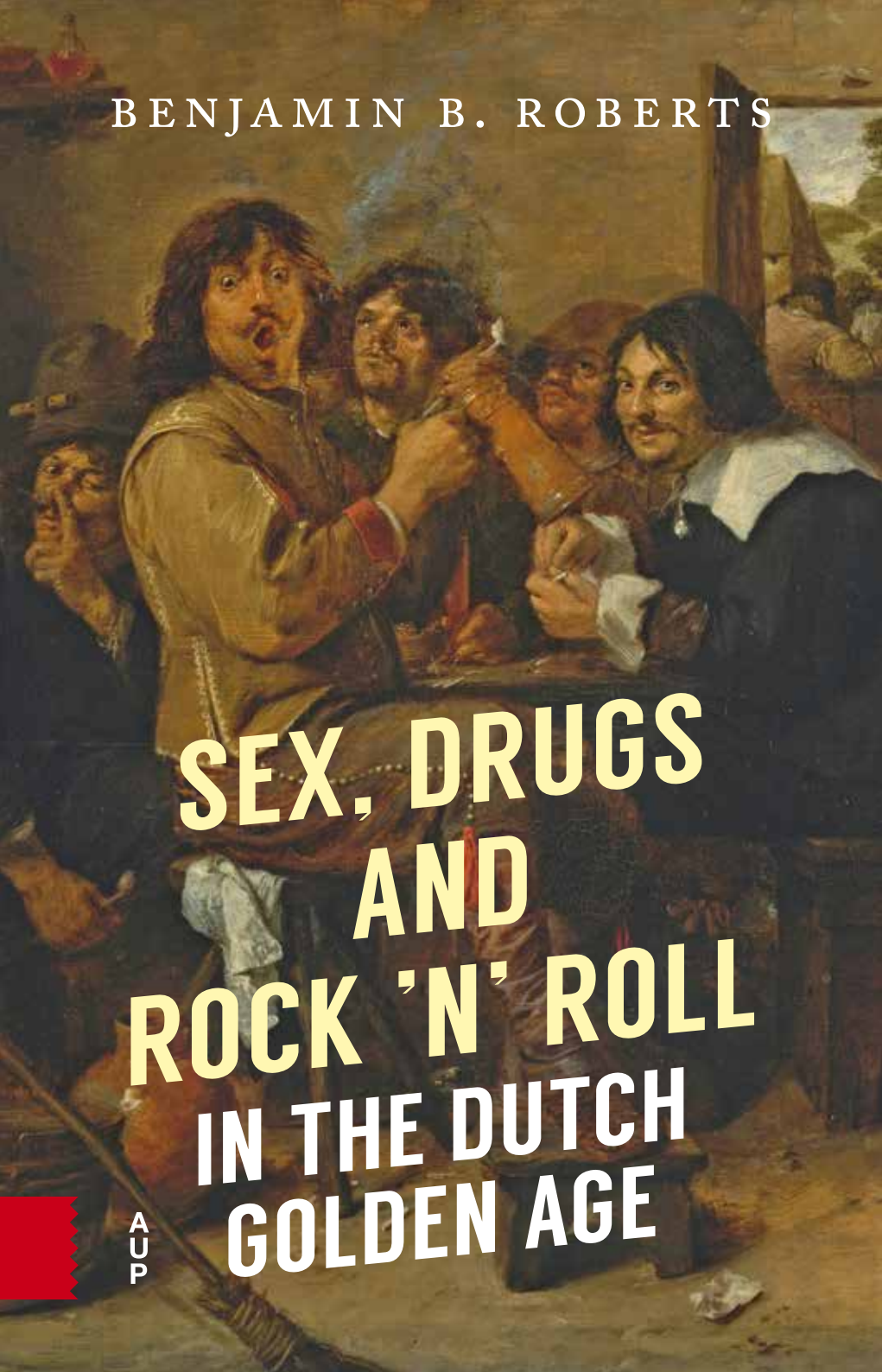
BENJAMIN B. ROBERTS
SEX, DRUGS AND ROCK 'N' ROLL IN THE DUTCH GOLDEN AGE
AUP

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Benjamin B. Roberts

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Amsterdam, 2017

These days, arriving at Amsterdam's Central Station, many tourists will be overwhelmed by the distinctly sweet, herbal scent of marijuana or hash. Since the late 1960s and the Flower Power days, Amsterdam has been known the world over for its Red Light District and hash bars or coffee shops, where patrons can 'legally' purchase marijuana and hash in small amounts. In the last forty years, the city has become known as a modern-day 'Sodom and Gomorra' for its toleration of prostitution and use of cannabis. In Quentin Tarantino's Oscar-winning *Pulp Fiction* (1994), one of the many eclectic dialogues between mobsters John Travolta and Samuel L. Jackson captures Amsterdam's liberal drug policy in a nutshell.

> Jackson: '*Tell me about those hash bars again. It's legal now, right?*'
> Travolta: '*Yeah, it's legal now, but not 100% legal. You just can't walk into a restaurant, roll a joint and start puffing away. They want you to smoke at home or in certain designated places.*'
> Jackson: '*And those places are… hash bars?*'
> Travolta: '*Yeah, it breaks down like this: it's legal to buy it, it's legal to own it, and if you are a proprietor of a hash bar, it's legal to sell it. It's legal to carry it, but that doesn't matter, now get a load of this. If you get stopped by a cop in Amsterdam, it's illegal for them to search you. Now that's the right cops in Amsterdam don't have.*'
> Jackson: '*Oh man, I'm going, that's all there is to it. I'm fuckin' going.*'

Otto Copes, 1629

More than twenty years since *Pulp Fiction* was released, a growing number of states in the United States are legalizing the use of cannabis. No doubt, Amsterdam and the Netherlands' liberal policy on drug use have played some role in this development. In the Netherlands, toleration of the use of drugs and other vices, including legalized prostitution, has a longer history; a history that is embedded in the way in which Dutch municipal authorities, schoolteachers, moralists, and parents raised their adolescent children in the Golden Age, in the heyday of abundance and affluence, an era when moderation was a necessity, not an option.

Let us start our story with Otto Copes in December 1629. Otto came from a decent family. They belonged to the elite of the town of Den Bosch, in the Generality Lands of the Dutch Republic. Members of the family held high-ranking public offices as town administrators and mayors. His parents died when he was young, and so Otto was taken in and raised by his paternal uncle, who was a member of Den Bosch's magistrate. By now, Otto was 18 years old and his behavior could hardly be termed appropriate for someone from his background. On a winter's night in 1629, he met up with two friends in a pub in Groningen for a drink that turned into a drinking binge. Earlier that year, Otto had enrolled as a law student at the University of Groningen, a medium-sized town 200 kilometers away from Den Bosch. Groningen took Otto far away from the watchful eye of his uncle, and he felt at liberty to do as he pleased and threw himself into college life. That day in 1629, Otto and his friends started drinking early in the afternoon and by evening they were completely wasted. After they left the pub, things went awfully wrong for them. During their walk home, they became aggressive and started to attack people. The city guard came to the rescue soon afterwards, but by then Otto and his friends had worked themselves into a frenzy of violence, and they started to fire their pistols at the city guard. Miraculously, no one was injured.

Today, the mere thought of drunken students staggering down the street in the middle of night carrying firearms would cause immediate public outrage. Bystanders would call the emergency services and the police would become involved, as well as politicians. The media would have a field day and the newspapers would be filled with moral panic. Commentators would complain about the violence of today's youth. Lawmakers would likely call for an increase in the legal age for alcohol consumption, and the media would speculate about how young people were able to buy weapons.

In the seventeenth century, however, municipal authorities made little fuss about juvenile delinquency. Neither did the media, as in the seventeenth century there were no newspapers as we know them today. And it is unlikely the incident would have been cause for moral panic. This *laissez-faire* attitude tells us much about seventeenth-century society and how young people were regarded at that time. It immediately raises the question: if drunken young people and violence were commonplace, what was considered 'normal behavior' for young people in the Dutch Golden Age?

When I was sixteen years old, my older brother and I traveled through Europe together on a Eurail Pass. We were young Americans who wanted to know everything about European culture and civilization. We wanted to immerse ourselves in the culture of Rembrandt, Bach, and Goethe. We walked along the canals of Amsterdam, admiring the seventeenth-century buildings and feats of urban planning, while cyclists whizzed past and cursed at us as we unknowingly used their bike lane as a sidewalk. We marveled at the masterpieces of Rembrandt, Jan Steen, and Vermeer in the Rijksmuseum. In Paris we were awestruck by the nineteenth-century planning of Haussmann, and in the Louvre we got lost because we wanted to take our picture next to the Venus de Milo.

In picturesque Heidelberg, we relished walking around the medieval castle. At the city's university, founded in 1386, we were amazed by the *Studentenkarzer*, or student prison, where

students were incarcerated and given a night to reflect on their inappropriate behavior. To my surprise, the walls of the cells were clad with profanities and obscenities. It reminded me of the toilet stalls at my high school in the United States, where the walls were covered with lewd texts, drawings of joints, and depictions of oversized male genitals. At that point, I started to question my lofty presumption of 'European civilization'. Were those young men the same Europeans who had created the fine art hanging in the museums I had just visited, the literary classics in the world's libraries, and the world's great musical compositions? Could it be true that young students in the early modern period were no better than myself and all those other pimple-faced teenagers in my school? Since that day, I have been wondering what we have in common with our ancestors, as well as how we differ from them. That question runs through this book as well.

The richest country in the world

What was it like to be a teenager and living under different economic and social conditions? During the Golden Age, the Netherlands had an exceptionally large child and adolescent population. How to educate and raise children as decent citizens was one of the main concerns of the early part of the seventeenth century. At that time, the Dutch Republic was the richest country in the world, and with nearly two million inhabitants, the most densely populated country in Europe. It was the most urbanized region in northern Europe, and it was one of the youngest nations, engaged in a fierce battle for independence from Spain and the Roman Catholic Church. The country was itself a teenager, seeking independence and desperately in search of its own identity.

With the eclipse of the Roman Catholic Church in the Dutch Republic, there was no predominant religion to take its place. The Protestant Church tried to gain the former's position as the state church, but failed. The religious landscape of the new

country was fragmented, divided up among different religions, which lived side by side and were obliged to tolerate each other.

After the fall of Antwerp in 1585 and the blockade of the Scheldt River, which closed off the city's main source of trade, commercial trade in northern Europe was diverted overnight from Antwerp to Amsterdam. From one day to the next, Amsterdam became the new staple market of Europe. The sealing off of Antwerp's harbor created a large influx of immigrants, who fled the city and resettled in the north. They brought their knowledge, money, and trade contacts with them. The influx of immigrants from the Southern Netherlands unleashed a wave of economic prosperity and a building boom, and generated unprecedented employment. In 1602, the Dutch East Indies Company (VOC) was founded. It became the world's first multinational, winning exclusive rights to trade with today's Indonesia, India, China and Japan. In 1621, the Dutch West Indies Company (WIC) was established and went on to trade in North America, the Caribbean, and Brazil. With its large trading companies, the Republic straddled the globe like a giant octopus, collecting goods from the eastern and western hemispheres. During this period, many merchant families amassed large fortunes and were able to climb the social ladder. Many times, these families ascended from the merchant class within one or two generations and became members of the ruling elite.

In the seventeenth century, the young Republic covered an area that only partially corresponds to the current boundaries of the Netherlands. The country was divided into seven provinces: Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Friesland, Groningen, Overijssel, and Gelderland. The province of Holland with its major trading cities, including Amsterdam, Leiden, Haarlem, Hoorn, Enkhuizen, Dordrecht, Rotterdam, Delft and Schiedam, stood at the helm of the Republic. Among the cities of Holland, Amsterdam quickly emerged as the cultural and economic epicenter of the province and hence of the Republic. The worldwide demand for luxury goods such as porcelain, furniture, books, and paintings transformed the city into a commercial and manufacturing center.

Without the wealth that came from these industries, the artistic achievements of painters such as Rembrandt, poets such as P.C. Hooft, and writers such as Vondel would not have been possible. The new elite wanted to be portrayed and immortalized by the country's most prominent painters. In Amsterdam, the painter Bartholomeus van der Helst was the Annie Leibowitz of the Golden Age, painting the country's rich and famous.

The new wealth of the Republic allowed parents to focus on the education of their children. During the Dutch Golden Age, many books of advice were published on how children should be educated and molded into decent citizens of the new country. Numerous schools were founded and several universities were established. It was as though the country had been swept by a wave of optimism about the future, and was full of hope about the younger generation. According to the Dutch sociologist Henk Becker, in his book *Generaties en hun kansen* [Generations and their chances] (1992), generations of young people growing up during economic hardship and crisis, war, or times of disease, are more likely to be pessimistic and have a negative view of the future. They often see hurdles ahead.

Young people who grow up during times of economic prosperity and peace, by contrast, often have an optimistic outlook on life. They are hopeful and see opportunities everywhere, even during difficult times. The baby boomers of the twentieth century are a good example of a generation that grew up in an era of economic prosperity. On the contrary, Generation X grew up in the 1980s when there was economic downturn, overshadowed by the threat of nuclear annihilation at the height of the Cold War. They grew up seeing the future as a grim place with few opportunities, if any at all.

For the early modern period, it is impossible (and unthinkable) to divide generations into categories as sociologists and marketing agencies have done for the twentieth century. That does not mean, however, that there were no differences between the generations in the seventeenth century. This book will focus on young men in the early seventeenth century and examine how

they became adults during an economic, cultural, and scientific golden age. Because sources on people in the lower classes are relatively scarce, this book will primarily be concerned with young people from the middle and upper classes. These were young men who were either enrolled at a university or had an apprenticeship, where they learned a craft or trade.

The sources on young people in the Dutch Golden Age used for this book include diaries, paintings, engravings, books on childrearing, educational treatises, police reports, reports from the academic court (the university's own court), and the entertainment books that were produced for young people in the Golden Age. These sources provide us with a glimpse of what it was like to be young in the seventeenth century.

During the Golden Age, a young man was considered a youth until he married; that is, until he was financially independent and had the resources to marry and start a family. In general, this included most men until their late twenties and sometimes as old as their early thirties. In comparison to neighboring countries, the Republic had a large population of young people. They were mostly young laborers or students who had immigrated to the Northern Netherlands. The influx of immigrants had many causes. In the Southern Netherlands, there was heavy fighting during the Revolt against the Spaniards, which disrupted the economy and unleashed social upheaval. This was a major reason for young people to emigrate and seek refuge in the Northern Netherlands.

In the early seventeenth century, there was similar social turmoil in parts of present-day Germany, where a bloody conflict was fought between Roman Catholics and Protestants. During the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), entire towns and villages were destroyed. The countryside was looted and reduced to ashes, crops were destroyed, and livestock were indiscriminately slaughtered. If the inhabitants did not perish from the sword, then they were likely to die from famine and plague. There was little future for the young people in these regions. For them, moving to the flourishing cities of the Northern Netherlands

was often the only option to build a new life. They were like the young men from Syria, Iraq, Iran, and countries in Northern Africa today, who risk the dangerous sea crossing from Turkey to Europe in rickety boats. There was no other possibility for them than to leave everything behind and hope for a better life elsewhere. Staying was not an option, because the future that awaited them in their own country was one of violence and famine.

Although seventeenth-century sources do not provide exact statistics about specific age groups, as modern demographic bureaus can do today, we can assume that early modern cities were inhabited primarily by unmarried young people under the age of thirty. They flocked to the cities of the Northern Netherlands in the early seventeenth century. They gave a boost to the economy and stimulated demand for housing, foodstuffs, and household goods. At the same time, they found work in the flourishing trade sector, and in the emerging textile industry and other industries. They were the driving motor of the economic and cultural boom that was known as the Dutch Golden Age.

A country full of young people

Many of the young immigrant men found work in the shipping industry. One could earn good money working on board one of the many VOC or WIC ships. Such a job provided a young man with at least six to nine months of work, with fixed wages. In addition, he could see parts of the world that he could have only dreamt of as a child. Exact data on how many foreigners were employed by the VOC and the WIC during the early seventeenth century are unfortunately unknown. However, we do know that approximately 475,000 foreigners were employed by the VOC during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For a country with a total population of two million inhabitants, the proportion of foreigners must have been considerable. The loading and unloading of ships alone required a workforce of 35,000. Most of

these men were not born in the Republic and today they would be called ethnic minorities or guest workers.

The second largest group of young men that came to the country found employment in the army. At least half of the soldiers were foreigners, and sometimes entire regiments came from the same country or region. The Scots, Southern Germans, and the Swiss in particular had a reputation for providing mercenary troops. There are no exact data on the numbers of young men and the regions from which they came. A rough estimate suggests that the Dutch State Army employed one million men during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, half of whom were foreigners.

The third group consisted of 'journeymen', or apprentices learning a craft. They included many Germans, known as *Wanderburschen,* who had internships as craftsmen in the cities of the Republic. There were also many journeymen from the Southern Netherlands who, after the blockade of the Scheldt River, had little or no chance of finding an internship in any of the Flemish cities. In this period, many people from the Southern Netherlands sought refuge in the Republic. During the Dutch Revolt, approximately 150,000 people migrated from the South to the North. Many were wealthy merchants who chose Amsterdam as the new destination in which to continue their trade throughout Europe. Other immigrants in the Republic found work in the growing textile industries of Leiden and Haarlem, or were employed as seasonal workers in the bleaching industry outside Haarlem and Zandvoort, where linens were sun-bleached in the fields along the coast. Every town or village in the Republic had local factories where beer was brewed, or glue and straw were processed. In short, there were plenty of jobs for both skilled and unskilled laborers.

The growing economy also instigated a migration of students to the universities in the Republic. University towns such as Leiden, Groningen, Utrecht, Amsterdam and Franeker attracted many foreign students who wanted to study at a Protestant university. In Europe, with the exception of England, the Republic

was the only country with a Protestant university. Leiden, for example, had a large student population with many foreigners. They made up a considerable proportion of the city's population and were usually responsible for disturbing the peace after sunset. The continuous 'pull factor' of young people searching for economic prosperity in the Dutch Republic unleashed an unprecedented golden age, while at the same time creating a country that bustled with a young and rambunctious population.

Amsterdam, center of the world

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Amsterdam inherited Antwerp's crown as the center of world trade. The city experienced a population explosion, similar to those that would occur in London and Paris in the nineteenth century. In 1568, at the beginning of the Dutch Revolt against Spain, Amsterdam was home to barely 30,000 inhabitants. By 1600, the population had more than doubled to 65,000. Fifty years later, it had grown to 140,000 residents. In the course of the seventeenth century, Amsterdam became the third most populated city in Europe.

In the early seventeenth century, there was a high degree of social upward mobility. Merchants who amassed large fortunes in a relatively short period were able to climb the social ladder. During the economic boom they acquired not only wealth, but they also sought political influence, and pursued key administrative positions in town magistrates. Some went further, and gained key national offices. Within one or two generations, this group of merchants had worked their way up the ladder and become the new rulers of the country. The new members of the elite also wanted to flaunt their newfound wealth and position. They built large patrician-style palaces along the canals, spent their summers at extravagant country estates, and acquired aristocratic titles from the impoverished old nobility to consolidate their status. They also raised their children in accordance with their new lifestyle, and provided them with an education that

was similar to that of the nobility. Their sons attended Latin school and university, their education culminating with a grand tour of France, and Italy, sometimes England, which could last for months, if not years. The sons of the new elite were taught about classical civilization, which was considered appropriate for their new status in society.

The wedding party

One tier below the new elite lay the rising middle class, whose members also profited from the Golden Age. Unlike the *nouveau riche* with their large houses on the main canals and children at university, these were the members of the economic class that earned enough money to buy luxury goods, such as entertaining books and fashionable clothing. It was also a new class whose social power and influence were taken seriously. Its members included young men such as Manuel Colyn, who, together with his elder brother Michiel, ran a publishing and printing house on Damrak quay in Amsterdam. Today, Damrak is the first street that most visitors to the city encounter. It is the stretch from Amsterdam's main railway station to Dam Square, with its neon-lite fast-food joints, tacky souvenir shops, and seedy gambling houses. In the seventeenth century, Damrak was the hub of Amsterdam's publishing industry. Books and other publications could easily be loaded into the moored vessels only a few meters across the quay and shipped elsewhere. From the quay of Damrak, the forbidden works of the philosopher Descartes and pedagogue Comenius were published and distributed throughout Europe.

Manuel's parents had died in 1603, during an outbreak of the plague. Manuel, eight years old at the time, was raised together with his siblings by his eldest brother Claes Colyn, who at the age of 23 had become responsible for his younger brothers and sisters. They lived in a small alleyway named Teerketelsteeg, 'Tar Kettle Alley', that veered off into Amsterdam's main Singel canal. Claes was like a father to Manuel, and when he married 24-year-old

Catharina Cloppenburgh on Sunday 7 August 1622, Claes was his witness. Catharina's father, Jan Evertsz Cloppenburgh, was also a witness. Cloppenburgh ran a well-known publishing house that was located on Damrak next to that of Manuel's brother, Michiel. In Amsterdam's publishing world, the union between Manuel and Catherina must have been considered a merger between two leading publishing houses. After the church ceremony in the Nieuwe Kerk on Amsterdam's Dam Square, the couple hosted a wedding party where their guests played music, sang, danced, and drank.

Jeunesse dorée

At Manuel and Catharina's wedding party, there were many young people from the same social background. In the seventeenth century, these youngsters were known as *jeunesse dorée,* or gilded youth, because they were a generation of young people who were growing up in conditions of affluence and trying to distinguish themselves from the previous generation. With their optimism and energy, they were innovative and willing to take risks. One of the guests at Manuel and Catharina's wedding party was the 26-year-old Jacomo Pauw, the son of Reinier Adriaensz Pauw, a wealthy mayor of Amsterdam. In 1602 the latter had been one of the initial founders of the VOC, and in 1619 had been directly involved with the trial and execution of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, the statesman accused of treason. Despite his extreme wealth, Reinier Pauw was also a pious and frugal man.

That was apparent in 1631, when the city of Amsterdam had to levy an extra tax on its wealthy citizens. All those with a personal fortune of more than a 1,000 guilders were required to pay a tax of half a percent. Pauw's private wealth was estimated at 200,000 guilders, which was probably on the conservative side, considering that he most likely played down the actual amount to avoid paying too much tax. Other members of the Pauw family tried to gain political power after they had amassed

great fortunes. Jacomo's eldest brother, Adriaan Pauw, became *raadpensionaris* or Grand Pensionary of Holland. This was the highest-ranking public office in the country, and made Pauw the most powerful man in the Republic. He held the position until 1636, and was re-elected to the office a few years later.

Hendrick Hoochkamer was another guest at the wedding party who had moved up the social ladder. In 1601 his father, Jacob Pietersz Hoochkamer, had started a business importing silk from Italy, which he resold throughout Europe. In 1622, his 21-year-old son Hendrick was a silk merchant with a shop in Warmoesstraat, the most expensive shopping street in Amsterdam, where he sold silk cloth and other luxury goods. In 1631, the city taxed his father on a private fortune of 150,000 guilders. In the early seventeenth century, the economy was growing by leaps and bounds. This shaped the prevailing mindset; economically speaking, the sky was the limit. Everybody could become rich and move up the social ladder.

While climbing the social ladder was not difficult at this time, the real challenge was remaining at the top of the ladder and not falling back down. Some were unfortunate and fell faster than they had climbed. That happened to the father of Hendrick Hoochkamer. In 1638, his economic standing and social position collapsed when he was declared bankrupt. Hoochkamer was forced to step down from the city council and resign his position as captain of the city guard. To save face and avoid complete destitution, he was made porter of the municipal militia of crossbowmen.

Guilliaem van den Broeck was also invited to the wedding of Manuel and Catharina. When his father, Hans van den Bergh, went bankrupt a few years later, he was forced to sell all of his personal belongings, including his furniture and clothing and the inventory from his sugar factory, to pay his creditors. Behind closed doors, people gossiped about Van den Bergh's bankruptcy. Some claimed that he had lived an immoral life and had squandered his money on a mistress and alcohol – which was why the Amsterdam church consistory denied him the holy sacrament in 1628.

Consumer goods

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, massive fortunes could easily be made, but also quickly lost. The fear of losing everything hung over the new elite of the Dutch Golden Age, and it influenced their consumption. They tended to be frugal in their daily lives. Nevertheless, the early seventeenth century witnessed a sharp rise in material prosperity and the quantity and quality of consumer goods.

The middle classes and wealthy farmers profited from increased demand for consumer goods, and were simultaneously active participants in the emerging consumer economy. The furnishings in most homes in the late sixteenth century were usually modest, for example: simple wooden tables and plain chairs, rudimentary wooden boxes, and primitive bowls made from tin or wood. By the mid-seventeenth century, Dutch interiors looked quite different. Household inventories and wills reveal that people's homes were elaborately decorated with mirrors, paintings, books, and clocks. Homes were furnished with octagonal or round tables topped with expensive porcelain bowls, the chairs had comfortable armrests, and linen cabinets were made from oak wood and lavishly decorated. This new affluence was also reflected in everyday items, including clothing, dishes, and utensils. In less than half a century, both the quantity and quality of goods had substantially increased. In Europe, demand for such consumer goods originated in Northern Italy during the Renaissance and spread north through Germany and the Southern Netherlands, and finally to the Dutch Republic. The clearest indication of this new wealth in the Dutch Republic lay in the number of paintings that decorated the homes of the urban elite, the rising middle classes, and even those of farmers.

A fascination with children

In the early seventeenth century, the Republic was literally and figuratively a young nation. Not only was the Republic

still establishing its political and geographical boundaries, but it was also a country with many young people. The political and religious twists and turns of the new nation resembled the growth spurts and mood swings of an adolescent. In the seventeenth century, the different stages of life were associated with specific character traits. Old people, for example, were known for their calmness, benign character, and tendency not to become overly upset about things. On the downside, they were known for their melancholy, their frugality, and for the fact that they usually felt the cold (hence old age was often associated with the season of winter). Youth, on the other hand, was associated with passion and love. The sanguine character of young people symbolized the warmest season of the year. The young Republic and its young people oscillated between play and learning, between freedom and obedience, and between independence and security.

In the Republic, almost all of the cohesive elements that the Roman Catholic faith had brought to society had been abolished from the country's religious and cultural life. Moreover, the Protestant Reformed Church failed to assume the old church's role as a state church and work to unify the new state. The country was religiously divided and embroiled in a long, drawn-out war for independence from Spain. Whereas most countries that declare independence from a mother country are involved in a quick war where they cut the umbilical cord, the Dutch Republic needed eighty years to free itself from Spain. In those fourscore years, there was only one period of peace, the Twelve-Year Truce, between 1609 and 1621. For the rest of that time, the Republic was caught up in a continuous war from which there seemed to be no end in sight. One of the consequences of being at war for over four generations was the fact that young people were infatuated with everything that had to do with war and the military. Both adults and young people became obsessed with news about military campaigns. The war propaganda machine produced pamphlets and history books about battles, and prints portraying heroic soldiers engaged in war.

After the Iconoclastic Fury of 1566 and the long war for independence against Spain, younger generations in the Dutch Republic developed an aversion to everything that was Spanish and Roman Catholic. During the Iconoclastic Fury, icons and saints in churches had literally been removed from their pedestals. A didactical vacuum opened up where the empty pedestals now stood. The young people of the New Republic had to find new role models in a society without one common faith and that was slowly becoming more secular. With the exception of new economic-political structures and free-market liberalism, there was little cohesion in society. Against this backdrop, a new secular and urban culture developed in which children and adolescents were raised.

One of the defining traits of the Dutch Golden Age, and the reason why the period fascinates me, is that it was the first time in Dutch history when great interest was shown in children and the education of young people. There was an outpouring of publications, including moralistic treatises, songbooks for young people, and child-rearing manuals books, which were either produced for a young audience or their parents. It was as though the country had become fascinated with the young people who would define its future. In part, this publishing boom was also due to the fact that new forms of media, such as books, had become more affordable, as well as the fact that more people were able to read in the early seventeenth century.

Moreover, it was also fueled by the widely accepted notion that youth were the future of the country. This is evident from the great number of portraits of children that were painted. Nowhere in the world in the seventeenth century were so many children portrayed with attributes such as birds and dogs, which symbolized and emphasized the importance of a good education. Children, like pets, were supposed to be well trained and educated. In the Golden Age, a good education was praiseworthy. It was an asset not only for the family, but also for the new nation.

Founding fathers of a new society

Another striking aspect of the Dutch Golden Age was the fact that the Republic was a nation in the making. The young people of the period were the founding fathers of a new state. When they grew up, they became the bedrock of a new society in the seventeenth century, one that is still recognizable today. Young people were allocated a central role in society and considered an investment in the future of the country. With the attention paid to young people, a rich youth culture emerged during the Dutch Golden Age.

These circumstances had a fundamental impact on how the youth of the early seventeenth century perceived the future. Historically, major societal changes have occurred when there is a substantial young population. In today's society young people are the motor of the economy, and the elderly, who require healthcare and depend on retirement benefits, are often considered a burden for society. In sixteenth-century Germany, the Reformation was driven by a large population of young people who were demanding social and religious changes. At this time, Europe's population had started to grow again after the drastic decline of fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and the Black Death, in which a third of Europe's population died.

In the first decades of the sixteenth century, a new generation of young leaders came to the fore. Martin Luther published his famous 95 theses at the age of 34. In the 1520s, many members of the academic staff at the University of Wittenberg were quite young, aged between twenty and thirty. The historian Matthew Aurogallus, for example, was only thirty years old when he was made a professor. John Hainpol and Philipp Melanchthon, professors and Lutheran intellectual reformers, were even younger than some of the students they taught. The intellectual innovators of the new generation were the movers and shakers of the sixteenth century, who initiated the Reformation and changed Europe and the course of history forever.

We can find other examples in history of times where young people took the lead in changing society. It was mostly young people who stormed the Bastille in 1789 and started the French Revolution. And almost two hundred years later, in 1968, it was the students of Paris who took to the streets and demanded more democracy. In the same year, young people made up the majority of demonstrators in Prague who were demanding more freedom from the Soviet Union. In the United States, it was mainly young people who held protests and supported the Civil Rights Movement. As a rule of thumb, it is young people who bring about change in society. Change, whether it is backwards-looking or progressive, is an expression of youth culture.

By nature, youngsters are more inclined, and even willing, to take risks. Some are not afraid to use violence to achieve their objectives. Young people tend not to have social and economic obligations. If things go wrong, they have little to lose in terms of social status. This makes it easier for them to stand on the barricades and fight for what they believe is right, without having to pay the consequences of losing their jobs and endangering their family's livelihood.

One of the reasons why young people are capable of changing society is that they simply have more leisure time than any other age group. In the early modern era, people in general had more recreational time than today. Unlike the regimented work schedules of today, the working day in the seventeenth century was shaped by external factors. Weather and technological conditions regularly stopped the work of laborers, who then had to wait and literally had 'free time'. Men employed at sea and in the fisheries worked on a seasonal basis and had nothing to do during the winter months. Even during working periods, ships could remain at dock for days, sometimes months, waiting for favorable winds before they could sail. In the meantime, a small army of sailors and dockworkers had little to do. Other sectors were also dependent on weather conditions. Millers, for example, were dependent on wind, and construction workers and farmers had to wait for dry weather before they could build and sow.

Unlike in modern Western society, where free time is equated with wealth and luxury, in early modern society it simply meant that many people had nothing to do for several days.

For a young person, having too much time on one's hands could be disastrous. When young people were bored, they were more likely to commit acts of violence, obsess about their appearance, drink too much alcohol, fornicate, take drugs, and play music. During every period of economic prosperity, these aspects of youth culture seem to reappear, but they often assume a different shape or form. In the Dutch Golden Age, for example, juvenile violence was rampant. Young people did not hesitate to use violence against each other or the authorities. Moreover, many young people suffered from pent-up aggression, and violence was a means of venting this. In this respect, early modern society understood this problem and turned a blind eye. Society recognized that violence in young people was temporal. Today, by contrast, politicians take violence and juvenile delinquency seriously.

In the Golden Age, violence committed by youngsters was commonplace. What is more, violence played an important role for boys who were becoming men. University students, for example, were granted a special privilege that allowed them to carry a firearm. Young men from the lower classes, who did not have that privilege, were known to be just as violent, if not more. Foreign students who came from the countryside were particularly notorious for their frequent clashes with the officers of the peace, who were responsible for maintaining law and order.

Young people in the Republic

This book will examine the great social changes that young people brought about in the Dutch Golden Age. It will unveil the contribution that young people made to seventeenth-century Dutch society, and what remains of this today. In this book, I

use the term 'youth' to refer to male adolescents and young men between the ages of thirteen and thirty. In the early modern era, young unmarried men were still considered to be youths. Once they crossed the threshold of marriage, they 'graduated' and were considered adults.

A wide array of sources has been examined in order to reconstruct youth culture in the Golden Age. Primary sources such as moralistic treatises, educational books, and emblem books, where textual messages were reinforced with images, played a key prescriptive role, while the archives of the university courts reveal the wayward side of young people and their mishaps. Another source that was consulted were songbooks, which reveal the leisure activities of young people. In this study only male youths will be examined, for the simple reason that more sources reveal the behavior of boys and young men in the early modern period. In general, males were raised in the public domain and their misdoings were often recorded in public records. Sources that reveal the behavior of adolescent girls are rare, namely because they were raised by mothers or other female relatives in the private sphere of the home.

In Chapter Two, I shall look at how violence played an important role in the process of becoming a man. Parents and institutions were equally concerned about juvenile delinquency and the rampant violence that was committed by young people. Violence in the early modern period was not only a danger to others, but also their children were often the victims of violence.

Chapter Three will examine the hedonistic lifestyle of young people. Moralists accused wealthy parents of indulging their offspring with expensive clothes. The 'calculated slovenliness' of new trends in young people's clothes and fashion in the seventeenth century was considered an omen of moral and social decay.

Besides violence and hedonism, parents were concerned that their children were drinking too much alcohol. Young people in the seventeenth century were notorious for their binge drinking. In Chapter Four, we shall see how parents taught their children

to drink in moderation, and how doing everything in moderation was a sign of maturity. Chapter Five, in turn, will discuss how young people dealt with their budding sexuality and learned to temper their sexual urges in a period when there was no contraception and venereal diseases such as syphilis were rampant among young people.

Much like the youth of today, the young people of the Dutch Golden Age also experimented with mind-altering stimulants. In Chapter Six, we shall see how tobacco from the New World became the new experimental drug in the early seventeenth century. The young people of the Golden Age were the first generation in history to embrace smoking and turn it into a mainstream habit and national pastime. Indeed, one of the most striking aspects of the young people of the Golden Age was how they spent their leisure time. In almost every society and era in history, young people have found ways to rebel against their parents and spend time with their friends. Chapter Seven examines how the youth of the Golden Age entertained themselves with music and song. The lyrics were often about young people and the dilemmas that they faced. As such, they were universal and equally fitting today.

This brings us back to the earlier question, of whether the generation of the early seventeenth century was revolutionary in historical terms, or whether it was just like any other generation of young people. In the Conclusion, we will return to Otto Copes and consider the consequences that the youth of the Dutch Golden Age had for the youth of today.