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**“Door de volstreckte meesterschap bedorven”: Universal Humanity,
Antiblack Racism and Animality in Jan Nepveu’s Annotatiën (1765-72)
A Discourse Historical Approach**

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“Door de volstreckte meesterschap bedorven”:

**Universal Humanity, Antiblack Racism and
Animality in Jan Nepveu’s *Annotatiën* (1765-72)**

A Discourse Historical Approach

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“Door de volstreckte meesterschap bedorven”:

Universal Humanity, Antiblack Racism and Animality in

Jan Nepveu’s *Annotatiën* (1765-72)¹

A Discourse Historical Approach

“Stop shaking the tyrant’s bloody robe in my face, or I will believe that you wish to put Rome in chains.”²

Introduction

This thesis interrogates the epistemic foundations of the Eurocentric colonial metaphysical categories of the human and animal through a close lexical analysis of the *Annotatiën op de Surinaamsche Beschrijvinge van Ao. 1718* (Annotations of the Description of Suriname Ao. 1718), a redrafted monograph written between 1765-1772 by Jan Nepveu, governor-general of the Dutch slave colony of Suriname between (acting) 1756-57 and 1768-79. Principally investigating the relationship between whiteness, blackness and animality, I argue against the dominant scholarly trend that frames antiblack ideology in terms of acceptance/exclusion from the category of the human. Proponents of the liberal universalist concept of humanity envisage racism as the dehumanisation or subhumanisation of black(ened) people, the antidote being to include victims of racism into the global human family. Instead I argue in line with Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, author of *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an Antiblack World*, that

¹ “Meesters in geduurige zorg om slaaven in bedwang te houden, worden ook door de volstreckte meesterschap bedorven” (Masters in perpetual care to control slaves are depraved by absolute mastery). Jan Nepveu, *Annotatien op de Surinaamsche Beschrijvinge van Ao. 1718*, 1771, entry 231, inv. nr. 298, Marquette archive, Stadsarchief Amsterdam, Amsterdam, 334.

² Maximilien Robespierre, *Virtue and Terror*, ed. Slavoj Žižek, trans. Jean Ducange and John Howe (London: Verso, 2007), 47.

the category of the universal liberal human itself and the historical context from which it emerged established, sustains and demands race. Identifying and contrasting textual representations of whites, black(ened) humans and animals, this thesis draws on black critical theory, posthumanism, animal studies and Anthropocene studies.

In Western (European) civilisation, humanity was long conceived as part of rather than separate from animality, i. e. the nonhuman. Shannon argues early modern humanity is “relatively ecosystemic: it always had animality (and divinity and plants and elements) in or with it.”³ However, as articulated in humanist and later Enlightenment thinking, a shift occurred whereby European culture “culled humans” from the spectrum of life arguing that they “alone were equipped with a rational soul, [...] the rest were then compressed within the mechanistic limits of purely instinctual behaviour”.⁴ This innovation, exemplified by Descartes’ formulation *cogito ergo sum*, determined that there was no fundamental distinction “between animals and clocks or other automatons”, the so-called *bête-machine* doctrine.⁵ Building on Shannon’s thesis and animal and posthumanist studies at large, Jackson introduces black critical theory and insights from African diasporic cultural production arguing that the current “hegemonic, ‘universalist’ conception of ‘man’” – a sense of (human) being that hierarchically orders animals below humans – “is a mutation of prior metaphysical conceptions of being” which “was and remains an effect of slavery, conquest, and colonialism.”⁶ Fundamental to this shift is what Jackson identifies as the interlinked discourses of (abject) animality and blackness which she

³ Laurie Shannon, “The Eight Animals in Shakespeare; or, before the Human,” *The Indistinct Human in Renaissance Literature* 124 (2009): pp. 472-479, 477.

⁴ Ibid, 474.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an Antiblack World* (New York: New York University Press, 2020), 25.

argues emanated from the colonial encounter, a period in which Europe's "reigning epistemological frame" of was challenged and exceeded by the vastness of the New World and the burgeoning global society birthed during the Age of Discovery.⁷ What followed was a period of violence and domination resulting from the ceaseless European "appetite for mastery".⁸ The violent imposition of European control over the Americas (and beyond) in addition to the enslavement of African captives reflected and induced the assimilation of (foreign) humans, animals and plants into a globalised European epistemology. Epitomised by the Chain of Being (*scala naturae*), visually and rhetorically the white(ned) male European sat atop all other species/races of humans, animals and plants.⁹

Through a broad reading of racial theory in the Enlightenment Jackson argues that the current hegemonic conception of humanity envisages Reason as the dividing point between mankind and animality. Shaped during a time when European powers appropriated peoples, animals and plants on a global scale, Reason is formulated as a state "achieved in opposition to nature" rather than cooperation with it.¹⁰ A provincially (globalised) European concept, Reason is expressed as something originally possessed exclusively by Europeans, their growing power a self-justification of this assumption. Subsequently the African and the animal are thought to be lacking, less teleologically developed life forms. Jackson concludes that the logic behind this abjectification of other humans, animals and nature at large is "circuitous", that which is *different* – the sentience of an animal, the dynamics of a vast ecosystem, another human's

⁷ Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 25.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid, 29.

alternative epistemological framework (Reason) – is interpreted as “*absence* or *chaos*.”¹¹ To a considerable degree this dynamic formed the material and epistemological basis of the Western-orchestrated “transnational, capitalist order”, a system undergirded by the “epochal rupture” of New World slavery.¹² Jackson summarises the liberal universalist grammar of (human) being by identifying three of the discourse’s assumptions. First, that “‘the animal’ lacks perspective”, that is they lack ‘full’ subjectivity and insight.¹³ Second, that “‘the African’ is animal in the form of a human and, thus, is devoid of the achievement of Reason or the full realisation of perspective”.¹⁴ Third, “because ‘the animal’ – human and nonhuman – is lacking, animality disqualifies one from ethical consideration.”¹⁵ Here ethical consideration denotes respecting a subject’s desire to live and not to suffer. For example, a slave trading company director who finances a series of voyages humans views his desire to become richer as more important than the captives’ desire to be free. Likewise a human who kills an animal to eat, not in a context of necessity (survival) but rather of pleasure, determines that satisfying their taste buds is more important than the creature’s wish to live.

Jackson argues that the discourses of “‘the animal’” and “‘the black’” are “not only interdependent [...] but also entangled concepts”.¹⁶ This is not to say that racism is based on a prior pathologisation of the animal, rather in keeping with Aristotle, humanity and animality in Europe were long conceived as interlapping realms even during the Enlightenment. Rather Jackson asserts “the logic of conquest, slavery, and colonialism produced a linear and relational

¹¹ Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 30.

¹² Ibid, 45.

¹³ Ibid, 60.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid, 28.

conception of human animality.”¹⁷ From this point the “metaphysical question of ‘the human,’ as one of *species* in particular, arose”.¹⁸ In this vein blackness is therefore “an essential enabling condition of the modern grammar of the Subject, a peculiar grammar of kind or logic of species, one that approaches and articulates the planetary scale.”¹⁹ African humanity is hence not denied, rather it is formulated as a state of abject animality, likewise animality is also subject to racialisation.²⁰ The weaponisation of black(ened) humanity operated through the selective recognition rather than denial of material and immaterial features of black(ened) peoples’ humanity – the body, heart, emotionality and soul. What was observed as defective humanity, that is the different and unknown, was monitored and criminalised as a means of controlling and reshaping black(ened) individuals vis-à-vis the emergent liberal universalist category of the human. In this light Jackson argues: “Blackness has been central to, rather than excluded from, liberal humanism: the black body is an essential index for the calculation of degree of humanity and the measure of human progress.”²¹ The acknowledgement of features of black(ened) humanity, such as physicality (physiognomy, skin pigment), cultural practices and in particular sexual norms, are framed as teleologically regressive.²² Transatlantic slavery can therefore be seen as “a technology for producing a kind of human”, crafting the “nadir of humanity”, a figure

¹⁷ Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 26.

¹⁸ Ibid, 25.

¹⁹ Ibid., 50.

²⁰ Likewise Jackson maintains animality is racialised, a dynamic exemplified by Hegel’s conclusion that the supposed smaller size of American flora and fauna in comparison to that of the Old World, the tiger (jaguar), for instance, reflected the relative weakness of the Amerindian people. Ibid, 25.

²¹ Ibid, 46.

²² Jackson argues “[g]endered and sexual discourses on ‘the African’ are inextricable from those pertaining to reason, historicity, and civilization, [...] observations of gender and sexuality were frequently used to provide ‘evidence’ of the inherent abject quality of black people’s human animality”. Ibid, 5.

“foundational to [universal humanity] as its antipodal figure”.²³ In this sense the early modern European “abject abstraction of ‘the animal’” is not “an empirical reality but a metaphysical technology of bio/necropolitics applied to life arbitrarily,” both human and nonhuman.²⁴

As denoted in non-Western epistemologies and increasingly scientific studies, humanity is an interconnected part of nature rather than an extracted master of it.²⁵ To this end Jackson argues that the “highly unstable and indeterminate relational hierarchy” developed during colonialism is given buoyancy and the façade of coherence by what she terms *plasticity*, the “violent imposition and appropriation” of black(ened) humanity “as if it were infinitely malleable lexical and biological matter”.²⁶ For Jackson, statelessness is the central facet of blackness such that black(ened) people are cast as “sub/super/human at once, a form where form shall not hold”.²⁷ The formlessness of blackness to this end is described by Jackson as “an exception” necessitated by the instability of the hierarchical order of being, fluid blackness is essential to “the establishment and reproduction of [the universal human’s] code or representational grammar”.²⁸ Hence within modernity, a vision premised upon the advancement and progression of the universal subject, black(ened) plasticised humans’ “telos is not optimization of life per se but fluidification of ‘life’ and fleshly existence”.²⁹ As both a virtual floating signifier and a

²³ Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 46, 49, 20.

²⁴ Ibid, 15.

²⁵ For a comparison of Western and non-Western conceptions of ecology and being, see: Kyle Whyte, “Time as Kinship,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Environmental Humanities* (Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 39-55.

²⁶ Ibid, 3, 77.

²⁷ Ibid, 4.

²⁸ Ibid, 77.

²⁹ Ibid, 4, 11.

malleable material force experimented with on the slave ship and plantations, in this sense, the black(ened) human serves as “modernity’s condition of possibility”.³⁰

This thesis tests Jackson’s tripartite relational grammar of being in the Dutch Atlantic colonial context. I principally ask: “To what degree does Nepveu’s semiotics of humanity and animality correspond to Jackson’s three hierarchically ordered subjects of modernity (universal human, black(ened) human and animal)?” Centring on textual representations, I argue that depictions of humans and animals overwhelmingly conform to Jackson’s observations. Animality, in terms of metaphysics and teleology, is at large stable. The animal is not considered as possessing the kind of subjectivity which would engender ethical consideration. It is mechanical and predictable, unfeeling and material. The nonhuman animal is almost completely represented as a living commodity and/or (forced) labourer. However, this ideological framing does fray; animals are occasionally represented as having a perspective and/or likeness to humanity in a way that subtly contradicts the *bête-machine* doctrine. To a lesser extent I also consider plants and the nonliving nonhuman, entities which were considered one rung below (most) animals on the *scala naturae*. Second, I analyse depictions of the black(ened) human, principally the African and to a lesser extent the Amerindian subject. In line with Jackson, I argue that the black(ened) human is a plasticised subject.³¹ Black(ened) subjects are represented in multiple contradicting ways depending on the context. This includes the African as a cultural inferior, a fleshly automaton, an excessive/deficient being, a suprahuman, a subhuman and a human with major similarities to the European. Each state identified is not sequential nor autonomous, depictions of black(ened) humans overlap and co-exist, the black(ened) figure is demanded to

³⁰ Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 91.

³¹ For brevity’s sake, I use the term African to denote both those born in Africa and those diasporic Africans who were exported to or born in the New World. In line with Nepveu’s epistemology, this also at times includes people of partial African descent.

be everything and nothing at once. As a means of further justifying and sustaining the stratified racial order, throughout selectively recognised features of black(ened) humanity are criminalised. Such representations, articulated from a position of material and ideological power, are legitimised through what Jackson terms “the presumed necessity of managing, disciplining, criminalizing, and extinguishing ‘the animal.’”³² Disparate in character, the various incarnations of black humanity are rooted in the notion that the African is an ahistorical actor lacking perspective in view of the grand scope of world history. Due to their shared lack of ‘perspective’, I argue that the black(ened) human and the animal alike are considered “worthless” from an ethical standpoint both – existing to be transformed (or exterminated) by the hierarchically superior rational European.³³ The merits or perils of black(ened) peoples’ humanity is determined through discourses and processes developed during slavery and colonialism, namely, science, capitalism and racial theory. Throughout I argue that *Blanke* (white) humans in Nepveu’s *Annotatiën* are represented as having a superior rational perspective that (precariously) places them above them from all other beings. Biologically beautiful and culturally developed to a greater degree, whites are depicted as beings worthy of ethical consideration to a considerable degree because of their culture and geographic relationship to Europe. I chiefly identify the image of whites through Nepveu’s perspective as well as the direct representations of Europeans in the text. In this manner linguistic depictions of animals and black(ened) humans serve as sites of projection for European being by means of contrast and comparison. Regarding Europeans, I determine that white people are shown to be teleologically superior, possessing an objective sense of reality that enables them to see how the world really is. Supported by notions of cultural achievement and climatic superiority,

³² Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 53.

³³ Chia-ju Chang, “Wasted Humans and Garbage Animals: Deadly Transcorporeality and Documentary Activism,” *Ecodocumentaries*, 2016, pp. 95-114, 110.

Europeans are rational and measured beings. Nepveu presents this unique insight as a blessing and a curse, racial superiority is described as a necessary all-consuming evil. Their possession of rationality and white skin means that whites are considered from an ethical perspective. This is exemplified by Nepveu's descriptions of whites dying as 'murder', as well as his consideration of the quality of the colonists' lives. Nevertheless, epitomised by the almost complete split between Christian and Jewish slaveholders in Suriname, Europeans were not completely free.³⁴ Split along strict religious, class and gender segregation, whites were to a lesser but nonetheless consequential degree subject to the colonial hierarchical, control-orientated logics developed during slavery and colonialism. Beginning with an introduction to Nepveu, this thesis continues by detailing the principal document in question, the paper's methodology, relevant historiography and context, before engaging the three principal subjects of analysis.

Jan Nepveu

Jan (Jean) Nepveu was born in Amsterdam on the 27th August 1719 to Huguenot parents Louis Nepveu, a goldsmith, and Suzanne Hamelot.³⁵ After studying in Weesp, Nepveu migrated to Suriname at the age of around fifteen to join his parents thereby entering the ranks of the colony's small but racially dominant group of protestant Europeans.³⁶ Educated and evidently ambitious, Nepveu gradually rose up the administrative ranks in Suriname's capital Paramaribo. He began as a clerk in 1740, advancing successively from secretary to governor Jan Jacob Mauricius, secretary of the head of police, the second *raad-fiscaal* (high tax representative),

³⁴ Wieke Vink, *Creole Jews: Negotiating Community in Colonial Suriname* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2010), 0.

³⁵ A. J. van der Aa, *Biographisch Woordenboek Der Nederlanden Deel 13* (Haarlem: J.J. van Brederode, 1868), 128.

³⁶ Van der Aa, *Biographisch Woordenboek*, 128; and Frank Dragtenstein, 'De Ondraaglijke Stoutheid Der Wegloopers': Marronage En Koloniaal Beleid in Suriname, 1667-1768 (CLACS, 2002), 25.

acting governor-general, first *raad-fiscaal*, *ad interim* governor before finally becoming effective governor in 1769, a post he held until his death in 1779.³⁷ Past and contemporary scholars have described the governor's character as calm and realistic.³⁸ Further, parallels have been drawn between him and Mauricius, the so-called Enlightenment governor who was according to Neus-van der Putten a "great friend".³⁹ Unlike the majority of governors, Nepveu was also a successful planter making him one of the wealthiest men in the colony. Stipriaan notes that by the time of his death his wealth surmounted to "an estate, including six plantations, which was valued at almost one and a half million guilders."⁴⁰

Nepveu's governorship was a period of immense intensity. Marked by the rapid expansion of slave-based agriculture, (compared to around 3, 000 whites) the population of captives rose from 37,835 in 1752 to 59,923 in 1774, near continuous war against various Maroon groups which numbered 5 to 6,000 by 1770, crop failures, a credit crisis in 1773, rapid urbanisation, the volatile expansion and periodic collapse of agricultural production as well as incremental yet radical changes to the social structure of the slave-based society, namely the partial ascent

³⁷ Van der Aa, *Biographisch Woordenboek*, 128.

³⁸ A. J van der Aa, *Biographisch Woordenboek Der Nederlanden* (Haarlem: J.J. van Brederode, 1868), 128; and R. Bijlsma, "De Annotatien Van Gouverneur Jan Nepveu Op Herlien's Beschrijving Van Suriname," *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 2, no. 1 (1921): pp. 311-314, 313.

³⁹ Bijlsma, "De Annotatien Van Gouverneur Jan Nepveu," 313; and Neus-van der Putten Hilde, *Susanna du Plessis: Portret van een Slavenmeesteres* (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2003), 74.

⁴⁰ According to Souty, these include: "3 coffee plantations: Spieringshoek (district of Commewijne), La Singularité (district of Commewijne), Ma Retraite (Paramaribo), the latter being also planted in cocoa; — 1 sugar plantation: Crawassibo (Commewijne); — 1 supply of wood: Het Gulden Vlies (Pararackreek); — 1 brick kiln and — 1 tile factory, on the Appecappe plantation, on the banks of the river of the same name. Alex van Stipriaan, *Surinaams Contrast: Roofbouw En Overleven in Een caraïbische Plantagekolonie, 1750-1863* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1993), 39; and François J.-L. Souty, "Agriculture et système agricole au Suriname de la fin du xviie à la fin du xviiiie siècle," *Revue Française d'histoire d'outre-Mer* 69, no. 256 (1982): pp. 193-224, 207.

of (particularly female) creoles and *vrije negers* (free negroes).⁴¹ For Nepveu the most pressing issue was the maintenance of white rule. This required finance, the lifeblood of the colony which had slowed considerably following a high point of capital investment in the 1760s and early 1770s, and the formal and ideological preservation of white supremacy.⁴² After peace settlements were reached with the larger Maroon groups, the Ndjuka, Saramaka and Matawai, a campaign of destruction was launched against the so-called Bonni's, their namesake a formidable leader and freedom fighter. In addition to the 800 men "requested and received" by Nepveu from the States-General, the *Neger Vrijcorps* (Negro Free Corps) was established in 1772 as a core of 300 fighting captives.⁴³ Promised freedom and a small plot of land upon the termination of their service, the *Red Musi* or *Zwarte Jagers* (Black Hunters) were instrumental in sustaining Dutch rule.⁴⁴ Nepveu also initiated the construction of a militarised *Cordon van Defensie* (Cordon of Defense) around the colony's economically productive zones which, coupled with the wider expansion of plantations, was facilitated by the backbreaking toil of thousands of enslaved people. In what has been described as a defining feature of the colony, Suriname's growth and maintenance depended upon a constant struggle with the physical environment. As a land dominated by rivers, marshes, mangroves and dense forest, the production of agricultural monocultures required the continuous digging of trenches and dykes

⁴¹ Stipriaan, *Surinaams Contrast*, 311; and Karwan Fatah-Black, *White Lies and Black Markets: Evading Metropolitan Authority in Colonial Suriname, 1650-1800* (Brill, 2015), XIV; Karwan Fatah-Black, *Sociëteit van Suriname 1683-1795: Het Bestuur van de Kolonie in de Achttiende Eeuw* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2019), 57, 130; Rosemarijn Hoefte, "Free Blacks and Coloureds in Plantation Suriname," *Slavery & Abolition* 17, no. 1 (1996): pp. 102-129, 102-104; and Hilde Neus, "Seksualiteit in Suriname Tegenverhalen over Liefde En 'Vleselijke Conversatie' in Een Koloniale Samenleving," *Jaarboek De Achttiende Eeuw* 53 (2021): pp. 173-189, 175.

⁴² Fatah-Black, *Sociëteit van Suriname*, 127; and Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 57.

⁴³ Gary Brana-Shute, "Suriname: A Military and Its Auxiliaries," *Armed Forces and Society* 22, no. 3 (1996): pp. 469-484, 471.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

in unsanitary, disease-ridden humid conditions.⁴⁵ This made Suriname one of the deadliest colonies in the New World; Fatah-Black notes of the period 1751-1780: “Despite more than 80,000 people being transported, the number of enslaved Africans probably only increased by about 20,000 people over the period as a whole. The mortality on the plantations was [...] unimaginable”.⁴⁶

In the social sphere white society acquired a new theatre, printing house and weekly newspaper.⁴⁷ However, in general the colony remained a cultural backwater in view of Europe. Yet regarding materialism, arguably the Surinamers exceeded their European counterparts in extravagance and frivolity. Fueled by the sale of exports and credit, the latest french fashion for women, hairdressing, expensive furniture, lavish mansions and extraordinary parties characterised elite planter culture.⁴⁸ Amongst this hedonistic elite was a growing number of women from mixed European and African descent, a product of the colony’s low population of white women.⁴⁹ This extended to Nepveu’s family; his wife, Elisabeth Buys, was according to

⁴⁵ Gert J Oostindie and Alex Stipriaan, “Slavery and Slave Cultures in a Hydraulic Society: Suriname,” in *Slavery and Slave Cultures in the Americas* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), pp. 78-99, 78-84.

⁴⁶ Fatah-Black, *Sociëteit van Suriname*, 130.

⁴⁷ Capturing the dire mood of the time, of the theatre Nepveu commented that it: “kan om de ingezeetenen bij deeze fatale omstandigheeden van haaren miserabele Staat eenigszints te distraheeren” (may serve to distract the inhabitants of the fatale circumstances of her miserable state). Ph. A Samson, “Aantekeningen over Kunst En Vermaak in Suriname Voor 1900,” *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 35, no. 1 (1953): 154-165, 154-155; and Fred. Oudschans Dentz, “Geschiedkundige Aantekeningen over Cultureel Leven in Suriname,” *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 30, no. 1 (1949): pp. 42-50, 42.

⁴⁸ Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 109; and Fatah-Black, *Sociëteit van Suriname*, 140-141.

⁴⁹ Neus-van der Putten Hilde, *Susanna Du Plessis: Portret Van Een Slavenmeesteres* (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2003), 67-74; and Okko ten Hove and Wim Hoogbergen, “De Vrije Gekleurde En Zwarte Bevolking Van Paramaribo, 1762-1863,” *Tijdschrift Voor Surinamistiek* 20 (2001): pp. 306-320.

de Beer a “casties” (7/8 white).⁵⁰ The number of manumitted black(ened) individuals also steadily augmented during this period, with ‘free blacks’ comprising roughly a quarter of Paramaribo’s population.⁵¹ However, they remained legally and socially oppressed, victims of virulent racism; citing the example of the black(ened) Christian Isabella, Hoefte determines that the ‘free’ population often preferred to live amongst the captives.⁵² Nevertheless there are numerous examples of counter narratives, Africans fighting white supremacy in order to take control of their own lives. Perhaps the most notorious case was Elisabeth Samson, a free ‘black’ slaveholder and one of the richest individuals in the colony, who petitioned the Surinamese authorities and the States-General in the Hague to marry a white man, an illegal practice.⁵³ In general however Suriname remained a calcified racist society. Advancements by black(ened) peoples and what appear to be concessions by the government did not undermine either the principles upon which antiblack racism existed or the foundations of the slave system, rather they served to recycle the existing racial, gendered and class hierarchies. For instance, Nepveu allowed the Moravian Brotherhood to promote Christianity to various non-white groups in the colony, the religion hitherto seen as principally a white domain. Whilst this development arguably led to greater freedom, it also furthered Europeanisation and maintained an order within which black(ened) people were cast as inferior rather than simply different to whites. In this manner the dynamism of the 1760s and 1770s reflected an evolution rather than dismantling of white supremacy.

⁵⁰ Maarten de Beer, “Buys, Elisabeth,” *Digitaal Vrouwenlexicon van Nederland*, January 13, 2014, <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bwn1880-2000/DVN/lemmata/data/ElisabethBuys>.

⁵¹ Rosemarijn Hoefte, “Free Blacks and Coloureds in Plantation Suriname,” *Slavery & Abolition* 17, no. 1 (1996): pp. 102-129, 106.

⁵² Hoefte, “Free Blacks and Coloureds,” 110.

⁵³ Ibid, 110-113; and Cynthia McLeod, *Elisabeth Samson: Een Vrije, Zwarte Vrouw in Het Achttiende-Eeuwse Suriname* (Utrecht: Vakgroep Culturele Antropologie, 1993), 25-51.

Annotatiën

This thesis centres on Nepveu's unpublished monograph entitled *Annotatiën op de Surinaamsche Beschrijvinge van Ao. 1718* (Annotations of the Suriname Description of Ao. 1718), a portrayal of the colony's economic, political, social and cultural structures and life worlds, its basic geography, as well as descriptions of the flora, (non-white) human and nonhuman inhabitants. A commentary on J. D. Herlein's 1718 *Beschryvinge van de volkplantinge Zuriname* (Description of the settlement of Suriname), Nepveu developed various versions of *Annotatiën* between 1765 and 1772 in Amsterdam and Suriname. Vrij notes that the genesis of the manuscript was an advertisement by Petrus Schouten in the *Amsterdamsche Courant* on the 21st May 1760 announcing a reissue of Herlein's book.⁵⁴ A minute-letter from 13 April 1771 listed with one version of the document notes the first *Annotatiën* was originally developed and first given to secretary of the Sociëteit van Suriname (SC) Joan Hubert van Meel during Nepveu's 1765-1766 travel to and stay in Amsterdam.⁵⁵ The SC and its directorship (of between 10 and 13) were Nepveu's superiors and employers. They appointed the governor who, in turn, fulfilled his role according to the various charters and directives set by the board.⁵⁶ After 1771, the SC was split between two parties, the City of Amsterdam and the West Indische Compagnie (WIC).⁵⁷ An elite section of society, the directors orchestrated, financed and profited from numerous overseas ventures often taking up official capacities in various colonial companies in addition to civic roles.

⁵⁴ Jean Jacques Vrij, "Inventaris Van De Op Suriname Betrekking Hebbende Stukken in Het Stadsarchief Amsterdam," *Stadsarchief Amsterdam*, 2016, pp. 1-30, 6.

⁵⁵ Jan Nepveu, *Klad-aanteekeningen van eenige van Nepveu op J. de Herlein, (Leeuwarden 1718)*, ca. 1772, entry 1.10.60, inv. nr. 19, Jan Nepveu archive, Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, 3.

⁵⁶ Stipriaan, *Surinaams Contrast*, 23-25.

⁵⁷ Fatah-Black, *White Lies and Black Markets*, XIV.

There are six known editions of Nepveu's *Annotatiën*, the first edition from 1765-1766 housed in the Archief van de Familie Bicker family was likely at one point in the possession of Jan Bernd Bicker (1746-1812), SC director between 1782-1785. This thesis employs the two available digitised versions of the document: the first from the Jan Nepveu archive of the Nationaal Archief, from this point referred to as the draft version, and the second from the Marquette archive of the Stadsarchief Amsterdam, referred to now as the Marquette version. Both documents are made up of "An Alphabetical Register of the Matters and Things" pertaining to the colony, that is, an index of every atomised component of the colony thought to be noteworthy, attached to thirteen chapters each centring on a specific area of the colony.⁵⁸ These chapters correspond to the structure of the 1718 description, for example, chapter six in both Herlein's and Nepveu's works discusses the "Character, Nature and Qualities of the Black Slaves".⁵⁹

The draft version contains different blocs of text written at various times, some of which are only "fragmentarily preserved".⁶⁰ In comparison the Marquette edition is one continuous, extremely well-preserved document. The "recently written" draft document mentions a small number of events as late as 1772, notably, the request and arrival of three hundred troops to combat the growing threat of the Maroons.⁶¹ However, although the latest date discussed in the

⁵⁸ "Een alphabetisch Register van de Zaaken en Dingen". Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 3.

⁵⁹ "VI. Hooft-deel. Aard, Natuur en Eigenschappen der Swarte Slaven, des zelfs Geboorte Plaatzten en verdere over voeringe aan de Amerikaansche Kusten, enz." J. D. Herlein, *Beschryvinge van de Volk-Plantinge Zuriname.*, 2nd ed. (Leeuwarden: Meindert Injema, 1718), 90; and Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 216.

⁶⁰ Draft or *Klad-aantekeeningen* version is not numbered, therefore page numbers correspond to those listed on the digitised version (a total of 184 double spread pages).

⁶¹ "Ao 1772. Vond men sig inde colonie in zo groot gevaar, van wegloopers en slaaven, bevreedigde ter giverseende ook, dat gouv'r en Raaden versogt hebben nog drie hondert man te wille zende" (Ao 1772. The colony

Marquette version is 1771, I posit that this version was created after the draft document. This is because as well as being written in neater handwriting with less spelling errors, the Marquette text contains comments in the main body that appear as added asterisks or corrections in the draft version. Further, the Marquette text contains more adapted, eloquent and detailed phrases that appear to have their roots in the draft document; for instance, opening a section on slave religious leaders Nepveu writes in the drafted version “*Loekoemans* (seers)” whilst in the refined text the same phrase is rendered: “The *Loekemans* or seers as they are named”.⁶² The two documents’ structures also vary widely. The Marquette version’s pages are consistently numbered, a total of 424; additionally, the text has a formalised system of footnotes. In the case of chapters, the draft version is less orderly with one page often containing pieces of information that correspond to numerous sections of the 1718 description. The Marquette version, on the other hand, is easy to navigate and only contains relevant information on one generalised topic in each chapter. These factors, in addition to the numerous crossing outs in the draft version, lend me to believe that this document acted as Nepveu’s personal draft which he updated and referred to when copying out other versions of the text.

Regarding content, in the Marquette version Nepveu provides more detailed descriptions rendered in an academic style. For instance, the author provides more lengthy discussions of Rousseau’s and Montesquieu’s justifications for slavery in addition to providing numerated references to specific publications. Further, the Marquette version has more information about the Nepveu family’s achievements and plans for developing the colony. The author discusses his brother Louis Pieter’s plan to develop a road which would enable the expansion of the

was in such great danger, from runaways and slaves, that the governor and councils agreed to send three hundred more men). Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 179.

⁶² “Loekoemans (zienders)”; “Die Loekemans of zienders voornoemt zijn”. Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 134; and Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 244.

plantation system as well as his other brother Aubin's claim to a certain piece of land along the Commewijne river.⁶³ Both of these features may be a result of Nepveu altering the document in view of the likely intended recipient, Joachim Rendorp (1728-1792), a prominent SC director between 1758-1792 and mayor of Amsterdam whose family owned the Marquette House and its archival collections between 1707-1909. Further, Nepveu was in contact with Rendorp in the year in which the document was concluded, 1771; hence, it is probable that he was the sole or main recipient of the text.⁶⁴ It may also be the case that the copy was passed down or shared with younger SC director of the Rendorp family, Salomon Rendorp (1767-1824), director between 1792-1795, and potentially his son Willem Rendorp (1769-1827).⁶⁵ Concerning discrepancies between the text, there are a small number of undeveloped ideas not present in Marquette document, for example, in the copy of the register the phrase "Blacks natural to the forest".⁶⁶ However, for the most part the documents are largely identical. As such throughout I refer to both iterations of the text as *Annotatiën*.

Created in response to the growing number of "interested parties" in Suriname, that is, those with a financial stake in the colony, *Annotatiën* is aimed at the Amsterdam-based SC directors, creditors and investors.⁶⁷ The text enabled this diverse interconnected group, which self-consciously viewed itself as racially and culturally superior, to make more informed (economic) decisions about the running of the colony and plantations.⁶⁸ As such the description details

⁶³ Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 87, 91.

⁶⁴ Vrij, "Inventaris," 15.

⁶⁵ Andries Munter (1714-1771) director between 1743-1770.

⁶⁶ "Swarte haar bosch natuurel". Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 37.

⁶⁷ Fatah-Black, *Sociëteit van Suriname*, 146.

⁶⁸ Knowledge about Suriname was scarce as "most directors never visited the colony". Fatah-Black, *White Lies and Black Markets*, 9.

everything from finance, to defence, ‘African’ behaviour and technology, animals and plants, all geared towards providing the directors “a better Idea and Knowledge of the Fatherland’s so a Precious Colony”.⁶⁹ Hence discussions of credit, the expansion of the plantation system, its defence from Maroons and rival Europeans as well as processes integral to the production and export of Suriname’s main commodities of sugar, tobacco, cotton, cacao, timber and indigo feature prominently. *Annotatiën* is also interested in natural history, both human and nonhuman. Of note the monograph contains an index classifying and a considerable number of differing peoples, animals and plants. Nepveu also provides ethnographic descriptions of the assumed social, reproductive and cultural customs of African, Maroon and Amerindian communities. As such the document contains one of the earliest written record and translation of the “*bakra tongo*” variety of the Sranan Tongo language termed “*Neeger Engelsch*” (Negro English) by Nepveu, that is, the creole language spoken by the captives the first of which in Suriname were brought by English slaveholders.⁷⁰ Likewise *Annotatiën* sketches the seemingly empirical features of animal and plant life, for instance, their appearance and size. Discussions of black(ened) humans, animals and plants are threaded with references to Enlightenment scholars interested in philosophy, natural history and botany.

As *Annotatiën* was conceived as a much-needed update of Herlein’s text, throughout Nepveu corrects and updates information that was wrong in the past or has since become erroneous. For example, Nepveu notes that Herlein’s estimation that there were “five hundred houses” in

⁶⁹ “en beeter Denkbeeld en Kennise van deeze voor Vaderland zo Dierbaare Colonie”. See Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 3.

⁷⁰ Jacques Arends, *Language and Slavery: A Social and Linguistic History of the Suriname Creoles* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2017), 247; and Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 292.

Paramaribo cannot be “accurate”.⁷¹ The document is also in dialogue with other descriptions of the colony including the Englishman George Warren’s 1667 description of Suriname, member of the Surinamese governing elite Thomas Pistorius’ 1763 *Korte en zakelijke beschrijvinge van de Colonie van Suriname* (Short and pragmatic description of the Colony of Suriname) – a text also structured on Herlein’s – and long-term visitor to the colony Philippe Fermin’s 1769 *Déscription générale, historique, géographique et physique de la Colonie de Surinam* (General Description, history, geography and constitution of the Colony of Suriname). Nepveu notes that Pistorius’ text is “flawed” whilst Fermin’s is “so superficial, inaccurate, and even decayed with contradictions, that it is not worthy of notice, nor can it give the slightest idea of the Colony”.⁷²

However, the author also acknowledges his own work may be faulty, warning readers “it wouldn’t be pleasant for me, if it were made public in one way or another by the press, all the more so since I have since improved it much and increased it noticeably”.⁷³ Elsewhere Nepveu prefaces potential flaws in his work by noting, “from my foremost youth having been brought over from the Fatherland to this remote region [I] have received poor education in civilised

⁷¹ “Dat er Ao 1718 reeds vyff hondert huizen zouden gweest zyn, kan niet acuuraat weezen alzo er thans schoon zedert die tydt wel de helft vergroot is, volgens de lijsten der verpondingen of tax tot onderhouding van Paramaribo nog geen 800 gevonden worden.” See Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 85.

⁷² “De Beschryving door de Heer Pistorius [...] zodanig gebrekkelyk en wijnig accuraat”; and “zoo superficieel, inaccurate en zelfs met contrarieteijten vervalld, dat het geen be beiens waardig is, en ook de minste denkbeeld van de Colonie niet kan geeven.” Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 6.

⁷³ “’t zoude my negter niet aangenaam zyn, indien die verder op de ene of andere wijze wierde doorden druk publicq gemaakt, temeer wijl ik zedert dientijt dezelve veel heb verbeetert en merkelyk vermeerdert”. Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 3.

literature and science”.⁷⁴ This echoes John Gabriel Stedman’s description of Nepveu as “more a man of sense than of learning”, a negative image the governor was evidently aware of in some sense.⁷⁵ Nevertheless Nepveu appears content with the document, frequently pointing to his rigorous preparations and 40-year experience in the colony as markers of his authority. This is perhaps why *Annotatiën*, which Fatah-Black notes “could have sufficed as an independent book” due to its extensive and relatively up-to-date use of information, was influential despite remaining unpublished.⁷⁶ Of note the document influenced Jan Jacob Hartsinck, secretary of the West-Indische Compagnie (WC), and author of the 1770 *Beschryving van Guiana, of de wilde kust in Zuid-America* (Description of Guiana, or the wild coast of South America). Further, despite his perceptions of Nepveu as an unlearned man, Price and Price posit that Stedman’s 1790 *Narrative of a Five Year's Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Suriname* strongly draws on Nepveu’s work.⁷⁷

The following section, chapter one, reviews the historiography of *Annotatiën* and that of Dutch antiblack racism with a focus on the late-18th century. After detailing the methodology and context, I continue in chapter two with a discussion of the animal. Here I discuss the animal as a commodified food source, a (forced) labour and generalised economic entity and a reducing threat. I argue that contrary to the recurrent depiction of the animal as a predictable and mechanistic being, occasionally animals are represented as more than soulless automatons. After demonstrating that Nepveu’s attitude towards plants and the nonliving nonhuman reflects

⁷⁴ “dat ik, die van mijn eerste Jeugt af aan uyt het Vaderland in dit verafgeleegen gewest over gebragt zijnde alvaar maar gebrekelijke onderwijsinge in de beschaafde Letteren en Weetenschappen heb kunnen erlangen”. Nepveu, *Klad-aanteekeningen*, ca. 1772, 3.

⁷⁵ John Gabriel Stedman, Richard Price, and Sally Price, *Stedman's Surinam: Life in Eighteenth-Century Slave Society* (Baltimore, ML: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 55.

⁷⁶ Karwan Fatah-Black, *Sociëteit van Suriname*, 145.

⁷⁷ Stedman, Price, and Price, *Stedman's Surinam*, 319.

his hierarchical stance towards animality, I begin the discussion of black(ened) humanity in chapter three. Stressing the plasticity of the African subject, I determine that captives are represented as cultural inferiors, unfeeling automatons, sub/suprahumans and humans with criminalised features of humanity common to both blacks and whites.

Chapter One

Historiography

Literature discussing *Annotatiën* is limited. Interwar historian Bijlsma was the first to directly address what he described as a “considerably improved” version of Herlein’s text.⁷⁸ Rather than critique, Bijlsma reproduces Nepveu’s view of the colony in two articles.⁷⁹ Contemporary discussions of the document largely follow suit, employing the manuscript as a means to reconstruct a more comprehensive picture of 18th century Suriname. Through Bijlsma’s and Wolbers’ works, Stipriaan uses the document and Nepveu’s archival footprint at large to enrich the economic history of the colony.⁸⁰ Similarly, Souty employs *Annotatiën* to gauge the profitability of the agricultural system whilst Arends traces the development of Sranan Tongo through Nepveu’s short translation section.⁸¹ Fatah-Black has recently situated the *Annotatiën* as part of the outgrowth of descriptions of Suriname in the second half of the 18th century.⁸² Framing the document to a considerable extent as a response to financialisation and

⁷⁸ Bijlsma, “De Annotatie Van Gouverneur Jan Nepveu,” 313.

⁷⁹ Bijlsma, “Over Bodemgesteldheid En Suikerplantage-Exploitatie in Suriname 1765,” *New West Indian Guide / Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 4, no. 1 (1923): pp. 341-349, 349.

⁸⁰ Stipriaan, *Surinaams Contrast*, 39-40, 50-51, 69, 95, 212, 218-219, 258, 380.

⁸¹ Souty, “Agriculture et système agricole au Suriname de la fin du xvii^e à la fin du xviii^e siècle,” *Revue Française d'histoire d'outre-Mer* 69, no. 256 (1982): pp. 193-224, 209, 217; and Arends, *Language and Slavery*, 247.

⁸² Fatah-Black, *Sociëteit van Suriname*, 145.

the changing power dynamics this process engendered, he highlights the importance of the description and others in the Suriname *beschrijving* genre at large as means of meeting the growing metropolitan demand for knowledge in the mid-to-late-18th century.⁸³

A propos de wider literature on the Dutch Atlantic and early modern slavery, this thesis is in dialogue with the comparatively narrow scholarship dedicated to early modern Dutch antiblack racism. As illustrated by the educational background of the majority of historians who publish in the field, knowledge production in and around the topic remains rooted to the institutions that initially justified (Dutch) slavery, universities. In the long scope this institutional bias has arguably standardised a Eurocentric approach to race that occludes engagement with African and African diasporic perspectives past and present.⁸⁴ Nimako et al label this historically dominant but waning force within academia the “Dutch master narrative”, an approach that relies almost exclusively on Dutch archival sources.⁸⁵ The narrative is described by Nimako et al as the “focus on trade and not enslavement”.⁸⁶ In addition to representing the chattel slavery of Africans as something the Dutch and Europeans more broadly entered into rather than established, the narrative recurrently reproduces the terminology and arguments made by

⁸³ Fatah-Black, *Sociëteit van Suriname*, 145.

⁸⁴ Kwame Nimako, Glenn Willemsen and Amy Abdou, “Chattel Slavery and Racism: A Reflection on the Dutch Experience,” in *Dutch Racism*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V, 2014), pp. 33-52, 34.

⁸⁵ For further examples of the Dutch master narrative, see: Nimako, Willemsen and Abdou, “Chattel Slavery and Racism,” 34-38; and Pepijn Brandon, “Slavernijgeschiedenis zonder polderen: Observaties over een debat vol contrasten,” *Beleid en Maatschappij* 46, no. 2 (2019): pp. 258-264, 258.

⁸⁶ Nimako et al: “[The master narrative] presents a discursive framework under which the concept of ‘trade’ is anchored in some form of collaboration between Africans and Europeans failing to acknowledge the gruesome means by which these social relationships were entered into.” Postma: “The Atlantic slave trade was a cooperative venture between European and African merchants and their respective rulers.” Nimako, Willemsen, and Abdou “Chattel Slavery and Racism,” 34; and Johannes Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 13.

slavetraders. Postma, for instance, in his foundational 1990 study *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade 1600-1815*, a work illustrative of the master narrative, appears to take race as a self-evident rather than historically constructed concept determining: “The slaves came from different cultures and a race different from their European owners”.⁸⁷ Nimako et al also determine that the narrative absolves the Netherlands from guilt by representing the original sin of transatlantic slavery to be the selling of Africans by Africans.⁸⁸ The same compartmentalised framing is reflected in Postma’s depiction of transatlantic slavery as a phenomenon that ran against the general upward moral trajectory of Europe, arguing that race and cultural differences, “were used as rationales to justify this inhumane system at a time when slavery was disappearing in Europe.”⁸⁹ In this formulation racism is a product of profiteering, Postma notes: “Slaves were seen and treated as objects of potential economic utility”.⁹⁰ The same eurocentric and economically deterministic view of slavery has been identified by Dragtenstein in his review of the Dutch scholarly reception of Quassie, the late 17th to 18th century African-born captive turned slavehunter, slaveholder, *lukuman* (seer) and (tentative) member of the Surinamese elite.⁹¹ In short Dragtenstein determines that at large Dutch historians’ view of Quassie as a social success reflects the lack of consideration for the enslaved population’s perspective within scholarship, Quassie being a widely feared, distrusted and detested figure amongst Suriname’s captive population.⁹²

⁸⁷ Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 227.

⁸⁸ Nimako, Willemsen, and Abdou, “Chattel Slavery and Racism,” 34-35.

⁸⁹ Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 227.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Frank Dragtenstein, ‘*Trouw aan de Blanken*’ *Quassie van Nieuw Timotibo twist en strijd in de 18de eeuw in Suriname* (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2004), 81-93.

⁹² Dragtenstein, ‘*Trouw aan de Blanken*,’ 89-93.

Centring on the Dutch East Indies but with an eye to the global dynamic, Breman provides a more recent example of an economic centred approach to racism in his 2021 book *Kolonialisme en Racisme: een Postkoloniale Kroniek* (Colonialism and Racism: a Postcolonial Chronicle) in which he argues that trade-driven “European expansion” was an “expression of racism and a source of nourishment for it”.⁹³ The author identifies capitalist profiteering as the driving force behind the imposition of a global racial hierarchy, in an interview stating: “Colonialism is about control, control of commodities [...] Racism and colonialism have to be understood as having an objective, and the objective is your own profit”.⁹⁴ Breman’s functionalist view envisages racism as the product of the desire (and need) to control valuable commodities, the segregating of humans into deserving and undeserving inferior groups envisaged as a materially-rooted dynamic. As such one can infer that for Breman racism serves to deny people full entry into humanity, the self-inducing ideology of their supposed inferiority used as a front to extract cheap labour, an economically liberal conceptualisation of reality that the author does not historicise. Elsewhere Breman attests to his view that modernity was a deceptive project of exclusion: “While ideals were proclaimed to be of universal validity for the nations considered meritorious, these civilizational tenets were not supposed to have been internalized by the peoples (races) classed as inferior”.⁹⁵ The liberal human was hence expressed and conceived as an exclusively (elite) European category, those considered ‘inferior’ were extraneous to the Enlightenment.

⁹³ Jan Breman, *Kolonialisme en Racisme een Postkoloniale Kroniek* (Amsterdam University Press, 2021), 11, 35-36.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 35-36; BettBeat Media, “The Dutch Roots of Colonial Racism”, Podcast, (May 2022), 14:32, 15:45.

⁹⁵ Jan Breman, “Colonialism and its Racial Imprint,” *Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 35, no. 3 (2020): pp. 463-492, 488.

Other studies have portrayed Dutch racism as more pluralistic. For instance Blakely highlights the prominence of psuedo-biological arguments in the 18th century and the notion of African heathenism as a marker of inferiority.⁹⁶ In his view antiblack racism functioned not only to justify a profitable practice, but also to describe a relatively unknown part of the world against which Europe increasingly defined itself.⁹⁷ Situating Dutch racism as a product of the Europe-wide Enlightenment discourse on races, he argues that during the “Age of Reason” “black” Africans were invariably and interchangeably described as cultural inferiors, subhumans, corrupted offshoots of the white race and “the intermediary between great apes and white Europeans”.⁹⁸ Nonetheless Blakely determines: “It was ironic that the same scientific outlook which inspired the Enlightenment and decried human bondage encouraged theories which sought to dehumanize a large part of humankind”, hence framing racism as separate and contradictory to rationalism and science rather than being integral to its formation and articulation.⁹⁹ Further Blakely follows the notion that racism was ‘dehumanising’, a modality contradicted by the recurrent (selective) recognition and subsequent weaponisation of African humanity throughout Dutch and European 18th century racial discourse. Oostindie, with a focus on the Dutch Caribbean and the different racial structures in the region, likewise goes beyond the “forced, unwaged labour” paradigm in his discussion of racism in Suriname, arguing that there “was no denial of the humanity of the African” rather they were envisaged as “‘as yet’

⁹⁶ Allison Blakely, *Blacks in the Dutch World: The Evolution of Racial Imagery in a Modern Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 32-35, 188.

⁹⁷ Blakely, *Blacks in the Dutch World*, 188.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 186-187.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 188.

uncivilized” humans.¹⁰⁰ Centralising the importance of Christian arguments to justify slavery – “[t]he infinite inferiority of the blacks was therefore somehow of God’s making, and that made it only logical that blacks served whites as slaves, even if slavery as such was not the natural condition of mankind” – Oostindie represents 18th century racism as diverse, differentiated and contradictory.¹⁰¹ The author also infers that slaveholders simultaneously acknowledged and sought “to deny [the captives’] humanity.”¹⁰² This view arguably determining that humanisation was a byproduct of the “continuous need to come to terms with daily realities” of enslavement rather than a tool of racism itself.¹⁰³

Nimako and Willemsen have similarly stressed the “distinctly European” nature of Dutch antiblack racism, arguing that theology, scientific arguments, taxonomy and cultural notions of African barbarism co-existed.¹⁰⁴ To a considerable degree this theorisation of (Dutch) racism as multifarious and European draws on the perspectives of African diasporic historians and cultural theorists. The authors also imply that exclusion was central to Dutch racism arguing that: “One of the grounds for enslavement was the denial of the humanity of the enslaved”.¹⁰⁵ Further, emphasising the legal aspect of African slavery through their discussion of Europe as a “free soil” continent, Nimako and Willemsen infer that Africans were not considered full humans within Dutch law because they emanated from a non-European civilisation, despite the

¹⁰⁰ Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 50; Gert J. Oostindie, *Paradise Overseas the Dutch Caribbean: Colonialism and Its Transatlantic Legacies* (Oxford: Macmillan Education, 2005), 26, 40.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 26.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, 29.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 29.

¹⁰⁴ Kwame Nimako and Glenn Willemsen, *The Dutch Atlantic: Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation* (Pluto Press, 2011), 24-25, 42.

¹⁰⁵ Nimako and Willemsen, *The Dutch Atlantic*, 44.

European secular claim to universal rights.¹⁰⁶ Hence Dutch racism is seen as malleable, contradictory and opaque. Employed as a tool to forward white interests, the authors highlight the centrality of the seemingly universalist liberal language in racial ideology. Similarly, with a focus on the self-image of the Netherlands, its current forms of racism and their roots in the colonial project, Wekker provides an in-depth analysis of Dutch (antiblack) racism as a European phenomenon. Drawing on African diasporic and African American feminist theory, Wekker places the sexualisation and control over black(ened) humanity's sexuality as central to the reproduction of Dutch and Western antiblack racism.¹⁰⁷ Concerning racial ideology in 18th century Suriname, Wekker maintains that the "cultural policy" of division (language, religion, clothing, food and so on) characterised the life of the colony.¹⁰⁸ Further, in line with Nimako and Willemsen, Wekker views race as a totalising, globalising system which deeply shaped (Western) humanity's sense of being. To this end, Quoting Stoler, she determines that "race became the organizing grammar of an imperial order in which modernity, the civilising mission and the 'measure of man' were framed".¹⁰⁹ In view of race as an 'organizing grammar', she argues that the masculinisation of black female sexuality operated as a means to purify white female identity from associations with manhood.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Nimako and Willemsen, *The Dutch Atlantic*, 32-35.

¹⁰⁷ Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 40-41.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 42.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 44.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 105.

Building on the authors' identification of commodification, subhumanisation, religious discrimination, legal exclusion and the violence of sexualisation, in particular I follow Blakely's, Nimako and Willemsen's and Wekker's conceptualisation of Dutch racism as 'distinctly European' – a transnational globalising project of modern (human) being. Building on Wekker's identification of blackness and whiteness as interlinked modes of being, rather than having sequential states – the African as a heathen, commodity, subhuman and so on – I argue that racism renders blackness simultaneously “everything and nothing for an order [...] a statelessness that collapses a distinction between the virtual and the actual, abstract potential and situated possibility”.¹¹¹

Departing from the literature, all of the aforementioned authors describing racism in part as a form of dehumanisation, I determine that weaponised humanisation is central to the functioning of antiblack racism. Further, as a dynamic that transposes “recognition, and an inclusion that masks itself as an exclusion”, I argue that the black(ened) human's situation within modernity's “racially hierarchized universal humanity” is deeply linked to the entangled abjectification of nonhuman animals.¹¹² In what is evidently an understudied overlooked facet of Dutch racism, I determine that bestialisation is not based on a prior negation of the animal, rather the discourse of the animal and the black(ened) human emerged together during and following slavery, conquest and colonialism. To this end this study breaks with past research within Dutch academia by emphasising that the form of (human) being imposed during early modernity jointly reordered humanity's relationship to reality by emphasising separation and hierarchy.

¹¹¹ Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 35.

¹¹² Ibid, 18, 23.

Methodology

In order to critique rather than reproduce the representations and arguments made in the text, I employ Wodak's Discourse Historical Approach (DHA), a methodology designed to historicise, demystify and critique discourse. Triangulating theory, historiography, the given texts' context, and textual analysis, DHA lays bare the ideologies of seemingly perfunctory and inscrutable texts, in the process demystifying and historically situating representations poised as natural truths.¹¹³ The methodology entails the two interlinked processes: contextualisation and textual analysis. DHA addresses four levels of context in order to elucidate the "goals, values and interests" of the author(s), namely the texts' wider "intertextual and interdiscursive relationships", the texts' "extralinguistic social variables", general "socio-political and historical" context and the "co-text[s] and co-discourse[s]" contexts.¹¹⁴ I contextualise *Annotatiën* as a product (early) modernity, an era defined by slavery, conquest and colonialism. Viewing the four contexts as entangled processes, discourse seen as a reflective and constitutive of material dynamics, I consider three liberal Enlightenment discourses central to the text, science, capitalism and race.

Regarding textual analysis, I locate five linguistic and grammatical strategies employed by Nepveu to represent and attribute certain characteristics to the universal (white) human, black(ened) humans and animals. These include, first, "referential" strategies, that is, the use of metaphors, categorizations, and other tropic devices to establish human and nonhuman

¹¹³ Michael S. Boyd and Claudia Monacelli, "Politics, (Con)Text and Genre: Applying CDA and DHA to Interpreter Training," *The Interpreters' Newsletter* 15 (2010): pp. 51-70, 56

¹¹⁴ Ruth Wodak, "Critical Discourse Analysis, Discourse-Historical Approach," in *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*, 1st ed. (John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2015), pp. 1-14, 5; Martin Reisigl, "The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)," ed. Ruth Wodak, in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, (SAGE Publications, 2008), pp. 87-121, 93.

groupings and hierarchies.¹¹⁵ Second, “predicational strategies” which denote specific characteristics to the aforementioned actors.¹¹⁶ Third, strategies of “argumentation” that ascribe differing truth claims to non-whites and animals.¹¹⁷ Fourth, the perspectivization of a text, as in how the author-writer is positioned vis-à-vis the black(ened) human and the nonhuman and what effect this has on the attribution of certain characteristics.¹¹⁸ Last, linguistic means by which features of the non-white humans and animals are exaggerated or minimized, methods of “intensification and mitigation”.¹¹⁹

Context

The period in which *Annotatiën* arose, the late-18th century, belongs to early modernity a time in which Europeans instigated “the transnational capitalist order” through and following the genocide and displacement of Amerindians, transatlantic slavery, conquest and colonialism.¹²⁰ Preceded by Dutch, French and English expeditions to the ‘Wild Coast’ in the late 16th and early-to-mid-17th century, in Suriname these processes decisively gathered pace in 1650 following the establishment of plantation colony by Lord Francis Willoughby, the royalist governor of the mother colony Barbados.¹²¹ Later Suriname was seized by Zeelanders followed

¹¹⁵ Wodak, “Critical Discourse Analysis,” 8.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 8-9.

¹²⁰ Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 45.

¹²¹ Fatah-Black, *Sociëteit van Suriname*, 30-31; and David Worthington, “Sugar, Slave-Owning, Suriname and the Dutch Imperial Entanglement of the Scottish Highlands before 1707,” *Dutch Crossing* 44, no. 1 (October 2019): pp. 3-20, 5.

by the Dutch in 1667.¹²² Established in 1683, the Amsterdam-based chartered semi-state company the SC financed and administered the colony until its dissolution in 1795. Working closely with and occasionally against the planter class, colonisation in Suriname was “completely dependent on complicated supply routes and complex financial instruments.”¹²³ The colony was hence deeply interlinked to the global economy, within which the Dutch played a diminished but prominent role, in particular in terms of the trade of Africans and agricultural commodities.¹²⁴ During the 17th and 18th centuries, the colony gradually expanded and was at large considered a success particularly during the mid-to-late-18th century. The population of Amerindians dramatically decreased, the number of imported African captives rose from a few hundred to around 60, 000 by the time of Nepveu’s governorship, further, the environment was significantly Europeanised.¹²⁵ The flora and fauna native to Suriname was to a considerable degree destroyed and replaced with imported monocultures and animals from the Old World. Large swathes of the environment had been transformed, exemplified by the existence of around “500 large plantations exporting sugar, coffee, indigo, cacao and hard woods” by 1760.¹²⁶ Jackson and Goldberg position the discourse of liberalism as central to the universal human and by extension modernity, an era in which Europe expanded its power and influence.¹²⁷ Hence before outlining the three interlinked processes and discourses that constitute Nepveu’s text I

¹²² Worthington, “Sugar, Slave-Owning, Suriname”, 5.

¹²³ Fatah-Black, *Sociëteit van Suriname*, 131.

¹²⁴ Karwan Fatah-Black and Matthias van Rossum, “Beyond Profitability: The Dutch Transatlantic Slave Trade and Its Economic Impact,” *Slavery & Abolition* 36, no. 1 (August 2014): pp. 63-83, 80.

¹²⁵ Stipriaan, *Surinaams Contrast*, 34.

¹²⁶ Rosemary Brana-Shute, “Approaching Freedom: The Manumission of Slaves in Suriname, 1760-1828,” *Slavery & Abolition* 10, no. 3 (1989): pp. 40-63, 40.

¹²⁷ Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 23; and David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Blackwell, 1993), 1.

briefly define liberalism. From Hobbes to Hayek, the “commitment to continuous progress” is central to liberal thought, formulated as the promotion of “material, moral, physical, and political improvement”.¹²⁸ This commitment is reflected in the document’s introduction wherein Nepveu proudly discusses the various ‘improvements’ to the colony including economic changes, police and judicial developments as well as the social behaviour of the inhabitants.¹²⁹ Whether in economics, politics or academia, the agent of progress is the rational sovereign individual, an abstract universal figure.¹³⁰ Liberalism is an individualistic ideology. Thus rather than stress co-dependency and interrelationality, liberals envisage reality in “abstract and atomistic, general and universal” terms.¹³¹ To this end the liberal subject is “divorced from the contingencies of historicity as it is from the particularities of social and political relations and identities.”¹³² Citing Bauman, Goldberg argues another interlinked feature of modernity and liberalism is “the concern with order.”¹³³ As such the liberal subject, a rational autonomous individual seeking progress, acts on the world in order to shape it for his or her own ends. In turn the liberal fulfils their demand for order “through the domination of Nature by Reason; through the transparency of Nature to Reason in the Laws of Nature; through the classification of Nature in rational systems of thought; and through the mastery of Nature”, as previously stated nature or that which is not fully human also denotes the black(ened) human.¹³⁴ During the 18th century, the period in which Nepveu writes, liberalism reaches

¹²⁸ Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 4.

¹²⁹ Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 46-47.

¹³⁰ Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 4-5.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 5.

¹³² *Ibid*, 4.

¹³³ *Ibid*, 3.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 3.

maturity through the Enlightenment.¹³⁵ Consequently *Annotatiën* is embedded with references to key liberal ideologues and links to three prominent interlinked liberal Enlightenment discourses, science, capitalism and race.

Science

As outlined by Seth in a review of literature, science and secular knowledge production are inextricably linked to colonialism.¹³⁶ In particular natural history, taxonomy and industrial and social technologies developed to aid colonial regimes in their project to know, understand and subsequently control the (foreign) peoples, animals and plants they sought to dominate.¹³⁷ Intertextual links and the atomised classification structure of *Annotatiën* reflect the use of so-called rational forms of representation as a means to monitor the colony. Of note Nepveu uses the same sequential list format to detail the main features of black(ened) humans, animals, plants and the nonliving nonhuman with a view to control and profit from them. The cultural practices of the captives, for instance, are described in terms of their effect on the stability of the colony, a crude rendition that allows Nepveu and the governors to create informed policy judgements so as to maintain white supremacy. Likewise descriptions of a specific plant's preferred growing conditions allows the readers to ascertain whether and where the plant should be grown. By providing easy to understand information with a view to control, classifications, in this light, benefit the elite of the SC by allowing them to protect their financial interests and assets (plantations, slave, livestock and so on). This dynamic further reflects how the discourses

¹³⁵ Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 5.

¹³⁶ Suman Seth, "Putting Knowledge in its Place: Science, Colonialism, and the Postcolonial," *Postcolonial Studies* 12, no. 4 (2009): pp. 373-388, 373-384.

¹³⁷ Seth, "Putting Knowledge in Its Place," 376.

of the animal and the black(ened) human are structurally linked, both subjects came to be seen as beings which could be known and subsequently dominated by rational superior humans.

Similarly, rational technological innovation on the plantations was used to enrich the colony's elite. Here Nepveu is a quintessential liberal in view of his commitment to rational progress. Advocating the establishment of machinery in the colony, Nepveu was a patented innovator who introduced new types of crushing mills to Suriname.¹³⁸ Also evident in *Annotatiën* is the pan-European dimension of scientific discourse, exemplified by Nepveu's comparison of how the English produce sugar; further he states that colonists from the French possessions have come to Suriname to construct windwills.¹³⁹ This indicates that the relationship between science and colonialism was constituted by transatlantic networks of knowledge, the development of technology being a collective European discursive and material endeavour.

Capitalism

As with science, capitalism expanded and developed to a significant extent through and with colonialism. Davis et al and Moore determine that system's contemporary form was principally shaped by the violently produced "surplus of cheap agricultural commodities and other raw materials" that came into existence during and following the conquest of the New World.¹⁴⁰ Tsing argues that scalable, replicable and homogenised zones of economic production were

¹³⁸ Stipriaan, *Surinaams Contrast*, 158.

¹³⁹ Nepveu, *Annotatiën*, ca. 1771, 182; and Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 150.

¹⁴⁰ Janae Davis et al., "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, ... Plantationocene?: A Manifesto for Ecological Justice in an Age of Global Crises," *Geography Compass* 13, no. 5 (2019): pp. 1-15, 3; and Jason W. Moore, "The Capitalocene, Part I: On the Nature and Origins of Our Ecological Crisis," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 44, no. 3 (2017): pp. 594-630, 596.

developed on the plantation, a ‘rational’ structure imposed upon nature by man.¹⁴¹ Powered by long distance capital investments, colonists brutally orchestrated the establishment of plantations across the New World by using the well-established template of erasing native flora, fauna and the local human population, replacing them with foreign crops farmed by African captives with the goal of exporting the blood-stained goods to Europe.¹⁴² Davis and Todd summarise this process of “settler colonialism” by stating it engendered “a severing of relations between humans and the soil, between plants and animals, between minerals and our bones.”¹⁴³ Reflected and induced by an atomistic liberal view of reality, in view of the seemingly endless newly colonised lands (filled with ‘resources’) capitalists used money “as a homogenizing force for transforming all value into an objective quantification”.¹⁴⁴ As reflected by Nepveu’s compulsion to assess almost every item in the index in view of cost, money serves to obliterate difference: “Atoms, entrepreneurs, voters, trees, patients and dogs lose there uniqueness; they become, by definition, fungible within their groupings.”¹⁴⁵ Echoing early modern science, Mbembe argues that capitalism is, “the compulsion to categorize, to separate, to measure, and to name, to classify and to establish equivalences between things and between things and

¹⁴¹ Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: on the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021), 38-40.

¹⁴² Mintz and Rosenthal argue that the colonial capitalist mode of production, a system undergirded by chattel slavery, set the (economic) course of modernity. They link the plantation to the later the stratified organisation of factories and contemporary labour management styles respectively. Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*. 39; Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 47; and Caitlin Rosenthal, *Accounting for Slavery: Masters and Management* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 189.

¹⁴³ Heather Davis and Zoe Todd, “On the Importance of a Date, or Decolonizing the Anthropocene,” *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 16 (2017): pp. 761-780, 770.

¹⁴⁴ Tony Tinker, “The Enlightenment and Its Discontents: Antinomies of Christianity, Islam and the Calculative Sciences,” *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal* 17, no. 3 (2004): pp. 442-475, 450.

¹⁴⁵ Tinker, “The Enlightenment and Its Discontents,” 450.

persons, persons and animals, animals and the so-called natural, mineral, and the organic world”.¹⁴⁶ This economically liberal, divisive mode of representation characterises the format and co-textual context of *Annotatiën*. The use of economic tabulations, calculations and estimates allowed Nepveu and directors alike to envisage the colony in a detached manner whereby every decontextualised entity is represented with an eye to exploitation. Further adhering to the structuring principles of the various types of text used to connect the Surinamese authorities and the SC in Amsterdam, namely letters and reports monitoring and promoting growth, the monograph’s immediate purpose is to promote the relatively novel capitalist goal of continual “acquisition”.¹⁴⁷

Likewise the context of the text’s production demonstrates that the document emerged as a direct response to capitalism’s systemic demand for continual profits, a dynamic that led to the growing ‘need’ for information about the “precious” colony in the late-18th century.¹⁴⁸ Specifically this demand was triggered by highpoint of capital investments in the 1760s and early 1770s coupled with the States General-backed reassertion of power in 1750, resulting in a major power shift from the planters to those in the metropole.¹⁴⁹ Fatah-Black elucidates this development through the notion of financialisation, “a modern concept used to describe how financial elites gain more control over policy”, arguing that following the increase in the supply

¹⁴⁶ Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2019), 158.

¹⁴⁷ Winjum argues that the growth of accountancy reflected the truncation of the medieval “goal of subsistence” by “the capitalistic goal of profits.” James O. Winjum, “Accounting and the Rise of Capitalism: An Accountant’s View,” *Journal of Accounting Research* 9, no. 2 (1971): pp. 333-350, 335.

¹⁴⁸ Nepveu states he wishes to provide, “tenminsten van een beeter denkbeeld en kennise van deeze voor vaderland zo dierbaare colonie dienstig” (at least a better Idea and Knowledge of this Colony so precious to the fatherland). Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 3.

¹⁴⁹ Fatah-Black, *White Lies and Black Markets*, 8-10; and Fatah-Black, *Sociëteit van Suriname* 1683, 127.

of credit Amsterdam-based financiers “had a greater say in determining policy.”¹⁵⁰ The focus on exported and imported commodities, agricultural production, shipping, duties and demography served the speculative and profiteering considerations of this extracted financial class; this group advocating for the expansion of Suriname’s territory, economy and (free and captive) population so as to increase (tax) revenue. In view of Nepveu’s and his family’s ambitions to expand plantation system, representations geared towards economic production can be seen to have materially benefitted the colony’s distant elite and their business partners on the ground.¹⁵¹

Race

Nepveu draws on both high and low brow Enlightenment scholarship as a means of justifying and narrativizing Europe’s imposed racial hierarchy. For instance, the author directly quotes numbered passages from Montesquieu’s 1748 *De l'esprit des lois* (The Spirit of Law) and Rousseau’s last response to his 1750 *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* (Discourse on the Sciences and Art).¹⁵² Although it is imperative to avoid reducing the Enlightenment “to its more infamous ideas”, in the case of Montesquieu and Rousseau their views on the enslavement of Africans exemplify the limits of the rational subject’s claim to universality.¹⁵³ In brief both authors condemn slavery. Rousseau, for instance, ascertains that the institution is corrupting for all those involved: “I shall speak of that sort of Men, cruel brutal ones, whom are masters and

¹⁵⁰ Fatah-Black, *Sociëteit van Suriname*, 127.

¹⁵¹ Stipriaan, *Surinaams Contrast*, 51.

¹⁵² “J. J. Rousseau, in zyn laatste antwoord voor zyn reedvoering op de weetenschappen, pag 128 in ’t Fransch zegt [...] Den Presidert Montesquieu, [...] in het Fransch, L’esprit de Lois 115, c181” (J. J. Rousseau, in his last reply to his discourse on the sciences, page 128 in French says [...] The scholar Montesquieu, [...] the Spirit of Law in French, 115, c181). Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 221-222.

¹⁵³ Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 23.

those of the other sort, scoundrels and liars, who are called slaves.”¹⁵⁴ Montesquieu similarly represents slavery as corruptive to masters and slaves alike before arguing that the slavery of black(ened) humans can be reluctantly accepted. As such in view of Montesquieu, Nepveu determines “if [slavery] can ever be tolerated at all, it can be so with regards to these black African races; for it must be less offensive than with others”.¹⁵⁵ One reason given is the black(ened) human’s “very flat nose and black skin” which “Montesquieu jests about” with Nepveu also pointing to African civilisation’s supposed corruption in addition to the existence of an innate African malice.¹⁵⁶

Reading Montesquieu in detail, one can determine that his simultaneous denunciation and approval of African slavery reflects the view that humanity was hierarchically ordered. Maintaining that the institution ran counter to the universal desire for freedom, Montesquieu condemned slavery in the abstract.¹⁵⁷ However, in view of “*raison naturelle*” (natural reason), that is, the consideration of climatic, cultural, social and political factors, enslaving Africans

¹⁵⁴ “ik zal met spreken van dat soort van Menschen, wreeden brutaal, die men meesters en van die andere soort, schelmen en luigenaars, die men slaaven noemt.” Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 221.

¹⁵⁵ “Men zon daar bij wel mogen stellen, dat zo het ooit zonder kwetsinge van het gemoet toegelaten kan weezen het omtrent deeze zwarte Africaanse geslagten, immers minder aankootelyk moet zijn als omtrent andere; met zo zeer om haar platte neus en swarte huyd gelyk den Franschen Presidert Montesquieu zeekerlyk schertsinde wyze, zegt, als omdat zy reets algemeen onder haar vorsten en ook nog byzonder onder elkander in slavernij zyn, dezelve wel meest, schoon er wel nu en dan goede ander gevonden worden van aart zeekerlyk de kwaadste en allerbooste zyn die gevonden worden” (It may well be said that if it can ever be tolerated at all, it can be so with regards to these black African races for it must be less offensive than with others, with their very flat nose and black skin as the French scholar Montesquieu jests about, further, as it is the case that they are usually enslaved amongst her princes, and also especially amongst each other, although now and then there are good ones to be found yet too certainly the angriest and most wicked are also found amongst them). Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 220-221.

¹⁵⁶ Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 220-221.

¹⁵⁷ Charles-Louis Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. and ed, Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller, and Harold Samuel Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 251-252.

and the ‘southern nations’ more broadly was deemed tolerable and even necessary.¹⁵⁸ Drawing on a range of liberal theorists who emphasised rationality as the defining feature of (full) humanity, for instance, John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, Descartes, David Hume and Voltaire, both Rousseau and Montesquieu depicted non-Europeans as natural humans existing in a state of immanence, instinctual “quasi-animal” humans.¹⁵⁹ For Montesquieu lack of rationale disqualifies black(ened) humans from ethical consideration, something evident in the scholar’s business portfolio.¹⁶⁰ Nevertheless, reflecting the notion of the humane ideal, the belief that “humanity is gained by performing acts of kindness and attuning oneself to the suffering of those of inferior status and lesser capacity”, Montesquieu does implore Europeans to treat enslaved Africans in a civil manner.¹⁶¹ The scholar argues: “Reason wants the power of the master not to extend beyond things that are of service to him; slavery must be for utility and not for voluptuousness. The laws of modesty are a part of natural right and should be felt by all the nations in the world.”¹⁶² Thus as well as positioning the enslavement of Africans as justifiable if it serves rational means, such as economic development, Montesquieu positions Europeans as paternalist figures, highly developed and hence burdened with the responsibility of caring for and developing lesser beings. In this light his notion of ‘the laws of modesty’ similarly

¹⁵⁸ Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, 252.

¹⁵⁹ Rationality, imagined to be a specifically European innovation, is also employed as a means of hierarchically ordering in Rousseau’s *Discours sur l’origine et les fondements de l’inégalité parmi les hommes* (Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men) (1755).

¹⁶⁰ Montesquieu was the “president of the parliament of the slave-trading port of Bordeaux and shareholder in the Compagnie des Indes”, the French West India Company. Fayçal Falaky, “Reading Rousseau in the Colonies: Theory, Practice, and the Question of Slavery,” *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 19, no. 1 (January 2015): pp. 5-19, 9; and Sergio Armando Gallegos-Ordorica, “The Racial Legacy of the Enlightenment in Simón Bolívar’s Political Thought,” *Critical Philosophy of Race* 6, no. 2 (2018): pp. 198-215, 206.

¹⁶¹ Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 53.

¹⁶² Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, 255.

reflects the idea that European sexual norms were the telos of all humanity rather than something provincial. This framing is evident throughout *Annotatiën* with Nepveu interpreting African (cultural) difference as absence or chaos.

Another argument that positions the European atop the hierarchical scale of humanity is climate theory, a school of thought developed to a considerable extent by Montesquieu and reproduced in *Annotatiën*.¹⁶³ In brief, climate theory states that those who “inhabit or originated in cold or temperate climates [...] have better physical and moral dispositions than others.”¹⁶⁴ As such Europe’s relatively stable environment is viewed as a factor that allowed whites to transcend nature. Other parts of the world are perceived to be too hot, cold or tempestuous to permit full human development. Discussing the factors that influence the “nature” of the Amerindians, Nepveu reproduces climate theory by detailing their “sinfulness, that the climate entails”.¹⁶⁵ This logic almost certainly extends to Africa and Africans as the author notes in the index for *Neeger* that Africans “are hardy against the climate, her land deadly for whites”, a sentiment supporting the idea that black(ened) humans had developed to be physically strong and tough against the environment, consequently rendering them mentally defective.¹⁶⁶ For Jackson, the implication Africans are underdeveloped due their lack of rationality and attachment to an

¹⁶³ Gallegos-Ordorica, “The Racial Legacy of the Enlightenment,” 203-205.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 204.

¹⁶⁵ “ook nog behlaven de sindelykheid, die het climaat medebrengt”. Nepveu’s discussion of Amerindians in this section also alludes to his likely views on the hierarchy of races. Despite the climate Nepveu notes, “en veele mits een wijnig educatie wel voor aartig, verstandige en schrander kunnen zyn” (many, provided a little education, can become nice, sensible and shrewd). This sentiment of Amerindian potential is echoed throughout with Nepveu describing the various ‘nations’ as intelligent, proud and confident in comparison to Africans. This again reflects Nepveu’s decontextualised and atomised perspective of reality, he does not consider the process of being enslaved (the Middle Passage, racialisation and so on) as something that may influence the African captive population. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 99.

¹⁶⁶ “zyn gehard tegens ’t climaat, haar land doodelyk voor Blanken”. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 408.

inferior climate highlights the impossibility of achieving full humanity. In view of African cognitive and climatic inferiority, Jackson argues, “in order to *become* human without qualification, you must already *be* Man in its idealized form, yet Man, understood simultaneously as an achievement and bio-ontology, implies whiteness and specifically nonblackness.”¹⁶⁷ This suggests that that even if black(ened) people achieve rationality, they remain junior partners. An Enlightened African is better than a barbarian, but an imitation nonetheless.

As a text in dialogue with previous descriptions of Suriname, *Annotatiën*’s intertextual links to the works of previous or contemporaneous descriptions are evident in the recycling of representations about Africans. In particular the depiction of captives as “Heathen Slaves from the dynasty of Cham” (Herlein, 1718) occurs in Herlein’s, Hartsinck’s, Warren’s and Fermin’s texts as well as black(ened) human’s supposed innate malice; Warren referring to the enslaved to this end as “naturally treacherous and bloody” and Hartsinck similarly as “treacherous, cruel”.¹⁶⁸ Further intertextual references demonstrate the monograph’s strong connections to the Dutch slave trade and its formal and informal culture industry. Slave terminology derived from *Westindische Compagnie* (WIC) and later private slave trading firms feature strongly. For example, regarding ethnic groups, Nepveu discusses *Papa* slaves, those from the Slave Coast, “contemporary eastern Togo, Benin and the Western part of Nigeria”, *Fidaase* or *Fida* captives for those “procured by the Dutch via the ports of Ardra or Allada and Whydah, among the oldest trade posts of the Dutch West India Company in Western Africa” and *Loango* or Angolan slaves who were people “embarked from a Dutch trading post on the banks of the Congo river [...] in

¹⁶⁷ Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 32.

¹⁶⁸ Oostindie, *Paradise Overseas*, 30.

the kingdom of Loango (or Brama)".¹⁶⁹ Nepveu also mentions *Cormantijn* captives which denotes "people who were deported from the Gold Coast, the central and eastern part of modern Ghana up to Accra."¹⁷⁰ The author further employs to the arguments of (an unnamed) Jacobus Capitein, a Christian minister and theologian.¹⁷¹ At 8 years old Capitein was taken from his family in present day Ghana and sold by the WIC, later to study at Leiden University subsequently publishing a 1742 work that defended the slavery of Heathen Africans.¹⁷² He treatise was widely referenced by Dutch and more broadly European slave traders alike.

A further text cited is a 1770 edition of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, a London-printed monthly that discussed a wide range of topics with a strong focus on the frontiers of Europe's expanding empires. Nepveu discusses the magazine as a means to support his claim about the kind of dyes Amerindians use to paint their bodies.¹⁷³ Although this may appear neutral, in the context of knowledge production publications such as the aforementioned magazine were vital tools by which agents of colonialism gathered (crude) information about the colonies, their peoples, animals and plants. In turn this allowed detached colonists and financiers to make (better)

¹⁶⁹ Margot van den Berg, "Ningretongo and Bakratongo: Race/Ethnicity and Language Variation in 18th Century Suriname," *Revue Belge De Philologie Et D'histoire* 91, no. 3 (2013): pp. 735-761, 741-743.

¹⁷⁰ Berg, "Ningretongo and Bakratongo," 741-743.

¹⁷¹ Dienne Hondius, "'No Longer Strangers and Foreigners, but Fellow Citizens': The Voice and Dream of Jacobus Eliza Capitein, African Theologist in the Netherlands (1717-47)," *Immigrants & Minorities* 28, no. 2-3 (2010): pp. 131-153, 134.

¹⁷² Hondius, "'No Longer Strangers and Foreigners,'" 134.

¹⁷³ "In de Gentlemen Magazine te Londen gedrukt Ao 1770; geeft een docter berigt van zyn ondervinding van dit gebruikt tegen de persing. Met deeze oly gemengt met Rokoe bestryken de Indianen zig dagelyks, waarbij zy zig zeer wel bevinden. Zie verder fo: Articul Indianen" (Printed in the Gentlemen Magazine at London Ao 1770; re gives a doctor's report of his experience of this use against the pressing. With this oil mixed with yellow-dye the Indians brush themselves daily; where they are very well. See further: Article Indians). Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 201.

decisions about how best to further the project of dominance with information that framed their actions not only as morally justifiable but as necessary. Further, as demonstrated by Nepveu's use of the magazine, such publications formed the information networks that integrated the colonies into the wider global discourse.¹⁷⁴ Coffee houses, a slave-labour powered industry mentioned at one-point by Nepveu, were one of the main locations where discussions regarding everything from the supply of credit to the humanity of Africans took place.¹⁷⁵ It is likely that on his 1765-66 return to Amsterdam the soon-to-be-governor disseminated 'information' about Suriname to financiers, speculators and prospective colonisers in one of Amsterdam's many coffee houses.

Chapter Two: the Animal

Representations of animals in *Annotatiën* are overwhelmingly consistent. Nonhuman creatures are depicted as having a mechanistic mode of being rendering them undeserving of ethical consideration. For Nepveu, the animal is a gift from nature to (fully realised) humanity, a dynamic underscored by the notion of the universal rational human's innate superiority. In turn animals are almost exclusively represented as living commodities or forced mechanistic labourers. Their appropriation into human-made systems, such as capitalism and taxonomy, is portrayed as justifiable and even progressive.

¹⁷⁴ Ellis details how across Europe the coffee house was an important site for social, economic and political debate as well as for the dissemination of print-press publications, journals and books. Markman Ellis, *The Coffee House: A Cultural History* (London: Phoenix, 2005), chapters 11-12.

¹⁷⁵ Describing the spiritual 'ceremonies' of black(ened) captives Nepveu notes, "waartoe ook het dampen van Tabaks rook een remedie is, zodat het vertrek daar van vervuld word als een hollands coffij huys op den middag" (to which the smoking of tobacco smoke is also a remedy, so that the room is filled with it like a Dutch coffee house at noon). Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 298.

Nepveu follows Herlein's four taxonomy categories of animal: land *dieren* (animals), birds, *diertjes* (small animals, insects) and *ongediertjes* (vermin, literally un-animals) and sea creatures.¹⁷⁶ This distinction follows what was a layman's taxonomy in contrast to the system of binomial nomenclature as developed by Nepveu's contemporary Carl Linnaeus. To a far greater extent than Herlein, the author divides animals between the tame (domesticated) and the wild. For example, ducks are distinguished on the basis of whether they are "*Tamme voogels*" (Tame birds) or "*wilde vogels*" (wild birds).¹⁷⁷ Thus, there are two types of duck, "*Wilde Endvogels*" (Wild Duck-birds) and simply "*Endvogels*" (Duck-birds).¹⁷⁸ As well as cows there are "*Buffels, wilde koebeesten*" (Buffalos, wild cow-beasts).¹⁷⁹ Each of Nepveu's four categories of animal is the focus of a chapter in addition to one on plant life. The format and style of the chapter follows natural historical taxonomies and, through the occasional use of the first person, the broader Suriname travel/description genre to which Nepveu is in dialogue with. Elsewhere in *Annotatiën*, namely in the early chapters which centre on the production of various crops and the general economic life and layout of the colony, animals feature as (forced) labourers and to a lesser extent cultivated animals. The intertwined discourses of 18th century science and economic liberalism are the main linguistic means through which Nepveu makes sense of and assigns value to animals. This frames nonhuman creatures in a decidedly utilitarian light whereby animals are presented as mechanistic and valuable only in what they can 'give' to humans. To a lesser extent animals are shown to be a source of dangers and, in a handful of instances, the subjectivity and lifeworld of nonhuman animals are represented as more complex than that of an automaton's. Nevertheless almost all depictions of animals are rooted in the dual

¹⁷⁶ "Met een vertoog van de Bosch-grond, Water- en Pluim-gedierten;" Herlein, *Beschryvinge*, 3v.

¹⁷⁷ Nepveu, *Klad-aanteekeningen*, ca. 1772, 14; and Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 331.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 158, 163.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 6.

notion that animals lack perspective and do not qualify for ethical consideration, the representations hence function as reproductions and/or mediums of extraction. This chapter proceeds by outlining representations of animals as mechanical taxonomised commodities, forced labourers, limited sources of danger and human-like animals. I also briefly discuss Nepveu's depiction of plants and the nonliving nonhuman.

Ordering Nature's Larder

In the 1718 description of Suriname, the introduction to the chapter on birds states: "All the works of God are glorious; he made them all with wisdom; the earth is full of his riches".¹⁸⁰ For Herlein all creatures embody the Almighty. For Nepveu however instead of belonging to God's family "all wild plants, animals [...] belong to Natural History".¹⁸¹ This secular artificial structure, however, is not simply empirical – it is a thing of beauty. Referring to the "collection of Dr. Hans Sloane", a mass of "roughly 70,000 objects, including minerals, geological, botanical and zoological specimens" donated to the British state in 1753 by the botanist, naturalist and slaveholder, Nepveu describes it as "very beautiful" and "a rather perfect collection".¹⁸² Yet he also adds that "there are still many plants, birds, fish, animals, such as in Guyana, which are not yet known in that collection."¹⁸³ It is against this "almost infinite" global

¹⁸⁰ "Alle de werken Gods zijn heerlijk; hy heeft haar alle gemaakt met wijsheid; het aardrijk is vol van zijne goederen". Herlein, *Beschryvinge*, 183.

¹⁸¹ "alle wilde planten dieren en wat verde tot de Natuurlyke Historie behoort. Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 161.

¹⁸² "zeer fraaij [...] een vry volmaakte collectie". Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 161; Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 336-337; and Kelly Elizabeth Yasaitis, "Collecting Culture and the British Museum," *Curator: The Museum Journal* 49, no. 4 (2006): pp. 449-462, 451.

¹⁸³ "uitgezondert, van accuraat, sal men de liefhebbers daartoe verwijdert. schoon er nog veele planten vogelen vischen dieren houde gevonden van guijana die in die collection nog niet bekend zijn." Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 161.

task of categorisation, to which Nepveu seeks to contribute, that the classifications in the *Annotatiën* should be seen.¹⁸⁴ The efforts of the governor and thousands of other Europeans during the Enlightenment to categorise and ‘know’ all living and nonliving entities relays a desire to control the relatively recent colonial ‘possessions’ in turn reifying the self-image of Europeans as an Enlightened rational yet hierarchically dominant people. To this end Earle argues classifications “underpinned early modern systems of knowledge in the Atlantic world”, they “reflected a yearning for order that transcended any division between science and statecraft.”¹⁸⁵

Nepveu’s desire to order nature is revealed in his musings on animal subgroups. Of note he discusses whether “the crocodile or caiman can be counted more as a water than a land animal”.¹⁸⁶ Elsewhere Nepveu debates the proper name for a Manatee, a problem he notes results from “the ignorance of the Indian names”: “*Lamantin*, I cannot see from the Description whether [Herlein] has placed this under the name of Manatee, they are generally called *Lamen* on the islands”.¹⁸⁷ Additionally Nepveu writes: “Fish and sea monsters, many sorts some not known” indicating in line with his comments on Sloane’s collection that further taxonomical work is needed in and around Suriname.¹⁸⁸ Nepveu also provides anatomical descriptions that both familiarise and acts a means of better knowing (and therefore dominating) an animal. For example, speaking of the “great crabs” Nepveu details that “just as in Zeeland, the body is a bit

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Rebecca Earle, “The Pleasures of Taxonomy: Casta Paintings, Classification, and Colonialism,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (2016): pp. 427-466, 431.

¹⁸⁶ “de crocodil of kaaijman kan men meer voor water als land dier reekenen”. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 345.

¹⁸⁷ “*Lamantin*, ik kan aan de Beschrijving niet sien of het selve dat hij onder de naam van Manatij gesteld heeft *Lamen* zijn werd se doorgaants op de ijlanden genaamt, omme deselve zeederen weegens de onkunde der Indiaanse namen”. Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 161.

¹⁸⁸ “Vissen en zee gedrochten, meenigte soorte eenige niet bekend”. Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 14.

higher and rounder”.¹⁸⁹ Further, the author determines the rhamdia or *kikkervis* (frog-fish) has “all four legs complete like a toad, but the tail and head still like a fish”.¹⁹⁰ Nepveu also sporadically details the function and location of various anatomical parts of the creatures he describes, for example, he notes that snakes have “their Venom under the Teeth”.¹⁹¹ The application of general rules atomise the nonhuman by rendering them as discrete entities with discrete characteristics as opposed to interlinked parts of a broader ecological system.¹⁹² Further they enable Nepveu to master nature by crudely sketching out basic information that can be used against the animal in question. For example, assumably preceeded by information gathered on the migrations of fish off the coast of Barbice, Nepveu notes that fishing in this region has been “regulated in a fixed time and manner as in Holland” which he argues benefits “Whites and Slaves” alike.¹⁹³

Although Nepveu does not directly address the nature of animal subjectivity, the language he employs indicates that the nonhuman was viewed as a reactive and predictable being. In essence

¹⁸⁹ “De groote krabben is een zeer keller vis zynde van een ander gedaante, met een groote teugel en vyf klander als pooten, daar de eetbaare vissen zit, even als in de Zeeuwse dog het lighaam wat hooger en ronder”. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 351.

¹⁹⁰ “alle vier de poten als een pad compleet had doch de staart en kop nog als een visch”. Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 162.

¹⁹¹ “hun Venijn onder de Tanden”. Ibid, 13.

¹⁹² Nepveu also ascribes general rules to plants largely as a means to bolster economic production. The author details the average pattern of growth, plant size and generally economically important qualities: “De Caracus bomen groeje veel dikker hout, ook hooger en schooner de blaad grooter” (The *Watercacao* [*Pachira aquatic*] trees grow much thicker wood [than the wild], also higher and prettier and the leaves larger). The author refers to the renowned Dutch botanist the “vermaarden professor Boerhaave” (illustrious professor Boerhaave) of which one of the colony’s unnamed “Heere Botaniste” (Gentleman Botanists) was a disciple of. Boerhaave’s writings or collections are not discussed. Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 111, 114, 166.

¹⁹³ “in de Barbice als gezegt is word in de vangst even als in Holland omtrent de Haring vangt opvast gestelde tyde en maniere gereguleerd, en worde de souten om ’t gantische voor uit deelingte aan Blanke en Slaaven te trekken”. Ibid, 162.

they are represented and by extension understood to be not much different from automatons. For example, animals are shown to be purely reactive and instinctive beings, responding to stimuli as opposed to having abstract thoughts like Europeans. Nepveu argues that the “*tijger*” (jaguar) does not attack humans “unless raging with hunger, or if he is by his child, it is also said that there are examples, that when they are shot and not killed, they come at the shooter.”¹⁹⁴ The supposedly mechanistic behaviour of the animal is outlined to the greatest degree not in a description of an animal itself but of the captives’ apparent response to one. Seen as lacking abstraction and the ability to objectively and rationally observe reality, Nepveu infers that the slaves’ reaction to a “very human loving” type of snake showcases their underdeveloped view of the world.¹⁹⁵ Discussing the catching of rats and mice, Nepveu determines that “although this and other animalistic workings are natural, it gives a great impression on the other slaves”.¹⁹⁶ Nepveu’s juxtaposition frames that which is “natural” as something that should not surprise a rational human, ‘animal workings’ being totally predictable and reducible to a certain number of generalised rules. The author’s snubbing of the captives in view of the snake further reflect the fact that Nepveu views his interpretation of reality as the only legitimate one, their difference in perception imagined to be a non-existent, limited or chaotic understanding.

Likely seeking to locate the much sought after universal natural laws, on a few occasions Nepveu postulates about the behaviours of certain animals.¹⁹⁷ For instance, describing snakes

¹⁹⁴ “ten ware misgelyk indien by raasende van honger of zeg by zyn eerst geworpene jongen bevond, ook zegt men zyn er exempelen, dat wanneer zy geschooten en niet doodelyk geraakt zyn, dat zy dan op den schutter afkomen.”. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 321.

¹⁹⁵ “Geuda slang [...] die Slangen zyn niet vervijmig en zeer menschievende, aasen op rotten en muijsen, die zy wel weeten te vangen, schoon dit en andere diergelyke uytwerksels maar natuurlyk zyn, zo geeft dat grooten indruk op de andere slaaven”. Ibid, 241.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 241.

¹⁹⁷ Thomas L. Hankins, *Science and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), 7.

the author hypothesises: “They lay, most tightly rolled, and have a long thin tongue that occasionally sticks out, on which [they] probably get some small indiscernible animals or eggs that feed them.”¹⁹⁸ Similarly, Nepveu describes the electric ray: “*Torpedo*. is now well known in Europe, if you touch it with a [fencing] foil or another long piece of iron it gives a hit or tick just like the Communion of Electricity, but much harder so that you can fall from it.”¹⁹⁹ Nepveu’s description highlights not only the increasingly scientific attitude embedded in natural history, Herlein on the contrary described the *torpedo* as “being lively, touching any other creature”, but also the expansive global information networks which connected science and the colonies.²⁰⁰ The research that determined the torpedo was electrical was conducted throughout Dutch Guyana in the mid-18th century by a network of European researchers centring in Leiden, Haarlem and Amsterdam.²⁰¹ Nepveu’s reference to the ‘Communion of Electricity’ is likely a product of their work. Yet despite its Dutch origins, Nepveu frames this

¹⁹⁸ “Ze leggen, meest inmal kandergerold, en hebben een lange dijne tong die se nu en dan uit stecken waar op deselve waar schijnelijk eenige kleijne onsigtbare dierties of eijssenties krijgen die hen voeden.” Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 157.

¹⁹⁹ “*Torpedo*. is thans in Europa genoeg bekend, als men se met een floret of ander lang stuk ijser aanraakt geeft het een slag of tick even als de Communicatie van de Elextriciteit, doch veel harder sodat men er van kan neder vallen.” Ibid, 161.

²⁰⁰ “*Torpedo*, of zo de Engelschen zeggen Num-eel, zo veel als een beroerde Aal of Paling, dewelke levendig zijnde eenig ander Schepzel aanrakende, geeft aan alle leden van de zelve eene zulke doofheid en beroerte, dat zy voor een tijd lang ten eenemaal ongevoelig; en het is gelooflijk dat verscheide uijden verdronken zijn, die het ongeluk gehad hebben dat zy in 't swemmen over de Rivieren door zo een Vis geraakt geworden. Zijn ook by andere Kramp-vis genaamt; staande de Menschen onwetende, wanneer zy door een schielijke bevinge, (het welk dit Gedierte in de Natuur heeft, en schijnt als gegeven te zijn tot een middel om daar door zijne vryheid te bekomen,) ademende zulke koude dampen uit, dat de zelve die het Gedierte aan raken gelijkzaam alle kragren verliezen. In der waarheid een vreemde en wonderlijke eigenschap, dewelke ons met geweld dringt vele andere Natuurlijke dingen, tot nog toe niet aangenomen, te geloven.” Herlein, *Beschryvinge*, 194.

²⁰¹ Peter J. Koehler, Stanley Finger, and Marco Piccolino, “The ‘Eels’ of South America: Mid-18th-Century Dutch Contributions to the Theory of Animal Electricity,” *Journal of the History of Biology* 42, no. 4 (2009): pp. 715-763, 752-753.

knowledge as something now possessed by Europe. This arguably affirms that for the governor Europe rather than simply the Netherlands was viewed as the Enlightened community to which he belonged and was in dialogue with. Scientific progress here is a collective project carried out and forward by Europeans at large, rather than individual nations.

Throughout the natural history chapters Nepveu shows himself to look upon animals more as commodities than as objects of scientific inquiry. Recurrently what initially appears to be an account of an animal's behaviour is in fact provided in order to instruct the reader how to kill and then eat the creature. Three notable examples include the sea turtle, the large water snake and wading birds. Of the sea turtle Nepveu notes, "she comes to lay her eggs on the sand banks" before noting that this is the best time to collect her eggs and the animal.²⁰² Concerning the water snake, Nepveu first describes how the animal mechanistically responds to prey – "if any animal comes within its reach he jumps forward [...] first he rolls over it, then he manages to choke it" – before noting that when the prey is ingested – "[it] appears three times thicker than his throat" – "one can come to him with a club and beat him to death, it has a lot of fat that has to be boiled out or roasted and preserved".²⁰³ The "snipes [...] of various sorts", meanwhile, "are mainly shot at the beach, they are so thick together that if one shoots with a fine hail into the sand beneath them, and then shoots often a hundred and fifty lay [dead]."²⁰⁴ This blend of natural historical and economic language is not a contradiction. The logics of taxonomy and

²⁰² "als se op de zand bakken aande oevers haar eijeren komen leggen, wel 3 a 400 stuks die de zon uitbroeit savonds neem". Nepveu, *Klad-aanteekeningen*, ca. 1772, 157.

²⁰³ "als eenig dier onder zijn bereik komt springt hij voorig toe [...] ten eerste rold hij er sig om, dan weet hij het te verstikken [...] schoon 't drie maalen dikker schijnt als zijn keelgat [...] en dan kan men hem met een knots ligetelyk bij koomen en doodslaan, het heeft veel vet, dat uit gekookt of gebraade en bewaart word". Ibid, 158.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 157.

commodification flow seamlessly into one another as they emanate from the same perspective, that of the transcendent universal subject looking to control and extract from the colonies.

The status of the animal as a commodity is underscored by the frequent reference to the taste of animal flesh.²⁰⁵ In fact, despite often only a few lines or even words long, the majority of Nepveu's descriptions detail what a creature tastes like. Amongst them include the "*Jacitin*", a bird "people now call crow", which is "very good in taste".²⁰⁶ Further "three sorts of wild doves", which Nepveu notes are "very tasty" as well as the "*Pakoesjes, MakaMaka*" fish (*Schizodon fasciatus*) which is "very good to eat".²⁰⁷ Also described is the manatee, which in line with its formulation as commodity is detailed as being available at the butchers alongside the sea turtle. Nepveu calls it "the sea cow [...] being very good and tasting like calf meat."²⁰⁸ Similarly Nepveu discusses the sea turtle in terms of its durability as an edible commodity. He

²⁰⁵ In addition to animals, to a lesser extent Nepveu discusses the tastes of fruits, vegetables and spices. Of note, Nepveu describes the pomelo – "De gideons appel, is een kleijne pompelmoes citroen van een zeer kostelyk en aangenaam zuur word veel tot het make van punsch (een gezonde drank in die lande gebruikt)" (Gideon's apple, is a small grapefruit citrus having a very delicious and pleasant sourness, used a lot to make punch (a healthy drink in that country)) – and "De queijse nooten, dat de aller vetste en rijkste not is die men men ergens vinde kan de melk als amandelmelk daarvan gemaakt is zeer kragtig. Men eet se ook wel geroost om de magtigheid die eenige niet verdragen kunnen te matigen" (the great *aqueijse* nut which is the fattest and richest nut one can find anywhere; one can make milk like almond milk-which is very potent. They are also eaten roasted to moderate the power that some cannot bear). Reflecting the extensive circulation of edible commodities in the 18th century, Nepveu also notes that Surinamese cinamon is "veel scherper als de oost Indische caneel smaakt" (far sharper than east Indian cinamon tastes). Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 166, 169.

²⁰⁶ "Jacitiin zal zijn de vogel die men nu krauw noemt, hout sig op bij of in dwampen daar bij meede op vind en wormen aast, is goed van smaak..." Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 159.

²⁰⁷ "Daar zijn twee of drie soorten van wilde duiven, die meest Bruyn van veederen en om de hals glisteerend zijn, als afgebrooke Indigo, behalve de kleijne tortel duijtjes, die zeer lekker zijn"; "De Pakoesjes, MakaMaka [...] zeer goed te eeten zijn". Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 160, 162.

²⁰⁸ "Menatij: is de zeekoe is gemeenlyk so geslagt en sowel als de zeeschildpadden bij de slagters verkogt, zynde zeer goed en als Calfsvlees". Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 343.

writes: “This great beast lives for a very long time if you clean it yourself with seawater every day, I brought one with me to Holland, in a square tank”.²⁰⁹ Continuing the author details that the animal survived eight weeks without food and was resultantly “very good, when she was slaughtered and eaten in Amsterdam.”²¹⁰ Equally Nepveu notes that small snakes can be stored for a long time before being eaten.²¹¹

Other descriptions which emphasise the aesthetic or sonic beauty of an animal also mention taste. The “Moutou” bird (*anioema*, horned screamer) is described as “being a beautiful shape [...] on the underside the plumes are completely white just like a black skirt with a white lining” yet it also is shown to contain “meat [which] is good to eat, but very dry.”²¹² The “*Uware Piranga*”, described as being like “a Heron who changes her colour three times, is now known under the name of Flamingo”, is depicted as a bird with the “most beautiful incarnate red that can be seen”.²¹³ Nevertheless Nepveu maintains that they “are also good to eat, especially when

²⁰⁹ “Dit groote beest leeft zeer lang als men ‘t zelve dagelyks met zeewater verschoont, ik he er een meede in Holland gebragt, in een vierkante bak; die alle dagen 2 maalen ververscht wierd, zonder dat iets anders daar in is gedaan, dan alleen in de kroostzee, heeft men het eenige maalen wat kroost voorgelegt, waarna hu even heeft gehapt, dog weijnig doorgeslokt, naderhand is het zelve wel 8 weeken zonder iets anders als zeewater geweest”. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 328-329.

²¹⁰ “was evenwel zeer goed, toen zy geslagt en gegeeten wierd te Amsterdam.” Ibid, 328-329.

²¹¹ “Kleijne slange bewaart is Casse met kleijne gaatijs daar de lugt vrij in kost, sonder eete groot geworde” (Small snakes are kept in bags with small holes to allow the air to flow freely, [they] become large without food). Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 157.

²¹² “Moutou, [...] zijnde van een schoone gedaante [...] aan ‘t onderlijft zijn de pluijmen gaants wit, even als eens swarte rok met een witte voering, [...] ‘t vleesch goet te eeten doch veat droog.” Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 160; and J. van Donselaar, *Woordenboek van het Nederlands in Suriname van 1667 tot 1876* (Amsterdam: Meertens Instituut, 2013), 154.

²¹³ “Uware Piranga, als een Reijger die ge koleur haarer veedere drie maalen veandert, is nu bekend onder de naam van Flamingo zijnde eerst asch gnauw, ver volgens Bruyn agtig en algaand weg worden alle de ... vederen... eindelijk van schoonste incarnaat root die men sien kan, zij leeven aande oeuvvers van visch en wormmjes om

they only have brown feathers”.²¹⁴ Speaking of the yellow-throated toucan, who he refers to as the “*Swarte Minog*, is named *koejake* by the Negroes”, Nepveu describes their physical beauty as well as the pleasure their existence endows upon him, “such a beautiful black with a yellow tail [...] many nest together constantly flying to and fro, always flapping loudly, which gives liveliness and is amusing.”²¹⁵ Yet he also mentions that these birds “are eaten by me”.²¹⁶ In addition to exemplifying the void of ethical consideration vis-à-vis animals, Nepveu’s focus on taste arguably reflects the idea that hedonistic sensory fulfilment was – in addition to the advancement of the universal human’s power and the transformation of nature – a major priority for Enlightened humans. De Lange argues that in European civilisation prior to Descartes, “the

deselver heerlijke couleur worden er nu en dan schoon ’t seer beswaarlijk vald na Europa over gevoerd.” Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 159.

²¹⁴ “zijn ook goet te eeten vooral als se nog maar aan haar bruyne veederen zijn.” Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 159.

²¹⁵ “Swarte Minog, zal weesen die de Negers koejake noemen van haar gelwit ook wel geelstansten also so schoon swart met en geele staart zijn worde me gegeten, doch zijn aartig wyl se gaarn bij de wominge op hoge boomen nestelen, zijnde laar nesten even als een langebeurs die se van bove duurt weeten vast te maaken, en daar se veele bij elkander nestelen geduurig heen en weervliegen altyd geluyd slaande, dat leevendigheid geeft en amuzant is”. Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 160.

²¹⁶ Small birds feature amongst the few taxonomical descriptions which do not represent animals as food. They include the “t huijs vogeltje” (house bird, tropical wren), in Sranan Tongo *gado-fowloe* (God’s bird) due the belief it had special protection, of which Nepveu notes, “veel in kome nestelen en jongen broejen. ’t geen zeer aangenaam is, so om haar gezang van de vroege morge als omdat se geduurig met het voede van haar jonge telkens als se wat aan deselve gebragt hebben, een singen” (many come to nest and brood young, which is very pleasant, her song of the early morning as when they continually fed their young, whenever they have brought something to them, a sing). A description is of the “*Trompetter*” (grey-winged trumpeter) which Nepveu details “Deeze laatste zogenaamt Trompetter omdat hy met zyn agter kwatier een bromment geluyd maakt, is zeer vrolyk en menschlievend” (this aforementioned Trumpeter is so-named because he makes a hum with his back quarters, is very cheerful and people-loving). INepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 160-161; and Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 333.

senses had derived their measure and criterion from cosmic harmony.”²¹⁷ Rationalism subsequently divorced man from God, taste was secularised thereby creating the impetus, “to arrange and recreate our world of experience in such a way that it ‘pleases us’”, rather than to coexist within and spiritually attain “knowledge of a true, but absent world”.²¹⁸ Taste is hence a marker of civilised (secular) life and reflection of the growing willingness of Europeans to transform the physical world in order to satisfy their consumer cravings, a development exemplified by the explosion of slave-powered coffee, sugar and caoco plantations.

Descriptions of the taste of animal flesh also sustain and mirror the power dynamics of the colony.²¹⁹ In particular, (in)access to specific meats reflects Suriname’s hierarchy of race. Thus speaking of the catfish Nepveu notes, “the *Bagger* a large Fish [...] is reckoned as the worst and is given to the slaves”.²²⁰ The use of the third person further demonstrates that the governor has not eaten the “slave fish”, rather he knows about its taste through others.²²¹ By extension the author’s frequent references to the tasty animals he has consumed affirms his position as a racial superior. At the level of appropriation, representations of animals as tasty commodities reflect the fact that food was a vehicle used by the colonisers to craft a new hybrid Europeanised civilisation in the New World out of the ashes of the Amerindian world. This is illustrated by

²¹⁷ Frits De Lange, “Moraal, een Kwestie van Smaak? Verschuivingen in de Hedendaagse Moraal,” in *Moet Moraal Weer? Voorbij de Vrijblijvendheid en Zedenmeesterij* (Kampen: Kok, 1994), pp. 11-38, 22.

²¹⁸ De Lange, “Moraal, een Kwestie van Smaak?”, 22.

²¹⁹ Shannon Lee Dawdy, “‘A Wild Taste’: Food and Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Louisiana,” *Ethnohistory* 57, no. 3 (January 2010): pp. 389-414, 389.

²²⁰ “De *Bagger* een groote Vis [...] gereekent voor de slegtste en word aan de slaaven gegeven”; in the draft version Nepveu notes the *Bagger* is “gereekent voor slaave visch” (considered a slave fish). Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 347-348; and Nepveu, *Klad-aanteekeningen*, ca. 1772, 162.

²²¹ Ibid.

Nepveu's desire to civilise Suriname's "native resources" by offering serving suggestions.²²² For instance, the freshwater fish, referred to as the "*Praprarie*" or in Sranan Tongo the "*coema coema*", is noted to be "very good, which is best barbequed that is brought over the fire".²²³ Likewise the "*warrapmer* and *patakka*", "a scale fish like a small carp, which is very fat and tasty", is described as being "eaten fresh in *pepperpot* or on the smoker, with salt and pepper to reduce the oiliness, it is very tasty".²²⁴ Similarly, the "largest land tortoise" is described as being "very well stewed and made like a *fricacheto*".²²⁵ Discussing crabs, Nepveu notes "people make a tasty sauce with pepper and lime juice (this is also the same way in which oysters are stewed or fried up, it is tasty fayre, but it may be that it is not healthy)".²²⁶ In sharp contrast to the overwhelming majority of African individuals, the author's rudimentary descriptions of meals and pairings demonstrates that the Surinamese elite had access to goods from across the

²²² Dawdy, "'A Wild Taste,'" 389-390.

²²³ "Prapranie, Coema Coema en andere meer, is zeer goed, doch best gebarbekot dat is over 't vuur getroogt". Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 162.

²²⁴ "De warrapper en Patakka is een schubvisch als een kleyne karp er wat zeer vet en lekker [...]
varsch gegeten tot Peperpot of op de rooster wel met sout en peper toegemaakt om de vettigheid wat te derpen is se zeer lekker". Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 162.

²²⁵ "de grootste land schildpadden [...] zijn zeer goet gestooft af als een fricahetoe gemaakt." Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 157.

²²⁶ "maakt men met peper en limoen sap en daarbij smaakelyke sous (ook worden se op de manier als men oesters doch gestooft of op gefruit) , 't is een lekker eeten, doch 't kan zyn dat se niet gezond is". Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 163.

world.²²⁷ For example, Nepveu details that “[giant] tortoise meat [...] especially the liver” is commonly accompanied with “Madera wine”.²²⁸

To a lesser degree throughout the natural historical chapters Nepveu represents various creatures as aesthetic commodities or *Rariteiten* (curiosities). Notable examples include the flamingo and the “Awari” (southern opossum).²²⁹ Of the flamingo Nepveu writes that due to their “lovely colour they are now and then transported to Europe [alive], although it is very difficult”.²³⁰ This reflects the notion that animals, like any other colonial commodity, were conceived of in view of how they could be transported in a manner that protected their monetary value. Further the mention of the trade in “live exotic animals” indicates that the SC directors were aware and likely interested in this industry, live colonial creatures embodying the “wealth

²²⁷ Although the Amsterdam-based SC elites often sampled colonial delights in their own city, they would not have been able to taste as many animals as Nepveu. Hence the author provides numerous comparisons so as to familiarise the Dutch readership with the exotic tastes of Suriname. For instance, he notes the “groote kreeft” (large crayfish) has “beeter van vleesch als de Europiaanse zee kreefte” (better meat than the European sea lobster); similarly, in the draft version the “zeer lekker kreeft” (very tasty crayfish) is likened to crabs found in England. Likewise, the “Cirkas” crab (*Callinectes bocourti*) is described as being “plaatter” (flatter) than those in England “doch so groot niet” (but not so big). Nepveu also describes the “Heymar” (anjumara) as a “een groote schubvisch, als de Cabeljauw” (large scale fish, like the cod). Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 162-163; Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 350-351; Donselaar, *Woordenboek van het Nederlands in Suriname*, 88; and Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 162.

²²⁸ “het schildpadden vleesch en vooral de leever een zeeker middel is om alle kwaad uyt het bloed te drijven” (tortoise meat and especially the liver is a sure means to remove all evil from the blood). Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 328.

²²⁹ Donselaar, *Woordenboek Van Het Nederlands in Suriname*, 97; and Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 326.

²³⁰ “Uware Piranga, als een Reijger die ge koleur haarer veedere drie maalen veandert, is nu bekend onder de naam van Flamingo zijnde eerst asch gnauw, ver volgens Bruyn agtig en algaand weg worden alle de ... vederen... eindelijk van schoonste incarnaat root die men sien kan, zij leeven aande oeuvvers van visch en wormmjes om deselver heerlijke couleure worden er nu en dan schoon ’t seer beswaarlijk vald na Europa over gevoerd.” Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 159.

and power that extended to distant lands.”²³¹ This demand was especially prominent in Amsterdam, a city which had established itself as a centre of (un)living curiosities and a point from where animals, plants and the skills to keep, trade and taxidermise them were distributed across Europe.²³²

On three occasions Nepveu details his own efforts to bring animals to Europe, namely, “two great rattle snakes”, the aforementioned sea turtle and an “*Espadon*” (swordfish).²³³ Such descriptions are accompanied by measurements which once more demonstrate the entanglement of commodification (capitalism) and taxonomy (science). For instance, describing the swordfish whose broadbill is described as “swords with teeth”, the author writes: “I brought one about five feet long and six or seven inches wide, its teeth two and a half inches long, going narrower from front to back and the teeth narrower or shorter.”²³⁴ As well as recording his trophy, the author’s purveying and measuring of specimens served key social purposes in the colonial context. First, bringing animals to the metropole was a means of improving social standing.²³⁵ In addition to gift giving and sharing/displaying – it is unlikely

²³¹ Ria Winters, “The Dutch East India Company and the Transport of Live Exotic Animals in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” in *Animal Trade Histories in the Indian Ocean World* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), pp. 27-64, 28.

²³² Tomomi Kinukawa, “Learned vs. Commercial?: The Commodification of Nature in Early Modern Natural History Specimen Exchanges in England, Germany, and the Netherlands,” *Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences* 43, no. 5 (2012): pp. 589-618, 592, 602; and Christopher Plumb, *The Georgian Menagerie: Exotic Animals in Eighteenth-Century London* (London: IB Tauris, & Co Ltd, 2015), 23.

²³³ “Ik heb twee groote ratel slangen overgebracht” Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 157; Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 343.

²³⁴ “Espadon, veele die swaarden met tanden zijn er thans in Holland van Suriname en elders overgezonden. Ik heb er een gebracht van vyfy voeten lang en 6 a 7 duymen breed, zynde de tanden twee en anderhalf duym lang, gaande van vooren na het eiynde smalter en de tanden kleijner of korter”. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 343.

²³⁵ Winters, “The Dutch East India Company and the Transport of Live Exotic Animals,” 32-34; and Kinukawa, “Learned vs. Commercial?,” 589-593.

Nepveu ate an entire sea turtle alone – those people considered naturalists “became the object of curiosity themselves” in 18th century society.²³⁶ This echoes the second function, the assertion of racial identity. As well as a means and reflection of Nepveu’s status as a teleologically superior being, curiosity as Kinukawa argues was “a mark of whiteness; being curious meant having white desire.”²³⁷ The taxonomisation and commodification of nature, in Suriname and in Europe, were hence seen as rational progressive pursuits which would “result in the improvement of the entire colonial society.”²³⁸ This is likely one reason why, in discussing Sloane’s collection, Nepveu advises the reader how he can see the collection noting, “[it] was published in England with pictures, those who might be extra curious because of this would be able to pay for the purchase of that work.”²³⁹ This exemplifies that knowledge production and engaging in the trade of exotic goods and their replicas were intertwined dynamics. In the 18th century knowledge production and collation was an elite sport.²⁴⁰

Economic Entities

Throughout the natural history chapters Nepveu’s primary conceptualisation of the animal is as a commodity. Elsewhere in the document animals are similarly rendered as economic entities, namely as (forced) labourers and/or cultivated sources of food. Such representations mitigate

²³⁶ Kinukawa, “Science and Whiteness as Property in the Dutch Atlantic World: Maria Sibylla Merian’s *Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium* (1705),” *Journal of Women’s History* 24, no. 3 (2012): pp. 91-116, 106.

²³⁷ *Ibid*, 106.

²³⁸ *Ibid*, 102.

²³⁹ “vermits het zelve met plaaten in Engeland uytgegeeven is, zouden die geene, die extra curieus deswegens mogten zyn, zig met den inkoop van dat werk kunnen voldoen.” Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 336-337.

²⁴⁰ This is underscored by Nepveu’s listing of the price of the Sloane collection. He details it cost “30000 L sterlings, dat is over de 300000 Guldens gerembourseerd” (30000 L sterling, that is about 300000 guilders cash on delivery). *Ibid*, 336-337.

or repress other features of an animal's existence – such as their sentience, social/ecological relations and individuality – instead depicting nonhuman animals as homogenous sources of profit to be exploited to the fullest. Outside of the natural historical chapters, all representations of animals are cost-orientated. The majority of the aforementioned working or cultivated animals are imported European species. Nepveu does not describe their appearance, temperament or behaviour thus signifying their (imagined) uniformity and lack of being. Labouring animals are only differentiated on account of their type (mule, pig) and productivity, for instance, “work asses” and “milk cattle”.²⁴¹ The main referential categorisation for animal labourers is the term “beast”, a term encompassing cows, oxen and occasionally horses forced to pull and push the cogs of grinding machinery.²⁴²

Nepveu also discerns between animals on the basis of their ability to work. For instance, the “*slegte Paarden*” (bad horses) that are brought by English traders.²⁴³ Such “needed horses” are described as being necessary for “sugar mills and other functions, the majority of them come from boats from north America which also bring provisions such as tobacco, mackerel, shad and other items brought in for the slaves which are very necessary.”²⁴⁴ The horses are deemed bad due to their “mortality” which the author notes “often exceeds the acceptable number of yearly deaths, yes sometimes up to 50 to 60 heads in a year”.²⁴⁵ In this formulation death is a

²⁴¹ “werk assen [...] melk vee”. Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 87.

²⁴² “Beeste = Moolen om Zuyker te maale Plan en Kosten” (Beast = Mills, to mill sugar Plans and Costs). Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 6.

²⁴³ Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 164.

²⁴⁴ “de nodige paarden voor haare suiker molens en ander die nuits mogen die vaartuigen die meeset alle uit noord america komen, eenige vivres aanbrengen voor al is de tabak en makreele, elft en andere die voor de slaave gekomt word zeer noodzakelyk”. Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 63.

²⁴⁵ “omdat de Engelsche slegte Paarden brengen, en daar de sterfte eens begint dikwils jaarlyks meer als het benooidge getal uitsterfte, ja somtyds tot 50 en 60 stuks in een jaar”. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 164.

problem when it passes the economically viable threshold. Value, therefore, is determined by how much labour can be extracted from an animal's body versus the monetary cost of purchase. This is reflected by Nepveu's comment on the use of rotational shiftwork in animal-powered mills, "the oxen work in the night which saves the Horses a lot, who if they also have to work at Night seldom last long".²⁴⁶ Economic logic here determines that animals should be treated in a manner that draws out as much labour as possible for the longest period of time, i. e. without killing them. Considerations of an animal's welfare in this light facilitate profit-making practices.

Similarly viewed in terms of cost and power, on a number of occasions Nepveu compares and equates labouring humans and animals. For example, comparing the mortality of horses to the deaths of new slaves the author writes, "besides, [the horses' mortality] is indescribable next to the inconveniences caused by the sicknesses of new slaves, such as the Yaws and so on, and also a great deal of loss".²⁴⁷ Likewise, human and animal labour is shown to be interchangeable to some degree. Discussing a new type of crushing mill in 1774 Nepveu notes "for want of mules this is now whirled round by Negroes".²⁴⁸ Black(ened) humans and animals are united in Nepveu's outlook as being both undeserving of ethical consideration. They are as such

²⁴⁶ "de nagts werken de ossen, dat de Paarden veel bespaart, die als zij ook bij Nagt moeten werken het zelden lang uijthouden". Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 143.

²⁴⁷ "de Engelsche hebben eenige muyl ezels gebragt, die tegens 4 a 500 't stuk verkogt worden, waarbij men zig beeter als bij de Paarden bevint daarbij is het niet beschrijkelijk, wat men met nieuwe slaaven voor ongemakken van zietens als de jaas &c heeft, en ook meest veel verlies". In the draft version the 'great deal of loss' is attached more directly to the captives, "de slaave zo duur moeten betaald" (the slaves have to pay so dearly). Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 164; and Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 104.

²⁴⁸ Humans and animals are further equated in terms of the space they occupy, "also er buijte Paramaribo Huysen en gronden genoeg zijn waar het melk vee sou kunnen gehoude worden en waar van eenige gemeene luyde soude kunnen leeven" (so there are enough houses and grounds outside Paramaribo where the dairy cattle could be kept and where some common people could live). Stipriaan, *Surinaams Contrast*, 157; and Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 87.

subject to the same atomising economically rational logics which levels everything on account of cost.

Animal labourers, as with the nonhuman more broadly, are also shown to be machine-like beings. For example, the use of the passive tense to describe ‘beast’ labour masks the reality that an animal is a subject forced to work through means of violence. To this end discussing the functioning of the spindle Nepveu notes that, “*met beeste laat rond gaan*” (with beasts [it is] caused to go round).²⁴⁹ An active intersubjective dynamic, the forcing of an animal to pull a heavy wheel, is here transformed into a naturalised automatic state of affairs. The implicit argument made is that animals perform labour robotically, their entire telos deemed to be to serve man.²⁵⁰ This is also evident in the referential terms used to describe machines powered by animals, namely, the “beast work mill”.²⁵¹ In addition to merging the living and the unliving, the ‘beast’ which this name refers to is not an individual or group but the sum of power extracted from all animals forced into this deadly contraption. This clouds the animals’ resistance (and suffering) rendering thereby textually reducing subjects with unique perspectives into indistinguishable expendable fuel cells.

The homogenisation of animal diversity and subjectivity is also present in representations of animals cultivated to be eaten. Invariably referred to as animals “for slaughter” as well as “*stuks*” (pieces), the value of an animal is expressed in terms of its net effect on profit.²⁵² For

²⁴⁹ Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 107.

²⁵⁰ Elsewhere plants are described in similarly mechanistic terms. Trees that do not grow fruit are “defecteus” (defective), the planting of figs can yield “sober productie” (sober production) whilst in the index the coca tree is listed as the following: “hoegeplant, mogelijk om de queeken, verscheyde soorten, bloesyen, dragt & behandeling” (tall plant, possible to cultivate, different sorts of blossom, gestation and management). Ibid, 4, 169, 6.

²⁵¹ “een beeste werk molen”. Ibid, 21.

²⁵² Ibid, 76-77; Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 39, 162.

example, describing the main industries along the Commenwijne river, Nepveu determines that the “cattle especially cow-beasts do very well and go onto become very fat and good”.²⁵³ In this example the evocation of their physicality serves to highlight their profitability. Elsewhere the net value of an animal is determined on the basis of input costs, notably, the costly and limited vegetation used to feed grazing animals. For example, Nepveu discerns that pigs are, “are most destructive to cost, and if they come out all [is] spoiled; especially since horses and beasts are kept in the pasture, where care is taken to ensure that they do not enter there, as it is deadly principally for the horses”.²⁵⁴ Goats likewise, despite “doing the best and most abundant breeding” also “do much harm, jumping about everywhere and approaching everything, and especially all the trees, which they come next to, nibbling off the bark which causes death”.²⁵⁵ However, despite “doing a lot of damage” Nepveu notes that goats and pigs are “more pleasant of meat, compared to those in Europe especially when they are fed with maize and *taijers*” due

²⁵³ Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 39.

²⁵⁴ “die beesten meest kost vernielende zyn, en als zij uytkomen alle bederven; vooral daar paarden en de beesten in de weyde gehouden worden, waar voor men wel zorg deent te draagen dat se daar niet inkomen alzo het doodelyk principaal voor de paarden”. This is summarised in the index: “Varkens = kweek, schaadelyk wilde, zee of water en honde varkens (Pigs = harvest, harmful wild, sea or water and dog pigs). Ibid, 225-226; Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 14.

²⁵⁵ “Cabrieten zouden de beste en meenigvuldigste kweek geeven, dog weinig planters houden dezelve omdat se veel kwaad doen, overal sprengende en by alles komende, en wel voornamenelyk alle boomen, daar zy maar by kunnen komen, de bast afknabbelen, die daar door sterven”. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 325.

to their “very good and healthy” diet.²⁵⁶ This again reflects that in addition to profit-making the sensory pleasure of white Europeans was of great importance for 18th century elites.²⁵⁷

Animals outside of the control of the colonial system are also described and given value on the basis of their effect on production. For example, Nepveu describes parrots in the chapter on birds as “now and then causing great evil to the coffee when it hangs ripe on the tree”.²⁵⁸ Likewise in the index Nepveu notes: “Tiger various sorts, which strikes slaves, Horses [and] Beasts dead”.²⁵⁹ In keeping with the primary logic of *Annotatiën*, this is likely recorded in view of expenditure. Echoing the contemporary danger of the development of zoonotic diseases on factory farms, one ‘costly’ animal is shown to be a product of the implementation of supposedly rational means of cultivating cattle. Nepveu notes, “all those Beasts as well as the Horses are chased into the meadow every day and in the evening again towards the house, which means more large flies and vermin and are brought in, which is also harmful for the health; which, however is just as it is in all well-arranged places”.²⁶⁰ For the author, as for those parties who uphold and finance the intensive production of chickens and pigs in the 21st century, the health

²⁵⁶ “Cabrieten zouden de beste en meenigvuldigste kweek geeven, dog weinig planters houden dezelve omdat se veel kwaad doen, overal sprengende en by alles komende, en wel voornamenelyk alle boomen, daar zy maar by kunnen komen, de bast afknabbelen, die daar door sterven, het is een zeer goed en gezond eeten... maar ook gelyk [varkens] aangenaamer van vleesch zyn, als in Europa vooral wanneer se met mais en taiyers gevoedt worden, dog doen meede veel schade...”Nepveu, *Annotatiën*, ca. 1771, 325.

²⁵⁷ In the draft 1772 index sheep are listed as “zeer goed” (very good), assumably on the basis of profitability and/or taste. See Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 14.

²⁵⁸ “Papagaaien [...] doen nu en dan groot kwaad aan de coffij alzo wanneer die ryp aan de boomen hange”. Nepveu, *Annotatiën*, ca. 1771, 334.

²⁵⁹ “Tyger verscheyde soorten, hoete schieten slaven en Paard Beesten dood”. Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 14.

²⁶⁰ “alle die Beesten zo wel als de Paarden worden daagelyks in de weyde gejaagt en savonds weeder na huijs, het geen meer vullens en groote vliegen en ongedierte en de plaats brengt schaadelyk ook aan de gezondheid het welk egter ligtelyk gelyk het op alle wel gereegelde plaatsen is”. Nepveu, *Annotatiën*, ca. 1771, 107.

risks involved in the cultivation of animals in “well-arranged places” is not considered to be a big enough of a danger to change the practice.²⁶¹ This implies that although the restructuring of the world according to economic logic is not without flaws, it is ultimately viewed as a superior means of organisation.

“More tame, less wild”

Representations of animals that fall outside of the categories of subjects of scientific inquiry and economic entities are few and far between. One such depiction in this vein is of the animal as a source of anxiety, not in terms of their effect on economic production but with regards to (white) human safety. For instance, to a limited degree Nepveu floats the idea that “large water snakes” are dangerous noting that, “[they] are often found, but I’ve never heard that people have been damaged by them; but the Indians say, that in their villages, often in the water, that they take children away”.²⁶² Likewise in Nepveu’s description of *tijgers* he discusses their potential danger but overall affirms that, “they are all generally in fear of man, [...] to my knowledge in the 40 years that I have been here, no person has been killed by a tiger” a sentiment he extends to all “wild beasts”.²⁶³ This is further reflected in the index section which lists *dieren* as “four-legged, now more tame less wild, all are afraid of Man”.²⁶⁴ This association of animals as in

²⁶¹ In describing the effect of the “large flies and vermin” as simply “harmful for the health”, Nepveu also mitigates the danger of European practices by avoiding graphic details and establishing a distance by referring to those people effected by the flies through the collective impersonal “the health”. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 107.

²⁶² “De groote waterslangen worden nig dikwils gevonden, dog ik heb nooit gehoord, datse menschen hebben beschaadigt; egter zeggen de Indianen, datse op haare dorpen dikwils in ’t water, kinderen wegneemen”. Ibid, 338.

²⁶³ “Omtrent de wilde dieren zal ik aanmerken , dat zy alle in ’t gemeen voor den mensch bevreest zyn, zelfs geen Tyger zal een mensch aanvallen, maar in tegen deel van hem afwijken, [...] Egter is mijns weetens in 40 jaaren dat ik er geweest ben, geen mensch van een tyger gedood, ook zyn zy meer gemindert, zodanig dat de prame van f10 voor ieder kop die men aanbragt, afgeschafft is, egter worden er heer en daar nog gevonden”. Ibid, 321.

²⁶⁴ “Dieren, viervoetige, thans meer taame mindere wilde, syn alle voor den Mensch bevreest”. Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 7.

fear of humanity is reified by the introduction to the *dieren* natural history, which notes: “It is certain that less wild animals are seen now than in former times; therefore, one cannot say as much as [Herlein] has written. Yet on the other hand tame animals have certainly increased since that time.”²⁶⁵ Thus although animals still had the potential to attack, from the governor’s position of privilege, the fauna of Suriname had been pacified by the colonial regime to the extent that they no longer posed a threat.

Nevertheless there is one group of animal that does instill fear into Nepveu, insects. Referring to three types of mosquito the author notes: “*Monspieren*, these are worse than the *makers* and *musquiten*, they are so small that people can hardly see [them], they make the skin grow up with bumps that are almost like a fire.”²⁶⁶ In the draft version, which assumably to a greater degree reflects Nepveu’s immediate impression of the fly, instead of ‘worse’ he uses the word “*enger*” (scarier).²⁶⁷ Yet in the spirit of the hierarchically dominant rational human, Nepveu indicates that even the worst creatures in Suriname can be counteracted through innovation. Quoting the English travel writer Warren the author affirms that the “poisonous and harmful beasts and worms is now the most evil that can be said of Suriname”; continuing, however, he describes that thankfully the land provides “complete and infallible remedies and aids”.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁵ “‘T is zeeker, dat men thans minder wilde dieren ziet, als in voorige tyden; weshalven niet veel op ’t geene den schryver daarvan aageteekent heeft, weet te zeggen. dog daaren tegen zyn de tamme dieren zeekerlyk zeedert die tyd vermeerdert.” Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 321.

²⁶⁶ “Monspieren, deeze zyn nog erger als de makers en musquiten, alzo zy zo kleyn zijn, dat mense nauwlyks kan zien, zy doen de huyd oploopen met bulten, die byna als vuurbrandig zijn”. Ibid, 342.

²⁶⁷ “Monpieren, deese zijn nog enger als de makers en moskiten also se so kleijn zijn dat men nauwelyks kan zien, en als de huyt doen op loopen met bulk als vuur brandig zijn”. Donselaar, *Woordenboek van het Nederlands in Suriname*, 153; and Nepveu, *Klad-aanteekeningen*, ca. 1772, 157.

²⁶⁸ “gehandelende van vergiftige en schadelyke beesten en wormen, dit is nu het allerkwaadste, dat van Suriname kan gezegt worden, want het Land is anders zodanig van God gezeegend, en heeft zo veel deugdin dat deeze ongemakken niet daar by haalen kunnen; daar zyn ook voor eenige van dezelve alreede uijtgevonden, volkomen

Human-like Animals

Throughout *Annotatiën* animals are represented as mechanistic, unfeeling and predictable beings. Their physicality is described in terms of aesthetic pleasure or with regards to profit-making pursuits. However, in a few instances the being of animals is described as exceeding the aforementioned boundaries. For example, Nepveu describes dogs as creatures that “never go mad” thereby revealing that animal life was not solely seen as mechanistic but also as something that could become irrational and unpredictable.²⁶⁹ Further, in this vein dogs are depicted as being more cognitively secure in comparison to other creatures. Nepveu also describes the Coati, which he also calls a “Meercat”, as human-like on three occasions. Regarding maternal behaviour, in one version of the index the author lists: “Coati Meerkat her child sucks, like a Human”.²⁷⁰ Concerning appearance Nepveu details: “I have seen one captive, three feet high, like an old man, had breasts like a nursing woman”.²⁷¹ Continuing the author refers the coati as a specific subject, a mode of representation which occurs only twice in the monograph, elsewhere with regards to the horses and oxen that work at night. Nepveu writes, “this one had been cut in the back, and once it was done, it bound itself very well.”²⁷² Nepveu also refers to coatis as “nimble Hen thieves”, the term thief once more denoting a subjectivity beyond that of an automaton.²⁷³ It is evident that the coati made an impression on Nepveu. His

en onfeylbare remedien en hulpmiddelen en tot de rest zal ook metter tyd raad weezen.” Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 343.

²⁶⁹ “Honden worden nooijt dol Nepveu”. Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 9.

²⁷⁰ “Coatij Meerkat suijgt haar jongen, als een Mensch.” Ibid, 6.

²⁷¹ “Ik heb er een gevangen gezien van wel drie voeten hoog, als een ouwelijk mensch; had borsten als een zoogende vrouw deeze was in de rug gekapt, en het zig, nadat het eens gedaan was, zeer gewellig verbinden”. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 326.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ “zy zyn behendige Hoender dieven”. Ibid.

acknowledgement of the animal's subjectivity as well as his likening of its physicality and behaviour to that of a human's reflects that on occasion the strict human-animal binary present throughout the manuscript did falter. Rather than an exact reflection of how the world is, in this light the consistent representations of animals as mechanistic economic entities reveal themselves to be the product of a hierarchically dispositioned anthropocentric ideology. Overall however for Nepveu animality is distinctly mechanistic and one-dimensional. This is further demonstrated by a description of animality present in the 1718 document but not in Nepveu's. Unlike the governor, Herlein denotes that animals like humans strive to be free (from pain). As such discussing the *torpedo*'s sting Herlein determines that it must have been given this faculty "as a means by which to obtain its liberty".²⁷⁴

A Material World

When considering the representation of plants in *Annotatiën* it is unfruitful to argue whether a plant can be (un)ethically treated in the same way as an animal because vegetative beings do not have the same sentience engendered by a central nervous system. Hence whilst animals feel pain, plants do not. Nevertheless by analysing the ways in which the author depicts plants one can locate attitudes and logics that parallel the discourse of the animal, the black(ened) human and the Enlightened human. A recurrent theme within Nepveu's descriptions of plants is that the European human restructuring of nature results in a superior environment. This is reflected by the author's preference for and understanding of European flora as more beneficial than indigenous plant life. This is exemplified by the championing of imported and "tame" plants over indigenous or "wild" life forms.²⁷⁵ Similarly Nepveu touts the establishment of coffee

²⁷⁴ het welk dit Gedierte in de Natuur heeft, en schijnt als gegeven te zijn tot een middel om daar door zijne vryheid te bekomen". Herlein, *Beschryvinge*, 194.

²⁷⁵ Herlein, *Beschryvinge*, 194.

cultivation as a major economic and scientific success. The author details how the “lover of chemistry”, silversmith Christiaan Hansbach, was the first person to successfully introduce coffee into the colony in 1712 as he “knew how to prepare the earth with such vigour”.²⁷⁶ Resultantly Hansbach enabled the planter Stephanus Laurentius Neale, “later *Graaf* [Count] Neale”, to make “a great fortune in a short number of years”.²⁷⁷ Likewise Nepveu triumphantly argues that the “many tests” to further establish indigo, an “advantageous plant”, have been a success.”²⁷⁸ Such representations of plants likely reflect the belief that the Enlightened European stood above rather than within nature and as such plants could be replaced and manipulated to serve humanity. Bolstered by the endlessly optimistic discourse of 18th century science, technological innovations serviced economic liberalism, an ideology that structured, atomised and classified components of the world with the goal to produce profit. The rise of these twin divisive and often violent forces, Tinker argues, this led to the ignorance and/or denial about the “internal or implicit relations, and hence interdependences” between living and nonliving entities.²⁷⁹

The economisation of the natural environment is elsewhere reflected in Nepveu’s proposals to colonise “uncultivated” lands, the term ‘uncultivated’ denoting an ahistoric environment not

²⁷⁶ De Coffij heeft men begonnen Ao 1717 of 1718 in Suriname eerst te cultiveeren; zeeker zilversmit genaamt Hansbach van geboorte een Duijtscher, gaf voor, [...] dat hij als een liefhebber van de chimie zeekere aarde wist te prepareeren zo kragtig [...]. De heer Stephanus Laurentius Neale, naderhand Graaf van Neale is een van de eerste geweest, die daar van heeft weeten voordel te maaken met gemelde Hansbach eenige plantjes af te boonen zo door drank als geschinken, waar meede die Heer in korte jaaren groot Fortuijn heeft gemaakt, en van andere is nagevolgt.” Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 165-167.

²⁷⁷ Ibid, 165-167.

²⁷⁸ “De Indigo planting is ook begonnen [...] dat het met een wijnig economical meede een voordeel plant sou weezen. Ten minister is zeeker dat se aldaar zeer goet te maaken is wyl gem Heer Destrade diende proeven heeft geven aakt die zeer schoon zijn uit gevallen.” Nepveu, *Klad-aanteekeningen*, ca. 1772, 99.

²⁷⁹ Tinker, “The Enlightenment and Its Discontents,” 450.

(yet) controlled and ordered by man.²⁸⁰ Further reflecting the single-minded pursuit of profit, Nepveu describes one means of expanding economically productive zones to be the burning of forests. The author writes, “the Fire can be stoked especially in the upper countries as it is very expedient to burn strongly, yea, the stronger the better.”²⁸¹ Similarly discussing barren land Nepveu determines: “If [the lands] don't want to give anymore, they have to be put under water by a dam and made fallow”.²⁸² The description of the land and more broadly the nonhuman as something that “gives” to humanity is repeated on at least two other occasions in the document with no mention of humanity giving anything back, rather nature is seen as something to be manipulated so as to work better *for* humanity.²⁸³

Elsewhere Nepveu maintains that the Europeanisation of the natural environment has led to vast improvements. For instance of “Gardens, plots” Nepveu notes “most of which now grow as good and some better than in Europe”; likewise, discussing certain areas under cultivation he argues that “These lands are highly sought after” and, with “great labour and costs [...] they

²⁸⁰ “Nieuwe Plantagien, principalyk van de kostelijke landen die ongecultiveerd leggen aan de Rivieren”. Nepveu, *Klad-aanteekeningen*, ca. 1772, 180.

²⁸¹ “de Brand daar ingestooken kan worden vooral in de boove Landen daar het zeer voordeelig is sterk te branden, ja hoe sterker hoe beeter”. I have translated “voordeelig” as expedient, however, the word can also be translated as advantageous, beneficial and economic. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 122.

²⁸² “Bij het dikwils omslaan schoon het wat meer werk geeft vind men profyt wyl de lande vrymeer geeven, dat plegt men voorheen zo niet te doen. Als ze niet meer wille geeven moeten ze door afdamuurige onder water gezet en braak gelaate worden zie zo.” Nepveu, *Klad-aanteekeningen*, ca. 1772, 100.

²⁸³ “’T is zeekerlyk jammer, dat de rijneegen buyten Paramaribo niet verder en beeter omtrokken zijn, nu moet men na ieder van gemelde twee weegen, dezelve weg heen en weder doen en dat is op zyn best onderhalf uur Rijens; daar doordeen de Natuur zo veel geeft, dat men in Europa en elders met veel werk en kosten moet maaken en krygen zeer gemakkelyk ten minsten van den eene van die Paaden na den andere doorloopende weegen konden gemaakt worden”; “De vijgeboom die men in Suriname cultiveerd is de spaanse vijge boom die uit Europa overgebracht daar zeer veel kiert en veelt vrugte geeft.” Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 95; Nepveu, *Klad-aanteekeningen*, ca. 1772, 168.

are just as fruitful as the most valuable in Holland”.²⁸⁴ Nepveu also views transformed plants/land as superior not only on account of productivity and profit, but on an aesthetic basis too. This is indicated by his preference for areas shaped according to straight lines which he finds more aesthetically pleasing than disorganised or natural areas. Nepveu writes: “The streets of Paramaribo are mostly laid out sculpted, making that place, although little work is done on it, possibly the most beautiful and *sindelykste* [neatest, cleanest] from nature that one can find anywhere.”²⁸⁵ This is further echoed by a poem composed by Nepveu’s predecessor and political ally, Jan Jacob Mauricius, in which he expresses that the colony is much improved in part due to the increase of plantations which stand “line to line”.²⁸⁶ In this vein man-made asymmetrical environments can be seen as expressions of control. Ordered environments may have also been seen as manifestations of a higher teleological spirit. Nepveu’s statement that Paramaribo’s streets are ‘from nature’ may reflect the belief that Europeanised structures were seen as higher forms of nature rather than artificial structures. However, there is one area that contradicts this vision – taste. As such in addition to his prolonged musings on the wondrous flavours of various wild creatures, Nepveu argues: “*Annas* or American pineapple is now

²⁸⁴ “Tuynen, laanen, het planten van allerlei vrugtboomen en moeskruyden welke thans meest alle zo goet en eenige beeter als in Europa voortkomen”; “Deese landerijen zijn zodanig gewilt [...] niet sonder groote arbeid en kosten door huisdinge afveroolgingen zijn gedoleer even als de vaarste in Holland”. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 96.

²⁸⁵ “De straaten van Paramaribo zijn meest opschulp uitsen geleegeen, waar door die plaats, schoon er wijinig werk aan gedaan word, mogelijk de mooiste en sindelykste uit de natuur is die men ergens kan vinden. Niet tegenstaande de swaare en dikwils continnueele stortleegens.” Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 73.

²⁸⁶ “In negen jaaren van myn' zuure Landvoogdy, Is 't Land een vierde en meer verbeterd in waardy, Gantsch Kommewyne met een' dubblen boog van huizen, Plantaadjen, lyn aan lyn, met schuuren, lootsen, sluisen” (In nine years of my sour governorship, Is the land a fourth and more improved in worth, All of Commewijne with a double arch of houses, Plantations, line to line, with sheds, barns, locks). Jan Jacob Mauricius, *Dichtlievende Uitspanningen* (Amsterdam: Weduwe S. Schouten en Zoon en Gerret de Groot, 1753), 160.

known in Europe. Although *kunst* [artificiality, artifice cultivation] cannot come to achieve its true perfection and taste.”²⁸⁷

Chapter Three: the Human

In *Annotatiën* blackness is a stateless, free flowing form that shifts depending upon the rhetorical context within which it is employed. The black(ened) human is cast as simultaneously animalistic, culturally inferior machine-like, exuding an excess and lack of being, sub/suprahuman and human. Jackson argues the statelessness and fluidity of blackness subjects black(ened) individuals to continued discursive and material experimentation, articulation and rearticulation.²⁸⁸ The “operations of simultaneously being everything and nothing” is exemplified by the three main referential categories employed by Nepveu to describe those in bondage: *Swarte* (black), *slaaf* (slave) and *neeger* (negro).²⁸⁹ In the index each term has its own emphasis; *swarte* centres on cultural characteristics and disposition, *slaaven* (slaves) on economics and *neeger* on Africa(ness) and physicality. However, the categories blur rather than stand alone to the extent that they are described as interchangeable.²⁹⁰ Indicating the plasticity of black(ened) humanity, the definitions contain a multitude of positive and negative descriptions listed one after the other. *Swarte* lists:

“Black, gracious, in concealing evil, also in learning of crafts, her cost varies, household goods and what her master gives, manner of eating, wantonness, example of white murder, plot to run away, very dangerous for peace with the *wegloopers* [runaways], losing the courage to not run away, misfortunes caused by them doleful experiences,

²⁸⁷ “Annas of Americaanse pijnappel is thans in Europa bekend. Schoon aldaar door kunst niet tot zijn regte perfectie en smaak kan koomen.” Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 171.

²⁸⁸ Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 35.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 35.

²⁹⁰ For instance, below the input of *Slaaven* the author lists: “Zie verder op ‘t woordt Neegers en Swarten” (See further the words Negroes and Blacks). Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 13.

are quick in the bushes, they have the feeling of Pythagorus not yet discovered, have various opinions concerning the soul, no education, all tradition in the narration of their *Anais* stories, know little about Hell and Devil, sense of punishment or reward regarding [acting] more or less evil, Angolans have some acquaintance with the Roman religion, Papa *neegers* circumcise the womens' wonderous clitoris.”²⁹¹

The neurotic and contradicting nature of blackness as articulated above – captives here represented as commodities, sources of danger, cultured humans, uncultured humans, Heathens, (limited) Christians and so on – manifests throughout the manuscript. Descriptions of black(ened) humanity are rarely stable and coherent, single sentences and phrases often concurrently stress Africans' likeness with Europeans and their fundamental cultural/biological/teleological inferiority. The exact subjects to which Nepveu refers are often unclear. Hence representations of African slaves from various origin points, diasporic enslaved Africans, manumitted and descendents of manumitted slaves, *vrije neegers* (free negroes), the so-called *mulattos*, *wegloopers*, *Bosch Neegers* (Bush Negroes) and mixed African and Amerindian individuals frequently overlap and intermingle.²⁹² Thus although certain groups are shown to have particular characteristics, it is more beneficial and reflective of Nepveu's own perspective to discuss a general black(ened) humanity rather than to approach each subgroup individually. This chapter henceforth proceeds by identifying the major trends present within the varied and multifaceted nature of blackness.

²⁹¹ “Swarte, frieedig , in 't verheelen van 't quaad, ook in 't leeren van ambagte, haar cost verscheijde, huijsraad en wat haar meester geeft, manier van eeten, baldaadigheeden, exempelen van Blanke moort, complotte om weg te loopen, zeer gevaarlyk voor de vrede met de wegloopers, verliesende de suut niet van weg te loopen, ongelukken door hen veroorzaakt droevige ondervindinge, zyn snel in de Boschen, of zij 't gevoele van Pytagorus hebben niet wel te ontdekken, hebben verscheijde gevelen weegen de ziel, geen onderwijzinge, allen traditie bij de vertellinge van hun anassijtorij, weeten wynig van Hel en Duijvel, gevoelen van straf of belooning in meer op minder quaad, Angoolsche hebben eenige kennisse van de Roomsche Religie, Papa neegers besneedem de vrouwen wonderlijke clitoris.” Nepveu, *Klad-aanteekeningen*, ca. 1772, 14.

²⁹² The groupings and terms themselves are interchangeable, as with slave, black and negro.

Cultural Barbarians

Jackson states the humanity of black(ened) slaves is understood as “a state of abject human animality.”²⁹³ This translates to the representation of black(ened) humans’ (real or imagined) cultural practices and concepts as underdeveloped and corrupted, a perspective justified on account of the state of immanence which Africans were thought to dwell in. Viewing Europeans as having attained objective abstraction through rationalism, Africans were seen like animals to be mechanistically governed by instincts. This is reflected by one of Nepveu’s musings on the ‘nature’ of black(ened) people, he states, “from childhood they seek to satisfy their bodily passions and actions, occupying the brain so much with them that they think little of such isolated matters; they have absolutely no education [...] that imagination is very material or corporeal”.²⁹⁴ This sentiment is further echoed by visceral descriptions of the enslaved population’s *baljaaren* (romping, frolics) which is described as including “clattering [...] clapping [...] playing [...] a cheering shriek [...] many springings and hoppings” and elsewhere “excesses”.²⁹⁵ Likewise Nepveu determines: “The *Loange*, they are the Angolan slaves, make very wonderful movements with the body when dancing and giving the worst sound imaginable”.²⁹⁶ Such descriptions underscore that Africans were seen as physically excessive beings stuck within rather than extracted from their body. The usage of the term ‘wonderous’

²⁹³ Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 47.

²⁹⁴ “wyl zy van der jeugd af, hunne lighaamelyke passion en handelingen zoeken te voldoen, de hersenen daar mede zo veel beezig houden, dat zy om zulke afgetrokkene zaaken weijnig denken; onderwyzingen hebben zij gantsch niet, [...] die verbeelding is zeer materiaal of lighaamelyk”. Nepveu, *Klad-aanteekeningen*, ca. 1772, 143.

²⁹⁵ “daar ze rammelende [...] in de handen te klappen gevolgt word, van tyd tot tyd een juijehend geschereij maakende, [...] speelen [...] de handen klappen en pijchen, [...] springende en huppenlende”; “en wanneer zij in die aexessen zijn” (and when they are in these excesses). Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 231, 233.

²⁹⁶ “de *Loange* dat zyn de Angoolse slaaven maaken zeer wonderlyke beweegingen met het lichaam bij het dansen en geeven het naaste geluid dat men bedenken kan”. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 232.

arguably further positions African culture as wild and otherworldly in that, from the perspective of someone who has transcended nature, the *baljaaren* is rendered a ‘wonderous’ spectacle – a phenomenon of nature to behold.

The notion of the corporeal and hence irrational African is elsewhere evident in descriptions of the supposedly corrupted minds of black(ened) humans. Of note Nepveu labels the African’s imagination as “inflamed or disordered”.²⁹⁷ Determining that “her imagination can yield so much power”, Nepveu argues that African cognition is dangerous for the captives because it can faultily fabricate illnesses and even induce death following the transgression of a particular ‘superstitious’ cultural-religious boundary. For instance, commenting on what often follows if the spirit of a deceased parent is not respected, the author notes, “[if] they transgressed their oath, or they have sworn falsely, they languish and die swollen up.”²⁹⁸ Discussing what happens when Angolan slaves eat an animal – a “cow, sheep or another edible Cattle” – that is seen as a manifestation of God and/or an incarnation of a family member, Nepveu determines that “they strike out with evil spots and sores, [...] or get weeping and die from the terrible imagination.”²⁹⁹ Similarly, Nepveu argues that snakes are not given as food to slaves because due to “superstition which is so big [...] if they came to eat them they would get a rash.”³⁰⁰

²⁹⁷ “een verhitting of verwarde inbeeldingskracht”. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 252.

²⁹⁸ “dat de verbeeldings kracht zo veel op haar vermag, dat zy hun Eed overtreedende of valsch geswooren hebbende kwijnende en eijndelyk als geswollen storven.” Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 235.

²⁹⁹ “ieder heeft voor zyn huys God, ’t een of ’t andere wanschepzel, en als het eenig beest is, als koe, schaapen of ander eetbaar Vee, zo mogen se daar van niet eeten ja zelfs niet van dat ’t geen huis God van haar ouders is geweest, en zo zy bij ongeluk daar van eeten, slaan zy met kwaade vlekken en zeeren, die ze dan trefte noemen, uijt of raaken aan ’t krijnen en sterven door de vreeselyke inbeeldingskracht.” Ibid, 251.

³⁰⁰ “alleen uit superstitie die so groot is dat se als se ervan eeten quam uitslag krijgen.” Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 161.

The notion of Africanness as an excessive untamed state of being is also mirrored in descriptions of sexuality. Of note Nepveu recurrently highlights the nakedness of black(ened) humans. Amongst other examples Nepveu records that, “on the plantation the children [are] completely naked until puberty”; “The children [...] remain thus completely naked until their marriageability” and “men and women completely naked, her shame partially covered”.³⁰¹ Discussing pre-1650 interactions between Europeans and (West) Africans, Jackson argues that: “The common criteria for bestial otherness were measures of degrees of civility in Iberian and English sources rather than complexion.”³⁰² Rather than skin tone, differences between family and gender norms, (a perceived lack of) clothing and bodily ornaments were early components of Africanness identified and subsequently pathologised by Europeans. Brown argues that as such nudity came to be perceived as “sexual promiscuity and the absence of civility to Europeans, which they sometimes described as ‘beastly’ living”.³⁰³ In this vein Nepveu’s frequent representation of Africans as naked can be seen as an ingrained European conception of black(ened) humanity as bestial and depraved.³⁰⁴ This may explain why on two occasions descriptions of African nakedness is mentioned in the context of the clothing given by whites to slaves, in this light slavery is viewed as an institution that raises less developed humans to a higher state of being, European (sexual) norms imagined as teleologically more advanced.³⁰⁵

³⁰¹ “op plantagien de kindere gants naakt tot puberty”; “De kinderen [...] blijve dus gants naakt tot haar huwbaarheid”; “mannen en vrouwen gansch naakt haar schaamheid even bedekt”. Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 29, 143, 37.

³⁰² Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 7.

³⁰³ Kimberly Juanita Brown, *Repeating Body: Slavery's Visual Resonance in the Contemporary* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 88.

³⁰⁴ In the index the notion of African sexual difference and depravity is reflected by the listings: “Hoererij den Swarten” (Whoredom of the Blacks) and “Poligamie veel wyvery der swarte mans” (Polygamy many wives of the black man). Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 9, 33.

³⁰⁵ Ibid, 37, 13.

Nepveu's paternalist cultural chauvanism is echoed elsewhere in a description of sexual behaviour, "no parent will ever fornicate with children or grandchildren, nor uncles with mothers, but they will easily take various lusts with or especially [to] children".³⁰⁶ To this, positioning European culture as older and wiser, Nepveu comments, "the Whites should still be ashamed of them in that matter."³⁰⁷ The author also notes that it is common practice on the plantation to monitor and police sexual behaviour. He recounts, "copulation with the Master's knowledge often lasts no longer than the loves urges" before detailing that the "Master or Masteress" of the plantation often "keeps on eye" on the captives' relations noting that, if relations are deemed to become damaging, they "counteract with strict punishments".³⁰⁸

The animality of the black(ened) human's sexuality is described as dangerous and threateningly virulent as well as culturally defective. For instance, one entry in the index simply reads: "Black mistress dangerous for white children".³⁰⁹ Elsewhere the black sexual threat is underscored by a description of an Amerindian group that is described as having been sexually overpowered by *wegloopers*. Discussing how a number of African slaves became part of an Amerindian group, Nepveu notes that:

"because of the lust and weakness of their quasi-masters, they mated with them by giving their daughters as wives, and since those Negroes and the *carboekels* or *mulattos*, their children and descendants, are much stronger in

³⁰⁶ "geen ouder sullen ooit met kinderen of klein kinderen, nog oomen met moesje vergiergen, maar ligtelyk zullen se schoon sij het voor behoorlyk houden verscheijde lusters met of name kindere, [...] so dat alles gewoogen de Blanken voor hen in die zaake nog beschaamt moeten staan." Other cultural differences are also described by the author, for example, that *swarte* "eeten zonder lepel" (eat without a spoon). Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 143, 37.

³⁰⁷ Ibid, 143.

³⁰⁸ "die copulatie met kennis van de Meester duurt dikwils niet langers als de liefdens dreeft, [...] ten ware de Meester of Meestersse welke laatse dikwels daar 't oog beeter op houdt, zulx door stringe straffen tegen gaat". Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 237.

³⁰⁹ "Minner Swarte voor blanke kinderen gevaarlyk". Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 32.

stature, much braver in war, and also of a much worse disposition than the Indians, they have taken possession of the Indians in short, placing them under them, where they have made and carried themselves as chiefs”.³¹⁰

Considering this account one can affirm that Africanness was viewed jointly as potent, powerful and evil. The subtext of the description is that lust and by extension sexual relations with Africans may lead to a reversal of power. This anxiety is also reflected in Nepveu’s description of “the forbidden love-trade of the whites”, that is sexual relations (likely including prostitutes) occurring between white men and black(ened) women, as “malpractice”.³¹¹ As such the governor proposes “stricter punishments for it and to check it as much as possible”.³¹² Further, commenting on “public shamelessness”, which is assumably the fornication of whites and blacks in public, Nepveu calls for more checks and castigates the phenomenon as “a source of much evil and disasters”.³¹³ One of these dangers was likely the spread of leprosy and other diseases, conceived in terms of the African degeneration and the “moral, social and medical degeneration” engendered by sexual intercourse with black(ened) humans.³¹⁴

As with sexual relations, martial bonds between white and black were also considered dangerous and sinful, a belief exemplified by Nepveu’s description of “the *zwartin* [black

³¹⁰ “dog deeze door de zugt en zwakheid hunner quasi-Meesters, hadden zig met hun vermaagschap door hunne dochters ten wijve te krijgen, en vermits die Neegers en de karboekels of mulatten haare kinderen en nakomelingen veel sterker van lighaams gestalte, in den oorlog veel dapperder en ook veel erger van inborst zyn als de Indianen, zo hebbense zig in ’t korte meester gemaakt de Indianen onder haar stellende, waar ver zy zig als Opperhoofden gemaakt”. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 296.

³¹¹ “den verbooden Minnenhandel van de blanken [...] dat belet kon worden dog kwaalyk eig te voeren, [...] egter zoude moogelyk daarop swaarder straffen gestelt en so veel mogelyk nagegaan en agter haald wordende immers de openbaare schaanteloosheid zo niet geheel, ten minsten wat meer in toomen; dit is ook al een bron van veel kwaad en onheijlen.” Ibid. 105-106.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Stephen Snelders, Leo van Bergen, and Frank Huisman, “Leprosy and the Colonial Gaze: Comparing the Dutch West and East Indies, 1750–1950,” *Social History of Medicine* 34, no. 2 (2019): pp. 611-631, 617.

female] named Elisabeth Samson”.³¹⁵ Samson, who is one of only two African individuals named in the document, became the first ‘black’ female to marry a white man in Suriname after years of legal strife.³¹⁶ Marriage between black and white had been prohibited by decree since 1685, however, as a slaveholder with immense wealth and determination – Samson’s efforts to secure marriage took her to petition the States-General in the Netherlands – her case was considered.³¹⁷ Nepveu’s reading of the situation is that the marriage would place the racial superiority of whites in peril.³¹⁸ To this end he describes the possibility of a black(ened) woman marrying a white man as a “horrific disgrace and shame” further noting that “the White sex hitherto for that reason hitherto held as its own may also all be swept away, it would certainly have nothing but dangerous consequences, with regard to the dissimilarity that one has to instil there between that people and the Whites, and the esteem for Whites that should be instilled in them.”³¹⁹ Black(ened) sexuality is hence criminalised in view of its potential to shatter the mystique of the superior universal human. As Wekker argues, this fear of black(ened) sexuality

³¹⁵ “een zwartin genaamt Elizabeth Samson”. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 111.

³¹⁶ Cynthia McLeod, “Celebrating the Extraordinary Life of Elisabeth Samson,” *Encuentros* (Washington D. C.: 7 August, 1998), 2.

³¹⁷ McLeod, “Elisabeth Samson,” 2-3.

³¹⁸ Nepveu’s predecessor, Wigbold Crommelin, and the political council of Suriname held similar views. However, they also expressed that by allowing the marriage inversely white supremacy would be upheld as Samson’s money would be inherited by a white person. They argued: “This would mean that the wealth which the young man will inherit in due time, will come into White people’s possession. That would be a good thing because it is not recommendable that Black people are rich and have possessions and money, for our slaves might get the idea they also could become rich, and that they could become high and mighty like White people are, while it is obvious to everyone that Whites are from a nobler and better race than Blacks can ever be.” McLeod, “Elisabeth Samson,” 2.

³¹⁹ “dat dan de thans ijselijke schanden en schaamte aan die van de Blanken sexe tot nu toe deswegens als eijgen gehouden ook allen ijskens mogt verdriijnen, het geen zeekerlyk niet dan gevaarlyke gevolgen zoude hebben, met opzigt tot de ongelykheijd, die men aldaar tusschen dat volck en de Blanken moet scateneeren[?], en de agtinge voor Blanken, die hun dient in geboesemt te worden.” Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 111-112.

was reformulated in view of the self-image of whites. As such the control over the captives' gender norms and sexual behaviour was envisaged as part of the White Man's burden.³²⁰

In the sphere of culture and religion, as described as spiritual practices are also represented as markers of a defective state of being and perspective. This is demonstrated by the recurrent use of the adjective 'superstitious' to describe the enslaved population's beliefs and modes of worship. In addition to being a metric which the author employs to compare captives (albeit incoherently) – “Angolan Slaves, very superstitious”, “No nation is more superstitious than the *Loangers* or Angolan slaves”, “the *Papa* slaves are themselves more superstitious [...] compared to other Nations” – the term's logic is self-referentially casts Nepveu and the European readers as the opposite of superstitious, rational.³²¹ Hence the (perceived) beliefs of the African captives are deemed false rather than different. Examples of 'superstition' include the worship of the “Cotton tree, *afgod* [idol] of the *Neezers*”, ghosts, to which notes “the Blacks believe in them, same for the Indians”, “Dead Corpses” alongside “devilish Practices” orchestrated by the slave “witches” and “priests”.³²² Nepveu also details that Europeans soldiers stole “God Icons, which are wooden or earth shapened figurines, with which they also make many Devils” from a destroyed Maroon village.³²³ He depicts the figurines as “three such

³²⁰ Wekker, *White Innocence*, 95.

³²¹ “Angoolsche Slaaven, zeer superstitieus”; “dezelve Papa slaaven hebben zig vrij meerder superstition [...] als de andere Natien”; “Geen Natie is superstiteuser als de *Loangers* of Angoolse slaaven”. Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 5; Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 238, 251.

³²² “Cattoentrie, afgod den *Neezers*”; “Spookten, de Swarte gelooven daar aan, idem de Indianenen”; “Doode Lijken, vertelsel onder de slaaven daarbij de nagts en bij verjaaringe wat”; and “Baljaeren, was is, ieder neger natie different [...] de slaaven loopen een halve nagt ver om 'er bij te zijn ----- duijvelsche Practijk daarbij”; “Torenheksen of Priesteressen”. Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 6; Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 250; Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 5, 13, 7, 6; and Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 242.

³²³ “De Cormantijnen of kust slaaven hebben haar Goden Fetisches, dat houte of aarde wanschaapene beldjes zyn, daar mede zy ook veel Duijvelarijen maaken; bij het afbreken van het wegloopers dorpje agter Paramaribo zyn

wonderous creations partly in human form” one of which portraying “a bird”.³²⁴ In view of Christianity, the language of idols, witches, devil and animal worship was an affirmation of the notion that, “[t]o be black was to be a heathen and therefore outside of Christendom”, a common place argument that undergirded the enslavement of Africans.³²⁵ Although Nepveu places more emphasis on the secular differences between Europeans and Africans, Christianity is nonetheless presented as a universal truth that Africans (so far) lack. As such, the author describes the captives’ spiritual beliefs as incomplete, for instance, he writes: “They also have little or no idea of Hell and the devil, but they seem to know well that good and evil are also rewarded after this life”.³²⁶ Further, in line with the notion whites have developed more than any other ‘race’, (perceived) African religion is compared to European myths and legends of old. For example, speaking of the belief in the *Azee*, Nepveu writes: “It is just as true as with the story of the Vampires only recently in Bohemia, and the *Hekse Historien* [Witch Stories] all over Europe in ancient times”.³²⁷ The subsuming of (observed) African beliefs under

uijt het huijs van ’t opperhoofd drie zulke wonderlyke maakzels gedeeltelyk met menschelyke gedaante, dog de mens als een Vogel aan het Gouvernement gebragt; ook waaren zij wonderlyk behangen met coraalen en veederen.” Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 250.

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Animal ‘worship’ examples include the so-called “diergelyke ceremonien” (animal ceremonies) and “diergelyke bezweeringen” (animal incarnations). Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 235; Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 243; and David Kofi Amponsah, “Christian Slavery, Colonialism, and Violence,” *Journal of Africana Religions* 1, no. 4 (January 2013): pp. 431-457, 438.

³²⁶ “Van Hel en duivel hebben zy ook geen of weijnig denkbeeld, evenswel schijnen zy welt e weeten, dat het goed en ’t kwaad ook na dit leeven beloont wordt; dog alleen en meer of minder goed of kwaad, dat afgestorvene en zyne omzwerving wedervaart; met de Angoolsche slaaven komen er die kruisjes maaken, en de Roomsche Catoholijke gebieden op zeggen, ‘tgeen zy van eenige priesters en hun lan leeren.” Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 273.

³²⁷ “hetgeen bij heb Azee genaamt wordt, deeze zeggen se gaan waaren, zuijgende kinderen en ook volwassene het bloed af, tot dat se vergaan. Daar meede is het geleegeven even als met de historie van de wampieren nog onlangs in Boheemen, en de Hekse Historien alomme in Europa in oude tyden daar van er veele zig het zelfs zo vast

European frames of reference is elsewhere evident in Nepveu's affirmation that black(ened) humans, "all have the opinion of Pythagoras".³²⁸ This is in reference to the pythagorean cult's belief in the transmigration of the soul, something which the author identifies within the captive population. Nepveu posits "[the concept] is enough not to infer what their feeling really is", continuing by arguing that it is difficult to identify their abstract beliefs because of their lack of education and defective cognition.³²⁹ The use of this Western frame of reference and its subsequent inability to satisfy Nepveu's desire to 'know' the captives' beliefs demonstrates that the differing vocabularies, epistemologies and modes of interpretation led to a gap in communication; this void interpreted as absence or chaos rather than difference.³³⁰

inbeelden"; "Azee, bloed zuijgens, frigebeeldheid (der neegers) gelijk, de vampiere". The *azee* or *azemen* is a belief of West African origin. There is no single *azeman*, however, generally it is described as a female vampire spirit that "enters the house at night in the form of a ball of fire to drink the blood of innocent people." Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 251-253; Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 5; Tinde R. van Anandel, Amber van der Velden, and Minke Reijers, "The 'Botanical Gardens of the Dispossessed' Revisited: Richness and Significance of Old World Crops Grown by Suriname Maroons," *Genetic Resources and Crop Evolution* 63, no. 4 (September 2015): pp. 695-710, 703; and Tinde van Anandel and Sofie Ruyschaert, *Medicinale en Rituele Planten van Suriname* (Arnhem: LM Publishers, 2014).

³²⁸ "zy alle hebben 't gevoelen van Pythagoras: Het is genoegzaam niet op te maaken, wat eygenlyk hun gevoelen is, wegens de ziele en de opstandingen na den dood; de eene heeft er deeze, en de andere gene denkbeelden van doorgaants zeer weijnig daarop pijnsende"; "zij 't gevoele van Pytagorus hebben niet wel te ontdekken" (they have the feeling of Pythagoras not yet discovered). Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 272; and Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772,

³²⁹ Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 272.

³³⁰ Difference or the unknown perceived as inferiority is also expressed through the descriptions of the oral cultures of the slave communities, namely, the "*Analsij-tory*" (Anais stories), "dat is vertellinge van de Spinne kop" (that is tales of the Spider's head), Nepveu writes "onder welke vertellingen eenige zeer aartig, en niet ongeestig zijn" (of which some tales are very nice, and not witty), thereby demonstrating that these 'superstitious' stories were also seen as poetically backward. Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 5; and Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 254.

Throughout the descriptions of inferior black(ened) cultural and social practices, from sex and marriage to religion and philosophy, Africa is evoked as a means to justify the supposedly weak mind of the black(ened) human. In addition to the general assertion that Africans “Live poorly in their land”, Nepveu describes the continent as a land of moral depravity.³³¹ Of note in keeping with the wider pro-slavery discourse of 18th century Europe, the author maintains that African men commonly sell their children or wives to settle a debt.³³² In what appears to be a skewed transposition of guilt, the author also states that, “many [captives] have first been slaves of black masters for some time in Africa, also they are mostly under the power of kings, who use all his subjects as slaves and dispose of their bodies at his pleasure.”³³³ The image of Africa as a cruel and wanting land is also reflected in an instance wherein Nepveu refers to Africans as lacking European modes of knowledge production.³³⁴ Speaking of the importance of war in Africa, he contends: “They bring those things and their war deeds into their song, yet they have not the science to record them.”³³⁵ This strategy of perspectivisation reveals once more that different cultural means were interpreted as lacking in comparison to Europe’s. Another manifestation of this self-imagined superiority is Nepveu’s ethnographic descriptions of slave culture. As well

³³¹ The only arguably neutral depiction of Africa is in view of what commodities it produces. To this end, Nepveu comments, “De Negers zeggen dat se in haar land groeit en zeer fijn en lang dradig catoen geeft” (the Negroes say that in their land cotton grows and is very fine and long-threaded). Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 16; and Nepveu, *Klad-aanteekeningen*, ca. 1772, 168.

³³² Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 216.

³³³ “veele zyn eerst al eenige tyd in Africa slaaven van zwarte meesters geweest, ook zyn ze meest onder de magt van koningen, die al zyn onderdaaren als slaaven gebruikt en over haar lyfen goed na welgevallen disponeert.” Ibid, 216-217.

³³⁴ Amerindians are also described as morally lacking. For example, describing Nepveu writes under the subheading “Wreedheijd in oorlog” (Cruelty in war), “Zij verschoonen nog jong nog oud in den oorlog alles doodslaande, om weeder wraak” (Young and old in war are all slain to prevent vengeance). Ibid, 290.

³³⁵ “Zy brengen die zaaken en hunne oorlogs daaden wel in hunne gezange, dog zij hebben de weetenschap niet om ze te boek te staaven.” Ibid, 316.

as taxonomising the African captive population, “every Nation and also the Creoles have their own way of playing as of dancing”, Nepveu also strives to classify and compartmentalise features of Amerindian existence.³³⁶ Discussing Amerindian tools and equipment Nepveu notes that: “I have brought with me [to Europe] a complete collection very accurately miniaturized by free Indians of all that they have in use, which has been placed in the curiosity cabinet of the Prince.”³³⁷ The impulse to describe and by extension to know arguably reflects the dynamic of control in Suriname. Systems developed to record and categorise targetted colonised humans, animals and plants. In turn they allowed administrators such as Nepveu to better make decisions to control the chaos of the New World they sought to incorporate and manipulate for their own material gain. Further, articulated from a supposedly objective and extracted position, the act of recording was a performative act that solidified and reproduced the colonial hierarchy. From the perspective of the botanist, naturalist or ethnographer, the civilised European way of interpreting the world is seen as universally true. In this light it reaffirms that the universal progressive human has stepped outside of nature through the achievement of rationalism, every other perspective regarded as instinctual and by extension false.

Automatons

The author’s representations of the black(ened) subject’s cultural, sexual and religious difference coalesce to frame the African as an excessive, immanent, cognitively deficient and untamed human. Together these judgements about the blackness justify the institution of slavery and reinforce the racialised divide established in Suriname and beyond. A product and a reflection of the pathologisation of black(ened) people is their disqualification from ethical

³³⁶ “ieder Natie en ook de Creolen hebben haar aparte wijze zo van speelen als van dansen” Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 232.

³³⁷ “Ik heb eene complete Collectie medegebragt zeer accuraat in ‘t kleijn gemaakt door vrije Indianen van alles wat dezelve ingebruik hebben, dat in ‘t Rariteit cabinet van de prins is gegeven”. Ibid, 290-291.

consideration, a conclusion that places them alongside animals as beings who are teleologically inferior and without perspective. One manifestation of the notion that black(ened) humans do not meet the requirements to be ethically considered is the representation of the captive as an automaton. As with every facet of blackness, the automaton is not a sequential state but rather a demand that is in constant effect. In other words, in addition to all the other modes of being racial logic demands of black(ened) individuals, they must be machine-like. Here I define the human automaton as a natural labourer, that is, their telos is to toil (for white people). The qualities of the living machine are fungibility, homogeneity, amorphability and the absence of the capacity to feel as a full human does, all features evident in Nepveu's depiction of black(ened) captives. Jackson infers that as with Descartes' "ticking-clock-animal-automato thesis, which held that animals felt pain but that pain was merely a mechanical response to stimulation", black(ened) people were thought to be "impervious to pain".³³⁸ This stemmed from and reflected the notion of the black(ened) human as the animal in human form, a vision of reality that absconded white masters from guilt. The suffering of slaves was evident; but due to their cognitive inferiority it did not warrant the extension of empathy as in the case for whites. In keeping with Jackson's conclusions, throughout *Annotatiën* pain and death caused (in part) by the brutal regulated work regimes of Suriname are registered at the level of economics rather than ethics.

A central aspect of the representation of African captives as automatons is the underlying implication that black(ened) individuals are fungible and homogenous. This image is forwarded by the use of the referential categorisations, the most frequent being the interchangeable *slaaf* and *neeger*. In the late 18th century, both were racialised legal terms that regarded the slavery of black(ened) humans as acceptable on account of their heathenism and inherent (biological

³³⁸ Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 186-187.

and cultural) inferiority to whites.³³⁹ This intermeshing of blackness and slavery is illustrative of the efforts of the Dutch to protect whites from slavery, a sentiment echoed in the index.³⁴⁰ Inherently pejorative and indicating a strata of humanity one rung below Europeans, the usage of *slaaf* and *neger* engenders the conceptualisation of a black(ened) human as something valuable only in terms of how they can serve the needs and desires of the superior white human. Other terms used include “*koppen*” (heads) and “*stuk*” (piece), employed also to discuss animals, these categorisations operate by reducing individuals to atomised physical components that assign black(ened) human’s worth to be solely economic.³⁴¹ The term “*weglooper*” (runaway), employed to describe Maroon and African individuals who had freed themselves by running away, also reflects the notion that the black(ened) human was viewed as a commodity. *Weglooper* hence implies that the human property should be returned to its owner, the captive is still *de jure* property.³⁴² Strategies of argumentation further construct the image of the African population as fungible and homogenous. For instance, discussing cotton Nepveu determines:

³³⁹ Michael Rowland, “An Analysis of the Middelburgsche Commercie Compagnie’s (MCC) Representation of Human Captives (1732-1803): A Discourse Historical Approach,” *Bastion: Working Papers on Slavery and Its Afterlives* 2, no. 1 (October 2021): pp. 45-70, 55-56.

³⁴⁰ “Slaave een blanke moet zijn, in onbruik” (A slave must be a white, in disuse). Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 21.

³⁴¹ “Een dus wel gestelde zuyker Plantagie met 100 a 120 slaaven te velde, waar toe men gemeenlyk 180 a 200 koppen hebben moet” (A well established sugar Plantation with 100 to 120 slaves in the field, for which one should generally have 180 to 200 heads). Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 157.

³⁴² This is reflected by a dispute between an Amerindian nation and the colonial authorities described by Nepveu. In brief, the quarrel resulted from a group of *wegloopers* captured or absorbed by an Amerindian. The colonists demanded payment, the Amerindians purportedly sent it but it was ‘not delivered’. The situation demonstrates that whites maintained that all black(ened) people were their property unless they had been freed or manumitted by the European authority, in the abstract running away did nothing to reverse the status of the enslaved. See, “zy een groot deel weggeloopene slaaven hadden gevangen, en dat hun premien van die zij overgelevert hadden niet betaald wordende” ([the Amerindians] had captured a large contingency of runaway slaves, and that their payment of which they had sent was not delivered, they kept some as their slaves). Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 296.

“A *Neeger* cannot pluck for more than 4 days, [...] he can pick 10 or 12 bags and sort about as much, so that one needs a third more slaves on this plantation than compared to coffee and cocoa.”³⁴³ As well as acting as a crude means to calculate estimates for production, a form of abstraction that undergirds the credit system upon which the colony depended, such generalised rules mask differences between captives.

Individuals are also rendered interchangeable through the assignment of monetary values. To this end captives appear in the form of tabulations. When describing the functionings of “A well-established sugar plantation with 100 to 120 slaves in the field”, Nepveu relays the costs of running such an enterprise in terms of “the ordinary deaths of slaves, including charges” which amounts to “at least 10 to 12000 guilders a year with 10 slaves at f450 a piece”.³⁴⁴ In a footnote the governor adds: “By the way, slaves are marked up to f550 to f650 a piece.”³⁴⁵ Elsewhere Nepveu calculates the cost of slaves, including import charges, “provisions” and the price of building materials for housing, alongside the prices of imported working animals, animals imported to be eaten, taxes, the salary of various types of employees and inanimate goods such as iron, fabrics and pottery.³⁴⁶ The reduction of a captive to a digit collapses the

³⁴³ “Een Neeger kan niet meer als 4 daags plukken, [...] hy kan 10 a 12 afmaalen en omtrent zo veel schoon maaken, zodat men wel een derde meer slaaven tot deeze planterij als tot coffij en cacao noodig heeft.” Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 200; and Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 116.

³⁴⁴ “Een dus wel gestelde zuyker Plantagie met 100 a 120 slaaven te velde, waar toe men gemeelyk 180 a 200 koppen hebben moet, [...] de kosten van zodanige Plantagie de ordinaire sterfte van slaaven daar onder gerekent met de lasten, belopen ten minsten 10 a 12000 guldens ‘sjaars als 10 slaaven a f450 het stuk” (Zeedert zijn de slaaven tot f 550 a f 600 het stuk gemonteerd). F stands for guilder. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 157.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ “Het Comptoir der Venduen geniet 5 per C van alle verkooping en buyten nieuw aangebragte slaaven daar 2 ½ per C van word betaalt; [...] f6 voor ieder Paard f6 en voor ieder koebeest” (The *Comptoir der Venduen* benefits from 5 per C of all sales of newly brought slaves of which 2 ½ per C is paid; [...] f6 for every horse f6 and for every cow-beast). Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 101; Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 64; Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 101.

difference between individuals, allowing the colonial authorities, directors, creditors and absentee planters alike to conceptualise humans as investments without the onus of acknowledging their (supposedly inferior) likeness. Instead slaves become one cost amongst many. Consequently the rendition of humans into indiscernible costs allows the system of transatlantic slavery to reproduce itself because, as economic alchemy determines, initial costs are simply precursors to greater (potential) profits.³⁴⁷

Captives in view of labour are occasionally depicted as differentiated yet in a manner that affirms their status as automatons rather than diverse socially-networked individuals. For example, Nepveu discusses the (supposed) point of origin of the various captives in view of which are thought to work harder. He notes that “fines and payments (from some)” have been introduced to “[get] the needed *Papa* slaves”; in contrast Nepveu maintains that *Fidaase* slaves are “brought over less” this likely a reflection of “geographical hierarchy of value” assigned to various groups of captives amongst European slave traders on the basis of their supposed work aptitude.³⁴⁸ In addition to differentiating between skill and/or occupation, for instance, “*Ambagts slaaven* [craft slaves]”, from time-to-time Nepveu delineates on gender, “the *slavinnen* [female slaves] tie the cane by head, or by its leaves”.³⁴⁹ Elsewhere the author

³⁴⁷ “400 oxhoofden a f50 't oxhoofd - f20.000 De malassie en dram gesteld op - f3.600 - f23.600; Af de kosten - f12.000 Blijft. . . f11.600”. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 158.

³⁴⁸ “Boetens en Breuken (van soomige) aan de Papa den noodige slaaven”; and “Fidaase, slaave word weynig meer aangebragt”. Of the *Fida* captives Nepveu argues that they are very “zeer arbeijdezaan” (very hardworking), “vooral de vrouwluij” (especially the women folk); “egter” (however), he warns, “is het zeer gevaarlyk oude Mans slaaven van dat sort te koopen, omdat se meest alle in haar land met vergift omgaan om hun wraak te oeffenen of oogmerken te bereiken” (it is very dangerous to buy old Men slaves of that sort, because in almost all cases in her country they use poison to avenge or achieve their ends). Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 6; Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 25; Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 8; and Stephanie E. Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: a Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 166. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 237.

³⁴⁹ “de slavinnen binden het by hoof of de blaaden van 't riet”. Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 5, 100.

distinguishes captives with reference labour practices. Detailing how a coffee harvest is disciplined, he notes: “However, there are slaves though otherwise not lazy, and indeed the strongest of men, who are unable to pluck as much as the others while being beaten to death, because it is a handy craft, heavy hands not for this”.³⁵⁰ Such distinctions suggest that a captive’s physicality was taken into account with a view to maximising efficiency. At the reverse end of this logic, captives are at times represented as an amorphous mass. For example, discussing the expansion of the plantation system into ‘uncultivated lands’ Nepveu notes, “a cut could be made with 300 slaves in two dry seasons, so long as it is only 7 or 8 hours distance away.”³⁵¹ Similarly the author details that a path through the swamps could be “tidied up by cutting with three hundred slaves”.³⁵² The intertwined strategies of perspectivisation, which places the white master as someone who can orchestrate the movements of a mass of slaves, and predication, which denotes a group of slaves as something that operates in unison, establishes an image of the captive population as a kind of bionic arm operated by a white brain. This image of a giant fleshly tool obscures the diversity and individuality of this mass of people whilst simulatenously masking the resistance of said individuals to such kind of work. Further it represents African labour as a given feature of Suriname that does not stem from the operations of a violent regime but rather simply exists and can be utilised as the white authorities see fit, namely, to shape the environment according to its own notions of functionality, civility and progress. This is further reflected by descriptions of work carried out

³⁵⁰ “egter zyn er slaaven, schoon anders niet luij en wel de sterkste mans, die niet in staat zijn al weerdende doodgeslaagen, zo veel als de andere te kunnen plukken, omdat het een handig futselwerk is, daar toe zwaare handen niet met zijn”. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 178-179.

³⁵¹ “maakene doorsnijding met 300 slaaven in twee drooge tyden zoude kunnen gemaakt worden alzo ’t maar 7 of 8 uren distantie is”. Ibid, 88.

³⁵² “schoonde te maaken door snijding met drie hondert slaaven”. Nepveu, *Klad-aanteekeningen*, ca. 1772, 75.

in the passive tense, that is, without a subject. For instance, discussing deforestation efforts Nepveu determines that the jungle “will be chopped” without mentioning who by.³⁵³ This is because it is assumed that this task will be carried out by black(ened) humans, the passive tense thereby further naturalising Africans as an underclass with machine-like characteristics and usages.

Another reoccurring represented facet of black(ened) being is that of enslaved as unfeeling when compared to fully realised white humans. This is demonstrated through the bureaucratised and detached descriptions of the violent disciplinary methods used to punish and subjugate the captive population which in turn presents the suffering of Africans as a biopolitical rather than ethical concern. Of note Nepveu describes the *Spaansche Bok* (Spanish Buck) torture as effective until it kills the victims.³⁵⁴ Drawing on Hartsinck’s description of the colony which in turn was to a large degree based upon *Annotatiën*, Canfijn and Fatah-Black detail the punishment, “the hands of the condemned slave were bound together, through which [their] legs were thrust, while a stick was put through the tied-up hands and pulled-up knees. After the stick was firmly stabbed into the ground, the slave was flagellated with a whip of knotty tamarind branches. When the slave’s skin was flogged sorely, the body was turned over to thrash the other side as well.”³⁵⁵ In Nepveu’s description of the punishment he adds that “some use hoop-sticks yet that is dangerous, because the slaves very often die from it; that punishment

³⁵³ “na dat alles dus ter neder geveld is en een dag of agt geleegeen heeft word het gehakt” (after that everything has fallen to the ground and has been lying for a day or eight it will be chopped). Nepveu, *Klad-aanteekeningen*, ca. 1772, 96.

³⁵⁴ Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 267-268.

³⁵⁵ Imran Canfijn and Karwan Fatah-Black, “The Power of Procedure: Punishment of Slaves and the Administration of Justice in Suriname, 1669–1869,” *Journal of Global Slavery* 7, no. 1-2 (2022): 19-47, 26-27.

is often practiced as a public punishment around Paramaribo on all the streets”.³⁵⁶ As well as reflecting the *spaansche bok*’s usage as a visual marker of white supremacy, Nepveu’s argumentation as to why hoop-sticks are ‘dangerous’ reflects the notion that the punishment and death inflicted on slaves was not seen as cruel but rather as economically costly.

The formulation of the loss of life as an economic penalty is by far the most common way in which deceased captives are discussed. Often termed the “death of slaves” and respectively on one occasion each “ordinary deaths” and “continual deaths”, at large Nepveu employs the verb ‘cost’ as a euphemism for death.³⁵⁷ For instance, he notes that the process of polderisation “not only costs a lot of slaves and work, but also takes away a lot of land”, the expansion of windmill powered sugar production likewise, “costs much work and slaves”, “the terrible digging [...] costs many slaves and work” and the installation of new waterworks, “costs many Slaves and work”.³⁵⁸ This manner of describing death serves to both hide the reality of a human being worked to death, in the process concealing the differences between the various deaths, and to affirm African human life as valuable only in terms of how it pertains to economic production. The formulation of ‘slaves and work’ as comparable simulatenously occurring costs also demonstrates that a captive was viewed, as with work animals, in terms of how much labour

³⁵⁶ “eenige gebruiken daartoe hoepelstukken, dog dat is gevaarlyk also de slaaven zeer dikwils daar van komen te sterven, die straft word dikwels als een publique straft rondom Paramaribo op alle de straaten geoeffent”. The author also states that guava branches are sometimes used to whip. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 267-268.

³⁵⁷ “vooral als er wat sterfte van slaaven meede gemoeit is” (especially if some slave deaths are involved); “Coffij houdmoolen voor de noode bast geeft swaar werk en stefte van slaaven” (Coffee woodmills, for the needed bark causes a lot of heavy work and death of slaves); “de ordinaire sterfte van slaaven”; and “continueele sterfte”. Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 101, 6; Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 157; and Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 118.

³⁵⁸ “niet alleen veel slaaven en werk kosten, maar ook veel land wegneemt”; “veel werk en slaaven kost”; de Schikkelyke Delvinge [...] veel Slaaven en werk kosten”; and “veel Slaave en werk kosten”. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 141-142; Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 101, 173, 108.

could be extracted from their bodies in the most economically efficient fashion. Elsewhere captives (and working animals) are represented solely in terms of raw power through the usage of compound referential terms. For example, the “*Neger Suykerkoker* [Negro-Sugarcooker]”, an advanced technology that boiled, bleached and alkalinised sugar cane juice, is described by Nepveu as a piece of capital emanating from mother colony of Barbados.³⁵⁹ As with *beeste*, the union of biological being and machine renders the former an interchangeable and disposable vessel of power.

As a further means of absolving Nepveu and the directors from guilt, death through labour is recurrently decontextualised. For example, discussing the transportation of coffee from the field to the weighing house Nepveu writes, “to carry to the house when it is a bit far away, and even more so when the weather is bad, is a heavy and evil burden, and especially for the women and weak men”.³⁶⁰ Continuing Nepveu attributes the kind of work rather than the white-controlled system which has enforced it as the cause of much death, coffee plucking seen to give many diseases and certainly breaks many a slave’s necks”.³⁶¹ Similarly Nepveu notes that: “The lack of fresh water in the lower countries causes great misery to the slaves [...] and thus the slaves have to drink waste water from the swamps and cavities, causing more disease and corruption

³⁵⁹ In keeping with the transatlantic discourse of slavery, Nepveu notes the regional variations between the English Barbadian cookers and those in Suriname, “in Suriname doet de Neger Suykerkoker in de eerste keetel maar een twee of drie hande vol ongebluste kalk”(in Suriname, the Negro Sugar Cooker is only filled with two or three hands full of quicklime in the first kettle). Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 13, 105.

³⁶⁰ “het huys draagen als ’t wat verre af en nog meer als het kladdig weer is, is een zwaare en kwaade last, en wel bijzonder voor de wijven en swakke mans, [...] dit geeft veel ziekten en breekt zeekerlyk meenige slaaff den hals”. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 179.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

amongst the slaves.”³⁶² For Nepveu questioning the structures of power and their effects would not only jeporadise the entire colony, but his mode of reason, a perspective embodied by the universal (European) human. Consequently death from overworking and suffering are represented as fixed features of reality that can only be alleviated by technical rational solutions. Of note Nepveu discusses the problem of “the plagues of mosquitoes and flies in addition to the lack of good water” which “causes the loss of many slaves”, however, the author adds “if the land is poldered and dried for some time, that also diminishes”.³⁶³ Similarly, the governor extolls the wonders of a number of remedies that can cure captives so as to reduce the financial burden on slave traders and slaveholders who are unfortunate enough to have their finances impeded by the sickness.³⁶⁴ In addition to enabling the (short-term) continuation of a system that enriched Nepveu, the white upper echelon Surinamers and the Dutch/European transatlantic elite at large, the introduction of technologies to protect the Europeans’ investments reflected their belief in the human’s mastery over nature. Rather than modify their course of action and view of the world, (early) modernists seek to innovate so as to keep the wheels of transnational commerce and the perspective of the universal liberal human afloat.

³⁶² “’t gebrek van soetwater in de beneede landen veroorzaakt groote elende voor de slaaven [...] en dus de slaave nootzaaken om slegt water uyt de swampen en holen te dranken, waardoor meer ziekten en corruptien onder de slaaven word veroorzaakt”. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 34.

³⁶³ “de plaagen der mosquiten en monspieren behalaven het gebrek aan goed water, gemeenlyk ’t verlies van veele slaave veroorzaakt, doch als de lande eenige tyd bepoldert en bestorven zijn, vermindert dat ook wel”. Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 68.

³⁶⁴ Nepveu views the illness in terms of the negative effect it has on the European master rather than African captive: “De Jaas is de aller fataalste zieken die meest alle Nieuwe Slaven krijgen, en waar van men niet voor ongelustkig reekent als de helft daar van in leven blijven” (The *Jaas* is the most fatal illness which most all New Slaves get, and as so one is not counted unlucky if half of them remain alive). Ibid, 68, 22.

The plasticity of blackness in the *Annotatiën* engenders a schizophrenic oscillation between various representations of African captives whilst, simulatenously, maintaining that black(ened) individuals be everything and nothing at once. As an index of progress and globally-orientated grammatic node upon which the universal human pivots, different guises of blackness are employed for various often overlapping means. In the case of slaves as automata, the representation serves the ideology of economic liberalism, an atomising accumulation-orientated discourse. Other forms of blackness, as with cultural, sexual and religious depictions of teleological inferiority, represent black(ened) humans as psuedo-biologically inferior. This in turn furthers the notion of the black(ened) subhuman, a typecast that sustains the idea Africans were especially suitable for hard labour, a form of work envisaged to be too burdensome for fully developed wealthy Europeans.

Arguably the notion that African slaves belong to “*Chams geslagt* [Ham’s race]” is an example of an *Ur*-psuedo-biological argument within the text.³⁶⁵ However, although the author repeats this refrain on numerous occasions, he appears to doubt or distance himself from the popular conviction in a footnote noting: “I don’t know how it is proven.”³⁶⁶ Elsewhere Nepveu more emphatically employs quasi-biological beliefs that are more reflective of the emergence of

³⁶⁵ “Chams geslagt off daar de neegers van zyn” (Ham’s race, or of which the negros are of); and “heydensche slaaven uijt het geslagt Chams. Ib: aanbidden den duyvel” (heathen slaves of Hams’ race. Ib: devil worship). Amponsah surmises the Curse of Ham as a strategic “(mis)interpretation” of scripture used to reify the image of Africans as “natural” slaves. The myth arguably also furthered the connection between African nakedness and sin, “Ham’s transgression” according to Bergsma and Hahn was seeing Noah in the nude, an event invariably interpreted as Ham witnessing and/or engaging with Noah in (incestuous) sexual intercourse. Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 6, 25; Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 240; Amponsah, “Christian Slavery,” 435-436, 452; and John Sietze Bergsma and Scott Walker Hahn, “Noah’s Nakedness and the Curse on Canaan (Genesis 9:20-27),” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124, no. 1 (January 2005): pp. 25-40, 28-32.

³⁶⁶ “Hoe dat beweezen word weet ik niet.” Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 240.

scientific racism, a broad field that in response and in tandem with slavery and colonialism. Empirical racist arguments were widely circulated throughout Europe and the colonies; hence as is suggested by Nepveu's reference to the various international texts he draws on it is likely that the author was exposed to range of racial theories from across the Atlantic world. Of note, possibly in reference to the Scottish surgeon John Hunter's belief that Africans were (originally) born white, Nepveu notes, "the blackness of the *Neegers* arises from them having a black upper layer of skin, under which a white one lays"; continuing, "[it is] probably the defect of that black upper layer of skin which is the cause of this phenomenon."³⁶⁷ The notion of a(n) (extra layer of) corrupted African skin was omnipresent in mid-to-late-18th century scientific discourse, catalysing the development of cutting-edge medical equipment and transnational scholarly debates across Europe and the Americas.³⁶⁸ As a professed reader of Montesquieu, Nepveu would have also likely known of the theory of degeneration, an idea that espoused black skin was caused by a mix of 'excessive' climatic conditions, diet and disease.³⁶⁹ In this manner beliefs about supposed physical deficiencies blended into climate theory and in turn into the notion that both the mind and body of the African were impeded from a developmental standpoint. This is evident by the conjunction of statements about the apparently hereditary mental disposition of black(ened) humans. Nepveu contends: "The Blacks are malicious in inclination, hateful and insulting [...], it is enough to see that most possess all malice to the

³⁶⁷ "Vermits bekend is, dat de swartheid der Neegers voortkomt van dat dezelve een swarte opperhuyd hebben, onder den welke een witte legt, zoen waarschylyk het manquement van die swarte opperhuyd, de oorzaak van dat verschijnzel." Marvin Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory: A History of Theories of Culture* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2001), 85; and Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 256.

³⁶⁸ Nina G. Jablonski, "Skin Color and Race," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* (2020): pp. 437-447, 440-441.

³⁶⁹ Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory*, 84-87, 110-111.

fullest extent”.³⁷⁰ Mirroring the sentiment and in concurrence with Herlein, in the Marquette document the governor writes that the captives “possess [...] wickedness in the utmost evil” and further that they are “deceitful and lying”.³⁷¹ However, illustrating the plasticity of blackness, African physical and mental attributes are not always cast as subhuman. To this end Nepveu routinely claims Africans are physically stronger and more agile, “the hardness of her natural skin with an understood speed and the ability to aptly make do in the woods”.³⁷² Blackness is hence portrayed as suprahuman and subhuman. Africans are mentally inferior but impressively strong and quick.

Blackness as simultaneously a deformity and form of suprahumanity is exemplified by Nepveu’s intermittent framing of black(ened) humans as exceptional peculiarities of nature. These individuals, which feature in the index and in the chapter dedicated to the discussion of ‘Nature, Qualities and Characteristics’ of the so-called *swarte slaaven*, are represented as deformed, animalistic and monstrous limit cases of humanity. In this vein they further reflect the Enlightenment notion that physically and mentally the African was the animal in human form or, invariably, an inbetween being that connected European man and the great apes.³⁷³ A key example is the discussion of the “White children of Black parents” which Nepveu maintains

³⁷⁰ “De Swarte zijn kwaadaardig van geneigdheid, haat dragend en stijkoming [...] is genoeg te zien dat meest alle boosheide in de miterste graat bezitten.” Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 143.

³⁷¹ “Uijt het voorgaande is genoeg te zien, dat zij meest alle boosheden in de uijterste quaad bezitten, den schrijver kon er genast by gevoegt hebben, deesaftig en leugenagtig”. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 234.

³⁷² “de gehardheid van haar huiten naturel met een aanbegrijpste snelheid en kunde aan sig inde boschen te behelpen voor uit”. Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 68.

³⁷³ Stefanie Kennedy, “‘Let Them Be Young and Stoutly Set in Limbs’: Race, Labor, and Disability in the British Atlantic World,” *Social Identities* 21, no. 1 (2015): pp. 37-52, 39-40.

are “considered Gods to the *Neegers*”.³⁷⁴ The children, who are described in a manner akin to the description of Surinamese fauna, i. e. as specimens with specific physical attributes, are according to Nepveu “from nature are born white into the world”.³⁷⁵ In the Marquette edition Nepveu likens their “wonderous eyes” to that of a “cod”, further detailing that they have come “into the world so wonderfully against the common course”.³⁷⁶ In this guise such instances of apparent black “deficiency” are rendered unusual but nonetheless natural, a frame of reasoning that arguably permits the wider assumption that black(ened) humans were simultaneously natural and deformed.³⁷⁷ A further example of a liminal animal-like human is what is described as the crab-like Maroons.³⁷⁸ They are introduced in the style of an adventure/travel story, with Nepveu noting that whilst “making peace with the Saramaccan *Bosch Neegers*” a group of colonial representatives had purportedly found “a whole village, with Negroes who only had the big and small toes on their feet, and also fingers on their hands, and henceforth they were named Toefingers”.³⁷⁹ Continuing he describes that their feet appeared as “two Pincers of a

³⁷⁴ “Witte kinderen van Swarte ouders beschrijvinge worden voor Gooden bij de Neegers gehouden”. Nepveu, *Klad-aanteekeningen*, ca. 1772, 15.

³⁷⁵ “Deese haar kinderen die uit de Natuur wit geboren ter weereld komen.” Nepveu, *Klad-aanteekeningen*, 143.

“met wonderlyke oogen, bijna als die van een kabeljauw, [...] hem zo wonderlyk tegen de gemeene loop te doen in de waereld komen”. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 255.

³⁷⁷ “gebrekkelykheid”. Ibid.

³⁷⁸ The author summarises them as: “Neegers met twee toonen aan de extremitijten van de voeten, ook de vingers aan de handen maar een familie” (Negroes with two toes on the extremities of the feet, also the fingers on the hands). Ibid, 256.

³⁷⁹ “By het maaken van de vrede met de Saramaccanse Bosch Neegers, gaan die voor, dat zij een gantsch dorp hadden gevonden, met Neegers, die maar de groote en kleijne toonen aan de de voeten, en ook zo de vingers aan de hand hadden, en daardoor Toevingers genaamt worden waar van zy er ook een paar medebragten, zijnde het figuur van dezelve voeten als de twee Tengels van een crab, dog ras heeft men ontdekt, dat het maar een familie was, bestaande nog maar in zieven stuks, die dus gesteld ter waereld komen.” Ibid, 256-257.

crab”.³⁸⁰ However, in a tone of disappointment Nepveu notes, “a race had been discovered, but it was only a family, existing in only seven pieces, who had come into the world as such.”³⁸¹ A final example further echoes the association of divergent body types, deformity and animality. Nepveu writes: “At Plantation Vossenburg on the River Commenwijne, a *Neegerin* [female negro] gave birth to two equally animal-like children, which is considered a rarity, now one of them is still a man of 36 to 40 years old.”³⁸²

Jackson and others have argued that the spectacle of the black ‘freak’ was an operation of racial logic which affirmed the superiority of white Europeans by casting the African as a border case of humanity betwixt the fully formed human and the animal.³⁸³ To this end she contends that the black(ened) human is a “discursive-material site that must contend with the demand for seemingly infinite malleability, demand whose limits are set merely by the tyrannies of will and imagination”.³⁸⁴ In the case of *Annotatiën*, Nepveu’s inclusion of black limit cases of humanity likewise centre on psuedo-scientific fantastic hypotheses of the black(ened) human as a creature inherently skewed towards bestial and corrupted states of being. This arguably absolves Nepveu from considering the confines of the European Enlightenment definition of a normative human (body), as blackness features in essence as a sinking ground for all that counters accepted standards of (European) universal humanity. Such associations of blackness with monstrosity

³⁸⁰ Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 256-257.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² “Op de Plantagie Vossenburg aan de Rivier Commenwijne heeft een Neegerin twee even diergelyke kinderen ter waereld gebraft, die men als een Raretijt gaat zien, thans is er nog een van, zijde een man van 36 a 40 jaaren.” Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 256.

³⁸³ Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 22.

³⁸⁴ Ibid, 72.

further cements the racial order by the simple fact of generating a mixture of fear, awe and disgust towards those represented as vastly dissimilar.

Blackness as a bio-ontological zone of human possibility is arguably further denoted in Nepveu's discussion of the "wonderous clitoris" of the female *Papa neegers*.³⁸⁵ Nepveu details, "the males are circumcised, and the females have their clitoris in a wonderous way; they say so by inciting a certain bit more or lengthening, some so much that one would mistake them for hermaphrodites."³⁸⁶ The ostensive inbetweenness of the female *Papa neegers* not only reflects the notion that black(ened) women are simultaneously held as sexually exotic and grotesque, but arguably that the African female is a fluidified (un)gendered form that contains "fundamental indefiniteness and opacity".³⁸⁷ To this end, as an enabling device of the grammar of the emergent universal human, black(ened) femininity functions as a stateless site of possibility against which the European male/female gendered binary is measured and by extension anchored.

Abject Equality

Whether animal-like, mechanistic, sub or suprahuman, antiblack racism in *Annotatiën* recurrently constructs black(ened) being as an inferior, warped type of humanity. In this guise black(ened) humanity is appropriated, experimented with and criminalised rather than denied. This is most apparent in depictions of black(ened) humans as equal to white humans in terms of their range of (human) desires, emotions and potentialities. A notable example is Nepveu's application of the liberal universalist concept of freedom. In what Vrij alludes to as being a

³⁸⁵ "wonderlijke clitoris". Nepveu, *Klad-aanteekeningen*, ca. 1772, 13.

³⁸⁶ "zijn de mans besneeden en de vrouwen hun klitoris op een wonderlijke wijze: zo zij zeggen door het aanzetten van zeekere meer of verlengt, zommige zo zeer, dat men ze voor hermaphroditen zou aanzien." Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 273-274.

³⁸⁷ Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 85.

major innovation in the governance of Suriname, Nepveu weaponises what he describes as the universal human desire for freedom.³⁸⁸

“It is within Nature itself to seek change and especially freedom, and even to remove oneself from subjection and slavery; the example of their masters, which they have in front of their eyes every day, would alone, besides all other reasons, be cause enough so that one certainly cannot be too careful to restrain them.”³⁸⁹

Simultaneously extending and criminalising Enlightenment universalism, Nepveu uses the captives’ likeness with himself and Europeans at large in order to maintain white supremacy. For the Surinamers preserving the white/black power imbalance was their top priority, Vrij argues that as proved in August 1799 capitulation to a European power did not engender the end of slavery and was therefore less feared by the colonists.³⁹⁰ Due to the fact that the settlers were vastly outnumbered, the colonial authorities had to be pragmatic and speculative regarding the minds of those they oppressed.³⁹¹ Fear of poisoning, murder, raids and the complete loss of the colony to Maroons and the black(ened) population were all prospects underscored by the

³⁸⁸ Jean Jacques Vrij, “Kleur en Status in Vroegmodern Suriname de Schutterij Van Paramaribo als Case Study,” *OSO. Tijdschrift Voor Surinaamse Taalkunde, Letterkunde En Geschiedenis* 24 (2005): pp. 20-38, 22.

³⁸⁹ “’t is de Natuur eijgen na verandering en vooral na de vrijheid te haaken, en zig zelfs van subjectie en slaavernij te ontslaan; het exempel van hun meesters staat, di zij dagelyks voor oogen hebben zou daartoe alleen, behalven alle andere reedenen, het genoeg veroorzaaken, zodat men zeekerlyk niet te zorgvuldig kan zijn omzig in staat te stellen dezelve in bedwang te houden.” Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 218.

³⁹⁰ Jean Jacques Vrij, “Wapenvolk in Een Wingewest De Slavenkolonie Suriname, 1667-1799,” in *Geweld in De West: Een Militaire Geschiedenis Van De Nederlandse Atlantische Wereld, 1600-180* (Leiden: BRILL, 2013), pp. 45-74, 50.

³⁹¹ The paranoia is reflected in the descriptions under “Blanke” in the index, including: “Blanken en slaven, calculatie” (Whites and slaves, calculate); “Blanke, bediendens, vermeerdering, en oppositie daar teegen --- op de Plantagien noodig en voordeelg” (Whites, servants, increase, and opposition to it – needed and beneficial on the Plantations) and “Blanken door slaaven vermoort” (Whites killed by slaves). Nepveu, *Klad-aanteekeningen*, ca. 1772, 6; and Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 57.

1763-1764 Berbice Slave Uprising, an event described by Nepveu as primarily a (Dutch national) economic tragedy. It was therefore tactically shrewd to emphasise rather than suppress the likeness of the African population as fellow humans also inclined towards emancipation, although this notion ran contrary to other depictions of black(ened) humanity as natural slaves, mentally inferior and feelingless. This is *raison naturelle* in practice. The appropriation of slave humanity as a means to control the captives was formulated as imperfect, perhaps even immoral, but ultimately acceptable in that it served the (greater) liberating and progressive force of European civilisation, a system self-induced by the riches it violently appropriated.

The desire to socialise and enjoy oneself is likewise appropriated by Nepveu. For instance, discussing *baljaaren*, the author notes, “experience has taught us [that banning such gatherings] is fruitless [...] usually causing very great bitterness in the minds of the people, in that they were never allowed any relaxation in their slavery and after slavery and after work; which all Men from Nature are inclined to, and thus it seems an excess of tyranny to refuse such a thing on the whole”.³⁹² This discussion debatably elucidates two considerations Nepveu maintains when approaching the slaves’ humanity. First, the appropriation of the captives’ universal humanity as a means to maintain power. As with the innate yearning for freedom, rather than extend empathy Nepveu uses this information so as to better control the population.³⁹³ This is

³⁹² “Aan Paramaribo is het dikwils gansch verboden geweest en zwaare straffen voor dir daarbij gekreegen wierder gestelt, dog de onder vinding heeft geleerd, dat zulke vrugteloos is, [...] in tegendeel doorgaants zeer groote verbittingen in het gemoed van het volk veroorzaakte, doordeen men hen in hun slaavernij en na slaavernij en na den arbeyd nimmer eenige uytspanning gunde, daar alle Menschen van Natuur dog toegeniegen zyn, en dus een over maat van tirannij schynt, zulke ganisch te willen weeren”. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 226-227.

³⁹³ The hijacking of positive as well as negative emotions is also evident. Of note the use of tobacco and the slaves’ apparent fondness are appropriated as a means for the colonists to placate the captives so as to further safeguard slavery. Nepveu writes, “de Engelsche reeken de tabak die zij aan brengen en zeer sterk is, vettig te maaken waardoor ze zekere smaak krygr en lang brand waar van de slave veel houden” (the English tend to make the

likewise expressed in discussion of punishments and other restrictions which the author warns must not be implemented too heavy handed as the slaves become angry, begrudging and desperate.³⁹⁴ Second, regarding the ‘excess of tyranny’, the author arguably considers and operates on the basis of the humane ideal by inferring slaveholders cause the captives misery through excessive ‘tyranny’.³⁹⁵ The first consideration indicates that for Nepveu reforming slavery was a means by which to placate the black(ened) population and therefore uphold the system. The second consideration, however, arguably upholds slavery in a more sinister deceptive manner. Denoting that it is the duty of the civilised slaveholder to treat those of “inferior status and lesser capacity” better, Nepveu embeds black inferiority and naturalises white supremacy by crafting an image of a benevolent civilised colonial authority that goes out of its way to help lesser beings.³⁹⁶ This in turn bolsters the notion that European powers are the true progressives, unlike the barbaric rulers of Africa and the Orient, they believe in the emancipation and general upliftment of humans everywhere (in the abstract). In reality slavery

tobacco they bring, which is very strong, greasy, so that they get a better taste and burn for a long time, which the slave loves very much). Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 117.

³⁹⁴ The balance between instilling “subordinatie en vreeze” (subordination and fear) was a constant preoccupation of the white colonists, described by the author as a “zo neetelig” (so tricky) a task. Elsewhere Nepveu argues that striking the wrong balance can make the slaves “te baloorig” (too angry) and also bring them “tot desperatie” (to desperation) in a manner that “t gemoed zeer tegen de blanken verbetert” (resolves the mind against the whites). Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 269, 229, 270.

³⁹⁵ Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 53.

³⁹⁶ Further evidence of reforms implemented not out of solidarity with the captives but as a means to civilise the colony, a desire that emboldens and strengthens the image of the superior white human, can be found in discussions around the increased bureaucratisation of violence. For example, Nepveu notes tha: “De zenuw afsnijden mag thans de Meester ook niet doen, als na kennisgeving en goed keuring als vooren” (The Master may not cut the nerve now, as [after] notification and approval as before). Here the main concern is for proper process rather than the tortured captive population. Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 53; and Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 269.

is hence seen as a necessary evil, a framing device that partially absolves slaveholders and supporters of slavery from guilt.

The contradiction between condemning slavery and maintaining it is elsewhere present in Nepveu's various acknowledgements of the suffering of captives. Such instances frame slavery as tragic but unavoidable, the "*noodige slaaven* [needed slaves]" serve a greater cause.³⁹⁷ Examples include the author's recognition of the "misery upon the [slave] ships" and the captives' "sorrow of being led out of their land" as factors to be taken into account.³⁹⁸ Likewise Nepveu speaks of the "incredible labor and fatigues" for black(ened) humans and whites travelling through the forest in addition to "the dreadful fatigue after a whole day's labour" of captives working on plantations.³⁹⁹ On one occasion Nepveu employs the personal pronoun 'I' noting, "however, I have seen many who at the end look very miserable, and even have got gangrene or necrosis and have died wretchedly".⁴⁰⁰ Whilst this is an example of the author retelling a moment in which he as a subject personally witnessed the pain of the captives, Nepveu does not venture to question slavery. Hence it is represented as a dreadful institution, one that corrupts master and slave. In the light of the necessity of Reason's advance, captives and white masters alike are jointly envisaged as prisoners of history, fixed in their roles.

³⁹⁷ Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 6.

³⁹⁸ "die elende op de schepen, gevoegt bij het verdriet van uijt hun Land gevoert te worden (alzo zij nog altijd hoop behouden, waar se ook op de kust zyn om weder bij de haare te komen)" (that misery on the ships, added to the sorrow of being led out of their Land (so they still have hope wherever they be on the coast to get back to her [coast])); Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 217.

³⁹⁹ "de schrikkelyk vermoeitheid na den arbeid van des geheelerdag". Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 112.

⁴⁰⁰ "egter heb ik veele gezien, die er eindelyk zeer elendig aanwaaren, en selfs de gangrene of koudvuur daar is hebben gekreegen en elendig syn gestorven". Ibid, 68.

In addition to appropriating the captives' desires and emotions, the author demonstrates that provincially European markers of humanity were extended as a means of controlling the black(ened) population. Of note Nepveu partially extended normative European legal rights, emancipation, through the establishment of *Swarte Jagers* (black hunters) in 1772, a regiment of 300 slaves bought by the governor to combat the intensifying Maroon raids and attacks.⁴⁰¹ The individuals, through the promise of (legal) freedom, helped tip the balance during the First Boni War (1765–1776), a period in which the colonists narrowly avoided the total collapse of their power.⁴⁰² Racialisation, a central enabling node of Enlightenment humanity, was also employed to manage the black(ened) population. For example, discussing *mulatten* (mullattos), Nepveu determines there are those, “who claim to be of European descent because their forefathers and the third or higher generation was once a white, however [they are] completely black”; continuing the author nonetheless infers that these ‘completely black’ individuals still conceive themselves as white and consequently as superior, therefore he notes, “a plan has now been made to bring them under the Company, to be used in case of need.”⁴⁰³ Nepveu also argues that if an African is followed by four generations of white relatives then the offspring is rendered “completely white as with Europeans”.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰¹ Silvia W. de Groot, “Rebellie Der Zwarte Jagers: de Nasleep van de Bonni-Oorlogen 1788-1809,” *De Gids* 133 (1970): pp. 291-303, 292-294.

⁴⁰² Anton de Kom, *We Slaves of Suriname*, trans. David McKay (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2022), 108.

⁴⁰³ “Mulatten, [...] en bij de vierd niets meer te bespeuren is dan volkome blanke Coleur als de Europeanen dog daar en tegen als de eerste, [...] dus zijn er die zig van Europeanische afkomst reekenen, omdat haar voor vaderen en de derde of hooger graad eens een blanke is geweest, egter gantsch zwart: [...] is thans een ontwerp gemaakt om dezelve onder een Compagnie te brengen, om en cas van nood, gebruikt te kunnen worden.” Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 2-3.

⁴⁰⁴ Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 2-3.

However, throughout *Annotatiën* Nepveu infers that although black(ened) humans can achieve degrees of (fully realised) humanity, those considered visibly black could never be equal. This is most starkly evident in the description of the former slaves absorbed by the colonial regime, Quassie van Timotibo. A saltwater slave turned freeman, botanist, healer and slave hunter, Quassie was a key ally and member of the Surinamese elite.⁴⁰⁵ Aiding the white colonists in the various Maroon wars, enslaving free Amerindians and helping to control the black(ened) captive population, Quassie was gifted riches by the regime and even the stadhouder in the Netherlands. Further he was respected on an intellectual level due to his expansive botanical knowledge of herbs.⁴⁰⁶ However, despite these markers of whiteness he was recurrently mocked, his civility and wealth viewed as ill-fitting imitation and a threat to white supremacy.⁴⁰⁷ Likewise Nepveu writes that although he makes “such a great impression on the faces of the blacks” the “distinguished whites” know that he is really a kind of trickster, his deployment of various plants and medicines are “only trifles”.⁴⁰⁸ The abjection of ostensibly Europeanised Africans is further evident in Nepveu’s description of Jacobus Capitein. The theologian and minister, despite having achieved academic excellence, is not named referred to instead simply as a “*Neeger*”, a term that denoted mental backwardness, servility and depravity.⁴⁰⁹ On the reverse side of this logic numerous white men are mentioned throughout the document. Unlike black(ened) humans, they are shown to be subjects of ethical

⁴⁰⁵ Dragtenstein, ‘*Trouw Aan De Blanken*,’ 7-14.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 19-34.

⁴⁰⁷ Hoefte, “Free Blacks and Coloureds,” 106.

⁴⁰⁸ “Schoon hij bij de voornaamste blanken wel wil weeten, dat het maar beuzelingen zyn, dog die zo grooten indruk op het gemoet van de swarten maaken, dat hy er alles door kan weeten”. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 249.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 221.

concern. For example, their deaths at the hands of Africans are described as “murder” rather than costs and their general wellbeing, extraneous to economic factors, is presented as something to be emotionally concerned about.⁴¹⁰

In addition to full humanity being ultimately unattainable, those black(ened) humans who have attained various degrees of Europeanness are also shown, paradoxically, to be highly dangerous. To this end one can argue that universal humanity, conceptualised as European in form, is used to criminalise even those who move closer to it. For example, Nepveu routinely notes that ‘educated’ and urbanised slaves pose a greater threat than the captives toiling on the plantation. He writes, “one has to fear less from the field slaves who are most very stupid and inept” it is rather the “house slaves, black officers, service folk such as the carpenter, mason and so on” which Nepveu notes have “become able to handle rifles, yes, quite more skilled than the whites”.⁴¹¹ The anxiety about those captives and *vrije neegers* with greater autonomy is also reflected in the index which states: “Colonies, damage inflicted on them by too many skilled slaves.”⁴¹² One such reason given is because the façade of white supremacy appears to be at

⁴¹⁰ “Nu en dan is ‘t voorgevallen, dat se hun meester en de verdere blanken hebben vermoort, het geval van Amand Thomas is bij de gedrukte verantwoording van den Heer Gouverneur Mauricus gedetailleert” (Now and then it has happened that they have murdered their master and the rest of the white men, the case of Amand Thomas is detailed in the printed account of Mr. Governor Mauricus). Speaking of the difficulties in establishing and maintaining the colony, Nepveu notes: “Dat alles om mogelyk een kleyn gedeelte Europeanen eengermaate lekkerder leeven te doen genieten waar tot dan nog grooter gedeelte van dezelve elendig moeten soigen en swerven” (All this in order to possibly allow a small proportion of Europeans to enjoy a somewhat more pleasant life, where until then even greater proportions of them had to wretchedly search and toil). Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 262; and Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 7.

⁴¹¹ “alzo het zeeker is, dat men wijinig van de veld slaaven die meest zeer dom en onbekwaam zyn, te vreezen heeft, zo zij met door de huijs slaaven, swarte officieren en ambagts luyden als Timmer, Metselaars &c. aan gezet en aangevoert worden, alle deeze worden zo bekwaam ook met geweer om te gaan, ja vrij bekwaamer als de blanken en hebben”. Nepveu, *Annotatien*, ca. 1771, 105.

⁴¹² “Colonien schaade aan dezelve toegebracht door te veel bequaam gemaakte slaaven”. Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 7.

times challenged by said individuals, to this Nepveu writes “skilled slaves, have caused a number of incidents of disrespect towards the Whites.”⁴¹³ Elsewhere network building is recognised and subsequently criminalised, as is listed in the index: “Slaves, communication and confluence harmful.”⁴¹⁴ Likewise in the draft version of the index the author notes that even those who have formally made an oath to the white regime are not to be trusted, writing: “Black’s oath [of loyalty], cannot be counted on much”.⁴¹⁵ This arguably demonstrates the scope of the liberal human’s parasitic relationship towards the black(ened) human; whiteness needs blackness.

Conclusion

This thesis has considered to what degree Jackson’s three metaphysical categories, the universal human, the black(ened) human and the animal, conform to Nepveu’s semiotics of being in *Annotatiën*. In brief I argue Jackson’s grammar of being decidedly aligns with Nepveu’s representations. Animals are represented as mechanical, feelingless beings coveted for the taste of their flesh or imported for their labour. Further representations of animals act as a site on which the author projects his self-image as a powerful civilised man sat atop the *scala naturae*. As with animals, black(ened) humans are not ethically considered. Their desires and wills are acknowledged and then used against them. Supporting Jackson’s observation that blackness and animality are two entangled discourses, it is evident that Nepveu looked upon both groups with a view to controlling, reengineering and, in view of the logics of hierarchy, exterminating their prior forms of reason. Expanding on current literature, I determine that the precarious position of black(ened) humans was underlined by their status as plasticised entities within a

⁴¹³ “aanbagt slaaven, getal verschrikkelyke oneevemeedigheid met die van de Blanken.” Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 13.

⁴¹⁴ “Slaaven, communicatie en saamenloop quaad”. Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 13.

⁴¹⁵ “swarte haar Eed, wynig staad daarop te maaken”. Ibid, 37.

highly unstable order. Hence the African is at once culturally inferior and similar to Europeans, mechanistic and emotional, a source of fear and an object of ridicule, a subhuman and a suprahuman, an animal and a man.

Regarding whites, a category largely articulated through Nepveu's projections onto the discursive sites of animality and black(ened) humanity, the universal liberal human is represented as a teleologically superior subject defined by their rationality. Whilst this is represented as a burden, the weight of being the only ones with full perspective condemning Nepveu to misery, their supposed superior mental faculties and skin colour does qualify them for ethical consideration. This is reflected by the numerous white people named in the document and, moreover, the framing of their interests (economic, hedonistic, cultural) as more important than the lives and desires of all over beings. Nevertheless the line between whites and black(ened) humans is not concrete. The counting of white colonists, the concern with their health and sexual behaviour demonstrates that they are not completely excluded from the interlinked profiteering and biopolitical concerns of the author.⁴¹⁶ Nepveu's desire to manage, control and economise the *Blanke* demonstrates that the same technologies which were developed and employed to control the abject human and nonhuman also encased the lives of Europeans. This indicates that the pathologisation of black(ened) and their segregation from whites was to a considerable degree enforced top-down.

This thesis draws on a textually-orientated historical methodology in combination with theory in order to disclose the ostensibly hidden functions of antiblack racism. However, in relying almost exclusively on *Annotatiën*, only a glimpse of the realities of racism has been laid bare. Nepveu's document can be seen as a narrative of European colonial being as well as an

⁴¹⁶ "Burger, gevangen huys noodig" (Citizen, prison house needed), "Der blanke minder gezangc als in Europa zyn zeer voordeelig" (The less sick whites as in Europe are very advantageous). Nepveu, *Klad-aantekeeningen*, ca. 1772, 6, 30.

economic, natural historical and (partially) philosophical text. As with every story, many details have been left out. Although the author does describe gruesome methods of torture, disease and ‘continual’ death, he chooses not to discuss many features of white supremacist violence in the colony. As shown, when he does describe the horrors of the plantation system the true terror is masked through a number of linguistic strategies. Hence one can note that a key functioning of (racial) ideology is the denial of what one sees and hears. Hiding the perspectives of others, whether it be the author’s occlusion of the Maroon leaders (Bonni, Baron and Jolicoeur) who almost brought the colony to its knees, or the fact that African captives refused to operate like machines, to this end enables Nepveu to maintain his worldview, a vision that justifies every death and every act of destruction he was (in part) responsible for.⁴¹⁷

Drawing attention to European nature of Dutch racism and the colonialisation of Suriname at large, this thesis has emphasised the (universal) radical implications of slavery, conquest and colonialism on humanity’s sense of being. In the present day the effects of the early modern hierarchical sense of (human) being are everywhere to see. In the age of climate change, the notion (white) humans stand above rather than within nature is however increasingly difficult to maintain. The increased destabilisation and volatility of earth systems, namely, the biosphere, climate and the human social world, underline humanity’s fragility and dependence on other entities. The predicament of the current situation is further underscored by noting that the colonial-era logic of human superiority and mastery over nature has led to the direct and indirect destruction of “competing conceptions of being and justice that *are not* rooted in opposition between Man and Nature”.⁴¹⁸ As a means of gradually unravelling racism, the abjectionification

⁴¹⁷ Kom, *We Slaves of Suriname*, 108.

⁴¹⁸ Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 30-31.

of the animal and climate change, it is hence necessary to investigate and revive those alternative modes of being wiped out by the liberal universal human.

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