On September 28, 1673, Felix Lopez de Haro held a book sale auction at his house. According to the advertisement he placed in a local newspaper, buyers interested in purchasing books from the library of the recently deceased city physician of Gouda could request a catalogue prior to the sale from Lopez de Haro himself or from his colleague in Amsterdam, Johannes Jansonius van Waesbergen, his colleague in Rotterdam, Arnout Laers, or his colleague in Haarlem, Abraham Casteleyn. On the surface, this sale may not seem remarkable. Lopez de Haro held over thirty such auctions. Leiden booksellers, perhaps because of their proximity to the main University in the United Provinces, specialized in auctioning off libraries of dearly departed notables. Booksellers across Holland placed hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of similar advertisements over the course of the century. Taken collectively, on the other hand, these advertisements reveal an emergent social network established by individual Dutch booksellers that supplied information, goods, and services across the fluid borders of the nascent republic, thus forming a crucial part of the ‘first modern economy’.

In European history, the seventeenth century often plays the role of the red-headed stepchild, neglected and thought to not properly belong to the family. In typical survey courses, instructors scarcely mention the entire period, moving from Renaissance to Enlightenment without any apparent bumps in the road. Indeed, the period is fraught with minor wars, religious squabbling, inconsequential state-building, population stagnation, and economic troubles; hardly the good lecture fodder historians usually gravitate toward. One of the

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major exceptions to this age of doom and gloom is the experiences of the United Provinces of the Netherlands, who rose to pre-eminence on the shoulders of others to achieve their shining moment in history, a true Golden Age. Dutch history has a tendency to be contrary. They established a republic in the Age of Absolutism, a monarchy in the Age of Democracy, and had a Golden Age in an Age of Crisis.² This vision of Dutch exceptionalism, though, belies the subtlety and complexity of the social and economic mechanisms under which the citizens of the watery republic operated.

The historiography of Dutch studies may be replete with recipes for Dutch success in this inauspicious time and tips for how to avoid the stagnation and decline that follow, but recent scholarship has challenged that vision. In The European Economy in an Age of Crisis, Jan de Vries portrayed the seventeenth century as a necessary focal point for apportioning economic development unequally across the European continent, creating a system, to put it crudely, of winners and losers that would fuel the future growth of the world economy in crucial ways. In his depiction the crisis acted as historical agent, squeezing out inefficient producers with deflation and rewarding efficient and/or innovative producers through increased market share.

On a small scale, the career of Felix Lopez de Haro bears out this process. The number of booksellers in Leiden grew explosively over the course of the seventeenth century and Lopez de Haro faced a highly competitive environment when he chose his profession. Though he enjoyed the position of official printer to the Walloon and States Colleges of the University of Leiden beginning in 1683, he found that he could not prosper on the profits from printing and bookselling alone. Instead, he and others like him, turned to book auctions as a means to supplement their income. In the sixteenth century, Louis Elsevier, another immigrant to the United Provinces, had pioneered the use of the book sale auction, and its accompanying catalogue, as a means of selling books, especially used books, to previously underserved markets. Facing shrinking national and international markets for their goods in the seventeenth century, Dutch booksellers such as Lopez de Haro chose to capitalize on this innovation in order to maintain the