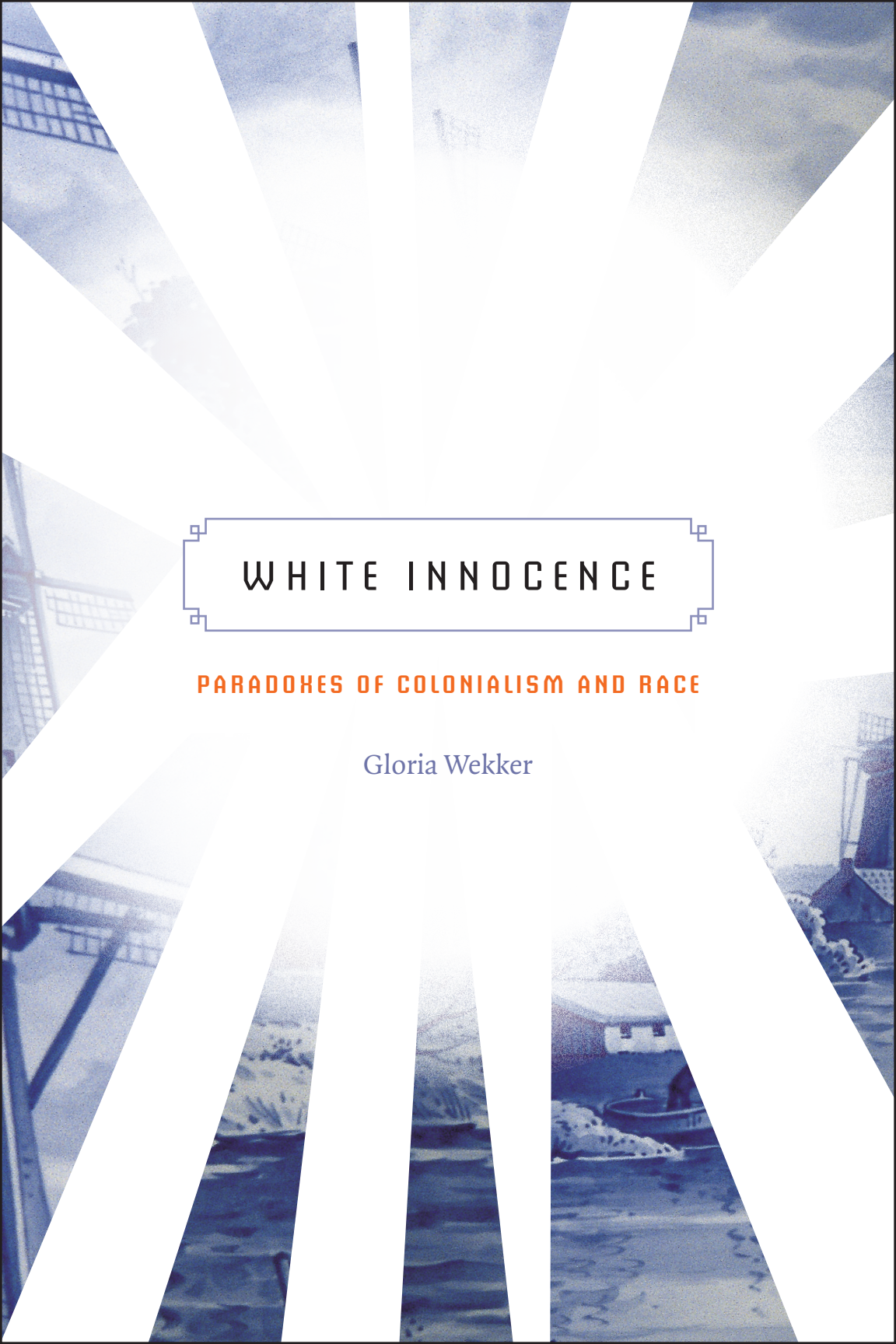

WHITE INNOCENCE

PARADOXES OF COLONIALISM AND RACE

Gloria Wekker

WHITE INNOCENCE

WHITE INNOCENCE

Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race

Gloria Wekker

Duke University Press
Durham and London
2016

Printed in the United States of America
on acid-free paper ∞
Designed by Amy Ruth Buchanan
Typeset in Quadraat by Copperline

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Wekker, Gloria, author.
Title: White innocence : paradoxes of colonialism
and race / Gloria Wekker.
Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2016. |
Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2015042542 |
ISBN 9780822360599 (hardcover : alk. paper) |
ISBN 9780822360759 (pbk. : alk. paper) |
ISBN 9780822374565 (e-book) |
Subjects: LCSH: Racism—Netherlands. |
Netherlands—Race relations. | Sexual
minorities—Netherlands.
Classification: LCC DJ92.B53 W455 2016 |
DDC 305.8009492—dc23
LC record available at http://lccn.loc.gov/2015042542

Cover art: Hand-painted Delft blue plate,
Holland (details). © Christine Osborne
Pictures / Alamy Stock Photo.

To future generations of antiracist activists

To Robin, Rosa, Minne, Finn, Milan, Ceriel, Ravi, Josephine, and Lucy

To my brother Paul (1959–2011)

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

. . . and on the other side, the bright
look of innocence, the white dove
of peace, magical heavenly light

Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

This book has been a long time in the making and thinking through. In the course of the past two decades, after coming back to the Netherlands from Los Angeles in 1992, where I had done my PhD, looking at the Netherlands with fresh eyes regularly sent frissons of discomfort and alienation up my spine. My anthropological eyes, making the familiar world strange, received strong, new impulses to make sense of the Netherlands, where I had grown up after I was one year old. After my return, I often had the feeling that I was involuntarily seeing the emperor, the Netherlands, without his clothes on, in his most detestable nakedness. It now often struck me that interracial situations, conversations, and phenomena that would be totally unacceptable in a U.S. context would pass without any frowns or critical comments in the Netherlands. Starting from the 1990s and into the first decade of the twentieth century, this process was intensified by an unprecedented turn toward a neorealist discourse (Prins 2002), when the murders of populist politician Pim Fortuyn in 2002 and filmmaker Theo van Gogh in 2004 gave rise to an exceptional bluntness in the interracial domain. The evasive attitude around race that had been customary in civilized circles—somewhat like our impulse, as Toni Morrison (1992a) remarked about the United States, "not to talk with the hunchback about his

hump"—virtually disappeared. Many Dutch people, never shy in voicing their opinions, now felt justified in uttering statements, especially toward Muslims, one more offensive and willfully humiliating than another. It is worth recollecting that in the 1970s and 1980s, it was Moluccan and Afro-Surinamese Dutch people who were thought to be the unassimilable Other. Meanwhile, what remained the same was that in the avalanche of publications attempting to understand society and the resentment afflicting the white Dutch population, there was an avoidance of race as a fundamental social and symbolic grammar orchestrating affect and understandings, a glaring omission that induced me to write this book. It is also one of the ways in which I am realizing the program I had in mind when I formally accepted the chair in gender and ethnicity, Faculty of the Humanities, at Utrecht University in 2002, to study whiteness (Wekker 2002a).

We are living in hopeful times: a second wave of antiracist activism is taking off. It is very heartening to see that a new generation of brave antiracist activists has stood up in the past years both outside and inside the academy. I dedicate this book to them, and to a generation after them, my grandnieces and grandnephews: Rosa, Robin, Minne, Finn, Milan, Ceriel, Ravi, Josephine, and Lucy, a rainbow-colored tribe. May they all live in a world that recognizes them for who they are and that will let them live in active solidarity or without having to carry the burden of their skin color, thus without "white innocence."

I want to thank my colleagues at the Department of Women's Studies, at Utrecht University, with whom I worked so hard for so many years: Rosemarie Buikema, Rosi Braidotti, Berteke Waaldijk, Sandra Ponzanesi, Iris van der Tuin, Marta Zarzycka, Babs Boter, Eva Midden, and Kathrin Thiele. We would not have gotten anywhere without the steady support of Trude Oorschot. I think with fondness of the many talented students in the one-year master of arts program, of which I was the coordinator until 2012, and whom I have had the pleasure to teach and see grow. I am always amazed to get news from them and find out where they have wound up and what each of them is doing to make a difference in the world. Especially dear to me are the students I have supervised through their PhDs, Cassandra Ellerbe-Dueck, Sabrina Marchetti, Lena Eckert, and Shu-yi Huang; and the students that I am still supervising, Heather Hermant, Phoebe Kisubi Mbasalaki, and Yvette Kopijn, from whom I learn so much and who keep me on my toes. I also thank Shu-yi and Heather for inviting me to their home

universities, Shin Hsin University in Taipei, Taiwan, and York University in Toronto, Canada, where a tribute to Audre Lorde, "The Contemporary Urgencies of Audre Lorde's Legacy," jointly organized with the University of Toronto, took place in March 2013. I received much-welcomed responses from Jin Hariwatorn, Enakshi Dua, Anna Aganthangelou, and Honor Ford Smith on an early version of chapter 4. I thank Maayke Botman for the many conversations about the way that race works in the Netherlands that we have had in the course of the years. My student assistants have been very helpful. I especially want to thank Erin van de Weijer, who helped me out on numerous occasions with making PowerPoint presentations, and most recently I have depended on Mirna Sodre de Oliveira. Mark Hazeleger has been indispensable to solve my "computer blues" at a moment's notice, and I thank Gon Buurman for her fine photography.

I want to acknowledge my colleague Philomena Essed for her courage in putting "everyday racism" on the agenda in the Netherlands at an early stage. I also thank her and Isabel Hoving for their initiative to bring out the edited volume *Dutch Racism* in 2014, after three decades of silence on racism. I also wish to thank professors Nina Lykke, Cecilia Åsberg, Berit Starkman, and my fellow scholars at GEXcel International Collegium for Advanced Transdisciplinary Gender Studies at Linköping University, Sweden, where I spent a two-month sabbatical in November and December 2009. In addition, this book was also made possible by a year's sabbatical at NIAS, the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies, in Wassenaar, in 2011–2012. I have given many talks in the Netherlands and abroad in the past years, too many to mention here, but I would like to collectively thank the people who invited me and my audiences for their feedback and allowing me to put my ear to the ground in so many different places, from Paramaribo to Tallinn to Cape Town.

Thanks to historians Rosemarijn Hoefte and Alex van Stipriaan for commenting on the introduction. An earlier version of chapter 1 appeared as "Diving into the Wreck: Exploring Intersections of Sexuality, Race, Gender, and Class in the Dutch Cultural Archive," in P. Essed and I. Hoving, eds., *Dutch Racism* (2014) and is reprinted here with permission of Editions Rodopi, b.v. A special thank you goes to Frances Gouda and to the excellent editing work done by Isabel Hoving. I want to thank the organizers of the George Mosse lecture series at the University of Amsterdam, especially Gert Hekma, where I presented a very first version of chapter 4 in September

2009. Furthermore, I thank Mari Hermans for our productive collaboration in writing the chapter "Aisha Is Cool" in *Lesbo-Encyclopedie* (Hermans and Wekker 2009), Juul van Hoof and Hanneke Felten of Movisie in Utrecht, Glenn Helberg of OCAN, and Stefan Dudink for his insightful comments. A very early version of chapter 5 was delivered as a presentation at Feministisch Verzet (Feminist resistance) in Utrecht, on November 15, 2013. Thanks to research MA students at the time, Annette Krauss, Gianmaria Colpani, and Katrien Smiet for inviting me. Thanks to Dineke Stam for her comments on the coda.

I also want to thank the Amsterdam branch of SIT, the School for International Training, under the directorship of Yvette Kopijn and her team, including Nancy Jouwe, who gave me the opportunity to present work in progress on chapter 3 to the students. I want to thank my (imagined) community of black American, British, German, Swedish, and Caribbean feminists (f/m) with whom I stand shoulder to shoulder, among whom I want to mention some by name: Audre Lorde and Claudia Mitchell-Kernan, the chair of my dissertation committee at UCLA and first black female teacher. I want to thank my friends and colleagues M. Jacqui Alexander, Gail Lewis, and Ann Phoenix, who although they are objectively farther and far away, never feel that way. I feel fortunate in knowing all three of you, by the sustenance of your work and for making me feel less lonely during the process of writing. Phone and Skype conversations with Jacqui, often past my midnight, always bring up new angles and insights. I am happy to be a small part of the launching of the Tobago Center for the Study and Practice of Indigenous Spirituality. May Yemanyá and Oshun continue to bless us.

Several people have discussed chapters or ideas in the book with me and I want to thank Saskia Wieringa, Halleh Ghorashi, Nancy Jouwe, Fenneke Wekker, Rosemarijn Hoefte, Alex van Stipriaan, Christien Brinkgreve, Dineke Stam, Toke Hoppenbrouwers, Alexandra Miller, Patricia Schor, Geertje Mak, Annette Krauss, Mikki Stelder, Polly Wagenaar, Ama Koranteng-Kumi, Stefan Dudink, Michael Haman, Rodney Wekker, and Lindsey Louis. A special thank you to Alex Miller for editing a chapter. Of course, I remain responsible for any judgments in error, despite their incisive comments. Furthermore, there are people who would never let me forget the book and urged me to finish it: Jennifer Tosch, Dienke Hondius, Guno Jones, and Nancy Jouwe. Fellow members of the Scientific Council of NiNsee—the National Institute for the Study of Dutch Slavery and Its Legacy—Alex van Stipriaan, Guno Jones,

Dienke Hondius, Kwame Nimako, and Francio Guadeloupe have jointly created an atmosphere in which the urgency of this study always remained crystal-clear. A special mention is due to the Collective of Transcultural Therapists in Amsterdam, Anna de Voogt, Glenn Helberg, Urmy MacNack, Kitlyn Tjin-a-Djie, Hermine Klok, Dirck van Bekkum, Fariba Rhmaty, and Pui Fan Yip, thanking them for the important work that they do and for collectively brainstorming with me over chapter 3.

I want to thank my family and my in-laws in the Netherlands, Suriname, and the Dominican Republic for their support and their warmth. Last but not least, my friends Diny Zanders, Twie Tjoa, Claudette van Trikt, Andrée Douglas, Thea Doelwijt, Marijke van Geest, Rachelle Tjin-a-Djie, Anita van den Berg, Sheila Arthur, Tieneke Sumter, and Marjan Sax, whom I saw less often than I wanted to, for their insights and patience.

Finally, I want to thank my loves Maggy Carrot and Altagracia Ramirez Felíz, who light up my life with laughter, lightness, and adventure and who help me to realize the best and most generous self that I can be, in this unorthodox but exciting life that we have chosen, in which the personal cannot help but be political.

INTRODUCTION

> All the energies poured into critical theory, into novel and demystifying theoretical praxes—have avoided the major, I would say the determining political horizon of modern Western culture, namely imperialism.
>
> Edward Said, "Secular Interpretation"

"A Particular Knowledge . . . "

This book is dedicated to an exploration of a strong paradox that is operative in the Netherlands and that, as I argue, is at the heart of the nation: the passion, forcefulness, and even aggression that race, in its intersections with gender, sexuality, and class, elicits among the white population, while at the same time the reactions of denial, disavowal, and elusiveness reign supreme. I am intrigued by the way that race pops up in unexpected places and moments, literally as the return of the repressed, while a dominant discourse stubbornly maintains that the Netherlands is and always has been color-blind and antiracist, a place of extraordinary hospitality and tolerance toward the racialized/ethnicized other, whether this quintessential other is perceived as black in some eras or as Muslim in others. One of the key sites where this paradox is operative, I submit, is the white Dutch sense of self, which takes center stage in this book. I strongly suspect that with national variations, a similar configuration is operative in other international settings that have an imperial history. It is my—admittedly ambitious and iconoclastic—aim to write an ethnography of dominant white

Dutch self-representation. In a Dutch context this is iconoclastic because whiteness is not acknowledged as a racialized/ethnicized positioning at all. Whiteness is generally seen as so ordinary, so lacking in characteristics, so normal, so devoid of meaning, that a project like this runs a real risk of being considered emptiness incarnate. My main thesis is that an unacknowledged reservoir of knowledge and affects based on four hundred years of Dutch imperial rule plays a vital but unacknowledged part in dominant meaning-making processes, including the making of the self, taking place in Dutch society.

In this exploration, I am guided by the concept of the cultural archive (Said 1993), which foregrounds the centrality of imperialism to Western culture. The cultural archive has influenced historical cultural configurations and current dominant and cherished self-representations and culture. In a general nineteenth-century European framework, Edward Said describes the cultural archive as a storehouse of "a particular knowledge and structures of attitude and reference . . . [and,] in Raymond Williams' seminal phrase, 'structures of feeling.' . . . There was virtual unanimity that subject races should be ruled, that there *are* subject races, that one race deserves and has consistently earned the right to be considered the race whose main mission is to expand beyond its own domain" (1993, 52, 53).

Importantly, what Said is referring to here is that a racial grammar, a deep structure of inequality in thought and affect based on race, was installed in nineteenth-century European imperial populations and that it is from this deep reservoir, the cultural archive, that, among other things, a sense of self has been formed and fabricated. With the title *White Innocence*, I am invoking an important and apparently satisfying way of being in the world. It encapsulates a dominant way in which the Dutch think of themselves, as being a small, but just, ethical nation; color-blind, thus free of racism; as being inherently on the moral and ethical high ground, thus a guiding light to other folks and nations. During the colonial era, the match of the Netherlands with the Dutch East Indies, its jewel in the crown, was in self-congratulatory fashion thought of like a match made in heaven: "The quietest people of Europe brought together with the quietest people of Asia" (Meijer Raneft, cited in Breman 1993). I attempt a postcolonial, or rather a decolonial,[1] intersectional reading of the Dutch cultural archive, with special attention for the ways in which an imperial racial economy, with its gendered, sexualized, and classed intersections, continues to

underwrite dominant ways of knowing, interpreting, and feeling. I argue that in an "ethnography of dominant white Dutch self-representation" (cf. Doane 1991), sexual racism turns out to play a prominent role. I offer an exploration of the ways in which race, which by dominant consensus has been declared missing in action in the Netherlands, became cemented and sedimented in the Dutch cultural archive, and how race acquired gendered, sexualized, and classed meanings during more than four hundred years of "colonialism of the exterior" (Brah 1996).

In a U.S. context, where decidedly more work has been done on the cultural archive than in Europe, Toni Morrison has insightfully addressed what slavery did to the white psyche.[2] In an interview with Paul Gilroy, Morrison states, "Slavery broke the world in half, it broke it in every way. It broke Europe. It made them into something else, it made them slave masters, it made them crazy. You can't do that for hundreds of years and it not take a toll. They had to dehumanize, not just the slaves but themselves. They have had to reconstruct everything in order to make that system appear true" (Gilroy 1993, 178).

I, too, am interested in "the dreamer of the dream" (Morrison 1992a, 17), what the system of oppression did to the subject of the racialized discourses constructing blacks as inferior, intellectually backward, lazy, sexually insatiable, and always available; that is, I am oriented toward the construction of the white self as superior and full of entitlement. I offer my reading of the consequences of slavery in the western part of the empire, Suriname and the Antilles, on white Dutch self-representation. The bulk of the book is dedicated to an investigation of how these complex configurations have become intertwined with current dominant regimes of truth, with an emphasis on cultural productions in the past two decades.

The book's main thesis is thus that an unacknowledged reservoir of knowledge and feelings based on four hundred years of imperial rule have played a vital but unacknowledged part in the dominant meaning-making processes taking place in Dutch society, until now. This insight has already been ominously and forcefully formulated by one of the forefathers of postcolonial studies, Martiniquan Aimé Césaire (1972) in his much-overlooked *Discourse on Colonialism*. Césaire, writing immediately after World War II, courageously chastised Europe: "What am I driving at? At this idea: that no one colonizes innocently, that no one colonizes with impunity either; that a nation which colonizes, that a civilization which justifies colonization—

and therefore force—is already a sick civilization, a civilization that is morally diseased, that irresistibly, progressing from one consequence to another, one repudiation to another, calls for its Hitler, I mean its punishment" (1972, 39).

Césaire drew intimate connections between the racist methods used in the colonies to discipline the "natives"—the Arabs in Algeria, the coolies of India, and the blacks of Africa—and the Nazi methods later used and perfected against the Jews and other others in Europe. The memory of the Holocaust as the epitome and model of racist transgression in Europe erases the crimes that were perpetrated against the colonized for four centuries. This excision coincides with the representation that the history and reality of Europe are located on the continent and that what happened in the colonies is no constitutive part of it. This frame of mind—splitting, displacement, in psychoanalytical terms—is still operative to this day, for instance, in the way that the memory of World War II is conceptualized. It is the memory of what happened in the metropole and of the many Jews who were abducted and killed, not about what happened in the colonies at the time (Van der Horst 2004). Trying to insert those memories into the general memory often meets with hostility and rejection.[3]

At the same time, this regime of truth has enabled Europe to indulge in the myth of racial purity, as homogeneously white. The statement "no one colonizes innocently; no one colonizes with impunity either" points to the deeply layered and stacked consequences colonization has had for the European metropoles and their sense of self, which also forms my point of departure. It is noteworthy that while the concept of race finds its origin in Europe and has been one of its main export products, still it is generally the case that race is declared an alien body of thought to Europe, coming to this continent from the United States or elsewhere. In *European Others*, Fatima El-Tayeb powerfully states, "To reference race as native to contemporary European thought, however, violates the powerful narrative of Europe as a colorblind continent, largely untouched by the devastating ideology it exported all over the world. This narrative, framing the continent as a space free of 'race' (and, by implication, racism), is not only central to the way Europeans perceive themselves, but also has gained near-global acceptance" (2011, xv).

Discussions in different disciplinary areas, including gender studies,

about the appropriateness of race as an analytic in Europe often reach untenable conclusions that other categories like class are more pertinent to the European reality or that the supposed black-white binary of U.S. race relations makes it unfit as a model for studying European societies (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1999; Griffin with Braidotti 2002; Lutz, Vivar, and Supik 2011). In this introductory chapter, I first sketch three long-standing paradoxical features in dominant Dutch self-representation, which collectively point to white innocence (Wekker 2001). Next, I outline the three central concepts I use in this study—innocence, the cultural archive, and dominant white Dutch self-representation—and subsequently I lay out the theoretical and methodological stakes of the project; finally, I map the chapters.

Paradoxes in White Dutch Self-Representation

In trying to capture some significant features of white Dutch self-representation, a good place to start is three paradoxes that immediately present themselves to the eye of the outsider (within).[4] The dominant and cherished Dutch self-image is characterized by a series of paradoxes that can be summed up by a general sense of being a small but ethically just nation that has something special to offer to the world. Current exceptionalism finds expression in aspirations to global worth, which are realized in The Hague being the seat of several international courts of justice, such as the Rwanda and Srebrenica tribunals. Just as during the imperial era, Our Indies, that vast archipelago of Indonesian islands known as "the emerald belt," were what set the small kingdom of the Netherlands apart and made it a world player, now the Netherlands prides itself on its role as an adjudicator of international conflicts. Thus, the mid-twentieth-century trauma of losing Our Indies,[5] which fought for their independence from the Netherlands during two wars, finds a late twentieth-century parallel in the fall of Srebrenica (1995), in former Yugoslavia, when at least six thousand Muslim men and boys under the protection of a Dutch UN battalion were killed by Serbians under the command of General Ratko Mladić. Together with his superior, Radovan Karadzic, a Bosnian-Serbian leader, Mladić has been on trial in The Hague since 2012, with various postponements and reopenings of the tribunal. The two events, thoroughly different as they are, have significantly shaken the cherished Dutch self-representation.

FIRST PARADOX: NO IDENTIFICATION WITH MIGRANTS

A first paradox is that the majority of the Dutch do not want to be identified with migrants, although at least one in every six Dutch people has migrant ancestry. Whether it is Spanish and Portuguese Jews, Huguenots, Belgians, Hungarians, people from Indonesia, Suriname, Antilleans, or Turks and Moroccans, the Netherlands is a nation of (descendants of) migrants. Of course there are different ways to identify for elite migrants—Huguenots, Sephardic Jews (among others, Spinoza), Flemings, English, and Scottish—who came with capital and know-how and who helped launch Dutch prosperity, and for other, lumpen migrants, especially Germans and Scandinavians. But my point is exactly that the class positionings of one's migrant ancestors are less significant than their places of origin, specifically whether their heritage in terms of visible difference in skin color could be shed as fast as possible. While several migratory movements, mainly from surrounding or nearby countries, such as Germany, France, Portugal, Spain, and Italy, occurred from the sixteenth century on, the country remained overwhelmingly white until the middle of the twentieth century. Postwar migration to the Netherlands consisted of three major groups: postcolonial migrants from the (former) empire,[6] labor migrants from the circum-Mediterranean area and recently from Eastern Europe,[7] and refugees from a variety of countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. All in all, of a total population of 16.8 million people, 3.6 million (21.4 percent) are allochthonous (i.e., coming from elsewhere), 2 million of which are "non-Western" (12 percent) and 1.6 million (9.4 percent) Western (CBS 2014, 26). If one goes back further in history than three generations, probably the percentage of migrants would be even higher. The specific use of the term "migrant" is problematical in a Dutch context, because, depending on the country of birth, interpellating especially the four largest migrant groups—Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese, and Antilleans—the children and grandchildren of migrants remain migrants until the fourth generation. I return to this and related terminology in the section on theory and methodology.

The ubiquitousness of migrant pasts is, however, not the dominant self-image that circulates in dominant Dutch self-representation. Whereas in the private sphere stories may be woven about a great-grandmother who came from Poland, Italy, or Germany, in the public sphere such stories do

not add to one's public persona; they are rather a curiosity. There is a popular TV program *Verborgen Verleden* (Hidden past), in which well-known Dutch people go in search of their ancestry. Almost invariably, foreign ancestors show up, as well as the other way around, ancestors who went to Our Indies or Suriname. Invariably, this comes as a great surprise to the protagonists. I read this phenomenon as saying something significant about Dutch self-representation, for instance, in comparison with North American self-representation, where everyone knows and seemingly takes pride in their ancestry: in the Netherlands there is minimal interest in those elements that deviate from Ur Dutchness, which might mark one as foreign, or worse, *allochtoon*, that is, racially marked.

Belonging to the Dutch nation demands that those features that the collective imaginary considers non-Dutch—such as language, an exotic appearance, *een kleurtje hebben*, "having a tinge of color" (the diminutive way in which being of color is popularly indicated), outlandish dress and convictions, non-Christian religions, the memory of oppression—are shed as fast as possible and that one tries to assimilate. For new immigrants, for instance, the test for entrance into the Netherlands, the so-called integration exam, turns "the right of citizenship into a demand for cultural loyalty" (De Leeuw and van Wichelen 2014, 339), whereby cultural values, such as gender and gay equality, which are at least contested in Dutch circles, are presented as normative and nonnegotiable to newcomers. In the public sphere the assimilation model of monoethnicism and monoculturalism is so thorough that all signs of being from elsewhere should be erased. Of course, those who can phenotypically pass for Dutch, that is, those who are white, are in an advantageous position. It is migrants with dark or olive skin who do not succeed in enforcing their claim on Dutchness or have it accepted as legitimate. The main model for dealing with ethnic/racial difference is assimilation and those who cannot or will not be assimilated are segregated (Essed 1994). Thus, notwithstanding the thoroughly mixed makeup of the Dutch population in terms of racial or ethnic origins, the dominant representation is one of Dutchness as whiteness and being Christian. This image of Dutchness dates from the end of the nineteenth century, with the centralization and standardization of Dutch language and culture (Lucassen and Penninx 1993).[8]

AN EXCURSION ON SELF-POSITIONING

My own family migrated to the Netherlands in December 1951, when my father, who was a police inspector in the Surinamese force (Klinkers 2011), qualified to go on leave for six months to the "motherland," where we eventually stayed permanently. I admire my parents for having made the decision to migrate, both of them twenty-nine years old, with five children under eight years of age, because migration at the time, given the price of passage by boat, meant that they would most likely never see their families and country of birth again. The regulation for leave in the motherland was of course meant for white Dutch civil servants only, who should not "go native," losing their sense and status of being Dutch, but my father had risen to a rank where he qualified for that perk. He had already started to learn Latin on his own in Paramaribo, wanting to study law in Amsterdam, which was not possible in Suriname. The highest secondary educational level in Suriname at the time was MULO or more extended lower education (Gobardhan-Rambocus 2001), and he had to pass an exam in Latin, *colloquium doctum*, to be admitted to the University of Amsterdam. In one of our family albums, there is a photo of the five Wekker siblings in Artis, the wonderful zoo that we lived practically next door to (figure I.1). It was only decades later that I realized that the reason why we found our first house in the old Jewish neighborhood of Amsterdam was that 70 percent of Jews in the Netherlands were abducted during World War II.

On a sunny day in the summer of 1952, the Wekker siblings, of which I was the youngest at the time,[9] were sitting on and standing by a donkey in Artis. At the edges of the photo are postwar white, Dutch people, in simple summer clothes, looking at us, enamored because we were such an unusual sight: "just like dolls." My mother, in later years, would often speak of the uncomfortable sensation that wherever we went, we were the main attraction. She drew the line at curious strangers touching our skin and hair. My mother was deeply disillusioned about the fact that, having come to the motherland, we did not have an indoor shower and had to bathe in a tub in the kitchen, as was usual at the time. We had had an indoor shower in Suriname and now had to go to the communal bathhouse every Saturday (Wekker 1995). We were one of the first Afro-Surinamese families to migrate to the Netherlands, where previously mostly single men and women had come to seek opportunity in the motherland. My family became subject to the same postwar disciplining regime that was meant for

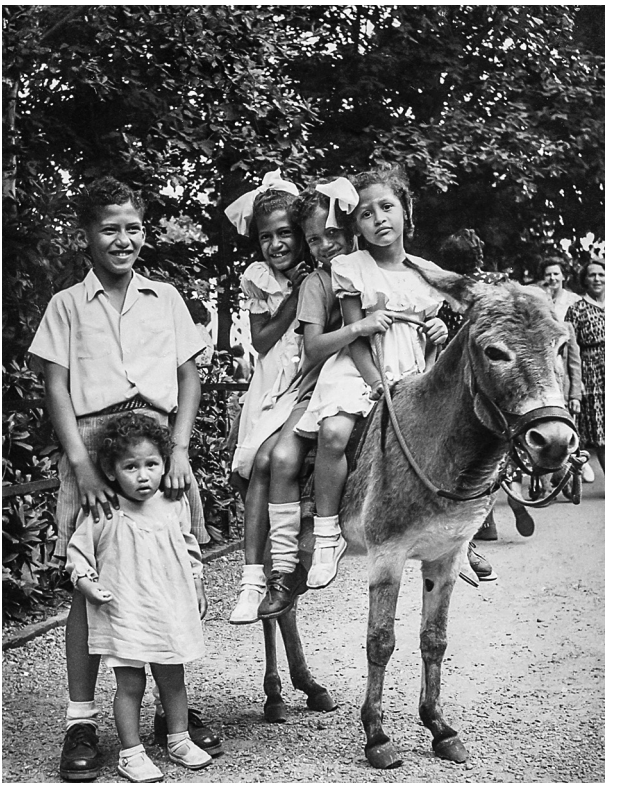

Figure I.1 The Wekker siblings in 1952.
Photo from the collection of the author.

"weakly adjusted," white lower-class people and orientalized Indonesians (Indos) coming from Indonesia in the same period (Rath 1991). Indos are the descendants of white men and indigenous women, who formed an intermediate stratum between whites and indigenous people in the colony, and for whom it was no longer safe, after World War II, to stay in Indonesia, which was fighting for its independence from the Netherlands. The postwar uplifting regime consisted of regular unexpected visits from social workers, who came to inspect whether we were duly assimilating, that is, whether my mother cooked potatoes instead of rice, that the laundry was done on Monday, that we ate minced meatballs on Wednesday, and that the house was cleaned properly. I imagine that if we had not measured up, we would have fallen under the strict socialization regime meant for

those postwar, working-class families, who failed the standards and were sent to resocialization camps. Clearly, a gendered regime was operative, where, as in all families at the time, men were supposed to work outside the home and women were good housewives. What has remained firmly in our family lore of those early years is that the Dutch were curious but helpful; an atmosphere of benevolent curiosity toward us reigned (Oostindie and Maduro 1985).

Let's briefly fast-forward and juxtapose this situation to an event five decades later in May 2006, the fateful night when Minister Rita Verdonk of Foreigners' Affairs and Integration, white and a former prison director, representing the VVD (the conservative People's Party for Freedom and Democracy), repeatedly told Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a black female member of parliament for the same party and a former refugee from Somalia, that since she had lied about her exact name and her date of birth in order to obtain Dutch citizenship, the minister was now forced to revoke it.[10] Playing on the time-honored expression *gelijke monniken, gelijke kappen* (equality for all),[11] this could also mean that Hirsi Ali would lose her seat in parliament. This night has etched itself into my consciousness and that of many others, as a traumatic wake-up call to our precarious existence as people of color in the Dutch ecumene. For many white Dutch people, the event was shocking and deeply unsettling, too, because it brought the German occupation back to mind, of being witness to a frightening display of authoritarian rule that brought back the *Befehl ist Befehl* ethos of the war years, that is, rules exist to be obeyed (Pessers 2006). Thus, the differing cultural imaginaries—World War II for the white majority versus an existential feeling of being unsafe for people of color as eternal foreigners—that different parts of the population experienced were brought home forcefully that night. Although race was not mentioned at all, Verdonk was frightening in her lack of imagination and lack of intellectual agility in presenting her arguments for the decision to revoke Hirsi Ali's citizenship.[12] She just read out loud, over and over, what her civil servants had written down for her. A deeply existential fear overtook many of us, sitting mesmerized through the televised spectacle, which went on all night: For if this could happen to Hirsi Ali, who was then seemingly at the top of her game, having injected the debate on multicultural society with her radical anti-Islam positions, seeing Islam as basically incompatible with a modern society and with women's and gay emancipation (Ghorashi 2003), then what about the rest of us? Who among

us, black, migrants, and refugees, would ever be able to feel safe again in the Netherlands? She was at the height of her popularity among a circle of some influential white feminists, but especially among middle- and upper-class white men, and she basked for a while in their enamoration; they called themselves "friends of Ayaan" and dubbed her "the new Voltaire." Her popularity was, in my reading, to a large extent due to a toxic combination of the exoticization of a noble, enlightened black African princess and the fact that Hirsi Ali's teachings—it is not "we" who have to change, but "them," the Muslim barbarians, who do not fit into the modern Dutch nation—gave license to many of her followers to say things out loud about Muslims that had been unspeakable before. The element of sexual racism was abundantly present. Her figuration acted, on an emotional and sexual plane, as the catalyst for releasing the pent-up feelings brewing in the cultural archive; an intelligent black woman, beautiful, attractive, with a mysterious, wounded sexuality that would supposedly be healed by white male intervention. Apart from the well-known white male rescuer fantasy, the entire configuration is consonant with an often-invoked white man's dream to be with an intelligent black woman, who always already has the sexual capital of wildness and abandon at her disposal that has traditionally been associated with black women (Bijnaar 2007). This is the dream that the male protagonist of Robert Vuijsje's (2008) best-selling novel *Alleen maar nette mensen* (Only decent people) entertains. The spectacle staged on and around Ayaan Hirsi Ali also brings to mind the hypothesis of Jan Nederveen Pieterse (1990) that Europe is more fascinated by black women, while the United States is obsessed with black men. These fantasies were intimately connected to the Dutch cultural archive, and they were reduced to ashes and smoke once Hirsi Ali found her bearings at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, DC. She found herself a new lover, a couple of academic notches above the old one, and generally had little use for the Netherlands and her old admirers anymore, who were left by the wayside like jilted lovers. In the spring of 2013, she obtained U.S. citizenship.

From the benevolence embedded in a 1952 snapshot to the public abjection of a powerful black woman, I am interested in the self that constructs these hysterical, excessive, repressed projections. Throughout the text, I use such thickly descriptive and analytical vignettes to make sense of the Netherlands, having lived through such widely diverging attitudes, climates, and discourses toward the black, migrant, and refugee other.

SECOND PARADOX: INNOCENT VICTIM OF GERMAN OCCUPATION

A second marked paradox in dominant Dutch self-representation involves the recent past. The dominant self-image is that of innocent victim of German occupation during World War II. This representation has for a long time overlooked other populations that were intimately involved in the horrors of the time and who are more correctly conceptualized as (co)victims of the Dutch, and the gradual realization of this omission has thrown a less favorable light on the preparedness of the Dutch to protect and defend their fellow citizens, the Jews, than had earlier been imagined. Although a fourteen-volume standard work was published, *The Kingdom of the Netherlands during World War II* (De Jong, 1969–1991), it is only in the past three decades that the fate of the majority of Dutch Jews, who were transported to and killed in German concentration camps, has taken a more central place in the historiography of and the literature about World War II (Leydesdorff 1998; Withuis 2002; Hondius 2003; Gans 2014). Whether it was because of the excellent administrative system that kept track of the particulars of the citizenry, and that served the Germans well in their deadly mission, or because of lack of empathy with the Jews, from no other Western country, with the exception of Poland, were as many Jews abducted and murdered in German concentration camps as from the Netherlands. As in other nations, unidirectional memory has focused on the Holocaust (Rothberg 2009), seemingly erasing all other traumas.[13]

The second overlooked aspect, which lasted until the end of the 1960s and still regularly rears its head and is then conveniently forgotten again, is that the Netherlands perpetrated excessive violence against Indonesia, which was fighting for its independence in roughly the same period and which had been fully expected to return to the imperial fold after its occupation by the Japanese. This violence hardly forms part of the Dutch self-image, much less the more than 100,000 victims of "pacification" outside of Java, at the turn of the twentieth century (Schulte Nordholt 2000). It is only in periodical, temporary flares that the historical connections between the Netherlands and Indonesia are lit up, the latest episode of which is the widows of Rawagede, West Java, who have sued the Dutch state for compensation for the massacre of their 431 husbands, fathers, and children in 1947. The euphemistic term "police actions" for two wars speaks volumes about a self-image that embraces innocence, being a small but just and

ethical guiding nation, internationally. The title *White Innocence* bespeaks this feature of Dutch self-representation.

THIRD PARADOX: THE DUTCH IMPERIAL PRESENCE IN THE WORLD

The third, overriding paradox involves the more distant past: There was, until the last decade of the twentieth century, a stark juxtaposition between the Dutch imperial presence in the world, since the sixteenth century, and its almost total absence in the Dutch educational curriculum, in self-image and self-representations such as monuments,[14] literature, and debates about Dutch identity, including the infamous debates about multicultural society in the past two decades, which have resulted in the almost unanimous conclusion that multiculturalism has failed. Judging by curricula at various educational levels, from grade school to university level, it is the best-kept secret that the Netherlands has been a formidable imperial nation. Students in my classes are always surprised and appalled when they hear about the Dutch role in the slave trade and colonialism, often for the first time. In the last decades some change in consciousness of the Dutch imperial past has come about. In 2006, a national committee composed a national historical canon with fifty windows, or separate items, that covered the aspects of Dutch national history that students were supposed to know about: "those valuable elements of our culture and history that we would like through education to transmit to new generations" (Van Oostrom et al. 2006, 4). Six of these fifty windows have something to do with colonialism, slavery, and the slave trade. Although slavery has been a part of the compulsory core goals of history education since 1993, it is up to the individual teacher to decide how much time to devote to the topic. Research on sixteen secondary schools in Amsterdam showed that the number of hours varied from less than one school hour to more than twelve hours, depending on the racial positioning of the teacher and the composition of the school population (Mok 2011).

An earlier noteworthy event in the breaking of silence around the Dutch imperial past was the establishment of a monument to commemorate slavery in Amsterdam in 2002, which was initiated by the Afro-European women's organization Sophiedela and a briefly favorable political climate, with a national government including the Labor Party and D66 (Democrats 66). These parties were favorably inclined to honor the requests of Sophiedela

and other black organizations for a monument. Subsequently a counterpart was established: NiNsee, the National Institute of Dutch Slavery and Heritage past and present, also founded in 2002.[15] This institute, subsidized by the government and the city of Amsterdam, sadly did not live to celebrate its tenth birthday, because it was, like other memorials to the past such as the library of the Royal Tropical Institute and other institutions in the cultural field, abolished by the government Rutte-I, 2010–2012, in which the Conservative Democrats, VVD, in coalition with the Christian Democrats, were supported by Geert Wilders's xenophobic and populist Party for Freedom, PVV. This unholy trinity managed, despite the protected status of NiNsee and guarantees for its continued existence and growth, to end its subsidized status as of January 1, 2013. In an ethno-nationalist frenzy and on the attack against cultural "leftist hobbies," fueled by PVV, against "everything that is of value,"[16] the infrastructure to produce and disseminate knowledge about Dutch slavery past and present was almost annihilated. That anything, the barest shell, is left standing of NiNsee is due to the city of Amsterdam, traditionally led by the Labor Party and other leftist parties, which continues to subsidize the offices and a minimal staff. Professor of sociology Abram de Swaan raised a rare voice when he spoke at the 150-year Commemoration of the Abolition of Slavery on July 1, 2013:

> NiNsee was a gesture of contrition, an institutional way to apologize for past crimes of the Netherlands towards its Afro-Caribbean population. That is no small matter. It is about restoring one's own honour by honouring the humanity of the other. It is about a debt of honour. You cannot just withdraw that gesture when it happens to be a convenient way to cut costs. To retract that gesture is dishonourable. It was and is a mortal insult to all Africans they once enslaved. (2013, 6)

He lucidly remarked that the fate of NiNsee mirrors how the Netherlands looks at its postcolonial citizens: "still not taken seriously, not their past of slavery, nor their present presence in this country" (De Swaan 2013, 6). And I would add: disposable, with nothing meaningful to contribute in terms of knowledge production, nothing that "we" would want or need to know about, who should assimilate and quit moaning about the past. Thus, what we see in the fate of NiNsee is not merely a cutting of costs in dire economic times, but, in light of the cultural archive, an active excision

of a fledgling knowledge infrastructure that might have produced valuable knowledge about "us."

We are still a long way away from understanding the complex relationships between the Dutch global, imperial role, on the one hand, and the internal erasure of this role and the current revulsion against multiculturality, on the other. The past forms a massive blind spot, which barely hides a structure of superiority toward people of color. As long as the Dutch imperial past does not form part of the common, general store of knowledge, which coming generations should have at their disposal, as long as general knowledge about the exclusionary processes involved in producing the Dutch nation does not circulate more widely, multiculturalism now cannot be realized, either. People of color will forever remain *allochtonen*, the official and supposedly innocuous term meaning "those who came from elsewhere," racializing people of color for endless generations, never getting to belong to the Dutch nation. The counterpart of "allochtonen" is *autochtonen*, meaning "those who are from here," which, as everyone knows, refers to white people. Thus, the supposedly most innocent terms for different sections of the population are racializing, without having to utter distasteful racial terms (Wekker and Lutz 2001). I return to this terminology in the section on theory and methodology.

Forgetting, glossing over, supposed color blindness, an inherent and natural superiority vis-à-vis people of color, assimilating: those are, broadly speaking, the main Dutch models that are in operation where interaction with racialized/ethnicized others is concerned. Persistently, an innocent, fragile, emancipated white Dutch self is constructed versus a guilty, uncivilized, barbaric other, which in the past decades has been symbolized mostly by the Islamic other, but at different times in the recent past blacks (i.e., Afro-Surinamese, Antilleans, and Moluccans) have occupied that position. It is within this dominant context that black, migrant, and refugee communities have had to come to self-actualization in the past seventy years. Black Dutch people (and other racialized/ethnicized others) are confronted with an enormous paradox. The implicit and infernal message, the double bind we get presented with all the time is: "If you want to be equal to us, then don't talk about differences; but if you are different from us,

then you are not equal" (Prins 2002). This basic but deep-seated knowledge and affect, stemming from an imperial cultural archive, will have purchase too in other former imperial nations, where a now near other has to be dealt with in proximity.

Three Central Concepts

INNOCENCE

It is heartening to see, with a number of recent publications, the first sign in three decades (Balkenhol 2014; Essed and Hoving 2014; Hondius 2014a and b) that older and younger scholars are—against all odds and certainly not making it easy on themselves, in terms of a propitious mainstream academic career—engaging with the history and the present of Dutch race relations.[17] It seems—to use an apt watery metaphor—as if a long-blocked-off stream has suddenly found the proverbial hole in the dyke and is now rushing forth. In this section, I want to lay out how I understand and use the three central concepts in this book, that is, innocence, the cultural archive, and white Dutch self-representation. Let's first consider innocence. Amid the complexity and the manifold understandings of Dutch racism that are unfolding, I am foregrounding the notion of white innocence, although I certainly do not contest nor erase the other approaches that have been put forward, and I invoke them whenever appropriate. Innocence, in my understanding, has particular resonance in the Dutch landscape, not only because it is such a cherished self-descriptor, but also because it fits with a chain of other associations that are strongly identified with: First, there is innocence as the desired state of being that is invoked in the Christian religion. While since the end of the 1960s Christian churches as institutions have crumbled, the underlying worldview has not. Jesus is the iconic innocent man. He does not betray others; he shares what little he possesses; he does not use violence nor commit sins; he lives in poverty; he cures the sick, turns the other cheek, and is goodness incarnate—yet he is sentenced to death.[18] He undergoes this treatment for the good of humanity, selflessly putting others' interests before his own. Unquestionably, there is a nobility in Jesus that is to be emulated and that many people, notwithstanding widespread secularism, subscribe to. Second, there is the association of innocence with being small: a small nation, a small child. Being small, one might easily and metaphorically be looked upon as a child, not able to play

with the big guys, either on the block or in the world, but we have taken care of the latter predicament by being a trustworthy and overeager U.S. ally.[19] An undisputed corollary of being a small child is, in our located, cultural understanding, its undiluted innocence and goodness. Being small, we need to be protected and to protect ourselves against all kinds of evil, inside and outside the nation. Third, in a traditional worldview, innocence also carries feminine connotations, as that which needs to be protected, that which is less strong and aggressive but more affectionate and relational. Fourth, innocence, furthermore, enables the safe position of having license to utter the most racist statements, while in the next sentence saying that it was a joke or was not meant as racist.[20] The utterer may proclaim to be in such an intimate, privileged relationship to the black person addressed, that he or she is entitled to make such a statement. I pay attention to this preferential mode of bringing across racist content by means of humor and irony in chapter 1. Fifth, the claim of innocence is also strong in other European, former imperial nations, such as Sweden. It is striking that we still lack studies of whiteness, within a European context, that would also enable intra-European comparisons (but see Griffin with Braidotti 2002). The case of Sweden is interesting, because characteristics comparable to the Dutch case come to the fore, that is, the widespread and foundational claim to innocence, Swedish exceptionalism, and "white laughter" (Sawyer 2006; Habel 2012). This commonality might point to innocence, not knowing, being one of the few viable stances that presents itself when the loss of empire is not worked through, but simply forgotten. The anger and violence accompanying innocence may be understood as a strand within the postcolonial melancholia syndrome (Gilroy 2005), and I return to it in chapter 5.

Innocence, in other words, thickly describes part of a dominant Dutch way of being in the world. The claim of innocence, however, is a double-edged sword: it contains not-knowing, but also not wanting to know, capturing what philosopher Charles W. Mills (1997, 2007) has described as the epistemology of ignorance. Succinctly stated, "the epistemology of ignorance is part of a white supremacist state in which the human race is racially divided into full persons and subpersons. Even though—or, more accurately, precisely because—they tend not to understand the racist world in which they live, white people are able to fully benefit from its racial hierarchies, ontologies and economies" (Sullivan and Tuana, 2007, 2). This not-understanding, which can afflict white and nonwhite people alike, is

connected to practices of knowing and not-knowing, which are forcefully defended. Essed and Hoving also point to "the anxious Dutch *claim of innocence* and how disavowal and denial of racism may merge into what we have called *smug ignorance*: (aggressively) rejecting the possibility to know" (2014b, 24). Using the r-word in a Dutch context is like entering a minefield; the full force of anger and violence, including death threats, is unleashed, as the case of Zwarte Piet or Black Pete shows so clearly (chapter 5).[21] The behavior and speech acts of his defenders do not speak of innocence but rather of "*an ignorance militant, aggressive, not to be intimidated, an ignorance that is active, dynamic, that refuses to go quietly—not at all confined to the illiterate and uneducated but propagated at the highest levels of the land, indeed presenting itself unblushingly as* knowledge" (Mills 2007, 13, emphasis in original).

I expressly mean innocence to have this layered and contradictory content, this tongue-in-cheek quality: notwithstanding the many, daily protestations in a Dutch context that "we" are innocent, racially speaking; that racism is a feature found in the United States and South Africa, not in the Netherlands; that, by definition, racism is located in working-class circles, not among "our kind of middle-class people"; much remains hidden under the univocality and the pure strength of will defending innocence. I am led to suspect bad faith; innocence is not as innocent as it appears to be, which becomes all the more clear, again as the case of Zwarte Piet/Black Pete illuminates.

In sum, innocence speaks not only of soft, harmless, childlike qualities, although those are the characteristics that most Dutch people would wholeheartedly subscribe to; it is strongly connected to privilege, entitlement, and violence that are deeply disavowed. Loss of innocence, that is, knowing and acknowledging the work of race, does not automatically entail guilt, repentance, restitution, recognition, responsibility, and solidarity but can call up racist violence, and often results in the continued cover-up of structural racism.[22] Innocence also includes the field that has become the center of my explorations: sexual racism. There is denial and disavowal of the continuities between colonial sexuality and contemporary sexual modalities. Since innocence is not monolithic, nor fixed or immutable, and since it involves psychic and cultural work, in all the chapters I am concerned with the question of how innocence is accomplished and maintained.

THE CULTURAL ARCHIVE

Often when I have given presentations in the Netherlands on the topics in this book, people have asked me where this cultural archive is located: is it in Amsterdam or in Middelburg, the capital of the province of Zeeland, the site from which slavers left for Africa, their first stop on the triangle trade route? My answer is that the cultural archive is located in many things, in the way we think, do things, and look at the world, in what we find (sexually) attractive, in how our affective and rational economies are organized and intertwined. Most important, it is between our ears and in our hearts and souls. The question is prompted by a conception of an archive as a set of documents or the institution in which those documents are housed.[23] My use of the term refers to neither of those two meanings, but to "a repository of memory" (Stoler 2009, 49), in the heads and hearts of people in the metropole, but its content is also silently cemented in policies, in organizational rules, in popular and sexual cultures, and in commonsense everyday knowledge, and all of this is based on four hundred years of imperial rule. I read all of these contemporary domains for their colonial content, for their racialized common sense. The content of the cultural archive may overlap with that of the colonial archive, in which the documents, classifications, and "principles and practices of governance" (Stoler 2009, 20) pertaining to the colonies are stored. Knowledges in different domains have travelled between colonies and metropoles and vice versa, but with the cultural archive I expressly wish to foreground the memories, the knowledge, and affect with regard to race that were deposited within metropolitan populations, and the power relations embedded within them.

I stay close to the spirit in which Edward Said used the concept of cultural archive, as outlined above, although he does not give many clues as to how to operationalize it, outside the domain of culture, taken as poetry and fiction, that is, the body of novels metropolitan authors produced during imperialism. Said convincingly shows how those novels were not insulated from "the prolonged and sordid cruelty of such practices as slavery, colonialist and racial oppression and imperial subjection" (1993, xiv), but helped fuel imperial expansion and subjecthood in the metropole. My objects of study pertain to dominant white self-representation, to policies, principles, and practices, and to feelings. In my reading, the transmitting of racialized knowledge and affect between the colonial and the metropolitan parts of empire took place within what can be conceptualized as one

prolonged and intense contact zone (Pratt 1992). It helps to conceptualize the cultural archive along similar lines as Bourdieu (1977) does for habitus, that is, "that presence of the past in the present," a way of acting that people have been socialized into, that becomes natural, escaping consciousness. The habitus of an individual springs forth from experiences in early childhood, within a particular social setting, often a family, and Bourdieu understands such processes in terms of class. Habitus is "history turned into nature" (Bourdieu 1977, 78), structured and structuring dispositions, that can be systematically observed in social practices. In a comparable fashion, racial notions must also have been transmitted to following generations, sometimes above, often below the level of consciousness. I am not implying that the cultural archive or its racialized common sense has remained the same in content over four hundred years, nor that it has been uncontested, but those historical questions, important as they are, are not, cannot be my main concern. Standing at the end of a line, in the twenty-first century, I read imperial continuities back into a variety of current popular cultural and organizational phenomena.

WHITE DUTCH SELF-REPRESENTATION

What does it mean to think in terms of dominant white Dutch self-representation? I understand the Dutch metropolitan self, in its various historical incarnations, as a racialized self, with race as an organizing grammar of an imperial order in which modernity was framed (Stoler 1995; McClintock 1995). Racial imaginations are part and parcel of the Dutch psychological and cultural makeup; these imaginations are intertwined with our deepest desires and anxieties, with who we are.[24] Although the project does not aim to be predominantly historical, it cannot escape addressing certain historical questions, because it offers such a different reading of Dutch history than dominant versions of that history rehearse. "To account for racism is to offer a different account of the world," as Sara Ahmed (2012, 3) aptly remarked. Amid the grand narratives that mediate Dutch self-understanding—the perennial struggle against the water, the eighty-year armed resistance against being part of the Spanish Empire, the Golden Age, the struggle for religious freedom and pillarization—i.e. living within a Catholic, a Protestant, a socialist or a Humanist pillar as a way for people of different religious convictions to live peacefully together, the centrality of a way of negotiating to solve disputes, called *polderen*[25]—none evokes

race (e.g., Schama 1987; Israel 1998; Shorto 2013). Most often, religious, class and regional differences have been foregrounded as the primary differences that need to be taken into account when examining our culture. It is intriguing that imperial cultural figurations have stayed impervious to scrutiny for so long, in spite of rare voices to the contrary. I am operating on the assumption that race has been sorely missing from dominant accounts of the Netherlands and that this racial reign began with the Dutch expansion into the world in the sixteenth century. The construction of the European self and its others took place in the force fields of "conquest, colonisation, empire formation, permanent settlement by Europeans of other parts of the globe, nationalist struggles by the colonised, and selective decolonisation" (Brah 1996, 152). Contemporary constructions of "us," those constructed as belonging to Europe, and "them," those constructed as not belonging, though the specific groups targeted vary over time, still keep following that basic Manichean logic. This entails the fundamental impossibility of being both European, constructed to mean being white and Christian, and being black-Muslim-migrant-refugee.

Theoretical and Methodological Stakes of the Project

The kind of analysis that I undertake here, postcolonial and intersectional, builds on insights that unfortunately have not found much fertile ground yet in a Dutch context. My approach has three innovative aspects, which together will show the purchase of the model that I propose.

RACE, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY

First, I am simultaneously bringing together the central analytical concepts of race, gender, and sexuality, that is, intersectionality, in approaching white self-representation. Intersectionality is a theory and a methodology, importantly and initially based on black feminist thought, which not only addresses identitarian issues, as is commonly thought, but also a host of other social and psychological phenomena. It is a way of looking at the world that takes as a principled stance that it is not enough merely to take gender as the main analytical tool of a particular phenomenon, but that gender as an important social and symbolical axis of difference is simultaneously operative with others like race, class, sexuality, and religion (Crenshaw 1989; Wekker and Lutz 2001; Botman, Jouwe, and Wekker eds.

2001; Phoenix and Pattynama eds. 2006; Davis 2008; Lutz, Vivar, and Supik eds. 2011; Lykke 2010 and 2011; Lewis 2013; Cho, Crenshaw and McCall 2013). In fact, these grammars of difference coconstruct each other. The concepts of race, gender, and sexuality are lodged in different disciplinary academic fields, pointing to the alienness of thinking intersectionally in the traditional academic organization. Let's start with the more straightforward concepts: gender is located within the interdisciplinary field of gender studies. The school of thought called intersectionality finds a home in the interdiscipline of gender studies, although it has increasingly been taken up in other disciplines in the social sciences and the humanities as well. Sexuality, as another important axis of signification, finds a home in sexuality studies, where first gay and lesbian studies were initiated, later to be followed by queer studies, which takes distance from a fixed, immutable, inner sexual identification. It bears noting at this point that both of these (inter)disciplines behave as if their central objects of study—gender and sexuality—can be studied most intensely if other axes of signification are firmly kept out of sight. For both gender studies and sexuality studies or queer studies, this means that, a commitment to intersectionality notwithstanding, race is mostly evacuated.

Race presents a more complicated case in a Dutch context. It is a term that is not commonly utilized, since World War II, except to indicate varieties of animals and potatoes (Nimako and Willemsen 1993). Ethnicity is the term more often used, and it indicates the social system that gives meaning to ethnic differences between people—to differences based on origin, appearance, history, culture, language, and religion. Ethnicity, culture, and culturalization, supposedly softer entities, which, again supposedly, operate on cultural rather than on biological terrain, have been used in such hardened ways that biology and culture have become interchangeable in the stability that is ascribed to the cultures of others. In Dutch commonsense thought, but also in many academic discourses, the remarkable thing is that when ethnicity is invoked, it is "they," the other, allochthones, who are referenced, not autochthones. Just as within gender it is most often women and femininity that are called up, not men or masculinity, so within the realm of ethnicity being white is passed off as such a natural, invisible category that its significance has not been a research theme. As in many other places, such as the United States, "ethnic," as in ethnic cuisine, ethnic music, is everything except white. There is thus a systematic asym-

metry in the way we understand these dimensions, where the more powerful member of a binary pair—masculinity, whiteness—is consistently bracketed and is thereby invisibilized and installed as the norm (Wekker and Lutz 2001).

In the move to ethnicity and subsequently to culture and culturalization (Ghorashi 2006), the work that race used to do, ordering reality on the basis of supposed biological difference (although the term was banished), is still being accomplished. There is a fundamental unwillingness to critically consider the applicability of a racialized grammar of difference to the Netherlands. However, in the main terms that are still circulating to indicate whites and others, the binary pair autochtoon-allochtoon/autochthones-allochthones, race is firmly present, as well as in the further official distinction in the category of allochtoon: Western and non-Western. Both concepts, allochtoon and autochtoon, are constructed realities, which make it appear as if they are transparent, clearly distinguishable categories, while the cultural mixing and matching that has been going on cannot be acknowledged. Within the category of autochtoon there are many, as we have seen, whose ancestors came from elsewhere, but who manage, through a white appearance, to make a successful claim to Dutchness. Allochtonen are the ones who do not manage this, through their skin color or their deviant religion or culture. The binary thus sets racializing processes in motion; everyone knows that they reference whites and people of color respectively. The categories are not set in stone, however: In the past decades, some groups have been able to move out of the construction allochtoon. For example, Indos have firmly moved out and Surinamese people are on their way out, and it is now Islamic people, constructed as the ultimate other, who seem firmly lodged within it.

However much it is disavowed and denied in a Dutch context, I take race to be a fundamental organizing grammar in Dutch society, as it is in societies structured by racial dominance. I view race as a "socially constructed rather than inherently meaningful category, one linked to relations of power and processes of struggle, and one whose meaning changes over time. Race, like gender, is 'real' in the sense that it has real, though changing, effects in the world and real, tangible, and complex impacts on individuals' sense of self and life chances" (Frankenberg 1993, 11). I use the term "race" in this book, sometimes merely as race or racialization, sometimes in the combination race/ethnicity. That is, following Stuart Hall

(2000), I use race and ethnicity as two sides of the same coin, subsuming and merging a more natural, biological understanding of race with a more cultural view.

Finally, let me say something about the terms "black" and "white." I use them not as biological categories but as political and cultural concepts. As Stuart Hall remarks about "black": "The moment the signifier 'black' is torn from its historical, cultural and political embedding and lodged in a biologically constituted racial category, we valorize, by inversion, the very ground of racism we are trying to deconstruct. In addition, as always happens when we naturalize historical categories (think about gender and sexuality), we fix that signifier outside of history, outside of change, outside of political intervention" (1992, 29, 30). I follow Frankenberg's conceptualization of whiteness, in that whiteness refers to "a set of locations that are historically, socially, politically, and culturally produced, and, moreover are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination. Naming 'whiteness' displaces it from the unmarked, unnamed status that is itself an effect of its dominance" (Hall 1992, 6).

When we finally, then, look at the location of the study of race in the academy, we have to conclude that race is not studied in the Netherlands, while ethnicity is, but only in the limited sense that it pertains to the other, as I lay out in more detail in chapter 2. The study of whiteness is strongly underilluminated. Thus, multitudes of studies on Surinamese, Antillean, Moroccan, and Turkish Dutch people, their positionings in the labor market, in education, and in housing are being done in academic institutes for ethnic studies. Popular, recently, are studies on ethnic profiling by the police, especially on men of color, which, as can be expected, is vehemently denied by academic institutes. Equally the recent deaths of young Antillean and Surinamese Dutch men at the hands of the police are downplayed. Other axes of signification, such as gender and sexuality, are in a familiar manner bracketed, put at a distance. In this book, I am breaking with the persistent tradition of foregrounding a single axis, in that I bring race, gender, and sexuality into conversation with each other, on the understanding that they all are part of each other's histories and representations and are refracted through each other (Somerville 2000; Alexander 2005).

THE METROPOLE AND THE COLONIES

The second innovative aspect is that I bring the history of the metropole and of the colonies into conversation with each other. Knowledge about Dutch overseas expansion is, not incidentally, in quarantine in a separate specialization of the discipline of history; it is not an element of Dutch national history. General common and academic sense is the idea that colonialism-of-the-exterior (Brah 1996) has created a sufficiently convenient distance to the former Dutch colonies to make it possible to never have to take persistent imperial patterns of thought and affect into account when studying the Netherlands. It is noteworthy that it was Ann Laura Stoler, an American historical anthropologist who specializes in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia until 1945), who first made the important observation in *Race and the Education of Desire* (Stoler 1995) that, compared to other European colonial nations like France and Great Britain, it is remarkable that in the Dutch academy, historical research and general ways of knowing have been set up in a way that the history of the metropole is structurally set apart from the history of the colonies. This was evident in the Dutch academy through the fact that within departments of history, the discipline was centrally structured such that there was a preponderance of majors, courses, and specializations that dealt with national history, while a small, separate minority of curricular materials was devoted to the Dutch expansion in the world, meaning colonial history. While this is still the case in Leiden, other history departments have taken different routes in the past decades,[26] but that is not to say that there is an automatic engagement between historical developments that took place in the metropole, say policies on care for the elderly, the destitute, and orphans, and what repercussions these had in the East and the West, or the other way around. The metropolitan and colonial parts of Dutch colonial empire are still overwhelmingly treated, both inside and outside the academy, as separate worlds, the metropolitan and the colonial, that did not impinge upon each other. Stoler's challenge has, with a few exceptions (Waaldijk and Grever 2004; Van Stipriaan et al. 2007; Stuurman 2009; Legêne 2010) not been taken up by Dutch historians. Indeed, Caribbeanist and historian Gert Oostindie (2010, 260–65) is not alone when he argues that postcolonial studies have, with good justification, not found an eager reception nor many practitioners in the Netherlands, and he deems that not much is lost by that fact.

THE EASTERN AND WESTERN PARTS OF EMPIRE

Third and finally, another breach with tradition is that in this book, I confront the very different reception and memories that the eastern and western parts of empire evoke in the Netherlands and how this difference still plays a part in current configurations. Comparison between the eastern part, Our Indies, and the western part of the Dutch empire, Suriname and the Dutch Antilles, is seldom undertaken. Almost by default, when the colonies are invoked, it is the Indies that are meant and foregrounded, usually without giving much attention to the active disappearance of the West. There is not much interaction between scholars specializing in the study of the Indies, on the one hand, and of Suriname and the Antilles, on the other.

Methodologically, I use what Judith Halberstam (1998) calls a scavenger methodology, making use of insights from gender and sexuality studies, discourse and narrative analysis, post- and decolonial theory, and psychoanalysis. I work with interviews, watching TV and reading novels, analyzing e-mail correspondence, my own and others' experiences and organizational structures, rereading historical texts, and doing close readings of various kinds, to eventually and jointly be able to sketch a picture of the cultural archive, the dominant white Dutch self and its representation.

Content of the Book

The first chapter, "Suppose She Brings a Big Negro Home," is devoted to a series of case studies of everyday racist events, taking its inspiration from popular culture, including everyday TV content, experiential accounts, and a novel. One case study deals with racial difference, featuring among others Martin Bril, a popular journalist who uttered a racist statement. Three experiential vignettes collectively point to characteristic, commonly occurring patterns in racism when dealing with black (men and) women in everyday encounters and discourses in the Netherlands: sexualization, relegation to the category of domestic servant/nanny, general inferiorization, and criminalization. To the average Dutch person, there is nothing wrong with any of these events; they are often seen as merely funny. One of the characteristic ways to bring racist content across is by using humor and irony. I will do close readings—Freudian, Fanonian, Du Boisian, and

postcolonial—of these meaningful moments and reflect on possible connections with the cultural archive.

Chapter 2, "The House That Race Built," addresses how race does its work in Dutch public policy and in the academy, pertaining to women's issues. More fundamentally, I explore the nature of the fear and aggression that is called up in many white people when they (have to) deal with racial or ethnic issues. I argue that at the root of the attention to the emancipation of women in the sphere of policy is a widespread and deep-seated, racialized conception that suffuses the object of policy making and seemingly naturally and self-evidently divides women into white, allochthonous, and Third World women. Race is at the basis of the division (Wekker 1994), and the same silent racialized ordering is also operative in the academy, in the division of labor within and between disciplines. I am taking up the discipline that I know best and where I was located for almost twenty years: the discipline of women's/gender studies is my special object of exploration, in trying to uncover what the fear of engaging with race/ethnicity consists of, among both students and faculty. Here we are in allied territory, mostly white women who are deeply driven by feelings of social justice, yet, notwithstanding the public claim to be doing intersectionality, they are deeply reluctant to truly grapple with race/ethnicity.

Chapter 3, "The Coded Language of Hottentot Nymphae," analyzes a psychoanalytical case study from 1917, in which three apparently white middle- or upper-class women in analysis in The Hague tell their psychoanalyst that they are suffering from "Hottentot nymphae," the contemporary term for enlarged labia minora, which are commonly associated with black women. Two features are intriguing about this case study: first, while the women use a racialized grammar to understand themselves, the psychoanalyst Dr. J. W. H. van Ophuijsen dismisses their claim and understands them as suffering from Freud's "masculinity complex," thus in terms of gender. I want to explore the meaning of this substitution of gender for race, which sites in society would provide these women with knowledge about race, and, finally, what the stakes are for the women and for the psychoanalyst. A second feature of this case study is that it shows that, contrary to what is commonly assumed, race was firmly present as a discourse in upper-class circles of the metropole, without black people being present in significant numbers. The fact that these women use a racialized

discourse to make sense of themselves runs counter to the commonly held view that race was absent in the Netherlands until the late 1940s, when the first postcolonial migrants started to arrive from the East Indies. I analyze the case study in terms of what it can tell us about the cultural archive.

The next chapter, "Of Homo Nostalgia and (Post)Coloniality," addresses gay politics in the Netherlands in the past decade. Starting from the jolting realization that at the penultimate national elections in 2010, white gay men voted overwhelmingly for PVV—the Party for Freedom, led by Islamo- and xenophobe Geert Wilders—I am interested, first, in tracing the history of the Dutch white gay movement in comparison with the women's liberation movement. This leads me, second, to explore how government policy in the field of gay liberation underwrites and sets up one particular, located conceptualization of homosexuality as universal, and how this thinking has become entwined with Islamophobia and nationalism. The strong Dutch version of homonationalism (Puar 2007) forcefully foregrounds the acceptance of homosexuality as the litmus test for modernity, while rejecting Islam. In this exploration, third, the figuration of Pim Fortuyn with his contradictory desires—rejecting Muslims and at the same time preferring them as his sexual partners in dark rooms—plays a pivotal role. His contradictory desires are straight from the colonial past and connect intimately to colonial sexual practices that were stored in the cultural archive.

Chapter 5 engages with popular culture again. I analyze the voluminous e-mail or hate mail addressed by members of the Dutch public to the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, after a project in 2008 initiated by German and Swedish artists Annette Krauss and Petra Bauer critically interrogated the phenomenon of Zwarte Piet. This figuration, a black man with thick lips and golden earrings, clad in a colorful Moorish costume, and wielding deplorable grammar, is imagined to be a servant of a white bishop, Sinterklaas, who hails from Spain. The pair of them come to visit every year at the end of November, culminating in a merry evening on 5 December, when presents are given to children. Zwarte Piet is considered by many white Dutch people to be at the heart of Dutch culture, an innocent and thoroughly pleasant children's traditional festivity, but its critical reception since the 1970s, mainly by black people, precipitates a strong reaction in the majority of Dutch people. Critique of the phenomenon of Zwarte Piet elicits vehemently aggressive and defensive reactions, as expressed in the e-mail bombardment to the museum. I investigate the precise nature of

these reactions, the themes the correspondents brought up and the discourses they used to convey their unhappiness. Connecting this vehement affect to Gilroy's (2005) "postcolonial melancholia," I do a reading of the place of Zwarte Piet in white Dutch self-representation, in which innocence, in manifold senses, turns out to be central. What does all of this tell us about the cultural archive and Dutch self-perception?

Collectively these chapters, visiting different social and cultural domains, attempt a critical, intersectional, and decolonial reading of white Dutch self-representation, with special attention to the ways in which the racial economy, with its gendered, sexualized, and classed intersections, continues to underwrite dominant, racist ways of knowing and feeling. A characteristic of the Netherlands is, for those with eyes to see and some reflective capital, a particularly virulent form of racism, prominently displaying itself as sexualized racism, which is immediately denied and disavowed, all against a general background of national self-flattery and collective benevolent readings of the self.