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# Prosecution and Popularity: the Case of the Dutch Sequah, 1891–1893

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## The Scene

THE PREVAILING OPINION about medical licensing systems in Europe is that they were the most rigid in countries and regions that had been subjected to Napoleonic rule.<sup>1</sup> This includes the Netherlands. Although in the course of the nineteenth century licensing laws were amended twice, in 1818 and in 1865, until recently it remained illegal to practice medicine without official qualifications in the Netherlands. Licenses were granted only to those who had followed a formal medical education, at a medical school or, since 1876, exclusively at a university. Unlicensed practitioners ran the perpetual risk of being prosecuted, fined and, in cases of severe recidivism, jailed. If cognisance is also taken of the comparatively early foundation of the Dutch Society for the Repression of Quackery in 1880 (a German equivalent only came into being in 1903) the Netherlands could be depicted easily as a quack's hell. Daily practice, however, was quite different for there was a wide gap between the letter of the law and its enforcement.<sup>2</sup> Prosecution had never been fierce and, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the yearly average of convictions had fallen to a national total of six.<sup>3</sup> Rather than deterring unlicensed healers from practising, prosecution enhanced their fame. Protestant politicians, in particular, were known to support and even to consult irregular medical practitioners.

The prosecution of unlicensed healers can be seen as a defining element of medical professionalisation. Regular physicians, by accusing other healers as being unfit to practice medicine and thereby criminalising them, determined the boundaries of their own profession as well as their own social status. As Roy Porter has commented: 'Quacks are those doctors excluded from professional power and privilege'.<sup>4</sup> Yet, the attempt by licensed doctors to oust their competitors did not depend only on favourable laws and the co-operation of the state prosecution system; it also needed public support. This was the flaw in the application of the Medical Acts for it depended mostly on licensed practitioners not only to initiate the prosecution of their illegal counterparts but also, to be legally valid, the complaints had to be endorsed by witnesses. Public prosecutors had to be convinced that the healer to be prosecuted was not just officially registered, which was relatively easy to establish but, in addition, that his activity could be categorised as the practice of medicine. The latter was open to discussion as it could be argued that if someone had not undergone formal medical training, then what he practised was not medicine in the official sense. Furthermore, it had to be established that the suspect practised medicine regularly and as a trade rather than helping out of necessity, as was the case when a legally qualified physician was unable to attend. And these were only the legal arguments.

Other factors that hindered the implementation of the Medical Acts were associated with the prevalent cultural assumptions about health and healing and it is necessary to consider the popularity of irregular healers to discover these assumptions. Although the immediate reasons why a healer attracted patients do not have to equal the reasons why it was hard to prosecute him, the underlying motivations will have been similar for both. Since there is no systematically collected corpus of patients' documentation for illegal healers,<sup>5</sup> and since their patients' books have only rarely survived,<sup>6</sup> it is usually impossible to discover by whom, how often, from where and for what kinds of misfortune they were consulted. Other sources to determine their popularity are needed and newspaper reports are the most suitable for this purpose.<sup>7</sup> Even a single report can reveal details about the flow of patients that a healer attracted on a certain day, or about the medical encounter between healer and patient. A collection of newspaper accounts, moreover, may reveal the scope and the length of a healer's practice and of possible changes in them. This paper, based primarily on newspaper accounts, presents a case study of one of the most popular and famous healers in the modern Netherlands. He was known as Sequah.<sup>8</sup> 'When your legs are painful', the boys in the street used to sing, 'when you suffer from rheumatism, you go to Sequah: he cures you with music'.<sup>9</sup>

### Enters a Healer

IN JUNE 1891 an Englishman arrived in the Netherlands. He was called Charles A. Davenport and he was employed by the Sequah Company in London to sell remedies against rheumatism. The company also provided him with his public name: Sequah. 'The provinces which Sequah traversed are the most backward, in terms of education, in the enlightened kingdom of Holland' reported the English trade journal, *Chemist and Druggist*, at the end of August 1891. This was merely an attempt to belittle the activity of Davenport who, at that stage, had not proceeded beyond Roozendaal, a small town in the province of Noord-Brabant.<sup>10</sup> At the beginning of Davenport's stay his chances of success did not look very promising. 'I've been in Holland with little Davenport', wrote a representative of the company to the London headquarters in June. He continued: 'I don't think it will be a big do there as cases are hard to get – it may get better further up the country'.<sup>11</sup> The initial failure to attract sufferers had more to do with public scepticism than with Davenport's public persona. People waited for results before they submitted themselves to his treatment. A report from a local newspaper in Roozendaal shows this quite clearly, even though it relied, in part, on Davenport's own publicity material:

A few days ago an English doctor by the name of Sequah arrived here. With the aid of the so-called Indian prairie flower and Sequah oil the doctor tries to heal bad or malfunctioning indigestion, illness of the liver, rheumatism, impurity of the blood, kidney disease, asthma, bronchitis, etc. At certain times he drives through the streets in a cart drawn by four horses. It is no surprise that a number of the curious are drawn to this event. Yesterday night the Miracle Doctor (as he is called by the common people around here) began his activities, which consists of massaging rheumatic sufferers. Only one patient showed up. The "miracle doctor" plans to stay here for about three weeks. Healing is free of charge. Everyone who seeks a cure for rheumatism has only to come to him to obtain complete healing. Only when the results of his treatment have been witnessed will he sell his remedies, such as Sequah-oil which costs one guilder a bottle, as well as the Indian prairie flower and another remedy that will immediately heal all internal pains. He will help the poor and they will obtain a free bottle, even two when necessary. To avoid deception he asks for a note from a minister of the Church, confirming that the person is really poor.<sup>12</sup>

Davenport soon featured in the national press as well. A week after the local newspaper report the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* wrote:

Every night the miracle doctor is driven to the market place in his golden cart, drawn by four beautiful horses and accompanied by music. The sick who are even brought to him in bed are treated on the spot by rubbing them with

Sequah oil. At night the community is understandingly very excited to see him. Naturally he performs miracle cures.<sup>13</sup>

Davenport's cart was indeed a gaudy affair, akin to a circus wagon. It was adorned all over with statues of Red Indians, paintings and mirrors. It was designed in red and lavishly finished in gold. In it a six-men-strong brass band was seated, dressed up in Indian gear. The healer himself wore a Mexican-style leather outfit and a broad-rimmed cowboy hat.

The medical inspector of the district of Zeeland and the west of Noord-Brabant, where Roosendaal was located, could hardly fail to take notice of Davenport's activities. In a letter to the Minister of the Interior he asked whether Sequah should not be expelled from the country. The Minister replied, however, that this was not in accordance with the immigration law. The inspector had to be satisfied that, in order to indict Davenport in the magistrates' court of Bergen-op-Zoom, he could be charged with the illegal practice of medicine and the unlicensed sale of medicines. When the case was tried at the end of August, the healer had already departed for Rotterdam. In any case, convictions do not seem to have worried him unduly, since on appeal he was fined only one hundred and fifty guilders.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, as a response to such policing he hired shortly afterwards a licensed doctor to cover the medical side of his dealings. He procured also the services of a registered pharmacist to sell his oil. Davenport's sales route was cleverly chosen. Roosendaal may have been a minor town but it occupied a strategic position at the intersection of the route from Flushing (in the 1890s the port of arrival for ships from England) into the interior, with the route from Antwerp northwards to Rotterdam. The healer's itinerary carried him directly into the main towns of the Netherlands without venturing into the 'backward' countryside, rightly expecting the sufferers to flock to the market towns. After performing his healing in Rotterdam, he travelled straight to Amsterdam, in direct challenge to the Dutch medical profession.

### **The Treatment**

**I**N ROTTERDAM DAVENPORT MANAGED eventually to attract considerable attention, although only after several attempts. Already the first performance drew a 'large public of diverse rank and file' attracted no doubt by leaflets distributed from the advertising wagon and the sensational performance. A patient apparently unable to walk was carried onto the stage. As one of the Rotterdam papers described the event: 'Sequah immediately took away the man's cane and broke it in pieces, saying that he wouldn't

need it anymore'. Behind a curtain the man was undressed, massaged and put on his feet again. A journalist, who had been admitted into the secluded area, described the patient:

Now he had to make gymnastic movements, because he was still afraid of moving his feet. At first the man hardly dared to use his legs fearing the pains that cut through the bone and which had already plagued him for six weeks. But soon he moved more freely and with a bright face he began to dance and jump. He was told to jump still higher and landed on his feet ever more forcefully. For his blood to flow through his veins more quickly Sequah raised the man three feet high from the floor and then dropped him.

The patient put on his clothes and was then displayed to the public when he even attempted some dancing steps to the beat of the music. After that he was given some money. The next day, he was reported as having gone for an hour's walk, 'with much success, as he told us'.<sup>15</sup> The public quickly became aware that something very special was happening around Davenport. 'Even the competition from the fair does not harm him', the *Rotterdamsche Courant* remarked. Soon enterprising figures tried to join the bandwagon. Some started a business in salad oil, 'pretending it was Sequah-oil'. Others even went as far as stealing the real thing, Sequah oil, from the premises where Davenport held his performances. In Moerdijk, a small village south of Rotterdam, a Sequah impersonator gave an open-air show and there was even a plant named after him.<sup>16</sup>

Sequah, the healer, soon became a household name. Nevertheless, his fame was established on a particular day, 26 August 1891, from whence newspaper coverage of his performances increased dramatically. There were several reasons for this. A special Sequah issue of the *Monthly for the Repression of Quackery* was published on that day. It launched a fierce attack on Davenport, calling him 'a foreign quack, who exploits the suffering of miserable patients'. At the same time a ban was also issued on the sale of Davenport's bottles with remedies and the Rotterdam police started criminal proceedings against him.<sup>17</sup> The authorities conspired to put the spotlight on the healer. Yet it could not deflect from his public appeal, as it was expressed in December 1891, the next occasion on which there was an attempt to prosecute him:

Sequah has confused every professor, doctor and pharmacist. At first the newspapers were taken to task by some doctors because they wrote about Sequah and thus gave him free publicity; the *Monthly for the Repression of Quackery* acquired some of the same medicine (...) Sequah acquired public favour! Sequah was celebrated, more than a *doctor*, more than a *professor*, even

more than a *monarch* – and this caused the jealousy of the *medical faculty*! But however they put up arms against Sequah, they could not rob him of the gratitude of the patients who were delivered from their suffering!<sup>18</sup>

### The Healer's Impact

SEQUAH'S TOUR THROUGH THE NETHERLANDS only lasted a little over two years. It virtually ended in the summer of 1893 when a lingering conflict with the company came to a head. Subsequently, Davenport severed his links and started his own enterprise. In the autumn of the same year he settled in The Hague where he stayed until 1901 when he moved back to London. Thereafter he disappeared from historical scrutiny.

Everywhere Davenport went as Sequah he attracted enormous crowds, a lot of attention and much debate. This is witnessed by over eight hundred reports from many local Dutch newspapers about the events he staged and the reactions he provoked. One of his public's popular pastimes was to unharness the horses of his carriage and to pull it by hand through the streets, as in a triumphal procession. It was copied everywhere in the Netherlands. It was a routine not unique to the Netherlands for British Sequahs were similarly treated which suggests the company had a hand in its transmission.<sup>19</sup> In the end, Sequah left such a deep and lasting impression that, years later, he was still considered the ultimate 'quack' and the worst nightmare of every campaigner against quackery. The *Monthly for the Repression of Quackery* in 1908, for example, feared the rise of a 'new Sequah' as they called a healer with similar intentions to Davenport. Again, during the debates in 1914 concerning the abolition of the medical monopoly, Sequah figured among the few healers who were actually named by doctors as a warning example in their opposition to the campaign of Protestant lawyers to turn medicine into a free trade. As late as 1925, the Chief Inspector of Public Health remarked that no other healer had staged shows that resembled Sequah's performances.<sup>20</sup> Sequah also survived in the memory of his patients and he was celebrated in rhymes and songs.<sup>21</sup> A rhyme recorded in 1960 in Frisia, for example, almost seventy years after his grand tour suggests a long folk memory:

Have you read in a certain newspaper  
That Zeekwa has arrived in our fatherland  
When you have crooked legs or are bothered by rheumatism  
Come along to Zeekwa who will cure you with music  
Are you bothered by lice or flees in your neck  
Come along to Zeekwa who will catch them with his cap.<sup>22</sup>

The last two lines are somewhat enigmatic. They are partly dictated by the rhyme and partly a joke but, at the same time, they refer to Sequah's 'carnavalesque' performance and to his association with the lower classes, signified by the cap. Another instance of how the healer was remembered was voiced in 1962. A farmer in the province of Limburg told an interviewer how he had heard many yarns about Sequah: 'Because he was not allowed to practise as a doctor himself, he used the services of his assistant, Dr Davenport. Once he performed in Venlo, at the Hotel National. Beforehand he held a musical procession through the town and handed sweets to all the children. He treated his patients with many words and with music'.<sup>23</sup> Apart from the confusion of names, which tells us that the doctor who accompanied Sequah was pure 'window-dressing', the memory of the farmer, though selective, was fairly accurate.

### Popularity Reviewed

HOW CAN SEQUAH'S ENORMOUS POPULARITY be explained, a popularity unsurpassed in the Netherlands for almost a century? Can his case throw light on the attraction of other 'irregular' or 'alternative' healers? Why did so many people flock to his shows after their initial hesitation? Why did Davenport sell thousands of bottles of his oil?<sup>24</sup>

There are no simple answers to these questions. The reasons for the appeal of 'alternative medicine' seem to be sufficiently complex that the Dutch governmental Committee on Alternative Treatments, which recently investigated the effectiveness of all kinds of non-regular cures, decided to refrain completely from asking these kinds of questions.<sup>25</sup> Popularity, however, is the most important factor in understanding the success of 'quackery'. Most cures of 'irregular healers', to put it differently, are ascribed nowadays to pure suggestion or the so-called placebo effect, as indeed was the case a century ago when this was a favourite argument used by the opponents of 'quackery'. Nevertheless, this does not preclude studying why 'alternative medicine' was so attractive to sufferers.<sup>26</sup> Precisely because the placebo effect is deemed to play a very important part in processes of healing a cultural approach becomes essential.<sup>27</sup> This calls for a shift in approach, from thinking in terms of verifiable numbers to considering changing attitudes and impressions by people of specific age, class, education and gender and to specific situations.

In the course of this research on irregular healers, it has become clear that it makes little sense to identify general conditions of the rise and fall of a healer's popularity. Different healers seem to have pursued different



strategies. Analysis of individual healers even reveals different aspects of popularity. The case of Peter Stegeman, also known as 'the peasant from Staphorst', provides one example.<sup>28</sup> The way this healer communicated with his patients appears to have been of vital importance for his appeal. He always gave them a great deal of attention, expressed himself in simple language and kept his physical distance; he never touched his patients but only looked at them with his piercing eyes. Furthermore, he only asked to be paid for his remedies not for his advice which he gave freely. The 'renegade' doctor, as anti-quacks referred to such a 'collaborator', who shielded him from persecution for a couple of years, in contrast, did touch the patients and spoke in Latin which his patients perceived as incomprehensible sounds.<sup>29</sup> Yet, Stegeman's specific pattern of direct communication between healer and patient does not seem to have been applicable to another very famous early twentieth-century Dutch healer, the urinologist Pieter van Bijsterveldt, who attained proverbial status in and around Rotterdam.<sup>30</sup> He subscribed also to the inalienability and integrity of the individual body but, instead of looking at his patients and talking to them, he treated them from a distance.<sup>31</sup> His method of 'piss-gazing' made this possible and did not require his physical presence. Whatever the differences in communication and diagnosis, both Van Bijsterveldt and Stegeman were orthodox Protestants, as probably was a substantial portion of their patients.

A healer's popularity was linked usually to his or her use of speech within the specific setting of the medical encounter. This is not only apparent if it is considered that a regular doctor's medical prestige derived at least partly from his professional clothing, his use of Latin and his illegible handwriting. It is also clear from the practices of somnambules. These women healers derived their popularity amongst others from their oracular speech, uttered in a trance. This was complete gobbledygook for their intellectual opponents, but for their patients it struck the right balance between authority and understanding.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, what is to be made of Davenport, an Englishman, who at least at the start of his stay in the Netherlands did not speak the Dutch language and who needed an interpreter whenever he addressed his audience? How could he possibly have communicated with his audience and have persuaded them of his healing power and that of his remedy?

### The Language of Quackery

SEQUAH, THE MOST FAMOUS and flamboyant healer in the Netherlands, derived his reputation from the way he communicated with his potential customers, using visual and audio aids. People did not see a cart like his every day and they were intrigued also to witness a massage on stage as a form of entertainment, especially if the majority of the public was barred by a curtain from seeing exactly what happened on stage, thereby rendering the scene more mysterious. While this was happening Sequah's musical band entertained the public. Evil tongues whispered that the sound of music served to stifle the screams of the sufferers when they were rubbed rather roughly with the oil. When he was confronted with this criticism the healer immediately gave a performance without any music. However, he found it necessary to hide naked parts of the patient's body from the general public, although journalists and doctors were invited to step behind the curtain; the healing process after all needed impartial witnesses who would be able to tell the world about it. What was very visible to the public, nevertheless, were people who had been formerly tormented by rheumatism and who were now miraculously healed after their treatment by Sequah. They were seen throwing away their sticks and crutches and even dancing on stage. Davenport went as far as organising occasional running contests between those he had successfully cured. This was to prove that his cure lasted beyond one theatrical evening. Davenport was also an inspired speaker. Such were his oratorical skills that he was urged to run for parliament, not only in the Netherlands but also in Scotland where he had been active in 1890.<sup>33</sup> According to one of the Liberal newspapers, 'Sequah even outshines Domela Nieuwenhuis'.<sup>34</sup> Although Davenport needed an interpreter on stage, this man merely provided subtitles to the healer's compelling performance. Yet, being an acclaimed orator who was able to counter the attacks of his opponents with wit did not necessarily make him a sympathetic communication partner who inspired confidence. Nevertheless, he shared with other irregular healers the ability and the habit to speak the language people understood. All popular healers revered their patients' own views and feelings. This is where they laid the burden of diagnosis. 'They tell me they are in pain', Davenport said, 'and I believe them. Ladies and gentlemen, when you are suffering from headache and the doctor comes to visit you, how is he to know what you are suffering from unless you tell him?' It was Davenport's supreme achievement, in the medical encounter on stage, that he bridged opposites: between healer and public, between the stage and the floor, between the fully dressed and the naked, between illness and cure. Thus, he was able to convey a sense of wholeness and harmony.<sup>35</sup>

### The Image of Christ

BEYOND THE ANALYSIS of the direct communication between healer and patient it is also possible to indicate a deeper cultural reason for Davenport's popularity. His actions were, in fact, easily associated with the image of Christ the healer. This was for a number of reasons. One being that Davenport applied the method of laying on of hands rather like Jesus Christ and described in the gospel of Mark, 6:5. 'What you did to me is a miracle', a woman from Venlo told him and many would have agreed with her.<sup>36</sup> This comparison with Jesus Christ may sound far-fetched but less so if it is considered that, in different contexts, it has been made in relation to other healers.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, there are sufficient grounds for the conclusion that many of Sequah's followers subscribed openly to this notion and that others recognised it implicitly. Indeed, it is quite likely that the healer himself deliberately engineered it.

The extract from a national newspaper quoted at the beginning of this paper contains a clue to this sentiment: the sick were brought to 'Sequah' in a bed, it was written, which evokes the image of Lazarus brought to Jesus (Mark 2:3-4). A satirical piece from the weekly paper *De Amsterdammer* makes the biblical connection even clearer. This starts with the words: 'And in those days it came to pass...'. A few more passages underline the biblical style:

Then came a man from a foreign country sitting in a wagon of gold, with music and resoundings, and the fame of his deeds proceeded him, for he had healed many and he had made walk those who had sat down in sadness. (...) Then the old and the young fell on their knees and called the name of Sequah in ecstasy and started to praise him with hymns and prayers'.<sup>38</sup>

In this context it is of little concern that the author of this article probably wanted to ridicule the healer and his adherents; what is of significance is the way it was done. Others used even more direct messianic connotations, like a minister in the Calvinist town of Dordrecht. He said, during one of Sequah's performances: 'God has taken him to be a staff in his hand to cure the suffering mankind'. Sequah, he declared, was an 'envoy of God' and, in the following months, this phrase was repeated regularly in the publications of the Society for the Repression of Quackery. Sequah's divine gift was still remembered many years later.<sup>39</sup> 'What do you think about this deification of Sequah?' wrote a critic to one of the newspapers from Noord-Brabant. The same man also thought that people visited Sequah's performances 'to admire the only and immortal hero in his halo of supremacy and bliss'.<sup>40</sup>

Davenport shrewdly exploited the rumours of his supernatural gifts to

his advantage: he appeared modest by denying them explicitly while at the same time he reinforced them through carefully staged symbolic actions. Thus, he was reported to have said in Dordrecht: 'I am not God's envoy – as a certain minister told you this week; I am only an ordinary human being who asks you to believe what I am saying'.<sup>41</sup> This did not stop him from introducing a new element in his show in the very town in which he was denying his divinity. He not only healed the lame and the crippled but also started to feed the poor and to quench the thirsty in Dordrecht. Men, women and children in need, each in turn, were offered, from then on, a free meal in every town he visited. At the same time they were also given special gifts, usually donated by the local shopkeepers. The public responded, during the evenings, with flowers, poems and all kinds of presents for Sequah. The reporter of the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, another national newspaper, described the scene in Dordrecht:

On Monday night he was presented with a big wreath, made of yellow roses and laurel leaves. On the ribbons was printed in Dutch and in English: "When you arrived in the Netherlands, it was proclaimed: Do not believe him. He may kill you. Many inhabitants from Dordrecht now call out to you: O God, protect the saviour of the rheumatic sufferers and the benefactor of the poor!" When this wreath was laid upon Sequah's shoulders a huge cheer erupted. "Long shall he live in glory"! sounded from every mouth. (...)

On Tuesday night Sequah received a neat bouquet of white lilacs. In the name of some prominent citizens, who wished to remain anonymous, he was also presented with a poem, which went as follows:

To raise the spirit of the suppressed,  
To comfort those who grieve,  
To help those who weep,  
To quench those who are hungry,  
To bless with your best gifts,  
Is a duty but also bliss!<sup>42</sup>

The perception of Sequah's performance conformed to the contemporary image of Jesus Christ. This made Sequah appear like the Messiah sent by God to evict the usurers, the official doctors, from the temple of healing. Like Jesus he was perceived also as a martyr and the attacks from the Society for the Repression of Quackery and from legal authorities only strengthened this image. Sequah was said to act as a 'benefactor of mankind, a noble friend of humanity' and all those who took the trouble to attend his shows, which many did, could see with their own eyes how he healed the sick and invited the children to come to him (Mark 10:14).

Finally, the circumstances in which Davenport operated, just before

the turn of the century, contributed to his impact; given the importance of liminal time in Christian ideology. This was noticed also by contemporaries:

Those, who have lived through this craze already for some time as well as those who have never experienced it may find it hard to imagine that the "fin de siècle" city of The Hague runs to the Sequah-agent, as if he were a miraculous human being, rather like Paris celebrated Mesmer a good hundred years ago.<sup>43</sup>

### Resolution

DAVENPORT'S EXPERIENCE WITH THE LAW was very symptomatic of that of other famous healers. Once he had managed to exploit the loopholes in the legal system he was essentially left untroubled. He visited about thirty towns, during his two year's tour, but he was prosecuted only in the first three. The third case in Amsterdam depended upon the doctor who covered him having left the stage for a few minutes. Davenport paid the fines very readily. About nine months after his stay in Amsterdam he was once again prosecuted in Groningen, this time merely because his arrival at that town coincided with the conviction of a local masseur. The Groningen court eventually acquitted Davenport on appeal.<sup>44</sup> Davenport, for his part, hit back at his main public opponents. He sued the Society for the Repression of Quackery for libel, even though this organisation was only indirectly responsible for the prosecutions against him. He also won this case. When the most notorious 'quack' was able to practice almost unhindered, it can be safely assumed that healers of lesser renown could fare even better. If they were popular enough to be prosecuted, they also earned enough money to pay the fines or they had supporters who paid the fines for them. Laws which were meant to curtail the illegal practice of medicine turned out to promote healers by giving them free publicity, rather than by putting a stop to their trade. In the Netherlands, a country that was envied by medical associations abroad for possessing stringent medical laws, fighting 'quackery' often amounted to fighting metaphorical windmills. Of course, fighting God's envoy was sheer sacrilege.

*An earlier version of this paper has been published in Dutch under the title: 'De Godsgezant. Over de populariteit van een irreguliere genezer', Groniek. Historisch tijdschrift 131 (1995), 198-208. I would like to thank the Wellcome Trust for providing me with the means to consult the British sources. Cornelia Osborne's help in reformulating the original text was invaluable.*

## Notes

- 1 Roy Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind. A Medical History of Humanity from Antiquity to the Present* (London, 1997), p. 284; Matthew Ramsey, 'The Politics of Professional Monopoly in Nineteenth-Century Medicine: The French Model and Its Rivals' in Gerald L. Geison (ed.), *Professions and the French State* (Philadelphia, 1984), 225–305.
- 2 It could be argued that since the British Medical Act of 1858 did not outlaw medicine by non-licensed practitioners and because of the proliferation of social history of medicine in Britain, there is little incentive to study the prosecution of illegal practitioners. A mere glance at the *British Medical Journal*, however, suggests this to be wrong. It reveals the many different pretexts under which 'quacks', in fact, could be prosecuted also in Britain.
- 3 *Maandblad tegen de Kwakzalverij* 34 (1914) nr. 1, supplement.
- 4 Roy Porter, 'Quacks. An unconscionable time dying' in Susan Budd & Ursula Sharma (eds.), *The Healing Bond. The patient-practitioner relationship and therapeutic responsibility* (London & New York, 1994), pp. 63–81; quote 65.
- 5 Cf. Jens Lachmund & Gunnar Stolberg, *Patientenwelten. Krankheit und Medizin vom späten 18. bis zum frühen 20. Jahrhundert im Spiegel von Autobiographien* (Opladen, 1995).
- 6 Cf. Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra, 'Homeopathy's early Dutch conquests: the Rotterdam Clientele of Clemens von Bönninghausen in the 1840s and 1850s', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 51 (1996), 155–83.
- 7 For some regions of Europe legend texts contain valuable information, cf. Willem de Blécourt, 'Duivelbanners in de noordelijke Friese Wouden, 1860–1930', *Volkskundig bulletin* 14 (1988), 159–87. See also Torunn Selberg, 'Personal narratives on healing', *Fabula* 31 (1990), 284–8.
- 8 To distinguish him from his colleagues elsewhere, I have called him 'the Dutch Sequah'.
- 9 H.J.W. Drooglever Fortuyn, *Kwakzalverij, bijgeloof en geneeskunst* (Amsterdam, 1940), p. 42.
- 10 *The Chemist and Druggist*, 22 August 1891, 318.
- 11 Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, Sequah archives, box 1, file 2/G, Norman to Kasper, 18 June 1891.
- 12 *De Grondwet*, 18 July 1891.
- 13 *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 25 June 1891.
- 14 ARA (The Hague), Archive 'medische politie', inv.nr. 20, nrs. 2373, 2465, 2490; *Mededeelingen omtrent het Geneeskundig Staatstoezicht in de inspectie Zeeland en westelijk Noord-Brabant*, meeting 15 December 1891, pp. 17, 21; *Weekblad van het Recht*, 6087; Rijksarchief Noord-Brabant ('s-Hertogenbosch), Archive 'arrondissementsrechtbank Breda', inv.nr. 205, nr. 626.

- 15 Citations are taken from the *Maasbode* and the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* of 29 July 1891. See also *De Tijd* of the same date.
- 16 *Rotterdamsche Courant*, 14 August; *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 4 August; *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 6 August; *NRC*, 14 and 15 August; *Rotterdamsche Courant*, 16/17 August; *de Maasbode*, 21 August; *NRC*, 2 September 1891.
- 17 *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 26, 28 August; *Rotterdamsche Courant*, 28, 30/31 August; *NRC*, 28, 29, 30 August 1891.
- 18 *Asmodée*, 31 December 1891.
- 19 Cf. W. Schupbach, 'Sequah; an English "American medicine"-man in 1890', *Medical history* 29 (1985), 272–317, esp. 296.
- 20 *Maandblad tegen de kwakzalverij*, 28 (1908) nrs. 3 and 4, 32 (1912) nr. 3; 45 (1925) nr. 4; *Nederlandsch tijdschrift voor geneeskunde*, 30 May 1914, p. 2023, 2028.
- 21 In 1891 there were even plays written about him but it is not known to this author whether they were also performed.
- 22 Archive Meertens-Institute (Amsterdam), ms. Joh. Boonstra. The rhyme is given here in translation.
- 23 Archive Meertens-Institute, collection Engels, nr. 50. Cf. *Dagblad voor Noord-Limburg*, 29 December 1961; Henk Kooijman, *Volkverhalen uit het grensgebied van Zuid-Holland, Utrecht, Gelderland en Noord-Brabant* (Amsterdam, 1988), nr. 1111; *Volkskunde-atlas voor Nederland en Vlaams-België, Commentaar*, II (Antwerp, 1965), 78–9.
- 24 Exact sales figures are not available. According to the Society for the Repression of Quackery, at the end of October 1891 40,000 crates with 300 or 400 bottles each had already been imported.
- 25 See the report of the 'Gezondheidsraad' (Health Council), *Alternatieve behandelwijzen en wetenschappelijk onderzoek* (Den Haag 1993).
- 26 Cf. Cecil G. Hellman, *Culture, health and illness* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 196–201.
- 27 Cf. Paul Unschuld, 'The Conceptual Determination (Überformung) of Individual and Collective Experiences of Illness' in Caroline Currer & Margaret Stacey (eds.), *Concepts of Health, Illness and Disease. A Comparative Perspective* (Providence and Oxford, 1986).
- 28 In this context 'peasant' (Dutch: *boertje*) had come to signify: 'healer from the countryside'.
- 29 Willem de Blécourt, 'Het Staphorster boertje. De geneeskundige praktijk van Peter Stegeman (1840–1922)' in Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra (ed.), *Geloven in genezen* (Amsterdam, 1991), 171–94.
- 30 Ewoud Sanders & Rob Tempelaars, *Krijg de vinkentering! 1001 Nederlandse en Vlaamse verwensingen* (Amsterdam/Antwerp, 1998), pp. 116–7.

- 31 Willem de Blécourt, 'The Tale of Two Brothers. Urine diagnosis and medical politics in the Netherlands and Michigan, early twentieth century', paper given at the SSHM conference, *Medicine and the Family*, University of Exeter, 1995.
- 32 Willem de Blécourt, *Het Amazonenleger. Irreguliere genezeressen in Nederland, 1850-1930* (Amsterdam, 1999), chapter 6.
- 33 *The Greenock Herald*, 5 April 1890, cf. *Nieuwe Bredasche Courant*, 29 March 1893.
- 34 Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis was the contemporary Dutch epitome of the public orator; a former Protestant minister turned socialist and later anarchist.
- 35 Willem de Blécourt, 'Sequah in Amsterdam. Over de invloed van reclame op een medische markt', *Focaal. Tijdschrift voor antropologie* 21 (1993), 131-72.
- 36 *Limburger Koerier*, 13 January 1893.
- 37 Cf. Selberg, 'Personal narratives', 286; Herbert Schäfer, *Der Okkultäter* (Hamburg 1959), 140.
- 38 *De Amsterdammer*, 11 October 1891.
- 39 *Dordrechts Nieuwsblad*, 28 January 1892; *Maandblad tegen de kwakzalverij*, 12 (1892) nrs. 3 and 4; 13 (1893) nr. 9; J. van Riel, 'Geschiedkundig overzicht der Vereeniging over de jaren 1880-1905' in *Gedenkboek van de Vereeniging tegen de kwakzalverij* (Dordrecht 1906), 160-97, esp. 177.
- 40 *Noord Brabanter*, 11 November 1892.
- 41 *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 30 January 1892.
- 42 *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 5 February 1892. See also *NRC*, 2 and 3 February 1892.
- 43 *Nieuws van den Dag*, 29 February 1892.
- 44 Willem de Blécourt, 'Irreguliere genezers in de stad Groningen in de tweede helft van de 19e eeuw', *Gronings Historisch jaarboek* 1 (1994), 126-41.