The printed book in the Dutch Atlantic world

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CHAPTER 8

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In 1708 the Amsterdam publisher Nicolaas ten Hoorn produced a book with the intriguing title *Description of the Mighty Kingdom of Krinke Kesmes*. Often cited as the inspiration for *Robinson Crusoe*, *Krinke Kesmes* describes how a Spanish adventurer who had served in the Dutch navy in the Third Anglo-Dutch War decides to expand his trade into Spanish America and across the Pacific Ocean. Caught in a storm, the author ends up in the utopian kingdom of Krinke Kesmes, where the supervisor ("the Garbon") introduces him to local customs and ideas. Ultimately, invigorated by the experience, the Spaniard returns to Europe a richer and wiser man. In the eighth and final chapter, just before leaving the imaginary kingdom, the author invites the Garbon to come to his ship. In a brief reversal of roles, he then exposes his own intellectual framework by showing his distinguished guest the books he has carried along from Europe. In his bookcase, he immediately reaches for Adriaan van Berkel's *Voyage to Rio Berbice* (1695), a wonderful example of what in modern advertising would be called "product placement", because that volume had been printed by Nicolaas' father Jan ten Hoorn. Upon learning about the Spaniard's catalogue of books, the Garbon remarks in admiration: "Dear Sir, as far as I know, you have no poor books, I wish you much joy from them, along with a useful pastime, and that you may derive wisdom from them". Thus encouraged, the author then shows him some of the other books he possesses, including Baltasar Gracián's *Criticón* and *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*, as well as the works of René Descartes in Spanish translation, and sixteen books of Euclid, also in Spanish. All these books, the author concludes, "I presented to [the Garbon] with all my heart".[1]

Krinke Kesmes is a work of fiction, and was intended to be read that way, so there is good reason not to approach it with an eye for verisimilitude. But the level of detail regarding the contents of the fictional bookcase nevertheless invites the question how realistic this catalogue of printed books might have

1 Henrik Smeeks, *Beschryvinge van het magtig Koningryk Krinke Kesmes* (Amsterdam, 1708). For the English quotations and a brief introduction of the book, I used *The Mighty Kingdom of Krinke Kesmes*, ed. David Fausett, transl. Robert H. Leek (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1995), pp. ix–xliii, 118–19. This article was presented as a paper at the Books in Motion-conference at the Gotha Forschungszentrum of the University of Erfurt, and at the annual meeting of the Renaissance Society of America in Boston in 2016. I am grateful to both audiences for their comments and suggestions.

looked around 1700? Which books did people pack when they left the Dutch Republic for a future in the Atlantic world? Which books did they order after having settled in Recife, New Amsterdam, Elmina or Paramaribo? An ambitious early attempt to establish a printing press in Dutch Brazil failed in 1643 because the master printer died prematurely,[2] meaning that during the entire seventeenth century, readers in the Dutch colonies depended for their reading matter on shipments from Holland. So were the contents of libraries in the Dutch Atlantic comparable to those in the mother country? Or can we establish a reading practice that was somehow different from that in the United Provinces? These questions, to be fair, are elementary to cultural historians and certainly to scholars of the printed book, but they are virtually *terra incognita* for specialists of the Atlantic world. Despite the preeminence of the Dutch Republic in the production of printed books in early modern Europe, our knowledge of the export of books to and book ownership in the Dutch Atlantic world is at best sketchy. This article aims to be a first step towards filling that scholarly gap. Due to the size of the task, I will focus for now only on the period of the first West India Company (1621–1674).[3]

Dutch books arrived in the Atlantic world well before Dutch colonists did, as inquisitorial records in South America testify. In 1608, according to one cleric in Buenos Aires, Flemish merchants from Lisbon conducted a subversive campaign by hiding books in cases that officially contained only wine and salt. Several years later, in 1616, the inquisition in Lisbon even went so far as to inform Philip III about Protestant books that were destined for the Americas.[4] The main culprit, in the eyes of the inquisition, was the Hispano-Dutch polemicist

2 Frans L. Schalkwijk, *The Reformed Church in Dutch Brazil (1630–1654)* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 1998), p. 56.

3 First indications are that the pattern discussed below becomes a lot more varied certainly in the second half of the eighteenth century. See for example Robert Cohen, *Jews in Another Environment: Surinam in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), pp. 106–23 and appendix A & B; Rob Krabbendam, "Reading in Elmina: The Private Library of Jan Pieter Theodoor Huydecoper in West Africa, 1757–1767" (unpublished MA thesis, Leiden University, 2012). Both libraries – of David Nassy and Jan Pieter Huydecoper – also contain many books printed in the seventeenth century.

4 Eddy Stols, "De Zuid-Nederlandse boekdrukkunst op de Portugese routes van de eerste mondialisering", in: Idem and Werner Thomas, eds., *Een wereld op papier: Zuid-Nederlandse boeken, prenten en kaarten in het Spaanse en Portugese wereldrijk (16de–18de eeuw)* (Acco: Leuven/The Hague, 2009), pp. 149–50. The work by Aventroot found in Lisbon was almost certainly his *Carta de Ioan Aventrote al poderosisimo Rey de Espania*, printed by Paulus van Ravesteyn in Amsterdam in 1614. On Aventroot's propaganda, see Werner Thomas, "El hombre que intentó convertir al rey de España. Hans Aventroot (1559–1633)", *Foro Hispánico* 3 (1992): 45–66; and Benjamin Schmidt, "Exotic Allies: The Dutch-Chilean Encounter and the (Failed) Conquest of America", *Renaissance Quarterly* 52.2 (1999), pp. 457–60.

Joan Aventroot, a man who had the explicit ambition to convert the Spanish king to Protestantism. Aventroot's campaigns in the Atlantic world continued after the foundation of the West India Company in 1621.[5] In 1628 Spanish soldiers discovered a box in the Río de la Plata estuary that had been left there by a Dutch vessel which contained copies of a pamphlet that called on the population of Peru to revolt against the king and the pope. The pamphlet, Aventroot explained, had been meant to make up for the failure of a previous Dutch expedition, the so-called Nassau Fleet, to distribute Protestant catechisms in South America. This time, somewhat predictably perhaps, things again did not go according to plan. The captain who was responsible for distributing the books in Buenos Aires had returned with all but 75 of the 3,000 copies he had been given.[6] Logistics and sheer distance, then, compromised these early intellectual attempts. But even if delivered correctly, the impact of Dutch books in Habsburg America could not be taken for granted. A man from Haarlem who worked on the sugar plantation of the Antwerp-born Schetz family in Brazil, and who later was arrested on suspicion of Lutheranism, complained that others ridiculed him for reading a book on the passion of Christ.[7]

With the arrival of Dutch political power in the Atlantic world, the situation improved. In 1624, after the West India Company had successfully completed the conquest of Salvador de Bahia, the capital of Habsburg Brazil, Dutch printed matter infiltrated South America. In Salvador, crews replaced illustrations of Catholic martyrdom they found in the Jesuit convent with an image they had taken from Holland – in this case a print of the so-called "tyranny of Alva" that served as a reminder that the war in Brazil was intimately connected to the hardships previous generations had endured in the Low Countries.[8] As part of the same expedition, the first printed books arrived. In this opening phase, the distribution of books was effectively monopolized by the Reformed Church.[9] Comforters of the sick had a checklist of twelve printed titles they

5 *Resoluties der Staten-Generaal*, 2 June 1627 reveals that Aventroot had asked the States-General for a ship with 30 men to distribute copies of his pamphlet in "the South Sea", but to no avail.

6 Joan Aventroot, *Send-brief aen die van Peru.* [Kn. 4001] (Amsterdam, 1630), pp. 7–8, 13. Schmidt, "Exotic Allies", p. 457, mentions that as many as 8,000 copies were printed, but I have not been able to verify that number. Cf. Thomas, "El hombre que intentó convertir", p. 58.

7 Stols, "Zuid-Nederlandse boekdrukkunst", p. 149.

8 Michiel van Groesen, "Herinneringen aan Holland: De verbeelding van de Opstand in Salvador de Bahia", *Holland* 41.4 (2009): 291–303.

9 For an extensive examination of religious control over "the colonial library", see Danny L. Noorlander, "The Reformed Church and the Regulation of Religious Literature in the Early Dutch Atlantic World", *Itinerario* 42.3 (2018): 375–402.

were given before embarking for the Americas.[10] The list was as succinct as it was predictable. At the top it listed the Bible (in Dutch and in Spanish), John Calvin's *Institutiones*, and a book called *Schatboeck der christelyke leere*, an introduction to the Heidelberg Catechism translated into Dutch with comments by Festus Hommius, a staunchly Calvinist minister and a respected translator of theological texts. These three spiritual heavyweights were followed by several books with a more practical objective. They included (unspecified) books of psalms of which at least one needed to have musical annotations, Heinrich Bullinger's *Huysboeck*, a treatise in pastoral theology that contained fifty of the Swiss reformer's most memorable sermons, and *Cort begrijp der christelijke religie* by Theodore Beza, another canonical text of Reformed Protestantism. The only author to be represented twice in the short list was the English Puritan William Perkins. His first title, *Reformatus Catholicus* (or *gereformeert Catholijck* in Dutch), was a treatise written with the objective to draw Roman Catholics to the Reformed Church by emphasizing the many similarities between the confessions; the second, *Tractaet van de gevallen der conscientie* had the same brief, and was an even more popular treatise for a whole generation of students of Protestant theology. Then came William Bucanus' *Loci Communes* and Franciscus Landsbergen's *Christelijcke overdenckinge des doots*, and finally, the list contained a few generic references to "books for comforters of the sick and prayer books".[11]

This short list is a fair representation of the Dutch Atlantic world that many ardent shareholders of the West India Company had signed up for in the early 1620s. Inside the boardroom, however, the Company directors were more ambivalent about the expansion of religious orthodoxy. In the charter of June 1621, the issue of religion was conspicuously absent. Only when the Company failed to attract sufficient capital, anonymous pamphleteers in the United Provinces clarified that the Dutch would introduce the gentiles and savages to the Holy Scripture and bring Reformed Protestantism to the Americas.[12] Soon enough,

10 Rijksarchief Zeeland, Archief Classis Walcheren 73, fol. 1r. See also Willem Frijhoff, *Fulfilling God's Mission: The Two Worlds of Dominie Everardus Bogardus* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 324–25.

11 This short list may well have been prescribed by Joh. P. van den Broeck, *Geestelijcke spooren* (Amsterdam, 1622), see Frijhoff, *Fulfilling God's Mission*, p. 326. The book titles in this article have been identified by means of the Short-Title Catalogue Netherlands (www.kb.nl/stcn).

12 *Korte Onderrichtinghe ende vermaeninge aen alle liefhebbers des Vaderlandts, om liberalijcken te teeckenen inde West-Indische Compagnie.* [Kn. 3363] (Rotterdam, 1622), [B3v]: "dat wy middel sullen hebben om het heylighe Evangelium onder de Heydenen en wilde menschen te propageren, daer wy dan oock sonderling naer sullen moeten trachten: ende dit

in 1623, the Amsterdam consistory negotiated that a minister and three comforters of the sick would be employed on ships bound for the West.[13] On paper, the directors wholeheartedly endorsed this arrangement.[14] In reality, however, religious orthodoxy turned out to be at odds with the Company's mercantile objectives. As early as 1629, the Company drew up an ordinance directing WIC officials to accord liberty of conscience to "Spaniards, Portuguese, and natives of the land, whether they be Roman Catholics or Jews".[15] That notion would become the accepted practice in Dutch Brazil. Church authorities loudly voiced their disapproval. In 1638, the authoritative Zierikzee minister Godfried Udemans condemned Company policy in no uncertain terms: "Concerning the issue whether one should allow the Portuguese living under our jurisdiction in the East and West Indies, for political reasons, to openly worship according to the rules of the Papist Religion? To that we answer unequivocally: No".[16]

The discrepancy between principled theologians like Udemans and the pragmatic bureaucrats of the West India Company becomes increasingly obvious when we look at a wishlist of books the Classis Recife sent to the *Heeren XIX* for use in Brazil that same year:

> We have deemed it necessary to inform Your Mightynesses that in all towns and fortresses we are in need of books for our ministers and comforters of the sick, and we request that you send us 12 Bibles of the new translation [i.e. the so-called *Statenbijbel* of 1637], as many Psalm-postils by Dominie [Abraham] Schultetus, Bullinger's *Huysboeck*, Taffin's *Boetveerdicheyt des Leevens*, and a series of Psalmbooks, some A.B.C. books in Dutch, and some catechisms for the children.[17]

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behoort insonderheyt te bewegen in dese Compagnie te teeckenen, alle de gene, die de voorplantinghe van den waren Gods-dienst lieff hebben, ende van herten begheeren".

13 Frijhoff, *Fulfilling God's Mission*, pp. 290–93; Evan Haefeli, *New Netherland and the Dutch Origins of American Religious Liberty* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), pp. 84–85.

14 For the Reformed orthodoxy of the WIC directors, see Danny L. Noorlander, "'For the Maintenance of the True Religion': Calvinism and the Directors of the Dutch West India Company", *Sixteenth Century Journal* 44.1 (2013): 73–95.

15 Jonathan Israel, "Religious Toleration in Dutch Brazil, 1624–1654", in: Idem and Stuart B. Schwartz, *The Expansion of Tolerance: Religion in Dutch Brazil (1624–1654)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), p. 18.

16 Godfried Udemans, *'t Geestelyck roer van 't coopmans schip* (2nd rev. ed.; Dordrecht 1640), p. 357: "Aengaende de [...] vrage, of men de Portugijsen, die onder onse Jurisdictie, in Oost- ende West-Indien wonen, om eenighe Politijcke redenen, niet en soude moghen toelaten de openbare oeffeninge van de Paepsche Religie? Daer op antwoorden wy rondt uyt, neen".

17 Nationaal Archief, OWIC 53-26, fol. 1^{v}: Classis Recife to *XIX*, 4 March 1638.

Despite the fact that in the previous fourteen years Dutch Brazil had not developed along the lines the clergy had envisaged, their list of books to be purchased and read had not changed. Throughout the middle third of the seventeenth century, religious literature was at the heart of any library in the Dutch Atlantic world, and the same titles surfaced again and again in both private and more corporate inventories of books. Yet *de facto* toleration of Roman Catholics and Jews, and a reluctance to convert African slaves to Reformed Protestantism, meant that the religious books the ministers desired were not as influential as they would have liked. Instead, in an environment that was generally unreceptive and sometimes quite hostile to zealous attempts at conversion, the distribution of Reformed books could lead to problems. Individual ministers in Pernambuco were robbed of their books with alarming regularity, leading to requests for sending yet more copies of the same titles.[18] Across the ocean, in Africa, the picture was the same. Here too, the small libraries of Dutch officials in Elmina and Fort Nassau were dominated by the same authors: Bullinger, Taffin, Perkins, and Schultetus featured alongside Bibles and catechisms – interspersed only by the odd nautical treatise.[19] Dom Garcia II, the King of Kongo and a political ally of the West India Company, in 1645 even ordered an auto-da-fé of Dutch catechisms – a very public rejection of Reformed Protestantism that jeopardized the Company's commercial and political future in West Africa.[20]

Back in Brazil, also in 1645, the West India Company made an inventory of books lying in one of their warehouses in Recife (Figure 8.1).[21] Better than any other document, this inventory demonstrates how slowly the Dutch Atlantic world had developed into a market for printed books, and also how little had changed in the approach of the authorities to distributing reading matter. The numbers of copies had significantly increased since the Dutch had first settled

18 NA, OWIC 22, fol. 140r, 17 March 1636. Here minister Jodocus van Stetten asked for new books after his old ones "had been confiscated by the enemy". The Heeren XIX resolved to send him Calvin's *Institutiones* in Dutch, the Acts of the Synod of Dordt in Latin, and the regulations of the classis in Zeeland.

19 *Vijf dagregisters van het kasteel São Jorge da Mina* (*Elmina*) *aan de Goudkust* (*1645–1647*), ed. Klaas Ratelband. (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1953), pp. 367–69, 372, 383.

20 Klaas Ratelband, *Nederlanders in West-Afrika, 1600–1650. Angola, Kongo en São Tomé* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2000 [1950]), p. 221; Mark Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms, Partners in Trade: Dutch-Indigenous Alliances in the Atlantic World, 1595–1674* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), p. 212. The main (but not the only) source for this auto-da-fé is Giovanni Francesco, *Breve Relatione del successo della missione de' Frati minori Capuccini* [...] *al Regno del Congo* (Milan, 1649), pp. 87–88. I am grateful to John Thornton for this reference.

21 NA, OWIC 60-80, Memorie vande volgende boeken althans berustende opt magazijn der stuckgoederen [te Recife], 9 juni 1645.

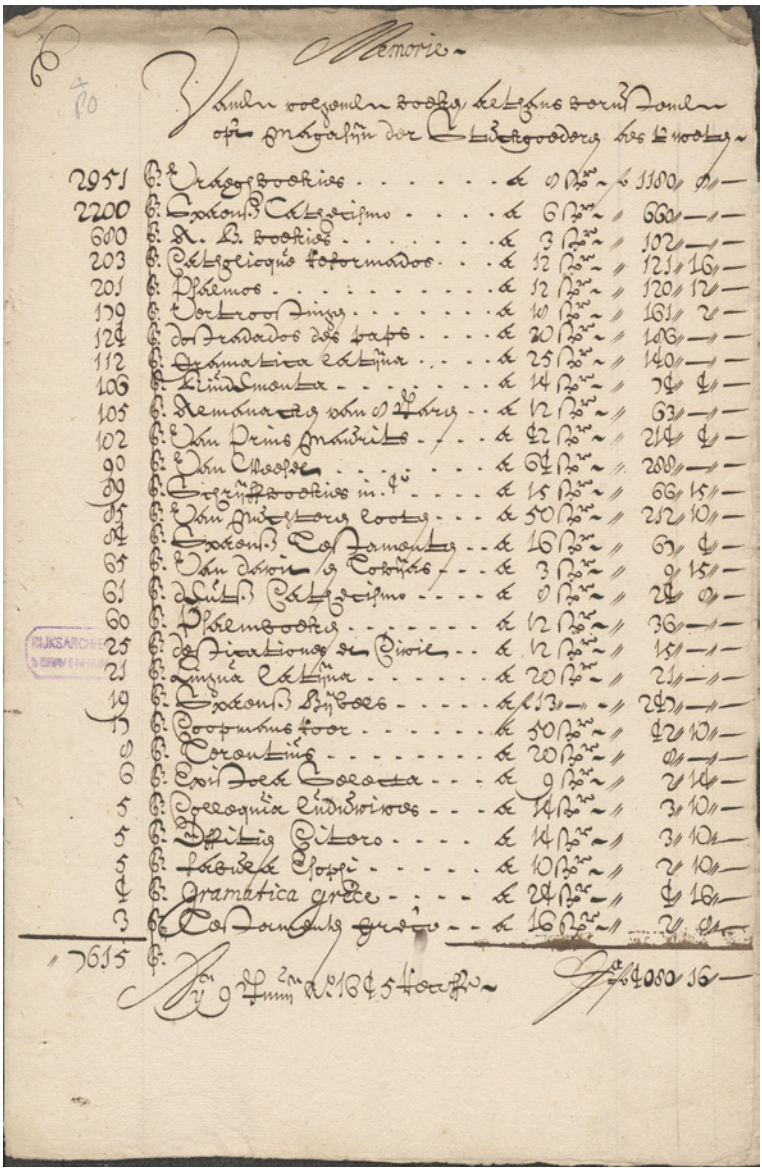

FIGURE 8.1 List of books in a warehouse in Recife, 9 June 1645
NATIONAAL ARCHIEF, OWIC, NR. 60, 80, FOL. 1R

in northeast Brazil. Altogether there were now well over 7,500 books ready for consumption in Recife. Yet the nature of the books had not changed. Bibles, psalmbooks, catechisms, and A.B.C. books dominated the list. Several things stand out. Firstly there were many books that were to a varying degree outdated.

The Company, for example, still possessed 102 copies of a book that commemorated the death of stadtholder Maurits, by now more than twenty years in the past. The list also contained 90 copies of a pamphlet celebrating the victory over Spain in Wesel – in 1629. It is difficult to imagine that any reader in the mid-1640s would still be interested in these titles.[22] It is important to note that these books were probably not purchased all at once. The list also mentioned 85 copies of the Haarlem minister Daniel Souterius' *Nuchteren Loth* ("Sober Lot"), a book of sermons that warned against the consequences of drunkenness.[23] The directors of the West India Company in Zeeland ordered 25 copies of this work in September 1634, and the way their purchase was formulated suggests that this was the first time they bought this title, which they noted "was highly useful for reading on board, and to be sent to Fernabocq". Either the book must have been successful, and several further purchases were made, or other regional chambers independently also had decided to buy the volume, thus leading to an accumulation of copies in Recife.[24]

Whether there was a lack of organization as a result of the Company's federal set-up is uncertain, but what is clear is that their policy to bring books to the Atlantic world was flawed. This can best be shown by looking at titles that were printed in other languages than Dutch. The second aspect of the 1645 inventory to catch the eye, is the large number of books that had the obvious intention of converting Portuguese sugar planters to Protestantism. They included (still) William Perkins' *Reformatus Catholicus* (203 copies), and several other titles in Spanish, including 124 copies of Cipriano de Valera's *Los dos tratados del papa* first printed in 1588,[25] hundreds of psalmbooks, dozens of Bibles and New Testaments, and no less than 2,200 copies of a Spanish catechism![26]

22 More generally, the overwhelming majority of the literature in Recife had been printed before 1630. This was also noted for New Netherland by Willem Frijhoff, *Fulfilling God's Mission*, p. 325.

23 Frijhoff, *Fulfilling God's Mission*, p. 324.

24 OWIC 22, fol. 40^{r} (11 Sept. 1634): "Is geresolveert dat men sal coopen vijf en twintich boucken gemaeckt by Daniel Souterius dienaer des Goddelijcken Woorts tot Haerlem gheintituleert Nuchteren Loth, aengaende dronckenschap seer nut om't schepe te lesen en naer Fernabocq te senden". Souterius, incidentally, was successful in convincing the WIC of buying his books. Three days later, the Zeeland directors bought 24 copies of two further titles (OWIC 22, fol. 41^{v}).

25 Possibly Cipriano de Valera, *Los dos tratados del papa*. (2nd rev ed., Madrid, 1599). On Cipriano de Valera's books, see A. Gordon Kinder, "Religious Literature as an Offensive Weapon: Cipriano de Valera's Part in England's War with Spain", *Sixteenth Century Journal* 19.2 (1988): 223–35.

26 Perhaps *Catechismo que significa Forma de instrucion que se enseña en las escuelas y yglesias reformadas* (1628).

Unfortunately, only four days after this list was drawn up, Portuguese sugar planters launched a major revolt against the West India Company that lasted for nine years and would ultimately lead to the fall of Dutch Brazil, meaning that virtually none of the Spanish books in the warehouse reached their intended readership. Yet the fact that these titles remained unused in Brazil was not just the result of unforeseen geopolitical developments. Nine years earlier, in 1636, minister Jodocus van Stetten in a letter to the directors in Zeeland expressed the need for a Bible in Portuguese. He also complained that the catechisms he had at his disposal were of little use in Brazil, unless they were translated into Portuguese. "I mean Portuguese", he explained, "not Castilian, as you gentlemen had the other [catechisms] translated, all of which are useless here".[27]

Stetten's colleague, the Spanish convert Vicente Joachim Soler, immediately sent a manuscript that met the requirements to the Dutch Republic. But in this instance the discrepancy between missionary ideals and Atlantic realities becomes strikingly clear. The Classis Amsterdam, who were assigned to deal with the matter, concluded that the best course of action was to use the Heidelberg catechism *in Spanish*, "for the greater unity of the churches in Brazil and in the home country". The classis effectively forced the West India Company to buy hundreds of copies of a Spanish edition of the catechism that had recently been printed, and ordered to send them to Brazil. In addition, the classis advised against printing Soler's Portuguese manuscript because, as one historian of the church in Brazil has put it, "the book put matters in ways that were not exactly correct and that were even dangerous".[28] The manuscript was returned to the West India Company. Hence decisions made *in patria* meant that a useful and even desired book never appeared in print and thus never crossed the Atlantic in substantial amounts, whereas at the same time the number of volumes that was lying idle in a Recife warehouse was deliberately expanded by yet another shipment of books that had been deemed unnecessary, and quite explicitly for that matter, by those who could know. Small wonder, then, that there were still 2,200 unused copies of a Spanish catechism on the eve of the planters' revolt.

Perhaps, in hindsight, the church's ambition to convert the sugar planters of Pernambuco to Calvinism was unrealistic – with or without the right books. But what about the native Americans? Pamphlet literature in the United Provinces

27 OWIC 51-85, fol. 2r: Jodocus â Stetten to Chamber Zeeland, 16 July 1636: "Ic sprecke van Portuges, niet Castiliaens gelic u E.E. de anderen hebt late translateren, de welcke alle sonder profit alhier seijn".

28 Schalkwijk, *Reformed Church*, p. 157.

had insisted for decades that the "poor and innocent Indians" had to be liberated from Spanish tyranny in order for them to be instructed in the right (Protestant) fashion.[29] This brings us to a third observation based on the list of 1645. At the very top of the list, mention was being made of 2,951 *Vraeghboekjes*, an indiscriminate term for probably another catechism. The only book that can realistically be identified as such is a trilingual catechism – in Dutch, Portuguese, and Tupi – that went by the title of *Eenvoudige ende korte onderwyzinge uyt Godes Woord in de Brasiliaensche, Nederduytsche ende Portugeesche talen*. The booklet caused a minor storm in the United Provinces as once again the West India Company and the Reformed Church were at odds over the matter. The catechism, desired by Calvinist missionaries in Brazil and almost certainly written by one of them, David á Dooreslaer, was sent in 1641 to Enkhuizen to be printed, under the watchful eye of the local directors of the West India Company and the local consistory. Once again the Amsterdam classis expressed its doubts about the orthodoxy of the text, but the Company decided to have the catechism printed anyway. Against the wishes of the States of Holland, alerted to the matter by the Amsterdam classis, the Company shipped the books to Brazil in February 1642. But by the time the books had arrived in Recife, the balance of power had shifted at home, and the Company wrote to Brazil advising its officials (and through them the ministers) not to use the catechisms. Dooreslaer, by all accounts, was furious. In a letter to the church authorities at home, he explained that the Tupi language was indeed so barbarous that it could not properly convey the word of God, but that in difficult circumstances this was the best he could do. The issue provoked controversy on either side of the Atlantic, but the books were probably never used beyond the odd copy here or there, perhaps explaining the 2,951 copies in the Recife warehouse.[30]

What stands out amidst this grotesque yet ultimately familiar tale of Atlantic mismanagement are two things: First, distance was an impediment for the distribution of books: such a concerted mismatch of supply and demand would not have lasted for a decade if not longer in the Dutch Republic or even in Europe. Second, other literature – that is books that were not written and printed with the intention of maintaining or expanding the Reformed faith – were virtually absent in Brazil. The 1645 warehouse list contains hardly any titles that colonists would have read to take their minds off the hardships of

29 Benjamin Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad: The Dutch Imagination and the New World, c. 1570–1670* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

30 Schalkwijk, *Reformed Church*, pp. 218–29 tells the story of the trilingual catechism in great detail, with further (circumstantial) evidence that the catechism is identical to the 2,951 *Vraeghboekjes* in the 1645 inventory.

life in the tropics. Among the 7,500 books, we find only 105 almanacks (of eight different years), a small number if we take into consideration the popularity of these works in the Dutch Golden Age.[31] At the bottom of the list we find as few as eight copies of a play by Terentius, and five copies of *Aesop's Fables*. Together with a handful of dictionaries, these works are the only ones in the inventory without an overtly pious undertone. The evidence of the titles of which only a few copies remained is not unambiguous. It is of course possible that most of the copies of *Aesop's Fables* the West India Company had transported across the Atlantic had already been sold, and that the fact that there were only five copies left in the warehouse should be interpreted as a token of the popularity of *Aesop's Fables* in Brazil. Yet all the other evidence from Recife (as well as from West Africa) appears to indicate that as long as the Dutch were carving out an empire at the expense of the Iberians, books for leisure were not a priority. Hence what was on offer in Pernambuco and on the Gold Coast, in modern eyes, was pretty sterile: Bibles, catechisms, and psalmbooks – lynchpins of even the most modest of private libraries in the Dutch Republic – intertwined with literature intended to convert Catholics to Protestantism, mostly in Spanish.

Two general factors have to be taken into account to explain this disappointing panorama of the printed book in the Dutch Atlantic world. First, chronology: The Dutch managed to hold on to their prized colony in Brazil for only twenty-five years, sixteen of which were marred by war, hunger, and social unrest. More than half of the colony's European inhabitants were soldiers, and although some of the newly arrived – like the German ensign Johann Philipp Mulheiser (in Pernambuco), the administrator Johan Farret (on Curaçao) or the Amsterdam *fiscaal* and poet Willem Godschalck van Focquenbroch (in Elmina)[32] – devoted their spare time to writing poetry, many of them could not read and those who could were no bookworms. Even potentially more highbrow collections of Dutch regents and administrators in Brazil – of which no information has survived – would probably have paled in comparison to the more pluriform aristocratic libraries of some of the Portuguese planters which

31 Jeroen Salman, *Populair drukwerk in de Gouden Eeuw. De almanak als lectuur en handelswaar* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1999).

32 Michiel van Groesen, "Van vaandrig in Brazilië tot dichter in Dordrecht: het *album amicorum* van Johann Philipp Mulheiser (ca. 1603–ca. 1677)", *De zeventiende eeuw* 24.2 (2008): 196–209; Joanne van der Woude and Jaap Jacobs, "Sweet Resoundings: Friendship Poetry by Petrus Stuyvesant and Johan Farret on Curaçao, 1639–1645", *The William and Mary Quarterly* 75.3 (2018): 507–40; Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, "De poetica van een libertijnse zelf-voyeur", *De nieuwe taalgids* 82 (1989): 2–15.

had been amassed over several generations.[33] Secondly, the price of books was a concern. Elsewhere in the Dutch Atlantic orbit – in Flatbush, Long Island – Reformed colonists were charged at least four times as much as customers in Holland for a catechism book.[34] The price difference is of course understandable when we take into account the costs of transportation, but at the same time many of the books we find in the Recife inventory were cheap. A four-hundred percent increase in price to what potential readers were used to at home would deter at least some, perhaps many.

In these difficult circumstances, individual colonists often did not possess more than a dozen books, judging from the situation in early Suriname. In 1672 Jacob Dimmese, a former ship's captain living in Paramaribo, had an inventory of his belongings made up which contained references to twelve books, in print and in manuscript.[35] Some of the entries refer to private papers, such as a "handwritten journal" and "new account of his last voyage", or were otherwise work-related, such as the pilot guide *Schat-kamer der grooten see-vaerts-kunst*. Among the printed books, we find a *huyspostille* and a "large" book of psalms (in quarto), the Calvinist Willem Teellinck's *Lusthoff der Christelijke gebeden* (first printed in 1628 but reprinted many times since), the first edition of the equally pious *Donder-slagh der Goddeloosen* of which no modern copies survive, an undefined "sequel" (*Vervolgh*) to the fifteenth-century Italian humanist Bartolomeo Platina's *'t Leven der Roomse pausen* (in the Dutch translation of 1650), and several unspecified titles that also point to a devout lifestyle. Suriname in the early years under the Dutch was a society in considerable disarray, and its book culture must have been even more barren than in Brazil.[36] Immediately after the Dutch takeover in 1667, the States of Zeeland sent two copies of an unspecified *Beschryvinge van West-Indien*, probably a recent translation of the militant anti-Catholic account by the sixteenth-century Milanese traveller Girolamo Benzoni, to the handful of Dutchmen in Suriname, and there are further snippets of information regarding the shipment of individual books. Yet it would take decades for the colony to prosper, and even longer for books to arrive in greater numbers.[37]

33 Stuart Schwartz, *All Can Be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 183–84.

34 Eric Nooter, *Between Heaven and Earth: Church and Society in pre-Revolutionary Flatbush, Long Island* (unpublished PhD dissertation, Free University, Amsterdam, 2000), p. 132.

35 I owe the reference to Dimmese's inventory of books to Suze Zijlstra.

36 Suze Zijlstra, *Anglo-Dutch Suriname: Ethnic Interaction and Colonial Transition in the Caribbean, 1651–1682* (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 2015).

37 Cohen, *Jews in Another Environment*, pp. 106–23.

In New Netherland, like in Brazil, there was no printing press (not until 1697), but at least there seems to have been a more concerted effort to import a variety of books from the mother country. The many differences in the demand for books, and by extension the book cultures that developed in South and North America, can only be explained by demographical and social factors. Ever since its foundation in 1624, a moment shrouded in modesty at the same time the West India Company sent twenty-six warships to Brazil, New Netherland was destined to be a settlement colony. Although free from the ravages of war, this choice brought its own set of problems: The Dutch Republic did not have large minorities that were pushed towards the New World by religious intolerance like the English, nor did they advertise their colony as a venue for social rise and distinction for noblemen like in Spain. New Netherland's design of proprietary manors famously failed to succeed, apart from the patroonship Rensselaerswijck. More generally, the Dutch lacked the demographic surplus of other European countries to populate a province in the Americas. Yet despite these obstacles, New Netherland had developed into a prosperous settlement colony of more than 5,000 European inhabitants by 1664, the year Director-General Peter Stuyvesant had to surrender the colony to the English. Most of the Dutch colonists decided to stay in New York – a good indication of their relative success in building a future in the New World. Most importantly in this context, many of the colonists came from the middle classes, and literacy rates were much higher than anywhere else in the Dutch Atlantic world. The historian A. Gregg Roeber has estimated that around 1700, "perhaps 80 percent of males and 60 percent of females were fluent in written and printed forms of the Dutch language".[38]

In New Netherland, like in the South Atlantic, the sources to examine the circulation of books are few and far between. Yet the picture that emerges is profoundly different. Although there are many private inventories that do not contain any reading matter, and several that contain only the bare necessities (a Bible, a psalmbook), there are also documents that reveal that some personal collections amounted to a small library. The very well-to-do Margrieta van Varick is by all accounts an exception. Her inventory of January 1697 included no less than 37 Dutch books in quarto, 46 in octavo, and 4 in folio – alongside a Bible and an (Old?) Testament which were bound with golden clasps. The

38 A. Gregg Roeber, "German and Dutch Books and Printing", in: Hugh Amory and David D. Hall, eds., *A History of the Book in America, vol. 1: The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 300. On New Netherland in general, see Jaap Jacobs, *New Netherland: A Dutch Colony in Seventeenth-Century America* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

books, she listed in her will, were to be divided equally amongst her children.[39] More representative perhaps of book ownership in New Netherland are a few surviving inventories from the town of Beverwijck, located along the Hudson River in what is currently the city of Albany.[40] The initial picture is quite similar to that in Brazil. In July 1632, the Amsterdam patroon Kiliaen van Rensselaer ordered the local sheriff Rutger van Soest to "read aloud some chapters from the Holy Scriptures, for which purpose a Bible is herewith sent to them as well as a *huyspostille Schulteti*", a book that was also in use in Brazil and Elmina, and, much later as we have seen, in Suriname.[41] Six years later Van Rensselaer sent "eight small books called *de Practijcke der Godtsaligheyt*, very useful for the families", a volume the consistory of Amsterdam recommended its ministers to pack when leaving for the Atlantic world.[42]

Yet among second-generation settlers in Beverwijck we find private collections that are more substantial than elsewhere in the Dutch Atlantic world. The farmer Jan Gerritsz van Marcken, who was banished from New Amstel on the Delaware in 1659, moved to Beverwijck where four years later he owned sixteen books "great and little", and "2 books with maps".[43] When Gabriel Leendertsz in 1654 auctioned some of his belongings, he sold among many other things two Bibles and a Heidelberg catechism, seven unspecified books (to four different people), and Johan van Beverwijck's *Schat der gesontheyt*. Judging by their size, albeit still modest, and by what little we know of their contents, the libraries of New Netherland included more diverse reading matter – works we do not find in the collections in battleground towns like Recife and Elmina. On his first visit to New Netherland in 1654, the trader Jeremias van Rensselaer carried seven books along, including a book titled *Hendrick de Grote* probably written by P.C. Hooft, Vondel's *Joseph*, and a panegyric on stadtholder Frederick Hendrik. In the 1670s, Jeremias developed an interest in religious literature beyond the predictable light religious fare we find elsewhere, including Adrianus

39 Deborah L. Krohn and Peter N. Miller, eds., *Dutch New York between East & West: The World of Margrieta van Varick* (New Haven and London: New York Historical Society & Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 343–46.

40 Janny Venema, *Beverwijck: A Dutch Village on the American Frontier, 1652–1664* (Hilversum/Albany: Verloren & SUNY Press, 2003), pp. 324–26.

41 *Van Rensselaer Bowier Manuscripts, being the Letters of Kiliaen van Rensselaer, 1630–1643*, ed. A.F. van Laer (Albany: University of the State of New York, 1908), p. 208.

42 Frijhoff, *Fulfilling God's Mission*, p. 323 – who estimates that this translation of Lewis Bayly's *Practice of Godliness* "may well have been the most popular spritual treatise of the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic".

43 *Early Records of the City and County of Albany*, eds. J. Pearson and A.F. van Laer (4 vols.; Albany, 1869), I, p. 344.

Cocquius' *Ware Practycque der Godt-Geleerdheit* – the second volume of which he asked his brother in Amsterdam to buy and send to him.[44]

The demand for books, and the absence of a printing press, created new commercial opportunities. That Gijsbert van Imborch, physician in the village of Esopus (Kingston), possessed a series of medical books is no surprise. On his deathbed in 1665, when an inventory of his belongings was made up, he owned volumes written by the likes of Andreas Vesalius and Nicolaes Tulp, for example, in a private library that altogether amounted to some forty titles including works by authors as diverse as Livy, Emanuel van Meteren, Sebastian Franck, and Paolo Sarpi.[45] Van Imborch, however, had served by life as a kind of improvised bookseller of some standing. In 1652, he had a shipment of Bibles, testaments, and catechisms sent over from Holland in order to sell these in New Netherland. When the demand for books was disappointing, he asked Stuyvesant for permission to organize a lottery. He was granted his wish, on the condition that "the price of books was increased a little in comparison to what he had paid in Holland", a third of the revenues of which Van Imborch had to hand over to the deaconry in Esopus.[46] What was on offer and what was sold in 1655 is unknown, but ten years later Van Imborch's inventory reads like a small bookseller's stock catalogue. It includes 83 copies of the *History of Tobias*, 8 *Histories of David*, 23 *Histories of Joseph*, 100 catechisms, 102 A.B.C. books, and 48 copies of Jacobus Borstius' *Kort begrijp der Christelijke Leere* – amidst many other books that were intended for the pious and the young.[47] Many titles in Van Imborch's catalogue overlapped with the warehouse list of the West India Company in Recife, but twenty years later – and 5,000 miles further north – it did at last show a bit more variety.

All of these initiatives to bring books to Manhattan and the Hudson Valley may have been haphazard and incidental in nature, but together they created a more lively Dutch book culture than can be established for the more populous (and occasionally rather romanticized) settlement in northeast Brazil. Books circulated and were avidly sought after. The diary of Jasper Danckerts, who travelled across New York in 1679–1680, tells us as much. Danckerts, a follower

44 Venema, *Beverwijck*, pp. 324–25. The auction inventory can be found in *Early Records of the City and County of Albany*, I, pp. 206–7 – but I follow Venema's slightly different reading of the list.

45 A. Eekhof, *De Hervormde Kerk in Noord-Amerika* (*1624–1664*) (2 vols.; The Hague: Nijhoff, 1913), II, pp. 163–64.

46 Eekhof, *De Hervormde Kerk*, II, p. 164: "Dat de boecken … een centjen sullen verhoocht worden boven hetgeene sy in Hollant gecost hebben, van welcke winst een derde sal gegeven worden aen de dyaconye deser steede".

47 Ibid.

of Jean de Labadie, had a keen interest in books. In Manhattan, he met a man from Middelburg, who

> had been an apprentice to Jacques Fierens, printer, at the Globe in the Gi[st]straat, and, although I had been often enough in that house, and he knew my face, he did not know me particularly. He came to this country with Cornelis Everts of Zeeland, and had assisted in taking it from the English in 1674. He had remained here since and married. He sometimes bound old books, and was the only bookbinder in the country.[48]

All the people Danckerts met during his travels he questioned about the books they owned and liked (or disliked). The picture that emerges here is suddenly quite diverse. Danckerts was presented with lots of religious literature, mostly recommended by fellow Labadists, but also with *Les Pensées de Pascal*, a book by the Flemish physician and chemist Jan Baptista van Helmont (in English), and an edition of Virgil's *Aeneid*. It is evident that Danckerts had brought many books to New York himself, because he generously distributed Labadist writings. He also acquired books, none more exotic than "one of the Old Testaments in the Indian language, and also almost the whole of the New Testament, made up with some sheets of the new edition of the New Testament, so that we had the Old and New Testaments complete" – quite an achievement because Danckerts had been informed that many Indian Bibles and Testaments "were carried away, and burnt or destroyed".[49] Upon his return to Amsterdam, he immediately went to the bookshops to fulfil his promises to friends in North America to send them reading matter they had ordered. One colonist wanted a good new Bible, which, Danckerts wrote, "cost us twenty-eight guilders, because it was the last one of Ravensteyn's edition. […] We put it on board of the ship […] which would leave in a month's time".[50] The oceanic crossing meant that the Dutch colonist had to wait for his new Bible just a little bit longer, but ultimately he received what he had desired.

"The Garbon", the supervisor of the island kingdom Krinke Kesmes, was impressed by the variety of books in the hold of a fictional Dutch ship shortly after 1700. If inhabitants of the Dutch Atlantic world would have seen the books the anonymous skipper had brought along, they would probably have been impressed too. In reality, Gracián, Euclid, and Descartes did not cross the ocean.

48 *Journal of Jasper Danckaerts, 1679–1680*, eds. Bartlett Burleigh James and J. Franklin (New York: American Historical Association, 1952), pp. 81–82 (27 Oct. 1679).

49 Idem, 264 (8 July 1680).

50 Idem, 296 (9 Oct. 1680).

In the embattled Dutch Atlantic world of the seventeenth century, only the Reformed Church had the means and the will to transport books across the ocean in large numbers. The discrepancy between orthodoxy at home and a more muddled practice in the Americas, however, meant that this process was far from smooth – especially when compared to the Jesuit campaigns orchestrated from the Southern Netherlands to stock their New World convents with spiritual literature.[51] The focus was on two aspects: maintaining the beliefs of the colonists, fueled by a whole string of canonical texts of Reformed Protestantism. And, secondly, attempting to convert Catholic colonists who inhabited the Dutch orbit by means of the distribution of books in Spanish. Both tendencies began with the foundation of the WIC in 1621 – and occasionally even earlier – and continued at least until the end of the 1640s when the Dutch Atlantic empire slowly began to disintegrate. Seen through the lens of the printed book, much of the Dutch Atlantic world never reached maturity, and many of the books that were transported across the ocean never reached their intended readers. The only colony that was deliberately designed to become a true settlement colony, New Netherland, appears to have been an exception to this rule. Here the book world gradually extended beyond the immediate designs of the Reformed Church. With the benefit of time, and the promise of a future in the New York area, a second generation of settlers assembled more varied collections of printed books. Here, too, Bibles, catechisms, and schoolbooks featured, but ultimately a book culture developed that slowly began to resemble that of the mother country they had forever left behind.

51 Dirk Imhof, "De Officina Plantiniana en de Moretussen: De Spaanse edities van de Moretussen en hun boekhandel met Spanje en Latijns-Amerika in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw", in: Eddy Stols and Werner Thomas, eds., *Een wereld op papier: Zuid-Nederlandse boeken, prenten en kaarten in het Spaanse en Portugese wereldrijk (16de–18de eeuw)* (Acco: Leuven/The Hague, 2009), pp. 79–80.