

Wim Klooster, *The Dutch Moment: War, Trade, and Settlement in the Seventeenth-Century Atlantic World* (Leiden: Leiden University Press; Ithaca NY, Cornell University Press, 2016, 376 pp., ISBN 978 0801450457).

The Dutch Golden Age stood out as a period when the seven united provinces commanded the unparalleled ability to mobilize labor and project violence across the world. In the history of the Atlantic World this period can be characterized as its ‘Dutch moment’. For a few decades the Netherlands were a crucial factor in the military and economic balance of forces in the trans-Atlantic world of trade, conquest, enslavement and settlement. As Klooster states, violence was a crucial element of this Dutch moment. The ‘Dutch Atlantic empire was forged in the battlefield’ (3). Front and center in this new history of the Dutch Atlantic is Brazil. This has not always been the case. For long, Dutch Brazil was only remembered as having an art-historical relevance. This often-ignored episode in Dutch history is now returning to its rightful place in the canon of the Golden Age.

Until Michiel van Groesen’s *The Legacy of Dutch Brazil* (2014) the wider implications of the Dutch colonial project in Brazil remained understudied. Van Groesen posits that the reason for this historiographical lacuna has long been the association of Brazil with an ‘embarrassing failure’. This point has also been taken up by Klooster who notes the same quick transition from hubris to embarrassment and forgetfulness. The new studies move away from the methodological nationalism that has engendered the forgetting of ‘Brazil’. As a result, the history of Dutch Brazil is clearly in for a new round of promising historical investigations. It should however be said that the limit to this upsurge remains that all recent publications on Dutch Brazil have been in English rather than Dutch. The publication of a Dutch translation of *The Dutch Moment* in 2018 will certainly remedy this.

By using the metaphor of the ‘unleashed lion’ Klooster has magnificently captured the early Dutch steps into the Atlantic. In the opening chapters Klooster offers us new information about the early ventures and he has also managed to dig up details of forgotten colonization schemes in the later period. An overemphasis on military prowess would not do justice to the Dutch Atlantic moment. Klooster keenly chose to include revolts and mutinies in his narrative of the Dutch moment (141). Resistance by the sailors and soldiers often confined the ambitions of commanders and this observation adds valuable insights to our understanding of the dynamics of the expansion. The violence projected outwards could just as

easily come to haunt those in power, a notion that adds to the metaphor of the ‘unleashed lion’.

Violence came at a cost. The figures of the deaths at the two battles of Guararapes – with 500 and well over a thousand Dutch casualties respectively – are sobering. Not only did the colonial project end in defeat, there were also structural weaknesses to the Dutch empire. The inability to rely on domestic settlers created a need for ‘tolerance’ of non-Dutch and non-Dutch Reformed elements in the colonies. With the possible exception of Amsterdam, religious tolerance was limited in the Dutch Republic of the seventeenth century. This was, however, ‘the norm in the colonies’. The Reformed ministers did not like this, but deviating from a tolerant course overseas proved to be much more costly than opposition from stringent Calvinists. The Dutch found out the hard way how costly it was when the Catholic Portuguese in Dutch Brazil rose in revolt.

Calling the overseas expansion of the Republic the ‘Dutch Moment’ has a catchy ring to it, although Klooster himself admits that this phrase might imply an overtly national interpretation of a wave of conquest and wars that were not clearly fought along national lines. Chapter 7 is therefore devoted entirely to the ‘non-Dutch’ in the Dutch Atlantic, both other Europeans, inter-imperial merchants, those of other faiths than the Dutch Reformed church and of course the enslaved Africans. He repeatedly touches on the Dutch attempts to recruit indigenous and enslaved auxiliaries to their armies (29, 50, 86, 90). The Dutch Atlantic empire was constructed ‘with the help of others’ in much the same way that the Dutch aided in the construction of the other empires.

Assessing the Dutch Moment also invites a comment about the remaining century of Dutch presence in the Atlantic. In the last quarter of the seventeenth century the Dutch had changed from being ‘attackers’ to becoming ‘defenders’. The period following the loss of Brazil has been characterized by the Dutch role as middlemen in the Atlantic world. Klooster reaffirms this view by investigating inter-imperial trade. The Dutch now rose to prominence, at one time becoming the greatest slave traders of the Atlantic world (164).

Violence is expensive and the Dutch assault on the Atlantic contributed to the bankruptcy of the Dutch West India Company (51). Scaling down their operation, Klooster provides a reassessment of the fates of private settlements (patroonships). These ventures were aimed at pooling private investments into the colonial expansion. When the seventeenth century came to a close, the Dutch Atlantic was no longer very special. The Dutch and its colonies became followers of the French and British, albeit on a much smaller scale.

In the ongoing surge of Dutch Atlantic publications, Wim Klooster has taken center stage. As an editor and an author, Klooster has been contributing to the literature on the general Atlantic world, and specifically to the Dutch in Atlantic history. His latest work, *The Dutch Moment*, makes many valuable

contributions to our understanding of the Atlantic world and the Dutch in it. The greatest contribution by Klooster undoubtedly lies in the boldness of his work paired with the fact that he has no fear of exploring archival sources. He has used them extensively to reassess the Dutch Moment and setting a new standard for contributions to Dutch Atlantic history.

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