Donald A. Luidens, Henk Aay and Michael J. Douma (eds.), ***E Pluribus Unum: The Weaving and Unraveling of a Singular 'Dutch American' Identity in North America*** (Holland, MI: Van Raalte Press, 2024, 248 pp., ISBN 9781956060119).

The study of Dutch immigrant communities in North America continues to attract steady academic interest. The field rests on a solid foundation of seminal overview studies. In 1955, Henry S. Lucas, a native of the city of Holland, Michigan, published *Netherlanders in America: Dutch Immigration to the United States and Canada, 1789-1950*, along with the two-volume *Dutch Immigrant Memoirs and Related Writings*, which compiled personal accounts, letters, and memoirs. Robert P. Swierenga has earned the informal title of 'dean' of Dutch immigration studies through a prolific body of work, most notably *Faith and Family: Dutch Immigration and Settlement in the United States, 1820-1920* (2000), a synthesis that combines quantitative analysis of immigration patterns with close attention to the enduring role of kinship networks and religious institutions. In the Netherlands, Hans Krabbendam at Radboud University published *Freedom on the Horizon: Dutch Immigration to America, 1840-1940* (2020), a comprehensive study that explores the motivations for migration, settlement patterns, community formation, and cultural adaptation.

Many of the aforementioned scholars have ties to Leiden University, Hope College and to orthodox Protestantism – a connection that is unsurprising given the central role of religion and identity in Dutch-American history. The A.C. Van Raalte Institute at Hope College in Holland, Michigan, named after the founder of the Holland settlement and the Holland Reformed Protestant Dutch Church, is arguably the most active centre for Dutch-American historical research. The institute sponsors fellowships, archival work, and publications, including the proceedings of the biannual conferences of the Association for the Advancement of Dutch American Studies. The most recent volume in this series, *E Pluribus Unum*, edited by Donald A. Luidens, Henk Aay and Michael J. Douma, stands as a testament to this ongoing research tradition.

This volume is organised around the three major approaches that currently shape the field, beginning with a focus on the small communities and enclaves in which Dutch identity was preserved within the broader context of a homogenising American society. These enclaves, often centred on church congregations, religious schools, and tightly knit neighbourhoods, served as critical sites of cultural reproduction and social cohesion. Microhistories offer valuable insights into the internal dynamics of these

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Dutch Protestant communities, revealing how faith, shared values, and communal institutions underpinned their collective identity and resilience.

Kenneth Kolk's account of Company I of the 25th Michigan Volunteer Infantry – largely composed of Dutch immigrants and recruited by the Reformed minister Albertus van Raalte – illustrates the deep intertwining of religious conviction and civic engagement. This unit of staunch abolitionists, known for carrying Bibles in their rucksacks and exhibiting exceptional health and unit cohesion, repelled a numerically superior Confederate force at Tebbs Bend, Kentucky, on 4 July 1863, the same day as the more widely remembered Battle of Gettysburg. Mark van der Werf's narrative of his ancestors, Oebele and Janneke van der Werf, who emigrated from Friesland in 1898 and were later joined by a chain migration of relatives, exemplifies the perseverance and communal ethos of Dutch Protestant migrants building agricultural livelihoods in Michigan. Similarly, Robert Schoone-Jongen documents how the Reformed Dutch community in Midland Park, New Jersey, established a Christian Sanatorium to care for mentally ill members, demonstrating a robust commitment to mutual care grounded in religious faith. In contrast, Mary Risseeuw's account of her Catholic Dutch ancestors in Wisconsin highlights how religious affiliation shaped assimilation trajectories: unlike their Protestant counterparts in Sheboygan, they found it easier to integrate into the broader Catholic community, suggesting that for Catholic immigrants, religious identity often superseded ethnic ties. Taken together, these microhistories demonstrate how Dutch Protestant communities in the United States fostered cohesion through a shared religious and institutional life, while also pointing to the limits of ethnic solidarity in the absence of confessional alignment.

The second section, by contrast, examines the gradual 'unraveling' of Dutch ethnic cohesion. As communities dissolved, church pews slowly emptied, and the Dutch language was forgotten, ethnic identity was gradually relinquished. Swierenga explores this process by tracing how the effects of upward mobility and white flight undermined the communal bonds he had earlier described in *Dutch Chicago: A History of the Hollanders in the Windy City* (2003). His neighborhood-by-neighborhood account reveals how increasing economic success contributed to the dilution of Dutch Reformed identity, as social integration and geographical dispersal eroded the institutional and cultural foundations that had sustained ethnic distinctiveness. Janet Sjaarda Sheeres vividly recounts the experiences of Dutch immigrant women from the community of Reverend Scholte who journeyed across the American prairies into Mormon territory in Utah between 1850 and 1869 – many of whom faced profound hardships and, in the process, lost their religious faith. This contribution is a good example of the growing interest in gender-focused analyses of immigrant women's roles that marks immigration studies.

Dutch immigrants who moved for health reasons to climatically favourable regions in California or Florida likewise often lost their ethnic

identity, as Suzanne M. Sinke's chapter demonstrates, in contrast to those treated at Dutch institutions such as the Bethesda Sanatoria in Colorado and New Mexico, where communal ties were maintained. An insightful chapter by Chris Dickon, based on *Dutch Children of African American Liberators* (co-authored with Mieke Kirkels, 2020), highlights the challenges faced by many biracial Dutch-American children born out of wedlock in the summer of 1945, following the liberation of the Netherlands. Through two compelling life stories, the chapter illustrates how prevailing racial sensibilities in both the Netherlands and the United States – at times compounded by religious harassment – left many of these children feeling 'neither here nor there'.

The third section explores how Dutch identity is remembered, reconstructed, and embraced in diverse ways, demonstrating its continued relevance in contemporary contexts. As Justin Vos shows, the Dutch language and ethnic heritage played a significant role in the mid-twentieth-century debates between traditional Calvinists and more progressive factions within the Christian Reformed Church. In a lively chapter, Rhonda Penning examines the ongoing celebration, commercial promotion, and often cheerful fabrication of Dutch heritage and identity through tulip festivals, parades, and other cultural events in former Dutch enclaves across the United States and Canada. Similarly, Earl Wm. Kennedy highlights the growing interest in genealogical research as a means of affirming – or inventing – Dutch ancestry. This genealogical mania spurred the creation of lineage societies such as the Holland Society of New York (1885) and the Mayflower Society (1897), and continues today through digital communities and online databases, reflecting a persistent fascination with the Dutch contribution to the American ethnic mosaic. As editor Luidens aptly observes, Dutch identity in North America has 'become a matter more of nostalgia than of recognizable fact' (xi).

This volume, with its wide range of topics, demonstrates how Dutch-American studies continue to attract scholarly interest and to produce rigorous and engaging research. It interacts meaningfully with broader academic themes such as imagined communities, integration, and assimilation, while offering valuable insights into the lived experiences of Dutch immigrants. Its particular strengths lie in its contributions to microhistorical approaches, its emphasis on community and religious networks, and its effective use of life writing and media to illuminate the immigrant experience.

At the same time, Dutch-American studies – while rich and deeply rooted – still occupy a somewhat distinct space within the broader field of immigration history. As the historiography of migration continues to expand, there are exciting opportunities for scholars in this field to engage more fully with emerging themes such as interethnic comparison, cultural hybridity, language retention, and bilingualism. Additionally, placing Dutch immigration within wider analytical frameworks – such as Atlantic history, settler colonialism, and diasporic studies – offers promising avenues for

further exploration. Embracing these perspectives would not only deepen the field's analytical scope but also strengthen its relevance within contemporary conversations in migration and ethnic studies.

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