

Tekst 5

FEATURES

Letter from Uzbekistan Jennifer Balfour

The cribbing game

1 **O**NE day my class of 20 university students turned in 20 identical assignments. Anticipating 20 red faces 5 the following week as I prepared to hand them back unmarked, I was flooded totally by a sea of uncomprehending stares wilting beneath my rage.

2 10 Some months later, during the final examinations, they were subjected to yet another fit of irrational pique. After disgorging 15 crib sheets from every imaginable hiding place, I threw them in disgust on the invigilator's table and was met with yet another blank face. She had seen them, she explained calmly, but had 20 interpreted them differently. This was not cheating, she reasoned, but moral support. "Your culture believes in justice," she said. "We believe in helping each other." 25 And there she rested her case. She accused me of not caring for my students and I sat, thoughtful and chastened.

3 Individual responsibility, fairness 30 and playing by the rules permeate my Western conscience, but it seems that another law is at work here. I have been 35 forced to ask whether the communal approach to life has as much merit as my own individualistic morality, if not more.

4 I long ago gave up testing students according to their individual 40 knowledge, primarily because of the seriously deleterious effect on my own, and consequently their mental health. Attempts to encourage classroom 45 competition have always degenerated rapidly into flurries of eager advice passed unashamedly between members of opposing teams. Weaker students are always 50 a target of more assistance. Woe betide the class know-all who refuses to pass on vital information, even to the "enemy".

5 Co-operation and communality 55 are the building blocks of Central Asian society. From the moment a new bride enters her new household, even her baby is not her own. She produces heirs for 60 her husband's father's line and individual responsibility only re-enters the picture when she produces the wrong sex child or, heaven forbid, no child at all. 65 Whereas I bristle when a neighbour announces her intention to marry off her son or daughter, she and her husband regard it as a matter of honour and pride to 70 bear the load and see them safely on their way. She will name the progeny herself, and with a simple whisper in the ear at a week old will ensure the child's 75 future as a Muslim.

6 Family loyalties are prized above all others, earnings are pooled and elders consulted over every major decision. Young 80 marriages move into rooms or houses built for them, full of furniture bought for them, and wear clothes chosen for them. When a family decides it is time 85 for their new bride to return to work, grandparents faithfully mind the children. Those children will, when their time comes, return all the favours owed, and 90 complete the cycle of obligation around which this society revolves.

7 Students recoil at my descriptions of our aggressive, acquisitive 95 world, where family and friends take second place to career and individual aspirations, and think me heartless and cruel for leaving my own flesh and 100 blood to their measly pensions and the whims of state in a faraway land.

8 The 20 students were genuinely upset at my outburst that day. 105 They had gathered for hours around the class swot, painstakingly copying her answers and memorising every sentence. As far as they were concerned they 110 had done the right thing. No one student outshone another and no one felt left out.

9 I would be more heartless and cruel than they had imagined if I 115 quarrelled with the means, but as their teacher I am also responsible for the end. Whichever way you look at it, their method might have taught them how to live, but 120 has it taught them anything else? And here it seems is where East meets West. I am working on the twain meeting one day, but until I get there, assuming they have the 125 same problems in the medical institute, I know where I'd rather have brain surgery.

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- 1p 5 Op welk feit had de "rage" (regel 9) van de schrijfster betrekking?
- 'Your culture believes in justice' (lines 22-23).
- 1p 6 ■ What kind of justice did the invigilator mean?
- A All students should be judged according to their own achievements.
 - B All students should be treated alike by the teacher.
 - C Students should not be denied the right to pursue the study of their choice.
 - D Students should not be excluded from the group they are part of.
 - E Students should not have to accept responsibility for the misconduct of fellow students.
- 1p 7 ■ How could paragraph 3 be characterised?
- As
- A a justification of a personal standpoint.
 - B a statement of a general truth.
 - C the answer to an academic question.
 - D the description of an inner debate.
- 1p 8 ■ Which of the following does the writer express in paragraph 4?
- A Resignation at her students' lack of rivalry.
 - B Satisfaction at having put an end to her students' undesirable behaviour.
 - C Uncertainty about basing her teaching programme on her students' cultural background.
- 'the cycle of obligation' (line 90).
- 1p 9 ■ Which of the following is/are NOT part of this phenomenon?
- A 'Co-operation and communality' (line 54)
 - B 'individual responsibility' (line 61)
 - C 'a matter ... the load' (lines 68-70)
 - D 'Family loyalties' (line 76)
- 1p 10 ■ Which of the following is true of paragraphs 7 and 8?
- They are meant to
- A explain the errors in both the teacher's and the students' attitude.
 - B further clarify the differences in outlook between students and teacher.
 - C illustrate the common ground between students and teacher.
 - D suggest a mutual unwillingness on the part of students and teacher to communicate.
- "I know where I'd rather have brain surgery" (regels 126-127)
- 1p 11 Wat bedoelt de schrijfster met deze opmerking?