a better future, then we should do it. And Bill got only a father, he didn't have a mother, and he said, "Well, if I was 20 years younger I would go with you!" (laughs). So it was harder for us than for them, I reckon. Well, when we left probably they feel it - how

much they missed [us], especially the grandchildren ...

Mrs C is describing her parents' and father-in-law's reactions to their decision to emigrate. (She points out that her mother-in-law was dead.) Their reactions were predictably different. Her parents expressed muted sadness over the loss of a daughter and grandchildren whereas her father-in-law responded with enthusiasm, identifying with his son: "If I was 20 years younger I would go with you!" Yet, aside from what one might term emotional coloration, their responses were much the same; in any case emotions were overshadowed in this account by rationality. These parents drew the familiar connection between children and going away, that is, children (sons and other men's wives) go away from their parents. They were, in effect, saying that it was the prerogative and responsibility of the young to make a better future for themselves. If this meant going away, then so be it. Presumably they should not go away if the future they make is not better than the one they would have had in the Netherlands but this is an imponderable. However, as I discuss in previous chapters, many people left the Netherlands believing that their country had no future (for them) because of severe economic and population problems, and came to Australia believing like other immigrants that Australia was a land of unparalleled opportunities. In fact, not only has the Netherlands recovered, it has prospered and many migrants have returned to find that their relatives are more prosperous than are they. Certainly, this is just one measure of success but it is one which seems to matter to many Dutch who came to Australia in search of material

prosperity. These supposedly rational, practical beliefs stressing individual autonomy and control were considered to outweigh emotional notions about filial responsibility, especially that of daughters to mothers. Their primary responsibility anyways was now to their husbands, which raises my second point. Responsibility for migrating and, by implication, for leaving their parents rests with their husbands; it was their decision.

Self: How did your grandparents react to your mother's coming out?

Wilhelmina: Oh they were dreadfully heart-broken. Mainly because they didn't know how long it would be before they saw her again. And the fact that it was just so far away. And their only daughter. Actually, Mum's brother, the younger one of her brothers was going to come out here as well but the family - Mum's mother and father - did not let them go but suggested they wouldn't like Mum's brother to come to Australia and live here as well. But I only found that out when I went to Holland myself and the aunt told me ...

Self: Did they try to stop your parents or at that point [she was the first child to migrate] didn't they know what hit them?

Wilhelmina: I don't think they tried to stop them. They are very - the thing where the husband is right and [what] the husband says, goes. They didn't dare go against that. Mum's virtually lived that type of life style here in Australia even. Everything Dad says is fine ...

Many informants have given this same explanation. Like other "heartbroken" parents of daughters, Wilhelmina's grandparents would not interfere in another man's decision. They did interfere

and successfully prevented a son from emigrating later : indeed, the only two examples of successful interference by parents told to me involved sons (see Chapter VII for other example). In most cases of sons migrating parents apparently did not mind all that much or at least this is what I am led to believe. In these cases parents did mind and could put direct pressure on the person, their son, whom they held responsible for the decision. They were not undermining another man's authority over his wife by appealing to her; indeed, they were upholding that authority. Interestingly, Wilhelmina did not learn about this incident, although she had known her uncle might emigrate, until she talked to her aunt in the Netherlands. Neither of her parents told her; her father, because his in-law's views were irrelevant to him and her mother, for the same reason that she has told Wilhelmina almost nothing about her life before marriage or her own reaction to her husband's decision to emigrate: "Everything Dad says is fine". Such confidences would challenge this definition of reality, revealing that she once had and still could have a separate set of priorities and identity from her husband. Right or wrong, she has followed his lead in virtually everything. As Wilhelmina's repeats throughout our conversations, she just doesn't want to know anything else. And yet, there are glimmers of another reality - in Wilhelmina's memories of her mother's utter loneliness alone at home with small children, her mother's continued closeness with her own family and her separate trips home to the Netherlands.

Wilhelmina's father (like other men in this study) takes virtually total responsibility for migrating; it was his decision.



Still a loner, he was apparently not close to his own family in the Netherlands. He attributes little or no responsibility to his wife who, as I have already indicated, accepts and collaborates with this definition, or the Dutch and Australian governments which encouraged and assisted their migration (like ten's of thousands of others). As with many others who came to Australia so that they might become farmers or self-employed businessmen and tradesmen her father's main (stated) reason for emigrating is that he believed that it would be "easier" to find the white collar job he wanted but could not secure in the Netherlands. This better job has never eventuated, which is hardly surprising given that employment opportunities for immigrants have been largely restricted to lower status jobs in the building and industrial sectors (see Chapter IV). He worked hard to make migration a material success by working at more than one job at a time (as a result, often being away from home) and moving the family in search of work, but even in these limited terms he has not been successful. Interestingly, his daughter suggests that sometimes he has felt "victimised". She does not specify by whom and he himself may not know just who victimised him. However, his over-riding response seems to be that he failed somehow, has been not quite good enough, and that if he persists, he still might succeed.

Money has always been, to me, the forefront of Dad's thoughts, always - it's always money. The worry of it and the lack of it, the reason why there's a lack of it. That's another thing. There's always got to be a blame, a blamer and a blamee (laugh) for something going wrong. It can't be just a "oh well, that's bad luck" type of thing. There has to be somebody's fault always ... Even as far as himself, he condemns himself where it was

probably ... oh well, it's just bad luck. (my emphasis)

Even when it is just "bad luck" her father feels responsible. Bad luck is an acceptable explanation for Wilhelmina, it is not for him. It smacks of making excuses: men make their own lives and deserve their fates. Indeed, this was, I suggest, the special allure of emigration for these men; being pioneers, finding adventure and making new futures. A few men I have interviewed have realised this dream and done well, better (they say) than they could have done in the Netherlands. Australia has been - for them - the land of opportunity. Most have not done so well and it is debatable if they are, in objective terms, any better off for migrating. Some have suffered, it seems, very bad luck but even after recounting what sounds like a litany of disasters, all insist that they did the right thing in migrating: no, they have no regrets. To quote one man, It was the best thing I ever did. At the same time, as I argue in Chapter VI, migration outcomes are often visibly scrambled. Almost every informant can cite instances of unfairness; of later and less worthy people who managed to receive generous travel subsidies whereas they paid (almost) full fare, or of Dutch who posed as skilled tradesmen and prospered while their own legitimate qualifications were undervalued and sometimes not even accepted. Such accounts constitute, I suggest, a form of plea-bargaining. They are not what they appear; their relative lack of success is due to extenuating circumstances and, indeed, is evidence of their own integrity compared to those Dutch who succeeded by cheating. The function of such anecdotes is not to question the supposed

rationality of fairness of migration; instead, these fundamental contradictions between belief and outcome are resolved by blaming other Dutch. Surely, such "rationality" in the face of events and circumstances so patently beyond one's understanding (let alone control) must impose a heavy burden of guilt and denial on the person who supposedly set them all in train. By comparison, following husbands and leaving mothers behind seems almost trivial. Paradoxically yet appropriately, it is the wives and children, who do not bear this same burden, who hint that it does exist.

#### It's Their Own Fault

Generally, informants have not said that they regret emigrating. They all know of other Dutch who wish that they had stayed in the Netherlands but as a rule they are rather unsympathetic to their plight. The general consensus seems to be that this happens to other people and they should have gone back to the Netherlands or better yet never come in the first place. These people should have known beforehand how - "things" (life, their children, jobs, everything) would turn out. Informants acknowledge that circumstances may have prevented them from returning but ultimately it is their own fault if they are unhappy.

I think a lot of people that do go back never really fitted. They should not have come in the first place. They should have done their two years and gone back but by that time may be their business was doing nicely ... or Mum was going to have another baby and it was all inconvenient and they turn around and they've been here ten years! ... This is when you get the people that are critical - I'm critical of a lot of things here too but by the same token

you shouldn't lose sight of the advantages either. As I far as I'm concerned, it balances out in favour of Australia. If you're honest and it doesn't then you should go back: but they don't - through circumstances may be ... (my emphasis)

Interestingly, the category of people earning least sympathy from other Dutch seems to be those who came for their children and now feel deserted by those same children. No one I interviewed actually admits that this is their experience; a few say they came for their children but none actually complain that their children have let them down (after all they have done for them). Informants are more likely to insist - vociferously, almost moralistically - that they did not come for their children and, therefore, cannot not, even if they wanted, make that complaint. Nevertheless, most know of such unfortunate cases and are prepared to voice an opinion:

And I don't believe in that idea, that people went to Australia for their kids. I think that is wrong [my emphasis]. If you only come here for the kids - may be some people with grown-up boys that they say the boys might have a better opportunity in Australia - and these people, they regret it. You know Mrs T? Well, she says, "We should never have come here, but we did it for the boys". And all her boys got very good jobs. Now, if she didn't have the boys she would have gone back, because they did it for the boys and not for themselves.

Again, it is their own fault if they are unhappy because they came for their children. Such people, I am told, probably drove their children away by being too demanding because they came for them, or because they have spoiled their children by doing too much for them - including coming to Australia. In any case, they came for the "wrong" reason (as if there is a correct reason). Emigration is an individual responsibility: people (that is, men) came to

Australia for themselves and it is up to them to make a success of it.

Generally speaking then, regrets are not permissible; however, there are two common regrets which informants do express, which seem to be considered acceptable. They have to do with the unforeseen consequences of emigration and are about children and what I describe as broken connections. The first regret, that they did not teach their children to speak Dutch, I have already discussed in Chapter VII. The second is that by migrating they took their children away from the extended family, especially from their grandparents: They took the children away. It is this particular regret which I would like to examine, starting with the memories of a woman who left the Netherlands as a young child.

The children: "God! What have I done?!"

Johanna: I've asked my mother subsequently, "Did you ever sit down and tell us what was happening and she said, "Ach, we were so busy with ourselves. We had our own agonies to go through". When I think of the emotional blackmail ... So they had their own problems to work through, their own emotions, their own grieving, their own sense of loss and we children just picked up those vibrations ... I can remember the day we left. It was raining. A big bus took us from Groningen to Rotterdam where the boat left from. I can actually remember the warehouse-type customs hall through which we went; where we had the x-rays, the cold bloody things. On the bus - all the people who were going, all the baggage stowed ... and people crying. I can remember looking out of the bus and seeing my grandfather and grandmother - and that has never left me.

It's dreadful - well, I mean I get tears in my eyes still and I asked Hank, my brother, "Did you have any perception that when we left, it was going to be forever?" And he said, "No. They sort of said we were going somewhere, like on a holiday, but no one ever said we weren't coming back".

Self: And yet, from what you're describing the message went right to the -

Johanna: Oh! To the core. We got the vibrations [that] people didn't articulate but we picked up the emotions and it took me the next ... 35 years nearly to come to terms with my own sense of loss. (speakers' emphasis)

Lack of communication between the generations regarding emigration is a familiar theme in this work. As I argue throughout, given the enormity of the experience, compared to official definitions of emigration as a rational and individual act, it is hardly surprising that people could not find the words to describe migration, especially to other family members who were affected by that decision. Again, this involves parents and children but here the silence is between those who left and those who were taken away with them (rather than the parents who were left behind).

Just because children and parents did not talk about emigration that is not to say that children were unaware of what was going on. Like other people I have interviewed who came to Australia as children, Johanna and her siblings were not expected to understand the family's migration. They were told that they were going "on a holiday" or at least that was their impression. (Other children remember being told that they were going on a big adventure.)

They were not privy to family discussions and had no say in the final decision, they were just taken along. Yet, it could be said that Johanna (and other children) understood the meaning of emigration - the "emotional blackmail" on her parents to stay, the grieving and loss - at least as well as her parents did, who made the decision to leave. She had no illusions; she knew what was happening was terrible and beyond her control.

Three of the grandchildren - of a limited number of grandchildren were leaving that family ... Grandchildren disappearing was the clincher.

According to Johanna this was the worst part of her family's emigration for her grandparents. Children might return; grandchildren "disappeared", presaging the loss of future generations and ultimately the dissolution of the family. And this, I suggest, is precisely what happened: they were right.

Those people who brought children with them and are now grandparents themselves may well identify with their own parents and understand what they did to them. Or, as Mrs C, herself a grandmother, describes the impact of their departure on the family "Well, when we left probably they feel it - how much they missed [us], especially grandchildren". My question is: just who is realising later how much they missed grandchildren? Mrs C, her parents or both? Apparently they, like many other families, did not talk about their feelings, but Mrs C estimates that they "probably" missed their grandchildren, if not their children. Another woman, Mrs V, has just completed a trip to the Netherlands to see her mother and sisters. She describes how she half dreaded going because she would miss her own small grandchildren and how

much she looked forward to seeing them after her three months away. She and her husband came to Australia for good, bringing with them a young daughter who had been especially close to Mrs V's father.

Self: How did your family feel about your decision?

Mrs V: They didn't say much [my emphasis] but I think they were very hurt that we took their only granddaughter away. Now I can understand [speaker's emphasis]. Now I have got my own grandchildren, I said, "God! What have I done?! Two years old, they are nice then and [to] just say, 'Well, we are going'". ... That is what I missed in the beginning - birthdays, birthday for Nelly, no grandpa. All the kids were talking about nanna and grandad and Nelly had nothing and - that hurt [speaker's emphasis]. I thought, "God, I wish my children had grandparents", and it is my fault that they don't have. And now with my own three grandchildren - as soon I come Lynn sits on my lap and I had to read her a story. She says she has two bedrooms, one at Oma's (grandmother) place and nobody else is to sleep there, only Lynn, and one at Mummy's place. And I thought, "God, I took that away from my parents!" Because my father was - Nelly was everything [to him]. (my emphasis)

As with other families, no one said much about how it felt losing a daughter and a granddaughter. Now, Mrs V realises how much her parents must have suffered; now that she has grandchildren of her own and can imagine how such a loss would feel. God! What have I done?! Mrs V is acknowledging that she did this to her parents. Her husband made the decision to emigrate but she, at least, shares responsibility for this. Indeed, it could be argued that she alone is responsible for hurting her parents as he was, at that time, quite unaware of the importance of "family" (see



Chapter VII) while she came from a very close family. Mrs V is also suggesting that what they or she did (to just go away without even acknowledging their grief) was cruel.

By migrating, parents have taken away from their children whether these children were born in the Netherlands or Australia, the feelings of belonging which they knew in the extended family (and some rejected). They made that choice for their children and as I suggest in Chapter VII this can cause parents to feel some guilt also. This realisation is often "brought home" most vividly by visits back to the Netherlands when children sometimes discover for themselves what it is like to belong to an extended family and conversely what they have lost.

This experience is far more affecting, I suggest, than parents' oft repeated stories of "the good old days" back home; stories which are foreign-sounding and, considering their authorship, stories whose meaning is uncertain. (If it was so good back there, then why did they leave?)

I think that trip we made in '75 when they met all the relatives [was important]. Afterwards ... I wondered whether we did the right thing to take them. Because what you don't now, you don't worry about. And instead they started to realise. We arrived there, for instance, on Good Friday. On Easter Sunday, we ~~were~~ all at my brother's and had Easter together ... people everywhere! They never had that experience and they were really - "fancy that!" And it was hard for them afterward. (my emphasis)

Mrs J finds that she is responsible not only for taking her children away from the family, she is responsible for awakening them to that fact. Afterwards ... I wondered whether we did the right thing. Children start to ask their parents and themselves difficult questions. Another woman, Mrs S, describes her

daughter's emotional reaction after a trip home:

Why did you emigrate? Why did you go away?  
(Because you miss a whole family.) But we  
stayed here. Also we are very glad to be back  
here because it is too small [there], we don't  
fit in anymore. (speaker's emphasis)

Mrs S speaks both for herself and her daughter in a way which illustrates what I consider to be the essential structural antagonism existing between parents and children in regard to migration; the child asking accusingly, Why did you go away (and take me away from all this)? What was wrong with you that you did not fit in? And the parent defending herself and the unforeseen consequences of a decision which right or wrong is now considered irrevocable. It is too small [there] we don't fit in anymore.

This structural antagonism is expressed in oft repeated stories about old, unhappy Dutch migrants who cannot leave Australia, as one man explains, "because the children have gone. They made a success of their lives and they're [the parents] stuck" (speaker's emphasis). It is evident also in a variant on this story, in the above mentioned story about ungrateful children of foolish parents, who have come to Australia for their children's sakes rather than for their own. The moral of the story is that parents must fend off their children's ingratitude by acting for themselves, which may well mean behaving ungratefully towards their own parents. (This sequence of children leaving parents is discussed later.)

Conversely, antagonism is masked by equally formulaic stories told by parents and children about children's gratitude. These stories stress the notion of Australia as a land of wide open spaces and opportunities, and the mutuality of their - parents and

children's - interests.

But the boys all like it here and they are grateful that we did come her, hein? [Her husband agrees.] Two of them went back for a holiday overseas and said always, "I am grateful, Dad and Mum, that you went to Australia. Life is more - easier here in Australia and it's not so compact with all the people". (my emphasis)

Whom is she speaking for, herself or her sons who have not lived or worked in the Netherlands since they were children and, according to her, consider themselves to be Australians? The couple came to Australia for their, rather his reasons - but happily as it turns out their children share and agree with those reasons, to such an extent that they "thank" them for coming to Australia and, after visiting the Netherlands, testify that they do not even like it there let alone feel homesick. Their parents came to Australia to become Australians (get ahead materially, speak English, fit in, assimilate) but they still consider themselves to be Dutch. The children resolve the contradiction by succeeding where their parents have failed. They are Australians and thus confirm the rightness and success of their parents' emigration.

Children, including some of those who complain that their parents robbed them of family, usually state that when all is said and done they are still grateful to their parents for coming to Australia. Apparently the wide open spaces and material opportunities which Australia represents outweigh regrets about family. In any case, Australia is what they know and where they live: their gratitude could be taken as a vote for the status quo, nothing more, nothing less. I consider that such gratitude

is a difficult attitude to meaningfully maintain primarily because it involves life long inequality of responsibility between parents and children, premised on the belief that life is better because of what the parents did. In a sense it is like being asked to be grateful for being born; no one asked their parents to emigrate and similarly no one can know what life would have been like had they stayed in the Netherlands. This, as I say in the introductory section, is an imponderable but one which seems to fascinate migrants (and in this case, anthropologists).

Showing gratitude is especially problematic for those children who feel that gratitude is expected of them by their parents, but who for various reasons do not feel grateful to them. Wilhelmina describes her reaction to her father's attempts to "build himself up" in their eyes:

W: You'd say what sort of things did you do as a kid? "Oh we used to ride push bikes with no tyres" and tell you how hard they had it as kids but it didn't sort of - it was all very generalised and it was all to build himself up. (my emphasis)

Self: Not in a way so you felt you knew it?

W: No, no. It was always [that] you should be lucky now because of what we had when we were younger. Look what you've got now, you should appreciate what you've got now. But of course, it doesn't make you appreciate just being told things like that.

Wilhelmina judges her father harshly; she is suspicious of his motives for emigrating in the first place and blames many of the family's problems on that and subsequent decisions made by him. In her eyes, he is clearly the central player in the migration drama. While she does not express gratitude to her father for

what he has done - quite the reverse - it is significant that Wilhelmina attributes to him such enormous responsibility for the family's migration and the consequences which seemed to flow from it. That is, as a daughter she accepts the basic premise that migration and making one's life are a man's responsibility.

Others appear to have trouble defining their stance towards their parents. Why did their parents/fathers come to Australia and do they owe them anything? Are they heroes or victims in their dramas?

Self: How do you see yourself in respect to your father? Is your father a person you can identify with?

Jan: Yes, to some extent - I suppose. When one thinks about it more and you start to pick [analyse] rather than just accept, like my brothers did for a long time. Yeah, the stubbornness - because coming out here with so many kids ... The stubbornness - to stay there and stick it out: I've always admired that. When I think about it now, it might be an ego thing, too scared to go back in case they laugh at him. I'm not sure ... [but] I thought he was really good with what he'd done [in Australia] and now I'm starting to see that he's very narrow in his views, in his approach. He worked out for himself what he wanted to do and he did it but he did not understand what it involved ... and what he did with his family in the meantime. His adventuring. (speaker's emphasis)

What motivated his father to emigrate and stay in Australia despite an apparent string of failures? What kind of person is his father? Was it the simple determination (the pioneering spirit) which Jan admires, fear of being labelled a failure, selfishness or narrow-mindedness which caused his father to persist? Jan is undecided. Clearly, Jan does not consider that

it was his mother's doing, except in a negative sense or passively; she just came along. The answer to his question matters to Jan (and other children) not because there is a single answer but because so much about his father remains a mystery to his son. His father's early life and family life prior to migration are inaccessible to him. Jan does not know his grandparents or any other relatives who might help to translate his father for him and perhaps help explain why he left them all behind. This is one reason, I suspect, why a trip back to the Netherlands is so significant for some of the children I interviewed. It helps place their parents in a context and provides a few missing pieces to the puzzle of who their parents are. Jan's knowledge of his father's past derives from the stories his father tells (about the War especially) in which he figures as a larger-than-life dramatic character. This imperfect knowledge contrasts with his only direct knowledge of his father as a migrant; as someone who is "different", not always successful and certainly more a victim than hero.

Then, there are those children who perceive that their parents got very little from coming to Australia whereas they consider that they have benefited greatly. In effect their parents have sacrificed their lives for them.

Self: Do you feel that your parents would have been happier if they hadn't come to Australia?

Henny: For themselves, I think they would have been, because my father, a few months before we left, was offered a building job which would have been really wonderful for him. The sort of work he would have loved to have done and it

would have set him up for the rest of his life. He would have been able to stay with some of the family he was very fond of and also with a lot of the friends he had made. He would have had a much fuller life. For my mother, she wouldn't have closed so much in on herself as she has. I think looking at it objectively, both economically and emotionally for them, it would have been a hell of a lot better if they'd stayed. For them it was an enormous sacrifice and a lasting one ...

Self: Do you feel that this sacrifice has been for you children?

Henny: I know it's been for us children ... (And for her, emigration has been "wonderfull"... She has received a University education, which she believes would not have been available to her in the Netherlands, and is happily settled in Australia.)

A great deal rides on these "grateful" children who, while recognising their overwhelming indebtedness (after all, this is the only way their parents' emigration makes sense) they can never redeem that debt. Paradoxically, the only way they can partially redeem their parents lives is by becoming Australians. A consequence of this is that Henny's mother is, in her daughter's words, "like a blind man trying to lash out", struggling to make sense of who her children have become and, by implication, of her own sacrifice. Her children have not turned out as she would have expected, they are not as "close" to her as she hoped they would be. Their success has alienated them from her and sent them "outside" of what she knows. Was this the purpose of all her sacrifice? For children like Jan and Henny, the uncomfortable mixture of guilt, anger, pity and gratitude which they feel in the face of such a complex situation may be another reason why so many

children go away from their parents and assimilate.

### A Going Away Situation

So far this chapter has concentrated on the significance of that first departure, by Dutch migrants from their parents, with some discussion about how this has affected their children as heirs to that event. I would now like to focus on migrants' relations with their children, in particular, similarities between these two sets of parent-child relationships and the idea that children leaving parents is an ongoing part of emigration. When people say that their children or - more commonly - that other people's children leave them, are they simply reporting on the fact that children grow up and move away? Is the situation of Dutch migrants really any different than other old Australians?

As I argue in my Introduction, we still know very little about the nature of family relations in old age in Australia. In general, one could say that Dutch migrants fit Australian norms for old age, with some important exceptions. That is to say, there is no statistical evidence to indicate that they have been "deserted" by their children, or at least no more so than old Australians generally. Most of my informants (and I would say, most Dutch migrants in Canberra) have children living elsewhere in Canberra. This is comparable to Rowland's (1986:29) Sydney figures which indicate that 87% of people, 60 years and over, have at least one child living in Sydney.<sup>2</sup> Dutch migrants in the ACT are also similar to Australian norms for housing and living arrangements in old age (ABS 1982b, 1982c). Dutch aged do not conform to the general "ethnic" pattern of living in



multi-generation households, yet they are also statistically under-represented in Australian nursing homes, aged hostels and so forth (see also Overberg 1984). It is not that public care for the aged is culturally unacceptable to the Dutch, such institutions are available and widely used in the Netherlands (ibid). My own informants commonly claim to prefer Dutch to Australian nursing homes because they offer more comfortable, I would say, more "civilised" facilities to their residents. One woman showed me plans for such a home which while not luxurious included a restaurant, billiards room, bar, chapel and other public, social rooms. In my experience, this compares very favourably with what is generally available to old people in Australia. Presumably, Dutch migrants would be prepared, would even choose to live in a Dutch style institution, if it were available and affordable rather than alone and entirely dependent on their children. (My own informants have said that they do not wish to live with their children and so far none do.) Ideally they would be able to speak Dutch in such an institution, given that most now speak Dutch at home. (A group has been formed to canvass support and hopefully eventually build a village for old Dutch migrants in Canberra.)

Dutch widows are, for several reasons, especially vulnerable, first of all because women as a rule out-live their husbands and are more likely to survive into "old, old age" or dependent old age (Neugarten 1977). Amongst Netherlands' born women 65 years and over in the ACT only two per cent live in nursing homes and other public facilities compared to nine per cent of Australian and New Zealand born women, while 30% compared to 25% of

Australian/new Zealand born women live on their own (ABS op cit). Such women, it would seem, must rely almost entirely on their children (or friends) for any help they do receive, with all the problems that such dependence can imply. Based on my informants and my previous research with Australian widows (op cit) many old women and men prefer not to be dependent on their children, choosing to remain independent as long as possible even if this includes receiving outside (paid or voluntary) help. Just because a person has children living nearby one cannot assume that these children are available to help, just as one cannot assume that a married couple can meet all their own needs. (For old women this can mean exhausting themselves caring for ailing husbands and putting their own health at risk.) As Day notes (op cit) patterns of helping and the meaning put on that behaviour vary considerably due to numerous non-measurable factors such as different personalities, family histories and circumstances etc. The issue as I see it is one of ensuring choice for people so that they are not forced, because of misplaced beliefs about the sanctity of the family or of migrant assimilation, for that matter, to rely entirely on their children in order to survive.

The second difference between Dutch migrants and Australian aged is related also to this question of dependency. As I have discussed previously, emigration has distorted and truncated the family structure of many Dutch migrants. Most came in nuclear families, leaving behind siblings and parents. Less than one half (20 out of 48) of informants have collateral kin in the migrant generation and those who do usually have only one or two siblings in Australia, thus diminishing their range of options for migrants

in old age, for example, if the two do not get along, live far apart or when one dies. This especially disadvantages women. As I have already shown, it is primarily women who grieve for sisters and mothers left behind. In old age they are often pulled between competing affections for children in Australia and their families in the Netherlands. Also, largely as a result of migration their energies and attention have been turned inwards on their children, and ultimately it is these women who will survive as widows and judge the worth of their lives in terms of their children. (And, of course, there are women for whom this has succeeded, who have lived their lives for their children, are in turn loved and cared for by their children and grandchildren and have no regrets.) This contrasts with the situation of the country widows I studied earlier (1983), whose life-long relationships with sisters and friends help to counter-balance their dependence on children and affirm their identities as competent, caring and powerful women.

Informants see themselves, I argue, as locked into a "going away" situation. They have already gone away from their parents, with all that signifies, and now as a consequence of their emigration their children may well go away from them. They hoped, in a sense, to make a kind of trade-off between their parents and children.

It's either the parents go away from their parents overseas or their children go away from their parents. You have a going away situation somewhere along the line.

In a characteristically succinct and dispassionate manner (see Chapter VII), Mr D summarises the situation. As a migrant, he cannot keep both his Dutch parents and his Australian children.

They are disconnected from each other and Mr D is somewhere in between. He has already gone away from his parents (only physically, he says, "It was only a matter of distance"; and now Mr D must move away from one generation and towards the other. Faced with this forced choice, Mr D decides "rationally" to complete what he has begun by cutting ties with his parents and assimilating (a decision consistent with his stated desire to get ahead materially in Australia). He has found, it seems, the best of all possible worlds.

As Mrs F put it, one of their reasons for emigrating (and leaving their families) was to keep their children with them: "To get them with me, I took the whole lot here! That it is so big here, Australia, that they [the children] don't emigrate from Australia". Following this same logic, parents chose to speak English with their children at home so that language would not divide the family (see Chapter VII). As rhetoric this may have made sense but the reality proved to be more complex. Like other migrants who came to Australia "for" their children, Mrs F feels she largely lost them as a result of migrating. Parents continued to be more comfortable speaking Dutch between themselves, while their children as a result of the decision to speak English cannot speak Dutch. In effect, language has divided the family.

Mr D's statement needs further explication. He fails to mention in this (rhetorical) context, but does earlier, that his children have gone away from him, too. Sacrificing his children did not alter the outcome, his children still left him and he has, in his terms, neither parents nor children. In fact, his own action prescribed the outcome because, says Mr D, his children

left him "just like" he did before them. History repeated itself; he got his own back. Revising Mr D's original (under) statement, he is saying that with migration: you have a going away situation all along the line.

To understand this further, we return to those unfortunate parents who complain about how their children have turned out.

Mr G: The only trouble is, see - you hear a lot of people say - here in Australia, they grow up, the kids. They get married and they leave you. It hurts many times - ja - but the other end is what did you do? When you were young and you left home and you left your parents behind?

Self: That's a dilemma isn't it?

Mr G: Ja! Because many times, like here in Canberra, we meet people - "my son is over there and my daughter left over there" ... "But ja!" (That is what I said.) Your answer is always, "What did you do?" When you left home at that time, you left your parents and your mother was crying -"

Mrs G: I always said, he left six sisters and brothers behind, I left three brothers behind. With our daughter, she is in West Australia. She, left nothing behind, only us two!<sup>3</sup> (speakers' emphasis)

Children go away from parents in two different ways: by moving away geographically and becoming Australians; and going away from the "home ways", that is, speaking English rather than Dutch, marrying non-Dutch partners, not visiting regularly or participating in family celebrations (Christmas, birthdays, anniversaries) and so forth. Unlike most of the children in this study Mr and Mrs G's daughter speaks "quite a bit" of Dutch and is married to a Dutchman; however, what they are complaining about is

that she lives too far away to be a proper daughter to them. She has "left nothing behind, only us two!" They are left even worse off than their own parents who, at least, have other children still in the Netherlands.

But what did you do? That is the catch, the hook. Because these people who are complaining, left their parents too. They left because they were young, with futures to build, they were married women with husbands to follow, they had their own lives to live: be it on their heads. They took their children away and raised them "in" Australia to become Australians, and they have succeeded. Now it is their children who are young with lives to live and the same answers apply. I ask Mrs V how she would react if her daughter too decided to emigrate:

Mrs V: It would hurt terribly ... [but] it's her life and I am not a person to stop her.

Self: For some Dutch people who, as you say, came out for their children, their children moving away from them now is a real difficulty. (Mrs V denies that she and her husband came out for their children. They came out for his career.)

Mrs V: Ja, ja. Then they say that's why we came to Australia and now we are alone ... Some just are at the kids all the time that they left them really. (speaker's emphasis)

Self: but yet they can feel guilty because they left -

Mrs V: Yes, because that's what they get back from the kids. They said, "What did you do? We stay in the same country but you went all the way from Holland to Australia." That's it, you can't say anymore. (my emphasis)

What else can they say? They are caught up in their own

logic; their children leaving them after they left their parents makes such sense. After all, they are their children and, as the saying goes, like father like son (like mother like daughter). This is precisely why their children's leaving is such a talking point - because it is so richly significant, so satisfying in its inevitability. As another woman said, describing her reaction to her son's proposed departure from Australia, that was the end of me. His departure signified the silencing, the completion and the death of her and what she and her husband had begun by migrating.

### Conclusion

Migration poses problems of meaning for those people who, as migrants, venture from the known into the unknown and as a result must confront their own anonymity. Their task is to find new meanings and identities for themselves, illustrated here by the surplus, indeed, confusion of meanings in migration stories in which the migrant is hero, villain, victim as well as author. What did people do by migrating or conversely what happened to them? The question is, where is responsibility for migration and outcomes attributed? The answers it seems are found in terms of family and its opposite, disconnection. Migrants left parents behind, the responsibility is theirs: this is what they did.

It is, as I attempt to show in this chapter, an answer which is full of significance and complexities. Leaving parents is considered an unnatural, morally suspect act, an act which needs explanation and exoneration. Like Dutch migrants generally (for example, see Emigratie 1955: 15 quoted in Chapter III) these children left their homes, giving nothing back to those who fed

and raised them to adulthood, their parents and their homeland. They committed the crime of non-reciprocity, of putting Self before Other, and are accused variously (or accuse themselves) of not loving their parents enough, abandoning them to their old age, causing their parents to become ill or even die from grief. They have given away the past for the future; they have been bad children to their parents.

Leaving parents has, I argue, different meanings for men and women, as does migration. The Dutch men discussed here seem to be distant from their families, not close, and it is they who did the leaving, hoping to find new and better futures for themselves. They, in a sense, are the Self in the dialectic. Women are close to family and are pulled away, from mothers and sisters especially, by their husbands; they follow and are lost to their families. Accordingly, responsibility for leaving is split between the two. Men are primarily responsible for migration and for making, in its own terms, a material success of migration by assimilating and finding work. Women, on the other hand, are responsible for making the experience, one could say, palatable; by keeping the family, which has already been split apart by the migration and will be further diminished as children move increasingly "outside", together and close. Women's relative powerlessness and their dilemma in the face of migration are immediately and easily apparent; evident in the way the decision to emigrate is made (or how it is reported), in their problematic position between the two families, their early homesickness and their dependence on their children. Men are in a difficult, if less easily defined, position. Whereas women can be largely



defined as victims and condemned, forgiven or pitied as such, men claim a heavy burden of responsibility. They are the people who went away for their own reasons and now must somehow bridge the gap between these definitions and the reality outside where they are not necessarily defined as heroes or authors of their fate. It does not always add up.

These same themes of responsibility and disconnection are played out between these sons and daughters and their children who, one could say, represent that obscure future they constructed. They left their own parents and hurried to assimilate their families so that they all could be Australians together and so that their children need not leave them. Instead they realise that they have taken grandchildren away from grandparents and ensured that their children will leave them too which, as it turns out, is fitting punishment for the "crime" of migration.

## FOOTNOTES

- 1 Mr G is overstating the situation here; approximately 325,000 Dutch left the Netherlands during this period (see Chapter III), however, this does not detract from the gist of his argument; a great many people did leave, not just a few rogues and scoundrels.
- 2 As far as I am aware, no such research has been done on family relations in old age in Canberra.
- 3 In other words, Mr G's parents lost very little when he left, they still had daughters. Mrs G's parents were left with sons only. They have "nothing"; their only child, a daughter, has gone away.

## CONCLUSION

Who then are the Dutch in Australia, what does it mean to be a Dutch migrant? This ethnography develops a number of interpretive arguments about Dutch assimilation and "invisibility", which I see as central features of Dutch identity in Australia. In the course of which series of connections are drawn between the Dutch ethnic stereotype, Dutch migration and government policies which stimulated that migration, and the personal histories and identities of Dutch migrants and their children. Such connections have been largely ignored with reference to the Dutch and other "ethnic" groups in Australia but are no less real as a consequence. My task, as I see it, has been to re-construct those connections and restore Dutch identity to the various contexts from which it emerged. Accordingly, this is not a study of Dutchness or Dutch culture per se but of "common sense" knowledge, in particular, the relationship between personal and public meanings.

I take as my starting point the stereotyped Dutchman; that well known and well documented individual who works hard, has little affection for his former countrymen or culture but who still behaves in a typically Dutch manner. He is, I argue, largely a product of Dutch and Australia migration policies which valued Dutch migrants, that is men, in terms of the work they did and their supposed assimilability. Not only did this typical Dutchman encapsulate these policies, he was responsible for their success or otherwise. In other words, it was up to him to work hard, stay

in Australia and assimilate for all his characteristically Dutch reasons. He brought with him - this Dutchman - a wife and children, for Dutch migration was "typically" family migration. They are little heard of, although both the Dutch and Australian Governments favoured family migration because it would help ensure the long term assimilation of greater numbers of a more desirable kind of migrant than would the migration of single men (which was the preserve of "darker", southern peoples). However, within this framework, their roles were clearly defined; children were to become Australians and Dutch women, the handmaidens of their families' assimilation into Australia.

That migration meant assimilation and hard work was communicated to Dutch migrants in a variety of ways. In the Netherlands this message was conveyed in the belief that migration was an individual responsibility and that people should "pay" morally and materially for their migration. Once a person left the Netherlands it was up to him to make his own way, work hard and fit into his new homeland. This same message was conveyed even more forcefully by the Dutch subsidy system which was designed to encourage migration but in doing so marked certain people as "surplus" (and of less value) and effectively forced recipients to pay for their migration; under the "old" system with all they possessed and under the more generous "new" system, morally. In Australian migrant camps, it was made obvious to Dutch migrants that basically they were migrants like any others and here to work. The best they could hope for was conditional status as "surrogate" British (conditional on there not being enough British migrants and on their rapid assimilation into the Australian "way

of life"). Afterwards, it was communicated by teachers and children who insisted that English be spoken in the home, otherwise the children would fall behind and not fit into Australia. Clearly, there was little benefit to be derived from remaining a Dutch migrant in Australia; looking back towards the Netherlands meant failure and in Australia a Dutch migrant was just a migrant. The one way out of this impasse was to find work, forget about the past and assimilate.

Based on my life history material, I would conclude that these messages found their targets. That is, Dutch men seem to have taken responsibility for migration (just as they also take responsibility for their lives) and to equate migration with assimilation and getting ahead materially. For them, migration represented a venture into the unknown, into a world which made very little sense, where outcomes were scrambled, scoundrels are rewarded and honest men failed. It is a journey so personal that its origins are often found in their characters; they have always been "loners" or were not "close" to their families in the Netherlands. One could say that they aspired to become the typical assimilated Dutchman. The women I interviewed recognise this logic as it applies to men but they do not identify with it themselves. In their stories women are generally not responsible for migration; they do not initiate the action, they "followed" men more or less willingly to Australia. Their responsibility was inside, to home and family. By building a Dutch home in Australia, they made the unknown, known; they were making life in Australia palatable. At the same time, migration was about leaving home and homesickness.

This division of responsibility and of space, where men went outside and women remained inside, helps explain how in cultural terms a person can be assimilated and yet be Dutch; indeed, how assimilation has become a symbol of Dutch identity in Australia. With a cosy Dutch home and a Dutch wife inside to make it cosy, a man can be Australian outside and Dutch inside. It was a means also of distancing themselves from other less assimilated and supposedly less desirable migrants and asserting a special, Dutch identity. However, the relationship between inside and outside is asymmetrical. Not only have these women "followed" their men and their ideas "outside" to Australia, they have had to go away from home and family (especially mothers and sisters) in the Netherlands. While such behaviour is consistent with the proposition that men are by nature outsiders who must make their own lives, it contradicts women's role as home-makers. Migration has made explicit pre-existing tensions between natal and conjugal families, that is, between women's responsibilities as daughters and as wives. It has forced them to make a choice between the two families; whereas in the Netherlands a woman could be a good wife and daughter within the context of the extended family, even though their dual loyalties might also be a source of open conflict.

Women's relative powerlessness in respect of migration is perhaps best illustrated by what I have described as the non-generativity of Dutch culture in Australia. Not only is the gezelligheid of the Dutch home and family not being translated into any kind of Dutch community feeling, their children have learned to speak English at home; they were "assimilated" there.

Yet these children are only following their parents' examples. Like their fathers, they have gone outside and become Australians. In terms of the masculine "migration/assimilation" model, this makes sense, it is a validation, a confirmation, of the choice their fathers made. Such an outcome makes sense also in the language of "going home", having left their parents, it is only fitting that their children should leave them too.

As I have reiterated throughout this study, it has not been my purpose simply to define Dutch culture or experience in Australia but to explore the Self-Other relationship and conversely the denial of that relationship which, I argue, the "assimilated" Dutch epitomise. More specifically, I have re-traced connections between the Dutch stereotype (as the Other), the historical and ideological contexts which gave rise to that stereotype, and the personal identities of the individuals who were so defined. At another level, I have been interested in how people understand their lives; namely, how they relate the "Dutch" person they were in the Netherlands and the Self they have become in Australia. And more immediately, I have explored, reflexively, my relationship with my informants and how this identification has influenced the ethnography I have written. Such a perspective offers us the prospect of a more "nuanced" understanding, not only of Dutch migrants in Australia, but of other cultural minorities as well as more general questions of meaning and identity.

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