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Sex and Drugs before Rock 'n' Roll

Roberts, Benjamin B.

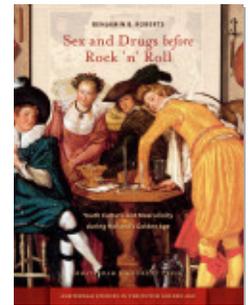
Published by Amsterdam University Press

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Sex and Drugs before Rock 'n' Roll: Youth Culture and Masculinity during Holland's Golden Age.

Amsterdam University Press, 2012.

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the summer of 1982 I was a sixteen-year-old American teenager who backpacked across Europe on a Eurail Pass together with my eldest brother. Bright-eyed and curious, I was on a quest to discover – and witness – everything ‘civilized’ that European culture had to offer, as opposed to the ‘uncouthness’ we Americans felt about our own culture. One of our first stops from Amsterdam was to the picturesque, medieval university town of Heidelberg, which included a climb to the Gothic *alte Schloss* perched up high above the Neckar River, an afternoon at the University of Heidelberg, Germany’s oldest university that was founded in 1386 and later bastion of Humanist and Reformation thought in the sixteenth century, and a visit to the university’s *studentenkarzer* or student prison, where pupils that misbehaved were incarcerated for short periods of time. To my surprise, the prison walls were clad with graffiti and lewd texts. They reminded me of the drawings of oversized genitals and ‘reefers’, the marijuana cigarettes, and coarse inscriptions about sex, masturbation, and drugs that I enjoyed reading on the walls of my high school restroom back in the US. My initial thoughts were: ‘Could it be that young men three hundred years ago were just as obsessed with the same profanities as me? And this was the “civilized culture” Americans aspired to model themselves after?’ There went my first presupposition about how ‘civilized’ European culture was. Since then, that notion about the continuity and discontinuity of the human experience, fueled by an almost innate curiosity about the dynamics of culture has intrigued me. It has been a main theme in my historical research endeavors, including my dissertation about child-rearing practices in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Holland. For this study, that fascination is the *leitmotif* in examining how one generation of young men experienced the phase of life between sexual maturation and the age of marriage during one of Holland’s most dynamic economic and cultural eras.

This work would not have been realized without the help and encouragement of many. Firstly I would like to thank Professor Willem Frijhoff, who, through our many delightful conversations, has given me countless advice, direction, and motivation from the very start of this project. His intellectual acuity and creativity have been an inspiration and his leadership qualities and emotional intelligence a role model. Professor Leendert Groenendijk, a fellow historian of early modern childhood and youth, was enthusiastic about my proposal and helped have it included as a postdoc research project, and component of the interdisciplinary research program at the Free University of Amsterdam, ‘Interplay: Dutch identity as a result of the interaction of culture, art, and religion, 1400-1700’. Leendert’s inspiration and perspicacity of more than 35 years in the field of historical pedagogy were welcomed gifts.

I was enriched by my colleagues at the Free University with the great wealth of knowledge and collaboration from many disciplines. Yvonne Bleyerveld, Arjan van Dixhoorn, John Exalto, Anouk Janssen, Christi Klinkert, Elmer Kolfin, Johan Koppenol, and Ilja Veldman read and commented on the manuscript at various stages. I want to thank Bianca du Mortier of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam for her treasured insight and entertaining discussions about early modern clothing and hygiene, and Wayne Franits of Syracuse University, Chris Corley of Minnesota State University at Mankato, Joel Harrington of Vanderbilt University, Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos of the Ben Gurion University at Negev, and B. Ann Tlusty of Bucknell University. I am very grateful for the staff at Amsterdam University Press, especially Sanne Sauer and Inge van der Bijl, who had to endure my persistence and sometimes stubbornness.

Since the start of this project life has shown me many facets and epiphanies. Without the exceptional care of Dr. Arne de Kreuk and the oncology ward of the St. Lucas Andreas Hospital in Amsterdam, this book would probably not have been finished. There are many dear people in my life that over the years encouraged me, often without knowing it. They include my immediate colleague-freelancers at 35-sous: Norbert Splint, Duncan Baumbach, and Inger Hollebeek, and my cherished friends including Ary Burger, Jan Willem Dammer, Maarten Eddes, Jaime Kyles, Spiros Mariatos, Rena Nasta, Suzanne Roos, Nina Siegal, Vlado Skovlj, and Stratos Latsis who inspired and had to endure me the most.

Amsterdam/Heidelberg, July 2012