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Drug Smuggler Nation: Narcotics and the Netherlands, 1920-1995 by Stephen Snelders, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2021, viii + 304pp., £85 ISBN: 978-1-5261-5139-1 (hardback).

Of the dizzying number and variety of characters that make up the cast of *Drug Smuggler Nation*, Frits van der Wereld is perhaps the most emblematic. A petty thief who started out smuggling tobacco before progressing on to cannabis in the 1960s, Frits became 'a leading figure in the criminal underworld of Amsterdam's harbour district around the Nieuwmarkt and the Zeedijk'. Frits, whose real name was Simon Adriaanse, 'was a typical entrepreneur who liked to diversify his interests', which alongside operating as 'a pimp', included opening his own café in the red-light area (p. 98). This establishment – *De Wereld* (The World) – explains his nickname: Frits of the World. This moniker of course also pointed to the international nature of Adriaanse's smuggling activities, which even if one only considers that which is documented, involved hashish cargoes from Lebanon and brokering heroin deals for Chinese networks in Malaysia. Snelders mentions one of Adriaanse's colleagues who was also involved in illegally transporting Pakistani migrants alongside Pakistani hashish to the UK, which indicates the opportunistic and entwined nature of these activities. These then are the two major themes of *Drug Smuggler Nation*; the increasing globalisation of the market in illegal psychoactive substances, especially in the post-war world, and the strategic ingenuity and improvised collaboration of the people that facilitated this illicit trade.

Snelders uses the term 'criminal anarchy' to describe the latter, borrowing from political theorists and sociologists to make a compelling case across seven chapters, organised chronologically. What he means by this is anarchy as a means of spontaneous (economic) organisation, in which 'autonomous individuals and small groups' form networks to respond to the demand for psychoactive drugs by taking 'direct action and develop[ing] the ways of operation of supplying the market', in which '[f]lexibility and invisibility are paramount' (p.13). This flexibility extended to the product itself as smugglers switched from tobacco to heroin, or cocaine to XTC (ecstasy or MDMA) and back again as market forces or consumer preferences dictated. These organisations coalesced along ethnic or national lines. Groups ostracised by wider Dutch society, such as Chinese "triads", Greek smugglers or Turkish families, all played their part in making sure that product was moved smoothly and discreetly.

One of the points that Snelders articulately hammers home throughout the book is that all these organisations were structurally and hierarchically fluid. The fictional idea of the drug lord kingpin, familiar to us through Hollywood films, Netflix series or, in the example that Snelders gives us, the character Rastapopoulos in Hergé's Tintin comic book *Cigars of the Pharaoh* (pp.9-10), is supplanted by the 'complex historical reality' (p. 217). Characters such as Adriaanse were merely cogs in a much bigger, global wheel of smuggling, and even within their own loose organisations. Individuals with different roles along the supply chain, in finance and money-laundering, wholesale product distribution, security and so on, were 'all basically independent, associating with each other in temporary situations' (p.169). It is testament to Snelders that as the narrative flits between these illicit trading assemblages, different drugs, and geographical locations, at no point does *Drug Smuggler Nation* feel messy or unfocused. On the contrary, the clarity that the organising concept 'criminal

anarchy' provides makes this book essential reading for historians of drugs and crime, but also for sociologists, anthropologists and criminologists more broadly.

All in all, there are very few improvements that one could suggest for Snelders' superb study. Perhaps the prose could be pacier, but the measured tone patiently guides the general reader through a narrative that is both minutely granular and grandly sweeping. Indeed, it is this expansiveness that prompts the biggest question; the book is much more of a global history than a domestic one, and so the *Nation* in the title puzzles. What was specifically or peculiarly Dutch about this story, and how did the drugs trade impact upon national cohesion, security or identity? After all, most lay readers imagine the contemporary Netherlands, and Amsterdam's cafes and coffee shops specifically, as a place of relaxed attitudes towards drug consumption, but that stereotype is left largely unexamined in what is a resolutely supply-side story. Snelders does suggest that the particular histories of the Netherlands fomented the right conditions for a thriving drugs trade – 'Dutch maritime and criminal traditions had come together in a powerful setting of criminal anarchy' (p.104) – and that former colonial ties, such as in Latin America, 'especially in the independent state of Suriname, where the regime facilitated the cocaine trade' (p.209) were also a contributory although inessential factor in the success of the smuggling trade. These assertions however are infrequent examples of the national story intruding upon the global, and this is arguably reflective of a broader pivot in the historiography of drugs.

This wide-angle global lens is one increasingly used by drugs historians, with Paul Gootenberg's *Oxford Handbook of Global Drugs History* and Lucas Richert and James H. Mills' *Cannabis: Global Histories* being two recent examples. This global turn is an acknowledgement of the *longue durée* trajectory of psychoactive substances that Benjamin Breen's 2019 book *The Age of Intoxication* made startlingly clear. Intoxicants rapidly became important commodities in the early modern period, and as such, were an essential driver of global capitalist expansion as they were bought, sold and consumed internationally. It is therefore understandable that scholarship has followed this analytic logic, but it's worth reflecting on why that results in histories that by and large, albeit not exclusively, focus on the supply and prohibition of drugs, rather than their consumption or attendant counter- and sub-cultures. This is less of a question for Snelders' excellent book, and more for the wider field that *Drug Smuggler Nation* is a major contribution towards. The shift towards global histories of drugs is one that seems to privilege economic, diplomatic, business or political histories over the cultural or social, and structural or policy explanations over an interest in individual agency or lived experience. Or to put it in the terms of *Drug Smuggler Nation*, it would be nice to hear more about the Simon Adriaanses of this world.

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