

Slavery, Sympathy, and White Self-Representation in Dutch Bourgeois Theater of 1800

SARAH JOSEPHINE ADAMS

Sarah Josephine Adams is a PhD candidate in Dutch Literature at Ghent University. Her FWO project *Slavery on Scene. Representations of Slavery on the Dutch Stage of 1800* examines performances of slavery in the Netherlands in an age of significant ideological and political change. The project aims to contribute to the understanding of the complex cultural production generated during Dutch colonialism, and its legacies in modern Dutch society. Her research interests include (post)colonial theory and literature, political history, and performance studies.

Abstract

Unlike the German, French, and particularly Anglo-American cases, the Dutch theatrical imaginings of colonialism, slavery, and race have been largely neglected by scholars of imperial culture. Looking at two early nineteenth-century bourgeois dramas, *Stedman* (1805) and *Kraspoekol* (1800), this article examines the complex nexus between slavery, sympathy, and the self-representation of the white middle class in the Netherlands of 1800. As a genre, bourgeois theater cultivated middle-class ideals of compassion, integrity, and benevolence in order to let spectators sympathize with poor, excluded or abused victims. This article explores the constellation of suffering slave characters in relation to the white bourgeois heroes in the plays and to their middle-class audiences. The central argument will be that bourgeois dramaturgy succeeded in conveying antislavery messages, yet primarily delineated and secured a superior white Dutch identity. Consequently, these dramas are considered as segments of the 'Dutch cultural archive', defined by Gloria Wekker as a large reservoir of memories, knowledge, and affects that has been crucial to the creation and continuation of white dominance in modern Dutch society.

Keywords: sympathy, abolitionism, bourgeois drama, Gloria Wekker, Dutch self-representation

Slavery, Sympathy, and White Self-Representation in Dutch Bourgeois Theater of 1800

SARAH JOSEPHINE ADAMS

In Dirk van Hogendorp's sentimental abolitionist play *Kraspoekol, of de slaaverny* (*Kraspoekol, or slavery*, 1800), a philanthropic Dutch merchant speaks to his compatriots quite directly in the final act: 'Batavians! Why don't you abolish this disgraceful and vicious slave trade in your colonies? These slaves are fellow humans, they are our brothers! Their tears and their blood are our responsibility, if we remain unfaithful to our ground principles.'¹ With his strong emphasis on the tears and misery of enslaved people, Van Hogendorp engages in what Brycchan Carey has accurately termed 'the abolitionist rhetoric of sensibility'. Coinciding with the sentimental episode in Europe, antislavery discourse employed 'the power of sympathy to raise awareness of suffering, to change an audience's view of that suffering, and to direct their opposition to it'.² Changing mentalities within the growing European urban middle classes and philanthropic reforms were mutually reinforcing.³ Catering to audiences that cherished sympathetic feelings, sentimental fiction thus invariably took a stand on the side of victims of sexual oppression, social exclusion or unjust (colonial) policies, and sought to play upon bourgeois values of common humanity and compassion.⁴

1 Hogendorp, *Kraspoekol*, 109: 'Bataaven! zult gij in uwe bezittingen in uwe volkplantingen, dien eerlozen, dien verfoeijlijken handel niet afschaffen? Het zijn onze medemenschen, onze broeders! hunne tranen, hun bloed koomen op onze hoofden, indien wij, ontrouw [blijven] aan onze beginzelen.' 'Batavians' means 'Dutch people'. During and after the Dutch Revolt against Spain, the Dutch considered the Batavi, who revolted against their Roman oppressor in 69 AD, as their courageous ancestors. I would like to thank the *EMLC* editorial board and the anonymous reviewers for their thorough criticism of earlier versions of this paper. All translations are my own.

2 Carey, *British Abolitionism*, 2. Like Carey, this paper will apply the contemporary term 'sympathy' rather than 'empathy', which appeared only around 1900 as a translation of the German *Einfühlung*. 'Sympathy' roughly equals emotions such as pity, compassion and fellow-feeling (see also Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*). Another note on language: given the topic of this article, one cannot avoid quoting problematic and offensive terms and phrases. I hope to provide a critical context in which these derogatory titles and citations can be read for purposes contrary to those for which they were initially used.

3 See also Davis's standard trilogy on the social momentum of human rights movements, democracy, and global revolution in relation to abolitionism, and more particularly the second volume: *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*.

4 For searching investigations of sentimental novels and poetry see, among others, Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility*; McGann, *The Poetics of Sensibility*; Bell, *Sentimentalism, Ethics, and the Culture of Feeling*. Dutch research on sentimentalism confines itself to Meijer, *The Pure Language of the Heart*, and Sturkenboom, *Spektators van hartstocht*.

Antislavery dramas such as *Kraspoekol* cultivated these middle-class ideals and invited their spectators to sympathize with enslaved people. As in the genre of the ‘humanitarian narrative’, authors and playwrights developed techniques to bridge spatial and emotional gaps between suffering slave characters and the audience, and represented remedial action as morally imperative.⁵ In her paper on the ethical movements in Dutch colonial politics, Maartje Janse claimed that sentimental literature could instruct people in the metropole on how to become the victims’ ‘rescuers’.⁶ Whereas the Dutch word *burger* had merely legal implications until the 1750s, it now referred to ideals such as integrity, sympathy, and morality.⁷ Voicing his concerns about the corruption of the Dutch ‘ground principles’, the merchant in *Kraspoekol* does not only refer to Enlightenment values; he wants to restore this Dutch bourgeois identity of being compassionate benefactors.

Looking at two early nineteenth-century plays set in the Dutch East and West Indies, *Kraspoekol* (1800) and *Stedman* (1805), this article contributes to the understanding of the complex nexus between antislavery, sympathy, and the self-representation of the white middle class in the Netherlands of 1800. Both plays take a quite radical stance in the abolitionist debate. Although historiography has long emphasized that the Dutch were among the last to abolish slavery in 1860 (East India) and 1863 (Surinam and the Antilles), many individual actions were initiated by Dutch petitioners, politicians, and authors who severely critiqued Dutch colonial and slavery politics.⁸ My analysis of *Kraspoekol* and *Stedman* will demonstrate, however, that abolitionism was also an exquisite instrument of Dutch self-fashioning.

As several scholars of Anglo-American literature have shown, the relationship between sentimental literature and empire is indeed a paradoxical one.⁹ It served both to stimulate readers and audiences to change imperial ideologies and as a tool to soothe them; it propagated equality and at the same time structured social categories in racial and gendered terms. In a Dutch context, such incongruities have received little attention from literary scholars.¹⁰ In the sections that follow, this article seeks to illuminate the ambiguous relationship between bourgeois drama and abolitionist ideologies by examining the constellations of slave characters and the two white heroes of *Stedman* and *Kraspoekol*. My central argument will be that bourgeois dramaturgy succeeds in conveying antislavery messages, yet at the same time strictly delineates and secures a superior Dutch (and male) identity. It was, in other words, primarily a means to publicly display a ‘white morale’.

5 Laqueur, ‘Bodies, Details, and the Humanitarian Narrative’, 177–178.

6 Janse, ‘Representing Distant Victims’, 62.

7 For discussions of the Dutch term *burger* in the late eighteenth century, see Kloek and Mijnhardt, ‘De verlichte burger’ and their book *1800: Blauwdrukken voor een samenleving*, esp. chapters 4–16.

8 Compared to Denmark in 1803, Britain in 1834, and France in 1848. However, scholars agree that the British case was an anomaly rather than a model. Sens concludes that the relatively slow emergence of abolitionist protest in the Dutch Republic can be attributed to an imagined and a real decline in state and society. Reformers of all kinds inhibited the development of issues other than national ones. Sens, ‘Dutch Antislavery Attitudes’, 100–101. For comprehensive research on (Dutch) abolitionism, see Janse, *De afschaffers*; Janse, ‘Representing Distant Victims’; Drescher, *Abolition*; Nimako and Willemsen, *The Dutch Atlantic*.

9 See, among others, Festa, ‘Sentimental Visions of Empire’; Ahern, *Affect and Abolition*.

10 Important exceptions are Legèze, *De bagage van Blomhoff en Van Breugel*, and Pieterse, ‘Het gevaar van de koloniale parvenu’. The amount of work done in the domains of anthropology, history and social sciences is more satisfying. Examples include Essed and Hoving, *Dutch Racism*; the work of Dienke Hondius; and Wekker, *White Innocence*.

Recently, the Afro-Surinamese Dutch anthropologist Gloria Wekker has pointed to similar paradoxes in the present-day Netherlands. In her book *White Innocence* she suggests that the Netherlands tends to frame itself as an innocent, progressive, and ethical nation that is color-blind and free of racism, while race is in fact the 'fundamental organizing grammar in Dutch society'.¹¹ Drawing on Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*, Wekker expands on the notion of the 'cultural archive' that has always represented white consciousness as the principal authority and European power as only natural.¹² The cultural archive of the Netherlands, then, is the result of four centuries of Dutch imperial rule. It is the large reservoir of memories, knowledge, and affects that has been crucial to the creation and continuation of white dominance in modern Dutch society.¹³

Because I will read *Stedman* and *Kraspoekol* as instruments helping to mark the contours of a superior white, middle-class identity, I consider them as segments of this Dutch cultural archive. Whereas Said reads a body of literature produced in the metropolises against their beneficial or supposedly innocent purposes, Wekker observes modern Dutch culture and organizational phenomena in order to illustrate how the effects of colonialism are still present today. This article attempts to combine these two approaches. To be sure, it is not my intention to doubt the abolitionist intentions of these early-nineteenth-century writers, nor will I unquestioningly project modern concepts upon historical texts. Quite the reverse: I will read these dramatic texts as clues to understanding present-day thinking about race in Dutch society.

Kraspoekol, Stedman, and the Dutch Antislavery Repertoire

Unlike the German, French, and particularly Anglophone cases, the theatrical imaginings of colonialism, slavery, and race have been largely neglected by scholars of Dutch colonial history and literature.¹⁴ Therefore, I will first briefly introduce this so far unstudied repertoire and locate *Stedman* and *Kraspoekol* in it. Around 1800, both major and smaller Dutch playhouses produced and translated a large collection of theatrical works that dealt with issues of empire. I have compiled a list of more than twenty plays that explicitly treat slavery. Half of them are original Dutch productions, while the other plays are translations, mainly from German and French. The repertoire consists of ballets, pantomimes, and operas, which, partly motivated by stylistic conventions, normalized colonialism and

¹¹ Wekker, *White Innocence*, 23.

¹² Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xxvi.

¹³ Wekker, *White Innocence*, 19-20.

¹⁴ While there are some studies on the performance of (anti)slavery drama and race in the German (Riesche, *Schöne Mohrinnen*; Köhler, 'Beautiful Black Soul?'; Sutherland, *Staging Blackness*) and French contexts, the Anglophone stage has been examined more broadly. See particularly Nathans, *Slavery and Sentiment*; Gibbs, *Performing the Temple of Liberty*; Waters, *Racism on the Victorian Stage*. The Dutch theater repertoire has never been thoroughly studied from a postcolonial perspective. A notable exception is Manjusha Kuruppath's recent book *Staging Asia*, in which she presents a first attempt to study Dutch colonialism through the lens of theater and offers readings of three plays dealing with the Dutch East India Company. In my PhD project *Slavery on Scene. Representations of Slavery on the Dutch Stage of 1800* (funded by FWO, 2016-2020), I chart the theatrical imaginings of colonial slavery, and illuminate some substantial paradoxes within these performances and the institution of theater.

did not critique slavery.¹⁵ To name but two examples: *Isabelle & Don Ferdinand, or the Indian festival* (*Isabelle & Don Ferdinand, of het Indiaansch feest*, 1802) and *Zamor and Lilli, or love between two negroes* (*Zamor en Lilli, of de liefde onder de negers*, 1815). As these titles suggest, these genres offered exotic spectacles rather than antislavery plots. In contrast, tragedies and bourgeois (melo)dramas unanimously maligned colonial slavery: *Abolition by the French* (*De Verlossing der slaaven door de Franschen*, 1794), *The negro slaves* (*De negers*, 1796), and *Zuma* (1819).

Kraspoekol and *Stedman* occupy a unique position within this second group of dramas. Whereas most plays prudently represent slavery in Spanish, French, or English contexts, these works explicitly focus on the Dutch colonies. Dirk van Hogendorp, the author of *Kraspoekol*, had good reasons to address the Dutch case in particular. Unlike many authors, he had served the Dutch East India Company (voc) himself. In his position as governor of East Java, he called for structural reform in favor of Javanese and enslaved people. After a long fight against the corruption and wrongs of the voc, he was imprisoned by the colonial authorities.¹⁶ Van Hogendorp's aversion to the Dutch colonial system resulted in various critical writings in which he drew up plans to immediately abolish 'the brutal [slave] trade and the disgraceful oppression of our fellow humans'.¹⁷ *Kraspoekol* is written in the same vein. The drama is set within an urban and familial context in the Dutch East Indian capital of Batavia (present-day Jakarta). The play is named after a cruel slave-owning Indian woman who lives with her Dutch philanthropic brother-in-law Wedano, a senior voc merchant. As an exemplary middle-class citizen, Wedano urges *Kraspoekol* to stop using brutal force against her slaves, but she refuses. In the final act, she is killed in a rage by her slave Ali, whose wife Philida she had cruelly abused.¹⁸

Although published without a preface, *Stedman* (1805) is clearly written for antislavery purposes. It is the anonymous translation of *Die Sklavin in Surinam* (Frankfurt 1804, and

¹⁵ An important exception is Goens, *Pantolon, East-Indian planter; Arlequin liberated from slavery by magic* (*Pantolon, Oost-Indische planter; Arlequin uit slaverny verlost door Toverkunst* 1803). This is a quite unique ballet-pantomime, as it seems to criticize slavery and even ridicules Dutch East Indian gentry.

¹⁶ For a detailed account of Dirk van Hogendorp's life, his experiences in the Dutch East Indies, and his ideas on colonialism, see Meerkerk, *De Gebroeders van Hogendorp*.

¹⁷ Hogendorp, *Stukken*, 453. The year after his return to the Netherlands, Van Hogendorp wrote *Berigt van den tegenwoordigen toestand der Bataafsche bezittingen in Oostindiën* (*An Account of the Present State of the Batavian Colonies in the East Indies*). He later published *Stukken, raakende den tegenwoordigen toestand der Bataafsche bezittingen in Oost-Indie* (*Articles Concerning the Present State of the Batavian Colonies in the East Indies*).

¹⁸ Although situated in the Dutch East Indies, *Kraspoekol* (particularly its preface) is in the first place a denunciation of slavery in the Caribbean Basin: 'Slavery in the East Indies is generally much more lenient than it is in the West Indies, as East Indian slaves are only serving in a domestic context' (iv-v). The play seems to be emblematic for the laundering rhetoric that characterized both fictional and non-fictional narratives about East Indian slavery. Likewise, historiography of Dutch colonialism and slavery has given disproportionate attention to the large-scale plantation slavery in the West, thus trivializing the allegedly exclusively urban, domestic, and 'more humane' nature of Asian slavery. For rectified views on slavery in the Dutch East Indies, see Baay, *Daar werd wat gruwelijks verricht*; and Rossum, *Kleurrijke tragiek*.

Vienna 1805) by Franz Kratter, a popular writer of the Austrian Enlightenment.¹⁹ The play is a dramatic adaptation of the famous autobiographical notes of John Gabriel Stedman (1744-1797), who, as a Scottish-Dutch officer in the regiment of Colonel Fourceaud, helped protect Dutch planters against ‘rebellious maroons’ in Surinam. After much censoring, his diaries were published as *A Narrative of a Five Years’ Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (1796).²⁰ This narrative was rapidly translated into several European languages, including German and Dutch, and its numerous detailed engravings of the abuses on Dutch plantations were eagerly used as abolitionist propaganda across Europe. Like many of the cultural adaptations of the *Narrative*, the play revolves around the two prevailing motifs in Stedman’s diaries: the gruesome crimes against enslaved people in Surinam and the awaking love between the officer and the fifteen-year-old slave Cery (in the *Narrative*, she is called Joanna).²¹

Lifting the Black Veil: Representations of Slave Suffering

Sentimental abolitionist discourse as defined by Carey fits into the larger genre of ‘the humanitarian narrative’. According to Thomas W. Laqueur, this type of story speaks in an extremely detailed fashion about the pain and suffering of ordinary people ‘to make apparent the causal chains that might connect the actions of its readers with the suffering of its subjects’.²² In other words, for the politics of reform authors had to describe actual suffering to arouse compassion, then offer examples of effective social action, and subsequently make audiences aware of their own ability to protest. This section will discuss this first step: how do *Stedman* and *Kraspoekol* represent slavery, and how do they expose slave suffering to elicit sympathy? Thereafter, I will shift focus to the bourgeois heroes of these plays and examine how they engage in antislavery efforts and encourage reform. The final section of this article asks how these abolitionist dramas connect to the creation of a persistent Dutch sense of superiority.

Although decorated with peaceful and picturesque scenery of lemon and orange trees surrounding a Paramaribo sugar estate, *Stedman* comes to bear out Surinam’s bad reputation regarding the treatment of slaves. The sadistic manager Lude is in charge of the plantation. He is assisted by his even crueler overseer Sixtus, who embodies the stereotypical drunk plantation aggressor who lashes innocent slaves to death. Opening with a typical plantation theme, the second act shows Lude sitting in front of his house, keeping watch

¹⁹ I would like to suggest Jan Steven van Esveldt Holtrop as a possible translator. He translated several other dramas from French and German (‘Hoogduits’) and was the son of Willem Holtrop, who published *Stedman* and many other translations by Jan Steven van Esveldt Holtrop around 1800. However, I will keep referring to Kratter and his anonymous translator.

²⁰ The full title reads *A Narrative of a Five Years’ Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam, in Guiana, on the wild coast of South America; from the year 1772, to 1777. Elucidating the History of that Country, and Describing its Productions.*

²¹ For an overview of what Carl Haarnack has called ‘Stedmania’ (the many translations and adaptations of *A Narrative* into other literary genres): Haarnack, *Buku – Bibliotheca Surinamica*, <https://bukubooks.wordpress.com/> (Accessed on 15 April 2018).

²² Laqueur, ‘Bodies, Details, and the Humanitarian Narrative’, 176-178.

(gazing in the distance with binoculars) over the laboring slaves on his estate. As Sixtus approaches Lude, he narrates how he punished a slave for running away:

LUDE *is sitting at the table on his terrace in front of the house, smoking. In front of him: books, binoculars, and a bottle of wine. SIXTUS standing near Lude, greeting him with respect.*

LUDE So, one hundred strokes of the cane. I do hope you hit that slave hard enough?

SIXTUS Oh, it was delightful to see. Ha, ha, ha, after the sixth blow he was already bleeding. [...] After the tenth, his flesh stuck on the canes. [...] He won't run again!

LUDE Are you sure?

SIXTUS Honestly, he won't be able to run away anymore. I finished him off very quickly, and cut off all his toes. [...] Now he can drag himself along the plantation, and he'll be weeding and raking until we hear his ribs rumble with hunger. [...]

LUDE Ha, damn you, Sixtus! Here, you deserve a glass of Mallaga [wine].²³

Not only does this scene of slave suffering display the inhumane discourses and logic of the Dutch plantocracy. By explaining in detail the harsh mistreatments of this particular slave and by representing Lude and Sixtus as detached from all sympathetic emotions, it is specifically designed to let spectators feel the pain of slaves and understand why they would run away from Lude's plantation. Only a few scenes later, Cery displays two fresh lashing wounds to Stedman, whose reaction then exemplifies the intended sentimental reaction of the audience. Whereas Cery stays calm, Stedman exclaims how the sight of such abuse physically affects him, thus emphasizing his authentic fellow-feeling: 'Oh! Cery, I cannot bear this. [...] Oh! I'm becoming senseless.'²⁴ We find another horrible scene of black oppression in the fourth act, in which Sixtus enjoys abusing enslaved people:

SIXTUS, *enters with a bunch of slaves. We hear whiplashes and desperate cries of slaves.*

March! Back to your cages! Three of you stay here. (*To one of them.*) Prepare me a seat, you have the honor that I will rest on your back. (*The slave leans down, resting on his hands and his knees. Sixtus sits down.*) Well, this is more comfortable than the best chair! (*To the other two slaves.*) Make me some breeze! (*They kneel and start to wave two big fans.*) Ha! (*Sixtus slaps one of them with his fist.*) You scoundrel! You smashed your fan into my face! Do you want to get flogged? (*He takes out a bottle of alcohol and starts drinking.*) Ah! It's good to rest after such intensive labor!²⁵

23 Anonymous, *Stedman*, 28-29: 'LUDE zit aan een tafel, op het terras voor zijn huis en rookt. Vóór hem liggen boeken, een verrekijker en staat een flesch wijn. SIXTUS, in een eerbiedige houding, een weinig van hem af staande. LUDE: Honderd stokslagen zegt hij? Maar goed er opgesmeerd? SIXTUS: Dat het een vermaak was om te zien. Ha, ha, ha, met den zesden slag kwam er bloed. [...] Met den tienden kleefden er reeds stukken vleesch aan den stok. [...] Hij zal niet weder wegloopen. LUDE: Hebt gij daarvoor gezorgd? SIXTUS: Op mijne eer, hij zal niet weder wegloopen. Ik heb een kort proces met hem gemaakt, ik heb de tenen van beide zijn voeten afgesneden. [...] Nu kan hij in de plantagie kruipen, en wieden, en harken, en honger lijden tot men de ribben in hem hoort rammelen [...]. LUDE: Ha, daar is een geheel glas Mallaga, Sixtus!'

24 Anonymous, *Stedman*, 52: 'ô Cery! – neen dat dulde ik niet! [...] ô Ik zoude onzinnig kunnen worden.'

25 Anonymous, *Stedman*, 81: 'SIXTUS, met een' hoop slaven. Men hoort reeds van binnen de zweepslagen en het geschrei dier slaven: Marsch! Naar uw hok. (*De slaven gaan heen.*) Gijlieden blijft hier. (*Drie van dezelve bijven terug.*) [...] (*Tegen een' der slaven.*) Bereid mij eene zitplaats: ik zal u eens weder de eer aandoen, op uwen rug uit te rusten. (*De slaaf bukt zich neder, rust op handen en voeten; Sixtus zet zich op zijn' rug.*) Zoo. Hier zit ik beter dan op den gemakkelijksten stoel. (*Tegen de twee andere slaven.*) Maak mij wind! (*Zij knielen voor hem neder en waaijen hem met twee groote waaijers.*) Zoo. (*Hij werpt een' der slaven met een' vuist-slag ter aarde.*) Hondsvot! Gij stoot mij den waaijer vlak in 't gezicht; moet gij de zweep proeven? [...] (*Hij haalt een flesch Mallaga uit den zak en drinkt.*) Dat smaakt! Het is wel waar: na gedanen arbeid is het goed te rusten.'

Interestingly, this scene stands completely isolated from others. It draws an unambiguous picture of Surinam as place of despotism, brutality, and racism. With stage directions explicitly calling for on-stage representations of slave violence and suffering, *Stedman* employs physical (and mental) harm as a universal language to shape sympathetic feelings among the bourgeois audience. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), Adam Smith had fostered compassion as a principle inherent to human nature, and as a sentiment that could be easily derived from the lively portrayal of the misery of others.²⁶ Kratter provided 'visual evidence' of the wrongs in the Dutch colonial empire to emphasize the urgency of sympathy and action.

At the same time, however, these vivid re-enactments of slave suffering lay bare the sadomasochist nature of slave torturing not only within imperial power constellations, but also between white spectators and black characters. As scholars have convincingly argued, the sentimental and graphic presentation of slave suffering often entailed ambivalent pleasurable feelings among the audiences.²⁷ Moreover, sympathy itself could be seen as the embodiment of a controlling attitude. In her influential book *Scenes of Subjection*, Saidiya Hartman sharply noted that the convergence of (colonial) violence and pleasure should be identified as 'one of the primary attributes of the economy of enjoyment'.²⁸

Pain and suffering in *Kraspoekol* are represented mostly verbally, yet in a more detailed fashion than they are in *Stedman*. The fourteen-year-old girl Tjampakka, who is said to be Wedano's favorite slave, testifies of her enslavement. She narrates how she was kidnapped from her parents, brothers, and sisters in Boni, and how she was chained and gagged so she could not run or scream for help. Thereafter, she was imprisoned in a dark cave on Makassar, together with twenty other people. For six months they were given only rice and water. One of the main arguments against the slave trade was the cruelty of the passage from the African West coasts to the Caribbean Basin. However, and according to Tjampakka's testimony, the East Indian colonial slave trade was equally inhumane. She explains that:

by night, we were embarked on a boat; this vessel was very small yet packed with 120 men, forty women and some children. Male slaves were chained together and were not allowed to leave the cargo space for fresh air – women were sometimes allowed on deck. This way, we were transported to Batavia, where we were publicly sold on the slave market.²⁹

²⁶ Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 1-2: 'How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it. Of this kind is pity or compassion, the emotion which we feel for the misery of others, when we either see it, or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner. That we often derive sorrow from the sorrow of others, is a matter of fact too obvious to require any instances to prove it; for this sentiment, like all the other original passions of human nature, is by no means confined to the virtuous and humane, though they perhaps may feel it with the most exquisite sensibility. The greatest ruffian, the most hardened violator of the laws of society, is not altogether without it.'

²⁷ See especially Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*; Wood, *Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography*; Klarer, 'Humanitarian Pornography'.

²⁸ Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 26.

²⁹ Hogendorp, *Kraspoekol*, 31-36: 'Bij nacht wierden wij aan boord gebragt; het vaartuijg was klein; en echter wierden er honderd en twintig mansslaaven en veertig vrouwen, behalven de kinderen, ingeladen. De mans waren twee aan twee in ketenen aan elkanderen vast gesmeed, en mogten niet op het verdek koomen om lucht te scheppen; doch ons vrouwen wierdt het somtijds toegestaan. Op die wijze wierden wij naar herwaards gevoerd,

To advance an abolitionist ideology, Van Hogendorp overtly contrasts the cordiality and familial sentiment of enslaved Indonesians with the hypocrisy and inhumanity of the European colonial policies. Captivity narratives and horror stories about the slave trade were very effective and a recurring motif in abolitionist writings, as they underscored the brutality of slavery as an institution. Moreover, this type of narration singled out the capacity of feeling of black people, who were conventionally depicted as numb and naive.³⁰ In *Slavery and Sentiment on the American Stage*, Heather Nathans has proposed that such representations could look beyond what Thomas Jefferson in 1788 had described as the ‘immoveable veil of black’ which covered all the emotions of African people. Not only did this supposed veil preclude people of color from experiencing and expressing the same set of feelings as whites, it would also prevent bourgeois audiences from sympathizing with them. Countering Jefferson’s assertion, Nathans suggests that sentimental productions in which black characters were staged as suffering victims capable of ‘middle-class feelings’ could ‘lift up the veil of black’ and elicit sympathy with their white counterparts.³¹

By this token, Van Hogendorp represents Tjampakka as an innocent child who is brutally taken from her family and severely traumatized. She attests that her memories haunt her and that she keeps thinking about her mourning parents: ‘Oh, what a fatal memory! Excuse me, master, I cannot speak of this without bursting into tears. [...] My emotions suffocate my throat.’³² She expresses the inability to produce a coherent story because she is physically affected by her authentic emotions. The melancholy in Tjampakka’s testimony suggests an incurable desire to be reunited with her family in Boni. Thus Van Hogendorp violates the sanctity of the family so central in bourgeois mentality.

The frontispiece of the drama text represents a key scene in the play (fig. 1). Despite its unsatisfactory depiction of Tjampakka’s young age, the engraving provides many additional details concerning costumes, scenery, and plot. Tjampakka is to be punished for breaking a plate while serving Kraspoekol some tea – it was a trap set by Kraspoekol herself: the plate was already broken. Kraspoekol, literally meaning ‘to beat hard’ (‘pukul keras’), furiously points to the splinters. She orders her male slaves, standing in the back of the gallery with rattan sticks in their hands, to rope the girl to a ladder in the garden and to lash her brutally. Kraspoekol, like Sixtus in *Stedman*, expresses the pleasure she derives from these abuses: ‘Well, well. Roped to a ladder – that’s perfect; so they will not miss! I hope the boys close down on her.’³³

Moved by her story, Wedano eventually liberates Tjampakka. As a consequence, Kraspoekol and her *nijai* (overseer) Ignis now target Philida, who is married to Ali. Jealous

en toen openlijk te koop geveild.’ See also the chapter ‘Proeve van den slaavenhandel’ in Hogendorp, *Stukken*, 453-464.

³⁰ Nathans, *Slavery and Sentiment*, 70.

³¹ Nathans, *Slavery and Sentiment*, 1-14.

³² Hogendorp, *Kraspoekol*, 31: ‘O, noodlottige herinnering! Vergeef mij, mijnheer, ik kan niet aan mijne ouders gedenken zonder traanen te storten. [...] De aandoeningen van mijn gevoel [doen] mijne woorden verstikken.’

³³ Hogendorp, *Kraspoekol*, 24: ‘Zoo, op de ladder gebonden — dat is goed; dan is het raak! Als de jongens nu maar goed toe kloppen.’



Fig. 1 Frontispiece of *Kraspoekol, of de slaaverny* (Van Hogendorp 1800). Special Collections of University of Amsterdam, UBA 692 D 58.

of this marriage, Kraspoekol severely beats Philida and chains her up to a heavy wooden block. Ali responds to the abuses of his pregnant wife in a lengthy monologue:

ALI Oh Philida! Unfortunate Philida! [...] – Cruel Dutchmen! Are we not human, then? You treat us like animals – worse than animals. Not even dogs are punished without a crime; but we, unfortunates, we are. – Why is Philida burdened with this torture? – because she wanted to be with her husband. – What is her crime? what kind of law system could legitimize such unjust practices? – however, where shall we, unfortunates, find justice? – who will even hear us? [...] Oh, unfortunate Philida! – what dire fate do we have now? – torn apart – heaven! I cannot bear this thought! No! – I would rather – oh! What can I do?³⁴

³⁴ Hogendorp, *Kraspoekol*, 58-59: ‘Ach Philida! ongelukkige Philida! – wreede Hollanders! zijn wij ook geen menschen? en gij behandelt ons als beesten – erger dan beesten. Geen hond wordt geslagen zonder schuld; maar

Again, the strong affective ties and the genuine family bond are articulated. Ali's emotional and desperate tone represents both physical and mental pain, strongly rooted in the feeling of the iniquity of the colonial 'legal system', which prevents him from charging Kraspoekol for abusing Philida. Excessive sentiment is indicated in the drama text by exclamations, while silences and an untidy accumulation of acute questions suggest Ali's limited ability to express his feelings through rational language. Theater is a privileged medium able to employ this technique of *style haché*, as the inability of coherent speech to convey the physical effects of inner sentiments can be rendered more explicitly in the performance of the actor.³⁵

A modern audience might consider all this as hyperbolic sentiment, yet it corresponded to the late-eighteenth-century dramaturgical practice of gesticulating and expressing inner feelings to elicit a compassionate response. In order to raise awareness and arouse sympathy, both *Stedman* and *Kraspoekol* displayed details about suffering and cultivated authentic emotions to which the audiences could relate. Put simply, the authors forged a unity of shared feelings between slave characters and the white bourgeoisie. The emotional portrayals of slavery emerging on the Dutch stage during the decades around 1800 should be interpreted as an effort to remove the supposed veil of black, which described skin tincture, yet did not 'obscure the texture of the mind'.³⁶

Benevolence of the Bourgeoisie

One of the most important genre conventions of bourgeois drama was the staging of a representative benevolent hero from the middle class who could instruct the audience to become perfect *burgers*. Propagating sympathy and philanthropy, the tears of the bourgeois hero were not symptoms of weakness but of humanity.³⁷ Made eyewitnesses of the suffering, Laqueur argues, the audience should subsequently be made aware that the suffering can and should be stopped.³⁸ Through the representation of Wedano and *Stedman* as exemplifying heroes capable of sympathetic feelings and supporting the abolitionist cause, Van Hogendorp and Kratter could persuade their audiences to take action.

As noted, *Stedman* reacts in a very emotional way to Cery's wounds, thus behaving as an excellent citizen. He even suggests that he is experiencing pain as well: 'I cannot

wij ellendigen wél. – Waarom is mijn Philida nu zoo geteisterd? – om dat ze kwam vraagen den nagt bij haaren man te mogen doorbrengen. – Wat is hierin misdaadig? welke wetten kunnen zulke onrechtvaardigheid billijken? — maar bij wien zullen wij ongelukkigen recht gaan zoeken? — wie zal ons aanhooren? [...] Ongelukkige Philida! – wat zal voortaan ons lot zijn? – van elkanderen afgescheurd – hemel! ik kan de gedachte zonder ontroering niet verdragen – neen! – dan liever – maar ach! wat kan ik ongelukkige toch uitvoeren?

35 Castelveccchi, *Sentimental Opera*, 138-139.

36 Nathans, *Slavery and Sentiment*, 2.

37 Mattheij, *Leerschool der liefde*, 191. Mattheij's book is the only comprehensive study devoted to Dutch bourgeois drama practices and theory. German literature is more advanced on this topic: see, among others, Pikulik, *Bürgerliches Trauerspiel und Empfindsamkeit*; Szondi et al., *Die Theorie des bürgerlichen Trauerspiels*; Immer, *Der inszenierte Held*.

38 Laqueur, 'Bodies, Details, and the Humanitarian Narrative', 177-178.

bear this'. Marianne Noble has called this effect 'sentimental wounding', analyzing this rhetorical strategy in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as 'a bodily experience of anguish caused by identification with the pain of another'. Of course, this is the effect of sympathy that both Carey and Laqueur have identified as indispensable to cause white characters and audiences to 'recognize intuitively the urgency of the antislavery cause and to redouble [their] commitment to it'.³⁹

Directions in the script of *Kraspoekol* indicate that Wedano 'radiates sincerity and philanthropy'. In the course of the drama, he urges Kraspoekol to at least treat her slaves humanely. He himself decides to liberate Tjampakka, thus bringing into practice the bourgeois drama convention of benevolence. In the context of this manumission, Wedano criticizes the ignorance of his countrymen and questions their cold-bloodedness in the slavery debate:

WEDANO Why is your soul incapable of these noble and virtuous emotions? How is it possible for a human heart to become so wrong and insensitive? Unnatural slavery, abhorrent slave trade, when will you be banished from the earth? When will you, oh! my beloved Dutch nation!, erase this bloodstain from your law books?⁴⁰

Employing the language of the heart and speaking directly to his 'beloved Dutch nation', Wedano complains about his countrymen's lack of emotions. Not only does he criticize their insensitivity, he also refers to the Dutch legal system and calls for slavery to be abolished. In other words, he demands that the Dutch campaign against slavery. In his 1798 political pamphlet *Proeve van den slaavenhandel* (*Thesis on the Slave Trade*), Van Hogendorp applied the same rhetorical procedure to directly confront the Dutch nation with its irresponsible attitude. He urges his compatriots to 'openly express their feelings regarding this case, in order to restore human bliss, especially for our fellow humans, our brothers, the slaves who have been – alas! – the subjects of our injustice, cruelty and ignorance for too long'.⁴¹ Both in his political writings and in *Kraspoekol*, Van Hogendorp connects unjust colonial practices to the mother country that profits from the colonial exploitations and is responsible for it.

The premiere of *Kraspoekol* took place on 20 March 1801 in The Hague. Due to a boycott organized by slavery supporters, however, the performance was stopped right before the second act, and it was never staged again.⁴² A review of the 1801 performance in the journal *Janus Janus-Zoon* reports how delegates of the East and West Indian Company disrupted the presentation as soon as the curtain rose. Men started yelling and blowing

³⁹ Noble, 'The Ecstasies of Sentimental Wounding', 295.

⁴⁰ Hogendorp, *Kraspoekol*, 39: 'Waarom is uwe ziel ook niet vatbaar voor deeze edele, deeze deugdzaame aandoeningen? hoe is het mogelijk, dat het menschelijk hart zoo verkeerd en verstokt kan worden? Onnatuurlijke slaavernij, verfoeijelijken slaavenhandel, wanneer zult gij toch van de aarde verbannen zijn? wanneer zult gij, o mijn dierbaar vaderland! deezen schandvlek uit uwe wetboeken wischen!'

⁴¹ Hogendorp, 'Proeve van den slaavenhandel', 463-464: 'Om hunne gevoelens over deeze zaak mede openlijk bekend te maaken, en daar door het menschelijk geluk te bevorderen; doch in 't bijzonder dat van een gedeelte onzer medemensen, onzer broederen, de slaaven, die, helaas! reeds veel te lang de voorwerpen van onze onrechtvaardigheid, wreedheid, en onverschilligheid geweest zijn.'

⁴² At the Rotterdam Theater Festival in 1990, it was presented as a radio play by Carel Alphenaar. In 2017, Urban Myth (directed by Jorgen Tjon A Fong) performed some of the scenes during Free Festival in The Hague.

cheap whistles, preventing other spectators from understanding what was being said on stage. One spectator, John Carleton, who also translated Van Hogendorp's political writings into English 'for the benefit of all white men', observed that if these demonstrators would have had the chance, 'they would have also extinguished the stage candles, to keep in darkness what [they] and their ancestors never intended for the light'.⁴³ Near the end of the first act, theater manager Ward Bingley came on stage, furious, requesting the audience to remain silent so that the performance could continue. After mixed responses of curious spectators shouting 'yes!' and demonstrators yelling 'no!', Bingley decided to call the play off.

In the same period, Van Hogendorp's critical *Berigt van den tegenwoordigen toestand der Bataafsche bezittingen in Oostindiën* (*An Account of the Present State of the Batavian Colonies in the East Indies*) was republished and his *Proeve van den slaavenhandel* came out in Delft and The Hague.⁴⁴ Considering Van Hogendorp's reputation as a severe opponent of the Dutch colonial system and his clear stance towards slavery in *Kraspoekol*, which was available in print months before the actual premiere, the slavery lobby was afraid of the exposure of its corrupt and inhumane practices. All copies of the play were sold out one the day after the performance, and the publisher claimed that he could have sold ten times more.

Interestingly, the review in *Janus Janus-Zoon* mentions the attendance of Willem van Irhoven van Dam, a Dutch Patriot active in the same circles as Pieter Vreede. In 1797, Vreede had given an impressive speech condemning the Dutch slave trade and slavery during the First National Assembly of the new Batavian Republic.⁴⁵ The same review also applauds the managers of the playhouse in The Hague for staging *Kraspoekol*, because 'it was about time to inform the nation and the Dutch citizens about the unfortunate fate of these fellow humans'.⁴⁶ As this performance and its reception indicate, abolitionist drama affected the minds and hearts of the Dutch bourgeoisie, wherein a (still disorganized) web of concerned and engaged citizens and political representatives started to develop. As Janse has shown, representations of suffering and political awareness worked in a mutually reinforcing way and led to the emergence of Dutch ethical antislavery movements in the decades that followed.⁴⁷ Abolitionism belonged to the age of the democratic revolution. Framed as a concerned and sympathizing 'rescuer', Wedano sets a perfect example.

Cery's Complexion: The Morality of the White Middle Class

Albeit less pronounced, Kratter's protagonist clearly identifies himself as an abolitionist. Stedman openly indicts the abuses on Lude's plantation, and together with Governor

43 John Carleton, cited in Bastin 'The Rivalry between Dirk van Hogendorp and S.C. Nederburgh', 84-85.

44 Hogendorp, *Stukken*, 453-464.

45 Vuyck, *Een visioen van vrijheid*, 112-113.

46 Bosch, 'Donderdag den 26 Maart', 285-286: 'Dat het, meer dan tyd was, de natie te verlichten omtrend het ongelukkig lot haarer natuurgenoeten.'

47 Janse, 'Representing Distant Victims'.

Walmoden he orders Lude to remove Sixtus from his position as overseer. Stedman compassionately laments the fate of the slaves in Surinam, calling them the ‘unfortunate victims of barbarous avarice and arbitrary oppression’ and remarking that his memories of Surinam will always be fused with ‘the lingering image of the oppressed, imprisoned and tormented humankind’.⁴⁸ As he embarks for Europe in the final act, Stedman is carrying with him reports on how Europe ‘could abolish the slave trade and [...] turn cruel planters into human beings again’.⁴⁹ The reports he is taking across the Atlantic presumably refer to the actual diaries of John Gabriel Stedman, which were generally interpreted as abolitionist writings.⁵⁰ Like Wedano, Stedman functions as an exemplary hero, whose good intentions are to be followed by middle-class audiences. Whereas *Die Sklavin in Surinam* was definitively staged in the German states, *Stedman* was not performed in the large theaters of the Low Countries.⁵¹ Nevertheless, the Dutch adaptation seems to be specifically designed for staging – probably in smaller playhouses – and definitely circulated in printed form.

More explicitly than *Kraspoekol*, *Stedman* grounds abolition and emancipation in a domestic bourgeois sphere. Near the end of the play, Kratter deviated completely from the original *Narrative* and made some essential changes to the plot in order to suit the generic conventions of bourgeois drama. As recorded in the *Narrative*, John Gabriel Stedman repeatedly proposed to ‘his mulatta’ Joanna to purchase her and to take her to Europe as his wife. He paraphrases the firm answer of Joanna, who is not willing to accept these offers:

[Joanna] could not but prefer remaining in Surinam: first, from a consciousness that, with propriety, she had not the disposal of herself; and secondly, from pride, wishing in her present condition rather to be the first among her own class in America, than a reflection or burthen on me [Stedman] in Europe, as she was convinced must be the case, unless our circumstances became one day more independent.⁵²

Joanna insisted on her rights of self-determination and prefers to be respected ‘among her own class’ instead of being a disgrace to Stedman in Europe. As Mary Louise Pratt observed in *Imperial Eyes*, Joanna alludes in this citation to the independence of the Americas as a prerequisite for a successful relationship between an ex-slave and a Westerner.⁵³ I believe that, additionally, these lines refer to the almost insuperable power relation between a

48 Anonymous, *Stedman*, 49, 61: ‘De ongelukkige slagtoffers van barbaarsche hebzucht en willekeurige onderdrukking’, ‘[steeds te] voorschijn tredend beeld der onderdrukte, gedwongene, afgepijngde menschheid.’

49 Anonymous, *Stedman*, 129: ‘Hoe men den slavenhandel zoude kunnen afschaffen, hoe men [...] de harde planters tot menschen zoude kunnen maken.’

50 In reality, John Gabriel Stedman’s attitude towards slavery was much more complicated. Although his indictments against planter violence were nearly unprecedented and inspired antislavery movements on both sides of the Atlantic, he was certainly no abolitionist. Throughout the narrative Stedman emphasizes the potential problems that (direct) emancipation might create and focusses on better individual treatment as the spearhead of his argument. Several scholars have argued that the adaptation from Stedman’s diary to the published narrative resulted in crucial changes in its tone, making it sound more like a whitewashing project than it actually was. Sollors, for instance, observed that Stedman’s original criticism was ‘toned down’ and that the published version represented him as an advocate of the proslavery cause: Sollors, *Neither Black, Nor White*, 202.

51 Although Riesche does not mention it in her list of performances in *Schöne Mohrinnen, Die Sklavin in Surinam* was staged at least once in Frankfurt, on 31 December 1804.

52 Stedman, *Narrative* (1796), ii, 390–391.

53 Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 99.

white European officer and an Afro-American woman of color, which would persist even in Europe. Joanna's principal and persistent conviction not to assimilate into European culture may in some ways rectify this power relation.

Well aware of the bourgeois demand for a nuclear family, Kratter replaces the separation of the two lovers with an entirely new plotline of the happy marriage. His novel interpretation of this love bond is significant for many reasons. As in the *Narrative*, Stedman repeatedly asks Cery to marry him and to sail to Holland. In the course of the first acts, Cery expresses her reasons for remaining in Surinam in terms similar to those Joanna used:

CERY [Stedman] is worth a better fate. What would I be doing in Europe, surrounded by beautiful and proud European women who stand supreme in every possible way? Would he not be ashamed of his American slave?⁵⁴

Here, Cery is talking to her friend and 'patroness' Augusta, a Dutch planter widow who secretly also has amorous feelings for Stedman.⁵⁵ Suppressing these feelings, Augusta decides to purchase the girl from Lude and orders Cery to eventually join her lover to Europe. This way, Cery is manumitted and can go to Holland as a 'free' woman:

AUGUSTA To unite two beautiful souls, this is my luck!
 STEDMAN (*To Augusta.*) Big-hearted woman!
 CERY (*Kneeling for Augusta.*) Oh! Let me cry in front of your feet. [...]
 AUGUSTA Oh! Watch the tears of joy glistening in his eyes! [...] – Walk into his arms, girl!
 CERY (*To Stedman.*) I want to be your slave, I want to be owned by you; but being your wife...
 AUGUSTA (*In a joking but demanding tone.*) Obey, slave! Your master obliges you.
 STEDMAN Give me your hand, and become my wife! (*Cery reflects for a moment and then intensely embraces Stedman's chest.*)⁵⁶

These lines conclude Kratter's drama and directly situate slave emancipation within the bourgeois sphere. The middle-class assumption that love rather than shared class or race should be the basis of marriage had prevailed by the incorporation of Cery into Stedman's family. Moreover, it encourages and emphasizes the virtuousness of small individual actions. As Augusta indicates, sympathetic feelings are the most fortunate: "To unite two beautiful souls, this is my luck!"

Despite the 'emancipatory' scheme of this turn of events, Kratter's happy ending is problematic in many respects. Quite obviously, Cery is denied all agency by being forced

54 Anonymous, *Stedman*, 101-102: 'Hij is een veel beter lot waardig. Wat zoude hij met mij, in Europa, in den kring der schoone, trotsche, van alle zijden boven mij uitblinkende Europésche vrouwen, doen? Zoude hij zich daar niet ras over de Amerikaansche slavin schamen?'

55 Augusta's character is probably inspired by Mrs. Godefroy from the *Narrative*. Mrs. Godefroy is Stedman's friend and is also very favorably disposed towards Joanna and Jonny (Joanna's and Stedman's son). Mrs. Godefroy loans Stedman money to purchase Joanna and Jonny from their master, yet in the end Joanna refuses to leave Surinam. There is no indication that Mrs. Godefroy had intimate feelings for officer Stedman.

56 Anonymous, *Stedman*, 140: 'AUGUSTA: Twee schooner zielen gelukkig gemaakt te hebben, zij nu ook mijn geluk. STEDMAN (*Tegen Augusta.*): Grootmoedige, edele vrouw! CERY (*aan hare voeten vallende.*): ô Laat mij aan uwe voeten weenen! [...] AUGUSTA: ô Hoe schoon blinken vreugdetranen! [...] – In zijn armen, gelukkig meisje! CERY (*Tegen Stedman.*): Uwe slavin wil ik zijn, u toebehooren; maar uwe vrouw.... AUGUSTA (*Op eene schertsachtig gebiedende toon.*): Gehoorzaam slavin! Uw Heer beveelt. STEDMAN: Geef mij uwe hand, en wordt mijne vrouw! (*Cery bedenkt zich een oogenblik; en zinkt daarna aan zijne borst.*)'



Fig. 2 Copperplate of Joanna in A Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam. Illustrated with 80 elegant engravings from drawings made by the author, by William Blake and others (London: J. Johnson & Th. Payne, 1813). Collection Buku Bibliotheca Surinamica.

into this marriage (as we will see in the next section), but the ways in which she is portrayed in terms of bourgeois ideals also counteract the abolitionist aim of the play. In a general note in the German text, Kratter describes Cery's appearance in much detail and in similar terms as Joanna was depicted in the *Narrative* (fig. 2).⁵⁷ Remarkably, however, he adds that Cery is 'a white slave'. The Dutch version does not mention her complexion, but gives Cery 'whirling blond hair' instead of 'frizzy tresses'.⁵⁸

Stedman seems to lay bare some of the new ways of racial thinking which began to develop during the last decades of the eighteenth century.⁵⁹ As Roxann Wheeler influ-

57 Kratter, *Die Sklavin in Surinam*, 2: 'Eine weisse Sklavinn.' This description also corresponds with other representations of enslaved women in Surinam of the early 1800s.

58 Anonymous, *Stedman*, 2: 'blond hair, dat in dunne lokken zwiert.'

59 For an in-depth study of how theater and race relate, see Waters's already mentioned book *Racism on the Victorian Stage*, in which she explores how characters of color produced, reinforced, extended, or challenged racial assumptions.

entially argued in *The Complexion of Race*, from the 1770s onwards, skin color was increasingly considered as a primary signifier of 'racial difference'.⁶⁰ This new racialization is tangible in the ways in which *Stedman* and *Kraspoekol* stage characters of color. Barbara Riesche has proposed that Cery's female sex was given priority over her complexion to juxtapose her pureness with the cruel male plantocracy.⁶¹ Although this interpretation is valuable, it denies how culture connects to changing ideologies of empire. The ambiguous descriptions of Cery's character in the German and Dutch texts are symptomatic of racial thinking in which neither civility nor religion, but skin color, became a prime marker of racial categories and of assumptions about an 'inherent' inferiority of people of color as opposed to a privileged white identity. While Joanna in the *Narrative* is a 'mulatto' girl with a black mother and a white father, the dramatic adaptation explicitly and repeatedly mentions that Cery's mother herself was a 'mulatta'. This 'Westernization' of Cery implies that she could marry Stedman only if she paralleled European (beauty) standards. Thus, it would be easier for white spectators and readers to sympathize. Cery's bleached skin served as a foil to justify an otherwise provocative interracial marriage between an enslaved woman and a white European officer, which was rather unlikely in the metropolises.⁶²

Kratter takes off Cery's 'veil of black' quite literally. Yet in doing so he reaffirms Thomas Jefferson's assertion that a black complexion hampered the capacity of emotions and, apparently, the possibility to marry people of the white middle class. Other slave characters of *Stedman* and *Kraspoekol*, then, are explicitly rendered as colored and would have been performed by white actors in blackface.⁶³ The focus on their 'otherness' by means of blackening their face and adding local color helped define the white bourgeois identity and its middle-class values, to which Cery had to assimilate before she could marry a Stedman.

'Let me be your savior': Sympathy and White Self-Representation

The concluding benevolent act in *Stedman* was intended to epitomize the morality of European middle-class representatives, and to mark the liberation of an enslaved girl. Strictly speaking, however, and as noted earlier, Cery is more than ever deprived of all agency. Like Joanna in the *Narrative*, Cery had decided to not leave Surinam for fundamental

60 Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race*, offers a comprehensive analysis of racial thought in eighteenth-century British culture and traces the role of skin complexion in this process.

61 Riesche, *Schöne Mohrinnen*, 158.

62 Neither did European literature of 1800 stage many interracial marriages. For an inquiry into interracial marriages or sexual relations in British literature, see Susan B. Iwanisziw, 'Intermarriage in Late-Eighteenth-Century British Literature'. The earliest example in Dutch literature would be the anonymous *Geschiedenis van een neger, zyne reize met de heer N. van Suriname naar Holland* (ca. 1770). Representations of interracial relations in Dutch culture and society have not been adequately studied, however.

63 It is beyond the scope of this paper to elaborate on the unexplored domain of early Dutch blackface performances, yet my preliminary research has shown that it was a common practice in divergent theatrical environments. In the context of *Slavery on Scene*, I am working on a chapter on blackface performances in (anti) slavery theater in the 1800 Low Countries.

reasons. In spite of her efforts, she is purchased by Augusta and donated to Stedman as ‘a little souvenir’.⁶⁴ *In a joking but demanding tone* Augusta subsequently orders her new slave to accept Stedman’s proposal. Not only is Cery disrespectfully objectified, Augusta’s intendedly ironic remark (‘Obey, slave!’) also (re)establishes a white supremacy that reaches far beyond the colonial borders and apparently still holds even when the contours of the slave-master relationship are gone. In this final section, I will read *Stedman* and *Kraspoekol* as segments of what Gloria Wekker has called the ‘Dutch cultural archive’: the reservoir of knowledge, culture, and affects with regard to race that circulated in the metropolises, and the power relations they implied.⁶⁵ I will elaborate further on how these bourgeois abolitionist dramas helped produce and retain a superior white Dutch identity against the subjugated reality of (enslaved) people of color.

Without being explicitly racist, Augusta’s joking tone towards Cery licenses her to extend notions of white supremacy. In *White Innocence*, Wekker has identified humor as a key strategy of white self-representation, as it enables white people to get away with racism without being criticized: ‘Just joking, I am not racist’.⁶⁶ This justifying discourse, and especially its cheap and recurring nature, is closely related to the ways in which the Netherlands tends to still frame itself as a stainless and color-blind nation. Following Paul Gilroy’s argument in ‘Black Bodies, White Bodies’, however, Wekker notes that this studious need for innocence and control is a projection of white inner fears.⁶⁷ Right before Cery’s emancipation, Augusta clarifies her motives for helping her and Stedman: ‘I am a proud woman, who will not let herself be surpassed in nobleness by slaves.’⁶⁸ In fact, it was a manifestation of Augusta’s anxiety over losing her dominance to an enslaved woman and her effort to stabilize her morally superior identity. This recalls Homi Bhabha’s notion of ‘colonial mimicry’, or the white desire to see the colonial subject as ‘almost the same but not quite’. In this way, a substantial element of inferiority remains apparent.⁶⁹

Forcing Cery into marriage, Kratter’s play seems to view women of color as sexual commodities rather than human beings with sexual or emotional agency. As Marianne Noble acknowledged, fictional slave characters, even in abolitionist writings, were frequently ‘positioned as erotic objects of sympathy rather than subjects in their own right’.⁷⁰ Stedman establishes his position towards Cery very early in the play: ‘Were you not a slave, my eye would not find you half so pleasing.’⁷¹ Again, Stedman’s ‘sympathy’ embodies a controlling attitude. Officer Stedman in the *Narrative* had several sexual partners during his

64 Anonymous, *Stedman*, 138: ‘een klein aandenken.’

65 Wekker, *White Innocence*, 19.

66 Wekker, *White Innocence*, 33-35.

67 Wekker, *White Innocence*, 95.

68 Anonymous, *Stedman*, 139: ‘Ik ben eene trotsche vrouw, die zich niet gaarne van slaven in edelmoedigheid laat overtreffen.’

69 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 123.

70 Noble, ‘The Ecstasies of Sentimental Wounding’, 297.

71 Anonymous, *Stedman*, 50: ‘Bijaldien gij geene slavijn waart, zoude mijn oog u niet half zoo beminnelijk vinden.’

stay in Surinam: Joanna was one of many.⁷² Obviously, this was censored from Kratter's bourgeois play and replaced by an exclusive love story, which would ironically transfer Cery into the bondage of a patriarchal marriage in which women by rule took a subservient position. It illustrates how female slave characters were valued in terms of sexual property and servitude. Both Joanna and Cery have internalized a sense of inferiority and fear to become the subject of disdain and racial biases.⁷³ In *White Innocence*, Wekker highlights similar cases in modern Dutch society and explains how women of color in all kinds of family configurations are easily mistaken as a nanny of their own child, a domestic worker or a prostitute.⁷⁴

Although Van Hogendorp's Batavian drama is no exact reflection of the East Indian colonial reality, it seems to illustrate how, as in Surinam, the Dutch imperial rule in the East Indies operated in tandem with gender and race politics. In both national and international contexts *Kraspoekol* is an exceptional play, because the abuses against slaves are not committed by a white man, but by two women of color. In the preface, Van Hogendorp emphasizes that, in contrast to large-scale West Indian plantation slavery, the mistreatments in the East Indies were generally restricted to Indian and metis women like *Kraspoekol* and *nijai* Ignis, who seriously vent their 'innate' jealousy and anger on female slaves like Tjampakka and Philida. Because sexual relations in colonial society were meticulously controlled and the immigration of European women was restricted by the VOC for more than two centuries, concubinage was the most popular domestic option for Dutch colonists. Being mistresses and domestic servants at the same time, concubines created a social hierarchy in which metis (a 'new race' of Eurasian people) were rejected by both Western and native cultures.⁷⁵ Tributary to this system of concubinage and métissage, *Kraspoekol* exposes the problematic consequences of 'the hybridization of European men with native women, and especially slaves'.⁷⁶

Kraspoekol and *nijai* Ignis threaten to blur the existing colonial racial hierarchy. As Ann Laura Stoler noted in her conveniently titled essay 'Making Empire Respectable', concubines and metis women in the Dutch Indies 'posed a classificatory problem, impinging on political security and white prestige'.⁷⁷ Whereas in the first act *Kraspoekol* is assigned to lead the household, Wedano installs a new patriarchal protocol in the following acts, in order to re-establish a white European morality. Tjampakka subsequently convinces her

72 Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 95-97. Pratt describes the love affair with Joanna as 'a romantic transformation of a particular form of colonial sexual exploitation' in which European colonists bought local women to serve as domestic and sexual partners for the duration of their stay.

73 Anonymous, *Stedman*, 101-102.

74 Wekker, *White Innocence*, 35-36. As Wekker explains, 'a white father and his adopted daughter of color, or a white mother and her black adopted son, may be mistakenly seen as interracial lovers with an appreciable age difference, which is, of course, more acceptable in the case of the older white man and his Thai daughter than for the white mother with her Colombian son. There is a different, gendered, valence to the person of color in these configurations: the Thai daughter might easily be taken to be a call girl, semiprostitute, or import bride, while some agency and desire might be ascribed to the son. White women in this configuration, through their positioning at the intersection of age, gender, race, and sexuality, cannot generally claim much respectability.'

75 Stoler, 'Making Empire Respectable', 637-639.

76 Hogendorp, *Kraspoekol*, vi-vii: 'de vermenging van Europeërs met inlandsche vrouwen.'

77 Stoler, 'Making Empire Respectable', 647.

friend Castoerie: 'Let us serve the best we can, it is our duty to submit ourselves to this fate and to please our master.'⁷⁸ Wedano's domestic arrangements in Batavia reflect the white- and male-dominated colonial politics in the East Indies in general, which excluded metis and natives from important positions. Concerned with these notions of degeneration and miscegenation since the early 1800s, metropolitan bourgeois discourse of the late nineteenth century eventually powerfully reinforced the position of white women in the Dutch East Indies to safeguard white superiority.⁷⁹

In accordance with bourgeois drama conventions, this white male identity takes center stage in both *Stedman* and *Kraspoekol*. The genre reduced characters of color to sexual property and passive victims, whereas bourgeois heroes fostered sympathy for them and provided them the necessary emotional and material comforts. These heroes are able to punish evil overseers, liberate at least some slaves, and articulate philanthropic attitudes. Slaves characters are rendered naive and infantilized, praising their benevolent tutors Wedano and Stedman. As Tjampakka gains her freedom, she thanks '[her] savior, [her] second father'.⁸⁰ Quacko is delighted when Augusta donates him to Stedman as 'a welcome gift': 'Yes, my mentor, my savior! I want to be owned by you.'⁸¹ The gratitude of these characters illustrates how the European civilizing mission infiltrated sentimental culture in which the prospect of amelioration facilitated a status quo in favor of the white colonial elites.⁸²

However, in the frame of a bourgeois ideology, sympathetic feelings and the gratitude of these slave characters are very rewarding. After Tjampakka's manumission, Wedano attests that 'it feels great to do a good deed!' He even claims that he is more blessed than Tjampakka herself, as 'the satisfaction of performing benevolent acts is much higher than receiving them'.⁸³ These self-serving intentions of the white hero awkwardly remind us of what Teju Cole called 'the White Savior Industrial Complex' in 2012.⁸⁴ As Cole so aptly phrased it: 'The white savior supports brutal policies in the morning, founds charities in the afternoon, and receives awards in the evening.' In *Kraspoekol*, Wedano is a senior merchant of the VOC and owns several slaves himself. Despite his penetrating and sentimental antislavery speeches, Wedano's philanthropic actions seem to support the self-gratification and representation of the moral and sympathetic white bourgeoisie. Rather than about justice, white saviorism is about 'having a big emotional experience that validates privilege'.⁸⁵

78 Hogendorp, *Kraspoekol*, 17: 'Het onze plicht, ons daar aan te onderwerpen, en ons best te doen om onze meesters genoeg te geeven.'

79 Stoler, 'Making Empire Respectable', 643.

80 Hogendorp, *Kraspoekol*, 38: 'Mijn verlosser, mijn tweede vader!'

81 Anonymous, *Stedman*, 24: 'Ja u, mijn leeraar, mijn weldoener! u wil ik toebehooren.'

82 Festa, 'Sentimental Visions of Empire', 32.

83 Hogendorp, *Kraspoekol*, 38: 'O hoe zoet is het eene goede daad te verrichten! [...] De wellust van eene weldaad te doen is oneindig grooter dan die van ze te ontfangen.'

84 Teju Cole coined the term 'White Savior Industrial Complex' on Twitter after watching the *Kony2012* video. His seven-part response was later reproduced on the websites of *The Atlantic* and *The New York Times* and was translated into several languages.

85 Cole, 'The White-Savior Industrial Complex'. See also Adams and Van der Haven, 'De schertsende dukaten van een opperkoopman', in which *Kraspoekol* is read contrapuntally and in relation to paternalist and economy-driven development aid campaigns.

Without denying the popularizing and political role these plays might have had in the Dutch slavery discussion, I hope to have demonstrated that, especially in retrospect, these sentimental bourgeois dramas maintain the paternalistic and white-centered discourses they seem to criticize on the surface. As an integral part of Western imperialist culture, both *Kraspoekol* and *Stedman* are colonial segments of ‘the Dutch cultural archive’ and therefore co-responsible for the creation of a persistent white supremacy in the present-day Netherlands. Whereas 1800 abolitionist drama relocated antislavery feelings within the realm of bourgeois ideologies and therefore, as a genre, was able to inform the masses about this issue, these works simultaneously ‘made empire more respectable’ and carried with them the early syndromes of racist beliefs and white innocence.

Bibliography

- Adams, Sarah J. and Kornee van der Haven, ‘De schertsende dukaten van een opperkoopman. Over de breuklijnen van een abolitionistisch verlichtingsdrama’, *Vooy's* 35 (2017/4) 8-19.
- Ahern, Stephen, *Affect and Abolition in the Anglo-Atlantic, 1770-1830* (Surrey 2013).
- Anonymous, *De Verlossing der slaaven, door de Franschen* (The Hague: J.C. Leeuwestijn, 1794).
- Anonymous, *Geschiedenis van een neger, zyne reize met de heer N. van Suriname naar Holland* (Utrecht: S. De Waal, ca. 1770).
- Anonymous, *Stedman* (Amsterdam: W. Holtrop, 1805).
- Anonymous, *Zamor en Lilli, of de liefde onder de negers* (ca. 1815).
- Baay, Reggie, *Daar werd wat gruwelijks verricht. Slavernij in Nederlands-Indië* (Amsterdam 2015).
- Bastin, John, ‘The Rivalry between Dirk van Hogendorp and S.C. Nederburgh. An English “Translation” of the “Berigt”’, *Indonesië. Tweemaandelijks tijdschrift gewijd aan het Indonesisch cultuurgebied* (1953-1954) 84-85.
- Bell, Michael, *Sentimentalism, Ethics, and the Culture of Feeling* (Basingstoke 2000).
- Bhabha, Homi K., *The Location of Culture* (New York 1994).
- Bosch, Bernardus, ‘Donderdag den 26 Maart’, *Janus Janus-Zoon* 38 (The Hague 1801/4) 281-286.
- Carey, Brycchan, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility. Writing, Sentiment, and Slavery, 1760-1807* (Basingstoke 2005).
- Castelvecchi, Stefano, *Sentimental Opera. Questions of Genre in the Age of Bourgeois Drama* (Cambridge 2013).
- Cole, Teju, ‘The White Savior Industrial Complex’, www.theatlantic.com (Accessed on 15 April 2018).
- Davis, Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca 1975).
- Drescher, Seymour, *Abolition. A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (Cambridge 2009).
- Ellis, Markman, *The Politics of Sensibility. Race, Gender, and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge 1996).
- Essed, Philomena and Isabel Hoving, *Dutch Racism* (Amsterdam and New York 2014).
- Festa, Lynn, ‘Sentimental Visions of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Studies’, *Literature Compass* 6 (2009/1) 23-55.
- Geysbeek, Witsen P.G., *De negers* (Amsterdam: J.R. Poster, 1796).
- Gibbs, Jenna M., *Performing the Temple of Liberty. Slavery, Theater, and Popular Culture in London and Philadelphia, 1760-1850* (Baltimore 2014).
- Goens, Rijklof Cornelis van, *Pantolon, Oost-Indische planter; Arlequin uit slaverny verlost door Toverkunst* (Amsterdam: Abraham Mars, 1803).
- Haarnack, Carl, *Buku – Bibliotheca Surinamica*, <https://bukubooks.wordpress.com> (Accessed on 15 April 2018).

- Hartman, Saidiya, *Scenes of Subjection. Terror, Slavery, and Self-making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford 1997).
- Hogendorp, Dirk van, *Berigt van den tegenwoordigen toestand der Bataafsche bezittingen in Oost-Indiën en den handel op dezelve* (Delft: M. Roelofswaert, 1799).
- Hogendorp, Dirk van, *Kraspoekol, of de slaaverny* (Delft: M. Roelofswaert, 1800).
- Hogendorp, Dirk van, *Stukken, raakende den tegenwoordigen toestand der Bataafsche bezittingen in Oost-Indie en den handel op dezelve* (The Hague and Delft: J.C. Leeuwstyn and M. Roelofswaert, 1801).
- Immer, Nikolas, *Der inszenierte Held. Schillers dramenpoetische Anthropologie* (Heidelberg 2008).
- Iwanisziw, Susan B., 'Intermarriage in Late-Eighteenth-Century British Literature. Currents in Assimilation and Exclusion', *Eighteenth-Century Life* 31 (2007/2) 56-82.
- Janse, Maartje, *De afschaffers. Publieke opinie, organisatie en politiek in Nederland 1840-1880* (Amsterdam 2007).
- Janse, Maartje, 'Representing Distant Victims. The Emergence of an Ethical Movement in Dutch Colonial Politics, 1840-1880', *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 128 (2013/1) 53-80.
- Klarer, Mario, 'Humanitarian Pornography. John Gabriel Stedman's *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (1796)', *New Literary History* 36 (2005/4) 559-587.
- Kloek, Joost and Wijnand Mijnhardt, *1800: Blauwdrukken voor een samenleving* (The Hague 2001).
- Kloek, Joost and Wijnand Mijnhardt, 'De verlichte burger', in Joost Kloek and Karin Tilmans (eds.), *Burger. Een geschiedenis van het begrip 'burger' in de Nederlanden van de Middeleeuwen tot de 21ste eeuw* (Amsterdam 2002) 155-171.
- Köhler, Sigrid G., 'Beautiful Black Soul? The Racial Matrix of White Aesthetics (Reading Kotzebue and Kleist)', *Image & Narrative* 14 (2013/3) 34-45.
- Kratter, Franz, *Die Sklavin in Surinam* (Frankfurt: Friedrich Esslinger, 1804).
- Kuruppath, Manjusha, *Staging Asia. The Dutch East India Company and the Amsterdam Theatre* (Leiden 2016).
- Laqueur, Thomas W., 'Bodies, Details, and the Humanitarian Narrative', in Lynn Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley 1989) 176-204.
- Legêne, Susan, *De bagage van Blomhoff en Van Breugel. Japan, Java, Tripoli en Suriname in de negentiende-eeuwse Nederlandse cultuur van het imperialisme* (Amsterdam 1998).
- Mattheij, T.M.M., *Leerschool der liefde. Burgerlijk drama en de Amsterdamse Schouwburg, 1738-1788* (Houten 2010).
- McGann, Jerome, *The Poetics of Sensibility. A Revolution in Literary Style* (New York 1996).
- Meerkerk, Edwin van, *De Gebroeders van Hogendorp. Botsende idealen in de kraamkamer van het koninkrijk* (Amsterdam 2013).
- Meijer, Annemieke, *The Pure Language of the Heart. Sentimentalism in the Netherlands, 1775-1800* (Amsterdam 1998).
- Nathans, Heather, *Slavery and Sentiment on the American Stage, 1787-1861. Lifting the Veil of Black* (Cambridge 2009).
- Nimako, Kwame and Glenn Willemsen, *The Dutch Atlantic. Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation* (London 2011).
- Noble, Marianne, 'The Ecstasies of Sentimental Wounding in Uncle Tom's Cabin', *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 10 (1997/2) 295-315.
- Pieterse, Saskia, 'Het gevaar van de koloniale parvenu. Max Havelaar en het Nederlandse standsbesef', *Indische Letteren* 1 (2018) 37-51.
- Pikulik, Lothar, *Bürgerliches Trauerspiel und Empfindsamkeit* (Cologne 1966).
- Pratt, Mary Louise, *Imperial Eyes. Studies in Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London 1992).
- Quack, Jan de, *Zuma* (Amsterdam: J.C. van Kesteren, 1819).
- Riesche, Barbara, *Schöne Mohrinnen, edle Sklaven, Schwarze Rächer. Schwarzendarstellung und Sklavereithematik im Deutschen Unterhaltungstheater (1770-1814)*. PhD diss., Ludwig Maximilians University Munich, 2007.

- Rochefort, J., *Isabelle & Don Ferdinand, of het Indiaansch feest* (Amsterdam: Abraham Mars, 1802).
- Rossum, Matthias van, *Kleurrijke tragiek. Slavernij onder de voc* (Hilversum 2015).
- Said, Edward, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York 1993).
- Sens, Angelie, 'Dutch Antislavery Attitudes in a Decline-Ridden Society, 1750-1815', in Gert Oostindie (ed.), *Fifty Years Later. Capitalism, Modernity, and Antislavery in the Dutch Orbit* (Leiden 1995) 89-104.
- Smith, Adam, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 2 vols. (London: A. Miller, 6th ed. 1790) 1.
- Sollors, Werner, *Neither Black, Nor White, Yet Both. Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature* (New York 1999).
- Stedman, John Gabriel, *A Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam, in Guiana, on the wild coast of South America; from the year 1772, to 1777. Elucidating the History of that Country, and Describing its Productions* (London: J. Johnson and J. Edwards, 1796).
- Stoler, Ann Laura, 'Making Empire Respectable. The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20th-Century Colonial Cultures', *American Ethnologist* 16 (1989/4) 634-660.
- Sturkenboom, Dorothée, *Spectators van hartstocht. Sekse en emotionele cultuur in de achttiende eeuw* (Hilversum 1998).
- Sutherland, Wendy, *Staging Blackness and Performing Whiteness in Eighteenth-Century German Drama* (Surrey 2016).
- Szondi, Peter, Gert Mattenklott, and Wolfgang Fietkau. *Die Theorie des bürgerlichen Trauerspiels im 18. Jahrhundert. Der Kaufmann, der Hausvater und der Hofmeister* (Frankfurt 1974).
- Vuyck, Simon, *Een visioen van vrijheid. Mémoire sur la liberté des cultes (1827), Proeve eener Verhandeling over den slaavenhandel (1790)* (Hilversum 2013).
- Waters, Hazel, *Racism on the Victorian Stage. Representation of Slavery and the Black Character* (Cambridge 2007).
- Wekker, Gloria, *White Innocence. Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham 2016).
- Wheeler, Roxann, *The Complexion of Race. Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia 2000).
- Wood, Marcus, *Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography* (Oxford 2002).