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History, Memory and National Identity
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25 June 2023

The Netherlands and Dutch East Indies Under Attack:
How American comic creators represented the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies
during World War 2.

Acknowledgements

This master thesis is dedicated to everyone that has supported me along the way, and I would therefore like to give my sincere thanks to a number of people.

Thank you to my girlfriend Ria, for supporting me every day and cheering me on whenever I needed it. Without her, I might have never reached the end goal.

Thank you to Kees Ribbens, my thesis supervisor. Without his guidance, advice and feedback, this thesis would not have been in the shape that it is now

Thank you to Gerard McConville, for helping me with the analysis of my sources during our internship together at the NIOD in Amsterdam. Without his help this thesis might not have been possible.

Thank you to everyone from the History, Memory and National Identity Research workshop for the fun experiences and learning opportunities.

And lastly, thank you to my family, who have supported me during the writing process.

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1. Chapter 1: Introduction.

Comics have historically always been considered as lowbrow culture. They were looked down upon, as opposed to the more refined novel for instance. Over time however, the phenomenon of comics has grown extensively. Think for example of the recent partial transition of comics to graphic novels. That same sentiment can be found in the field of historical research with regard to comics. When one thinks of historical primary sources, what often comes to mind are sources such as government documents, newspapers and perhaps old diaries. What all of these types of sources have in common, is that they are all based on text. Comics however, have been under the radar for quite some time now, as the use of visual sources for historical research has been quite scarce outside of the field of art history. The acknowledgement of comics as potential sources for historical study is a recent phenomenon. The first studies regarding comics that were done around the 1940's in the US were purely pedagogical and psychological in nature, not historical. This can possibly be attributed to the stigma that comics are considered unimportant and irrelevant.¹ Comics weren't seen as anything else but potential influences on the minds of children.

For this master thesis I will be using war comics as primary sources for historical research. Specifically, I will analyse comics which were produced in the United States that represent the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies during World War 2. War comics, as will be discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis, were a specific genre of comics that emerged alongside World War 2.

The reason I'm interested in comics is because I have simply always liked them. I read a lot of them and still do to some degree. I also believe that the use of comics as a historical primary source is severely underutilized. Comic artists, who are responsible for both the scenarios and the drawings, have a lot of (free) artistic ways to uniquely express themselves, and I believe that this expression can be used as meaningful evidence when doing cultural historical research. On the other hand, there is also the interesting question of how representations in comics can be formed when viewed through the lens of propaganda.

¹ Matthew Lombard et al., "A Framework for Studying Comic Art," *International Journal of Comic Art* 1, no. 1 (1999): 17-18.

1.1 Research Question and Sub-Questions.

The main research question for this master thesis is: How did American comic creators represent the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies during World War 2 in their war comics that were published between 1940 and 1945? This question can still be considered to be quite broad. To narrow it down, I will make use of some of the following sub-questions.

Firstly, I will be asking two short, context related sub-questions. In the first question, I will be delving deeper into the comic industry in America leading up to- and during the war. How did comics become a popular medium in the United States? The second sub-question relates to the pre-established American views of the Dutch before the war started. What were the American views of the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies leading up to World War 2?

After this, I introduce the rest of my analytical sub-questions. The first one reads as follows: How are clichés and stereotypes of the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies used in the comics? When thinking of Dutch clichés, things such as windmills and clogs come to mind. The first part of the chapter will discuss the clichés and stereotypes that are exclusive to the Netherlands, whereas the latter part will discuss clichés and stereotypes surrounding the Dutch East Indies.

The second analytical question focusses on the areas and locations that are used for the stories of the comics and how they are represented. Which real and fictional places are used when representing the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies? This question should give some insight into what locations American comic creators, as well as their readers, are most familiar with.

The third and final analytical question will ask the following: How are the people that make up the population of the Netherlands and the East Indies represented? This question is quite layered, as it discusses a variety of topics, such as the visuals that are used to portray the characters, their characteristics and traits. Besides this, I will also be taking a closer look at a case study of a popular reoccurring Dutch character, known as the Flying Dutchman.

Based on the results of these combined five sub-questions, I feel confident enough to provide an answer to the main research question. The result will be found in the conclusion.

1.2 Theoretical Concepts.

Over the course of this thesis, I will be working with a number of theoretical concepts that might require an explanation. The first and arguably most important one, is comics. What exactly do I mean when I talk about comics? As it turns out, the definition of this concept has a bit of a history as well, since it is a well discussed topic in the literature.

In the 1989 writings of American English professor Joseph Witek for example, he references a term coined by the influential American cartoonist Will Eisner in order to define comics. This term known as ‘sequential art’ hints towards the way of storytelling that is unique to comics. To consider something as a comic, there needs to specifically be a combination of words or text and multiple images that flow from one to the other, therefore being sequential. This concept of comics therefore excludes single images as comics.²

In 1994, American comic creator and theorist Scott McCloud published *Understanding Comics*, in which he further develops this idea of sequential art in his attempt to expand the definition in a joking manner, ultimately ending with the following definition: Juxtaposed pictorial and other images deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer. While overly extensive, it does a good job at narrowing down the exact format of the comics that I will be analysing. It places specific importance on the images and their ability to tell a story.³

For my research, the concept of comics that I will adhere to falls more in line with that of McCloud. A source is considered a comic when images are juxtaposed to each other in sequence, usually accompanied with text from characters or narration. While it is true that McCloud’s definition of comics leans more towards the standard comic formula of today, I still believe it to be a good baseline to judge the war comics on, even though they were made and published in the 1940’s.

The second concept that will be used a lot throughout my thesis is representation, or historical representation to be precise. Representation in history, according to historian Frank Ankersmit, is indifferent to meaning. Representation can however help us explain the creation of meaning. Meaning is more often than not representational. We recognize the world around us by the way other people represent it. Representation is purely concerned

² Joseph Witek, *Comic Books as History: The Narrative Art of Jack Jackson, Art Spiegelman, and Harvey Pekar* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1989), 5-6.

³ Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 7-9.

with the world as it is or was.⁴

Ankersmit further elaborates that the concept of representation should not be understood in such a way that 'a represents b' implies a 'real-world existence' of b. Representations can for example also be of fiction. What is represented therefore does not necessarily have to exist in the physical world. It can also be an idea, or in the case of this thesis, a viewpoint or mindset.⁵ It is with this concept of representation that I will look into these American war comics.

A last concept that will be used occasionally in this thesis is propaganda. As will be demonstrated in the literature review, the vast majority, if not all of these World War 2 comics, were created with propaganda purposes in mind. But like the previous concepts, what does propaganda really mean? For example, does propaganda always have to be misleading or fabricated? Many differing definitions have been given throughout time, but an ultimate definition provided by academic researcher Thomas Huckin states that propaganda contains false or misleading information, which is addressed to a mass audience by parties seeking to gain an advantage. This usually comes in the form of governments working together with publishers. Propaganda is systematically created and does not invite critical responses. It should be noted that false or misleading information does not always equate to lies but can also refer to withheld information or an omission of truth.⁶ It will be interesting to see how war comics can be viewed with this concept in mind.

Even more interesting perhaps, is how both representation and propaganda can potentially be intertwined with each other. When considering the representation of the Dutch people as oppressed, it also creates a sense of sympathy towards the readers of the comics. This then, in turn, can also be used for mobilising effects, as potential readers will feel a sympathetic need to join the fight against the Nazis in order to free those in Europe. This doesn't necessarily mean readers will join the military, but they are however encouraged to help in whatever little ways they can.

⁴ F. R. Ankersmit, "Historical Representation", *History and Theory* 27, no. 3 (1988): 209–210, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2504918>.

⁵ Ankersmit, "Historical Representation", 210-211.

⁶ Thomas Huckin, "Propaganda Defined", in *Propaganda and Rhetoric in Democracy: History, Theory, Analysis*, ed. Gea Lyn Henderson and M.J. Braun (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2016), 123-127.

1.3 Literature review.

Before proper research with comics can be done, it would be wise to gain insight into the historiography of historical research with comics. Because the focus of this research is directed at American comics, it would make sense to first also study the history of the comic book industry and the culture surrounding it in America. A potential start for the historical discourse revolving around this topic is a publication from 1998 by the cultural historian Ian Gordon, in which he discusses comics and the consumer culture surrounding them.

The main argument that Gordon makes in this publication is that comics were a key part in the development of consumer culture in America. Comics were widely used for the promotion of other commodities and in turn accelerated commodification as a whole. Even the contents of the comics themselves served as an advertisement for values and practices of the growing consumerism found in America. This all started around the advent of the 20th century, when comics started appearing as part of a social phenomenon thanks to modernisation, which was in full swing at the time.⁷

Gordon cites art theorist Norman Bryson, who proposed that art can contain existing conventions. According to this logic, when creating art, the artist always in some form injects a piece of the current social discourse into the art. In this way, visual representations can both shape and reflect a culture and/or society. Comics therefore became visual representations through which the increasingly commodified American society saw and constituted itself.⁸

An interesting remark that Gordon makes in a later section of his book, is how comic sales essentially doubled between 1941 and 1944. Much of this can be attributed to America joining the conflict of World War 2, as well as the reading habits of the servicemen. The army operated a library service in order to maintain morale, which 44 percent of servicemen actively made use of. The reason comics were so popular among soldiers was the pre-established readership of comics by young males and the narratives aligning with the war itself.⁹

Another publication that discusses the relation between Americans and comics is Jean-Paul Gabilliet's *Of Comics and Men: A Cultural History of American Comic Books*. In this publication, Gabilliet presents his attempt to highlight the cultural history of comics, commenting that comics were at the lowest point of the cultural hierarchy in the United

⁷ Ian Gordon, *Comic Strips and Consumer Culture, 1890-1945* (Washington, D.C: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), 6.

⁸ Gordon, *Comic Strips and Consumer Culture*, 6.

⁹ Gordon, *Comic Strips and Consumer Culture*, 139-141.

States. Comics being at the bottom of the cultural hierarchy doesn't mean that they were the least popular. It only relates to the idea that comics are considered to be 'below' other forms of culture such as avant-garde literature or more refined novels.¹⁰

In his approach to show the emergence of comics in America, Gabilliet makes sure to specifically define what comics are and where they originate from, which in this case are imported comics from Europe around the 1840's. By providing a clear definition of what comics are to him he lays the foundation with which he can go on to define the history of the industry. His findings include an overview of the growing comic industry in America ranging from general developments of the medium to the history of both producers and consumers.¹¹

Gabilliet too acknowledges that the joining of World War 2 had a large positive impact on the comic industry, as the increase of war stories also increased sales and readership. Even before the Americans joined the war in 1941 however, there was already warlike mindset within the country, with lots of comics already featuring characters fighting the Nazis. Gabilliet also mentions the social and economic context of America at the time. Household incomes increased and the availability of consumer durables such as cars or household appliances went down. This then, in turn, gave a large boost to comics and other mass entertainment.¹² Whereas Gordon mainly attributes the rise of comics during World War 2 to the joining of the war and the servicemen reading the comics, Gabilliet also highlights other aspects of the growth in American comic culture.

A good starting point when it comes to writing about historical representation in comics can be found in Joseph Witek's work. In one of his publications, Witek analyses several comics that try to visualise historical events. Art Spiegelman's *Maus* is a good example of this, as it is a visualisation of Spiegelman's father's memories of the Holocaust. In his findings he discusses how the deliberate art style, with animals as characters, was needed because it was the only way to view the Holocaust without any human bias. In other words, it made the task of creating a representation of the Holocaust easier for the author.¹³

The way Witek reaches these conclusions is through the concepts and methodology that he uses in his analysis. Firstly, Witek too offers a way to conceptualise comics in the form of 'sequential art.' This term references the fundamental way of storytelling that belongs to comics, namely images that follow up on each other to form a narrative. Besides

¹⁰ Jean-Paul Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men: A Cultural History of American Comic Books*, trans. Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), chap. Introduction, Kindle, 1-3.

¹¹ Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men*, chap. Introduction, 3-9.

¹² Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men*, chap. Comic Books at War (1940-1945), 2-4.

¹³ Witek, *Comic Books as History*, 3-20.

his concepts there is also his methodology with which he analyses the comics in his book. The way in which he critically looks at panels and how the characters are filling them up raises a lot of interesting points regarding narrative and representation.¹⁴ It is within the details of the comic art that an author's intention with representation can be found.

This idea relates to the main argument brought forward by Witek. It is that not only the narratives of a given comic can tell us something about the past, but the way in which it is drawn as well. Whether it is through stylisation or framing, comic artists have a way of filling in their panels that is both unique to them as well as their time. The art of comics may not contain objective historical truths (if such a thing could even be attained), but what art can do is give us future historians a glimpse into the mindset of the artist, as well as the population that read the comics.

Similar work has also been done by Kees Ribbens. In one of his works, he analyses the way in which the history of World War 2 is represented in European comics. He examines both comics that were released during or close to the time of the war, as well as more recently published comics. From this analysis, a dichotomy starts to show itself between the comics published in different times.

The main argument that emerges from this text is that comics can, and in a lot of cases will, reflect the mindset of the population that was intended to read these comics. Ribbens shows several ways in which comics secretly reveal the zeitgeist with which they were made. A striking example is the way in which older and newer comics differ from their narratives with which they represent World War 2. Older comics that were published more closely to the war feature narratives with a lot of heroism, where good fights against evil. Newer comics have a tendency to let go of this approach and provide more nuanced narratives. This can be partially explained by the fact that World War 2 is becoming an ever-growing distant phenomenon. This makes it harder to relate to, which in turn causes the comics to be made with more subtlety and nuance.¹⁵

In a recent book review discussing several works related to historical research utilising war comics, Ribbens also further comments on the current state of field of comics studies. He emphasizes how all of the authors he discusses in the review rightfully highlight the versatility that comics offer when it comes to the representation of both military warfare and civilian involvement in war. A main argument that Ribbens mentions is one that the

¹⁴ Witek, *Comic Books as History*, 20-45.

¹⁵ Kees Ribbens, "World War 2 in European Comics: National Representation of Global Conflict in Popular Historical Culture," *International Journal of Comic Art* 12, no. 1 (2010): 1-9.

American historian Cord Scott makes in his book, *Comics and Conflict*. He argues that comics offer a unique insight in the mindset of the readers. This is based on the assumption that the perspective of the creator of a comic often reflects the views of the readers, as to fulfil the readers' expectations and guarantee more future sales.¹⁶

A relevant piece of research that is closely related to both the field of comics studies as well as my own research is the work of Paul Hirsch, a postdoctoral from the University of Texas who is specialised in visual culture. In his work, Hirsch looks at the ways in which race based propaganda was used in comics to represent the enemies of the Allies during World War 2. He remarks how an organisation known as the Writers' War Board urged comic artists to represent both a narrative of racial tolerance within the nation and racializing the enemy to justify total war. Comics were considered one of the best ways to spread these messages thanks to its broad popularity, comprehensibility, and emphasis on raw emotion.¹⁷

One of the main arguments found in this work by Hirsch is that as the war went on, the board became increasingly interested in representing the Germans with hatred based on race and ethnicity. Prior to 1944 comic artists would typically represent Germans in such a way that would make them look like buffoons or simply bloodthirsty criminals. By late 1944 however, U.S. losses started to mount, and Germany still wasn't ready to surrender. It was after this point that the board provided artists a template for German characters. Artists were encouraged to conflate Germans with Nazi's, making them incurably hostile.¹⁸

A publication that provides an even closer look into the role of comics as pieces of propaganda during World War 2 is *The 10 Cent War* by Goodnow and Kimble. They, as well as the other authors that contributed their essays to this title, argue that US comics were an extremely rich source for wartime propaganda. Through numerous ways, such as cultivating patriotic sensibility and glorifying American virtues like toughness and bravery, comics helped to forge a united front within the homes of Americans. They argue that this could be done thanks to the unique qualities that the medium of comics have, like the limitless potential with which artists could create representations.¹⁹

¹⁶ Kees Ribbens, "Book review: The Algerian War in French-Language Comics: Postcolonial Memory, History, and Subjectivity Comics and Conflict: Patriotism and Propaganda from WWII through Operation Iraqi Freedom Comics and the World Wars: A Cultural Record and Dan Ellin and Adam Sheriff, Comics, the Holocaust and Hiroshima", *Media, War and Conflict* 11, no.2 (2018): 282-286, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750635218776138>.

¹⁷ Paul Hirsch, "This Is Our Enemy", *Pacific Historical Review* 83, no. 3 (1 August 2014): 448-486, <https://doi.org/10.1525/phr.2014.83.3.448>.

¹⁸ Hirsch, "This is Our Enemy", 460-462.

¹⁹ Trischa Goodnow and James J. Kimble, *The 10 Cent War: Comic Books, Propaganda, and World War II* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), chap. Introduction. Kindle, 1-2.

As a final addition to this literature review, I wish to mention the work of Jane L. Chapman. In *Comics and the World Wars: A Cultural Record*, Chapman et al. provide arguments in favour of the use of comics for historical research. Chapman and the other authors stress once again that comics are not necessarily factual records of the past, but that they can rather reflect the circumstances and context of their creation. Either implicitly or explicitly, comics can be seen as markers of *mentalité*, or *zeitgeist*.²⁰

To substantiate their main argument, Chapman et al. provide us with case studies involving comics that feature both world wars as their main setting. Besides this, they also provide a solid methodology based on close reading and contextualisation. Doing historical research with comics therefore not only involves closely looking at the art and dialogue, but also knowing the background against which the comics are made.²¹

1.4 Innovate Aspects of the Thesis.

As can be seen by the literature review, historical research involving comics as the primary sources is quite a new field. And as mentioned in the introduction, most research that involves comics started out as pedagogical and psychological research involving children. Over time however, historians started to become increasingly interested in the use of comics for historical research. The result of which, is partially displayed in the literature review.

Today this field is more commonly known as comics studies. It is still a very wide field with a lot of different kind of research topics, ranging from topics such as the history of the medium itself to histories of certain writers or artists, and of course comics as a primary source for historical research. Comics studies is not exclusively about historical research though, as there is also a focus on the study of newer, contemporary comics. It is however the historical side of the field of comics studies, which I talked about most throughout the literature review, that I wish to speak to.

Because the field is still young, there are still gaps to be filled when it comes to research regarding representation of certain groups or events in contemporary comics. One research aspect that has already seen some work done is regarding the ways in which the Axis soldiers and leaders of World War 2, namely the Germans/Nazi's, were represented in American comics that were published during the war. The result of this research is a seemingly unanimous agreement among historians that Nazi's were increasingly represented

²⁰ Jane Chapman et al., *Comics and the World Wars: A Cultural Record* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 7.

²¹ Chapman et al., *Comics and the World Wars*, 22-26.

as evil as the war went on, making a transformation from incompetent to simply inhumane.

The main focus of this research will be on the representation of Dutch and Indonesian people of the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies in the contemporary American war comics, as this is a topic that is not widely discussed yet. This comes with the additional fact that the representation of a different country being occupied is also an untouched topic. Most research that does focus on occupation representation mainly looks at how a country represents its own occupational history, not necessarily the occupation of another. Furthermore, I wish to make another addition to the previously mentioned debate of representation in comics by analysing the comics that discuss the Dutch colonies, as this part of colonial history is also unexplored territory.

1.5 Sources and source Criticism.

The collection of primary sources that I will be using to conduct this research is a large selection of comics that have been collected by Kees Ribbens over the years. These comics all feature the Netherlands or the Dutch East Indies in their stories and were found on a number of online comic archives and museums, such as Comicbookplus, Digital Comics Museum and the Grand Comics Database.²² The reason that these comics are available online is because they are currently in the public domain, meaning that they are no longer restricted by copyright. This collection can by no means be considered complete however. It should also be noted that the comics from this selection are exclusively from comic books, and so there are no comics from newspapers. I have searched for comics to add to the corpus as well and found only seven comics that were able to be added to the collection. There could have been more comics from this time period in which the Netherlands were featured, but they might have not been digitized and made public yet.

As is evidenced by the large corpus of American war comics representing the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies, the American comic book creators of the time had a certain interest in the Dutch people. Out of the 101 sources that make up the corpus, 61 comics have been selected for my research. There are a few reasons as to why the rest of the corpus does not meet my criteria. Firstly, most of the comics that I chose not to use fall outside of the timeframe of my research question. Many of these comics were published in the 1950's and onwards. This means that the propaganda aspect with which the comics

²² "Home page", Comicbookplus, accessed on May 8, 2023, <https://comicbookplus.com/>. "Home", Digital Comic Museum, accessed on May 8, 2023, <https://digitalcomicmuseum.com/index.php>. "Home", CDR, accessed on May 8, 2023, <https://www.comics.org/>.

between 1940 and 1945 were created is missing. The comics that were published after this period were created with different motivations. Secondly, some of these sources don't match my definition of a comic, as discussed in the theoretical concepts section. Some of these sources are short text stories for example. Lastly, it should be noted that there are also two comics in the corpus which feature Aruba as a setting for the story, which was part of the Dutch West Indies. Because of this low number of sources to work with, I had to unfortunately make the decision to not include the West Indies in the analysis of this thesis.²³

From the selection of 61 comics that were selected for this research, 35 comics feature stories that take place in the Netherlands, while 13 of the comics feature stories that take place in and around the Dutch East Indies. It should be noted that besides this selection of 48 comics, there are 2 comics that feature both the Netherlands and the Indies in the same story. Technically speaking then, there are 37 representations of the Netherlands and 15 of the East Indies. The remaining 11 comics feature stories that take place in unknown locations or simply other parts of the world, but they nevertheless feature Dutch characters.²⁴

The characteristic of comics, and any other visual medium, is that the historical events represented in them don't necessarily need to be 'true'. What I mean by that is that when looking at comics through the lens of representation, the 'facts' are less important than the way in which these 'facts' are being shown. Comics don't need to tell a historically accurate story. Their strength is that they allow us future readers to gain a perspective of the mindset that the authors had at that time. Unpopular comics also fell out of circulation rather quickly during this period, so the comics that stuck around also hint at a larger shared mindset of the reading public. It's therefore less about fact versus fiction when it comes to the subject matter of the comics. This goes in line with idea behind Ankersmit's historical representation.

A possible weakness for these comics that I wish to analyse is that the target audience was most often children, as will be elaborated on in chapter 2. This would mean that the potential for depicting more explicit horrors of war may have been out of the picture. Even the comics that stride more towards 'realism' will still keep their younger demographic in mind and are therefore drawn accordingly. There is still of course also the adult audience that was mentioned in the literature review, so not all comics have to hold back on their subject matter to cater to a certain demographic. The comics should therefore be approached with the target audience in mind.

²³ Appendix.

²⁴ Appendix.

There is also the Writers War Board (WWB) to consider, who no doubt influenced the eventual shape a lot of these comics would end up taking, both character design and story-wise. The question then becomes whether the popularity of these war comics is reflective of an American mindset or if it is the result of the organisation causing this popularity through stimulation. I doubt however, that the Board had much influence over the representation of the Dutch in particular, as most of their efforts were directed at the demonising representation of the enemy. More about the WWB will be discussed in the following chapter.

1.6 Methodology.

A large part of the analysis consisted of a visual content analysis, which means I looked closely at the art itself. A good way to demonstrate my approach is to reference my bachelor thesis, in which I analysed Dutch comics depicting life in the Netherlands during World War 2. One example that I considered to be really interesting, is the different ways in which going into hiding was represented in both comics that were published during/shortly after the war and recent comics. In the older comics, going into hiding was represented by people diving into bodies of water (a wordplay on ‘onderduiken’). In recent comics however, going into hiding was treated with the severity that it probably deserved. Panels were filled with closeups of people’s faces, visualising the claustrophobic nature of hiding in a small room with multiple people while Nazi’s searched around. A lot of it comes down to looking for the little details.²⁵

I also worked with a reference sheet when analysing the comics. This sheet was initially developed by Kees Ribbens, but I made a few alterations to it in order to broaden the scope of the analysis²⁶. The sheet listed a number of questions that I would always ask when analysing the comics. This includes questions regarding the presence of Dutch characters, whether or not they are potentially based on real people, their characteristics and the locations that are used in the stories. The same series of questions also applies to any potential Indonesian characters. Furthermore, the reference sheet also features a list of stereotypes and cliches to look out for, such as windmills and wooden shoes (clogs). The sheet was frequently updated during the analysis, as I encountered multiple variables that weren’t included in the original version of the list.

A stereotype can be described as a mental concept that is used for classification

²⁵ Thom Helmink, “De evolutie van tekeningen in oorlogstrips: Hoe de Duitse bezetting van Nederland wordt afgebeeld in verschillende tijdsperiodes” (Bachelor thesis, Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2022), 15-37.

²⁶ Appendix.

purposes, made up of conventionally fixed patterns of representation. The mental concept of ‘The Dutch’ or ‘The Netherlands’ is visualised through the representative use of clichés. An example of this would be the adaptation of a cliché in painting. The stereotype is the idea, and the cliché is the idea given form.²⁷

Another part of the analysis will consist of looking at the dialogue or other forms of texts accompanying these comics. Text is half of what makes a comic what it is, and more often than not contains important information for the readers. Just like the visuals, it should be interesting to see how American comic artists decided to represent the way in which Dutch and Indonesian people speak or think, as well as how the narrative textboxes describe the scenery of the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies.

This analysis was done over the course of two months during my internship at the NIOD. In cooperation with my fellow intern Gerard McConville, we analysed a given half of the total corpus of 101 sources. This was all done under the guidance of our internship provider and also my supervisor for this thesis, Kees Ribbens.

²⁷ Sarah Dellmann, *Images of Dutchness: Popular Visual Culture, Early Cinema and the Emergence of a National Cliché, 1800-1914* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 34-35.

2. Chapter 2: Comics in the United States: From 1842 to 1945.

Comics are a staple of American popular culture and have been for a long time. But where did these comics come from? What is it about the medium of comics that has captured the attention of American readers so vividly? In this chapter I will further explore the rise of comic strips and comic books as a popular medium, as well as the arrival of the genre known as war comics and the government funded institution backing them, namely the Writers War Board.

2.1 Comics as a popular medium.

In Jean-Paul Gabilliet's writings regarding the history of comics, he states that historians of comics agree that the first comic that was published in the United States was a story by an author from Switzerland named Rodolphe Töpffer, dated back to September 14, 1842.²⁸ One such author who agrees with this statement is Scott McCloud, who explains how Töpffer's work in the mid-1800's laid the foundation for modern comics, using panel borders in combination with words and pictures. From that point on, British caricature magazines would keep this tradition going, well into the 20th century. Before Töpffer's comic was republished in the United States, comics had already been in circulation for quite some time in Europe.²⁹

The comic made by Töpffer was a translation from French into English that appeared in the form of a newspaper magazine. It was around this time however, that the demand for printed material increased thanks to the growing literacy rates in both urban and rural areas of the United States. A part of this growing number of printed material was comics, the first of which to be drawn by Americans being *Journey to the Gold Diggins* by Jeremiah Saddlebags in 1849, which was published in book form. Comics that were published during this time were seen as somewhat pricey however, which limited their appeal. There were however also large-scale collections of pirated British drawings that made their way across North America, which proved that there was indeed an audience for the comics. This audience consisted mostly of children, but many adults were fans of comics as well. Americans were much more favourable towards cheaper publications that also included comics, such as almanacs. This goes back as far as 1828, when yearly illustrations by David Claypoole Johnston became popular in Boston. These weren't to be considered comics but were rather illustrations that

²⁸ Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men*, chap. From Comics to Comic Books (1842-1936), 1-2.

²⁹ Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 16-19.

consisted of the same humorous cartoon elements that comics would later adopt.³⁰

Three decades after the American Civil War, from the 1860's to the 1890's, the United States witnessed increased economic activity thanks to large rural migrations and immigrations from Europe towards more urban areas. This caused the daily press to develop as the newfound working class was hungry for images and news. Newspapers however, would still feature less illustrations than magazines such as *Puck* and *Judge*, which were satirical humour magazines consisting largely of political cartoons and caricatures. Other magazines and news outlets would later begin to notice the commercial potential that the illustrations held and would slowly adopt them as well.³¹ This development had several consequences, according to comics historian Rick Marschall. It was a start for the formation of a taste for political cartoons among the American public, the emergence of informal illustrators that would later become the fathers of American comics, and the beginning of a market for newspapers that were published in colour.³²

Ian Gordon elaborates on this further, stating that the increased use of coloured illustrations in newspapers contributed heavily to the development of comics. In 1883, Joseph Pulitzer would start the publication of a Sunday edition of the *New York World* newspaper, which he had recently acquired. An important innovation was the regular use of editorial cartoons, which were mostly restricted to illustrated humour magazines before the 1880's. These cartoons, which were usually single humorous images which satirised reality, would later transition to become comic strips in the 1890's.³³

The competition that Pulitzer faced had also begun to take notice of the effectiveness of comic strips. William Randolph Hearst was one of those competitors and sought to utilize the use of comic strips even more than Pulitzer did. This competition caused comic strips to spread around all sorts of newspapers in the United States, culminating in 1903 when newspapers across the country would feature comic strips in their Sunday edition. A few years later, in 1908, about 75% of all Sunday comics featured comic strips.³⁴

By the mid-1910's, comic strips had transformed the commodity value of comic art and the culture surrounding it. The recognizable and easily repeatable formula of the comic strip made it very accessible to all kinds of readers. Americans across the United States could

³⁰ Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men*, From Comics to Comic Books (1842-1936), 1-2.

³¹ Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men*, From Comics to Comic Books (1842-1936), 2-3.

³² Rick Marschall, "'What Fools These Mortals Be!' The History of the Comic Strip Part One: Puck Magazine and the Ascendance of the Cartoon," *The Comics Journal* 57 (1980): 134-139.

³³ Ian Gordon, Comic strips and consumer culture, 13-14.

³⁴ Ian Gordon, Comic strips and consumer culture, 37-41.

now open their newspapers and be greeted by the evermore familiar comic strip, while also buying products related to said strips. Comic strips and their characters thus became part of American daily life.³⁵

Another part of the rise of comic books can be found in the development of pulp magazines, or simply pulps. Pulps were traditionally popular literature magazines that were printed on cheap paper made of wood pulp, and would mostly feature action-adventure, detective and crime stories. By the 1920's, pulps became prominent in the daily lives of many Americans. It was especially during this time of economic stagnation that pulps and comic magazines flourished, as they remained cheap. Comic magazines became a new part of the low-budget mass publishing business after 1935, when the medium finally firmly established itself. This was caused by an increased number of magazines and publishers, but also thanks to the first appearance of Superman in 1938. The emergence of the superhero genre has been credited by all historians of American comic books as the most important turning point of the industry. Viewed from all angles, the comics book became a cultural industry in 1939 when superheroes started to bloom. This is the point that comic books started appearing that were titled after their lead characters, such as Superman or Blue Beetle.³⁶

By the time of the Second World War, the comic book industry was still in a phase of rapid growth. This is largely attributed to increased household income and a reduced availability of consumer durables. Comic books became so popular in fact, that they started to compete with the newspapers which previously established their monopoly on comics. Throughout 1939 there were about 22 new comic books titles being released. This number of releases then skyrocketed to 697 in 1940, reaching a stabilized peak of 1125 new releases between 1944 and 1946.³⁷

The target audience of the newly created comic book industry was primarily the nation's youth. According to Goodnow and Kimble, a survey conducted in the United States in 1944 revealed that over 90% of those 11 or younger regularly read comics, while more than 80% of their older siblings up to the age of 17 were also avid readers. A 1942 study that took place in Indiana revealed that the average grade school student that participated in the study read five stories per day. Many adults were also comic fans, as at least 35% of adults between 18 and 30 read at around 6 comic books per month. This didn't include the millions

³⁵ Ian Gordon, *Comic strips and consumer culture*, 58.

³⁶ Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men*, chap. The Beginnings of an Industry: Comics Magazines (1936-1940). 1-3.

³⁷ Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men*, chap. Comic Books at War (1940-1945), 1-3.

of servicemen in the armed forces that would also regularly read comics while in training or deployed.³⁸

2.2 War Comics as a genre.

As the name of the genre would suggest, these comics would be dedicated to fictional and sometimes non-fictional war stories. Before the United States entered the war in December 1941 however, there were already a number of comics that would feature superheroes fighting against spies, saboteurs and dictators from aggressive nations. When conflict was starting to erupt in Europe during 1939, the fight against the so called Rome-Berlin Axis forces became the main topic of a large number of comics.³⁹ However, most of these comics that were created before the United States officially joined World War 2 were closer to action-adventure stories as opposed to what real war comics would later become. There were indeed gunplay and fights, but the narratives mostly revolved around men fighting for the greater good of the world and helping those in need. When the war did eventually reach the United States, comics were quick to embrace military themes even more, while also making sure that more superheroes were brought into the conflict. Over time, these war comics would become a stand-alone genre, the popularity of which fluctuated over the following years depending on the nation's involvement in wars.⁴⁰

Before joining the war in 1941, many Americans were still opposed to the idea of joining the conflict. In this social environment, most comic book creators simply tried to include information about the conflict, whereas others simply used the war as a stage for entertainment. There were however also some comic creators that did try to warn their readers of the upcoming war. This was usually done with stories in which spies had entered American soil. It was after the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor that the mindset of the American people shifted towards war, and comic artists were sure to step up their production. Comics would now attempt to rally the American populace to support their troops through the stories that were told, as well as through advertisements placed in the magazines informing people about what things they can do to help the war effort.⁴¹

War comics as they were at the time of the United States joining World War 2 can be described as comics that created an idealised image of war. The protagonists fought for the

³⁸ Goodnow And Kimble, *The 10 Cent War*, chap. Introduction, 11.

³⁹ Jean-Paul Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men*, Comic Books at War (1940-1945), 2-3.

⁴⁰ Cord A. Scott, *Comics and Conflict: Patriotism and Propaganda from WWII through Operation Iraqi Freedom* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2014), chap. Entertaining and Informing the Masses, Kindle, 6.

⁴¹ Cord A. Scott, *Comics and Conflict*, chap. Fighting for Freedom (1939-45), 1-3.

greater good of society while the antagonists were depicted as stereotypes of all that was wrong in that same society. Combat in these early comics was also very clean, as there was no blood being shed during the fights. If a hero did end up dying in a comic, it was usually an honourable death that was sure to be avenged by fellow patriots. This struggle for the greater good became the fundamental theme of wartime entertainment, and therefore also the war comics.⁴²

Ultimately, the vast majority of these early war comics served different purposes depending on their time of publication. Comics that were published before the United States joined the war largely called for intervention and as mentioned earlier, warned of enemy spies. This can be attributed to the fact that a lot of the comic creators of this time were Jewish, who knew the dangers of the Nazi regime.⁴³ On the other hand, the comics that were published after tried to inspire patriotism in the American readers. War comics as a genre, at the time of World War 2, were therefore mostly about the struggle for the freedom of the United States and the rest of the world against the absolute evil of the Axis. The superheroes, then, were the perfect representation of all that was good in American society.

2.3 The Writers War Board.

In order to promote this message of fighting against tyranny, many comic creators would join the Writers War Board (WWB). While some joined voluntarily, most creators joined through recruitment by government agencies. Those that were selected for recruitment were often those with a record of previously established commercial success, so that they could publish their work for the WWB in their usual markets. Historian Thomas Howell writes how the WWB was first established on Januari 1942 in order to promote government policy and promote support for the war effort. While the WWB was originally a privately founded organization by a self-recruited group of 20 authors from the New York City area, it quickly joined forces with the Office of War Information (OWI) and, according to one member of the WWB, functioned as “an arm of the government” thanks to this collaboration. The activities of the WWB were so extensive and successful that it has been come to be known as the greatest propaganda machine of all time. Besides the creation of comics, the WWB also provided newspaper articles, created radio stations and even wrote songs.⁴⁴

⁴² Cord A. Scott, *Comics and Conflict*, chap. Entertaining and Informing the Masses, 6.

⁴³ Goodnow and Kimble, *The 10 Cent War*, chap. Introduction, 6-7.

⁴⁴ Thomas Howell, “The Writers’ War Board: U.S. Domestic Propaganda in World War II,” *The Historian* 59, no. 4 (1997): 795–797.

Hirsh goes more in-depth when describing the connection between the WWB and comics. According to Hirsh, there were four reasons as to why the WWB perceived comics especially as a powerful tool for propaganda. The first is the aforementioned popularity of the medium, largely thanks to superheroes like Superman. Secondly, the audience of comics was diverse enough that it also included many adults, both civilians and servicemen. Thirdly, WWB members praised the comic book format for its simplicity, as the combination of text and images made it almost universally comprehensible. Lastly, the status of comic books as lowbrow entertainment caused it to be less likely viewed as propaganda by the population, as propaganda was usually associated with more official government media.⁴⁵

The WWB was however, entirely free of government control, and prided itself on that. The government never paid any of the board members, except for those that were recruited for specific government projects. This meant that there was also no government censorship in practise. There was no need for this either, as the board supported the Roosevelt administration and its policies strongly. In return, the OWI supported the efforts of the WWB, giving the board the freedom to create any kind of propaganda that the OWI could not create itself, as it was banned from doing by Congress. The methods that the board would end up using were sometimes more effective than the government's own policy, which stated that the public should be provided with objective information.⁴⁶

The WWB would continue to work together with comic creators throughout the remainder of World War 2. By late 1944, when U.S. losses started to mount and Axis forces refused to surrender, the WWB would focus on the portrayals of these Axis forces much more. The board feared that comics were treating the enemies of American too lightly, and so they encouraged creators to represent the enemy with a specific hatred based on race and ethnicity. This was done in a cooperation between the board and comic book creators, who together created a template for racial stereotypes that were to be used when representing the enemy. During this cooperation, the board would even provide the comic book creators with templates for Japanese and German racial stereotypes. This also means that Nazis and the German people for instance, would become grouped together. All Germans were now considered evil by nature. Prior to this, the Germans as buffoons, and distinctions would still be made between a regular German character and a member of the Nazi party. The same kind of demonization that was used against the Germans would be applied to the Japanese,

⁴⁵ Hirsch, "This Is Our Enemy," 456-460.

⁴⁶ Howell, "The Writers' War Board: U.S. Domestic Propaganda in World War II," 797-798.

although the Japanese were also subjected to much more racially insensitive depictions.⁴⁷

After first asking comic creators to produce stories involving practical wartime issues in 1943, such as labour and inflation, the Writers War Board seemed to have primarily revolved their propaganda campaign around demonizing the enemy as much as possible in order to justify and encourage the continued war effort by the U.S. At the same time however, the roles of friendly nations that had succumbed to the Axis invasions were also cemented in the war comic formula. The most common theme that united the portrayal of victims and allies in these comics was an emphasis on veneration. The most reoccurring message found in these comics was that these victimised nations were worthy of praise for their resilient nature as they continue to fight an uphill battle against evil. Similarly, the Allies are also to be venerated in the comics. British characters, for instance, are universally friendly towards the Americans, as readers would likely expect them to act. At times, even victims and allies can be the target of cultural stereotypes, but in these cases the portrayals were usually good-natured.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Hirsh, "This is Our Enemy," 460-471.

⁴⁸ Goodnow and Kimble, *The 10 Cent War: Comic Books, Propaganda, and World War II*, chap. War Victory Adventures: Figurative Cognition and Domestic Propaganda in World War II Comic Books, 9-12.

3. Chapter 3: Pre-established American views of the Dutch.

Why did American comics creators and their publishers choose to create stories about the Netherlands? It's a question we might never get a clear answer for, as most if not all of the comic artists that worked on these comics have long since passed away. There are however a number of ways through which the artists might have felt inspired to depict the Netherlands during World War 2. In this chapter, I will analyse how the views of Americans towards the Dutch might have been influenced, long before the start of World War 2 as well as during the war.

3.1 Preconceived notions of the Netherlands and the East Indies.

Dutch-American relations go back as far as the start of the seventeenth century, when Dutch explorers first landed on what is currently known as New York. This discovery inspired many other Dutch entrepreneurs to invest in the newly discovered North America. By 1626, Pieter Minuit, the new director of New Netherlands, would purchase Manhattan Island from the indigenous people in order to create the city of New Amsterdam, which was previously only known as a settlement called fort Amsterdam. The new Dutch colony would later however be handed over to the British two times. First after Petrus Stuyvesant had been defeated by British naval forces in 1664. It was later reclaimed by the Dutch in 1673, only for it to be handed to the British as a result of the Peace of Westminster in 1674.⁴⁹

Dutch immigrants were actually a rather small group when compared to the numbers of immigrants from other European countries. Despite their small numbers however, their distinctive subculture managed to survive. Hans Krabbendam, the assistant director of the Roosevelt Study Center, explains how due to the general European economic crisis, potato blight, and political stagnation of the 1840's pushed many to emigrate to the United States. In total, a sum of 200.000 Dutch immigrants settled in the U.S. in the 19th century and early 20th century. Because of their small numbers, they were able to stay close to each other, which created a strong sense of cohesion among the Dutch in America.⁵⁰

Annette Stott, a prominent art historian who also studied in the Netherlands, argues

⁴⁹ Hans Krabbendam, "Four Centuries of Dutch-American Relations, 1609-2009: A Major Contribution to Atlantic History," in *Four centuries of Dutch-American relations 1609-2009*, ed. Hans Krabbendam, Cornelis A. van Minnen and Giles Scott-Smith (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Boom, 2009), 17-28.

⁵⁰ Hans Krabbendam, "Chapter Five. "But tho we love old Holland still, we love Columbia more," The formation of a Dutch-American subculture in the United States, 1840-1920," in *Going Dutch: The Dutch Presence in America, 1609-2009*, ed. Joyce D. Goodfriend, Benjamin Schmidt and Annette Stott (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2008), 135-155.

that the perspective on ‘Dutchness’ and its meaning of it have always been in constant flux in the United States. At first the image of the aforementioned colonial Dutch Americans and their descendants dominated American art and literature. After 1855, the image of the Netherlands during the sixteenth and seventeenth century became popular among American audiences due to an increasing amount of American art and literature that was being made. And by the nineteenth century, the image of Dutchness in America and Dutchness in the Netherlands became one in the same.⁵¹

In 1809, Washington Irving wrote stories under the pseudonym of Diedrich Knickerbocker in which he told about the early Dutch settlers. These stories would influence American perceptions of the Dutch, and many historians and authors of all sorts would quote his works. Through the use of caricatures, the New Amsterdammers were depicted as lazy and fat people who smoked their pipes all day. Even a positive trait such as being very clean, was given a cruel spin, as Irving wrote how all the running water that was required to clean a Dutch house caused the Dutch people to grow webbings between their fingers. These texts from Irving provided plenty material for painters and other illustrators to create visual stereotypes regarding Dutchness. Most of these stereotypes however, were targeted towards men. Dutch women barely made appearances in the writings of Irving or the illustrations that followed his works.⁵²

Throughout the middle of the nineteenth century, a new view of the Dutch would emerge thanks to the work of John Lothrop Motley, an American historian who is widely credited as having created Dutch awareness in the United States on a wide scale.⁵³ In his history writing, Motley turned attention to the Dutch in the Netherlands, which were portrayed as courageous farmers and burghers who defended their homeland against tyranny. The fat, lazy, pipe-smoking Dutch were replaced by courageous, independent and resolute people. Unfortunately however, Motley’s writing did not inspire artists the same way that Irving’s work did, and no new visual stereotypes were created. To fill this void however, Americans started collecting paintings of the old Dutch masters. To the Americans, this represented the ideal presented by Motley much more than any other illustrations could.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Annette Stott, “Images of Dutchness in the United States,” in *Four centuries of Dutch-American relations, 1609-2009*, ed. Hans Krabbendam, Cornelis A. van Minnen and Giles Scott-Smith (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Boom, 2009), 238.

⁵² Stott, “Images of Dutchness in the United States”, 238-239.

⁵³ Owen Dudley Edwards, “John Lothrop and the Netherlands,” *BMGN-Low Country Historical Review* vol. 97, no. 3 (1982): 563.

⁵⁴ Stott, “Images of Dutchness in the United States”, 240-242.

While Motley did not inspire American artists as much as Irving had, he instead inspired other authors to create literature focussed on the Dutch. One such author would be Mary Mapes Dodge, who had become filled with admiration towards the Dutch thanks to Motley's writings. From this admiration, the now iconic book *Hans Brinker, or the silver skates: A story of life in Holland* was conceived and published in 1865. The story takes place during the 1840's in the Netherlands, and features a young boy named Hans Brinker. Despite being born into a relatively poor family, he works hard to provide them, with the main goal of the story being his wish to win an ice skating race so he can pay for his father's medical treatment. The book also features a side-story about a young boy that saves the town of Haarlem by sticking his thumb in the leaking dike, which would become very well known among American audiences. With her stories, Dodge not only wished to inform about the Netherlands, but also constructed the idea that the Dutch are resilient and brave.⁵⁵

It is after 1880 that the Dutch stereotypes and cliches we know today started to emerge within American society. Positive exchanges between the United States and the Netherlands continued to bolster the positive image of the Dutch. As travel became easier, it also meant that more American tourists were able to visit the Netherlands and confirm their pre-established beliefs about the Dutch. While some negative traits were still noted by some tourists, these images were still outweighed by the new characterisation of the Dutch, which saw them as brave, clean and Protestant people of mostly middle-class. It was in fact because of this tourism around the turn of the century, that the new stereotypes gained popularity. Children's books, postcards and travel books all featured the costumed Dutch men and women, tulips, windmills and wooden shoes. These stereotypes then became embedded in American ideas about the Netherlands, which still remain until today.⁵⁶

Stott further elaborates on this in her own publication, *Holland Mania*, in which she discusses the period between 1880 and 1920. During this period, the Netherlands became the focal point for the search for a national history and cultural identity. This fascination with the Dutch extended much further than those of Dutch descent, with many Americans imagining themselves and their heritage as shaped by their views on Holland.⁵⁷

Tourism in the Netherlands was made much more accessible thanks to the establishment of the Dutch steamship company, 'De Nederlandsch-Amerikaansche

⁵⁵ "Mary Mapes Dodge," Lexicon van de jeugdliteratuur, DBNL, Janneke van der Veer, accessed on June 5, 2023, https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/coil001lexi01_01/lvdj00267.php#d043.

⁵⁶ Stott, "Images of Dutchness in the United States", 242-243.

⁵⁷ Annette Stott, *Holland Mania* (New York: The Overlook Press, 1998), 9-11.

Stoomvaart Maatschappij'. Starting with a single steamer capable of transporting 396 people in 1872, the company would gradually expand. By 1882, it had acquired a fleet of ships and opened establishments in the ports of Boston, New York, Amsterdam and Rotterdam. In doing so, it became the principal means of direct tourism between the United States and the Netherlands. To further advertise itself within the U.S., the company changed its name to Holland-America Line. A few years later it would transport around 30.000 people annually.⁵⁸

The increasing number of people travelling to the Netherlands also brought about an increase in travel literature dedicated to the Netherlands. Guidebooks appeared that provided brief histories and emphasized which cities and locations to visit. Tours would lead Americans through major cities such as Amsterdam and Rotterdam, where they were directed towards places such as museums and churches. Tourists were often also directed towards rural villages, where they were supposed to get a taste of traditional Dutch life. Similarly to guidebooks, travel accounts provided planning tourists with information about their destination, while also creating more enthusiasm. In the 1880's, the two most popular travel accounts of the Netherlands were produced by a Frenchman and an Italian. In the 1890's, more books appeared that were written from an American perspective, which gave insight into the American attitude towards Holland. These accounts would align with the romantic writings of Motley and were overall very positive. The landscape was described as delightful and the people were kind-hearted, with democratic spirits.⁵⁹

While the mainland of the Netherlands (and primarily the region of Holland) was given the most attention throughout this period, there was also a growing interest in the Dutch East Indies among Americans. Gerlof D. Homan, a member of the history department of Illinois State University, notes that the United States became aware of the economic wealth of the East Indies in the early 19th century. Trade between the Dutch East Indies and the United States would steadily increase, and by 1941 American companies had become important investors in the colonial economy. Tourist interest remained rather small in scope up to 1941, but it wasn't insignificant. Few Americans visited the Dutch East Indies before World War 1, but many more came after 1918, with the primary tourism locations being Java and Bali. Tourists generally didn't express much concern for the colonial tensions that were present on the islands but were rather impressed by the orderliness of the islands. The island

⁵⁸ Stott, *Holland Mania*, 120-121.

⁵⁹ Stott, *Holland Mania*, 120-130.

of Java in particular was a favourite, as it was cultivated like a garden in the eyes of the tourists.⁶⁰

3.2 The Knickerbocker Weekly and the mainstream press.

On May 10, 1940, the Nazi invasion of the Netherlands would occur, which caused American tourism in the Netherlands to cease for the time being. This meant that now the Americans had no way to confirm their views about the Netherlands in a direct way. The only way to stay up to date with contemporary life in the Netherlands, was through the press. Luckily for the Dutch-loving American audience however, there was a specific magazine that would exclusively publish news about the Netherlands.

The Knickerbocker was a magazine published in America that started out as a monthly issue, presenting Dutch news to an American audience under the subtitle of ‘The Netherlands-American Digest’. This version of the Knickerbocker was established in 1938, but the earliest available publication that is accessible to me is dated December 1939.⁶¹ During this time, the magazine would feature articles discussing the war tensions felt within the Netherlands, as well as advertisements for Dutch products, which often included Dutch cliches such as windmills and traditional clothing.⁶² After the Nazi invasion on May 10, 1940, however, the magazine would largely feature articles and photographs detailing the situation in the now occupied Netherlands. Most of the articles published in the magazine would now highlight the destruction caused by the war, as well as the large number of refugees fleeing the country. Advertisements changed from product placements to information about where to donate money and clothes for Dutch refugees.⁶³

The editorial staff of the Knickerbocker magazine consisted mostly of Dutch people living in America, or Americans that were of Dutch descent.⁶⁴ As explored in the previous sub-chapter, Dutch-American relations go back as far as the seventeenth century. It therefore makes sense that a news magazine would appear in America close to the advent of World War 2 in Europe. Dutch people living in the United States, or even those of close Dutch descent, would likely be interested in news from the Netherlands. Prince Bernhard sent an approving message to the Knickerbocker as well, stating that it gave him much pleasure to

⁶⁰ Gerlof D. Homan, “The United States and the Netherlands East Indies: The Evolution of American Anticolonialism,” *Pacific Historical Review* 53, no. 4 (1984): 424-432.

⁶¹ *The Knickerbocker Weekly: FREE NETHERLANDS*, Volume 3, no. 1. March 1943, page 3.

⁶² *The Knickerbocker Monthly: The Netherlands-American Digest*, Volume 2, no.10. December 1939, page 1-24.

⁶³ *The Knickerbocker Monthly: The Netherlands-American Digest*, Volume 3, no. 7. July 1940, page 1-24.

⁶⁴ *The Knickerbocker Weekly: FREE NETHERLANDS*, Volume 1, no. 1. February 1941, page 1.

see this new publication that could strengthen the already existing bonds between the Netherlands and The United States.⁶⁵

On February 27, 1941, the magazine would undergo drastic changes. Instead of being a monthly issue, the Knickerbocker now became a weekly news magazine, even gaining a new subtitle: "FREE NETHERLANDS". This subtitle is the same as the weekly newspaper that was being produced by the Dutch press in London during World War 2, 'Vrij Nederland'. In the first issue of the restyled magazine, the editorial staff wrote intensely about their goals with the magazine. They wrote, dramatically, that the Knickerbocker Weekly was a child of war, born out of the sorrow caused by a brute act of violence. The magazine was to testify to the cold savagery and depravity of those by whom the rape of Holland was perpetrated. In doing so, they reported the news in such a way to try and invoke an emotional response from the reader. This is opposed to how the mainstream press would report, as they would mostly deliver the news about the Netherlands in a more neutral manner.⁶⁶

This grand declaration by the writing staff, which was printed on the opening pages of the first issue, can be seen as a demonstration of how the magazine wished to represent the Dutch people as downtrodden but resilient at the same time. Essentially, they sought to create a way to garner large scale support from American readers. They dismiss this idea in a later paragraph however, in which the writers of the Knickerbocker wish to assure the reader that they are just like any other news magazine, trying to report unbiased news. They refuse to appeal to the Dutch-American community merely out of a "sense of duty". Spreading news of the dire situation in the Netherlands was seen as enough to garner support from those who were interested enough to read the magazine.⁶⁷

A peculiar element of the Knickerbocker is that it was a bilingual magazine, as it featured articles written in English and Dutch at the same time. These were not the same articles however. Instead of the articles being translations of each other, they were separate in subject matter entirely. Dutch articles would still have English text underneath images, most likely to still be able to provide some information to American readers skipping through. The articles written in English had a tendency to be mostly about whatever it was that the Nazis were doing to the Dutch people and what new cruel rules they were implementing. The Dutch articles on the other hand, tended to focus more on things that primarily Dutch people would

⁶⁵ *The Knickerbocker Weekly: FREE NETHERLANDS*, Volume 1, no. 1, February 1941, page 11.

⁶⁶ *The Knickerbocker Weekly: FREE NETHERLANDS*, Volume 1, no. 1, February 1941, page 3.

⁶⁷ *The Knickerbocker Weekly: FREE NETHERLANDS*, Volume 1, no. 1, February 1941, page 3.

be interested in, such as the Nazification of education, what life in the Hague was like, or even events like the Elfstedentocht.⁶⁸

The Dutch East Indies is also mentioned a lot in the Knickerbocker Weekly, whereas the Western colonies found in the Caribbean were given far less attention. Every issue would usually have its own section dedicated to the Eastern colony, such as ‘From Our East Indies News Service’⁶⁹ or ‘News From the Indies’.⁷⁰ Most of the articles featured in these sections would be dedicated to the threat of the Japanese army spreading through Asia. Most of these articles however, would also be accompanied by a reassurance for the reader that the Dutch East-Indies army was actually quite capable of defending itself. The air force in particular was praised a lot.⁷¹ Issue 23 of the Knickerbocker Weekly features one such article, in which it is brought to the reader’s attention that two new types of planes were being developed in order to increase the strength of the Dutch East-Indies air force.⁷² This was much to the dismay of one Dutch lieutenant, who wrote a letter to editors of the Knickerbocker Weekly to ask them if they would be willing to leave such articles out, fearing it might leak defence secrets.⁷³

On a similar note, there are also instances where sabotage work done by the Dutch resistance finds its way into an article in the Knickerbocker. Whether it be cutting powerlines or setting fire to Nazi ammunition depots, whatever stories of the Dutch resistance came to light would usually be given attention in the Knickerbocker.⁷⁴ The inner workings of the resistance were never revealed in such articles, as that would undoubtedly benefit the Germans more than it would benefit the Dutch morale. The tone of these articles was often triumphant and celebratory, possibly to inspire hope in the readers.

There are many more types of information that could be gathered from the Knickerbocker Weekly. The magazine overall provided a decent picture for American readership what the situation in the Netherlands was like on a weekly basis. It leaned far less into stereotypical depictions in order to present accurate news. If the creators of these war comics (and other American readers) were familiar with the magazine, it is likely that the magazine would have changed their views of the Dutch to something more realistic, as

⁶⁸ *The Knickerbocker Weekly: FREE NETHERLANDS*, Volume 1, no. 3, March 1941, page 1-9.

⁶⁹ *The Knickerbocker Weekly: FREE NETHERLANDS*, Volume 1, no. 4, March 1941, page 10-17.

⁷⁰ *The Knickerbocker Weekly: FREE NETHERLANDS*, Volume 1, no. 5, March 1941, page 10-11.

⁷¹ *The Knickerbocker Weekly: FREE NETHERLANDS*, Volume 1, no. 1, February 1941, page 18.

⁷² *The Knickerbocker Weekly: FREE NETHERLANDS*, Volume 1, no. 23, August 1941, page 3.

⁷³ N. Guilonard, “Letter from Luitenant ter Zee 1e Klasse N. Guilonard,” 6 August, 1941, 243b Nederlands Informatiebureau – New York, NIOD Archive, Amsterdam.

⁷⁴ *The Knickerbocker Weekly: FREE NETHERLANDS*, Volume 1, no. 7, April 1941, page 6.

opposed to the stereotypical views. There is also the possibility that some of the articles from the Knickerbocker Weekly were shared in the mainstream press, creating a broader reach. However, there is no way of confirming if this was the case or not. According to the treasurer of the magazine, H.C. Gomperts, the Knickerbocker Weekly had around 14.000 subscriptions throughout its lifetime.⁷⁵ Whether or not the comic creators were part of this demographic and if it changed their views of the Dutch to something more realistic, remains to be seen in the comics themselves.

The mainstream press would of course also write about the situation in the Netherlands, but never as elaborately as the much more dedicated Knickerbocker Weekly. The Erasmus University Library houses a large online catalogue of prominent American newspapers, such as the New York Times. When searching for the Netherlands in the New York Times database and sorting the results from 1850 to 1949, a gradual upward curve emerges which resembles the increased attention that the Netherlands received in the newspaper. Most of these results consist of articles related to politics and economics, not so much tourism.⁷⁶

As World War 2 approached the Netherlands however, more articles would be written about the growing tensions in the Netherlands. As early as September 1938 there were already articles which expressed the Dutch anxiety surrounding Hitler and his plans for the annexation of surrounding lands.⁷⁷ When the invasion of the Netherlands did finally begin on May 10, 1940, the New York Times reported on the resistance towards the invaders' threat the very next day. A quote from The Lower House of Parliament's president J.R.H. Schaik was highlighted, in which he stated how the Dutch armed forces felt courageous in their fight against the invaders. He makes a reference to the 'glorious past' of the Netherlands, claiming that the Netherlands will once again defend its independence from usurpers. Interestingly enough however, it appears this was not front page worthy news, as this news was featured on page 8 instead.⁷⁸

During the years of Nazi occupation, much of the news would revert back to being either politically or economically based. There were however also articles being published to

⁷⁵ H.C. Gomperts, "Report about the in 1941 New York publication "The Knickerbocker Weekly"," no date given, 249-0377A Dossier – Knickerbocker Weekly, The, NIOD Archive, Amsterdam.

⁷⁶ "The New York Times," Erasmus University Library, accessed on May 11, 2023, <https://libguides.eur.nl/history/press>.

⁷⁷ Author unknown, "ANXIETY IN THE NETHERLANDS: Observers See Danger In Hitler-Chamberlain Talks' Delay." *The New York Times*, September 17, 1938, 2.

⁷⁸ Author unknown, "2 COUNTRIES DEFY INVADERS' THREAT: Belgium and Netherlands Tell German Envoys They Will Fight- War Regimes Begin," *The New York Times*, May 11, 1940, 8.

create more public interest in the Netherlands, its history, and its people. One such article would be that of Hans Kohn, a professor of Modern European History. In this article, he reviews two books focussing on Dutch history and the importance of their relationship with the United States. The article also made use of an image, that being one of a windmill in the Dutch countryside.⁷⁹

To summarise, the ways in which the Americans have historically viewed the Dutch up until World War 2 has changed many times. At first, the Dutch colonial settlers were often depicted as lazy and fat. This negative view would later disappear however, when the Dutch started to be represented as brave and hard-working. These views would later be reinforced by the spread of Holland mania and the increasing amount of tourism between the United States and the Netherlands. Many stereotypes and cliches would also form throughout this period, such as traditional clothing, windmills and clogs. The Dutch East Indies on the other hand, was given far less attention and wasn't well-known among the American public up until the early 19th century. Few Americans visited the Dutch colony, but those that did primarily visited the islands of Java and Bali. These tourists didn't appear to have any issues with the present colonial issues, as they were mostly impressed with how beautiful the islands were.

When World War 2 started in Europe, tourism to the Netherlands halted. News media such as the Knickerbocker Weekly and the rest of the mainstream press would write about the situation in the Netherlands, but most of this reporting lacked the aforementioned stereotypical and cliché views. Because of this more down to earth reporting, it can be argued that the view of the Dutch was slightly skewed towards a more realistic one. Similarly to before the start of the war, less attention was given to the Dutch East Indies as well.

⁷⁹ Hans Kohn, "Sturdy Bulwark in the Democracies," *The New York Times*, July 2, 1944, 10.

4. Chapter 4: Stereotypes and cliches.

The reason as to why comic creators decided to produce stories that took place in either the Netherlands or the Indies remains speculative, but it can be assumed based on the previous chapter that the historical connections between the Netherlands and the United States still held strong in the eyes of the comic creators. It is also rather strange that comic creators would put Dutch characters in places other than the Netherlands or the Indies. The reason for this will be explained later, however.

In this chapter, I will be looking at the different ways in which stereotypes and cliches of both the Netherlands and the East Indies are used inside my collection of war comics. My general impression of the representation of the Dutch and the Netherlands is that there are many uses of stereotypes and cliches in order to create a layer of familiarity for the reader. As discussed in the previous chapter, many Americans were familiar with this view of the Dutch. The first part of the chapter will explore the reinforcement of Dutch stereotypes and cliches, while the second part focusses on the stereotypes and cliches found in the Dutch East Indies.

4.1 Reinforced Dutch stereotypes and cliches.

As discussed in the previous chapter regarding American views of the Dutch, a number of stereotypes, or cliches, had come to be attached to the Netherlands and its people a few decades before the start of World War 2. Most of the time, these cliches would be found in children's books, postcards or travel books that advertised the Netherlands. Now that war had started in Europe and war comics became a popular phenomenon in the United States, these cliches were appropriated by comic book creators as well. A possible reasoning for the use of these cliches would be that, since the Dutch cliches were well known by American audiences at that point, the readers of the comics would more easily be able to recognize that the story took place in the Netherlands. While it is true that such information could also be given to the reader through the use of text boxes, visualisation was also of course a major part of the comic format. It would therefore make sense that comic creators at the time followed this formula and found it appropriate to provide readers with visual clarity of the Netherlands.

Sarah Dellmann clarifies in her writings on Dutch imagery in popular visual culture of the 18th and 19th century that cliches require a stable and fixed motif, which would allow for them to be repeatedly reproduced. Dutch motifs became stabilized towards the end of the 19th century when photographic media became easier and cheaper to reproduce. While prints of Dutch imagery existed well before the 1860's, the reproduction of these prints weren't nearly

as successful. The repeated use of things such as windmills and clogs when discussing Dutchness therefore made them into Dutch clichés. Clichés are the visualisations of stereotypes.⁸⁰

Out of the combined total of 37 comics that offer a representation of the Netherlands, 29 comics feature at least one of numerous Dutch clichés that were selected for this research, but most comics feature a combination of multiple clichés. Among these clichés, the windmills are by far the most popular, being featured in 23 out of the 29 comics. The second place goes to traditional clothing, or 'klederdracht', which are featured in 16 out of 29 comics featuring Dutch clichés. The third most common cliché found in these comics is the use of clogs and canals, which both appear in 11 out of 29 comics. Other popular clichés consist of tulips, dikes and farmers which appear between 7 and 5 times out of the 29 comics. The remaining clichés such as cheese, fishermen and the manners of speech (English with a heavy Dutch accent) are much less prominent.

Being the most prominently featured Dutch cliché, the windmills are mostly there to serve a specific purpose: to signify to the reader that the story is indeed taking place in the Netherlands. While it is true that other clichés also serve this purpose, the use of windmills seems to be by far the most effective cliché to do the job. A lot of times, the windmills featured in these comics are rather small and pushed towards the far background of the images. This undoubtedly made the windmills much easier to draw, while it still allowed the creators to be able to convey the intended Dutch iconography. There are however also a few stories in which the windmill is a key part of the narrative. In *Danger at the Dyke* (1943) for instance, members of the Dutch resistance are captured by Nazi officers and moved towards the inside of a windmill, where they are to be held captive and tortured for information. The windmill is stated to now be an official headquarters of the enemy.⁸¹ A similar thing happens in *The Phantom Eagle: The Black Mace* (1944), when one of the protagonists finds that his grandfather's old windmill has been transformed into Nazi headquarters.⁸² By doing this, the creators of the comics cleverly use the taking of the windmill as an analogy of the captured Netherlands as a whole.

This isn't always the case however, as there are also stories in which the windmills specifically serve as a secret base for the Dutch underground resistance movement. In *The*

⁸⁰ Dellmann, *Images of Dutchness*, 31-37.

⁸¹ Author unknown, *America's Greatest Comics #7*, *Danger at the Dyke* (New York: Fawcett Comics, 1943).

⁸² Otto Binder and Mark Swayze, *Wow Comics #30*, *The Phantom Eagle: The Black Mace* (New York: Fawcett Comics, 1944).

Blue Beetle: The General Alters His Plans (1943) for example, the protagonist joins forces with some members of the Dutch resistance. Together they manage to capture a Nazi general and take him to their secret windmill hideout for interrogation.⁸³ In this case, the cliché of the windmill is used as a beacon of resistance, since the members of the Dutch underground have taken refuge in it. In doing so, the creators of the comic show that all that is considered Dutch still belongs to the Dutch, and that they will continue to resist in order to keep it that way. Whether or not the intention of the creators was to use the windmills in such an analogical manner remains to be questioned, but the direct use of windmills in the narrative signifies that some thought certainly went into it.



Figure 1: The Windmills used as Nazi and Dutch Resistance bases (Author unknown, *America's Greatest Comics* #7. Sylvan Stein and Allen Ulmer, *Blue Beetle* #23)⁸⁴

Dikes too are often used as both a simple visual confirmation of the Netherlands, as well as an essential plot point. Unlike the windmills however, the dikes usually only appear towards the end of each comic to serve a specific narrative role. The stories in this group of comics usually conclude with the heroes destroying the dikes in order to flood the Nazi occupants out, which ends up saving the nearby Dutch people. One comic also uses the destruction of the dikes in order to reimagine it as a defensive strategy that was used during the start of the Nazi invasion of the Netherlands.⁸⁵ Not all dikes end up being destroyed however, as *Danger at the Dyke* features a reference to the aforementioned popular children's

⁸³ Sylvan Stein and Allen Ulmer, *Blue Beetle* #23, *The General Alters His Plans* (Holyoke: Holyoke Publishing, 1943).

⁸⁴ *America's Greatest Comics* #7, *Danger at the Dyke*. *Blue Beetle* #23, *The General Alters His Plans*.

⁸⁵ Author unknown, *Real Life Comics* #7, *The Fighting Netherlands* (New York: Better/Nedor/Standard/Pines Publications, 1942).

story of Hans Brinker, in which a boy saves the Netherlands by putting his thumb in the leaking dike.⁸⁶ While the imagery of Nazi occupants literally being washed away by the breaking of a dike would have been as entertaining as in the rest of the comics, *Danger at the Dyke* also establishes to the reader that the dikes really are important to the safety of the Netherlands. Once again, a Dutch cliché is used for different purposes.

A cliché that does seem to only serve a singular purpose however, is that of the traditional clothing that the Dutch people are shown to be wearing in a large number of these comics. Much like the windmills, the Dutch ‘klederdracht’ seems to be one of the most popular clichés among the American public. The vast majority of the time, the comics only show the female traditional clothing. The headpieces and dresses stand out among rest of the normally dressed people. They do their job well to signify that the story takes place in the Netherlands. The men on the other hand, are often simply drawn with either regular clothes or a farmer’s outfit, while occasionally wearing a cap. There is one instance in which the protagonist of a comic disguises himself with a ‘picturesque Dutch costume’, but that is as far as the representation for male traditional clothing goes.⁸⁷ A reason for this could be that the female and children’s outfit has a more distinct visual design. The headdress in particular is much more unique than for example the caps that some men are drawn with. The dresses also have more features that make them stand out, whereas the clothing of the men seems rather ordinary, especially when depicted in lower quality or detail, as is commonly the case in the art of these comics.

When looking at clichés that appear less frequently, there are the tulips and the farmers which represent stereotypical Dutchness in the comics. In the case of the farmers, they are usually the first people that the protagonist of a given comic story encounters throughout their journey in the Netherlands. These farmers are always cooperative and wish to aid the protagonist at all times. In *Skull Squad* (1940) for instance, the Allied group meets a Dutch farmer who guides them to a hideout in which other Allied soldiers are taking refuge.⁸⁸ Another service the Dutch farmers provide to the comic protagonists is to smuggle them around inside a carriage of hay, as can be seen in *Liberty Belle* (1942) when the protagonist tries to escape from the Netherlands to France in a hay coach.⁸⁹ It seems then, that the comic creators consider the Dutch farmers to be very trustworthy and brave enough to

⁸⁶ *America’s Greatest Comics #7*, *Danger at the Dyke*, 1943.

⁸⁷ Joe Samachson and Irving Tirman, *Adventure Comics #87*, “You Never Can Beat The Dutch” (Burbank: DC Comics, 1943).

⁸⁸ Ace Atkins, Gene Fawcette and Arthur Peddy, *Wings Comics #2*, *Skull Squad* (New York: Fiction House, 1940).

⁸⁹ Don C. Cameron and Chuck Winter, *Boy Commandos #1*, *Liberty Belle* (Burbank: DC Comics, 1942).

stand in opposition against oppression. Perhaps this stems from the pre-established notion that Dutch farmers were seen as courageous, as was mentioned in chapter 3.⁹⁰



Figure 2: The helpful Dutch farmer (Ace Atkins et al., *Wings Comics #2*)⁹¹

The tulips, much like the traditional clothing, are mostly present for the purpose of being a visual signifier of the Netherlands. The times that the flowers are shown in the comics, they are usually only part of the back- and foreground imagery. The only time that a tulip is directly relevant to the plot, is in *The Flying Dutchman: The Real Adolf Hitler* (1944). In the beginning of this story, the protagonist stops by a flower store to specifically buy something in orange. The store owner recognises this as a signal and presents the protagonist with a single orange tulip, with the wrapping of the flower containing a secret message. In this case, the tulip is used in the story as visual confirmation that 1). The mission is of Dutch origin and 2). The person accepting the mission is likely Dutch as well. Even if the protagonist's name wasn't The Flying Dutchman, it could be discerned through this exchange alone that he would likely be a Dutchman.⁹²

In this subchapter I have examined how five Dutch stereotypes and cliches have been used within this selection of American war comics. The use of cliches was likely an artistic choice

⁹⁰ Stott, "Images of Dutchness in the United States", 240-242.

⁹¹ *Wings Comics #2*, Skull Squad, 1940.

⁹² Bob Fujitani, *Air Fighters Comics #16*, *The Flying Dutchman: The Real Adolf Hitler* (New York: Hillman, 1944).

that was born out of simplicity. In order to make sure that their readers understood where the story took place through the visuals alone, the comic creators resorted to the clichés that were already well known by the readers at the time. Another reason for the use of clichés could be that the creators had a lack of visual sources from which they could draw inspiration. They stuck to cliché representations because they were unfamiliar with what the Netherlands really looked like at the time. In doing so, the comic creators also further reinforced the Dutch stereotypes in their own minds, as well as those of the readers. While all of the mentioned clichés have a similar task of conveying to the reader that the story takes place in the Netherlands or that there are Dutch people in the story, a good amount of comic creators have also taken advantage of the clichés in their storytelling.

A last interesting observation is that the usage of clichés in the comics (and the number of comics in general) seems to increase as the war goes on. There is only one comic that was published in 1940, which only featured windmills, clogs, and a farmer with certain manner of speech. 1941 was also a year in which very few comics were published that included the Dutch, once again featuring only two comics containing clichés. It is after this point however, that the publication rates of comics featuring Dutch clichés began to noticeably increase. This could be explained by the fact that the United States only entered the war after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Because the U.S was now formally at war, the comic creators put more emphasis on the friendly nations that had been downtrodden by the Nazi regime, one of which of course being the Netherlands. Out of the pool of 29 comics selected for this chapter, 7 were published in 1942, 10 were published in 1943, and 9 were published in 1944. Strangely enough, no comics featuring Dutch clichés were published in the war period of 1945. The only two comics that were published this year that featured the Netherlands appeared in November, when the war was long over.

4.2 Cliches and stereotypes in the Dutch East Indies

The Dutch East Indies are less prominent in the collection of comics compared to the Netherlands, as was mentioned earlier in chapter 1.5. Most of these stories take place in the various jungles of the island that make up the Dutch East Indies, and the native population is scarcely present. As a result, there are also fewer clichés or stereotypes to be found. 9 out of the 15 comics which stories take place in the Dutch colony feature a number of stereotypes and clichés when it comes to the representation of the islands. There is however one outlying stereotype that is found in almost all of the 16 comics, but it is not one that is representative of the colony itself. Rather, this stereotypical representation is of the Japanese forces which

are attacking the Indies.

There are a number of ways in which the Japanese are represented in a stereotypical fashion. Visually speaking, they are almost always coloured with yellow skin, accompanied with excessive facial features such as extremely slanted eyes and large front teeth. There are also comics in which the Japanese soldiers are given a more beastly appearance. A good example of a comic in which all of these elements are on display would be *Spies on the Junk* (1941). In this story, the Japanese forces appear as the antagonists, as they are given orders to capture the fictional port of Vandamm on the Dutch East Indies as part of the first attack on Dutch possessions. Figure 3 shows a panel which perfectly captures the visual stereotypes that were associated with the Japanese in the United States, even before they joined the war in December 1941.⁹³



Figure 3: The faces of the Japanese soldiers (Henry Kiefer (Drew Allen), *Crack Comics #11*)⁹⁴

As for the Dutch East Indies itself, there are only a few possible clichés that can be derived from the small comic selection. This includes the use of tribalistic clothing and practices such as war dances, as well as the ways in which the population of the Indies are referred to in the text boxes and character speech bubbles. The use of these clichés is rather low however, as only 5 out of the 16 comics featuring the Dutch East Indies have tribalistic representation. This is however mostly due to the fact that the population of the East Indies is

⁹³ Henry Kiefer (Drew Allen), *Crack Comics #11*, *Spies on the Junk* (New York: Great Comics Publications, 1941).

⁹⁴ *Crack Comics #11*, *Spies on the Junk*. 1941.

relatively absent in most of the comics, which will be discussed in chapter 6.

The comic featuring most of these tribal cliches would be *The Netherlands East Indies* (1942). In this comic, the reader is presented with varying examples of people in tribal clothing on the front page, with each island of the East Indies having different clothes. The next page features more examples of Indonesians wearing tribal clothes, but it also features certain practices. The men of Borneo are shown to be performing a war dance, whereas the women of Bali seem to be performing a more celebrative dance while being dressed in a full costume.⁹⁵ These kind of representations can be seen as evidence of the Orientalist mindset that the American comic creators had at the time. Orientalism, as the founder of postcolonial studies Edward Said describes it, and can be described as a complex group of Western representations of the Orient (the East). These representations were made to be opposites of the West. The West would for example call itself civilized, while the East was tribal and savage.⁹⁶

The use of these tribal cliches in the comics feels rather strange when compared to the cliches that were used to represent the Dutch. In the case of the European mainland of the Netherlands, cliches were mostly used in order to achieve recognisability, since a large part of the American population had become familiar with the cliches over the past few decades. The use of stereotypes and cliches involving the East Indies however, reads more like a case of orientalist mindsets from the comic creators. It can be assumed that the creators of the comics had little to no knowledge of what life on the Dutch East Indies was actually like, and instead resorted to more general representations of the exotic and unfamiliar East.

⁹⁵ Author unknown, *True Comics #16*, *The Netherlands East Indies* (New York: Parents' Magazine Press, 1942).

⁹⁶ Shehla Burney, "CHAPTER ONE: Orientalism: The Making of the Other," *Counterpoints* 417 (2012): 26-29.

5. Chapter 5: Locations of the Netherlands and the Indies.

While these comics feature numerous cliches and stereotypes that provide the reader with enough information to suggest that the narratives take place in either the Netherlands or the Dutch East Indies, the locations that are used for the stories also provide an extra layer of representation. But where exactly within the Netherlands or the Dutch East Indies are the stories shown to be taking place? What places do the protagonists of the comics travel to? Which parts of the Netherlands or the East Indies are missing from the representations found in the comics? It is without doubt that some places are simply more popular or well-known among the comics creators and their readers than other places, which we should be able to judge based on the following analysis.

In this chapter, I will be discussing the various locations that are used in the narratives of the selected comics. I will start by taking a closer look at the different cities and provinces that are represented in the comics featuring the Netherlands. There is also much to be said about the lack of representation of other locations. Similarly for the Dutch East Indies, I will highlight examples in which the comic creators make use of actual locations from the colony. This includes the use of the different islands that the East Indies consists of and some of the cities that are found on them. Due to the smaller number of comics featuring the Dutch East Indies however, this section will be somewhat smaller.

5.1 The representation of Dutch locations.

Based on the use of many Dutch cliches throughout the comics, it becomes quite obvious to the reader that the stories of the comics take place in the Netherlands. Like I mentioned before however, this isn't the only way through which the comic creators can communicate to the readers where their story takes place. Visualisations of cliches only hint generally towards the Netherlands as a whole, but they don't say anything specific about the actual location of the story. In order to provide the readers with more accurate information about the exact location in which the story takes place, most comics artists rely on the use of the text box, a key component of the comic formula. Because comics are a combined medium of visuals and text, both are often required to provide the reader with the full context of the comic's story.

It is within these text boxes that we find more details about the specific locations that the comic creators have chosen to use for their stories. As mentioned before, 37 of the comics from the corpus have stories that take place somewhere in the Netherlands. It should be noted that much like the cliches, there are cases of overlap within some of the comics, as some

stories take place in multiple locations in the Netherlands. When the locations provided by the text are compiled next to each other however, an interesting image starts to appear.

11 of the comics don't actually ever specify through text in which part of the Netherlands the story takes place. The only hint that is given to the readers in these cases can be found in the title of the story itself, as can be seen with comics such as *The American Crusader in Holland* (1943).⁹⁷ Besides these, there are also 3 comics in which the story partially takes place in an unknown part of the Netherlands, while in later parts of the comic the characters move to a more designated area. An example of this can be found in *Sergeant Boyle: It Happened in Holland*, in which the characters first arrive somewhere in the general vicinity of Holland. However, they move towards Amsterdam shortly after.⁹⁸

This comic is one of 6 comics that feature Amsterdam as a part of their story. Being the capital of the Netherlands, and arguably one of the most well-known cities among American audiences, it makes sense that some comics would make use of this setting. While most of these comics only claim to take place in Amsterdam, only one comic makes an attempt to visualise Amsterdam properly as well. The art of the first page of *Food for Starving Patriots Chapter 3* (1942) suggests that the comic artists had some knowledge of what the streets and canals of Amsterdam actually looked like. The architecture used for the houses, roads and bridges along the canals in the comics matches with the Amsterdam scenery that one would find in real life.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Authors unknown, *America's Best Comics #6*, *The American Crusader in Holland* (New York: Better/Nedor/Standard/Pines Publications, 1943).

⁹⁸ Carl Hubbell, *Jackpot Comics #7*, *It Happened in Holland* (New York: Archie/MLJ, 1942).

⁹⁹ Gardner F. Fox and Joe Gallagher, *All Star Comics #14*, *Food for Starving Patriots Chapter 3* (New York: All-American Comics Inc., 1942).

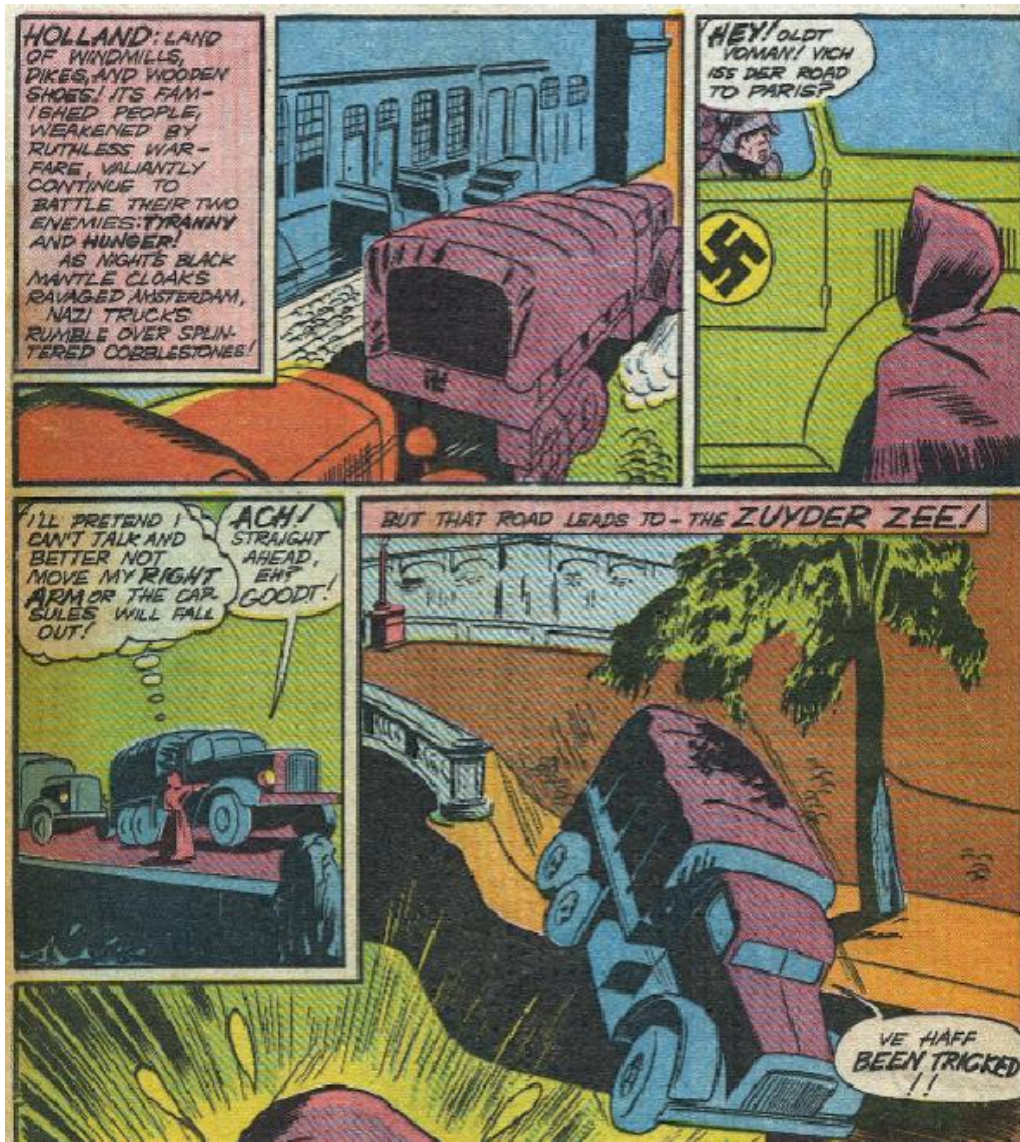


Figure 4: The streets and canals of Amsterdam (Gardner F. Fox and Joe Gallagher, *All Star Comics #14*)¹⁰⁰

Another city that Americans were most likely quite familiar with is Rotterdam, as it is also featured in 6 out of the 37 comics. Some of these comics even makes reference to the bombing of the city which took place towards the end of the Nazi invasion of the Netherlands in May of 1940.¹⁰¹ One of the few comics that represents Rotterdam from the ground is *Lt. Annie den Hooch: One-Woman Army* (1944), which tells the supposed tale of a real woman by the same name who was the first woman to wear the Dutch military uniform. The story begins with her as a nurse, working in an unnamed hospital somewhere in Rotterdam on the day of the Nazi invasion. As the fighting begins, she rushes to the streets to pick up anyone in

¹⁰⁰ *All Star Comics #14*, Food for Starving Patriots Chapter 3, 1942.

¹⁰¹ Bob Fujitani, *Air Fighters Comics #2*, The Coming of the Dutchman (New York: Hillman, 1942). Author unknown, *True Comics #38*, Lt. Annie den Hooch: One-Woman Army (New York: Parents' Magazine Press, 1944).

need of medical aid. Unfortunately, the rest of the story remains inside the rooms of the hospital and not much else of Rotterdam is really shown.¹⁰²

The majority of the time however, Rotterdam is only seen from the air. Specifically, the Rotterdam airport seems to have been a popular set piece for comics that focussed on aviation. The real airport that these representations seem to be based on is airport Waalhaven, which opened on March 18, 1922.¹⁰³ The visuals of the airport itself are rather simplistic, consisting of a few hangars landing strips that form an X shape, as can be seen in *The Flying Dutchman: The Albatross Mystery* (1943) and *Skull Squad* (1940).¹⁰⁴ When looking at an actual map of what the airport used to look like however, there are no real landing strips to be found that could possibly make the X shape. It seems much more likely that the comic creators chose to represent the airport in such a manner because it catches the reader's eye. The X is placed in the middle of the panels, which causes our eyes to naturally be drawn to it. The Rotterdam harbour is strangely absent, despite the fact that many Americans might be familiar with it.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² *True Comics #38*, Lt. Annie den Hooch: One-Woman Army, 1944.

¹⁰³ "Waalhaven", Ministerie van Defensie, accessed on May 9, 2023, <https://www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/vliegvelden-tijdens-de-tweede-wereldoorlog/vliegveldenoverzicht/waalhaven>.

¹⁰⁴ Fred Kida, *Air Fighters Comics #7*, *The Flying Dutchman: The Albatross Mystery* (New York: Hillman, 1943). *Wings Comics #2*, *Skull Squad*, 1940.

¹⁰⁵ Stott, *Holland Mania*, 120-130.

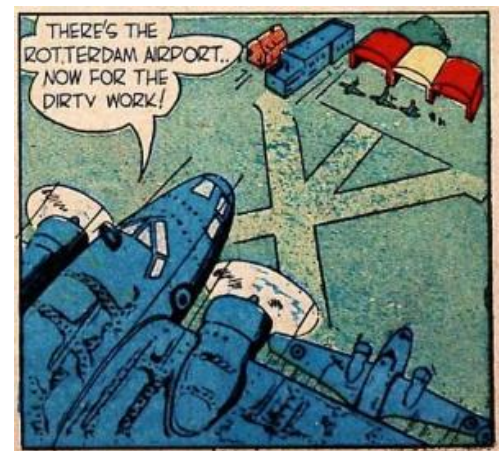
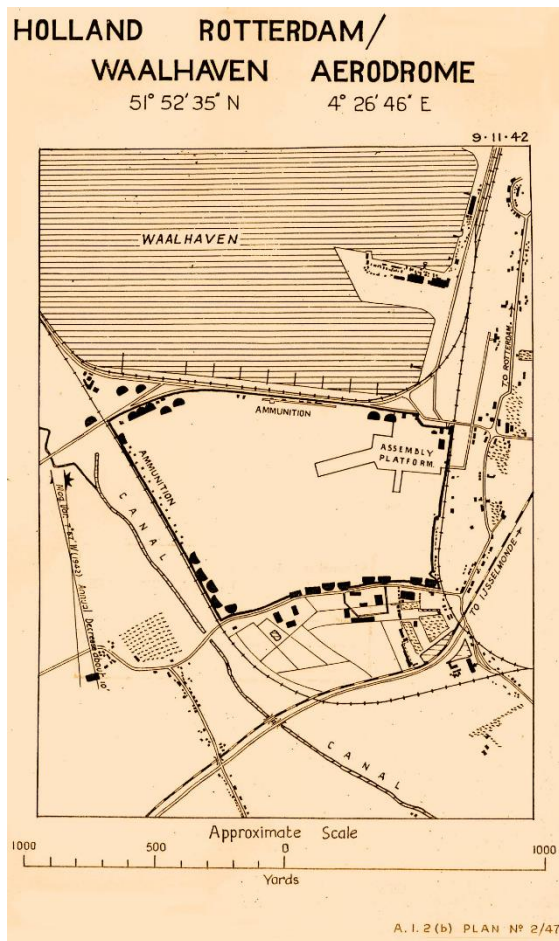


Figure 5: The Rotterdam Airport on a real map vs in the comics (Ministerie van Defensie, "Waalhaven". Fred Kida, *Air Fighters* #7. Ace Atkins et al., *Wings Comics* #2)¹⁰⁶

Being a little less specific than cities or towns, a number of comics also give regional hints as to where their stories take place. For the majority of these comics, the creators simply chose to use the combined province of Holland to describe where their story was situated, though there are some exceptions to this. In 3 of the comics, the Zuiderzee is used as a regional indicator for the story, while one comic only briefly mentions it in passing. Not much is done with the Zuiderzee in the art of the comics however, as only 2 of the comics actually briefly show some of the water. Narratively, it is either used as a transport area by means of boat, or it used as a reminder of the Dutch's eternal struggle against the water. When the Nazis try to destroy the dike in *Danger at the Dyke* (1943), the narrative box of text mentions that it is holding back the water from the sea (which is the Zuiderzee, as explained at the beginning of the story).¹⁰⁷ The comic creators represent the Zuiderzee as Dutch territory, as well as an age old threat against the Dutch.

¹⁰⁶ Ministerie van Defensie, "Waalhaven." *Air Fighters Comics* #7, *The Flying Dutchman: The Albatross Mystery*, 1943. *Wings Comics* #2, *Skull Squad*, 1942.

¹⁰⁷ *America's Greatest Comics* #7, *Danger at the Dyke*, 1943.

Lastly, there are also limited mentions of other provinces in the Netherlands besides just Holland. One comic actually gives the reader a small glimpse of Limburg. It features a panel of workers from the Limburg State Mines, demonstrating against the Nazis. The majority of the panel is occupied by the workers themselves, while in the background you can see parts of the old-fashioned mining buildings.¹⁰⁸ One other reference to a different province of the Netherlands appears in “*You Never Can Beat The Dutch*” (1943), where the story takes place on a dairy and in a town somewhere in Zeeland. The landscapes mostly consist of flat grasslands, there are windmills and canals all around, and of course there is a dike holding back the wrath of the North Sea, which is broken at the end of the story to flood the Nazis.¹⁰⁹

Most likely due to time constraints and a limited knowledge of what most Dutch cities really looked like, most comic creators chose to keep the art simple. There is the outlier of the one comic with a rather accurate depiction of the streets of Amsterdam that was mentioned earlier, but almost all other comics relied entirely on the text boxes in the corners to provide the readers with sufficient information to make it clear where in the Netherlands their story took place.¹¹⁰ The locations of Amsterdam and Rotterdam were likely picked because of their popularity as the two biggest cities of the Netherlands. Amsterdam is of course the capital of the Netherlands, but Rotterdam might have gained extra popularity among Americans due to the news of its destruction during the bombing of May 14. Both cities were also tourist hotspots thanks to the Holland America Line.¹¹¹

5.2 The representation of places in the Dutch East Indies.

Similarly to the geography of the Netherlands, the specific parts of the Dutch East Indies in which the narratives take place are more often than not presented to the reader in the form of text. This is done either through the text boxes placed on the top corners of the panels, or via the dialogue of the characters themselves. The exact locations of the East Indies can't be deduced by the visuals alone, as in most comics the East Indies are represented by large stretches of jungle. There are no landmarks which the comic creators could rely on to visually convey to the reader that the story took place in the Dutch East Indies, as was the case for the windmills in the Netherlands.

¹⁰⁸ Chuck Winter, *Choice Comics #1, Fight for Freedom in Holland* (New York: Great Comics Publications, 1941).

¹⁰⁹ *Adventure Comics #87, “You Never Can Beat The Dutch”, 1943.*

¹¹⁰ *All Star Comics #14, Food for Starving Patriots Chapter 3, 1942.*

¹¹¹ Stott, *Holland Mania*, 120-130.

The Dutch East Indies consist of multiple islands, as it is an archipelago. Some of these islands however, appear more common in the comics than others. By far the most reoccurring island of the Indies is Java, as it is used as the setting for the narratives in 7 out of the 16 total comics in which the Indies are featured. The island of Java is often represented from its shore as a tropical island, with palm trees lining its beaches. An example of this would be *Top-Notch's Hall of Fame: Lt. Commander Dr. Corydon M. Wassell* (1942). In this comic, an American naval ship sails past Java, which was already under the control of the Japanese forces at the time. As the American ship sails by the coast of Java, the foreground is dominated by the palm trees, while the ship itself is placed more towards the background of the panel.¹¹² By making the ship appear small in comparison to the island, it creates a sense of dread, almost as if the island itself is hostile.

Other representations of Java also include a closer look at the urban areas of the island. *The Fighting Netherlands* (1942) for instance presents the reader with what appears to be a town square in Bandoeng. The panel consists of an open space that is encircled by a few houses with balconies, as well as what appears to be a church in the background. Through the dialogue of the characters, it is revealed that this urban area is supposed to be the city of Bandoeng.¹¹³ Similarly, the story of *Java Justice* (1945) takes place in another urban area, but this time in two different time periods. The beginning of the story presents the reader with the city of Batavia (now known as Jakarta), some 200 years in the past. Not much is shown of what the city looked like in the past however, as only two small houses are present in the background of one of the panels. The other panel is only filled with a small crowd of people and the sky. This kind of minimalistic presentation remains throughout the comic, even when the narrative pulls the reader back to modern times. The panels are mostly filled with simple colours and buildings are sparsely found. Even when the protagonists find themselves inside a home, the art is kept very simple. The interior of the house doesn't say anything unique about those that live there.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Paul Reinman, *Top-Notch Laugh Comics #29*, *Top-Notch's Hall of Fame: Lt. Commander Dr. Corydon M. Wassell* (New York: MLJ, 1942).

¹¹³ *Real Life Comics #7*, *The Fighting Netherlands*, 1942.

¹¹⁴ Author unknown, *Captain Midnight #31*, *Java Justice* (New York: Fawcett Comics, 1945).



Figure 6: Reinforcements arrive in Bandoeng to stop the force coming from Palembang (Author unknown, *Real Life Comics #7*)¹¹⁵

Another island that is frequently featured in the comics is New Guinea. There are however some uncertainties to be found when it comes to the representation of this island. While it is indeed true that Dutch New Guinea was part of the Dutch East Indies, the eastern half of the island was not. This other half had two other European powers which each controlled their own territories, those powers being the British and the Germans. Authority over the British part of the Island had been handed over to Australia between 1905 and 1906 however. And after the events of World War 1, Germany would end up losing this territory to Australia.¹¹⁶ In these comics, it is sometimes not clear if the New Guinea in which the story takes place refers to the Dutch western half or the now fully Australian eastern half. For the sake of including as many comics representing the East Indies as possible however, I have chosen to make use of all these unclear comics, unless it is made clear that the story in a given comic takes place in the Australian half. In this case, the comic was left out of this analysis.

The other islands of the Dutch East Indies are never really given their own stories. Instead, they are often bundled together as a whole in the comics, mostly appearing on maps. *The Flying Dutchman* (1943) for example shows the islands of Sumatra, Borneo and Celebes, on which the protagonist helped to fight the Japanese forces. The rest of the comic shows his

¹¹⁵ *Real Life Comics #7*, The Fighting Netherlands, 1942.

¹¹⁶ "Papua New Guinea", National Museum Australia, accessed on May 8, 2023, <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/papua-new-guinea>.

journey through these islands.¹¹⁷ Similarly, *The Netherlands East Indies* (1942) presents the reader with an overview of the islands. Some islands however, are not fully displayed, and the backgrounds of some panels remain empty. Sumatra is shown to have straw houses deep within the heart of its territory, which are still being defended. On the other side of the spectrum, there is also a panel in which an oil refinery is being destroyed. Sumatra is stated in the comic to be a large oil provider, and the destruction was caused to stop the Japanese from acquiring it for themselves. The landscapes of Borneo, Bali and Celebes are not represented at all in these panels. What is interesting however, is how the text describes them. Borneo is said to be home to ‘wild men’, Bali is referred to as ‘the last paradise on Earth’, and Celebes is presented as defenceless. Dutch New Guinea remains absent throughout the comic, appearing only on the opening page on the map.¹¹⁸

Java is given exceptional attention in this particular comic however, as most of the story is focused on the island and its history. It is described as ‘the pearl of the East’, where oriental glamor and Dutch efficiency were blended. In order to represent this blending, the comic creators juxtapose panels next to each other, one showing the Dutch influence on the island and the other the traditional ways of life that had persisted since ancient times.

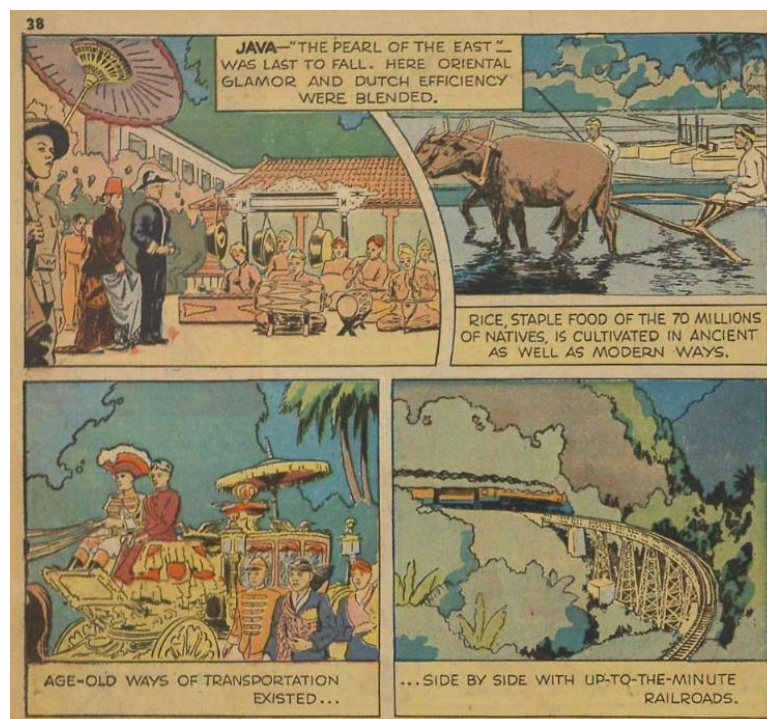


Figure 7: The Pearl of the East (Author unknown, *True Comics #16*)¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Pieter Cramerus, *True Comics #28, The Flying Dutchman* (New York: Parents' Magazine Press, 1943).

¹¹⁸ *True Comics #16, The Netherlands East Indies*, 1942.

¹¹⁹ *True Comics #16, The Netherlands East Indies*, 1942.

Almost all of these comics were published after the Dutch East Indies had already been fully captured by Japanese forces on 8 March of 1942.¹²⁰ It therefore makes sense that some of the representations of the islands include a sense of danger, since the islands are now controlled by enemy forces. The visualisation of the islands is also understandable, as 84% of the combined landmasses consisted of forests and plantations up until even the 1950's.¹²¹ It is therefore appropriate that the islands are often represented with jungle-like imagery. Another reason for this artistic choice could be the aforementioned orientalist mindset of the creators. The few cities that were shown in the comics were also based in reality. The way in which the cities were drawn however, remained mostly minimalistic and general, as opposed to a more accurate and realistic visualisation of what the cities must have looked like.

¹²⁰ M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since c. 1200 Third Edition* (Houndmills, Basingstroke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001), 244.

¹²¹ FWI/GFW, *The State of the Forest: Indonesia* (Washington DC: World Resource Institute, 2002), 7.

6. Chapter 6: A closer look at the population.

The protagonists of these comics featuring the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies are usually not Dutch at all, but rather American, British or people from other Allied countries. Many of these creators might not have known how a Dutch person would act outside of the stereotypical portrayal that they were familiar with. As a result of this, some Dutch characters might end up appearing much more like American characters. The characterisation and appearances of the comic characters however, can give great insight as to how the American comic creators viewed the Dutch and Indonesian people at the time.

In this chapter, I will discuss how the Dutch and Indonesian characters are represented in the selection war comics. I will be showing how the population of the Netherlands is represented in the comics. This will be done in a number of steps. First I will discuss how the Dutch characters are usually drawn and what they are shown to be doing. After this, I will highlight certain traits and characterisations that the Dutch people are given in the comics. This is then followed by a closer look at the representation of the Dutch resistance and how it was romanticized in order to garner support for the war effort from the readers. I also wish to discuss a particular reoccurring comic protagonist, the flying ace pilot known as the Flying Dutchman. The chapter is concluded with an overview of the representation of the people living in the Dutch East Indies, specifically the Indonesians, who are referred to only as natives in the comics.

6.1 Representing the population of the Netherlands.

The Dutch people often end up playing a supporting role in the narratives of these war comics. Because of this supporting role, they are often part of the background scenery and speak relatively little, while the American protagonist for example takes centre stage instead. In most cases the Dutch people still stand out despite being part of the background in a panel, largely thanks to the aforementioned use of traditional clothing. The women are often shown wearing traditional dresses and headpieces, whereas the men can often be seen wearing baggy trousers or overalls, combined with a cap.¹²² These representations are in line with the stereotypes mentioned by Stott and Dellmann. Women appear almost as frequently as men, although the men are usually given more important roles in the narratives, such as being an active resistance member. This doesn't mean that there aren't any female resistance members

¹²² *Adventure Comics #87*, "You Never Can Beat The Dutch", 1943. *America's Best Comics #6*, The American Crusader in Holland, 1943.

shown in the comics, but they are rarer.

There are however also times when there isn't direct visual confirmation that the characters in the comics are really Dutch, primarily because of the lack of traditional clothing. In *The Blue Beetle: The General Alters His Plans* (1943) for example, the members of the Dutch resistance are shown wearing regular clothing, consisting of t-shirts and jackets.¹²³ If the narrative of this comic didn't include a windmill and a tulip field, the comic creators could have just as easily said in the text boxes that the story took place in, let's say, France or Denmark, and none would be the wiser. Similarly, the characteristics of the Dutch can be attached to other Europeans, and it would be hard to tell the difference.

Through analysing these selected war comics, it becomes clear that the comic creators didn't have a singular vision of how they wished to represent the Dutch population, as there are a number of different ways in which the Dutch people are shown to be acting. In one comic the Dutch characters could be working as resistance members that are plotting to fight back against the Nazi occupants, while in the next comic they could be innocent civilians that are being terrorized by the Nazis. These two ways of representing the Dutch are often paired however, as plot events such as public executions are almost always tied to resistance. One representation that does reoccur is the ignorant attitude of the Dutch before the war. In the three comics that present the readers with such representations, the Dutch characters are optimistic about their neutrality, which is later proven to be a false hope.¹²⁴

The Nazis fiercely punish those and everyone around them for possibly aiding the resistance. An example of this can be seen in the *Jane Martin* (1944) comic from *Wings Comics #48*. When a train bridge is blown up by a Dutch resistance member, a Nazi commander gives the order to seize up to a 100 people as hostages that are to be shot the next day. This is a highly excessive number, as in reality there were usually only a few people being executed at a time. The largest recorded execution was on March 8, 1945, when 53 people were shot at 'Rozenoord', an execution area near Amsterdam.¹²⁵ Ultimately, the comic only presents the reader with a more realistic line of a maximum of nine people. The characters are still grouped closely together and fill the panels as much as possible, but it does make the execution look rather small in scale.¹²⁶

¹²³ *Blue Beetle #23*, *The General Alters His Plans*, 1943.

¹²⁴ Jack Kirby and Joe Simon, *Boy Commandos #1*, *The Town That Couldn't Be Conquered* (Burbank: DC Comics, 1942). *Boy Commandos #1*, Liberty Belle, 1942. *True Comics #38*, *One-Woman Army*, 1944.

¹²⁵ Loe de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog Deel 10b – Het laatste jaar: Eerste band* ('s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1981), 442.

¹²⁶ E. Lincoln and Lily Renee, *Wings Comics #48*, *Jane Martin* (New York: Fiction House, 1944).

The Dutch people are more than crowds waiting to be executed however, as most tend to have some personality traits attached to them. There are in fact a number of reoccurring traits that the Dutch people are featured with. The Dutch people are mostly shown to be passive, because resisting the Nazis would be punished harshly. Despite their passiveness however, the Dutch are still often presented as patriotic, resilient and brave. They are proud to be Dutch and wish for nothing more than freedom. There are only a three comics which also depict the Dutch as starving and downtrodden. Not all of these comics were published during the second half of the war, when the ‘hunger winter’ took place in the Netherlands.¹²⁷ This indicates to me that the element of starvation was used to make the Dutch look sympathetic, as opposed to an attempt to emulate the real situation in the Netherlands.

It is usually after the intervention of an Allied protagonist in the comic story (which regularly amounts to beating up dozens of Nazis), that the Dutch people are finally given their chance to fight back against their oppressors. When they do get the chance to fight back against the oppressors, the Dutch are very eager and willing to fight the Nazis with their own hands, becoming rather combative.



Figure 8: The Dutch People are given their chance to fight back (Jack Kirby and Joe Simon, *Boy Commandos #1*)¹²⁸

In most cases, the Dutch people are either characterised as either civilians or resistance members (either armed, as saboteurs or as informants). There are also a number of instances,

¹²⁷ De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog Deel 10b*, 160-162.

¹²⁸ *Boy Commandos #1*, *The Town That Couldn't Be Conquered*, 1942.

about 5 of them, in which the Dutch military is represented, but those are far less common as opposed to the previous two categories of characterisation. *Liberty Belle* (1942) is one of the few comic stories that offers a brief glimpse of fictional Dutch military leaders, who are shown to be rather oblivious to the impending threat of the Nazis.¹²⁹ Other representations of the Dutch military include comics such as *The Fighting Netherlands* (1942) in which the soldiers try to fight back against the Nazi invasion of May 10, 1940. They are shown to be trying their best but are ultimately pushed to defeat.¹³⁰ Dutch soldiers are also shown fighting in the Dutch East Indies, but which battles are fought is never specified.

It is rare for the Dutch characters to be something other than mere civilians, resistance members, or part of the military. There are for example only 5 comics in which Dutch people are shown to be enemy sympathisers. The representation of collaborators and/or traitors is often paired with other Dutch people showing their disdain towards them. In the very last panel of *Fight for Freedom in Holland* (1941) for example, two men that volunteered for service against the Soviet Union are called traitors by those that pass them on the street.¹³¹ Similarly, *Mutiny in the Classroom* (1942) presents the reader with a group of children resisting their new teacher, who is a collaborator with the Nazi invaders. Instead of writing complementary essays about Hitler, they draw him hanging from the gallows.¹³²

There are however also two instances where the supposed Dutch traitors are revealed to have never been Dutch at all, but rather German. One example can be found in *The Man Who Laughed At Horror* (1944). The character Hans van Mutter is introduced to the reader as a village outcast, as the other Dutch people in the town think he is a witch. The protagonists suspect him of being a collaborator with the enemy forces, and that suspicion is later proven to be partially correct when it is revealed that the man was a German all along.¹³³ This, alongside the fact that most comics don't even bother to represent traitors in any fashion, also helps push the idea to the readers that there are no bad Dutch people. This undoubtedly made for far more effective propaganda to convince the readers that the Dutch people are their friends and that they need their help.

¹²⁹ *Boy Commandos #1*, Liberty Belle, 1942.

¹³⁰ *Real Life Comics #7*, The Fighting Netherlands, 1942.

¹³¹ *Choice Comics #1*, Fight for Freedom in Holland, 1941.

¹³² Author unknown, *Real Heroes #7*, Mutiny in the Classroom (New York: Parents' Magazine Press, 1942).

¹³³ Joseph Greene (Joe Simon) and Louis Cazeneuve (Jack Kirby), *Boy Commandos #9*, The Man Who Laughed At Horror (Burbank: DC Comics, 1944).

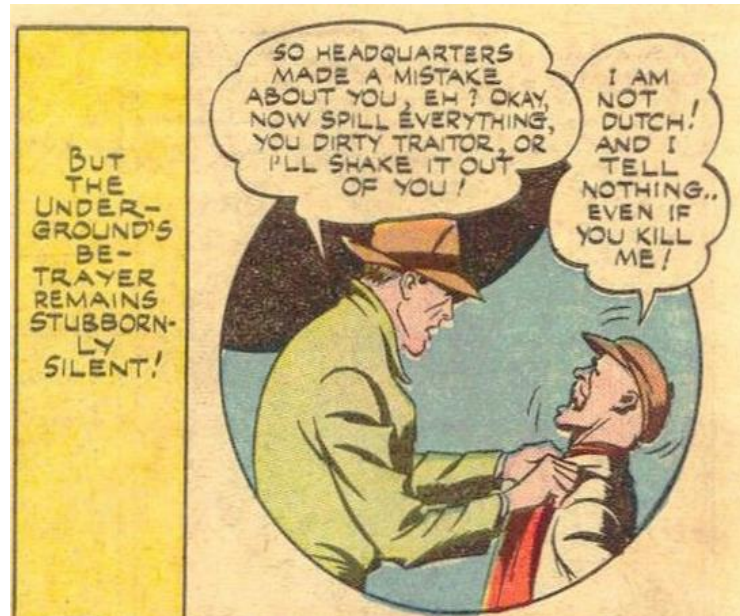


Figure 9: The traitor is not actually Dutch, but German (Joe Samachson and Irving Tirman, *Adventure Comics #87*)¹³⁴

Strangely enough there are no comics that clearly depict Dutch Jews in their stories. Despite the fact that the Jewish persecution was an essential element of World War 2, they are entirely absent from the narratives of these comics. What makes this even more strange is the aforementioned fact that a lot of comic creators that were active in the United States at the time were Jewish, who knew very well what the Nazi regime was doing to the Jewish population of not just the Netherlands but Europe at large. Does this mean that representing the persecution of the Jewish people was too difficult for the creators, or that they perhaps knew it wouldn't get the reader's attention? Literature discussing the representation of the Holocaust in comics generally focusses on comics from the 1950's and onwards. Public history professor Christine Gundermann for instance writes how the first comic about the Holocaust was Ernie Krigstein's *Master Race*, which was published in the United States in 1955. The Holocaust didn't become a part of popular culture until the 1970's.¹³⁵ It remains strange then, that the persecution of the Jews is absent from this collection of comics.

6.2 The Romanticization of Resistance.

As mentioned before, a lot of the Dutch characters that are present in the comics are identified as members of the resistance. A total of 23 comics feature one or multiple characters that are part of the Dutch resistance, which is usually grouped together under the

¹³⁴ *Adventure Comics #87*, "You Never Can Beat The Dutch", 1943.

¹³⁵ Christine Gundermann, "Real Imagination? Holocaust Comics in Europe," in *The Holocaust and its Contexts: Revisiting Holocaust Representation in the Post-Witness Era*, ed. Diana I. Popescu and Tanja Schult (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 231-234.

same general name, “The Dutch Underground”. These members, as well as the resistance as a whole, are always complimented by the protagonists of the comics for their effectiveness and determination. The *Race Riley and the Commandos* series for example features a female character called ‘The Black Tulip’. She is described as a masterful organizer of sabotage, spreading chaos to Nazis all around Holland. It is for this reason that is revered by the Dutch and their allies, as well as feared by the Nazi regime.¹³⁶

There are many types of sabotage and other acts of resistance shown in the comics. The aforementioned destruction of a train bridge is but one of many examples. One of the more frequently presented acts of sabotage is the destruction of Nazi ammunition depots and their related factories. Arson and bombings were some of the many activities of the Dutch resistance during the war, but it wasn’t as common.¹³⁷ Most of the resistance activities instead revolved around going into hiding and forming an illegal press, especially after 1943 when personal radios were being confiscated.¹³⁸

The explosions are drawn to be large, as well as the fire, which both help convey the sense that a lot of serious damage is done through these acts. This is usually also emphasized with the use of text, describing the magnitude of the damage.¹³⁹ Sometimes however, the sabotage work turns from realistic to fictional. The Dutch resistance in “*You Never Can Beat The Dutch*” (1943) for example, placed land mines under each tulip that is planted in the nearby field. When the Nazis try to clear these fields to build new camps, they’ll be blown to bits.¹⁴⁰ The violence in this case however, is not graphic at all, but instead humorous and non-lethal. This is a trend in the comics that is only broken a few times, in which the violence does become more graphic.

Besides acts of sabotage, the Dutch resistance is also frequently shown to be helpful to the Allies. In a few of the comics, the Dutch are shown to be helping crashed Allied pilots. *Fight for Freedom in Holland* (1941) gives the reader a brief glimpse of two Dutch men helping an R.A.F. pilot out of his crashed plane in order to provide him with medical care.¹⁴¹ Similarly, in *Destination Underground* (1944), the protagonists ask a local veterinarian to take care of the wounded pilot that they found in the woods. Despite the risk that the

¹³⁶ Milburn Rosser, *Sparkler Comics #33*, *Race Riley and the Commandos* (Chicago: United Features Syndicate, 1944).

¹³⁷ B. A. Sijes, *De Razzia van Rotterdam 10-11 November 1944* ('s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1951), 31.

¹³⁸ De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog Deel 10b*, 467.

¹³⁹ *Blue Beetle #23*, *The General Alters His Plans*, 1943. *Choice Comics #1*, *Fight for Freedom in Holland*, 1941.

¹⁴⁰ *Adventure Comics #87*, “*You Never Can Beat The Dutch*”, 1943.

¹⁴¹ *Choice Comics #1*, *Fight for Freedom in Holland*, 1941.

veterinarian puts himself in by doing this, he gladly accepts and offers his help.¹⁴² Through these positive representations, the Dutch are shown to be people that are worthy of the help of the Allies.



Figure 10: The many activities of the resistance in a V shaped page (Chuck Winter, *Choice Comics #1*)¹⁴³

This is further amplified by a lot of the final textboxes of some comics, or even remarks of the characters themselves. Both often state that the Dutch have a remarkable fighting spirit and that they will refuse to give up. They will continue their uphill fight against the oppressors regardless of the circumstances. An example of this would be the final words of Hein ter Poorten in the comic based on him, in which he quotes an old saying: “You can’t

¹⁴² Author unknown, *All-New Comics #9*, Boy Heroes: Destination Underground (New York: Harvey Comics, 1944).

¹⁴³ *Choice Comics #1*, Fight for Freedom in Holland, 1941.

beat the Dutch”. He vows to honour this old saying by continuing to fight together with the American general MacArthur and his men.¹⁴⁴

6.3 The Case of the Flying Dutchman.

There is one reoccurring fictional Dutch protagonist within the selection of comics that were found for this research, and that is the ace pilot known as the Flying Dutchman, named after the legendary ghostship of the same name.¹⁴⁵ Very little background information is actually given regarding the identity of the Flying Dutchman, most of which is found in the first story in which he appears. The reader learns here that the Flying Dutchman once lived with his parents in Rotterdam, until both were killed during the bombing on May 14, 1940. After this, he escaped from the Netherlands towards the United Kingdom and started his own private war against the Nazis. This simple backstory acts as a motivator for the fighting that the Flying Dutchman does throughout the comic series, while also making the reader sympathise with him. His actual name is never clarified, but it is hinted to simply be Jan at the end of his first story. The only people who know his true identity are the Dutch queen, Winston Churchill and a few high ranking Dutch patriots.¹⁴⁶ The mysterious element of the Flying Dutchman’s origin is never developed however. Instead, he remains as the brave and patriotic flying Dutchman throughout the many monthly stories that he is featured in between 1942 and 1944.

The Flying Dutchman is characterised in a similar manner as most other Dutch characters, as discussed previously. He is patriotic to the core and is always eager to fight the evil of the Axis. His bravery is backed up by a proficiency in combat, in the air with his plane as well as on land with his bare hands. Now that a Dutch character is finally the protagonist of the story however, there is a much bigger sense of agency given in the representation of the Dutch. It is now the Dutchman himself who chooses to take matters into his own hands, as opposed to the Dutch characters that are waiting to be saved.

¹⁴⁴ *Real Heroes #9*, You Can’t Beat The Dutch, 1943.

¹⁴⁵ Koman, R. A. “Het Vliegende Hollander Festival: Een toeristische volksverhaal-claim van een Zeeuwse stad,” *Traditie* vol. 13, no.1 (2007): 34-37.

¹⁴⁶ *Air Fighters Comics #2*, The Coming of the Dutchman, 1942.



Figure 11: The design of the Flying Dutchman (Bob Fujitani, *Air Fighters Comics #2*)¹⁴⁷

Despite the Dutchness of the protagonist however, most of the stories featuring the Flying Dutchman don't take place in the Netherlands or its colonies at all. 12 out of the 17 found comics featuring the Flying Dutchman take place outside the Netherlands and its colonies. Other locations include Germany and various parts of Japanese occupied territory in the Pacific. In these stories, all elements of Dutchness are all lost as well since the Flying Dutchman starts to read more like any other American superhero due to the disconnect with his country. The fact that he is Dutch becomes rather irrelevant to the many plots that he is written into.

As I have mentioned before, the vast majority of the protagonists of these comics are not Dutch at all. The fact that representations of the Dutch saving themselves is this rare, might have been an intentional choice by the comic creators. So far, I have demonstrated that the Dutch are represented in such a manner that the reader sympathises with them, in order to validate the war effort to rescue them. Creating representations of the Dutch saving themselves however, would counter this grander propagandistic narrative. Why would the Allies have to come save the Dutch, if they are already shown to be capable of saving themselves?

¹⁴⁷ *Air Fighters Comics #2*, The Coming of the Dutchman, 1942.

6.4 Representing the population of the Dutch East Indies.

There are a number of ways in which the population of the Dutch East Indies is usually represented in the comics. The first is the (aforementioned) stereotypical representation which uses tribalistic aspects. The story of *The Flying Dutchman* (1943) for example depicts the Indonesian population as tribal people, wearing only a loincloth and speaking poor English. Besides this, they also live in separate villages with huts that are presumably made out of clay and straw. They are also rather subservient, always helping the protagonist without question.¹⁴⁸ *The Netherlands East Indies* (1942) takes the tribalistic representation to an extreme, showing the native Indonesians performing a ‘dance of the wild man’ while wearing similar tribal clothing as mentioned before. The comic also presents the reader with pieces of history of the Dutch East Indies, in which native population is described as cannibals.¹⁴⁹ Similarly, *Spies on the Junk* (1941) describes the native population as a ‘savage people’ who viciously attack invaders. Much like in the previously mentioned comics, these people are also drawn in tribal clothing. This time however, they are also presented as violent, as they fiercely attack the Japanese soldiers that dared to step on their beach.¹⁵⁰

There are however also instances in which the population of the East Indies is represented without the use of stereotypes or caricatures. While *The Netherlands East Indies* mostly features tribalist representations of the native population, there are also a few panels towards the end of the comic in which the people are dressed in what could be considered more modern clothing. The panels seemingly feature only women, but they are shown to be wearing dresses, which is sometimes combined with a long sleeve shirt. While they are more well dressed, they are still represented as servants to the Dutch, as they are only really shown to be working on the many plantations that were to be found in the Dutch East Indies.¹⁵¹ This is also the first and only instance in which the plantations of the Dutch East Indies are mentioned in the collection of comics.

The real historical owners of these plantations, the white Dutch living in the Dutch East Indies, appear infrequently as well. The plantation owners themselves are never shown however, as most of the appearances of the Dutch in the colony instead amount to men working in the military. There are also two political figures shown, but the colonial context is not present in the stories.

¹⁴⁸ *True Comics #28*, *The Flying Dutchman*, 1943.

¹⁴⁹ *True Comics #16*, *The Netherlands East Indies*, 1942.

¹⁵⁰ *Crack Comics #11*, *Spies on the Junk*, 1941.

¹⁵¹ *True Comics #16*, *The Netherlands East Indies*, 1942.

The most interesting representation of the Indonesians however, can be found in *Java Justice* (1945). In this story, a group of ‘citizens of Java’ stand between the three escaping protagonists and the Japanese troops chasing them in order to buy them more time. When the Dutch collaborator Erbervelt tells them to move aside and not stop the work of their friends, the Indonesians exclaim that they themselves are not friends with the Japanese at all and that they refuse to move. It is the only time in this entire comic collection that someone is shown to be collaborating with the Japanese. The Japanese captain Ito however, orders them all to be shot and the Indonesian men are shown dead in the next panel. It is one of the rare moments that real violence is shown to the readers. Towards the end however, more armed Indonesians appear to deliver justice to both captain Ito and the traitor Erbervelt.¹⁵²



Figure 12: The Indonesians stand against the Japanese (Author unknown, *Captain Midnight* #31)¹⁵³

This is one of only two times in the small selection of comics featuring the Dutch East Indies in which the Indonesians speak perfect English. They are dressed in modern clothing, some wearing regular shirts and pants while others wear something more akin to a suit. Instead of the previous tribal representations, these men are shown to be modern allies of good. They don't protect the fleeing American pilots out of loyalty or because they are forced to, but because they choose to do so as it is the right thing to do. Captain Midnight, the superhero of the comic, even calls them patriotic natives at the very end of the comic. He believes that what the Indonesians are doing is good for the Dutch East Indies.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² *Captain Midnight* #31, Java Justice, 1945.

¹⁵³ *Captain Midnight* #31, Java Justice, 1945.

¹⁵⁴ *Captain Midnight* #31, Java Justice, 1945.

To me, it seems like the comic creators were far more interested in demonizing the Japanese (in ways as shown in chapter 4.2) as opposed to creating sympathy for the Indonesian population. This is due to the fact that the majority of the stories set in the Dutch East Indies spend far more time representing the fight against the Japanese, instead of representing its population, who appear very little. While comics that focussed on the Netherlands also featured plenty of negative representations of the Germans and focussed on fighting them, there was also a large emphasis on making the Dutch look good, as has been shown throughout this chapter. A possible reason for this could be the fact that the Americans simply didn't have a close enough relationship to the Indonesians as they did with the Dutch. The old relations between the Americans and the Dutch were actively used as part of what motivated the American audience to support the war effort. And with little to no past relations between the East Indies and the United States, there was little to no incentive to motivate comic readers to care about the native people of the East Indies.

Ultimately, the representation of the Dutch in this selection of comics aligns well with Stott's argument that the reputation of the Dutch in the United States had grown to become a positive one. The Dutch featured traits such as bravery, patriotism, and a reputation of fighting against those that oppress them.¹⁵⁵ The use of these traits when representing the Dutch also made them look sympathetic and worthy of the help from the Allied forces, which undoubtably made for good propaganda to garner support for the war effort. The interests of the Writers War Board, as described by Hirsch and Howell, were likely met well by these representations.¹⁵⁶ This propaganda strangely enough does not include Dutch Jews however, despite the fact that they were actively persecuted during the war.

The Indonesian population appears far less frequent than the Dutch. The Dutch East Indies were relatively unpopular among Americans, as shown by Homan.¹⁵⁷ This meant that the representation of the Indonesian population was a much more difficult task for the comic creators at the time. As a result, the representations that were made became mostly tribalistic, which could indicate an orientalist mindset among the comic creators, but not all creators resorted to these means of representation. Another reason as to why the Indonesians were shown to a lesser extent is due to the fact that the narratives of the stories featuring the Dutch

¹⁵⁵ Stott, "Images of Dutchness in the United States", 240-242.

¹⁵⁶ Hirsch, "This Is Our Enemy," 456-460. Howell, "The Writers' War Board: U.S. Domestic Propaganda in World War II," 795-797.

¹⁵⁷ Homan, "The United States and the Netherlands East Indies: The Evolution of American Anticolonialism," 424-432.

East Indies are mostly concerned with the Japanese aggression surrounding the islands. The emphasis of these comics was more so about the Japanese forces, and less about the Indonesians.

7. Conclusion.

After the comics of Töpffer had been introduced in the United States in 1842, the medium of comics would grow in popularity among the American readers. While the audience of comics was mostly the youth, there were also large amounts of mature fans to be found in every field of occupation. The American population was enthralled by comics, as they had slowly become a part of daily life. From almanacs to newspaper comics strips, to comic books, the medium had gradually grown into a nationwide phenomenon.

When World War 2 erupted in Europe, American comic creators were already making a number of comics that addressed the conflict. These comics would often call for intervention in Europe, as the creators often had Jewish roots and knew the dangers of the Nazi regime. Comics that focussed on the war exploded in numbers and popularity when the United States entered the war however, and the genre of war comics would develop into maturity. After 1941, comics would instead directly aim to inspire readers with a sense of duty towards the war effort.

A large part of this call towards patriotism can be credited to the work of the Writers War Board, who actively collaborated with comics creators in order to create the propaganda that the U.S. government itself could not. Most of the attention in this propaganda was given to the enemy however, and the board would provide comic artists with guidelines on how to best demonize the opponents of the Allies.

It is likely that the comic creators at the time considered representing the Netherlands in some of their comics due to the long history that it had with the United States. The attitude and views towards the Dutch in the United States were in constant flux throughout the 19th century, but they would ultimately grow to be positive. Throughout this period, certain stereotypes and cliches developed as well, which would be associated with the Dutch through means of travel guides and postcards, as well as more widely spread children's books. The Dutch East Indies however, were far less popular than the European mainland of the Netherlands.

During the war, tourism would grind to a halt and the American population was left with only the news outlets to provide them with information about the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies. The mainstream press would naturally write about the war in the Netherlands, but most of the reporting would be of economic or political nature. There were however also articles from time to time which advocated for more public interest towards the Dutch, which would usually make use of some cliches.

The best source for Dutch news in the United States would be the *Knickerbocker Weekly*, a magazine dedicated solely to the Netherlands. Its staff consisted largely of people from Dutch descent, and they would work to inform the American public as much as possible regarding the situation in the Netherlands. It provided a far more realistic view of the Dutch, as opposed to the stereotypical view that was far more common at the time.

The use of cliches when representing the Netherlands confirms the writings of Stott and Dellmann, who claim that most of the American population viewed the Netherlands with this stereotypical lens. It seems more likely then, that the comic creators chose to use cliches when depicting the Netherlands because they themselves were most familiar with that view of the Dutch, while also knowing that most of their audience would be most familiar with these cliches as well. It's interesting to note however that the few comics that pushed towards realism, such as those published in *True Comics* and *Real Life Comics*, strayed away from these cliches. This indicates that the comic creators were aware of the fact that the cliches were not an accurate representation of the 'real' Netherlands and its people.

The cliches are also directly used in many of the narratives of the comics. In doing so, the cliches not only act as visual signifiers of the Netherlands, but they were also used for more symbolic purposes. An example would be the use of windmills in some of the narratives found in the comic selection. They can either be bases of operation for the Nazis, in which case the captured windmill serves as a symbolisation of the captured Netherlands as a whole. On the other hand, they can also be bases of the resistance, in which case the windmills become symbolically associated with said resistance.

The cliches that were found in the comics featuring the Dutch East Indies were far more general in comparison. As was stated towards the end of chapter 3.1, the American public wasn't as familiar with the Indies as they were with the Netherlands. This caused the comic creators to fall back to using orientalist depictions in order to represent the Dutch East Indies.

Being the two largest cities and tourist hotspots, Amsterdam and Rotterdam were featured prominently in the comics. The combined western province of Holland is also featured heavily, as this was mostly part of the tourism route and advertisement as well. Not much attention was given to other provinces, although there were a few exceptions, such as Zeeland and Limburg. The East Indies are primarily represented by the island of Java, as this was the most widely known tourist location in the Indies for the Americans. The other islands appeared occasionally as well, but far less prominent.

The art is mostly minimalistic when it comes to the visual representation of the

locations that were used in the stories. Only in a few cases was it apparent that the comic creators knew what the city or landscape they were representing looked like. The information about the represented location was most often given in the text boxes that usually appeared in the top corners of the panels, as well as through character dialogue.

Lastly, the people of the Netherlands are represented in a number of ways, but they are primarily shown to be resilient, brave and patriotic. Despite their usual passiveness in the beginning of the comics, they are quick to turn combative if given the chance to back against the oppressors. This image of Dutch bravery lines up well with the literature provided by Stott. This representation conveys the idea to the readers of the comics that the Dutch are worthy of their rescue.

This propagandistic element is further reinforced by the fact that there are almost no traitors shown in the comics. And even in some of the rare cases in which treason does appear, the traitorous character is often revealed to have been a German spy all along. This lack of moral ambiguity regarding the Dutch people reveals that the comic creators tried to represent the Dutch in such a manner that their readers would be guaranteed to feel sympathy towards them. Strangely enough there are no representations of Dutch Jews to be given sympathy, despite their active persecution during the war.

The Dutch resistance is featured heavily in this selection of comics and is always heavily praised for not only their bravery, but also for how effective and efficient they are. A lot of different activities from the resistance are shown, from sabotage to providing aid for crashed Allied pilots. These positive representations, once again, affirm to the American readership that the Dutch are allies worthy of helping. This is further amplified by the fact that many of these comics state that the Dutch have a remarkable fighting spirit.

The one reoccurring Dutch protagonist that is found in the comics is the Flying Dutchman. While the backstory for his character is indeed Dutch and his character design creates an implication towards his nationality as well, most of his adventures take place outside the Netherlands or the Dutch East Indies. Because of this, the character often reads more like any other American superhero, as opposed to a real Dutch character.

Few of the Dutch characters are actually the protagonists of the story however, as that role is usually reserved for the American superhero, or other friends of the Allies. I would argue that this inadvertently also played a part in the grander propagandistic narrative that I have highlighted so far. If the Dutch are frequently represented as being saved by other Dutch characters, then why would they need help from the Allied forces? By mostly letting the Allied protagonists save the Dutch, the comic creators further emphasize the need to

intervene in the Netherlands.

The Indonesian population on the other hand appear far less frequently. Most of the representations for this demographic are tribalistic and can arguably be attributed to an orientalist mindset of the comic creators. Not all representations are like this however, as there are also examples of representations that don't resort to tribalist cliches. Most the narratives in the comics that featured the Dutch East Indies were primarily focussed on the Japanese forces and their aggression however. This could possibly be explained by the lack of a close relationship between with the Indonesians, as opposed to the close relationship with the Dutch.

Ultimately the findings of this research seem to indicate that the representation of the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies in the American war comics heavily aligns with the pre-established views that were created in the decades leading up to World War 2. Through the use of well-known stereotypes, cliches and locations, the comic creators wanted to make sure the readers knew that their stories took place in the Netherlands and the Indies. In order to garner public support for the war effort, the Dutch were often fictionalised to make them appear as good natured as possible, while the Indonesians were mostly ignored in favour of demonizing the Japanese. These representations barely changed over the course of the war, but they did become more frequent. Most comics remained entirely fictional, but there was also a group of comics that pursued a glimpse of realism, in which stereotypes and cliches were mostly absent. It appears then, that the creators of these comics were aware that the established stereotypes did not represent the reality of the Netherlands, yet many still chose to use cliches for the sake of recognisability. These representations do however, give us more insight into the mindset of the American comic book readers.

8. Appendix.

The following is the corpus of sources published in the United States which depict the Netherlands and/or the Dutch East Indies. Gathered by Kees Ribbens, with additions from Thom Helmink and Gerard McConville.

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The reference sheet.

These are scans of the reference sheet that I used during the analysis of this list of comics, accompanied by personal notes consisting of additions to the analysis criteria.

Relevant aspects for describing & classifying American comics from WW2

KR November 30, 2022

a) GENERAL INFO

- Story title
- Size of story (number of pages)
- Author's name (if known)
- Name illustrator(s) (if known)
- Was the comic part of a series?
- Title magazine/comic book
- Name of publisher and location
- When published?

b) SUMMARY

- Short summary of the story

c) CONTENT

- Did the Dutch element in this comic strip consist of:
 - Story takes place in the Netherlands
 - Story takes place in the Dutch East Indies
 - Story depicts one or more Dutch characters
- Are place names, regions, rivers and other Dutch toponyms used? If so, which ones? *Fictional places?*
- Are Dutch words or phrases mentioned in it? As speech or as written text?
- What personal names are mentioned?
- Are the depicted Dutch (or Indonesian) characters:
 - Realistic (do they have a name of a real historical person, for example)
 - Fictional
 - Unclear

1

- Are the depicted Dutch (or Indonesian) characters:

- Military
- Civilian
- Resistance member
- Government official or politician
- NSB member or other German-friendly position
- Jewish
- Prisoner
- Traitor → always not actually Dutch, but German pushing on them

- Are the portrayed Dutchmen (or Indonesians):

- Man
- Woman
- Boy
- Girl
- Elderly

- Are there cliché images/stereotypical representations of the Netherlands (or the Dutch East Indies) to be seen:

- Mill(s)
- Clogs
- Tulips
- Cheese
- Dikes
- Canals
- Specific buildings (Dutch architecture)
- Farmers
- Fishermen
- Other

- Speech (standard English/Dutch mix)
- Traditional clothing

- Tribalism
- Orientalism

- What roles and traits/characteristics of Dutch (or Indonesian) people are presented?

Pride

Patriotism

Royalist

Freedom-loving

Democratic

Anti-German

Principled ?

Opportunism

Commercial spirit

Religious/Christian

Combative

Passive

Other

- Are any Germans depicted? If so, how? (Japanese?)

Realistic (i.e.: do they have a name of real historical persons)

Fictional

Unclear

What roles and traits/characteristics of Germans/Nazis are presented?

- Are any Allied soldiers (or others) depicted (and what nationality do they have)? If so, how?

Realistic (i.e.: do they have a name of real historical persons)

Fictional

Unclear

What roles and traits/characteristics of Allies are presented?

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