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Edited by Franco Moretti:

The Novel, Volume 2: Forms and Themes

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BENEDICT ANDERSON

Max Havelaar
(Multatuli, 1860)

These were truly four anni mirabiles. In 1818 were born Ivan Turgenev and Emily Brontë, in 1819, Herman Melville and George Eliot; and in 1821, Fyodor Dostoevsky and Gustave Flaubert. Right in the middle, in 1820, came Eduard Douwes Dekker, better known by his nom de plume, Multatuli. His novel *Max Havelaar*, which over the past 140 years has been translated into more than forty languages and has given him a certain international reputation, appeared in 1860. It was thus sandwiched between, on the one side, *On the Eve* (1860), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), George Sand's *Le marquis de Villemer* (1860), *Great Expectations* (1860–61) *Adam Bede*, *The Confidence Man*, *Madame Bovary*, and *Oblomov* (all in 1857); and on the other, *Silas Marner* (1861), *Fathers and Sons*, *Salamambo*, and *Les misérables* (1862), *War and Peace* (starting in 1865), and *Crime and Punishment* (1866). This was the generation in which Casanova's "world republic of letters," subdivision the novel, hitherto dominated by French and British males, was first profoundly challenged from its margins: by formidable women in the Channel-linked cores and by extraordinary figures from beyond the Atlantic and across the steppe. Douwes Dekker, who emerged startlingly from one literary terra incognita, the tiny kingdom of The Netherlands (*ons kleine land*, as the Dutch still like to say), newly cooked up by the Holy Alliance, and wrote about another on the remote southeast fringes of Asia—the vast royal colony in the Indies—was another remarkable contributor to the ranks of these "I will be heard" novelists.

Douwes Dekker's father, a Calvinist sea captain of simple means but with extensive experience in Europe as a smuggler undermining Napoleon's Continental System and in Asia as a long-distance transporter of tropical products, arranged in 1839 for his half-schooled, highly intelligent, romantic, and egotistical nineteen-year-old boy to sail to the East Indies to seek a career and a fortune in the colonial administrative service.¹ In 1857, having achieved neither, the embittered, indebted son resigned and returned to

¹ Dik van der Meulen's *Multatuli: Leven en Werken (Multatuli: Life and Works)* (Nijmegen: Sun, 2002), almost nine hundred pages long, is now the overweight standard work on Douwes Dekker's life, if not his work. The most acute literary study of *Max Havelaar* is Marcel Janssens, *Max Havelaar, de held van Lebak (Max Havelaar, the Hero of Lebak)*. (Utrecht: Standard, 1970).

Europe. Three years later, his life until then almost exactly divided between The Netherlands and the Indies, he had become the most talked-of man in his home country. With *Max Havelaar* reasonably soon translated into English (1868), French (1876), and, exceptionally badly, German (1875), he started to be esteemed as the first European novelist to unmask in detail the exploitation and oppression inflicted by colonialism on Asia. Frans Rade-maker's visually splendid 1976 adaptation of the novel for the screen perpetuates exactly this "Harriet Beecher Stowe of the East" reputation.

But D. H. Lawrence shrewdly understood Douwes Dekker as above all a satirist and ironist. He wrote that for the novelist pity for the oppressed natives in the Indies was merely a "chick" hatched by the "bird of hate." "The great dynamic force in *Multatuli* is as it was, really, in Jean Paul and in Swift and Gogol, and in Mark Twain, hate, a passionate, honourable hate."² The strange narrative structure of *Max Havelaar* amply confirms this estimation and shows the reader how hatred creates a narrative bridge across two continents.

The Netherlands in which the author grew up was a shadow of the dominant world power of Rembrandt's midseventeenth-century Golden Age, when Dutch fleets burned their way up the Thames and dominated the huge maritime arc between the Cape of Good Hope and Kyushu. Overrun by France's revolutionary armies, given its first brief monarch by the Corsican Emperor, annexed into France, beggared by war and the Continental System, and subjected by London and Berlin to Orange absolutism, it had

² See his striking, but hasty and slovenly introduction to the second, worse English translation by William Siebenhaar, and published in New York by Knopf in 1927 (ix). He thought that compositionally the book was "the greatest mess possible," completely missing its intricate, sophisticated structure. Dutch literary historians, with some irritation, note that Lawrence has been the only "world-class" writer to have devoted some real published attention to Douwes Dekker. But it was a curious business. Siebenhaar was a Dutchman who emigrated to western Australia as a young man and served as a local civil servant from 1895 to 1916, when he was dismissed on charges of subversion and anarchism. He was an admirer of *The White Peacock* and *The Rainbow*, and attached himself clamlike to Lawrence and his wife on their visit to Perth in 1922. When he showed Lawrence a long essay he had written on Dekker, the famous man was sufficiently interested ("it's a queer work—real genius") to urge Siebenhaar to do a modern translation of *Max Havelaar*, promising to help find a publisher for it. Knopf, Lawrence's American publisher, finally did agree to print the translation, but only on condition that Lawrence write an introduction that could be prominently advertised. By this time, Lawrence had decided that the translator was "a bore" and resented being stuck with his commitment. These circumstances help explain the odd character of what Lawrence produced. This amusing history is described well in Oskar Wellens, "'A Queer Work': De toestandkoming van de Tweede Engelse *Max Havelaar* (1927)" ("'A Queer Work': How the Second (1927) English Translation of *Max Havelaar* Came into Existence"), *Over Multatuli* 48 (2002): 36–40.

become a backwater consoled only by pietism, gradgrindery, *and* hope from the exploitation of the Indies, the last significant residue of the once hegemonic intercontinental imperium.³

In the seventeenth and even part of the eighteenth centuries, the United East India Company, headquartered in Amsterdam, was the largest and most transnational corporation in the world, dominating the Indian Ocean by control of the Cape of Good Hope, Ceylon, and the Malacca Straits, as well as the South China and Java seas as far as the shores of Japan. Its executives and personnel were recruited from all over Protestant Europe (except rival England), as well as from many parts of Asia and Africa. Collaboration with subordinated native elites ensured an abundant, coerced supply of profitable agricultural products, while maritime supremacy guaranteed a high-markup monopoly on their delivery to European and Asian destinations. Increasingly corrupt, inbred, and incompetent, The Company finally went bankrupt in 1799, and the beginning of a modern state-controlled colonialism was undertaken. But twelve years later, just after Napoleon had liquidated The Netherlands as a political entity, the English had seized all the former Company possessions. The Netherlands eventually got back the East Indies only by ceding the Cape and Ceylon to London. Thus the Indies to which Douwes Dekker came at the end of the 1830s was not at all a conventionally exotic, unexplored nineteenth-century new colony, but a terrain so long familiar that *Max Havelaar* scarcely needed to locate its toponyms or to explain to readers its casual borrowings from Malay and Javanese. They had been seeping into Dutch for two centuries.

But it was also, in his time, a shrunken inheritor of the past. Now the property of bourgeois-absolutist Willem I of Orange, the colony was closed not merely to foreigners, but even to most Dutchmen. The Cultivation System, installed three years before Douwes Dekker's arrival, and lasting until 1870, pitilessly systematized the traditional practices of the Company, while vastly expanding the range of coerced crops (tea, coffee, sugar, indigo, quinine, and so forth). Meantime, the royally controlled Dutch Trading Company monopolized the export of all these commodities. The colossal profits of this racket made possible The Netherlands' economic stabilization and its late passage to industrialism.⁴ Lacking serious military power and dependent

³ Napoleon put his brother Louis on the newly created Dutch throne in 1806, but kicked him out in 1810 because of what the emperor described as his *manie d'humanité*, and then decreed the annexation.

⁴ Over the four decades of its life, the Cultivation System paid off the company's standing debt of 35.5 million guilders and provided The Netherlands with an additional, staggering 664.5 million.

ultimately on London for their security, the colony's rulers more than ever relied on the cooptation of native aristocrats whose enthusiasm for the Cultivation System was ensured by a substantial share of its profits. There was nothing adventurous or new here. Colony and metropole have rarely been so intermeshed: as the old saw went, *Indië verloren, rampspoed geboren* (the Indies lost, instant calamity). Such was the terrain in which Douwes Dekker, self-imagined child of *Emile*, *Kenilworth*, and *Don Quixote* spent almost two decades.

He was convinced that his more-or-less forced resignation from colonial service was the consequence of his efforts to protect the peasant population that he supervised in the district of Lebak (on the western tip of Java) from a huge array of abuses—illegal corvée labor, expropriation of land, theft of property, torture, and murder—practiced by the local native aristocrats with the connivance of the colonial bureaucracy to which he belonged. On his return to The Netherlands, armed with hundreds of copied documents and letters, he tried—fruitlessly—to get himself reinstated and promoted. *Max Havelaar* was composed by a man who felt he had very little to lose.⁵ But he had also become acutely aware of the paradox that a “true story” (like his own) entered society only as what Walter Benjamin contemptuously described as “information,” but that the same society could be gripped by a

Of the latter, 236 million went to reduce the public debt, 115 to cover a reduction on the taxes Dutchmen paid, 115 to create the state railway system, and 146 to the useless, but employment-creating, improvement of the country's fortifications. George McT. Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1952), 11.

⁵ With some tergiversations. At one brief point, he actually offered to withdraw the manuscript from publication if he were rehabilitated, promoted, given a lucrative new post in Java's sugar belt, and awarded a royal decoration. There is some evidence that he decided to use a nom de plume partly not to jeopardize the chance of rehabilitation. Probably more important, he wanted to bury the failure of “Douwes Dekker” under the éclat of a new historical figure: “Multatuli.” As for the choice of this odd Latin pen name, one can take one's pick. It may have been drawn from lines 413–24 of Horace's *Ars Poetica*: *Multa tulit fecitque puer, sudavit et alsit, Abstinit venere et vino* (As a youth [he] endured much, and much achieved, he sweated and shivered, and abstained from sex and wine). In his article “Nomen est omen,” (*Over Multatuli* 24 [1990]: 63–70), G. Kooops-Van Bruggen makes a good case for this interpretation on the basis of Douwes Dekker's attendance at a Latin school when a boy, and the fondness for Horace he exhibited in his published writing and private letters. The author goes on to say that the meaning of the name is that Douwes Dekker has “paid his dues” as an artist by his experience, training, and achievement. On the other hand, the popular interpretation is “I have suffered much,” and if this is right, a possible source is Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, verse 5: “For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.” By 1860, Douwes Dekker was certainly a free-thinker, if not yet an atheist, but his writing is full of biblical references and quotations. It may have amused him to melt Horace into Jesus.

“fiction.” He had before his eyes Harriet Beecher Stowe’s capture of millions of readers for her fictional *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) and probably also the market failure of her follow-up, *A Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, an impressive five-hundred-page dossier of the documents on which the novel had been based.⁶ But he also—because after all his own case was involved—wanted the “truth of documents” to speak. One could say that his motto should have been: Besides, it’s true.

Max Havelaar’s ironical subtitle reads *The Coffee Sales of the Netherlands Trading Company*. The reader will eventually discover that no coffee grows, or can be grown, in Lebak, and that no one in the Indies portion of the narrative even speaks about coffee. The subtitle turns out to be the title intended by the narrator of the early chapters of the book, and of bits and pieces later on. This “I” immediately identifies himself as Batavus Droogstoppel, a successful Amsterdam coffee broker, whose wealth depends on the Indies, then the most famous producer of coffee (we used to call it “java”) for a large, addicted Western public. Batavus Droogstoppel is a brilliant figure, quasi-Linnaean as an animal genus, but also linked to the colonial capital, Batavia, the ancient Batavi, usually reliable sepoy for the ancient Romans (a.k.a. the modern English), and the French revolutionary Batavian Republic of 1795–1806. But it is the surname Droogstoppel (Drystubble) that has become an indelible negative national trope for a prevalent type of Dutch middle-aged bourgeois male—hypocritical, grasping, pompous, puritanical, and utterly provincial.⁷

Droogstoppel confides to the reader that he recently ran into an old

⁶ He had mixed feelings about the novel. In chapter 17 of *Max Havelaar* the momentary “I” says: “Can its main point be denied to Uncle Tom’s Cabin, just because there never existed an Evangeline? Shall people say to the author of that immortal plea—immortal not by art or talent, but by purpose and intensity—shall they say to her, ‘You have lied; the slaves are not ill-treated; for there is untruth in your book—it is a novel.’” (My translation, from the critical edition of G. Stuiveling, *Max Havelaar* [Amsterdam: G. A. van Oorschot, 1950], 204. All subsequent quotations are my translations from this edition. Any italic is in the original.) From other writings of his, it is pretty clear that he thought his “campaign” for the Javanese paralleled hers for the American slaves, but he had all the genius that she lacked.

⁷ Although Dekker never acknowledged this, it is generally accepted today that the coffee broker is an ingenious mixed borrowing from Walter Scott, whose novels were hugely popular in eighteenth-century Holland, as elsewhere. The name comes from Dr. Dryasdust, the antiquarian Scott uses to introduce or frame *Peperil of the Peak*, *The Adventures of Nigel*, *Redgauntlet*, etc. The transition proceeds thus: literal translation of *Droog-als-stof*, to Droogstoffel, and finally to Droogstoppel. The coffee broker’s manner and style comes partly from the business-obsessed elder Osbaldstone in *Rob Roy*. See Jan Paul Hinrichs’s well-argued case in his “Rob Roy en Max Havelaar,” in *Over Multatuli* 34 (2000): 39–51.

schoolmate, who once saved him from a beating. Fallen on hard times, this personage wraps himself in an old shawl against the winter cold—Droogstoppel Irishly calls him Shawlie (that is, Sjaalman). The poor wretch begs the coffeebroker's help in publishing a manuscript and a dossier of documents concerning coffee cultivation in the Indies. It turns out that Shawlie is a former colonial civil servant who now earns a pittance helping a successful book dealer whose name translates as Talentsucker. Droogstoppel is gradually lured into accepting Shawlie's bundle of papers by the idea of publishing under his own name *Something Important on Coffee*. He turns over the dossier to a German boy invited to board with the Droogstoppel family. ("Young Stern" is the son of a wealthy coffee merchant on the Hamburg Exchange, whom Batavus thereby hopes to keep as a customer.) Ordered to work up the material into "something that resembles a novel," the German lad, in alliance with Droogstoppel's increasingly "insolent" son Frits, produces chapters to be read aloud at weekly intervals to friends and family. These readings increasingly delight the boys and the daughters of Droogstoppel's friends, while horrifying and boring most of their elders, including the now proverbial Parson Wawelaar (Twaddler), a biting caricature of the kind of stupid Calvinist preacher who justified the colonial project *in nomine Eius*.⁸

The effect of these early chapters, in which Douwes Dekker's perfect ear for different kinds of bourgeois cant is displayed, is not to make the absurdity of the framing device plausible, but to engage the reader's laughter and complicity, and seduce him or her to keep on reading as the setting moves from Europe to Asia. Most of the novel's remaining chapters purport to be Young Stern's transformation of Shawlie's documents into a "novel," but in the narrative few traces of a young German just beginning to learn Dutch are visible.⁹ The "I" not only knows a great deal that no young German could possibly know, even from a dossier, but is the obvious doppelgänger of the ostensible hero, rebellious colonial civil servant Max Havelaar. In a marvelous tactical move, Douwes Dekker split himself into a young idealist fictional hero and an older, sardonic narrator,¹⁰ a mix too of the non-Dutch

⁸ After Drystubble, Talentsucker, and Twaddler, one might expect that the name Havelaar would also be coded. There is no such word in Dutch, but *haveloos* (ragged, in rags) is a close neighbor.

⁹ Douwes Dekker was great admirer of Schiller and Goethe, and knew much of Heine by heart. Droogstoppel observes scornfully that Young Stern "like Germans in general, has a smattering of literature." He also, says the coffee broker, is a dreamer (*hy schwärmt*).

¹⁰ Many critics have suggested that the figure of Havelaar is modeled partly on the altruistic aristocrat in Eugène Sue's 1842–43 *Les mystères de Paris* and also partly on *Don Quixote*. In the

Stern and the fallen Shawlie. There is only minimal concealment of the artifice of this split, which also limns Douwes Dekker's own transformation from young administrator to mature satirist. The reader is to be intrigued by the equivocation and gradually swept into the "true" story of Douwes Dekker's career now masked to "resemble a novel." Yet not entirely. There are frequent Droogstoppel interventions, commenting on the fictionality ("lies") of Stern's "draft-novel," as well as amusing digressions—in the vein of Tristram Shandy's creator, who delighted Douwes Dekker—on everything from the ludicrousness of para-Gothic architecture to the symbolic meaning of dysentery for the arc of official careers in the colony.

The narrator takes the reader straight to the scene of the sensational denouement, the fatal few months of Havelaar's Indies bureaucratic service, now in, of course, Douwes Dekker's Lebak. But the earlier career of Havelaar/Douwes Dekker is recapitulated in Havelaar's sharp and funny dinnertime monologues about his years on the west coast of Sumatra, the north of tip of Celebes, and Amboina. In these chapters the reader is probably bemused by Multatuli's narrating Stern's narration of Shawlie's narration of Havelaar's story. But the layering is carried off by the brio of Douwes Dekker's style and his frequent written winks. It is Havelaar, not Shawlie or Douwes Dekker, who regularly insists that he has the documents to prove that what he is narrating really happened. This is the way in which the political truth of Java is tied to the social-moral truth of midcentury Holland.

The core "story" describes how Havelaar and his family arrive in Lebak with every intention of ending the abuse of the native population by the local native chiefs. It is characteristic of Douwes Dekker's account that the "feudal" abuses practiced by these chiefs are described as basically age-old features of Oriental despotism and in this sense are part of native culture. Havelaar rather likes his main adversary, an elderly aristocrat trying to live out the lifestyle traditional to his class within the constrictive carapace of Dutch colonial monopoly-capitalism. His fury is directed overwhelmingly at the corruption, cowardice, and racism of Dutch officialdom. Frustrated by his subordinates and threatened by his immediate superiors, he demands that the key native chiefs be arrested and indicted, only to discover that the highest authority, the royally appointed governor-general—who understands no

letters he wrote to woo his first wife, Dekker often spoke admiringly of Rodolphe and Sue's novel (his fiancée hated both), and he is said always to have had a copy of Cervantes' masterwork about him. See, for example, Janssens's *Max Havelaar*, 16–17; and Paul Vincent, "Multatuli en Rizal Nader Bekeken" ("Further Reflections on Multatuli and José Rizal"), *Over Multatuli* 5 (1980): 58–67.

native language—has little intention of upsetting any applegarts.¹¹ Influential and loyal chiefs are scarce commodities, whereas young, troublesome Dutch officials are easily replaced.

Toward the end of the novel there is another abrupt narrative break for a chapter devoted to the melodramatic and sentimental story of two poor village sweethearts, Saidjah and Adinda—the only part of *Max Havelaar* widely known and loved in contemporary Indonesia. Saidjah's father is robbed of his livelihood by the chiefs, leaves Lebak to find work elsewhere, is mercilessly flogged for traveling without papers, and eventually dies. Saidjah goes to work in Batavia, expecting to return after three years with money enough to marry Adinda and settle down peacefully. But on his return he finds her family house razed and her father and his children fled across the Sunda Strait to join rebels fighting near the southern tip of Sumatra. He follows them only to find they have been killed by Dutch troops, Adinda mutilated into the bargain, and ends his own life with a desperate solo attack on his oppressors.

Droogstoppel is dismayed that the young ones around him adore this “fiction” above all else in “Stern’s novel.” (It is also the core episode in Frans Rademaker’s film.) Strikingly, the “authors” partly concur. A narrative “I”—who seems more and more plainly to be Douwes Dekker/Multatuli himself, announces a confession: “Yes, a confession, reader! I do not know whether Saidjah loved Adinda. Nor whether he went to Batavia, Nor whether he was murdered in the Lampongs with Dutch bayonets. I do not know whether his father succumbed as a consequence of the rattan-scourging he received for having left Badoor [home] without a travel-pass. . . . All this I do not know! But I know *more* than this. I know *and I can prove* that there were *many* Adindas and *many* Saidjahs, and that *what is fiction in a particular case is truth in general* (204).¹²

The novel ends with an extraordinary collapse of the entire layered framework. “Enough, my good Stern! I, Multatuli, take up the pen. You

¹¹ Although full Orange absolutism came to an end in the magic year 1848 with the drawing up a constitution, the Indies continued to be personally controlled by the Dutch monarchy—largely beyond the purview of the newly constituted parliament. This situation did not change politically until 1870, nor socially, until the opening of the Suez Canal and the abolition of passports for Dutch people who wanted to enter the Indies.

¹² It is interesting that exactly this idea underlies the Cuban Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda’s visionary nationalist-abolitionist novel *Sab*, published in 1847 (of course, in Spain, not Cuba), five years before *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. She also wrote of her eponymous slave hero (before Flaubert’s cross-gendered identification with Emma Bovary): “*Sab, c’est moi.*” See the fine account in Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), chap. 4.

were not called upon to write Havelaar's history! I called you into being. I made you come from Hamburg. . . . I taught you to write pretty good Dutch, in a very short time. . . . It is enough, stern, you may go. . . . Halt! Miserable product of dirty moneygrubbing and blasphemous hypocrisy! I have created you. . . . You grew into a monster under my pen. . . . I am nauseated by my own creation: choke on coffee and vanish!" (236). In the concluding peroration we are warned that "*I will be read!*" (237). Should nothing be done radically to improve the condition of the Javanese: "[I would] translate my book into the few languages that I know and into the many languages that I can still learn, so to ask from Europe what I would have sought in vain in the Netherlands. And in all the capitals songs would be sung with refrains like this: *a pirate state lies on the sea between the Scheldt and Eastern Friesland!* And if even this did not avail? Then I would translate my book into Malay, Javanese, Sundanese, Alfurese, Buginese, Batak . . . and I should hurl *kléwang*-wielding [a native machete, but he does not need to explain this] warsongs into the hearts of the martyrs to whom I have promised help, I, Multatuli . . ." (238) This is a call, not for an antifeudal insurrection of natives against their abusive chiefs, but rather for the overthrow of colonialism itself, aided long-distance by a former colonial ruler. This stance one will not find, even half a century later, in Forster's *A Passage to India*, or Farère's *Les civilisés*, or still later in Orwell's *Burmese Days* Perhaps one has to wait till Genet's play *Les paravents*.

In The Netherlands, Douwes Dekker is almost universally regarded as the father of modern Dutch prose based firmly on the vernacular and in the street. In *Max Havelaar*, he invented the "novel that resembles a novel." From a certain angle, the book can also be seen as an olio of pitch-perfect parodies of existing genres—colonial bureaucratise, Calvinist sermons, sentimental romances, bad poetry, antibourgeois boutades, policymaker puffery, romantic self-aggrandizement and self-abasement, gothic intrigues, dilettante-journalistic social criticism, and so on. Since parody is necessarily parasitic, its peculiar stylistic pleasures are, alas, largely untranslatable, let alone in their zigzag juxtaposition. But no one can miss the aptness of Lawrence's final English point: "When there are no more Drystubbles, no more Governor-Generals or Slijmerings, then *Max Havelaar* will be out of date. The book is a pill rather than a comfit. The jam of pity was put on to get the pill down. Our fathers and grandfathers licked the jam off. We can still go on taking the pill, for the social constipation is as bad as ever" (ix).

Max Havelaar strikes one today as very remote from its untricky coevals, *On the Eve*, *The Mill on the Floss*, and *Madame Bovary*, which seem firmly, if nervously, embedded in national or quasi-national societies. But one can feel

certain affinities with the relentless ironizing, angry laughter, and reader-toying of the man who had seen his *Moby Dick* plummet into public oblivion. It is quite possible to read *The Confidence Man* as located in something boundless and transcontinental, with Memphis and Boston as far from, and near to, each other as Batavia and Amsterdam. From this point of view, Douwes Dekker's novel, like Melville's, serves as a portent of the world we endure today.

It remains to consider the absorbing history of *Max Havelaar's* entry into the world-republic of letters as that institution expanded its dominion and experienced internal transformations. As has been noted, Douwes Dekker's visibility should have been substantial in that he was translated into the key languages of English, French, and German in his own lifetime. The German version, however, excising half the original and full of errors, sank without a trace. The clumsy French version was briefly and mostly favorably noticed but also seems to have had little impact. The English version, nicely accompanied by a detailed map of Java and executed by an Anglophile Dutchman, Baron Alphonse Nahuys, was well received and is still very readable. But against Douwes Dekker's hopes it led to no political movement of solidarity, despite the Great Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 and the liquidation of the English version of the United East India Company. Probably, the contemporary hegemon was too certain that it always did things better, including colonialism, than the people across the Channel. It was almost certainly this version that so excited José Rizal, then researching Philippine history in the British Museum, that he wrote to his friend, the Austrian ethnologist Ferdinand Blumentritt on December 6, 1888: "Multatuli's book, which I will send you as soon as I can obtain a copy [in Dutch], is extraordinarily exciting.¹³ Without a doubt, it is of a much higher quality than my own. [His great *Noli Me Tangere* was published in Berlin in 1887, about the time that Douwes Dekker died.] Still, because the author is himself a Dutchman, his broadsides [*Angriffe*] are not as powerful as mine. Yet the book is much more artistic, far more elegant than my own, although it exposes only one aspect of Dutch life on Java."¹⁴

¹³ The correspondence indicates that Rizal thought the German-speaking Blumentritt would find the Dutch original easier going.

¹⁴ I have translated the original German as cited in Vincent, "Multatuli en Rizal," 61. Vincent takes the opportunity to point to the odd parallels between the two novels. Both have Latin on their title pages, though Rizal's came from John 20:17, not from either Horace or Paul. Both have idealistic young heroes who are destroyed by the machinations of the colonials. But Vincent notes that both descended independently from Sue's Rodolphe. He observes, however, that there are traces of Dekker's narrative strategy and rhetorical style in *El filibusterismo* (*The Subversive*), the sequel to *Noli Me Tangere*, published in 1891 in Ghent.

Although Douwes Dekker's death was respectfully recorded in French, English, and German newspapers, it was only as a consequence of Wilhelm Spohr's new German version of *Max Havelaar* in 1900 that a wider readership and admiration can be observed.¹⁵ It was followed by translations into Danish in 1901, Swedish in 1902, Polish in 1903, and Russian in 1908. All these versions were translations of Spohr's German.¹⁶ The renewed interest in *Max Havelaar* in Germany and in the "German-language" sphere was certainly connected to the rise of large and powerful socialist parties in many of these countries, German's role as the core language of Marxist thinking, and also wider intra-European critique of imperialism and colonialism. Berlin had also been the site of the spectacularly cynical imperialist carve-up of Africa little more than two decades earlier.

Between the two world wars, Europe's attention was focused inwardly on its own alarming problems—the rise of various fascisms as well as the Depression. Douwes Dekker almost disappeared from sight, with the exception of Siebenhaar's translation in the United States. However, a new Russian version appeared in 1936, as a portent of the next wave of Douwes Dekker enthusiasm. In the initial revolutionary era, and most likely long after, the key figure was the much-loved southern Cossack writer Konstanin Paustovsky (1892–1968), who had been a sailor in his youth and had thus spent time in Dutch ports. As early as 1923, he had published the article "Mnogostradal'ni Mul'tatuli" ("Much-suffering Multatuli") in a newspaper wonderfully titled *Gudok Zakavkaz'ia* (*Trumpet of the Transcaucasus*); he followed this up in 1926 with the short tale "Golandskaya koroleva" ("The King of Holland") in the Odessa newspaper *Moryak* (*The Sailor*) in which Douwes Dekker was praised for his selfless dedication to the suffering

¹⁵ Spohr moved in anarchist circles, like his successor, William Siebenhaar, and French contemporary, Alexandre Cohen, who in 1893 started publishing fragments of *Max Havelaar* (first in an obscure anarchist "rag," later in the *Mercure de France*. One can see why Douwes Dekker would have appealed to anarchists.

¹⁶ See J. J. Oversteegen's excellent "Multatuli in het buitenland" ("Multatuli Abroad"), in Pierre H. Dubois et al., eds. *100 Jaar Max Havelaar: Essays over Multatuli* (Rotterdam: Ad. Donker, 1962), 134–48. It will be recalled that as a consequence of the late-eighteenth-century partition of Poland between Vienna, Berlin, and St. Petersburg, turn-of-the-century Hohenzollern Germany included many bilingual Polish intellectuals and literary people. It is not impossible that the Russian translation relied on the Polish version, though Spohr's is more likely. See also Jerzy Koch, "De invloed van de Duitse Multatuli-receptie op de Poolse" ("The Influence of the German Reception of Multatuli on the Polish"), *Over Multatuli* 28 (1992): 13–28. This article includes a valuable graph of the number of Douwes Dekker texts translated into German and Polish for each five-year period between 1860 and 1985. Up to World War I, the movement of the two languages runs parallel, but not thereafter.

Javanese. Paustovsky's interest in Douwes Dekker never faded; in his 1956 book *The Golden Rose*, he included a detailed sketch of Douwes Dekker's life and work.¹⁷

As Stalin's Soviet Union consolidated its control over Eastern Europe in the decade after Hitler's downfall, *Max Havelaar* underwent a third boom, this time based probably on the 1936 Russian translation, rather than that of Spohr. Slovenian versions were published in 1946 and 1947; East German in 1948, 1953, and 1959; Polish in 1949 and 1956; Hungarian in 1950 and 1955; Slovak in 1954; Armenian in 1956; as well as two more Russian editions in 1956 and 1957.¹⁸ Paustovsky, Order of Lenin awardee, was surely behind at least some of this explosion. Douwes Dekker had become a martyr to imperialism and a stalwart friend of the colonized. That he was also a skirt-chaser, a gambler as compulsive and disastrous as Dostoevsky, and once in a while fantasized himself as the future king of Java was unspoken, perhaps indeed unknown.

The most recent wave of translations largely came out of the consolidation of the European Community and the concern of its members to institutionalize "mutual recognition" of each other's cultural value. One could say that Douwes Dekker finally had all Europe on his side. An Italian version was published in 1965, and an Estonian in 1973.¹⁹ In 1975 the first Spanish translation appeared—in Catalan Barcelona.²⁰ In an ironic move that Douwes Dekker would have appreciated, the Dutch government bought up a thousand copies to be distributed through its embassies in South America. Translations into Urdu (1983) and Korean (1994) were done by young nationals of Pakistan and Korea who had lived and studied in The Netherlands.²¹ In London, Penguin published in 1987 a new translation in its Classics series—Douwes Dekker was probably there to represent European Community member The Netherlands.

And what about the Indies, which, at the end of 1949, after a bloody four-year armed struggle against the Dutch, following three and a half years

¹⁷ Information drawn from Jan Paul Hinrichs, "Paustovskij en Multatuli," *Over Multatuli* 34 (1995): 3–5. A Dutch translation of "The King of Holland" appears on 6–9.

¹⁸ This information is from Oversteegen, "Multatuli in het buitenland."

¹⁹ On the latter, see Külli Prosa, "Multatuli in Estland" ("Multatuli in Estonia"), *Over Multatuli* 32 (1994): 58–64.

²⁰ See the text by translator Francisco Carrasquer, "De Ontvangst van de *Max Havelaar* in het spans" ("The Reception of the Spanish *Max Havelaar*"), *Over Multatuli* 8 (1981): 34–35.

²¹ See Dik van der Meulen and Olf Praamstra, "Droogstoppel en Slijmering in het Urdu," *Over Multatuli* 30 (1993): 40–43; and Myong-suk Chi, "Multatuli in Korea," *Over Multatuli* 37 (1996): 68–72. Chi is quite explicit about Amsterdam's financial support.

of occupation by the Japanese, had “joined the family of free nations” as Indonesia? The first and only translation into Indonesian appeared twenty-three years later: in 1972, just nosing out Estonia, and 112 years after its original’s incendiary publication. Until Hirohito’s armies wrapped up Dutch military resistance in two weeks of March 1942, Douwes Dekker was still regarded as a dangerous firebrand in the colony, and no edition of his work was ever permitted to be issued there. But the Dutch-educated nationalist elite—born between about 1896 and 1916—was familiar with him and his reputation, and it was not difficult, privately, to obtain copies of *Max Havelaar*. He was the “good Dutchman” who had spoken out against Dutch oppression four decades before the first self-recognizing “Indonesians” could do so.

In any case, after the suffering of 1945–49, the new Indonesian state, which had bad relations with a still-resentful, ex-imperial Netherlands, was determined to abolish the teaching of Dutch to its young citizens. The nationalist elite continued to use Dutch among themselves—offstage (it was still for them a closeted status symbol)—but emphatically denounced what President Sukarno called, unself-conscious of the irony, *Hollands-denkers* (Dutch for Dutch-minded people). This stance was only strengthened when the Dutch refused to negotiate the “return” of West Papua to Jakarta, and in retaliation the Indonesian government nationalized all Dutch enterprises in 1957, leading to an almost total emigration of Dutch and Eurasians from the archipelago.

Only with the installation of the brutal right-wing dictatorship of General Suharto in 1966 did the stance change. In desperate need of political and above all financial support, the new regime opened its doors widely to “Western” (and Japanese) capital, as well “state-to-state aid.” The Dutch then returned, if in diminished force, as businessmen and cultural missionaries who now knew their postcolonial place. The empire gone, and the prosperous European Community in place, Douwes Dekker could be positioned as The Netherlands’ *ex post facto* Nobel candidate and great friend of the Javanese (a.k.a. Indonesians). Since General Suharto knew little Dutch, and in any case never read novels, the time for an Indonesian translation had finally arrived—“in cooperation” with Dutch scholarly specialists, of course. The necessary Indonesian translator was Hans Baguë Jassin, an elderly, conservative literary critic, with a Calvinist religion and a Dutch Christian name, who had been persecuted as a *Hollands-denker* in the left-wing newspapers of the late Sukarno era: perfect for the regimes in both The Netherlands and Indonesia. The correct assumption on both sides was that only a handful of young people would actually read the book. But the outcome was quite

different when a distinguished Dutch film director Frans Rademaker just a few years later proposed to make a film of *Max Havelaar*, again in “full cooperation” with the Indonesian state and the Indonesian filmworld. Such cooperation meant the virtual elimination of Douwes Dekker’s ironical multiple framing; what survived was a beautifully acted and shot tropical melodrama. For Saidjah and Adinda—Multatuli’s fictions described them with the sparsest physical detail—Rademaker found two stunningly beautiful young actors who even had talent. But quarrels among the film’s makers started quickly—mainly from the side of the Indonesian “cooperators,” who increasingly disliked the idea of a rare Cannes-candidate film about Indonesia in which the hero was a Dutchman. But the real reason why Suharto banned the film from circulating in Indonesia until he fell from power in 1998 was much simpler. Douwes Dekker would have savored it. With the Dutch almost completely removed from the screen, except for the Havelaar family, the villainous “native chiefs” could too easily be read by viewers as the lineal ancestors of their own oppressors. At close to the same time, and for the same reason, Hollywood buff Ferdinand Marcos banned the screening of *The Godfather* in the Philippines.