

SEA OF THOUGHT

This thesis will blend critical speculative and essayistic fiction to recount the socio-economic development and colonial expansion of The Netherlands and the continued repercussion thereof, from the perspective of the sea. The sea, at once ancient and new every day, local and global, shapeshifting and plural, is a **witness**. Used and abused as an infrastructure for trade, transport (of data), and territorial expansion. A source of creation and destruction.

By adopting the sea as the perspective of this thesis, I aim to talk about history by presenting a subjective non-linear reflection on history. The text will make extensive use of footnotes, incorporating various sources and stories in a collagelike manner. This exploration will occur within the framework of 4 specific locations, each giving rise to an experimental essay. The following section presents a proposed point of departure for the poetic enquiry informing each of the essays.

INTRODUCTION

The 'Discovery of the Millennium': the existence of **water memory** shows that water retains, collects information about where it has been and what has traversed, been submerged in it. This discovery caused great outrage and has been dismissed by many as pseudoscience. Often things need to be discovered before they are believed. But things do not come into existence by 'discovery', they were there already.

“Water remembers all that has been. All that will be. Water copies information. Water carries data. Water records and circulates. Water is a communication interface. Water is a technology” (Tabita Rezaire, 2017, 10:02)

Water functions as an archive, a record of time. Water and time are inextricably linked to one another. Time comes from the word *tide*, the same holds for the Dutch equivalent *getij* derived from *tijd*. Two tides a day, created by an intermix between the gravitational forces of the sun and the moon, and the rotation of the earth. The sea with its waves crashing on the shore is like a metronome.

1: Rotta & Doggerland: The Deluge

Water is a source of creation and destruction: Flood myths. Rotta, proto-Rotterdam, has been repeatedly flooded. Red thread throughout the various existing flood myths is the fact that the Flood is a form of divine retribution, destroying one world and disobedient civilisation while bringing into being a new one. In these myths, a constant: a ship, an ark, a cradle carrying the birth of a nation favoured with the “Divine Blessing” to safety, to glory.

"The [Great] flood is a metaphor for The Netherlands as a phenomenon." (Geuze p. 8)

Integral to attempts of nation building is drafting up a story of origin, belonging and destiny. At the core of the origin story The Netherlands tells itself about itself, is the rise from and control of water. Control in the name of protection, strengthening coastlines, keeping the water at bay, and control in the name of territorial expansion: "winning" land from sea and overseas. This outward movement is motivated by the profit and economic growth.

To equate the Netherlands to the Great Flood, is to place the nation in the belly of a "godly" voyaging vessel. Connecting survival to expansion to carry out God's work. But at the cost of whom?

"Despair not, spare your enemies not, for God is with us" (Jan Pieterszoon Coen, the fourth governor-general of the Dutch East Indies, 1618)

2 Delfshaven: The Tide: The Moon and the Merchant

"The sea, or water, is the great medium of circulation established by nature, just as money has been created by man for the exchange of products" (Alfred Thayer Mahan, Naval Strategy).

We talk about money in the same way that we talk about water

"If the Moon pulls the tides, it also rules the market" (Sparkly Cat 2021)

In Astrology the Moon is related to **material fortune**. We are connected to the material world through money and our bodies - equally a **currency** meant to be continuously in motion under capitalism.

In search of new markets, sailors, looked up at the stars and moon to navigate themselves. This in combination with magnetic compasses, brought about a "**spatial revolution**". Navigation that opened ocean routes. The sailors' maritime expeditions and imperialism was driven by hunger not technological innovation (counter example of China). Connected to this spatial revolution is cartography. Landscapes, seascapes were transformed into representations, vacant lots up for grabs and control.

The stock-market can be traced back to one of the major Dutch colonial trading companies: the VOC (Verenigde Oost Indische Compagnie) was world's first officially registered company that went to the stock exchange, shaping up a violently extractive and coercive business model followed by many predecessors.

"... the V.O.C. became, by some measures, the largest company in human history, worth more than ExxonMobil, Apple, and Amazon combined." (Taiwo, O., 2021)

"Debt creates currency" (Sparkly Cat 2021, p. 117)

The richest countries are those with the highest **debt**. Two examples to expand on are: Piet Hein and the conquering of the Spanish Silverfleet (*Armada* or *Zilvervloot*). Celebrated as a big accomplishment. The fleet carried stolen silver, forcibly dug up by slaves in Bolivia was stolen. As well as the Dutch monopoly on the Nutmeg "trade" with Indonesia, forcefully established under the threat of fire. Production in destruction.

"No trade without war, and no war without trade," Jan Pieterszoon Coen (1618)

The moon is only visible half of the time, through reflecting the light of the sun. Visibility always comes at the cost of the **invisibility** of something else.

"Colonial violence does not write history as much as it annihilates histories The Middle Passage that over 12 million abducted African peoples were forced to complete across the Atlantic Ocean by European powers between the 16th and 19th centuries is one of the most striking examples of this." (Lambert 2021)

3 Europort & Maasvlakte: Liquid land

In the 19th century magnetic compasses were replaced by wet compasses. The land has liquified while the oceans have dried up, its all-time but no distance.

The ship is a site of modernity. Its transition from sails to steam ships has tied the ship more closely to the land. Sea routes are built and travelled like a highway. Becoming faster, more invisible, and automated.

"the more regularised, literally containerised, the movement of goods in harbours, that is, the more rationalized and automated, the more the harbour comes to resemble the stock market" (Allan Sekula 1995, p. 12)

"The problem of a world of floating, nonreferential signs, the creation of value from nothing, has been further intensified" (Klose, A. 2016)

Shipping which relies on water is everything but clear, clean, and translucent. The massive cargo ships with their cargo containers, function like modern **pandora's steel boxes**. Obscuring contents, conditions of production and its effects on the climate, is a continuation. Capitalism thrives, benefits from invisibility. *"In enlightened or liberal societies, which are also visual societies, some things are revealed while others are hidden" (Sparkly Cat 2021, p. 36)*

The planet Neptune is not visible to the unaided eye and is the only planet in the Solar System found by mathematical prediction rather than by empirical observation.

4 Eemshaven; the cloud

The ocean started as a cloud. Flood: In his 1755 book, Immanuel Kant argues that the Earth could have once had a ring around it like the rings of Saturn, probably made of ice, and that this could have been the water of the deluge (Wikipedia).

The shipping industry is *"the physical equivalent of the internet, the other industry which makes globalisation possible" (Lanchester 2021)*. The origin of the internet is connected to colonialism. The internet, like the shipping industry, is obscured behind a smokescreen. The cloud is not abstract. It is concretely based, centred in data servers, with a real impact on the world and its population. The internet cables traverse the bottom of the ocean, following the old slave trading routes and telegram lines. Inequality is built into the fundamentals of the system.

In 1989, Voyager 2 discovered an anticyclonic cloud system on Neptune. There were bright and high clouds associated with this system with an anticyclonic vortex.

Poseidon, the Greek equivalent of Neptune, the god of water and earthquakes, creates an earthquake, and tsunami, whenever the sea was ignored. Memories do not confine themselves to the past. Over time different memories compete to come back to the surface. Because a surface is a result of a constant process of writing and re-writing. The great flood has not

occurred, it is yet to come. The next ark, of the techno-colonial capitalists, heads for the moon, while the world floods in water or flames.

“Nothing is lost, nothing is created, everything is transformed” - Antoine Lavoisier (1774)

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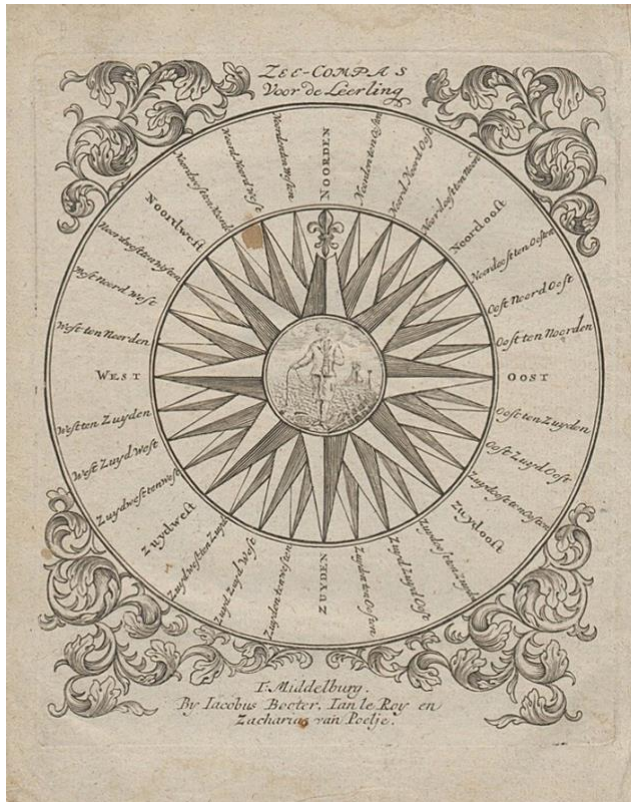
APPENDIX[edit]



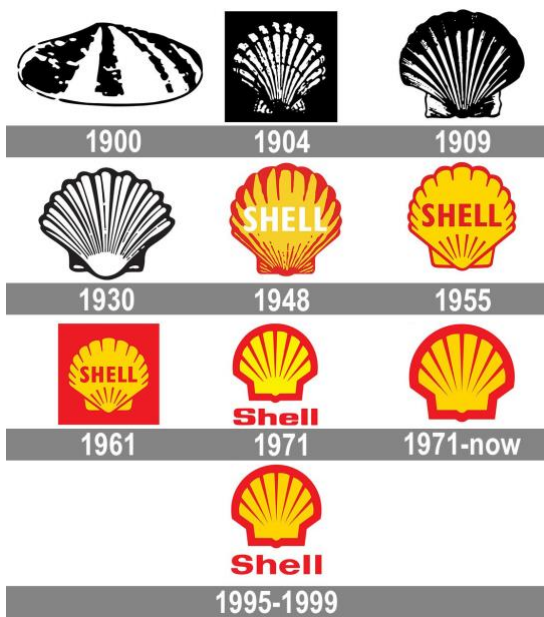
1. Book frontispiece of the sailing handbook "*Licht der Zeevaert*" ("The light of navigation") by (1608)



2. Map of the Indian Ocean by Hendrick Doncker, roughly dating back to 1664.



3. Page from Klaas Hendriksz Gietermaker (1712): 't Vergulde licht der zeevaart (4th edition)



4. Development of the Shell logo. Gradual abstraction.