

Thesis awards 2023 Faculty of Humanities University of Utrecht

Jury Report

At the end of the 2022-2023 academic year, the Faculty of Humanities has made available two prizes for the best Master and Research Master theses produced in that year within all MA and RMA programmes of the Faculty.

The selection of candidates for the thesis prize took place in stages. The first selection was made by the four teaching institutes and departments of the faculty, each of which nominated a thesis written and assessed between 1 September 2022 and 1 June 2023. The twice four theses thus nominated were then read and comparatively assessed by a jury. Due to circumstances related to the effects of the pandemic measures, which prevented a Masters thesis prize from being awarded last year, this selection included one additional MA thesis from the previous year, which the jury also assessed comparatively. Each thesis was also accompanied by a motivation letter from the supervisor, which the jury also read carefully. Subsequently, this jury, consisting of one person from each of the faculty's four departments, selected two winners - one from an MA programme and one from an RMA programme. The results of this procedure are explained in this report.

The jury appointed by the faculty board was composed of the following:

- Dr Marijke Huisman, assistant professor of cultural history, Department of History and Art History (GKG),
- Dr Laurens Ham, assistant professor of modern Dutch literature, Department of Languages, Cultures and Communication (TLC),
- Dr Jesse Mulder, assistant professor of theoretical philosophy, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies (F&R),
- Dr Ingrid Hoofd (chair), assistant professor of Media and Performance Studies, Department of Media and Cultural Studies (MCW).

In assessing the theses comparatively, the jury used the following criteria as a starting point:

- Scientific level of the thesis,
- Originality and importance of the theme and problem statement,
- Originality and purity of the methodology followed,
- Innovativeness of the research,
- Social relevance of the research,
- Balance in structure of the thesis and clarity of style,
- Language proficiency.

The departments' educational institutes nominated the following five Master theses:

1. MA Gender Studies (MCW): Marissa Schut: "The (r)evolution of the menstrual cycle."
Supervisor: Dr Ilse Lazaroms [no longer employed].

2. MA Gender Studies (MCW) : Elle Zwinkels: "Suddenly Seymour: the girl that's inside you." Supervisor: Dr Eva Hayward.
3. MA History of Politics and Society: (GKG): Jarne van der Poel: "'Heerma, Not Like This!'" Social housing, neoliberal reform and resistance in the Netherlands 1986-1995." Supervisor: Prof. Dr Ido de Haan.
4. MA Applied Ethics (F&R): Eva Krikke: "'But they do it too.' The Dutch national police and real-time facial recognition technology." Supervisor: Dr Jonathan Benson [and Dr Jos Philips].
5. MA Professional Translation (TLC): Nour el Houda Ghazlane: "The selection of literary translators English-Dutch (2000-2022)." Supervisors: Prof Dr Haidee Kotze and Dr Gys-Walt van Egdome.

The departments' educational institutes nominated the following four Research Master theses:

1. RMA Philosophy (F&R): Marlon Kruizinga: "'Staying True to Rebellion: Extracting Political Principles from Albert Camus' Post-Existentialism.'" Supervisor: Dr Maurits de Jongh.
2. RMA Musicology (MCW): Moira de Kok: "Sounds of Solidarity: Music in the 1984- 85 Miners' Strike." Supervisor: Dr Rebekah Ahrendt.
3. RMA History (GKG): Nelleke Tanis: "An epidemic and its aftermath. Cholera in Utrecht, 1866." Supervisor: Prof Oscar Gelderblom.
4. RMA Dutch literature and culture (TLC): Linde Lammers: "Postcolonial memory makers. The representation of the Indonesian War of Independence (1945-1949) in Alfred Birney's The Interpreter of Java and Jim Taihuttu's The East." Supervisor: Dr Remco Raben.

After reading all the theses and motivation letters, the jury then had the very difficult task of choosing two winners. That these choices were difficult was also shown by the fact that the final decision required an additional consultation after the long meeting the jury had already spent on it. The jury would like to emphasize here that each thesis excelled in its own way in almost every one of the criteria. Some were brilliantly and convincingly written; some had done very extensive and thorough source research; some were conceptually particularly strong; some made a highly original combination of methods, theories and research objects; and all were in their own way - sometimes more implicitly, but also often explicitly - socially relevant. The fact that all these thesis writers managed to bring such elements together in such a passionate way in a scientific publication particularly impressed the jury.

Among the Masters theses, after much deliberation, the jury nevertheless selected one winner from among the five works. This winner is:

Jarne van der Poel: "'Heerma, Not Like This!'" Social housing, neoliberal reform and resistance in the Netherlands 1986-1995," supervised by Prof Dr Ido de Haan.

The jury found this thesis, which addresses a subject that is still particularly urgent and relevant today, very convincing, exciting and clearly written. The thesis does fantastic and extensive source research, and the combination of theoretical lenses that the thesis innovatively posits leads to a sharp historical and political analysis of the very extensive corpus. The argumentation is strongly supported, and the jury even found the work to be of such high quality that, after some modifications, it could be published in an academic journal.

Moreover, an abridged version could also appeal to government bodies and a wider audience. The jury warmly congratulates Jarne on a great piece of work, and hopes he will further disseminate its insights to the political and social field.

Among the Research Master theses, the jury then selected the following winner after long deliberation:

Moira de Kok: "Sounds of Solidarity: Music in the 1984-85 Miners' Strike," supervised by Dr Rebekah Ahrendt.

The jury found this thesis to be very strong in terms of language and then delightful to read: "the enthusiasm just oozes from it," as one of the judges rightly noted. The thesis uses a highly original mix of two disciplines and brings them together in a creative and sublime way to analyze the four case studies. The theoretical framework powerfully makes a productive version of the tricky concept of 'solidarity', which also helps in how the writer manages to put down the whole analysis with a great sense of language as well as images. The jury found the quality of this thesis to be such that they see great potential in it to be rewritten as a scientific monograph, especially as an innovative model is proposed in relation to musicology and solidarity studies. The jury would therefore like to congratulate Moira warmly on this particularly fine work, and hopes that she will be able to further develop her scientific and writing talents in the near future.