

Abe de Vries  
 First Conference on Frisian Humanities  
 Fryske Akademy, Leeuwarden, 23-26 April 2018  
 25 April 2018

Construction of Social Identity in Frisian Realism  
 The Early Work of Waling Dykstra

ABSTRACT

---

Most, if not all, research on identity construction in Frisian literature has focused on the construction of 'Frisian', i.e. national identity. Frisian literature itself is viewed and valued foremost as an artistic expression of national awakening, and on the other hand, frustration. This still lively modernist and nationalist tradition tends to neglect most of mid-19th-century Frisian literature. In this literature, which is a communicative practice of subaltern social groups, representations appear that do not promote national identity. A social categorisation analysis of the early writings of arguably the most widely read Frisian writer of his day, the realist Waling Dykstra (1821-1914), shows that national identity is submerged in a wide field of social identity constructions, which challenges dominant representations of country life and the Frisian character, and critically addresses a broad range of themes, including economic, religious and moral ones. Through these texts, 'groupness' is activated by representations of the whole of social reality. Building on Gencarella, they can be explained as political acts in a Frisian folk counterculture, aiming to create not only a Frisian national character, but first and foremost a better life.

---

Introduction

In Frisian cultural and literary history, social identity constructions are usually sought in representations of the Frisian language, Frisian history and Frisian rural life. Breuker<sup>1</sup> and Jensma<sup>2</sup>, among others, highlighted the concern for dissemination of Frisian as a speaking and reading language, notions about medieval 'Frisian freedom', historical contrast with 'Holland' and the development of a Frisian folk character, as main building blocks of national or sub-national Frisian identity. In the middle of the nineteenth century (as Jensma, referring to Gramsci, has described), several representations about Frisian history and 'Frisian freedom' from the haute bourgeoisie's 'cultural hegemony' and 'cultural dominance',<sup>3</sup> were taken over by writers from the middle class that emerged after 1840, and passed on to their mostly petty-bourgeois audience. The assumption is that these hegemonic representations of Friesland and the Frisians form the entire spectrum of the social categories. That, however, has remained unexamined. In fact, concerning the literature in the period between Joast Halbertsma and Douwe Kalma, the research field is still largely fallow.

- 
- 1 Philippus Breuker en A. Janse, red., *Negen eeuwen Friesland-Holland. Geschiedenis van een haat-liefde verhouding* (Walburg Pers, Zutphen 1997); Philippus Breuker, *Opkomst en bloei van het Friese nationalisme, 1740-1875* (Wijdemeer, Leeuwarden 2015).
  - 2 Goffe Jensma, *Het rode tasje. Burgerlijk bewustzijn en Friese identiteit in de negentiende eeuw* (Fryske Akademy, Leeuwarden/Ljouwert 1998).
  - 3 *Ib.*, 24-26.

Lacking in Frisian identity research is an in-depth theoretical understanding of the discursive construction of social identity. The dimension of social identity construction that is used to orient between uniqueness and common 'belonging' and being part of the group has received plenty of attention. This is partly a result of the frequent use of a Frisian minority-ideological perspective. But the dimension of social identity construction that is used to manage one's 'agency' from the world-to-person unto a person-to-world direction has not been researched. My interest, therefore, is in the construction of a social identity, not necessarily in terms of national belonging, but of identity as agency, in literary texts. Such an 'inclusive' approach fits with a modern definition of identity following Benwell and Stokoe (2006), as a self-image that arises through identification in discourse. Social identity is "a public phenomenon, a performance or construction that is interpreted by other people". It is an idea about who 'we' are, which connects 'us' and distinguishes us from others. It is an idea that is not fixed for all time, but that is "accomplished, disputed, ascribed, resisted, managed and negotiated", among others in texts.<sup>4</sup> Potential to group formation, which Brubaker (2004, 2009) called 'groupness',<sup>5</sup> in a social context, is influenced by political, economic, social and cultural power relations and inequality.

Social identity construction in texts can be identified through discourse analysis. The focus is on text elements that indicate categorisation<sup>6</sup> through 'selfing' and 'othering' and the allocation of values, norms and qualities that belong to the 'in-group' or the 'out-group' (Abdelal et.al) (2010), Koller (2012)), distilled from what the narrator and characters do, say, think, describe or otherwise mention. Categorisation takes place through what the text says about a socially acting person or group, or the 'actor', the labelling of the actor - for instance, lazy or stupid or black - either implicitly or explicitly. Categorisation becomes visible in, among other things, contradictions, actions, the interpretation thereof, and the evaluation of the story. Social categories are formed by experiences and notions of belonging, for example on the basis of race, gender, profession, language, religion or political opinion. Empirical evidence shows that national stereotypes can not be separated from other identity traits, such as social hierarchy, gender or age (Perner, 2013), and theory also holds that social identity construction in texts relates to group and power relations, and reveals the ideological frameworks that determine the interpretation of social reality.<sup>7</sup>

Equipped with that theoretical set of instruments I have analysed early Frisian folk writings, and considered as representative the innovative 1850s work of the popular writer, poet and reciter Waling Dykstra (1821-1914). The baker's son from Vrouwenparochie Dykstra, when he lived in Spannum and later in Franeker, managed to make a living from the sale of his literature; he was the only Frisian writer ever to accomplish this.<sup>8</sup> From Dykstra's numerous

---

4 Bethan Benwell and Elizabeth Stokoe, *Discourse and identity* (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2006) 4.

5 Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without groups* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA 2004); Idem, *Identity theory* (Oxford University Press, New York 2009).

6 'The central idea of social identity theory is that social structure influences people's actions through the social psychological medium of social identity. That is, ethnic, gender, and class divisions persist not because of inherent characteristics of the members of the different groups, but because those people identify with groups that exist in specific relation to one another. Social stasis or social change reflects people's acceptance or rejection of the relations between these groups.' Dominic Abrams and Michael Hogg, 'Metatheory. Lessons from social identity research', *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 8 (2004) 101.

7 Teun van Dijk, 'Social cognition and discourse', in: H. Giles and W.P. Robinson, ed., *Handbook of language and social psychology* (John Wiley & Sons, Oxford 1990).

8 Dykstra wrote in the period 1844-1915 as much as 11 percent of all Frisian texts that were contributed to a periodical or were published as independent publications. N. J. de Vries, *Fan selskip nei mienskip. De rol fan*

works reprint after reprint was ordered, and the works were meant to be read out, recited and retold. It may, therefore, be assumed that the social categorisation in his work has found a relatively wide audience. His debut in book form, the song book *Doaitse mei de Noardske balke* from 1848 will serve as a starting point. The publication of his second novel, the *Thyl Ulespegel*, in 1860, can then be seen as a summary and conclusion of a period. The period of Dykstra's 'Winterjounenocht' cabaret performances then starts, from the village Holwerd.

My research question concerns the social identity construction in the work of Waling Dykstra from the period 1848-1860: Which social categorisation takes place, what norms and values are propagated, how and in which cultural and social dynamics does that happen?

Social categories are not difficult to identify in the selected works. For instance, the lofty Dutch language that the pedant secretary clerk Hidde Pinnema from Leeuwarden is speaking in the story 'De mislearre list', points to the category for 'pedantry from the city': the narrator calls the way of speaking 'nijmoadrichste stedsk', 'the newest city-speak'. A treatment like the one of Gealeboer, who after the harvest treats his workforce to a rich and alcohol-free 'heamiel', hay dinner, puts him in the category of the 'good farmer'. In this way, thirteen well-known and representative publications from the research period were examined on social categorisation: three song collections, two collections of stories and poems, two long poems, the first five volumes of a novella published in episodes, and a novel (see the literature review). Each is a popular work that has been reprinted, many have been read and in part also presented orally to the audience. In order to be able to explain the results better, I will first give a short sketch of Dykstra's early realism and the social field of influence in which his texts functioned.

### The Early Work

The village society in which Dykstra's work is read, and which it often refers to, is that of the first decade after the civil victory of 1848. Still a lot of land remains in the hands of (Dutch-speaking) nobility and aristocracy. At village level the farmers and their landlords remain lord and master, also with respect to spiritual life. Despite the reforms brought by the Provinces Act of 1850, economic capital, merchants and big bourgeoisie continue to dominate in the Provincial Council and Executive. After the crises in the 1940s the rural economy is booming, but not everyone benefits. There is poverty, and despite the expansion of the census suffrage there is still considerable political lawlessness. Primary education is bad in many places, and in rural areas summer work on the field empties the schools. In the religious area, sharp contradictions between liberally reformed and orthodox Protestants cause social tensions.

This world is not closed, narrow-minded or 'provincial': it is only smaller than the present world. The railroads are not there yet, the roads are often unpaved, the newspaper appears limited; the so-called newspaper stamp was only abolished in 1869, after which newspapers became a lot cheaper. News, opinions and social perception travel more slowly, but also resonate longer. In the 1950s it is, among other things, the 'popular writing' that carries images of society and people through the hamlets and brings them into the living room of the local tradesman.

Waling Dykstra is the most important founder of Frisian realism in the 1850s, a nineteenth-century literary movement in which - in deviation from romanticism - real-life events of mostly 'ordinary' people from the lower social strata is the main theme.<sup>9</sup> Those people, the

---

*Fryske literatuer tusken 1844 en 1915 as ferbinende krêft fan de ta stân kommende Fryske mienskip* (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, masterthesis 2015) 29.

9 Regarding literary realism, see G.J. van Bork et al., *Algemeen letterkundig lexicon* (2012-present): 'Period indication for a movement usually situated between romance and naturalism, roughly between 1830 and 1870.'

small bourgeoisie, also accounts for the lions share of Dykstra's audience. In the Dutch literature, comparable writers such as Nicolaas Beets, Johannes Kneppelhout and Jacob Jan Cremer come to the fore at the same time. Traditionally, and often denigrating, the nationalistic Frisian literary studies from after 1915 call Frisian realism 'folk writing'. I myself prefer the value-free term 'Frisian realism', which seems to me more useful for research purposes. Unlike their Dutch-speaking colleagues, Frisian-realistic writers always use their art to promote purposefully - and as a *sine qua non* - the emancipation and further dissemination of their language. Another remarkable feature of this literature is its predominant secondary orality. This means that many texts have been written with the intent to be recited, read out, or sung to the audience, in addition to being read privately, which affects both their literary design and technique, their humor, choice of subject and actor-character.<sup>10</sup>

I will deal with the song lyrics and stories first, and then briefly discuss two long poems and a novel.

### Song Lyrics

'Frisia non cantat', the saying goes, but that can not be true in the 1850s. Dykstra's debut, the popular songbook *Doaitse mei de Noardske balke. Fryske sankjes* (1848, reprinted in 1850, 1853, 1858, 1875 and 1897), brings from the third edition on 28 texts of 'sankjes', little songs, with tune indication. The successor *De boeresjonger. Nij Frysk lieteboek foar feinten and fammen* (1857, reprinted in 1857, 1860 and 1875) has 19 songs, and the third song collection *Mink mei 't orgel. Nij Frysk liete boek* (1860) 22. In total there are 69 song texts, of which I have examined theme, narrator and other category markers.

The overwhelming majority of the lyrics is about love, and contain advice and lessons concerning the 'frijerij', courtship, in youth, and also about marriage, sometimes referring to the lack of love or the desire for it. Eight of the 69 texts have a different theme. In *Doaitse* these texts are 'Fryslân boppe!' (on patriotism), 'De lêste weide' (reward after hard labor), 'It doarpslibben' (love for the village where one is born) and 'Ferverssankje' (honesty and straightforwardness taking precedence over gain), 'De boerestân' (recognition of the peasantry) and 'Simmermoarn-sankje' (joy about nature). From *Mink* the texts that diverge from the key themes are 'Fryslân' (love for the Frisian language and morals) and 'Selskips-sankje' (on the importance of friendship).

Noteworthy is the relatively high number of texts in which the story is told from an I-perspective, so that both singer and listener / reader are directly addressed, which spurs them into assigning meaning from the text unto themselves. The texts use an omniscient narrator only eighteen times, as opposed to 51 times an 'I' (with a few double counts in cases of dialogue). The secondary-oral character of the texts, as lyrics, strengthens their impact on the audience.

Almost all song lyrics concern the interaction of boy and girl, or man and woman, with respect to love and relationships. Actions are aimed at obtaining a marriage partner, and reflect desirable and undesirable behavior, dos and don'ts, norms and values. Themes are 'opsitten', i.e. the practice of nightly courtship visits at the girl's home, on Sunday night, or having a conversation, making fun at the funfair, traveling together, sailing in a rowing boat or skating together.

---

(my translation, AdV) For an overview, see Toos Streng, *'Realisme' in de kunst- en literatuurbeschouwing in Nederland tot 1875* (Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 1995).

10 Regarding secondary orality in literary texts, see Walter J. Ong, *Orality and literacy. The technologizing of the word* (Routledge, London-New York 1982). An inventory for the Frisian literature of the second half of the nineteenth century is provided by N. J. de Vries (2014).

In the 51 texts with an I-perspective, the I-figure is also the actor who deals with the situation or reflects upon the action. From the I-perspectives, eighteen cases concern a suitor, eleven times a girl in marriageable age, nine times an unspecified 'I', five times a man, three times a woman, twice a farmer, and once a villager, a painter and a worker. Divided by sex, texts are told by a man 28 times, against 14 times a woman. The eighteen texts with an omniscient narrator concern (including doubles) a suitor and a girl who find each other, ten times; a suitor and a girl who do not find each other or do not become happy, five times; a girl, four times; and a suitor, once.

No social or economic background is given to the vast majority of the actors. A number of times a village milieu is mentioned, and people from lower social groups (small bourgeoisie: gardener, skipper, tailor, boss), or sometimes a workman, sometimes a farmer. It is striking that actors from higher positions do not appear. However, several times a difference in status is presented, usually between farmers (higher) and small bourgeoisie (lower), a status inequality that is criticized from the lower perspective. It may therefore be assumed that the 'socially anonymous' actors also belong to the lower social groups.

As far as the allocation of norms and values is concerned, the focus is on the qualities that are associated with groups and individuals and the value given to those qualities. In a few songs, collective 'Frisian' qualities are praised, to be precise the Frisian manners of simplicity, being without fuss or boasting, straightforward and practical, and adhering to the Frisian costume. Those customs were implicitly contrasted with 'non-Frisian' characteristics or behaviors that were presented as undesirable, for instance, French dandy, urban showy, gossip, longing for false appearance and exotic vanities. A song sings the love for the rich and old Frisian language. Occasionally an explicit contradiction is given: the Frisian girl in front of the gritty 'poepinne', i.e. German female, or the free peasant versus ruling-class individuals who have others work for them, and versus traders. But the vast majority of the song texts connect positive (desirable) and negative (avoidable) qualifications to individuals, to their character traits, their beliefs and their behavior.

Girls are well represented. Apart from being sweet and handsome, they are also loyal, pious, modest, quiet, humble, content, honest, generous, friendly, cheerful, zealous, good-natured, equanimous, not tearful, gentle, quiet and bright. They keep their virtue and honor in high regard, attach to their freedom, have no idle chatter, can hold their own on skates, do not care about adornment, do not show off, do not value flattery, say what they think but not too fast, do not walk from one boy to the other, follow their hearts, wait for Mr Right and do not make love for money.

The boys or young men are equally pious, serious, industrious, straightforward, conscientious and faithful, but also busy, free, not shy, not slow, but rather audacious and unashamed, but not rude and blind. They dare to take the initiative, they understand their profession, they work hard and only afterward reward themselves, they are patient, they do not start a relationship with rash, do not rely on appearances, they keep their word, they think independently and don't schmooze anyone for gain. They too are looking for the true loves and they are not interested in loose courtship. They will not let themselves be withheld by bans on marriage because on the basis of differences in status or money. The ideal is to rent a house, add some land, and live in peace with a family and in a happy marriage.

## Stories

The narrative prose in the early period consists of the stories in the popular collections *It heamiel by Gealeboer* (1850, reprinted in 1851, 1853, 1860 and 1879), 'It heamiel by Gealeboer', 'De mislearre list' and 'De hingelmatte', and from the collection *Winterjounen by Gealeboer* (1851, reprinted 1860) 'De betsjoenende boeredochter', 'De Sinteklaasjûn', 'De tolfde maaie', 'It geheim yn de bôlekoer', 'In frjemde hoanne op 'e matte' and 'Bakkers Yntsje'. To these titles I added the first five episodes from the long story-in-episodes 'De winskhoed fan Fortunatus', published in various volumes (1851-1853) by Waling Dykstra's periodical *De Fryske Húsfreon*, but never released as an independent publication on the market. I researched these fourteen stories just like the songs, looking for theme, narrator and other signals for social categorisation.

The stories of Dykstra are written for pleasure and wisdom, and they present, often with humor, a mirror to the reader: look, this is mankind, and this way he could do better. The following themes are found in the stories. A good farmer does not look down on his workforce but treats it well and lives in harmony with them ('It heamiel by Gealeboer'). Urban people in a village have a hard time if they do not respect the customs of villagers and do not adjust themselves ('De misleare list'). Infidelity is punished ('De hingelmatte'). The evil of superstition brings ordinary people into trouble ('De betsjoenende boeredochter', 'De tolfde maaie'). Anybody ridicules the sluggish ('De Sinteklaasjûn'). Do not gossip and do not make snap judgements about people ('It geheim yn de bôlekoer'). Repentance after sin is worthy of forgiveness ('In frjemde hoanne op 'e matte', 'Bakkers Yntsje'). Moral improvement of the people is necessary for a better society ('The winskhoed fan Fortunatus').

Half of the stories use an I-perspective to tell the story, while the other half has an omniscient narrator. But in fact the I-stories from the two collections are also stories with an omniscient narrator; the 'I' then emerges only at the end as the one who tells the story. Next to this, Dykstra combines both perspectives in 'De winskhoed fan Fortunatus', this time through the trick with the wish hat, which ensures that the I, or narrator, can be everywhere, and watch and hear everything without being noticed. This gives the opportunity to present contradictions, for example the dispute between the two farmers and guardians of the poor, Wibe and Chamme, about how the poverty problem in society can best be solved. In the end both do their bit.

Social actors in the stories are almost always referred to by their name and profession or activity, so that it becomes clear to which social group, by Dykstra 'stand', i.e. elite or common people, they belong. In the fourteen stories, 23 of the cases are a man, 11 times a woman. From the 23 men 8 are a farmer, 3 a craftsman or tradesman, 2 a merchant, 2 a schoolmaster, 2 a scammer, a clerk, a sailor. The social processes that these actors set in motion or play a role in, clarify the ethos; the social actions give rise to the narrator's critical reflection on morality and on acting well in the mutual approach to social situations. Knowledge and advice to the fellow man are pivotal. Remarkable is the central position of the village, the farmer and the broad attention for women's social role. Children play no role, and neither do the higher bourgeoisie and the nobility.

The good farmer is sociable (not egoistic): he is generous, giving and lenient, takes good care of his workforce, prefers people from his own village to do the work over 'Jerries or other strange boys', gives his helpers a good meal at the end of the harvest time, does not drink, and is highly esteemed by his fellow villagers. He is not hateful, but forgiving, does not look down on the craftsmen, cares for the poor and is willing to help fighting poverty with his own hands, and takes care of and gives attention to the children. He is not outgoing, not gullible nor superstitious, but steadfast and resistant to temptation, and he shows repentance after sin.

The good craftsman is pragmatic and does not think the worst of the people, does not look up to rich farmers and is politically standing on the middle ground. The good ‘feint’, field hand, dares to demand a good treatment from his boss. Furthermore, outsiders in a village have to adapt to local customs, adultery is rejected and punished, but the vagabond sometimes can, by way of ridicule, afford to do something immoral. The good woman treats her staff as if it were family, does not look down on craftsmen, keeps income and expenses in balance, wants to work, turns away from showing off, does not gossip, is faithful in marriage, does not beg nor lie, dares demand moral behavior from her husband, father or employer, repents after sin, and takes good care of her children.

## Poems

‘De stiennen ûlebuorden’ consists of four parts, 43 strophes and almost 1800 words. I will not spend too many words on it (I have given a more detailed treatment of the poem in the journal *Fers2*<sup>11</sup>). In *Engelum*, a farmer and his wife are faced with setbacks; they are diligent but still have to borrow money and pawn possessions. Now the barn is also about to collapse. The devil (‘Hantsje’) offers his services. The farmer is ‘sljucht en rjucht en from’, straightforward and pious, and his wife is ‘kras en himmel’, strong and clean. The narrator states that he is working with Hantsje ‘om wat idele ear’, for some idle credit. Hantsje is sketched as a distinguished gentleman, but there is something fishy about him, like the big man who is used to throwing money and getting his way. Devil exorcists are his helpers. The woman ultimately offers a solution: she is positive, cunning, knows a lot, is independent and decisive, keeps an overview, preserves stability, trusts God and compensates for her husband’s shortcomings.

The poem is about banking and pledge capitalism, superstition (belief in devils and devil banners) and the male-female relationship. Hantsje stands for the lender, the capitalist who lends part of his wealth to peasants, for his own benefit; the loan shark who lives from other people’s misery. Strikingly, Dykstra labels the exorcists as helpers of Hantsje (at a time when the belief in their healing power had certainly not disappeared). In addition, it is noteworthy that the wife of the farmer is the heroine of the story. This poem also provides an image of desirable (to be praised, imitated) behavior and undesirable (reprehensible, unwise or immoral) behavior in the social reality of the then reader.

*Haitskemoai’s klachten oer it nye moden* counts 16 pages and consists of an introductory prose text from the writer, and then the actual poem, in which the ‘I’-figure, the 64-year-old peasant woman, mother and widow Haitskemoai, talks about the trouble she has with the behavior of her already grown children, who are depicted in contrast to their mother. Haitskemoai emerges as resolute, savvy, self-reliant, industrious, clever, clean, thrifty, and frankly expressing her opinions. According to her, the children show off too much and go out and spend too much money on useless things. She would want people to be simpler, humbler, more savvy, and more diligent, so that they would have a happier life, and it would also be better for society than boasting, showing off and partying, or trying to shine even more. But she does not only complain about show-off and frivolity; Haitskemoai focuses on egoism too, and she shows social responsibility for the poor and needy.

---

11 Abe de Vries, ‘Neo-folk as kryptyk op it kapitalisme. “De stiennen ûlebuorden” fan Waling Dykstra’, *Fers2* 3.19, 26 November 2017. [www.fers2.eu/neo-folk-as-kryptyk-op-it-kapitalisme/](http://www.fers2.eu/neo-folk-as-kryptyk-op-it-kapitalisme/) Accessed 23 April 2018.

## Novels: Thyl Ulespegel

*De Fryske Thyl Ulespegel, of de wonderlike libbensskiednis fan Hantsje Pik* is the second novel by Dykstra. It is one of the highlights of nineteenth-century Frisian literature (here, too, I refer to a more detailed treatment of an article on Fers2<sup>12</sup>). The story is told by Hantsje Pik, the most important social actor. He is the baker's fellow, later a baker himself, and probably partly an alter ego of the writer, who goes through life with jests and jokes and does not pay much attention to authority and difference in social status. He does not spare anyone his wit and pranks: first and foremost the farmers, but also farmers' sons, bakers, pastors, schoolmasters, 'seamstresses', field wardens, pious, and zealots. He does not step aside for anyone, not even for those who have been appointed above him.

Hantsje Pik (a traditional name for the devil) is not only a liberal spirit that haunts the Frisian pastures and the small bourgeoisie, and with humor calls out their failings, but he is also the subversive outsider who mocks the ruling order, the class society and the pillars. This is an individualistic attitude that ensures that traditional social and moral positions of power are questioned and undermined. Hantsje Pik is the sand in the machine, the rebellious little devil in the social system, revolutionary and realist in one person, who only relies on his own sharp sense, judgment and sense of justice.

## Conclusion

In general terms, through the use of the Frisian language, village decors, explicit references to Frisian mores, and also the predominant I-perspective, the corpus connects subnational identification with socially and morally desirable behavior of individuals from the lower social groups. Civilian norms and values are communicated, with a civilisation purpose, mostly like elsewhere in the Netherlands, for example through the Nut, a social service institution, but those are not always rural norms and values.

A striking emphasis in the lyrics (in 11 of the 69) is on the desirable independence and free partner choice of the boys as well as the girl. In matters of love they followed their hearts, independent from paternal authority, family pressure or considerations of religious or status differences, wealth inequalities or monetary gain. The higher classes in the middle of the nineteenth century, that is, the nobility, but also peasants, often took a very different point of view.<sup>13</sup> Charles Dickens treated arranged marriages for financial gain as a main theme in his novel *Domby and Son* in 1848. This emphasis on bourgeois independence and the romantic wish to let one's own heart speak can be classified as the active resistance category of agency against the world of 'capital': the power and influence of 'the money', and 'othering' via money as coercive and seductive means. Both categories, people of the heart versus people of the money, are found in *Doaitsen*: 'The moaiste faam fan Rypstermerke', 'De gouden ring', 'In âld man and

12 Abe de Vries, 'De friske literatuerkrytk, oftewol it wonderbaarlike leechlizen fan Waling Dykstra. Case-study: de proto-anargist Hantsje Pik', *Fers2* 1.8, 12 April 2015. [www.fers2.eu/20150412-de-friske-literatuerkrytk-oftewol-it-wonderbaarlike-leechlizen-fan-waling-dykstra/](http://www.fers2.eu/20150412-de-friske-literatuerkrytk-oftewol-it-wonderbaarlike-leechlizen-fan-waling-dykstra/). Accessed 23 April 2018.

13 The average age of marriage rose in the Netherlands under the influence of economic expectations in the period 1800 / 1830-1845 / 1855, and then dropped, first in the lower status groups, then also at higher levels; see Koen Matthijs, *De mateloze negentiende eeuw. Bevolking, huwelijk, gezin en sociale verandering* (Universitaire Pers Leuven, Leuven 2001), 193-194. See also: Pieter Stokvis, *Het intieme burgerleven. Huishouden, huwelijk en gezin in de lange negentiende eeuw* (Bakker, Amsterdam 2005). In peasant families and bourgeoisie with their own company, they only got married when the son took over the company or could start one of himself. The marriage pattern in these groups is called 'agricultural-artisanal'; see E.W. Hofstee, 'De groei van de Nederlandse bevolking', in: A.N.J. Hollander et al., ed., *Drift en koers. Een halve eeuw sociale verandering in Nederland* (Van Gorcum, Assen 1962).



in jong faam'; from *De boeresjonger*: 'It roaske and it bijke', 'Mei eigen spot nei bêd', 'Beppe's rie oan Kekke', and 'Simkjens klachte'. From *Mink mei 't orgel*: 'Klaas and Oeble Griet', 'De trouwe faam', 'Om het jild trouw', and 'Frijers-sang'.

The fourteen analysed stories and two poems also connect sub-national identification with the category of the 'uncontaminated': individuals from the lower social groups in the villages. The texts link socially and morally desirable behavior of the villagers with the use of the Frisian language, as well as typical village decors and characters. Social situations, character traits and social behaviors of most village characters are arranged in order to comment on prominent social themes such as poverty, deceit, superstition, idleness and egoism, but always according to a liberal procedure, promoting equality and modernity and rejecting inherited power. The omniscient narrator does not hesitate to show his own approval and disapproval; he will then address the reader directly, in the form of a lesson or summary, just like in oral transfer, where the listener always gets a direct message. Also the *Thyl Ulespegel* is, besides a book for private reading, a book for reading out, in which the vagabond categorises himself as low life and unbound and a debunker of hypocrisy, greed, deceit and sanctimony.

Moralisation, evaluation and value assignment in the work is always about being human *with other* people, for solidarity. An inferior, but emancipating social group, repeatedly puts traditional authority relations at risk, and denies and debunks them outright (against submissiveness). Social categorisation in the texts takes place through actors who reject the huge social inequality, show responsibility for family and fellow man, care about to the position of women, value independence, and mistrust formal authority and dogma. These actions and attitudes always go hand in hand with valued characteristics such as humor, honesty, sincerity, faithfulness in love, diligent work, goodwill, justice and straightforwardness.

Categorisation as 'othering' focuses particularly on the morally corrupting power of money - it is the age of growing capitalism - and increasing egoism in society, consumption drive, poverty, the influence of the city, superstition and credulity. (There is concern about the position of the worker, but much less for that of the wretch, beggar and bum, who morally fails and apparently wants nothing but misfortune.) Only when the elite-versus-masses status quo no longer fills the whole screen, Waling Dykstra's work communicates the importance of a 'Frisian' social and social-critical behavior, based on both petty bourgeois and Calvinistic norms and on liberal, critical and free-thinking ideas.

Important social categories throughout the early work are: 'the suitor in love' who does whatever it takes to be with his sweetheart; so that the patriarchal arrangement of marriage must be out of the way. 'The flaunting girl' cannot be trusted; and the world should prefer reason and usefulness rather than appearances. 'The good farmer' cares for his workers; and employers need to treat their employees right and to reward them well. 'The superstitious farmer' is stupid; and churches and religious leaders who do not interfere with superstition or even encourage it, are complicit in the human misery. 'The rich leech' preys on other people's bad luck; and the power of money and banks should be restricted. 'The charlatan exorcist' is an imposter; and if education was better, people could see that by themselves and develop themselves for their own good. 'The poor and honest landworker' deserves support; and society fails for this group. 'The courageous wife' is able, being 'it bêste stik húsrje', the best piece of furniture, to save the day; and women are equal to men. 'The Dutch-speaker' brings urban pedantry to the village; and contempt for and deprivation of the people's language should be ended. 'The debunking vagabond' lives off the ignorance of the persons he pulls the long leg; and a sceptical sage shall tell anyone the truth.

In Dykstra's texts the discursive construction of social identity takes place via four grand-categories: the Suitor, the Narrator, the Enlightener and the Vagabond. The Suitor claims the autonomy of the individual agent, the Narrator defines and criticizes the individual's social acting, the Enlightener shows the agent the path of reason, and the Vagabond gets rid of the obstacles (traditional authority structures) in a humorous way. At least three of these four grand-categories suggest a tendency to subversion and an aspiration for freedom, whereas the Narrator also points to the individual responsibility that comes with freedom. The texts can be regarded as expressions of awakening, disciplining and normative 'artistic communication in small groups'. The American anthropologist Gencarella describes this type of texts as: popular literature, not only focused on humor, romance and entertainment, but also on the activation of reason in politically, socially and linguistically deprived and awakening groups, in this case at the service of a better life in the no man's land between state society and beginning democracy.<sup>14</sup> These are texts located in the Frisian, minority language speaking small bourgeoisie in the countryside, and with which it forms a social and political category:

A performance of folklore, as an active memorial to common sense and the need for pieties, constitutes "the folk" as a political category; accordingly, such constitutions may be critically engaged for the sake of the emancipatory, impious, and comic advance of new social imaginaries or the reduction of violence.<sup>15</sup>

Incentives for social change, which Gencarella calls the appearance of 'new social imaginaries', are found in Dykstra in the form of a special narrator category: the magical outsider, researcher and philosopher (think of Diogenes), who - implicitly and explicitly - criticizes political, social, cultural and economic power structures. In the researched corpus not so much Frisian-national, rather than social-moral notions are pivotal, in an 'internally-persuasive discourse'<sup>16</sup> full of 'tips' from the writer, aimed at the greatest possible happiness for the greatest number of people.

---

14 Stephen Olbrys Gencarella, 'Constituting folklore. A case for Critical Folklore Studies', *Journal of American Folklore* 122:484 (2009) 172-196.

15 *Ib.*, 190.

16 M.M. Bakhtin, *The dialogical imagination. Four essays* (University of Texas Press, Austin 1981) 342 ff.