

Abstract Renée Vulto

### **Singing Communities**

#### *Politics of Feeling in Songs of the Dutch Revolutionary Period (1780-1815)*

The revolutionary years at the end of the eighteenth century were a period of great political instability for the Netherlands. In such a turbulent period, the song culture that was so deeply anchored in Dutch everyday life offered people a way to identify with and participate in collectives that could develop into communities engaging with the political developments of that time.

Through the analysis of an extensive corpus of songs and songbooks from the Dutch revolutionary period, I have defined three central ways in which political communities could be shaped in and through song: mobilisation, imagination, and affirmation. Song was used to disseminate ideologies, and singing was employed to mobilise people's bodies to engage with political developments. Such mobilisation was essential to make imagined feelings available to the felt, embodied experience. Imagination was essential for the imagined continuation of previously embodied communities, for example for communities in exile. Both the imagined and embodied forms of community played a role in affirming new regimes after yet another political shift.

However, despite the many political shifts that occurred in the revolutionary period, there were also patterns of repetition. Throughout the political song repertoire of the that time, the same tropes, tunes, and singing practices were employed repeatedly. Although their specific significations changed, they were continuously used for the same goal: to bring people together in a community of feeling. In my paper I will discuss how the creation and maintenance of sustainable political communities was dependent on continuity in and of practice, and how song facilitated this. I will show how Dutch politics—regardless of how these politics were ideologically motivated—relied on a fixed repertoire of feelings that was used throughout the Dutch revolutionary period to mobilise, imagine, and affirm communities within the current political regime.

#### *Biographical note*

Renée Vulto is a musicologist, literary scholar, and cultural historian who has written a thesis on eighteenth-century Dutch revolutionary song culture. She is interested in the role of sound in political processes. Her research combines methods and perspectives from the history of emotions, sensory history, sound studies, and digital humanities to approach a broad range of sources. Her current projects focus on song and sound as means of both political dominance (silencing unwanted voices) and subversion (voicing resistance) in Dutch political regimes, in the Netherlands as well as in its former colonies. In 2020, Renée initiated and co-founded the

international [Song Studies Network](#). The SSN hosts a online seminar series and edits a book series with Amsterdam University Press. Renée's monograph *Politics of Feeling in Songs of the Dutch Revolutionary Period (1780-1815)* will be published within this series in 2023. Contact: [r.vulto@uu.nl](mailto:r.vulto@uu.nl)