

A PERCEPTION OF A PERCEPTION OF A PERCEPTION: MULTATULI'S VIEW OF JAVA IN THE 1850s.

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It seems no exaggeration to say that the book *Max Havelaar*, by Eduard Douwes Dekker writing under the nom de plume Multatuli, is the most famous literary work by a Hollander on colonial Java.¹ From the time of its appearance in 1860, the book has aroused strong sentiments and has been the source of endless debate. The author became more than famous. He became a cult figure and he remains one to this day, when his devotees can investigate his life and works in a foundation bearing his name. His collected writings are published in thirteen volumes,² but there is no doubt that *Max Havelaar* is the jewel in the crown. This is the book that made his reputation and most clearly conveys his perception of Java. It is this perception that I plan to analyze in this article, but before I do that I must make obeisance to the literary merit of the work. Whatever the message, the style of the book is what has led to its enduring fame; it served as the opening call to a literary renaissance of Dutch letters. As both Nieuwenhuys and Beekman have pointed out, Multatuli was part of the romantic literary tradition whose style gave a vitality to his writing that has seldom been equaled in Dutch literature.³

Max Havelaar is Multatuli is Douwes Dekker in a fictionalized, romantic style, but in broad lines the story reflects the life of the Indies civil servant Douwes Dekker, who in 1856 resigned from the colonial service. After a rather mediocre decade and a half in the service of the Netherlands East Indies [NEI] government, upon returning from home leave Douwes Dekker was stationed as Assistant Resident (district administrator) in the depressed area of Lebak in West Java. Within a matter of weeks he discovers that the Javanese Regent [Bupati], head of the

district, is levying arbitrary assessments on the population and that the former Assistant Resident had possibly been poisoned by the Regent's henchmen. He quickly brings charges of corruption against the Regent and asks his superior, the Dutch Resident, to remove the Regent from this district so that the charges can be investigated. The Resident refuses to do this without further evidence, which Douwes Dekker refuses to supply. When his appeal to the Governor-General falls on deaf ears, he resigns from the colonial service, disillusioned over the way the Dutch government is governing Java. This essentially biographical story is embellished and interlaced with a cracking good account of the sanctimonious Dutch bourgeois merchant class who make a comfortable living by trading in colonial produce, which is extracted by the colonial administration from an impoverished, unjustly treated peasantry, whose sufferings form yet another thread in the story.⁴

We are told that when the book appeared it sent a shiver through the Dutch nation. It has never been clear to me whether this shiver resulted from the literary style or the message. Actually as the message of an ineffectual, somewhat oppressive colonial administration had been conveyed in various Dutch publications since the 1840s, it must have been the style of the message that really made this book so profound in its impact.⁵ This may explain why this impact was not what Multatuli had intended; in fact, it was almost the opposite from what he intended.

Multatuli's perception of Java in the 1850s, when his career as a civil servant came to an abrupt end, was that of a colonial government grown lax in the enforcement of its regulations. It was this

laxness that allowed corruption to enter the system, not only in the European civil service, but even more in the Javanese civil administration. Such a situation he experienced in Lebak, where the Javanese Regent was exacting more labor and more goods from his compliant population than was allowed by the regulations of the NEI government. The failure of the Dutch civil servants to enforce the existing regulations resulted in this undisciplined situation, a situation characterized by greed and self-serving. The moral of the story for Multatuli was that the administration needed to reform itself by stricter enforcement of the regulations that had been designed to protect the little man (the peasant) against the exactions of the stronger Javanese elite, whose baser instincts had to be kept in line by a European administration whose authority was supposedly paramount. In short, with reform and appropriate leadership the system of government cultivations, in existence in Java since 1830, could be made to work. Someone like himself, for instance, could do just that.

This was generally not the way in which Multatuli's story was perceived in the Dutch parliament. The liberal voices in The Netherlands and in Java had been objecting to government control of the fundamental export cultivations (such as sugar and coffee) for some time. They were able to use the book as one more item in their agenda for a dismantling of the system of government control over the economy of Java, the so-called *Kultuurstelsel* [Cultivation System, sometimes called Culture System]. Whereas *Max Havelaar* was meant to convey the need to reform a lax administration it was instead misconstrued as a need to abolish the system that had appeared to result in the abuse of the little man in Java. Within a decade after the appearance of *Max Havelaar*, the economy of Java had been opened to private enterprise, and the role of the government in the economy was gradually being undone. This was

contrary to Multatuli's message. The sad and ironic part of these events is that the little man in Java was no better off under the new governing system; in fact, many would argue that he came to be noticeably worse off.

An even more egregious twisting of Multatuli's story occurred some years later when Lenin used *Max Havelaar* to illustrate the message of anti-colonialism. If there is one thing that Multatuli was not, it was an anti-colonialist. Quite to the contrary he believed, along with the Europeans of his day, that colonial rule was essentially good for native peoples. What he wanted to see was a colonialism that applied rules of justice and equity and did not exploit the population, especially the defenseless little man.⁶

Having said this much about the general moral tone of *Max Havelaar*, let me now turn to the perception of Java in the 1850s that the book presents. The core of the story, as already indicated, has to do with the efforts of the Assistant Resident Max Havelaar [read Douwes Dekker] to seek justice for the little man in the district of Lebak, West Java, against the malfeasance of the Javanese Regent. It is that part of the story that has been most analyzed by scholars. Were these efforts misguided? Was Douwes Dekker a poor civil servant? Was he following the rules only to find himself sandbagged by a corrupt system? Was he led to untenable conclusions through biased and untrustworthy sources? These questions concerning the events of early 1856 have been argued and discussed down to the smallest detail so that anyone who has gone into the literature surrounding *Max Havelaar* will be familiar with the most minor players and the course of events on a day-to-day basis.⁷ But do these happenings provide the reader with a picture of Java of the time? I would argue that they do not. Lebak was a remote, out-of-the-way location that could be characterized as a pocket of poverty with a lifestyle only remotely related to what was happening in the rest of the island of Java.

However, in another context Multatuli does express himself quite clearly on how Java in a total sense finds itself under the Dutch colonial government. These statements, however, come early in the book before the incidents in Lebak begin to unfold. They not only give the author's perception of what was happening in the length and breadth of colonial Java, but they also provide a foundation on which to build his story of abuse, maladministration, and corruption that is detailed in the Lebak story. Let us examine this perception more closely by citing from the book so that we will, as far as possible, avoid distorting the image that the author seeks to create. The following descriptions of the administration of Java by the Dutch government are drawn from Chapter Five of *Max Havelaar* at the point when the new Assistant Resident Max Havelaar is expected in Lebak. In a footnote Multatuli explains that it is necessary to include this section on the mechanisms of the governance because the colonial administration was so unknown to the general public in Europe.

... the Assistant Resident is helped by a native chief of high rank with the title of Regent. Such a Regent, although his relation to the Government and his function are entirely those of a *paid official*, is always of the highest nobility of the land.... Very shrewd political use is thus made of their ancient feudal influence.... ... A Regency in Java is headed by a native official who combines the rank given him by the Government with his *autochthonous* influence, in order to facilitate the rule of the European officer who represents *Dutch* authority.

The relation between European officials and such highly placed Javanese grandees is of a very delicate nature. The Assistant Resident of a Division is the responsible person. He has his instructions, and is considered to be the head of the Division. Yet in spite of this the Regent, by virtue of his local knowledge, his birth, his influence on the population, his financial resources and

corresponding way of life, is in a much higher position. All this, then results in a strange situation whereby the *inferior* really commands the *superior*. I think the tone which should prevail in the relationship is fairly well indicated in the official instructions on it: 'the *European* official is to treat the *native* officer who assists him as his *younger brother*.'(pp.67-71)

This rather neatly stated, quite accurate description of the relationship between the European and the Javanese administration is followed by an analysis of the differences in wealth between the two individuals who act as elder and younger brother. It is noted, quite correctly, that many Regents have an income that not only exceeds the salaries of other Javanese many times over but also exceeds that of most Europeans.

The revenue of such a Javanese chief may be broken down into four parts. Firstly, his fixed monthly salary. Secondly, a specific sum as compensation for rights transferred to the Dutch Government. Thirdly, a bonus in proportion to the quantity yielded by his regency of products such as coffee, sugar, indigo, cinnamon, etc. And finally the arbitrary use of the labour and property of his subjects.

The last two sources of revenue require some explanation. The Javanese is naturally a husbandman. The soil on which he is born, which promises much for little work, lures him to this, and, above all, he is devoted heart and soul to the cultivation of his rice fields.... But strangers came from the West, who made themselves lords of his land. They wished to benefit from the fertility of the soil, and commanded its occupant to devote part of his labour and time to growing other products which would yield greater profit in the markets of EUROPE. To make the common man do this, a very simple policy sufficed. He obeys his Chiefs; so it was only necessary to win over those Chiefs by promising them part of the proceeds...And the scheme succeeded completely. ...the

entire business *must* yield a profit, this profit can be made in no other way than by paying the Javanese just *enough* to keep him from starving....

It now remains for me to speak of the last and principal source of revenue of the native Chiefs: their arbitrary disposal of the person and property of their subjects.

According to the idea generally held over almost all of Asia the subject, with all he possesses, belongs to the Prince. The descendants or relatives of the former Princes gladly make use of the ignorance of the people, who do not clearly understand that their TOMMONGONG or ADHIPATTI or PANGÉRANG is now a *paid official* who has sold his own rights and theirs for a fixed income, and that therefore the poorly paid labour in coffee plantation or sugar-cane field has taken the place of the taxes which were formerly exacted from the dwellers on the land by their lords. Accordingly, nothing is more normal than that hundreds of families should be summoned from great distance to work, *without payment*, on fields that belong to the Regent. Nothing is more normal than the supply, unpaid for, of food for the Regent's court. And should the horse, the buffalo, the daughter, the wife of the common man find favour in the Regent's sight, it would be unheard-of for the possessor to refuse to give up the desired object unconditionally. (pp. 72-74)

Here we have the essential perception of Multatuli about the system that was operating throughout Java in the mid-1850s. Multatuli is presenting this view to the Dutch reading public because he feels, quite correctly I would add, that most of the public in Europe knew nothing about the way in which Java was administered and how the wealth that flowed to Europe from Java was obtained. Though it was not totally impossible to obtain information about Java in The Netherlands -- people such as Van Hoëvell and others had been exposing abuses for some years -- most of the Dutch public had no access or little

interest in this material. In this regard *Max Havelaar* was indeed an eye-opener.

What has seldom been asked, both at the time and later, was whether Multatuli's perception of Java as conveyed in the quotations above was correct and accurate. Much has been written about the district of Lebak and the events that occurred there, but the accuracy of his general account of conditions in Java has not been subject to scrutiny. This paper analyzes Multatuli's perception in the light of what we know today about how Java was administered in the 1850s, knowing, as we do, that his perception had already been ignored by the Dutch parliament.

In our first series of quotations from *Max Havelaar*, given above, Multatuli describes the relationship between the European colonial administration and the Javanese administration. From the days of the East India Company, the administration of native peoples was indirect. That is to say, the fundamental precept of governance was that each ethnic group would be governed by its own chiefs, headmen, or whatever these people were called. In the parts of Java controlled by the NEI government, a fairly complex administrative hierarchy had developed on both the European and the Javanese side by the mid-nineteenth century. Though present in rudimentary form much earlier, the size and function of the administrative machinery became greater after 1830 when the Cultivation System was introduced. Under this System the NEI government undertook to have the Javanese peasant grow crops that would be salable on the world markets, and to grow them so cheaply that products from Java could compete with similar products grown elsewhere in the world. The principal products were sugar and coffee, also some tea and tobacco. Indigo was initially grown until about the 1850s. For the Dutch the process was very profitable, especially the coffee and sugar production. These crops along with pepper and tin produced substantial profits for the home government and for the Netherlands

Trading Company [NEH], which controlled the shipment and sale of the products.⁸ So successful were these government-controlled cultivations that private entrepreneurs, Europeans and Chinese, soon made efforts to privatize the operations. After 1848 when the King's authority was limited by parliamentary control in the Netherlands, the efforts to move the government out of the production business gained momentum. During the 1860s some of the minor crops were privatized; and sugar, by the Agrarian Laws of 1870, began to be phased out of government control into private hands. Only coffee remained a government monopoly, but was devastated by blight in the 1880s.

Under the Cultivation System, which was still in effect when Multatuli was in Java, the colonial administration exercised a major role in encouraging the production of exportable crops in those areas where these crops flourished. The Javanese administrators, especially the Regent or Bupati, were expected to urge the peasantry to plant and tend whatever crop was assigned to their village or district. It was indeed very much as Multatuli describes it. The NEI government made use of the traditional authority of these Javanese elite figures: the Assistant Resident guided and prompted the Regent, who in turn was to command the people to do what he wanted done or else prod them to get it done. Without this Javanese authority, the European administration could have accomplished little. Multatuli speaks of the *inferior* commanding the *superior*; this is slightly misleading since both the Javanese Regents and the European Assistant Residents had from time to time been discharged from their functions for lack of effectiveness. Multatuli's statement that "there is no opinion so general as to be a proverb in the Indies that the Government would rather dismiss ten Residents than one Regent," (p. 215) is just that: an *opinion* not a fact.⁹ However, the idea is correct insofar as the relationship was one in which the Regent was more able

to determine how things got done than was the European Assistant Resident. Most Assistant Residents in Java, having long learned this reality, would never have considered their position to be *superior* nor that of the Regent to be *inferior*. That is why most Assistant Residents never got into the troubles that Max Havelaar [Douwes Dekker] did.

It should be pointed out before moving on to the second set of quotations from *Max Havelaar* that the district of Lebak, in which Douwes Dekker's sad story unfolds, was not and never had been involved in the Cultivation System. It was known as a 'poor' district. Producing few products for external sale, it consequently had little flow of cash. The Regent of Lebak was a 'poor' Regent, always too short of revenue to support his family and to maintain his stature. Douwes Dekker knew this very well and makes mention of the Regent's circumstances in the book. (pp. 126-127) He was, however, consumed by his need to follow the government's regulations to the letter about the unauthorized use of *corvée* labor by the Regent. Yet he understood full well the people's desire to keep public buildings neat and clean, a task that would require more labor than was readily available. (pp. 206-207) More important to Douwes Dekker was his conviction that "I will not put up with injustice, by God -- *I will not put up with it!*" (p. 128) He meant to follow the letter of the regulations as he understood them. With such an attitude it is clear that in a situation of "a very delicate nature," (p. 70) (as he himself describes it), he was not the right man in the right place.

If we turn to the second selection from *Max Havelaar*, we encounter more serious problems with Multatuli's perception of conditions in Java in the 1850s. In this instance the subject of discussion is the sources of revenue enjoyed by the Regents in Java. In the previous section we analyzed Multatuli's view regarding the relationships of the Javanese and the European administrations, and noted that although his perception might have been

somewhat exaggerated it essentially was correct. When we address the sources of income and the nature of the authority enjoyed by the Regents, our analysis will indicate that Multatuli was simply wrong with regard to both facts and opinions.

The revenue of a Regent can be broken down into four parts; first a fixed monthly salary; second, compensation for transferred rights; thirdly, a percentage payment on the export products cultivated in his Regency; and fourth the arbitrary use of the labor and property of his subjects. Let us look at these in the order presented.

Just prior to the passage on the breakdown of a Regent's income, Multatuli informs his readers that "It is nothing unusual for Regents with an income to two or three hundred thousand guilders a year to be in financial difficulties." (p. 72) We should begin by pointing out that the salary of the highest paid Regents of the mid-nineteenth century was about f1,200 per month, and many earned less. The Regent of Lebak was in a remote district and had a salary of f700 per month at the time that Dekker was there. This was still a princely sum compared with other salaries of Javanese officials and was indeed better than most Europeans earned. Yet it was rarely sufficient to maintain the extensive establishments of most Regents, for they were constantly beset by family demands and other impositions. It certainly does not place the Regents anywhere near the figure given by Multatuli.

The second feature of a Regent's revenue as given by Multatuli is compensation for rights transferred to the Dutch Government. This is incomprehensible. At one time in the eighteenth century the rulers of Mataram were given compensation for transferred rights, but they were not Regents and this compensation had ceased to exist by the nineteenth century. I have no idea what Multatuli was referring to here.

For the third and fourth sources of revenue for the Regents, Multatuli supplies an explanation which is hardly necessary since they are quite correct and

understandable. However, the explanations are interesting in that they show how he thought that these matters worked, which is somewhat wide of the mark.

The third source of income for some Regents was the percentage payment on government cultivations in their districts. As Multatuli points out,

... strangers came from the West, who made themselves lords of his [the Javanese] land. They wished to benefit from the fertility of the soil, and commanded its occupant to devote part of his labour and time to growing other products which would yield greater profit in the markets of EUROPE. To make the common man do this, a very simple policy sufficed. He obeys his Chiefs; so it was only necessary to win over those Chiefs by promising them part of the proceeds ... And the scheme succeeded completely. (p. 73)

What the NEI government did was to pay both the Javanese and the European administrations in districts where crops for export were grown ten percent of the amount it paid for those crops: five percent went to the Javanese administration and five percent to the European officials. These monies were divided among the administrators with the largest amounts going to the higher officials. In districts where the government crops did well it was possible for a Regent to more than double his salary through these payments. All this is just as Multatuli describes it, and these crops, which were purchased at a price regulated by the government, were the source of the wealth that flowed to Europe under the Cultivation System.

What is missing in Multatuli's explanation is a balancing of the policy with the reality. Government cultivations were successful in only limited areas of Java; some Regents received only small percentage payments or none at all. In areas where the crops were successful both the Regents and the villagers profited and prosperity was in evidence. In areas where

crops were unsuccessful there could be suffering and little return to the peasant for his labor. In areas where there were no government cultivations there was usually no or little sign of prosperity with a strong retention of a simple, traditional lifestyle.

How severe was the suffering in those areas where the government cultivations were overextended or where they did not prosper? Multatuli's description gives an impression of widespread suffering under an administration that was indifferent to the little man. A number of writers both before and after the appearance of *Max Havelaar* were compiling abuses and malpractices that were occurring under the Cultivation System; it would be virtually impossible to deny that both cruelties and stupidities occurred constantly that should not have been tolerated either by the European or the Javanese administrators. But the NEI government was not insensitive to such matters -- matters that were frequently much worse than in Lebak, on which Multatuli was basing his case. In the worst scenario the government was beset by such ethnic intolerance, insensitivity, and greed on the part of its servants that reform was made difficult, while the best scenario recognized the impossibility of the European administration getting anything done without the cooperation of the Javanese officials. The little man -- the Javanese peasant -- continued to be subject to arbitrary treatment as he had been in the past and would be in the future. Before Dutch colonialism touched him by demanding the use of his land and labor for the production of export crops, the burdens upon the peasant may have been lighter in magnitude but similar in form. Colonialism exacerbated the intensity and speed of change but it did not alter the nature of basic social and economic relationships within Javanese society.

The fourth source of the Regent's income, according to Multatuli, was the arbitrary use of the persons and property of his subjects. It is understood, Multatuli tells us, that "over almost all Asia the

subject, with all he possesses, belongs to the Prince." (p. 74) He elaborates upon this homily by informing the reader that the people do not understand that their chiefs [the Regent and lesser officials] have traded rights, both their own and those of their peoples, for a fixed income; that therefore the poorly paid labor in the sugar fields or coffee groves has taken the place of earlier taxes exacted by the chiefs; and that as a consequence it seems normal that families should be summoned from great distance to work the fields that belong to the Regent. While it will not be possible to eliminate all abuses because of the people's attachment to their chiefs, it is the duty of the administration, especially the European administration, to protect the docile population against the rapacity of their own chiefs. (pp. 74-76)

In the above perception of the nature of the Javanese people with regard to authority and the socio-economic relationships within Javanese society, we see a closely woven mixture of truth and misinformation which twists the image just enough to bring it out of focus but not enough to make it unrecognizable. It is true that the Regents and other Javanese administrators had been salaried since the first decade of the nineteenth century. It is also true that the salaries were partly in lieu of goods and services (and occasionally money) which they exacted from the people. But it is also true that by the 1850s many Regents had been awarded pieces of populated land from which they could continue to draw sustenance for themselves and their families in the form of produce and labor. Such control of people and produce was essential to the maintenance of the status of the Regents and other chiefs and could not be replicated through a monetary salary arrangement. However, the land held by Regents in lieu of salary was very limited in extent. The people who lived on the Regent's lands were excused from cultivation services and other exactions and were, therefore, not involved in the government's crop scheme. Nor did the people on such lands work

anywhere except on the lands of the village in which they lived or at the Regent's home.

The remaining lands of the Regent's district were under the control (I use this word rather than ownership) either of the villages or of the NEI government. Villages with their lands had been brought under a land tax (technically called *landrent*) arrangement since the second decade of the nineteenth century. When such villages were involved in the government's cultivation system, the value of the crops produced for the government was frequently deducted from the amount of the assessed *landrent*. The result was that money in the form of cash payment rarely or never occurred. These people were not working for the Regent, however, unless it is argued that working in the government cultivations was being done on orders that emanated from the Regent. Their labor and their produce benefited the Regent only in so far as the percentage payments listed above would be involved. A Regent would not use such people to work lands under his control. A much more likely source of pressure upon such villagers would be their *corvée* services to the village and its administration.

It is true that all people within a Regent's district might be called upon for special assessments on festive or ritual occasions. It is also true that a Regent or lesser chief might lay claim to any property that struck his fancy, including womenfolk, livestock, and artifacts.¹⁰ The potentially arbitrary nature of Javanese authority was well known to all European administrations since the beginning of the nineteenth century and earlier, but the continual need to make the colony profitable made impossible the reforms that would have been required to change it. Most Regents made only moderate or no use of such privileges, but the occasional exception tended to gain widespread notoriety.

From what has been indicated here about Multatuli's perception of the nature of authority and administration in Java, several sorts of analyses can be made. It is

well known that Douwes Dekker had little experience in the actual Javanese parts of Java. His earlier postings in Sumatra and Sulawesi were in areas quite distinct from the Javanese socio-economic patterns. The only place in Java that he was stationed before his assignment in Lebak was in Krawang, an area of Sundanese lands in which private estates were more significant than government cultivations. What he reports about the Regents in Java and their sources of income must have been derived secondhand either through oral communications or through books and articles detailing various abuses of the prevailing system. Such writings were easily available in the 1850s. It must have been on the basis of such information that he built a perception of the administrative scene in Java that, while not totally false, was based upon partial views that exaggerated the shortcomings of the system. This perception influenced his view of what he thought was happening in Lebak, which is important for the plot of *Max Havelaar*, but much more importantly it was also the view that was conveyed to the reading public in The Netherlands. It was this latter view that misunderstood not just what had happened in Lebak but what was happening throughout all of Java. Both the perception of Multatuli and the perception of the Dutch reading public was a skewed version of reality.

The power of the *Max Havelaar* book, as stated earlier, lies in its style and its emotional content. Multatuli could always claim that he was writing a novel and was, therefore, not obliged to adhere to the truth in every detail. That was true enough for the Lebak story and for his creation of the coffee merchant as the symbols of the exploited and the exploiter, but it is not true for all aspects of the narrative. Government documents, for instance, are accurately cited, and the general nature of the administration that I have been analyzing here was clearly meant to be observably accurate, as his use of footnotes and citations would indicate. It seems quite clear that his knowledge of the social

and economic situation in Java in the mid 1850s was constructed from misinformation and biases and then conflated with the emotions that were guiding his hero throughout the book.

NOTES

¹All citations in this paper will be from the English translation by Roy Edwards which was first published by Sijthoff in 1967 under the title, *Max Havelaar Or the Coffee Auctions of the Dutch Trading Company*. This excellent translation has recently been reissued by the University of Massachusetts Press (1982) in the series "Library of the Indies", E. M. Beekman, General Editor. The page citations are from this edition. Multatuli means "Much have I suffered."

²A number of editions of Multatuli's complete or collected works seem to exist, none of which is truly complete. My reference here is to the thirteen volume set [which I own] consisting of ten volumes edited by C. Vosmaer under the title *Verzamelde Werken van Multatuli* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1888), and three additional volumes published in 1890 by E. & M. Cohen in Nijmegen/Arnhem.

³Rob Nieuwenhuys, *Oost-Indische Spiegel* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1978 rev. ed.), pp. 136-154. E. M. Beekman, "Afterword" in *Max Havelaar*, University of Massachusetts edition (1982), pp. 338-386. These are the two best sources that I have found for positioning Multatuli and his writings in their literary context.

⁴W.F. Wertheim in "Havelaar's Tekort," *De Nieuwe Stem*, vol. 15 (juni/juli 1960), 362, tells of Dekker's bourgeois upbringing struggling, on the one hand, with the equality concept of the Enlightenment, and with his preference for the aristocratic lifestyle, on the other.

⁵In this matter I follow Rob Nieuwenhuys, *Oost-Indische Spiegel*, p. 151 who lays the emphasis on the style rather than the message. On the matter of other writings about the Cultivation System and the failures of the colonial administration that were more factually based than Multatuli's account, I mention only two of the most obvious which Dekker must have read: (1) L. Vitalis, *De invoering, werking en gebreken van het stelsel en kultures op Java* (Zaltbommel: Joh. Noman, 1851). Vitalis had been on home leave in The Netherlands from 1852-1854 and noted the same indifference to matters of the Indies as Dekker noted. (2) Dr. W. R. van Hoëvell was editor of

Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indië (1838-1902). This journal was published in Java from 1838 to 1848 when Van Hoëvell was expelled from the Indies. From 1849 on it was published in Groningen. The journal is filled with complaints and grievances directed against the administration of the colony.

⁶For the reference to Lenin see Beekman, "Afterword," footnote #1, p. 378. Dekker was not against colonialism, but on the dustjacket of the University of Massachusetts edition (1982) we read that *Max Havelaar* is "One of the most powerful indictments of colonialism ever published...." He was a romantic reformer who was misunderstood.

⁷For contrasting views on this matter see Rob Nieuwenhuys, "De Zaak van Lebak," in *Tussen twee vaderlanden* (Amsterdam: G.A. van Oorschot, 1959) and P. Spigt, "Lothario zal toch hangen!" *De Nieuwe Stem*, vol. 15 (juni/juli 1960), 392-414.

⁸In 1860, the year that *Max Havelaar* appeared, the profits from the Indies were 34 percent of the total income of The Netherlands government.

⁹C. Fasseur, *Onhoorbaar groeit de padi: Max Havelaar en de publieke zaak* (Leiden: Huis aan de Drie Grachten, 1987), p. 4.

¹⁰In the book *Max Havelaar* one of the most touching tales is that of Saijah and Adinda (Chapter 17), two young villagers much in love and much abused by the cruel Javanese administrator. Arbitrarily the buffalo of Saijah's father is confiscated -- an event that will be burned in the memory of anyone who has seen the movie *Max Havelaar*.