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Jacob Israël de Haan

Pederast Poet between Amsterdam and Jerusalem¹

Intro

The Dutch poet, novelist, journalist and legal scholar Jacob Israel de Haan (1881-1924) is regrettably little known beyond circles of specialists of Dutch literature or of early-twentieth century Palestinian history. Nevertheless, his life is so interesting that it is discussed in several books and novels in Dutch, German and English (Bruggen 1910; Bruggen 1921; Bruggen 1924; Wilson 2003; Zweig 1932; Zweig 1933a; Zweig 1933b). He was the subject of one major biography in the sixties and many articles exist about him in Dutch (Bergh 1994; Delvigne/Ross 1994; Delvigne/Ross 2003; Giebels 1980; Giebels 1981; Giebels 2014; Hekma/Mathijsen/Schrijver 2009; Meijer 1965). He has also been the subject of several books in Hebrew that I was regrettably not able to read (e.g. Gleicher 1978). Recently, a new and very complete biography by Jan Fontijn has appeared (Fontijn 2015). By far most of his own work is written in Dutch: two novels, two volumes of collected poems, a book and a collection on legal issues, many smaller pieces for literary and scholarly journals and hundreds of newspaper articles². Very few of these publications have been translated into any other language. Through this article, I want to introduce his life and work as an example of the relation between literature and sexology, of a both personal and social struggle between modernism and premodern sentiments. Let me begin by admitting that I use both of these terms in a rather loose way, also because I address modernist and modernising projects that themselves take different, at times more specific, stances on these developments.

De Haan was a prolific writer with broad interests. He was born in the small

1 The author thanks Ben Garstka and the editors for their help with linguistic and editorial advice.

2 See www.dbnl.org under his name for most of his works.

village of Smilde in the northern part of the Netherlands where his father was a *gazzan* (precentor in the synagogue). He had many siblings, most of whom died early, and next to de Haan, the most well-known was his sister Carry van Bruggen who became an important novelist, philosopher and feminist (best known under her husband's family name). For most of his youth, the family lived in Zaandam, an industrial town north of Amsterdam where his father worked. De Haan followed his educational studies in Haarlem where he received his qualification as a primary school teacher. After finishing these courses, he took temporary jobs and continued with legal studies at the University of Amsterdam. Just before 1900, he began to write and to connect with those in literary circles. His first important relations would be with writer-doctors Frederik van Eeden and Arnold Aletrino (Fontijn 2015: 59; Fontijn 1990/1996). The latter specialised in the new science of criminal anthropology and wrote about «uranism» and somber novels about the lives of nurses (Joose 1986).

The literary and gay careers of de Haan are the subject of my paper and will be discussed at length after this introduction. He joined the modernist literary movement and started to write openly gay novels in the first decade of the twentieth century. Rejecting the orthodoxy of his parents, he became an atheist. He joined the socialist party and wrote for its daily newspaper, but was thrown out of both for his first gay novel *Pijpelijntjes* (1904). Strong leftist feelings of social justice made him protest against the prison conditions in czarist Russia (Haan 1913) After 1910 he returned to the Jewish religion, continued with poetry addressing both Jewish and pederast subjects, joined the Zionist movement and became the «Jewish poet» of the Netherlands. He wrote his dissertation on the terminology of legal responsibility (Haan 1916). During his final years, he lived in Palestine where he migrated in 1919. In Jerusalem, he met Arab boys and orthodox Jews, and he changed his political position from Zionism to take up the causes of the orthodox-Jewish organization Agudah that opposed the secular nationalism of Zionism and befriended the Arabs who formed the large majority in Palestine, but whose existence the Zionists denied. As an accomplished writer, de Haan sent articles to English and Dutch newspapers in which he opposed Zionist claims. He began to lobby for the orthodox cause, breaking the Zionist monopoly in European media and Palestinian politics. His criticism brought the debate to the colonial capital of Palestine, which the Zionists utterly disliked, and they planned to silence de Haan. In the end, he was murdered in June 1924 by men of the Haganah (a predecessor of the Israel Defense Forces), becoming the first Jewish victim of Zionism.

Homo/sexual context

For de Haan, Aletrino was the most important figure in teaching him on homosexuality (Joose 1986: chapter 6; Fontijn 2015: 85-89). Aletrino had published his first article on «uranism» in 1897; a lengthy review of Marc-André Raffalovich's *Uranisme et unisexualité* (1896). In 1901, his contribution to the 5th International Conference of Criminal Anthropology, held in Amsterdam, stirred a scandal. First, because the other conference participants (among whom Cesare Lombroso) opposed his humane stance on homosexuals, pitying instead of condemning them. Second, because Dutch politicians of a Christian background, including the Prime Minister Abraham Kuyper, made slurs about the University of Amsterdam as promoting the sins of Sodom. It was at this «neutral» (that is liberal) University that Aletrino was an unpaid guest teacher (*privaat-docent*) in criminal anthropology, while the Calvinist Protestants were busy establishing their own «Free University» in Amsterdam (free referring to free from liberalism) as part of the pillarization of the Netherlands. In this struggle between liberals and Calvinists, issues of sexual citizenship had become pre-eminent. Being able to accuse the liberals of promoting homosexuality was a powerful weapon against people who in most cases would themselves not dare to speak the unspeakable. Indeed, no one would come to Aletrino's defense.

In those hectic times, the two men met and Aletrino informed de Haan on theories of homosexuality, and in all likelihood about homosexual life. Aletrino had married a second time after his first wife had committed suicide. He may himself have been a bisexual man who moreover had sadistic inclinations (Fontijn 2015: 116; Joosse 1986). Several authors remarked on his effeminacy, also according to himself a sure sign of homosexual preferences. De Haan would describe him as sadist and bisexual in his novel *Pijpelijntjes* - the name is referring to the Amsterdam neighborhood De Pijp where de Haan lived, as well as to *pijpen*, referring to sucking. This novel is a thinly veiled description of the lives of two men who look very much like Aletrino and de Haan and bear their nicknames Sam and Joop. The novel was dedicated to Aletrino and we might see the novel as a sign of gratefulness of de Haan for Aletrino who introduced him to gay life. This homosexual life that I will discuss later is vividly depicted in the novel.

The period around 1900 was an interesting time of confusion as well as of openness. I already indicated the political turmoil between Christians and liberals, and there were major fights between socialists and trade unions on one side and capitalists and liberals on the other. The Christian parties would, in general, side with the liberals in class conflicts, but because of their important worker's constituencies, they often took middle ground between socia-

lists and liberals, and created their own Catholic and Protestant trade unions. De Haan was a member of the socialist party and wrote for its paper *Het Volk* (The People), and Aletrino was close to it. The fight about sexual morality that focused on the regulation of prostitution had ended in 1890 with an armistice. The brothels would - in general - be forbidden, its medical regulation that promised (but in actuality did not offer) protection against venereal diseases abandoned and prostitutes continued to be allowed to do their work in secret. The end of the debate on prostitution paved the way for other sexual debates, i.e. on contraception and abortion, marriage and divorce, pornography, child abuse and sexual variation.

The 1890's witnessed the rise of erotic and explicit sexual literature. The first translated works of sexology came on the market, most often in abridged form, not intended for the serious medical reader, but for the layman who was hungry for sexual knowledge. Some of these books were on homosexuality. Especially the case history, a recent diagnostic tool, had taken the curious readers by surprise with all their homosexual and masochist details. Some of these books were translations of medical handbooks such as Ambroise Tardieu's *Étude médico-légale* of 1857 or Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia sexualis* of 1886, but also essays by Edward Carpenter and Magnus Hirschfeld became available for the Dutch public. In the new century, Aletrino wrote two booklets on uranism and his colleague Lucien von Römer, a physician, wrote some major socio-medical and historical studies (Lieshout 2009). Both doctors supported the Dutch homosexual rights movement founded in 1912, which was the first foreign chapter of Hirschfeld's Wissenschaftlich-humanitäre Komitee (WHK). Both Aletrino and von Römer visited Hirschfeld in Berlin in the early years of the twentieth century. Von Römer closely cooperated with him, became an «Obmann» of the WHK and contributed to its *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* (see Hekma 1987).

Sexology and a homosexual rights movement came into existence and had ambiguous results. The doctors sometimes defended homosexuals, as Hirschfeld and Havelock Ellis (and also Krafft-Ebing to a lesser extent), but other doctors found therapies for aberrant desires or suggested prevention techniques. Sigmund Freud brought his oedipal model that advocated coital, reproductive sex within marriage as healthy sexuality (see Hekma 1987; Oosterhuis 2000; Sigusch 2008). All over Europe, new and often more repressive criminal codes were enacted (Weeks 1977: 14; Lautmann 1992; Hekma/Meer 2011). On the other hand, literature witnessed a homosexual Renaissance all over Europe with Stefan George and Thomas Mann in Germany, Oscar Wilde and the uranian poets in England, Walt Whitman and Herman Melville in the USA, Charles Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine, Arthur Rimbaud, André Gide, Marcel Proust and many more in France, Michael Kuzmin in Russia, Fernando

Pessoa in Portugal, the Greek Constantine Cavafy in Egypt and Louis Couperus and de Haan in the Netherlands. And they were only the best known among a much larger crowd of novelists, poets and writers (Meyers 1977; Summers 1995).

1889 saw the publication of a novel on «les amitiés particulières» («special friendships») in the famous Catholic boarding school of Rolduc called *De kleine republiek* (The little republic) by Lodewijk van Deyssel (pseudonym of K.J.L. Alberdingk Thijm). The book closely followed his own experiences. Van Deyssel was a member of the innovative literary circle of the «Eighties» (*Tachtigers*) who adopted the examples of French decadence, naturalism and estheticism. In 1891, the decadent novel *Noodlot* (Destiny) appeared, written by the gay man who would become the Dutch leading novelist of the turn of the century, Louis Couperus. Both novels had clear-cut homosexual content: van Deyssel's novel about the relationship between two pupils who would be sent away from school because of their affair and Couperus's novel describing how a man destroyed a heterosexual love affair out of jealousy and panicking that the male partner might turn out to be heterosexual.³ The two leading young poets of the group of the «Eighties», Willem Kloos and Albert Verwey, wrote poems to each other, the younger Verwey naming his poetry in honour of Kloos: «For the love that is named friendship» (*Voor de liefde die vriendschap heet*). Kloos was an unhappy homosexual whose various male love affairs produced his best poetry, while these same difficult relationships led him to alcoholism and psychiatric problems. When their German poet-friend Stefan George visited Holland, he was surprised to encounter in Verwey a husband and father of many children. Verwey had become a respectable *pater familias* and had abandoned the wild days of his youth. Kloos had done the same. Tamed by an (most likely) asexual marriage, he no longer wrote interesting poetry. Twenty years later, De Haan would identify with these men and write love letters to another leading member of this group, writer and physician Frederik van Eeden who became famous for his novels, his communal living arrangement «Walden» and his pacifism. De Haan's explicit love letters missed their target on someone who was in fact a straight male, but van Eeden became a life-long friend.

At the same time, medical doctors started to write the first articles on homo-

3 In the period until the Second World War, about a dozen openly gay novels were published in Dutch. Half of them popularized sexology in the form of a novel, introducing doctors and their medical theories of homosexuality. One novel had a preface by Magnus Hirschfeld. The other novels were less explicit on explaining same-sex desires or did not have any medical theorizing. The most interesting novelist was Jef Last, best known as one of Gide's companions to the Soviet Union. Several poets used homosexual themes in their poetry, most important among them P.C. Boutens and Willem de Mérode. The first book with homosexual life stories was published by Stokvis (1939).

sexuality and used this specific word from 1891 on. In 1897, Aletrino would be the first serious doctor to take up the cause of homosexuals. The first major Dutch «case history» was an apologetic letter of an anonymous doctor, a self-declared «uranian», written in 1870 and finally published in 1883. He had written this letter as an answer to a negative review of the work of Ulrichs in a medical journal. This letter appeared as a case history, apparently uncensored. The first Dutch defense of uranism therefore had a rather benign reception and caused no major stir. The first more thoughtful review of a German medical book on homosexuality was written in 1892 by a doctor who cooperated with Van Eeden. The relations between the medical scientific community – at that time still a rather progressive group working at their professionalization – and the new literary movement of the 1880s was strong, and included discussions of homosexuality. One of those discussions was a tribunal they staged in 1891 to decide whether Saar de Swart (Elisabeth Sara Clasina de Swart), a sculptress and a maecenas of artists, was a lesbian after a painter had fallen hopelessly in love with her and was rejected. The tribunal decided she was not a lesbian although she never lived with a man and only kept female companions during her long life (see for an overview of this Dutch gay history, Hekma 1987 & 2004).

Pijpelijntjes

The uncertainty on the direction of society until 1911, the year of new sex laws, made such new initiatives possible. Thanks to Aletrino, De Haan knew about the pioneering developments in science and literature. This enabled him to write the openly gay novel *Pijpelijntjes* (1904) without hiding behind a pseudonym.⁴ The book discusses gay topics in the context of a lower-class neighborhood. The two main characters have rooms with a lady whose husband is in prison. Several chapters describe events in this household and its vicinity in amusing detail. The gay stories run parallel to the neighborhood stories and rarely interconnect. The gay life of the roommates remains hidden for their neighbors, to which the class difference of the students living among working-class people is a significant factor. Of course, this naturalistic novel was not explicit on gay relations and sex as their modern counterparts, but the book offers an interesting array of loves and sexual encounters. In the first place, there is the slightly sadomasochist relation between Sam and Joop (as mentioned before, the nicknames of Aletrino and de Haan). Sam is generally depicted as a cruel person with black humor who likes to abuse Joop verbally

⁴ The generation of homosexual authors after the change of sex laws in 1911 would largely do so.

and physically – and Joop seems to like this (Haan 1974: 23). Nonetheless Joop remains the demanding partner. Sex between the partners is suggested in the novel. Sam is also cruel in daily life, for example when he is requested to kill a chicken for the house-lady. At the end of the novel, Sam has a girlfriend that he intends to marry. At that point, he says, in the past, he thought he was like Joop, that he didn't need «happiness with girls» (*meisjesgeluk*), but now knows better (Haan 1974: 207). Next to Sam, Joop has several affairs with working class youth, the youngest being 13. One of the boys is picked up on Dam Square, the center of Amsterdam, and taken home by Joop who serves him gin before they have sex. No sex is depicted but the disrobing is, until the moment Joop joins the rent boy on his bed (Haan 1974: 123-128). A boy who is released from prison stays his first night of freedom in Joop's bed, and they confess their love to each other – but this promise ends before the new day starts as the boy has disappeared without a trace (Haan 1974: 141-146). A carpenter boy is kept by Joop who pays his rent and salary so the lad's family will not be aware of his new job as a kept male (Haan 1974: 211-212).

These sexual situations are not sensationalized and don't offer a climax, but are inserted in a very casual manner. There is one scene that easily gets lost in the reading when de Haan describes how Joop receives a lady in his room who asks for a contribution for charity. She is with her son whom Joop puts on his lap. What he subsequently describes most resembles a masturbation scene in which Joop gets off thanks to the boy in his lap. After this scene he is annoyed by his visitors and shows them the door without contributing to the charity (Haan 1974: 180-182). The novel ends with the death of Sam after he passes his medical exams. Soon after, his girlfriend leaves for a house on the Spuistraat - probably meaning she had become a prostitute, with earlier hints that she had already been one and not having gotten «es», most likely referring to syphilis (Haan 1974: 195-196). So it is homosexual Joop who stays behind all alone and not heterosexual Sam, while the common ending of gay novels of those days had the gay man dying, by suicide or incident.

The book is unashamed in its representation of what is called «being different from the others» (*anders dan de anderen*) and «strange boy's feeling» (*vreemde jongensvoelen*), while its opposite is called «happiness with girls» (*meisjesgeluk*); the two latter being inventions of de Haan (as a sensitivist writer he invented many new expressions). The words homosexual, uranian and sadist never appear, which is remarkable, given the fact that the book is dedicated to Aletrino, the man who was one of the first to use these words in Dutch. In his correspondence on the book, de Haan for sure uses the word homosexuality, meaning he must have intentionally left it out of the novel (Delvigne/Ross 1994: *passim*). All the words he uses are rather descriptive,

so when Sam wishes to marry his girlfriend, Joop suggests that he should marry his Koos or another boy (Haan 1974: 210). The first sex survey in the Netherlands, conducted by Lucien von Römer and published the same year (1904), is even mentioned in the novel. Joop recalls the questionnaire and states »we also did one, but totally wrong» and remembers this as great fun. Again, no sexological terms are used (e.g Haan 1974: 125). It is also interesting that de Haan portrays Aletrino as a bisexual who wants to get married at the end of his studies when he believes he no longer feels any need for male love or cruelty against humans (biting, slapping). Thus, Aletrino's theory of the born homosexual is inverted in this description of himself as he changes sexual preference after his medical studies. At some point, Sam suggests to Joop to stop going after boys and even begins to control Joop's whereabouts. But when Joop does it once more, Sam simply admits «But perhaps you are right ... that you do what you think is good ... why shouldn't you do it?» (ellipses in the original, Haan 1974: 203). The book completely refrains from psychological speculation, making it appear a simple decision for the sake of social convenience to leave or not to leave the love of men for that of women. Most remarkable is this small sentence that Joop should do whatever he thinks is fine to do. In real life, Aletrino defended the position that the born homosexual should refrain from homosexual sex, and the doctor's role was to help him living a chaste life, following in the line of the French scholar Raffalovich. Joop is clearly homosexual and also effeminate, but nowhere is his preference explained or defended that he was born this way. De Haan apparently has no problem in creating a homosexual person in his novel, and also a character with homosexual and sadist inclinations, but does not follow the sexological tenets about sexual nature.

This first novel created a small uproar in Dutch society. Aletrino, who always suggested he was a heterosexual, became very angry and upset. He bought all the available copies of the book together with the betrothed of de Haan, Johanna van Maarsseveen, a female doctor whom he married in 1907. The work suggested by the resemblance of Aletrino to the novel's Sam and by the dedication that he was a sadistic bisexual who approved of the book. De Haan who did the children's page of the socialist daily *Het Volk*, lost his work and resigned from the socialist party before the party threw him out - the paper had immediately changed addressing him from comrade to mister (Haan 1982: 13). He also lost his teaching job he held for the City of Amsterdam. Complaining to his friends of the movement of the Eighties (Van Deyssel, Van Eeden, Verwey) delivered no result (Fontijn 2015: chapter 5). A second rewritten version of the novel was published later the same year, without the dedication to Aletrino, while the two main figures received other names and portrayed different characteristics. The book was no less homosexual, how-

ever. De Haan wrote a pamphlet attacking the socialist party for its stance in his case, but nobody came to his defense. The pioneer was offended, but a fine novelist and a fire-spitting star was born.

Nervous Stories and Pathologies

De Haan was a stubborn character who did not stop writing gay novels and stories after this first setback. He not only rewrote *Pijpelijntjes*, but also worked on a sequel, wrote a series of stories much later published as *Nervoeuze Vertellingen* (Nervous Stories) and completed a new novel *Pathologieën* (1908). One of the Nervous Stories includes a radical confrontation of Christ and Satan. The story has no title, but later editors called it «The Rape of Christ» while they released it as «On the experiences of Hélénuis Marie Golesco» after the name of the main character (1908) (quotes from the reprint Haan 1983). This name is a travesty of that of the female French-Rumanian novelist Hélène de Golesco. While Hélénuis is unknown as a male name in Dutch, it is widespread in its female version Heleen or Helena. The story goes as follows: Golesco is requested to come to Paris by Satan who asks him to confront an unknown person who appears to be Christ. First, Golesco is taken by the mediocre humane love of the Savior, but soon enough feels starker and becomes angry about his message of compassion and forgiveness. It ends with violence and rape, Golesco lying on top of Christ. The words that de Haan uses are rather vague, but they all point to a mix of brutality and sexuality, ending with the fatigue of Golesco from this «wilde, woedende, gemeenschap» (Haan 1983: 65; wild, ferocious communion; *gemeenschap* meaning both coital sex and community, as for example in «de gemeenschap van de gelovigen»: the community of believers). The problem of abusing Christ is that he likes it, not only in public on a cross but even in the privacy of this room (Haan 1983: 65). After the rape, Golesco falls asleep and when he awakens, Satan has come to his bedside and kisses him, calling him a «lieveling» (Haan 1983: 66). The final scene before the confrontation of Golesco and Christ was Golesco meeting a cute elevator boy that excited him. The various end scenes have again homoerotic and transgender undertones as evidenced in the rape of Christ, the kiss of Satan and the names being used. This kiss is the apotheosis of a small lecture the Devil delivers to explain why people follow Christ, which is out of mass hysteria, as we would say now. Satan gives the advice to despise «fatherlands» and Christian humanitarianism for the sake of beauty and autonomy (Haan 1983: 66). In this text, homosex clearly belongs to the side of pleasure, beauty, cruelty, Satanism, self-determination and anti-humanitarianism, while Christ stands for ugliness, mediocrity, mass hysteria and compassion for the weak.

This dichotomy of God and Devil, of chaste obedience and sexual autonomy, would haunt de Haan until the end of his life.

The second novel, *Pathologieën* (1908), has a title that conjures ideas of medicine and sexual science and indeed there is a series of references to it. The main story of the book is indicated in the subtitle «The downfalls of Johan van Vere de With». The name suggests a noble or patrician background. Johan is a young man and secondary school student who lives closely together with father, detached from the people of the small town of Culemborg where their beautiful house stands. The father is a man of independent means who pursues the then new study of criminal anthropology, as does Aletrino. The mother, a physician and much older than the father, had committed suicide when Johan was still a toddler. The son discovers he has sexual feelings for men, including his father. This acknowledgement ends the relation of trust and love between them as the son refuses to tell about his erotic feelings that very much confuse him. Reading certain books in his father's library has furthered the realization of his inclinations, but unlike in most other gay and lesbian novels of the period, their titles and authors are not named (quotes from the reprint Haan 1975: 19). Again, the words homosexual and uranian do not appear. After the son has told the father what his secret is, his father decides that they have to separate. The son moves to Haarlem where he will finish high school. He lives as a boarder in a room with old friends of his parents, a couple of which the husband is blind. They rent out another room to a decadent artist, René Richell.

Richell, who is about ten years older than Johan, is starting a successful career in painting. He says the work of Aubrey Beardsley is child's play compared to his (Haan 1975: 212). He lives in the house where Johan is boarding, has moreover his studio and often goes for longer visits to Paris and London where he hangs out in an unspecified dark and dangerous underworld. René immediately falls in love with the haughty and beautiful Johan. It takes some time before he tells so in a letter from London. After his return, the difficult love affair starts. René is a sadist who is tempted by Johan's haughtiness and wants to break him down. He does so in a series of declarations of love, which are mixed up with cruel acts and philosophies that his real love is to humiliate Johan and see him suffer. Good people suffer from bad people, so it is better for him to enjoy a depraved life and abuse the prude ones. At some point he suggests that he made another artist, another Heleen Golesco, commit suicide (Haan 1975: 115). He follows very literally the quip of Oscar Wilde that «each man kills the thing he loves». The comparison with Wilde goes further. René paints a picture of Johan which shows him as a beauty like in *The Portrait of Dorian Gray*, but a subsequent painting shows him in his worst state: «He was represented as a weakhead. Eyes flabby, toneless mouth trembling, horribly

begging. So his face was insane, depraved.» (Haan 1975: 163) While the painting in Wilde's work points to a lost past, de Haan's painting foreshadows the future.

All these discourses and representations are mirrored in real life where René abuses Johan: «He picked Johan up and he threw him on his bed, during an attack of outrageous fury. He kissed Johan wildly, he beat him, he tore his upper- and underclothing from his body, he grubbed deep with his fingers in him.» (Haan 1975: 165) The downfall of Johan takes some time and at several points he resists the love and sexual abuse of René, but the attacks on his body and mind become harsher, and visible wounds on his face impede him to go to school. In the end he uses the venom that his lover prepared for him (Haan 1975: 217). Johan could never decide, not even consider, to join his beloved in being a bad and depraved person so he suffered the destiny of good people.

The sexological literature is mentioned in general, but never specifically. «From the rich library of his father, Johan looked for the extensive and abundant books on the deviant situation of body and soul that he often definitively recognized as being his own.» He clearly knows he is a homosexual, but the term itself is never used (Haan 1975: 19). Again, de Haan gives circumscriptions and some old-fashioned terminology. To his father, Johan writes about «his special feeling» (Haan 1975: 120) but René is much more explicit when he names Johan «een gewoon sodemietersch snolletje, evenals de schandjongens [...]» (Haan 1975: 170; an ordinary sodomitical whore, like the infamous [rent] boys). The new scholarly terminology is not used, but Johan defends his special feeling in a letter to his father. He does so more in legal-philosophical than in medical terms, more in the terminology of Oscar Wilde than that of Magnus Hirschfeld: «there is no unconditional immorality, but for sure a very conditional one that is not very different from social intolerance.» (Haan 1975: 120) His father's answer is harsh. He doesn't consider Johan's ideas about his special feeling very important, but rather dangerous. He quotes John Ruskin, arguing that immoral people engaged in such debates always feel most justified (Haan 1975: 121). There is again an element of transgenderism as Johan's nickname is «Hannie», a feminization of Johan, apparently confirming popular theories of homosexual men being effeminate; «female souls in male bodies». But René is although clearly a homosexual not such a feminine type of homosexual. The family tree of Johan also seems copied from the case histories in the literature on degeneration and sexual perversion. Johan commits suicide like his insane mother. That his parents showed a big difference in age, the mother being much older than the father, seems to be another explanation for the degeneration he suffers from.

While the novel only vaguely refers to the sexological literature and does

not mention the new terminology of the Fin-de-Siècle, Georges Eekhoud (1854-1927) does so in his foreword (vii-xi; written in French, translated by de Haan). This Belgian novelist, most famous for his chaste gay novel *Escal-Vigor* (1899, German translation 1903/2007; he wrote more on gay topics, see Setz 2007) and the legal proceedings against it, was a friend of de Haan⁵. He says that the topic of the book is «uranism» and describes the relation of two «homosexuals». Johan comes, according to Eekhoud, close to being a «superior uranist»: delicate and artful, whose intimate relations always remain pure. Richell is in contrast the «pure devil» and a sadist. Such people are also to be found among those whose love life is different. He refers to the work of Richard von Krafft-Ebing and the German doctor Albert Moll and quotes the former at length. The psychiatrist tells the reader that this variant sentiment is not perversity, but perversion. It needs a certain predisposition and must in most cases be seen as a kind of disease. The sufferer should not be condemned, but pitied. It is a strange humane message that most of de Haan's work in fact rejects. The author himself seems to identify more with Joop in *Pijpelijntjes*, with Golesco in «The Rape of Christ» and with René in *Pathologieën*: with the evil and decadent characters.

This novel did not create much of a scandal. Of course, the reviewers would condemn the decadent topic, but at the same time some would praise the literary mastery of de Haan, as did Eekhoud in his foreword. The City of Amsterdam decided to remove him from the list of potential primary school teachers because of this novel. Van Eeden, who would remain his best literary friend, wrote he could not finish reading the novel because of its horrible topic. De Haan who had promised his wife to never write a homosexual novel again, had not been able to stop writing such literature. Like the marquis de Sade, forces beyond his will made him create such work. After *Pathologieën*, only the form changed. He now devoted himself to poetry instead of novels. The poems may have not been as radical as the books in their content, but they remained pederastic and continued to express his decadent and perverse, as well as orthodox Jewish, perspectives.

The modernism of sexology is not embraced by de Haan in this novel. He felt more akin to the decadent theories following Oscar Wilde. His skepticism regarding sexological modernity may as well have been influenced by

5 Eekhoud was a Flemish writer who wrote in French, as was common in those days for Flemish authors. His work is modern - he befriended writers such as Emile Zola, Paul Verlaine and Georges Rodenbach. His work is mainly about lower-class men and has socialist and anarchist tendencies. His book was seized by the police because it should be immoral. There were two court cases and in both cases Eekhoud was acquitted. He received strong support from his colleagues. Because of his fame as a «homosexual» author, de Haan contacted him and they became friends. Eekhoud was married but had homosexual interests. See Lucien (1999).

his pederast and masochist preferences. Boy lovers had little to expect from a modernity that started to discuss ages of consent that always ran upwards (in the Netherlands up from 16 for all sexual contacts to 21 for homosexual activity in 1911). The modernism of socialism had neither been very gentle nor welcoming to him. Coming from a traditional Jewish family gave him a strong social and emotional background in premodernism. His Johan feels sympathy for the housekeeper of the father. She is a good old Calvinist lady who regrets that God does not illuminate the home and the lives of the family. Johan is both seduced by her premodern religious goodness and by the modern more distant and rational righteousness of his father. This conflict between various forms of modernism and premodernism will intensify in the work and life of de Haan.

Poetry, journalism and legal studies

De Haan's later work consisted of legal studies, journalism and poetry. His journalism had started in the socialist daily *Het Volk* and continued with his *feuilletons* from Palestine from 1919 onward. Just after 1910, he wrote on the miserable situation of Russian prisoners. His socialist inclinations, subdued since he left the socialist party, found a new aim in protests raised against the czarist prison system. He went to Russia to visit the penal institutions and its inhabitants. His passion for the inmates was stimulated by his love for a young prisoner whose destiny was the object of another series of poems. This activism resulted in a small book protesting the inhuman prison conditions that included love poetry (Haan 1913). Politics was never far from his passions.

As a student of law, de Haan prepared other students for examinations and he turned out to be a good teacher. His dissertation (1916) was on the legal terminology of responsible and accountable, an interesting point in forensic discussions of perversion. The only scholarly movement he became involved in and that offered the theory of his legal dissertation was *significs*, one could say in postmodern parlance «terminological and discursive» analysis. The mathematician L.E.J Brouwer, whose theory has been coined «rubber» or flexible, started this movement. Even here, he remained on his own because the other members worked in different disciplines. He managed to get an unpaid teaching position at the University of Amsterdam as «privaat-docent», just as Aletrino had been in criminology. In 1917, he hoped to get the chair for penal law in his faculty, and lobbied for it, but was not appointed. It was not the disappointment with his legal career that stimulated him to leave for Palestine. There, he hoped to get a similar post at the Hebrew University that the

Zionists wanted to establish in Jerusalem. Once founded, he became a teacher at the legal school while he presumed to be a full professor.

De Haan's poems moved between Jewish and pederast themes addressing the topics of God, boys and wine. His work often refers to specific situations and places. Thematically, his work is close to that of medieval Arab poets. Various quatrains from the period that he lived in Jerusalem (1919-1924) discuss why he goes to the Wailing Wall, to summarize the various references: for you, my God, or for the Arab boys? Other poems tell how he is torn between Amsterdam and Jerusalem and how he desires to be in the one city while he is in the other. A series of poems is a rewriting of a novel of Georges Eekhoud, his Flemish gay literary icon whose novel *Une nouvelle Carthage* (1888), a kind of social history of Antwerp, is poetized in a rather gay collection *Een nieuw Carthago* (1919). Once in London, de Haan visited Wilde's prison and devoted some poems to Wilde and his own sentiments on that location. His best poetry is situationist work that is inspired by specific circumstances, by landscapes, by young men, by religious feelings, when he faces the pleasures of life or the dangers of death.

In his poetry, boy love is self-evident and does not need any explanation. In his poems, he distanced himself even more radically from science and sexology to literature, from elaborate decadent novels to compact poetry somewhere between dogma and insecurity. This hesitation between pleasure and sin, between hedonism and religious taboo, informs his work, also his Jewish poetry. De Haan may be seen as the Jewish poet of the 20th century. At the same time, many Jews rejected and still reject him because he never chose, without hesitation, for God or for Zionism. In his quatrains he affirms he hates God (307, «Despair», quoted from Haan 1952), he serves both God and Satan «with one lust and one pleasure» (306, «Good and evil»), and says «God knows us and will pardon us» (353, «Vain escape»). «All in God» (364) says «There is no love outside God. And outside God there is no guilt.» «The sins of God» (360) runs as follows:

My sins are sins of God in me.
The wine, the roses, are pleasures of God.
Enjoy freely your pleasures and sins.
It is all one destiny

There are many examples like this to be found which illustrate this ambivalence which, in the end, leads to the unity of sin and faith. In «All from God» (339), de Haan writes:

Men separated lust and pain.

But God keeps them together as day and night.
I know lust. I know intense suffering.
I praise the one Name of God.

And finally «God's gifts» (339):

My most pious songs I wrote,
When I got up from my sinful bed.
God has given me a treasure of sins,
And only God has saved me from my sins.

The lack of remorse or feelings of guilt after sinning and enjoying pleasure, the endorsing of a philosophy of «carpe diem» and suggesting that God will forgive these sins as He Himself created them, make de Haan a controversial figure to this day. He was a frontrunner in his openness about homosexuality, and failed. De Haan's first biography can be said to be a second murder on his person. Author Jaap Meijer (1965) shows more understanding for the murderer than his victim and reproaches de Haan that he never became a faithful believer in God and never abdicated the boys. He could have better said there are different ways to serve God, and asked how his religious ambivalence connects to his boy love and sadomasochistic inclinations. The unity of pain and lust neatly parallels the unity of sin and pleasure, of Devil and God. Humiliating oneself is at once a religious and masochistic service to the masters of one's universe. In the story «The rape of Christ» he played with this theme of the Son of God's pleasure in pain.

In his weekly «feuilletons» from Jerusalem for the Dutch newspaper *Algemeen Handelsblad* the same issues return, plus the political situation in Palestine.⁶ He went to Jerusalem as a Zionist, and one could make the argument that his orthodox friends and the Arab boys turned him from a Zionist into someone critical of Zionism. His most stable beloved and closest companion in Jerusalem would be Adil Aweidah (ca. 1900 – ca. 1963) who figures in many of de Haan's love poems, but there are other Arab names as well. In an early feuilleton (February 22, 1920) he gave the arguments of the Palestinian Arabs against Jewish migration to the country. This exposé is based on an interview with one of the Palestinian leaders, Aref Pasha El Dajani. De Haan's attitude to the Arabs was multidimensional. He loved the boys and enjoyed their culture. He described the Arabs as not-goal-directed, innocent, easy living, irreligious, while he himself was suffering from his Calvinist work-oriented attitude, his loss of innocence, his belief. He envied Arab's laziness and hedon-

⁶ The 394 feuilletons, edited by Ludy Giebels, are placed on the the Dutch literature site DBNL.nl.

nism. He also praised their leaders for their cultured and civilized behavior. He was certainly fitting the image of an orientalist, even occasionally dressing as an Arab. One wonders whether he should have gone native with the Arabs when he should have lived on. His position in the Jewish community had become impossible at the time of his death, and he knew so. Going back to the Netherlands would have been seen as a defeat that would have been difficult to confront and his sexual preference was more fitting in Arab than in Zionist or Dutch culture.

His relation with Jewish religion was conflicted. In The Netherlands, de Haan first rejected from 1898 on the religion of his parents and returned to it around 1912. He became an orthodox Jew, as far as that is possible for a practicing pederast. In Jerusalem he lived in the old city, among Arabs and orthodox Jews, renting a garden house from Adil's family, and was close to the Ashkenazi-Jewish community that had continued to live there during the days of the Ottomans. He found his friends and allies among the orthodox Jews. This community was critical of the secular position of Zionism that supported the separation of church and state, and saw the Jewish community not as the religious community that took precedence for the Ashkenazi. They had created their own organization Agudah in reaction to Zionism (Giebels 2014; Fontijn 2015). Because of their differences of opinion on state and religion they did not want to be subsumed under the Zionist organizations that claimed to represent all Jews, and were seen by the British colonial rulers as the sole representatives of the Jewish population of Palestine.

As a translator, journalist and legal advisor, de Haan would soon start to defend the orthodox cause against the Zionists, also in Holland and England. He made clear there were more orthodox than Zionist Jews in Palestine and the rest of the world. At this point in time, the last thing the Zionists could deal with in the public eye in London was internal division. De Haan, who had hoped to bring together orthodox and Zionist Jews and create bridges towards the Arab population, was instead being regarded by the Zionists as a traitor of their cause. This escalated when he met with and defended the orthodox position before the Hashemite king Hussein bin Ali and right-wing press-moguls from London such as Alfred Harmsworth, Lord Northcliffe and Max Aitken, Lord Beaverbrook, owners of the Daily Mail and Daily Express, respectively. He also started to write for their newspapers. In 1922, the anger of the Zionists reached such proportions that Jews would spit on him in the streets, and worse, would threaten to murder him. He was finally killed on June 30, 1924 by Awraham Tehomi (1903-1991), an immigrant from Russia. The Zionists attributed the killing to Arab feelings of honor upset by a boy-love affair. Only in 1970 the names of the murderer and his accomplices became known. The murder was committed by the Haganah with the full

approval of Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, its leader and later president of Israel, and his wife (Fontijn 2015: 546-555; Giebels 2014: 128). This political murder, the first by the Zionists of a Jew, did not bring a solution to the question of state and religion in the Jewish community and of relations between Arabs and Jews. In fact, it only aggravated the problems that continue to this day. Even today, orthodox Jews celebrate de Haan as one of their forerunners.

The return to the premodern

The work of de Haan shows a move we see repeated in these times all over the world, among Muslims, Christians and Jews. The confrontation with modern, secular states and cultures is utterly confusing to many people and instead of progressing to postmodern positions, they return to premodern ones while rejecting modern culture because it should be immoral, secular, decadent, etc. Religion offers a perspective modern culture is not able to offer, but outdated solutions don't answer new questions. One of the saddest parts of the return from modern to premodern and to orthodox positions is the dogmatic and restrictive sexual morality of monotheist religions, although they may have offered the pederast de Haan some clemency, in the same sense as boy-loving imams and pedophile priests. The legal theory de Haan developed with its linguistic turn brought him close to postmodern positions, but his world was a developing modern(ist) one where a broad postmodernism had yet to be developed.

In this period of turmoil around 1900 the young de Haan became immersed in various modernist projects: sexology, socialism, Zionism and its nationalism, masculinity and exclusivity. He joined these movements, but had been, or felt, rejected by them. He would always be more thankful to the poets and novelists of the «Eighties» who introduced him to modern literary movements of naturalism, decadence, sensitivism and so on. These literary movements were perhaps ambivalent, but were much more open-minded on sexual issues than their political and scholarly counterparts; although his beloved Dutch forerunners would never openly endorse his same-sexual literature. They would support his Jewish poetry. These literary movements gave more space to de Haan's contradictory passions for boys and for the Jewish God than sciences and ideologies did. But literature offered less the social influence de Haan liked to promote.

The isolation of de Haan in all the movements he joined can of course be attributed to his stubborn character. He was for sure a difficult person to deal with. To say that he was a troublemaker or even an insane person (as has been said) does not sufficiently take into account that he defended the causes of the

major losers of the twentieth century: perverts and pederasts, prisoners and Palestinians. This promoted his marginalization.

The lack of acceptance by the modernist movements encouraged his retreat to premodern positions. In his novels, he rejected the tenets of sexology and did not believe in «born uranians», fixed identities and for sure not in a homosexual who renounced boys, homosex or anal sex and sadism as Raffalovich, Aletrino or von Römer would have. He was thrown out of the socialist party, but continued to believe in social justice and protested the horrible fate of Russian prisoners. It comes as no surprise that he took to the work of Oscar Wilde and wrote various poems in his honor. He dedicated another poem to Prince Philip zu Eulenburg, advisor to the German emperor and key figure in the biggest homosexual scandal in the new century (1907/8). This typical conservative married man had sex with lower-class male servants while remaining a good friend of and important advisor to the German emperor William II – until the scandal. Eulenburg is another representative of a premodern homosocial world that rejected democracy, socialism and sexology, and celebrated friendship and culture rather than homo- or heterosexuality and medical sciences (Jungblut 2003; Domeier 2010).

The most radical turn de Haan made was in Palestine when he transformed from Zionist to orthodox Jew. What he rejected in Zionism was its nationalism and disregard of all other interests. The male macho attitudes and heterosexual demands of Zionists must have been anathema to him. The orthodox did not pursue a Jewish state in the modern sense, a geographical area with boundaries and an army. Rather, for them the Jews were in the first place a religious community, a brotherhood instead of a nation of citizens. According to de Haan the Zionists should not follow the examples of other nationalisms that were exclusive, possessive, always negated and even destroyed the other. Apparently the orthodox Jews were in those times less judgmental on his affairs with Arab boys than the Zionists as long as he kept them secret. They had lived for ages in Jerusalem among Muslim Arabs and Turks and orthodox Greeks who probably had fewer qualms about boy love and sexual affairs based in inequality. This neglect of his pederasty was made easier because de Haan expressed his love for Arab boys in poems and articles in Dutch that were published in Holland – far away from the hotbed of Jerusalem.

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