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0521804086 - *Innocence Abroad: The Dutch Imagination and the New World, 1570-1670*

Benjamin Schmidt

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INNOCENCE ABROAD

The Dutch Imagination and the New World, 1570–1670

Innocence Abroad explores the process of encounter that took place between the Netherlands and the New World in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The “discovery” of America coincided with the foundation of the Dutch Republic, a correspondence of much significance for the Netherlands. From the opening of their revolt against Habsburg Spain through the climax of their Golden Age, the Dutch looked to America – in political pamphlets and patriotic histories, epic poetry and allegorical prints, landscape painting and decorative maps – for a means of articulating a new national identity. This book demonstrates how the image of America that was fashioned in the Netherlands, and especially the twin themes of “innocence” and “tyranny,” became integrally associated in Dutch minds with evolving political, moral, and economic agendas. It investigates the energetic Dutch response to the New World while examining, more generally, the operation of geographic discourse and colonial ideology within the culture of the Dutch Golden Age.

Benjamin Schmidt is Assistant Professor of History at the University of Washington. He has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Woodrow Wilson Foundation. His many publications on early modern European cultural history and Atlantic world history include recent articles in the *Renaissance Quarterly* and *William and Mary Quarterly*.

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INNOCENCE ABROAD

THE DUTCH IMAGINATION AND
THE NEW WORLD, 1570–1670

BENJAMIN SCHMIDT

University of Washington



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For Louise with love

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PREFACE

*Cultural Geography in an
Age of Encounter*

FROM the vantage point of Godefridus Udemans, the New World turned out not to be so new after all. “It has been inhabited in fact since ancient times,” pronounced Udemans (1580–1649), a prolific and sometimes pugnacious *predikant* who peered out onto the world from his pulpit in the Zeeland town of Zierikzee, “as is apparent from its cities, villages, splendid dwellings, manner of governance, incalculable multitude of peoples, and so forth.” Socially, politically, and culturally more impressive than often allowed, America had been erroneously tagged as “new” – and Udemans took the word to have pejorative implications – owing only to the ignorance of certain geographers, who had plainly, and perhaps even willfully, misled their readers.¹

Udemans had substantially more to say on the Indies (his preferred nomenclature) and their configuration, topics he explored in his expansive meditation on godliness and commerce in the Dutch Republic, *t Geestelyck roer van 't coopmans schip* (The spiritual rudder of the merchant’s ship). The *dominee* doubted, to begin with, America’s putative “discovery” – how could one discover something so long in existence? – and he contested Castile’s claims to colonial authority in the West. Would the Spanish crown have tolerated an Indian claim to Castile, he wondered, if the natives of America had landed in Iberia before the soldiers of Spain had reached the Indies? More fiercely still, Udemans challenged Castile’s assertion of undertaking a “civilizing” mission in the Indies, articulating for his readers an utterly contrary conception of “civility,” “savagery,” and the Habsburg mission abroad. While Spanish observers briskly dismissed American culture as “barbarous,” Udemans found much to admire in the orderly polities, thriving market towns, subtle craftsmanship, and “civic virtues” (*burgerlijcke deughden*) of the Indians. As for savagery, the Castilian colonizers far outstripped their American subjects. Udemans decried, in no uncertain terms, the “demonic cruelty,” “gruesome depravity,” “horrific perfidy,” and

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“cursed avarice” of the conquistadors, qualities he expected his readers to recognize – a point made repeatedly in the volume – from their experience of Spanish rule in the Netherlands. Indeed, the Dutch shared a special kinship with the Americans, both “nations” having suffered the yoke of Spanish tyranny; and Udemans encouraged all efforts to support the Americans, most particularly those of the Dutch West India Company (WIC), lately established “with the intent not to conquer [the Indies], but rather to protect the poor Indians from Spanish violence, and perhaps also to trade with them.”²

Bourgeois virtue among Indian allies in a less-than-new world? Tempting though it may be to impute such geographic musings to the peculiarly baroque imagination of a provincial Calvinist preacher, Godefridus Udemans’s notions of the Indies are not at all unique. They derive from a distinctly Dutch conception of the New World, and they indicate a broader pattern of cultural geography that flourished, as did Udemans, from the earliest years of the Republic through the pinnacle of its Golden Age. The *stadhouder*, Willem of Orange, wrote movingly in his foundational *Apologie* of the “poor Indians” of America; the architects of the WIC proposed a strategic alliance with the same; and Joost van den Vondel, the leading poet of the land, composed stinging verse against the “tyranny” of Castile, perpetrated in the New World and the Netherlands alike. The image of America and its natives, as promoted by Udemans and his compatriots, suggests the powerful purposes of geography in the Dutch Republic and, by extension, the fascinating process of assimilating new worlds in early modern Europe. The significance of America, as perceived in the Netherlands, was carefully considered, contested, and calibrated from the earliest years of the sixteenth century – well before our recent debates on “discovery,” “encounter,” and “impact” in the Renaissance, and predating even the Enlightenment polemics on the topic, from which our own scholarly deliberations are said to derive. Indeed, from his perch in provincial Zierikzee, Udemans demonstrated a most savvy understanding of colonial discourse.

This is a study of cultural geography in early modern Europe: of the manner in which other places and peoples were imagined, appropriated, and manipulated in a period of “encounter.” It takes as its subject the Dutch representation of the New World during the formative first century of the Republic, circa 1570–1670, exploring the process of geographic assimilation in conjunction with those political, economic, and cultural developments that guided it. It examines how the idea of America first entered the Dutch imagination, how it evolved into a staple of political rhetoric, and how it ultimately came to influence an extraordi-

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nary range of concerns, both at home and abroad. From the earliest years of their revolt against the Habsburgs, the Dutch formulated an image of rapacious Spanish “tyranny” in America committed at the expense of “innocent” natives. With enormous polemical energy, the rebels exploited this image to blacken the reputation of Habsburg Spain. With still greater geographic ingenuity, their heirs extrapolated from it a projected “alliance” with the Indians – Udemans’s sense of “kinship” – to create a moral basis for overseas commerce. The twin topoi of American innocence and Spanish tyranny appear time and again in Dutch discourse of the period – in rebel propaganda and colonial polemics no less than patriotic history and moralizing letters – and attest to the profound interest of the Dutch in new worlds. Indeed, the very novelty and plasticity of the New World perfectly suited the purposes and polemics of the Republic. It enabled the Dutch to fashion a version of America that matched the rhetorical imperative of the day: to produce a usable geography that addressed the evolving needs of the Republic. This book investigates the energetic Dutch response to the New World while examining, more generally, the operation of geographic discourse and colonial ideology within the culture of the Dutch Golden Age.

The broader study of early modern Europe’s encounter with America has failed, in many ways, to account for the likes of Udemans. There is, most basically, a nearly complete lack of attention to the case of the Netherlands, a surprising state of affairs given the obvious economic, cultural, and political prominence of the Dutch Republic from the late sixteenth through mid-seventeenth centuries.³ It might be easy enough to justify this lacuna by pointing to the relatively meager Dutch presence *in* America: modest settlements in New Netherland (1624–1664) and Brazil (1630–1654) were indeed quick to collapse. Yet, much as the Republic may have lost the colonial contest in the New World, it did triumph in its colonial struggles in the Old, winning independence from Habsburg Spain in the Eighty Years’ War (1568–1648) and emerging from that conflict as one of the leading powers of post-Westphalia Europe. More essentially, the Dutch won the contest of *representing* a New World whose encounter was experienced, for the most part, as a textual affair. For the early modern Dutch possessed an empire of print second to none in Europe; the presses of Antwerp, Amsterdam, and Leiden produced a stream of histories, broadsides, and geographies that served as a crucial conduit between the New World and the Old. And these Dutch representations, in their many and varied and often multilingual forms, have only rarely received the notice they deserve.

Such neglect reflects the somewhat uneven shape of encounter stud-

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ies, which, though admirably attentive to the consequences of Europe's "invasion" of America, have tended to diminish the effects of America's reception back in Europe.⁴ The term of choice here is "impact" and the signal thesis that of John Elliott, who argued, in a pioneering and provocative essay, that the New World had an "uncertain" or at best "blunted" impact on the Old. Elliott, that is, proposed a narrative of indifference. The discovery of new worlds only marginally influenced European politics, society, and culture; works of history, geography, and theology failed to grapple with the new continents and failed to comprehend what Elliott has called "the American reality." What notions early modern observers may have contrived of a New World proved "fragile" and ultimately ineffectual, as most Europeans evinced "little interest in or concern for the new worlds overseas."⁵ Yet Udemans's own engagement with America, from the relative backwater of Zierikzee, indicates far deeper inroads made by American discourse than the "minimalist" thesis allows. It also implies a more complex and nuanced process of cultural encounter, and suggests the usefulness of focusing less on *whether* Europeans responded to the New World than on *how*, *why*, and to what ends they did so. The energetic and creative pattern of Dutch reception complicates the contention of widespread European indifference, pointing rather to the active and engaged enterprise, in the Old World surely no less than the New, of constructing cultural geography. The Dutch devised an image of America that, "real" or not, proved highly effective and ultimately influential in the production of political and colonial ideology.⁶

Europe's encounter with the New World was a necessarily diverse process (far more so than the designation "Europe" can possibly convey), and it is a goal of this study to contextualize a single, and in many ways singular, chapter of a larger early modern narrative.⁷ When *dominee* Udemans extolled the *burgerlijcke* manners of the Indians, and when a defiant Willem exposed the "tyranny" of their oppressors, each articulated a distinctly Dutch idea of America, expressed in the idiosyncratically Dutch vocabulary of political rhetoric. The global pronouncements of both men betrayed the provincial accent of the Republic. Neither's version of America would have enjoyed much currency outside of the Netherlands, and it is worth emphasizing that *all* early modern encounters with America would have been distinctive. Yet the Dutch case may have been especially so – or at least especially so perceived and so promoted – since the Republic uniquely shared with America the formative experience of Spanish imperial tyranny. This, of course, was an exaggeration: inhabitants of Granada and Moriscos across Spain may have had something to say on the issue, as might sub-

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ject populations in Milan, Naples, and Sicily, where Spanish dominion also prevailed. Yet it was an exaggeration that worked and one that encouraged a strikingly sympathetic rendering of the Indian and an extraordinarily ambitious rhetoric of “alliance.” It placed the Dutch response to the New World, moreover, on a wholly different trajectory than elsewhere in Europe. Thus, whereas Willem of Orange could console the Indians, who shared with him firsthand knowledge of the “barbarousness” of Spain, James VI of Scotland (later James I) had only haughty disdain for the “incivility” of the Americans. “Lett us abhorre the beastlie Indians whose unworthie particulars made the way patent of their miserable subjeitioun and slaverie to the Spaniard,” wrote the future king of England and ally of Castile, who by this time (1596) nurtured imperial ambitions of his own.⁸

The cultural geographers of the Netherlands – perhaps uniquely, certainly imaginatively, and unquestionably vigorously – fashioned themselves colonial subjects of Spain who had been made to suffer, like the natives of the New World, the unbearable yoke of Habsburg imperial rule. This would have remarkable implications both for the early reception of America and for the eventual strategy for America promoted within the Republic. For Udemans was hardly alone in anticipating a “natural” and “easy” alliance with those presumptive brothers-in-arms of the Dutch, the Indians. The original advocates of the Dutch West India Company likewise seized upon the rhetoric of “Spanish tyranny” to bolster their American project, predicating an ambitious colonial program on assumptions of an expansive colonial partnership with the put-upon American. They gazed upon the New World not as colonizers but rather as the colonized.⁹

Might the Dutch case, then, with its shifts from anti-imperial rhetoric to procommercial imperative, be understood within the context of colonial discourse? With a few adjustments to the standard conception of “colonial,” there is certainly some sense in situating the early modern Dutch experience within the (post)colonial paradigm.¹⁰ By converting the Habsburg elite (often drawn from Dutch ranks) into “Spanish overlords” and by portraying the army of Flanders (teeming with local mercenaries) as “Spanish wardogs,” the rebels masterfully generated a “colonial” antagonist where only a centralizing bureaucracy had existed. Their expansion-minded successors neatly segued from anti-Spanish propaganda to a pro-American literature that appropriated the well-worn tropes of “innocence” and “tyranny” abroad. This move partly resembles what the critic Partha Chatterjee has termed a “moment of maneuver” – popular elements of an anticolonial struggle are mobilized for another, in this case, overseas enterprise (“capitalism” is

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largely irrelevant here) – though with significant and extenuating complications.¹¹ The role of the subaltern, for starters, is ambiguous. In the first instance, the “Dutch” themselves fill the role, since it is they who must endure Habsburg persecution. In the second, it is the Americans of the Dutch imagination, who would dissolve into a heap of sand no sooner did Dutch emissaries land on New World shores to present their terms of alliance (an actual scenario described in Chapter Four). Furthermore, the colonial “contact zone” construed by the Dutch – to invoke Mary Louise Pratt’s critical lexicon – was wholly chimerical; no “transculturation” took place for the half century (1566–1621) between the rebels’ rhetorical appeal to Indian “innocence” and the WIC’s bona fide contact with Indian merchandise. The colonial discourse spun in the Netherlands was solely for domestic consumption.¹²

Here is an important distinction and one that calls attention to the subtleties – to the possibilities – of cultural geography in an age of encounter. The Dutch responded effusively to the New World, and this project focuses principally on the copious Dutch representations of “America” rather than the limited engagements *in* America or with Indians as such.¹³ It charts the development of a colonial discourse, to be sure, though one that requires substantial modifications to the concept of “colonial” and the putative “orientalist” (or occidentalist, as the case may be) agenda of such a discourse. It is not that American rhetoric was without effect, and it is one of the chief contentions of this study that rhetoric in the early modern Netherlands was not merely reflective of culture, but also effective – that the brand of polemical discourse that so thrived in the Republic had a causal role in the policies of the Republic. In the case of “American” rhetoric, however, this role pertained first and foremost to domestic affairs: to debates on revolt, to topoi of resistance, and to conceptions of fatherland history, which, in the Dutch case, habitually invoked the sister narrative of America’s *Conquista*. It pertained, secondly, to proposals for expansion and initiatives for partnership in the West, yet these were quick to peter out; and, in the end, Dutch constructions of the Indies played a limited role when it actually came time to “settle with the Indians.”¹⁴ The Dutch discourse on America, finally, was never one of “empire” (let alone “conquest”) but always of “alliance.” It projected an image not of a savage Other, but of a sympathetic partner and potential brother-in-arms, generously drawn, widely endorsed, and earnestly solicited to partake in the campaign against Habsburg’s “universal monarchy.” Cultural geographers in the Netherlands endeavored to domesticate, not exoticize, the natives of America.

Attention to the New World in the Netherlands, in truth, had less to do with matters overseas than matters at home. From the earliest mo-

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ments of their conflict with the Habsburgs, Dutch representations of America became implicated in a project of “nation-ness” – Benedict Anderson’s term, inelegant though it may be, makes better sense in the context of early modern Europe than does “nationalism”¹⁵ – descriptions of the new and very remote world of America relating to articulations of the new and very radical character of the Revolt and subsequent foundation of the Republic. When one Dutch editor praised the love of *patria* among “Chileans” who had fought a decades-long war against Spain (he had in mind, vaguely, the Araucanians), and when another bemoaned the “forfeiture of liberties that the blameless, innocent Americans have unjustly suffered,” both expressed through a New World idiom a narrative that was in fact Dutch. In the eyes of both, America’s history – real or not – reflected Dutch struggles, Dutch deprivations, Dutch foundational mythologies. Imagined geographies helped in this way to establish the “imagined community” of the nascent Dutch Republic. In describing the innocent suffering and valiant resistance of the Indians, the Dutch, naturally, were describing themselves.¹⁶

Why America? This had to do with global contingencies of time and space – history and geography – that Udemans, once again, so keenly understood. “It should be noted that the discovery of these lands,” he wrote of America, “was revealed to our nation at the very moment that God Almighty struck down the whore of Babylon.” Or more prosaically: “The Reformation in Europe and the Discovery of the Indies occurred at the same time.”¹⁷ To many in the godly Republic, the arrival of Protestantism announced both spiritual renewal and political revolt; sacred and patriotic history were intimately linked. To Udemans’s readers, these affiliations spanned oceans as well; the coincidence of the Revolt and the Discovery was no accident. That both events centrally involved that which Udemans branded “the empire of the Antichrist” – Habsburg Spain – only made this coincidence more compelling and further distinguished the Dutch response to the New World. For, while other Europeans, Protestant or Catholic, might have read the narrative of Discovery as a sacred text, only the Dutch could import patriotic meaning to their exegesis. The Indians and Dutch shared a mutual enemy, and, if there was an “Other” in the Republic’s geography, it was the Spaniard. The Dutch used Spain – Spanish tyranny, Spanish avarice, Spanish darkness – to define America, which, in turn, became a key component in the exercise of defining the Dutch.¹⁸

This is a project, then, of understanding encounter and understanding Dutchness. “Just who, exactly, did the Dutch think they were?” asked Simon Schama, provocatively, in his interrogation of the culture of the Golden Age. More simply, who were “the Dutch”?¹⁹ Discussions

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of the Dutch in this book refer to an early modern community that was outstandingly urban, phenomenally literate, and substantially less provincial than the word *burgerlijcke* might imply. They were the architects of the dazzling political, economic, and cultural expansion that took place in the northern provinces of the Netherlands beginning in the late sixteenth and climaxing in the mid-seventeenth century and producing what one historian has felicitously labeled “the New World of the Dutch Republic.” Not all took part in this expansion, of course, just as not all followed the rebel party in a conflict – the Dutch Revolt – that is now regarded more as a civil war than an epic struggle against foreign “tyrants.”²⁰ Those who did, however, and especially those in the wealthy cities of the powerful maritime provinces of the Republic, were exceptionally outspoken on the matter of their communal identity. The Dutch were those who articulated their Dutchness in the remarkable outpouring of histories and poetry, broadsides and ballads, atlases and almanacs, paintings and prints, produced over the course of the Golden Age. They did so, too, in a very expansive conception of geography – this is meant in the broadest sense of representations of the world – and they did so, notably, in their unhesitant, unambiguous, and enthusiastic embrace of the New World.

To discover the New World in the Netherlands, this study ranges widely, eclectically, and sometimes serendipitously across sources, genres, and decades, gathering evidence from all manner of description and representation of America. Writing at the opening of the seventeenth century, when the prospect of peace with the Habsburgs loomed ever more likely, a certain “lover of the Fatherland” published a pamphlet in Holland admonishing his countrymen never to abdicate their freedoms, for the enemy aimed “to exterminate your mother tongue” and enforce the use of Castilian, “as has been done in fact with the Indians, who are compelled to speak Spanish.”²¹ This, happily, never came to pass. Quite the contrary and to the delight of all freedom-loving patriots, the early modern Dutch issued a profusion of words and images and other cultural artifacts that expressed, in their own particular idiom, their opinion of Spain, its vast empire, and especially the Indies. These materials form the basis of this book. The sweep of this project is purposefully broad, covering a wide array of texts and genres, stopping to read some more closely though naturally not all alike. The story constructed from these materials, however, traces its subject along fairly direct narrative lines, progressing from the initial sightings of America in the early sixteenth century to the Republic’s colonial debates in the final decades of the seventeenth century.

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The original reports and chronicles of the New World available in the Netherlands comprise the sources for Chapter One, which examines the reception of early Americana under the Habsburg regime. In part an overview of sources available to the Dutch in the period preceding the Revolt (those materials that would form the building blocks of later ideas of America), this chapter also provides a case study of the process of European assimilation in the wake of the voyages of discovery. Over the first two-thirds of the sixteenth century, patterns of publication in the Low Countries reveal habits of reading that inclined, at first, indiscriminately toward a broad range of romances of conquest, and, with time, toward narratives more plainly critical of the Spanish conquerors. Rather than indifference, one detects increasing discernment in the Dutch selection of Americana for import and translation. Together with the literary sources, this chapter also considers the remarkable *West Indies Landscape* of Jan Mostaert – done in the first half of the sixteenth century, it is considered the first European painting of its kind – which is viewed from three varying perspectives: the scant testimony of Mostaert’s contemporaries; the voluminous opinions of modern scholars; and the more compelling commentary of Karel van Mander, the late-sixteenth-century poet and painter who perceived in the lyrical landscape a subtle critique of the conquest of America.

By the eve of the Revolt, the Dutch had read, in fact, quite extensively on America, yet written only sparingly and circumspectly about the overseas empire of their Habsburg overlords. All of that changed abruptly in 1566, when a group of nobles challenged the Spanish king’s government, citing the “abuses in the Indies” to bolster their case. Rebel pamphleteers seized upon this allusion to “tyranny in America,” warning shrilly of the Habsburg intent to colonize the Netherlands as they had the New World. In the subsequent war of words against Spain, references to “cruelties in America” and “atrocities against the Indians” become ubiquitous in Dutch polemics. Chapter Two analyzes how these topoi emerged, proliferated, and became codified in Dutch rhetoric of 1570–1600. It demonstrates, on the one hand, how political events in the Netherlands shaped perceptions of “tyranny” in America; and, on the other, how the literature on America, and especially the *Brevíssima relación* of Bartolomé de Las Casas, affected representations of Habsburg “tyranny” in the Netherlands. In anatomizing the rebels’ polemical corpus, this chapter also traces the origins of the Black Legend and identifies the long-overlooked contribution of the Dutch to this crucial chapter of European propaganda.

How the rebels’ conception of America framed the Republic’s policy for America forms the subject of the third and fourth chapters. In con-

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junction with the image of Spain's tyranny developed one of America's innocence and a contention that their mutual sufferings somehow allied the Indians and the Dutch. The earliest Dutch colonialists, and especially the indefatigable Willem Usselinx, made much of this presumed kinship and the Republic's implied responsibility to assist their American "brethren." The Dutch West India Company, traditionally viewed as the product of hard-line Calvinist politics nurtured by hard-nosed expansionist economics, had its roots in fact in the ideological soil of the late sixteenth century and the rebels' idea of America. Usselinx's campaign for an American enterprise underscored the moral obligation of the Republic to "free" the Indians and grant them their "natural liberties" – by which he meant both freedom of conscience and freedom of trade. The promotional literature for the WIC reveals a deep ambivalence among pamphleteers who appealed simultaneously to readers' moral sensibilities – the Company's mission to "save" the Indians – and to their financial self-interest – the Company's hope to *exploit* the Indians. That this incongruous rhetoric could be taken seriously is shown by a series of policy initiatives – an official solicitation to the "Lords of Peru" to billet Dutch "liberators," for example – that counted on the eager assistance of American allies. In the end, however, the idealistic view gave way to a more practical discourse of profits. The New World's gold took precedence over the Indians' souls. When Admiral Piet Heyn intercepted the Spanish silver fleet in 1628, Dutch poets celebrated his daring feat by casting it as a "romantic" intrigue. He had stolen the king of Spain's beautiful mistress (America) and "ravished her with piety." America's age of innocence had surely passed.

The middle decades of the seventeenth century, reviewed in the fifth and final chapter, witnessed the high and low points of the Dutch New World adventure. Finally ensconced *in* America, the WIC enjoyed successes in Brazil and New Netherland, where settlements prospered through the 1630s and 1640s. By the 1660s, however, Dutch Brazil had fallen to the Portuguese, New Netherland had succumbed to the English, and the WIC found itself irreparably mired in debt. "America" during this period could still symbolize for some a brave new world of innocence, incorruptibility, or even epic heroism. Yet, at the other end of the spectrum, it came to represent for many precisely the decadence and "tyranny" of appetite so central in the minds of Dutch moralizers and *predikanten*. Contemporary religious sermons and didactic poetry drew on the imagery of the New World to expound on the forever compelling themes of innocence and sin. The godly, to be sure, still cited America as a final outpost of pure and "natural" living, neither so corrupt nor so compromised as that closer to home. Yet, whereas the innocent Indian

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“ally” of the late sixteenth century was meant to expose the barbaric Spaniard for what he was, the noble savage of the mid-seventeenth century was meant to rebuke the decadent Dutch who, as the *predikanten* would have it, had fallen into an abyss of wantonness, decadence, and moral decrepitude. From here it was only a matter of time until the root of this corruption would be located in America, or at least its exports: gold, sugar, tobacco, and syphilis, to name the most poisonous. “America,” in this paradigm, possessed the power to corrupt, and, to the fire and brimstone preachers, none appeared more corrupt than those Dutch *in* America. The pamphlet literature on Dutch activities in America (ca. 1640–1660) tells a horrific tale of Dutch tyrannies against the Portuguese in Brazil, of WIC economic warfare against competitors in New Netherland, and of Dutch savageries against the Indians all over. This chapter concludes with the original Dutch pirate literature and demonstrates how these narratives pit rapacious French and English “buccaneers” against native Americans and by now “innocent” Spanish settlers. (These works date from the 1660s and 1670s, when Dutch relations with England and France had reached their nadir and those with Spain were on the mend.) Innocence and tyranny had become finally and ironically inverted; for the Dutch, too, could now be counted among the tyrants, and the Spanish, even, among the innocents of America.

An analysis of geography within its cultural, political, and economic contexts, this project ends as it begins: at a watershed in the history of the Netherlands. The starting date of circa 1570 delineates the foundation of the Dutch Republic and the creation of a new geography to serve evolving political and ideological circumstances. The closing date of circa 1670 marks the loss of New Netherland and the bankruptcy of the WIC, as well as the collapse of the Dutch government itself in the face of overwhelming pressure from English, French, and Orangist enemies. In between these moments of transition unfolds a story of geographic imagination set against the background of prolonged war against Spain, naval conflict with England, and dramatic expansion and later contraction of economic might. Whether or not the Republic’s Golden Age terminated abruptly in the final decades of the seventeenth century, the *perception* of decline most certainly set in following the convulsions of the 1670s, and this engendered a final, signal shift in geographic sensibilities. The twilight of the Republic’s Golden Age (considered in the Epilogue) saw a retreat in terms of Dutch polemics on America and an abandonment of the topoi of tyranny and innocence. The geographers of the Netherlands did not so much diminish their representations of the New World, however, as shift to images less peculiarly “Dutch” – images, that is, less specific to the political and economic circumstances of

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the Republic and more broadly accessible to a wider European audience. At the end of the seventeenth century, Dutch representations of America appeared more plainly exotic.

The theme of exoticism, it may be noticed, does not play a particularly central role in Dutch representations of America. Rather than exoticizing the New World, the Dutch expended a great deal of energy domesticating it; rather than perceiving the Indians as strange, the Dutch did their best to see them as familiar – as “brethren” and “allies.” All of which is not to say that the Dutch contemplated the New World without a sense of distancing wonder. The cultural geographers of the Republic, however, managed to ground the lofty disposition of wonder in the more earthly domain of state and society. In a sense, this book affords precisely an interrogation of Dutch geographic wonder, though one that reveals the distinctly local orientation of that disposition.²² It examines how politics were reflected in geography and how geography in the early modern Netherlands was also refracted through politics, economics, and culture. It details how the Republic projected an image of innocence onto America and how it integrated distant lands into domestic debates. Wonder and imagination were put to the service of patriotic polemics. The encounter with the New World granted the Republic a precious opportunity for self-exploration and even self-definition. America shaped Dutchness. And more broadly: geographic discourse in the early modern Netherlands, even when it related to the most exotic of locales, reflected decidedly provincial concerns.

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A Note on Nomenclature

IN a project concerned chiefly with language and geography, care has been taken to distinguish among peoples and places. “The Netherlands” is meant to designate the whole of the United Provinces (for the period after the Revolt), while “Holland” refers specifically to the individual province of that name. That said, it should be added that, first, many of the sources themselves speak of Holland in the same breath as “the Fatherland,” “Batavia,” or “the nation.” Second, most of the materials for this study were in fact published in Holland, where the Republic’s Golden Age was centered. Third, if indeed an author from another province wished to contribute to discussions on the New World, he (and it almost invariably was a *he*) did so on terms set by Amsterdam, Leiden, or The Hague. The “Dutch image of America” may in fact represent the vision of Holland as opposed to that of Overijssel, yet the same can be said more generally for many other aspects of Dutch culture. In discussions of the overseas colonies of the Republic, the designation “New Holland” refers specifically to the Dutch colony in Brazil, “New Netherland” refers to the primary Dutch possessions in North America, and “New Amsterdam” refers to the Dutch settlement on the lower tip of Manhattan. Note also that the term “New World” – much out of favor today, although no less Eurocentric than “America” or “Western Hemisphere” – has been used, as it appears in the sources, to refer generally to America. “Indian” and “American” refer throughout this book to what the Dutch broadly imagined to be a coherent native population in America. (Specific tribal names are employed when appropriate.) Finally, the term “America” itself refers to both the northern and southern continents, between which no fast distinction was made in the early modern period.