Introduction

Gert Oostindie and Jessica Vance Roitman

The historiography of the Atlantic has long dismissed its importance for the Dutch Republic. This view is summed up by the doyen of Dutch economic history, Jan de Vries, who remarked that the history of the Dutch in the Atlantic was “filled with frustration and disappointment, never resulting in a territorial, political or cultural presence that answered to the grand visions of successive generations of advocates.” Elsewhere, de Vries and his co-author, Ad van der Woude, remarked that “the 200 year history of the Dutch Atlantic economy is one of repeated cycles of hope, frustration, and failure.” De Vries and van der Woude were echoed by historian Piet Emmer, who dedicated his entire career to Dutch Atlantic history, yet nonetheless concluded that “the Dutch were not very important in that part of the world.”¹ However, in recent years, this dismissive historiographical tradition has been reconsidered and reevaluated.

The first challenge to this view was economic, perhaps not surprisingly given the long Dutch empirical tradition in economic history. A volume on the Dutch Atlantic edited by Victor Enthoven and Johannes Postma, *Riches from Atlantic Commerce*, asserted that the Atlantic was far more important economically than had heretofore been admitted by historians. Recent research has, indeed, produced upwards revisions of the importance of the Dutch Caribbean colonies to metropolitan trade.² Likewise, many contributions to this volume are cautiously revisionist in terms of the economic importance of the Dutch Atlantic. While the contrast between initial Dutch expectations for their Atlantic endeavors and the eventual outcomes was stark, most of the essays in this volume show, either explicitly or implicitly, that the Dutch Atlantic mattered more than was long assumed.

- 1 Jan de Vries, “The Dutch Atlantic Economies,” in *The Atlantic Economy During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice, and Personnel*, ed. Peter A. Coclanis (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 1–29, 2; Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy: Success, Failure, and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 476; P.C. Emmer, *The Dutch in the Atlantic economy, 1580–1880: trade, slavery and emancipation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 1.
- 2 Jan de Vries, “The Limits of globalization in the early modern world,” *Economic History Review* 63, no. 3 (2010): 710–733; Victor Enthoven, “An Assessment of Dutch Transatlantic Commerce, 1585–1817,” in *Riches from Atlantic Commerce: Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585–1817*, ed. Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven, (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 385–415.

But how, exactly, did the Atlantic matter to the Dutch? And why was the Atlantic engagement of the Dutch important for the Dutch themselves, but also for all the other actors involved in the Atlantic in the early modern period? Cautious calculations of the volume of trade, and the subsequent economic impact accruing to the Dutch from their Atlantic engagements, only illustrate a fraction of the complex story – even on the economic side of things. Hence, the need for this volume bringing together the multifaceted findings of a group of experts in Atlantic history as they grappled with the difficulties in delineating the ways in which a small, highly decentralized, eminently heterogeneous European country interacted with, influenced, and was impacted by, a vast, hotly contested oceanic space over more than a century.

The contributions to this volume begin to answer the questions of how and why the Atlantic was important to the Dutch and the Dutch important to the Atlantic by utilizing approaches that privilege entanglement, connections, and interaction. In fact, one of the unifying themes to come out of the disparate essays is that trans-imperial, and the concomitant regional, connections were constitutive for the Atlantic as whole, and for the Dutch in the Atlantic specifically. Yet there is a tension that lies at the heart of many of these chapters – a tension that is evident in much of Atlantic history. This is the fact that, as much as we may acknowledge that there was room for self-organization and cross- and interimperial connections, we cannot dismiss the centrality of the metropolitan state and its institutions to how the Atlantic functioned.

What is the “Dutch Atlantic”?

The authors of the essays in this volume almost uniformly come to the conclusion that it makes little sense to think of one integrated, much less one uniform, “Dutch Atlantic.” Even ascertaining what territories constituted the “Dutch Atlantic” is difficult in the extreme. Such a classification is dependent upon both chronology and definition. The roughest of outlines of the Dutch involvement in the Atlantic would run something like this: an ambitious start around 1600, coinciding with the triumphant phase of the Dutch revolt against the Habsburg monarchy and the rise of the Republic as the commercial center of Europe; the founding of the first Dutch West India Company (WIC), explorations, conquests both in the Americas and Africa, crowned by a significant role in the spread of the plantation complex, including African slavery, to the Caribbean. Next came a phase of geographical contraction starting in the mid-seventeenth century, which, by 1680, resulted in a modest, though enduring, Dutch Atlantic “empire” of a few scattered islands in the Caribbean

(St. Eustatius, Curaçao, Aruba, Bonaire, Saba, St. Maarten [shared with France]), some territories on the “Wild Coast” of Northeastern South America (Suriname, Essequibo, Berbice, Demerara), and the trading outpost of Elmina located on the West Coast of Africa. For the purposes of this book, this is the “Dutch Atlantic.” This choice, limiting though it may be, is based on the intertwined rationales of chronology and methodological delineations.

In terms of chronology, Dutch Atlantic history could be divided as follows. The first period extended from 1600 through the 1670s, started with scattered explorations but only got underway seriously with the establishment of the first WIC and the colonization, in this order, of New Netherland, Brazil, the Antilles and finally the Guianas. This “Dutch moment in Atlantic history” was a period of military ambitions, framed in the wider context of the Dutch Revolt against the Spanish and the ensuing short-lived Dutch hegemonic role. The second phase covers almost the entire period discussed in this book, starting circa 1680 and ending a bit more than a century later. This was a century of economic growth but also of shifts in centers of gravity within the Dutch orbit. The Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780–1784) sealed the fate not only of the Dutch Republic, but equally of its Atlantic possessions, which would never again regain their previous significance. This marks the beginning of the third phase in Dutch Atlantic history, a phase of growing insignificance.

This choice to focus on the seemingly inglorious period from 1680–1800 – a period in which the major settlement colonies of Brazil and New Netherland had already been lost, the first WIC bankrupted and the Dutch Atlantic “empire” had narrowed to some isolated fortresses in West Africa, a few nascent plantation colonies in the Guianas and six small islands in the Caribbean Sea – may seem odd, but it is in line with the overarching aims of the book. A reconsideration and reevaluation of why and how the Dutch mattered in the Atlantic and the Atlantic mattered for the Dutch requires moving beyond the glory days of Atlantic military might, expansion, and control. This story is well-known, often repeated, and the answers to the questions are clear.³ What is less clear, and what the chapters in this book help illuminate, is how and why the Dutch managed to maintain modest economic growth, and a limited, though visible, political, intellectual, and cultural presence in the Atlantic against a backdrop

3 See Gert Oostindie and Jessica Vance Roitman, “Repositioning the Dutch in the Atlantic, 1680–1800,” *Itinerario* 36, no. 2 (2012): 129–160; Piet Emmer and Jos Gommans, *Rijk aan het eind van de wereld: de geschiedenis van Nederland overzee, 1600–1800* (Amsterdam: Bakker, 2013) and Wim Klooster, *The Dutch Moment in Atlantic History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), forthcoming.

of the geographic contraction of their Atlantic territories, economic stagnation and decline in the metropole, and dwindling naval might.

This decision to center the studies in this book on the territories remaining to the Dutch after 1680 was compelled not only by chronological boundaries, but also by related methodological and definitional rationales. Our narrowly defined Dutch Atlantic was composed of the places colonized and ruled by representative institutions of the Dutch Republic. From the 1680s until the late eighteenth century, Elmina and the Antillean islands were administered directly by the WIC, Suriname by the Sociëteit van Suriname in which the WIC participated, and Berbice and Essequibo (and its dependency Demerara) in various ad hoc arrangements.⁴ The political and institutional contours of the Dutch Atlantic remained stable throughout the chronology of the book and nothing more would be added or ceded to this empire until the Napoleonic Wars.

Defining the Dutch Atlantic, at least during the period from 1680–1800, as being bounded by territories under the political and institutional control of representatives of the Dutch Republic is clear, simple and straightforward. But it is not without conceptual limitations. After all, the cultural staying power of “Dutch New York” (the former colony of New Netherland taken over by the English in 1664) was impressive.⁵ Many Dutch residents stayed in the colony after it was ceded to the English.⁶ As late as 1790 (the date of the first US census), about 100,000 Americans (or roughly 3.4 percent of the total population) were of (distant) Dutch descent.⁷ In fact, during the debate about the American

4 The only relevant institutional changes over time were the definitive loss of monopoly rights retained by the WIC in the 1730s and the Company's collapse and liquidation in 1792. There were changes in practical policies over time, in particular the acknowledgement that a comprehensive mercantilist policy was neither feasible nor rewarding. Hence, the early seventeenth century decision to make Curaçao a free trade zone for both legal and illicit trade was followed by the development of St. Eustatius as a Northern equivalent in the 1740s. Metropolitan policies for the Guianas retained more of a mercantilist character, but even here metropolitan decision-making allowed for an opening up of trade to the British Atlantic colonies in the early eighteenth century.

5 See Joyce Goodfriend, ed., *Revisiting New Netherland: Perspectives on Early Dutch America* (Leiden: Brill, 2005) and Russell Shorto, *The Island at the Center of the World: The Epic Story of Dutch Manhattan and the Forgotten Colony That Shaped America* (New York: Doubleday, 2004).

6 In 1700, this number would have been only 8650. See Henry S. Lucas, *Netherlanders in America: Dutch Immigration to the United States and Canada, 1789–1950* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1955).

7 <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab02.txt>. Jaap Jacobs points out that this number is possibly misleading as it may have included descendants of

Constitution in 1788, a translation of the draft proposal was printed in Dutch in Albany, which had, at the time, 17.5 percent of the population who claimed Dutch ancestry.⁸ This would seem to show that Dutch, in some form or another, was still used widely enough to necessitate this translation. And the Dutch Reformed Church in America continued to use Dutch liturgical forms throughout the eighteenth century, and did not gain independence from the Amsterdam classis until 1772 – over a century after the colony became English.

But, as Jaap Jacobs cogently points out, this persistence of Dutch religious, material culture (such as jambless fireplaces in New York colonial homes) and linguistic forms had far more to do with the dynamic of otherness in the colony than it did with any inherent adherence to, or affiliation with, the Netherlands per se. The colonial Dutch were defined by the English as being Dutch and came to define themselves through this prism. Thus, this fascinating endurance of Dutch culture was less about Dutch institutions or links with the Dutch Republic and more about identification over and against an “other” on a daily basis.⁹ Moreover, as Jacobs also points out, there is a tendency to oversimplify and mythologize the maintenance of Dutch cultural forms in North America, and, thereby, to assume an unbroken link from past to present when, in fact, Dutch culture in North America was in an ongoing state of change and (re) creation.¹⁰ This, of course, does not mean that it could not or should not be included in a study of the Dutch Atlantic, but, coupled with the fact that it was not under Dutch political rule between 1680–1800, it falls outside the purview of this book.

There was a similar dynamic of a persistence of Dutch cultural forms in the Cape Colony, which also falls outside the scope of our book, but for different reasons. For instance, Theodore Roosevelt (one of the most famous Americans of Dutch descent) could exchange Dutch nursery rhymes with the Afrikaners on his trip to South Africa in 1909.¹¹ Colonized by the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in 1652, over the next century and a half the Cape Colony developed into the one real settler colony in the Dutch colonial orbit, populated by some 20,000 Europeans by the late eighteenth century. As a midway point between

Germans or Scandinavians who had gradually come to identify as culturally Dutch, at least partially through intermarriage with Dutch families. This number is also well below that of the English, Scots, Irish, and Germans. See his *The Colony of New Netherland: A Dutch Settlement in Seventeenth-Century America* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009), 252.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., 254–255.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

the Republic and the Dutch settlements in Asia, the colony provided indispensable provisions and maritime facilities to the VOC fleet. The Cape Colony developed into a hub in a commercial and migratory web linking it to Europe and even more to Asia. The thriving trade included captives brought in to perform various types of work, though not in export-driven plantation agriculture. Some slaves were brought in from Madagascar and Mozambique, though the great majority came from Asia. The local Khoikhoi population was subjugated, driven further inland and made peripheral, both demographically and socially. Thus, the VOC developed the Southern tip of Africa into a place largely disconnected from the sub-Saharan part of the continent that was fundamental to the creation of the early modern Atlantic world.

Recent scholarly work aims to demonstrate “how Cape Town both shaped and was shaped by the wider Indian Ocean world,” rather than exclusively or even predominantly by the Dutch.¹² Very early on, certain Asian luxury goods shipped by the VOC via the Cape Colony to the Republic were re-exported by Dutch merchants to Atlantic markets. In contrast to the Spanish bullion trade, however, this Asian-Atlantic trade was of little economic importance and certainly did not produce significant integration of these various markets.¹³ Although further research could demonstrate heretofore unacknowledged links between the Cape Colony and the Dutch Atlantic territories between 1680–1800, the current state of the art does not justify including the Cape Colony and its marginal links to the Dutch Atlantic in this book.¹⁴

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- 12 Nigel Worden, *Cape Town between east and west: Social identities in a Dutch colonial town* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2012), xiii, referring to Kerry Ward, *Networks of Empire: forced migration in the Dutch East India Company* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
 - 13 Deborah L. Krohn, Marybeth De Filippis, and Peter Miller, *Dutch New York, between East and West: The World of Margrieta van Varick* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).
 - 14 Likewise, we follow the practice among historians of the Dutch Atlantic not to include North Atlantic fisheries in our analysis of the Dutch Atlantic. The WIC was not actively involved in the business of Dutch whaling and other fishing exploits in the Northern Atlantic, although whaling ships occasionally anchored off St. Eustatius. More broadly, these endeavors, certainly after the latter part of the seventeenth century, only marginally linked up with Dutch commercial networks to the South in the Atlantic, rarely or never included Africa, and did not involve Dutch colonization or governance. Christiaan van Bochove, “De Hollandse haringvisserij tijdens de vroegmoderne tijd,” *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 1, no. 1 (2004): 3–17; Christiaan van Bochove and Jan Luiten van Zanden, “Two Engines of Early Modern Economic Growth? Herring Fisheries and Whaling during the Dutch Golden Age (1600–1800),” in *Ricchezza del mare, ricchezza dal mare. Secoli XIII–SVIII*, ed. Somonetta Cavaciocchi (Prato, 2006), 557–574; Jan de Vries

If, as we have discussed above, defining what territories constituted the “Dutch Atlantic” is conceptually tricky, getting a handle on what, if any, characteristics could be said to define the Dutch Atlantic and its relations to a wider Atlantic world is also somewhat fraught. Nevertheless, as the chapters in this book will illustrate, there are four broad and overarching features that seem to be indicative of the Dutch Atlantic writ large. First, there is the exceptional economic heterogeneity and openness of the Dutch Atlantic “empire.” In the Republic, it was mainly the two coastal provinces (Holland and Zeeland) that participated in the Atlantic economy, and the dominance of Amsterdam was evident as the center holding the entire Dutch Atlantic together. In Africa, there was no such thing as Dutch colonization except for a handful of fortresses in and around Elmina, perhaps better defined as tolerated by, rather than imposed upon, local rulers. The trade in enslaved people soon dominated the African side of the Dutch Atlantic, but there was no question of a Dutch metropolitan or Caribbean control over the conditions or supply of captives. In the Caribbean, the Dutch-owned territories were either plantation colonies operated as much as possible along mercantilist lines, or, conversely, as free trade centers which thrived by undermining the larger powers’ mercantilist systems.

The connections between the Guianas and the Antilles were remarkably weak. In contrast, not only Curaçao and St. Eustatius, but also the plantation colonies were intimately linked to other empires – though, for the Guianas, this was predominantly to (British) North America only. Crucially important for the functioning of this Dutch Atlantic economy was the geopolitical setting. An increasingly weak naval power, the Republic could not guarantee the protection of its colonies and commercial networks in times of international war and was, therefore, critically dependent on conditions of peace or, conversely, on the willingness of France, Spain and, particularly, Great Britain to respect Dutch neutrality in times of war.

Secondly, and linked to this economic heterogeneity, was the remarkable variety of institutional arrangements, in sharp contrast to the monopoly on Dutch trading and governance exercised by the VOC in Asia and the Cape, but also different from the more uniform Atlantic arrangements imposed by the other European powers. While the WIC governed the Antilles and Elmina, various semi-public bodies governed the Guianas. Likewise, trade arrangements varied, but the WIC failed to ensure a lasting monopoly, to the benefit of both the other semi-public institutions in the Guianas and private merchants

and Ad van der Woude, *First Modern Economy*, 267; Paul Butel, *The Atlantic* (London: Routledge, 1999), 95.

and financiers. As for governance, within the Republic, the States General, the WIC with its varying provincial Chambers (dominated by Amsterdam and, at times, the Stadtholder) all had their own stakes and claims in the Atlantic. The resulting condition of perpetual contestation of authority was typical of the Dutch Republic and influenced the emergence of a West Indian interest group. In the Atlantic, this decentralized governance structure allowed for a significant variety in governmental policies and practices, not to mention causing constant bickering over the distribution of military costs and economic gains.

A third defining characteristic pertains to the patterns of migration and identity formation. The Dutch Atlantic's heterogeneity was vitally linked to migration patterns which, in turn, reflected the natural resources overseas and the economic and governance decisions made in the Republic. Because the Guianas were developed as plantation colonies and expanded almost permanently, over 90 percent of their populations were slaves, either enslaved Africans or, increasingly, their Creole descendants. In the major Antillean islands, the share of the enslaved population was considerably lower and demographic creolization proceeded at a higher pace. Although the Amerindian population living under Dutch rule was likely quite low (reliable figures are lacking), they played a vital role in maintaining Dutch control on the Guianas.¹⁵ European migration was characterized by an exceptional diversity in the origin of these immigrants. Large portions of the European settlers originated not in the Dutch Republic, but in Germany, the Iberian peninsula,

15 See the work of Neil Whitehead, "Carib Ethnic Soldiering in Venezuela, the Guianas, and the Antilles, 1492–1820," *Ethnohistory* 37, no. 4 (1990): 357–385; "Ethnic Transformation and Historical Discontinuity in Native Amazonia and Guyana, 1500–1900," *L'Homme* 126–128 (1993): 292–293; *Lords of the Tiger Spirit: A History of the Caribs in Colonial Venezuela and Guyana, 1498–1820* (Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Foris, 1988); "Native Peoples Confront Colonial Regimes in Northeastern South America (c. 1500–1900)" in *The Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas*, ed. Frank Salomon and Stuart Schwartz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 382–442 and Marjoleine Kars, "Cleansing the Land': Dutch-Amerindian Cooperation in the Suppression of the 1763 Slave Rebellion in Dutch Guiana," in *Empires and Indigenes: Intercultural Alliance, Imperial Expansion, and Warfare in the Early Modern World*, ed. Wayne E. Lee (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 251–275. For two excellent studies which illustrate the importance of Dutch-Indigenous Alliances for the Dutch empire, see Mark Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms, Partners in Trade: Dutch-Indigenous Alliances in the Atlantic World, 1595–1674* (Leiden: Brill, 2011) and "The Opportunities and Limits of Ethnic Soldiering: the Tupis and the Dutch-Portuguese Struggle for the Southern Atlantic, 1630–1657," in *Empires and Indigenes*, 193–220. These studies are outside the chronology of the present volume.

the British isles, France, Scandinavia, or elsewhere, and brought their own languages and religions.

Facing a dearth in the local Dutch supply of migrants, no attempt was made to keep the Atlantic colonies either fully Dutch by nationality or language. Nevertheless, there was certainly an imperative to maintain at least a nominally Dutch Reformed presence in the colonies, despite the diversity of the populations in these territories.¹⁶ Toleration of other religions was neither so clear-cut nor so self-evident in the Dutch Atlantic territories as later myths might lead one to believe.¹⁷ Yet, in addition to the Lutheran, Moravian, and various other Protestant groups in the Dutch colonies, the vast majority of the free colored population of Curaçao was Catholic, and the arrival of priests from the mainland of South America to serve this population was condoned. Particularly striking is the large proportion of Jewish settlers in the major Caribbean colonies, a presence which not only helped the Dutch Atlantic to tap into important commercial networks, but which also shaped specific processes of creolization within the Jewish community and beyond. With the exception of the post-1654 exodus from Brazil, there was little European migration between the Dutch Atlantic colonies, again undermining the idea of the Dutch Atlantic empire as a cohesive unit. The cosmopolitan character of the white population in the separate Dutch Caribbean colonies occasionally gave rise to questions about identities and collective loyalties to the Republic. On a practical level, in the overseas Dutch Atlantic, the Dutch language was spoken by only a tiny minority, and the two major Creole languages that emerged had no Dutch vocabulary, but rather English (Sranan Tongo in Suriname) or Portuguese/Spanish (Papiamentu in Curaçao).

Fourthly, and obviously connected to the bifurcation in the economic models the Dutch employed, slavery regimes varied considerably, and so did slave resistance. Ironically, slavery was not a dominant institution in Elmina. In Curaçao and possibly also in St. Eustatius, a great deal of slave work was not in

16 See the work of Evan Haefeli, *New Netherland and the Dutch Origins of American Religious Liberty* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Jaap Jacobs, *The Colony of New Netherland*, 144–179 and Danny Noorlander, “Serving God and Mammon: The Reformed Church and the Dutch West India Company in the Atlantic World, 1621–1674” (unpublished PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2011) for more information about the complex dynamic between toleration and the assertion of the primacy of the Dutch Reformed Church in the Atlantic colonies.

17 Even the much-discussed Jewish population in the Dutch Atlantic territories experienced both official and unofficial persecution. See Jessica Vance Roitman, “Creating Confusion in the Colonies: Jews, Citizenship, and the Dutch and British Atlantic,” *Itinerario* 36, no. 2 (August 2012): 55–90.

agriculture but rather in the urban domestic and particularly the commercial and maritime sectors, and here the division between free and enslaved labor became increasingly blurred. Of course, the slavery regime in the Guianas, quintessential plantation economies, was far more typical of slavery elsewhere in plantation America. Slave resistance, on the other hand, resulted in the truly extraordinary development of substantial maroon communities in Suriname's tropical rain forest, eventually recognized by Dutch authorities who lacked the means to contain this menace to the colony otherwise. Internal marronage was not an option on the Lesser Antilles, but there was some maritime marronage from Curaçao to the Spanish Main. On the other hand, and perhaps in contrast to the long-held idea that slavery in Curaçao was relatively mild, the island had several slave revolts. The uprising in 1795, in reaction to the Haitian Revolution, was among the most significant in the late eighteenth century Caribbean.

All the contributions to this volume speak, in one way or another, to these characteristics of heterogeneity and diversity in economics, institutional governance systems, and slavery regimes, as well as in the composition of the populations and their respective processes of identity formation in the territories under Dutch rule. Furthermore, the various chapters all acknowledge that the Dutch-controlled part of the Atlantic could only develop by developing strong trans-imperial connections, which in turn contributed to the further economic and cultural expansion of the Atlantic world at large. The essays reinforce the importance of both interimperial encounters and of regional connections which, certainly in the Caribbean, were really one and the same. Thus, the chapters in this volume emphasize that these trans-imperial connections were visible on the economic level, but also in the interpersonal sphere. These essays are informed by the search for trans-imperial dynamics – an acknowledgement of the tension between the individual, the network, the regional, and the (inter)national. This basically reflects the state of the art in the writing of Atlantic history today, where the study of individual territories and sub-empires is increasingly framed in a larger comparative and interdisciplinary framework.

Bridging Borders, Linking Empires

Wim Klooster's piece on "Curaçao as a Transit Center to the Spanish Main and the French West Indies" is centered on the connections between three imperial actors in the Caribbean – the Dutch, the Spanish, and the French. Klooster argues that the main commercial development in eighteenth century Curaçao

was the intensification of contacts with the French Caribbean. This is an important point that has been ignored in the historiography of the island, which generally emphasizes the role Curaçao played as a gateway to the Spanish American markets, particularly on the Venezuelan coast in the cacao trade, or else, to a lesser extent, focuses on the importance of North American merchants and English subjects residing on the island for the provision of desperately needed foodstuffs to the colony. Klooster summarizes this research on the Spanish and North American trades in his chapter, but particularly takes his readers beyond these relatively well-trodden paths.

Klooster shows how merchants in metropolitan Dutch ports and their correspondents on the island itself capitalized on the vast quantities of sugar, coffee, and indigo produced on Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Saint-Domingue. Curaçaoan merchants found an additional niche in the seemingly mundane mule trade. Mules were vital to the functioning of the sugar plantations on the French islands, and Curaçaoan merchants used their already-established contacts on the Spanish Main to ship these beasts to the French colonies where the market seemed nearly insatiable. There was also a voracious market for slaves on the French islands, especially in Saint-Domingue – a market the Curaçaoan merchants were happy to feed. What also comes to the fore in Klooster's essay is the pervasive tension between attempts at mercantilist control versus free trade. He shows that the traders of Curaçao were continually evading other empire's trade restrictions, whether on the Spanish mainland or on the British and French sugar islands – and found willing partners there.

Christian Koot's work on "Anglo-Dutch Trade in the Chesapeake and the British Caribbean, 1621–1733" reinforces these points about the tension between mercantilist control and free trade. His piece emphasizes the role of personal connections between Dutch and English traders in the Chesapeake and British Caribbean in creating long-lasting and durable commercial networks that transcended national boundaries. These personal, cross-national, relationships were also important in shaping British colonists' perceptions of, and reactions to, their own role within the increasingly mercantilist empire. He shows how Dutch and British settlers were allies in circumventing British trade rules for much of the seventeenth century, until their interests began to diverge in the early eighteenth century. Koot argues that Dutch trade, especially in the Chesapeake and the British Caribbean, was important to the early development of British colonies and, thus, the British Atlantic, which highlights the centrality of interimperial contacts in shaping the Atlantic.

Koot asserts that Dutch trade mattered in shaping an understanding of the evolution of the British Atlantic both because it aided economic development at the fringes of the empire and also because it shaped the political economy

of that empire. To support his arguments, Koots' essay examines the extent and scope of Anglo-Dutch colonial exchange, the ways Dutch and British merchants transacted business, the networks they constructed, and the colonial nodal points where trade was based. Koot pays special attention to the legal and political structures that allowed this trade to flourish and, eventually, to whither. His essay demonstrates that British colonists pivoted towards driving their own intercolonial trade in the eighteenth century, as well as that British planters' embrace of mercantilist policies that protected their interests in the West Indies and Chesapeake should, according to Koot, remind scholars that the politics of empire always mattered in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In his chapter on Paramaribo, Karwan Fatah-Black similarly acknowledges the importance of personal relationships in his discussion of the ways in which settlers helped intensify interregional and interimperial connections. For instance, healthy colonists were an important "commodity," especially colonists who had survived a year in the tropics, and Fatah-Black details how interimperial conflicts arose between the Dutch and the English over retaining such colonists. He also shows how the migration of Jews to Suriname from Barbados, and, after Zeeland's take-over in the 1660s, back from Suriname to Barbados created ties between the two colonies – ties that were largely outside of the control of the government officials and were of vital importance to the functioning of trade in the colony.

Fatah-Black argues that intercolonial networks, most of which were based on circuits of exchange outside the control of the Suriname Company, which governed the territory, were constitutive for the colony. He shows that, over the course of the eighteenth century, Dutch colonists and North-American merchants found ways to cooperate and circumvent the rules and regulations issued from Amsterdam and London. In fact, he asserts that not a single Dutch Guianese settlement would have grown and blossomed without creating ties to other non-Dutch colonies and relying on the resources available under the formal rule of other empires and states operating in the Americas. Importantly, Fatah-Black challenges the assumption of a unique Dutch intermediary function in the Atlantic by confirming the research of Johannes Postma, which posited a world of connections operated by non-Dutch ships and non-Dutch merchants.

This world of connections led to constant tensions between attempts to assert mercantilist control in Suriname, over and against settlers' desires for greater flexibility and freedom to conduct their own trade on their own terms. While Curaçao and St. Eustatius were largely free of these mercantilist restrictions, metropolitan policies for the Guianas retained more of a mercantilist

character. As Fatah-Black discusses, metropolitan decision-making still allowed for an opening up of trade to the British Atlantic colonies in the early eighteenth century. Despite this opening up of trade with the British Atlantic colonies, Fatah-Black also notes the divergence in interests between the English and the Dutch remarked upon by Koot.

This underlines that the politics of empire always mattered in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This is a point also brought up by Henk den Heijer, who studies petitions made by merchants engaged in the West Indies trade. Den Heijer asserts that these petitions demonstrate that merchants were continuously working, in varying alliances, to defend their West Indian trade interests via the States General. The States General, in turn, were usually willing to grant these requests because they too had an interest in the continuity of Atlantic shipping and trade, even if the financial resources they could provide were limited. Den Heijer's chapter illustrates, again, the constant tension between individual actors, consortiums of merchants operating within various networks, and the effect of metropolitan policies on the Dutch Atlantic colonies.

Kenneth Morgan's essay "Anglo-Dutch Economic Relations in the Atlantic World, 1688–1783" pays special attention to the legal and political structures that allowed trade between the Dutch and the English to flourish and eventually, as noted by Fatah-Black and Koot, to wither. Morgan examines some of the underlying economic mechanisms between European powers in the Atlantic. Morgan's research validates and reinforces the assertion of other scholars that the Dutch supported Britain's public credit by significant amounts of investment in the British national debt. Morgan's work goes on to show that the Dutch contributed financially to the strength of public credit in Britain and, thereby, assisted in the British attempt to stave off the rivalry of the French in the eighteenth century Atlantic trading world.

Morgan also underscores the well-studied point that Anglo-Dutch economic connections were extensive in the Atlantic world between the so-called "Glorious Revolution" in England (1688) and the American Revolution (1776). Morgan repeats the point that, despite the English takeover of New Netherland, the merchants of New York continued to have an important Dutch component until at least the American War of Independence. This meant that trade between New York and other English territories, especially in the Caribbean, had a significant Dutch influence between 1689 and 1776.

Morgan reemphasizes the important role played by Curaçao and St. Eustatius as transit points for the international exchange of goods and how this served Anglo-Dutch economic relations in a mutually beneficial way, a role also discussed in Wim Klooster's essay. Moreover, Dutch smuggling to

North America, in defiance of mercantilist restrictions, demonstrated the links between Dutch and Anglophone merchants as part of the Atlantic trading system, a point mirrored in the work of Koot and Fatah-Black. In addition, Morgan makes the new point that Bermuda's merchants and mariners found a significant outlet for their maritime activities through commercial contacts with Dutch Caribbean islands in yet another example of the importance of interimperial contacts. Lastly, Morgan addresses the issue of these sorts of so-called "leaks" in the mercantilist system. His contribution shows how important this porousness of the mercantilist systems of Britain and France were, and how well-situated the Dutch were to take advantage of these seemingly necessary escape valves in imperial systems.

Silvia Marzagalli's work on "The French Atlantic and the Dutch, Late Seventeenth-Late Eighteenth century" also grapples with the necessity of "escape values" in the mercantilist system. Her contribution reinforces the importance of porousness in the mercantilist systems of Britain and France and shows how the Dutch were centrally placed to profit from holes in these systems. Marzagalli also shows how the exclusion of the Dutch from direct trade to French America was less effective in wartime, when French colonies were opened up to trade by neutral parties such as the Dutch. More significantly for Marzagalli's argument, the exclusive colonial system created by France was viable in the long run only if some mechanisms compensated for the structural unbalance of trade it generated. She believes that the Dutch trade with France and its Atlantic colonies are a case study for testing the hypothesis that war played a central role in the viability of the French Atlantic system.

Her work details the ways in which the Dutch played a role in the emergence and viability of French colonial trade from the second part of the seventeenth century up to the French Revolution. This role evolved over time. Whereas Dutch capital proved essential in the rise of French-based shipping to the West Indies, the Dutch were, thereafter, essential mainly in organizing a flourishing re-export trade of colonial goods from the French ports to the Netherlands on Dutch ships. The point that underlies Marzagalli's essay is that the French colonial trade originated, flourished and persisted only through the collaboration of non-French merchants and the existence of non-French markets, among which the Dutch and the Netherlands were a relevant element, though no longer the most dynamic as time passed. Her essay also reinforces the importance of metropolitan policies. She emphasizes the importance of European states in defining identities and citizenships – definitions which played a huge role in determining who could and could not participate in colonial trade.

Marzagalli's conclusions are echoed in Ana Crespo Solana's "A Network-Based Merchant Empire: Dutch Trade in the Hispanic Atlantic context

(1680–1740)” in which the issue of citizenship is of major importance. Crespo Solano discusses the various means for determining who could become naturalized and thereby participate in Spain’s trade with the Americas. Specifically, she looks at the ways the Flemish and Dutch immigrants to Cádiz maintained their own identities, manifested in their merchant networks, while also belonging to the larger Spanish empire. She explores this topic in order to illustrate how Spain depended on foreigners to conduct its trade with the Americas.

Using a case study of the Dutch and Flemish “nations” in the city of Cádiz, Crespo Solana demonstrates that through family and “nation”-based networks, these Dutch and Flemish merchants played a vital role in the American trade based in Cádiz. These trans-imperial networks of Dutch and Flemish merchants help Crespo Solana make her case that the Spanish empire was a truly multinational undertaking since its inception in the fifteenth century, and was involved in a process of what might be termed internationalization that only intensified in the latter part of the seventeenth through the mid-eighteenth century with the active participation of these Dutch and Flemish Cádiz-based networks.

Victor Wilson and Han Jordaan’s work on “The Eighteenth-century Danish, Dutch, and Swedish Free Ports in the Northeastern Caribbean: Continuity and Change,” is, by its very nature, a study of cross-imperial connections and emphasizes what a truly multinational undertaking Atlantic engagement was. Wilson and Jordaan argue that the commercial networks on these small Danish, Dutch, and Swedish islands were operated similarly, despite belonging to different European empires. They demonstrate that merchants based on these islands often had contacts in all three free ports, due to their proximity to each other as well as to the existing regional systems of trade. These examples show that the merchant communities of these small and relatively obscure islands formed part of a complicated and eminently trans-imperial network that extended to neighboring colonies as well as to various countries in Europe directly.

Yet as self-organized and trans-imperial as these networks were, imperial policies were certainly influential, if not determinate. In fact, as Jordaan and Wilson argue, the experience of Dutch free trade informed and influenced Danish and Swedish colonial policy towards the creation of their own free ports of St. Barthélemy and St. Thomas to a considerable extent. And wars were turning points in the Dutch Atlantic – turning points which ruptured interimperial networks. Jordaan and Wilson insist upon the importance of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780–1784) as the beginning of the end for the Dutch in the Atlantic. As Jordaan and Wilson note, one critical component had been lost in this war for the Dutch: neutrality in international conflicts. Beginning in 1793

the Dutch were involved in two decades of almost continuous warfare. The Fourth Anglo-Dutch War was, for example, the death knell to St. Eustatius' role as regional market, and, hence, the impetus for emigration from the island. For St. Thomas and St. Barthélemy the decline of the Dutch colonies, which began as a consequence of the war, had a lasting impact. Immigration from St. Eustatius to the Danish and Swedish free ports increased and helped spur on an admittedly brief economic boom.

In this vein, Gert Oostindie argues in his piece "Dutch Atlantic Decline During 'The Age of Revolutions'" that, as important as all these aspects of law, politics, and governance were, it was ultimately war, peace, and neutrality that were central to the course of the Dutch in the Atlantic between 1680 and 1800. As Oostindie shows, the Republic, by scale and military and naval power no match for the major Atlantic players, had used its neutrality to build itself a niche as a broker greasing the mercantilist system. The decentralized fiscal system of the Dutch Republic, coupled with the relative weakness of the Dutch navy, meant that the Republic became dependent upon its neutrality vis-à-vis Britain for its Atlantic trade to function between 1689 and 1783. This neutrality was, to a large extent, predicated upon the fiscal-military strength of Britain, which protected Anglo-Dutch commercial endeavors from enemy incursion. He shows how the years between 1780–1815 taught the Dutch the lesson that a weak state's neutrality lasts only as long as larger states condone it. Oostindie argues that, after 1815, in the emerging post-mercantile Atlantic, there was no longer a need for trade zones such as Curaçao or St. Eustatius at all, and no need for illicit connections on the margins of mercantilism, so the very issue of neutrality became insignificant. The imperfect monopolies of the West Indian companies were challenged and broken, eventually giving way to direct Dutch state control of colonial affairs.

Oostindie goes on to show that the changes that really mattered in the Dutch Atlantic – abolition, geographical contraction, the loss of the brokerage function – were all externally imposed by other empires, mostly the British, and grudgingly taken on in the Netherlands and by the local elites in the colonies. His findings reinforce those of the other authors in the volume who assert the importance of metropolitan policies, the imposition of legal and institutional regimes in the Atlantic, and the centrality of war, peace, and neutrality in the functioning of Atlantic systems, even while acknowledging the importance of personal, cross-imperial connections that often circumvented the restrictions placed upon them by governments.

Piet Emmer's chapter on "The Rise and Decline of the Dutch Atlantic, 1600–1800" addresses some of the same themes that concern Oostindie such as why and how the Dutch empire in the Atlantic, which had managed to maintain

itself and even grow modestly economically, declined. Emmer argues for both internal and external factors. The fact that the Dutch were unable to hold on to one or more large-scale settlement colonies was due to an external factor: the lack of naval power. Even France, a much larger, more powerful and more populous country than the Netherlands, lost its settlement colony in North America, albeit a century later than the Dutch. However, the declining Dutch share in the Atlantic trade was caused by an internal factor: the relative decline in the productivity of Dutch trade and shipping. That is why the Dutch share in the trade in goods and slaves to non-Dutch colonies diminished relative to that of its competitors in areas where protective legislation hardly made the difference. It also explains why the Dutch were unable to profit commercially from the opening up of Latin America and relied heavily on protectionist legislation in order to prevent being outcompeted by British and US firms in the trade and shipping to their own colonies. Trade barriers, the much-hated stumbling block for Dutch expansion in the seventeenth century, had, Emmer writes, become a protective wall.

The contributions discussed so far emphasize the political and economic nature of linkages from and to the Dutch Atlantic. But it was not just in the economic and political arenas that trans-imperial connections were of great importance. Karel Davids challenges existing historiography and shows that the evolution of knowledge networks in the North Atlantic in the eighteenth century was a more complex affair than an exercise with merely two teams: the British and the American colonials, as it is so often depicted. Players on both sides of the Atlantic not only entertained bilateral relations but often corresponded with people in more than one region at the same time. Multilateral relationships were by no means uncommon. And these sorts of relationships developed not just between actors based in Britain, the Continent and the British American colonies, but also between American colonials or European continentals and people living in South America, notably in the Dutch Guianas. During the course of the eighteenth century, networks of knowledge thus cut right across different imperial spaces. Thus, the scholarly Atlantic transcended boundaries between the British, Dutch, French or Spanish Atlantics.

The Dutch academics or members of learned societies Karel Davids studied were aware of the West Indies, and played a central role in the emergence and evolution of scholarly networks of knowledge. They communicated with each other through written correspondence and journals of a scholarly or general nature about these territories. This was a small group of people whose interest in, and knowledge of, the Dutch Atlantic possessions was not quickly, easily, or widely disseminated to the general populace. But, as Davids admits, colonial possessions were not a *sine qua non* for Dutch actors to play a part in flows of

knowledge. Cross-Atlantic networks of knowledge emerged and evolved in part independently of the existence of colonial empires. What Davids demonstrates, then, is that while the Atlantic, in general, figured in literate circuits, and the Dutch Atlantic territories mattered for it, there was no specific recognition or understanding of a Dutch Atlantic per se.

Jessica Roitman and Aviva Ben-Ur's chapter "Adultery Here and There: Crossing Sexual Boundaries in the Dutch Jewish Atlantic" also looks at the pre-eminent importance of information flows. They, too, show how information flowed back and forth between the Amsterdam Jewish community and its "daughter" communities in the Dutch colonies of Curaçao and Suriname, and demonstrate through the lens of specific cases of legal and social transgressions the reciprocal cultural and legal influence the Jewish communities in the colonies had on the Portuguese Jews in Amsterdam. This is a different take on linkages and connections than the economic and political one taken by most of the other chapters, but the dynamics are the same. Roitman and Ben-Ur look at the interplay of, and tensions between, the multiple strands of law – Jewish, Dutch metropolitan, and Dutch law as actually practiced in the colonies – under which Jewish communities in Dutch territories lived. In their study, they look at particular incidents of adultery, a crime under Dutch civil, Christian, and Jewish law, and how this crime was dealt with. Interwoven in their story is a discussion of how these legal systems impacted the surrounding enslaved, Eurafrikan, and free black populations.

Ben-Ur and Roitman's essay on Portuguese Jewish communities in Curaçao and Suriname approaches issues such as the maintenance of communal boundaries, relations across and between religious and ethnic boundaries, and the creation of a creolized society. By focusing on a highly mobile, diasporic, and, by its very nature, trans-imperial community within the Dutch Atlantic, Ben-Ur and Roitman bring to the fore the importance of identification, affiliation, and, importantly, demographics. And, as was the case in both Marzagalli and Crespo Solana's essays, the definition of identities and citizenship is an underlying theme in the chapter. Citizenship status was of particular importance to the Jewish population in the Dutch Atlantic, which often had to fight to assert its rights to settle and trade in the region, despite the liberal privileges extended by the Dutch authorities.

Identification, or lack thereof, is a theme also picked up in Benjamin Schmidt's chapter "The 'Dutch' 'Atlantic' and the Dubious Case of Frans Post." Schmidt makes the case that the Dutch served as entrepreneurs of exoticism, manufacturing products that, first, tended to *dilute* the distinct parts of the world, mix and match geographic spaces, and highlight the bits and pieces of the world that seemed vaguely "exotic" rather than particular to this or that

national interest. This meant that these products tended to efface as much as possible the Dutch presence overseas in order to create books and pictures depicting an exotic world that appealed not particularly to a Dutch, but to a broadly European audience. They abnegated any sense of their *own* (Dutch) colonial and imperial presence – which, by this period, were but poor reflections of the imperial profiles of Spain, Britain, and France – preferring to promote a kind of hyper-imperial or pan-colonial *European* sensibility. They invented, thus, not only an exotic subject but also a European consumer of the exotic world. And this means, according to Schmidt, that there is no distinctly *Dutch* Atlantic in these sources so much as a generically “European” “exotic” world, behind which, to be sure, stood numerous entrepreneurial Dutch ateliers. What Schmidt demonstrates, then, is that while the Atlantic, in general, figured in literate circuits, the Dutch Atlantic, specifically, was of limited significance, an idea also echoed in Davids’ essay.

Alison Games summarizes the essays in the book in the final chapter and emphasizes the underlying narratives that emerge in the collection – the international orientation of the Dutch Atlantic as seen in settlement patterns and language, the important economic ties the Dutch forged (as middlemen, as traders, as brokers, as inhabitants of trade entrepôts) with other polities and people, and its decentralization. Games also contextualizes the essays in this book within trends in Atlantic history. Atlantic historiography is moving away from national or imperial perspectives and is taking a transnational and global turn. As Games points out, transnational themes have special salience for the Dutch, with their global enterprises in this era, and in light of their greater financial success in the East Indies. Games goes to say that the Dutch Atlantic might be even more important to Atlantic history than it is to the history of the Netherlands. A study of the Dutch in the Atlantic world reveals just the kind of Atlantic history that people have been calling for – entangled, international, multilingual, networked, connected.

Yet this entangled, international, multilingual (Dutch Atlantic) world was also multicultural, and Games critiques the book for its focus on the networks and connections of Europeans and their descendants. Amerindians and their vital role in the maintenance of Dutch military and political authority in the Guianas are left out. The maroons against whom the Amerindians helped the Dutch in the Guianas and their persistent challenges to Dutch control in the region receive little mention. In fact, the role of enslaved Africans and free people of color are only mentioned in passing in a few of the essays. Moreover, Africa, Games observes, is in this book not connected to the Dutch Atlantic despite the fact that Elmina was governed by the Dutch between 1680 and 1800. And religion, with the notable exception of discussions of Portuguese Jews and their communities and networks, is largely ignored in this volume.

Games, we acknowledge, is right to point out these omissions. Obviously this volume is not exhaustive, nor was it intended to be. Cogent, challenging, and enlightening as all these essays are, they can only do so much. The scope of the authors' briefs were limited in chronology and geography. They were to begin to answer the questions of how, exactly, did the Atlantic matter to the Dutch? And why was the Atlantic engagement of the Dutch important not only for the Dutch themselves, but also for all the other actors involved in the Atlantic in the early modern period? The authors' attempts to answer these questions have been presented. And it is not surprising that most of the answers are grounded in economics. The Atlantic was more important for the Dutch economically in the period between 1680 and 1800 than has been acknowledged to date. Many of the authors get beyond this simple fact and show us *how* this economic growth happened – via personal connections that were often regional, intra-imperial, cross-national, and multicultural. But this economic growth (and eventual decline), as many of the chapters also demonstrate, occurred within a set of international laws governing trade and against a backdrop of the extension of European politics into the Atlantic domains, including neutrality, war, and social movements such as revolutions and calls for abolition. A few of the authors also show that the Dutch in the Atlantic mattered for other nations such as the English, French and Spanish who depended on foreigners to maintain their own empires, and that Dutch imperatives for settlement mattered a great deal for ethnic and religious minorities such as the Portuguese Jews. And the Atlantic mattered for Dutch intellectual and artistic circuits and vice versa, though, as two of the essays argue, there was little recognition of the space as particularly Dutch.

But questions remain. Due to logistical and practical reasons, not all topics pertaining to the vast oceanic space that comprised the Dutch Atlantic, even with a limited chronology and geographical focus, could be addressed in one volume. Indeed, as Games notes, perhaps the most illustrative examples of connections, linkages, entanglement, are yet to come. How did Elmina connect culturally and economically with the rest of the Atlantic world? How can the Dutch cultural legacy in North America and the Cape Colony be included in a conceptualization of the Dutch Atlantic? What were the Cape Colony's linkages to the (Dutch) Atlantic world? Furthermore, although some work has already been done on the dynamic role of Amerindians in the Dutch settlements, further comparative research would help shed light on all sorts of fascinating questions about European colonization.¹⁸ Likewise, although much

18 See the works cited in note 15 of this essay for the role of Amerindians.

scholarship has produced on religion in the Dutch colonies, a synthesis is lacking. Again, many questions remain.

For now, we hope this volume takes up the challenge formulated by Jan de Vries that the contradictory nature of the early modern “Dutch” Atlantic may offer the perfect test of the viability of the very concept of an Atlantic world – an assertion echoed by Alison Games.¹⁹ By studying the “expansion without empire” of the most loosely national and least centralized of all European states involved, we are, by definition, looking at historical phenomena that were transatlantic and trans-imperial. We have advocated an approach to the Dutch Atlantic that privileges connections, and believe that any study should be conceptualized, at least partially, in terms of its linkages with other locales. This kind of transnational or entangled history is easily called for, but very hard to do, as is seen by the limitations of this volume. For all its challenges however – challenges with which all the authors in this book have grappled – it is vitally important to try to do this kind of research: transnational, multilingual, looking at the Atlantic in terms of intersections, entanglements, and interactions. This perspective will help us in reflecting on the question of whether all of the globalizing early modern Atlantic was really an integrated world, and if so, by what standards precisely. This volume opens up new perspectives on our understanding of the place of Dutch colonies and networks in the early modern Atlantic world, but also leaves plenty of room for further research, exploration, and discovery.

19 Jan de Vries, “Dutch Atlantic Economies.” See also Alison Games’ essay in this volume.