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# Black and White Comedy: Trade and Race in Bredero's *Moortje* (1617)

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In 1617 the popular Amsterdam playwright Gerbrand Adriaensz Bredero (1585–1618) published a peculiar adaptation of Terence's classical comedy *The Eunuch*.<sup>1</sup> While the Latin text is set in Athens,<sup>2</sup> featuring three trafficked enslaved characters – a Persian castrate, an Athenian girl and an Ethiopian girl – Bredero moves the story to his hometown and abandons the eunuch, 'because this kind of people is not very well known here'.<sup>3</sup> Instead, he assigns the title role to an enslaved Angolese woman called Negra, Latin for 'Moortje', which means 'little Moor' or 'Moorish woman'. The evident question is how Bredero's foregrounding of a Black enslaved woman, at the dawn of Dutch involvement in the slave trade, should be interpreted. In the late 1570s, when the play is set,<sup>4</sup> there were indeed enslaved Africans living in Amsterdam. While slavery was officially banned by most Dutch cities,<sup>5</sup> Sephardic households that had escaped from Habsburg rule and settled in Holland in the 1570s would include enslaved servants.<sup>6</sup> Dutch merchant families adopted this custom, which was tolerated by local authorities if it occurred on a small scale and the enslaved were kept within the confines of the private house.<sup>7</sup> Slavery could therefore continue to be seen as a Mediterranean affair, but this changed in 1602 when the United Dutch East India Company (VOC) was founded and immediately became involved in Asian networks of human trafficking and indenture.<sup>8</sup> By the time of its publication in 1617, *Moortje* must have prompted reflection on Dutch participation in the slave trade.

This article explores how *Moortje* renders the relations between colonial trade and racial thinking, regarding both Blackness and whiteness, through an analysis of race and its intersections with gender.<sup>9</sup> It argues that racial ideas in *Moortje* do not merely facilitate

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the enslavement of the Black woman; they also complicate her commodification and appropriation, while confronting the white male merchant with his dark inner self. More specifically, *Moortje* dramatizes whiteness as a disguise of colonial shame and may therefore be considered as foreshadowing 'white innocence', a concept by Gloria Wekker that designates a dominant self-image of the present-day Netherlands as 'a small, but just, ethical nation; color-blind, thus free of racism'.<sup>10</sup>

Before delving deeper into *Moortje*, a summary is required. The plot involves a privateer (Roemert) and a merchant's son (Ritsart), who have fallen in love with the same brothel-keeper (Moy-aal). Striving for her undivided attention, they both give her a servant: respectively, a Dutch girl called Katrijntje who was captured in a hijacking on the Barbary Coast (mirroring the Athenian girl in Terence's play) and Negra, the Angolan woman. Moy-aal recognizes Katrijntje as the daughter of a wealthy family and schemes to return her unscathed. This plan backfires when the brother of the merchant's son, Wrijsart, falls in love with Katrijntje and disguises himself as Negra to enter the brothel and rape her. To save their reputations, Moy-aal arranges a marriage between Katrijntje and her rapist, while Negra is hidden in Ritsart's house, concealing evidence of the indignities.

With motifs of commerce, privateering, prostitution and slavery, *Moortje* taps into a discourse on the ethical consequences of trade. Commerce had been on the rise in Amsterdam since the mid-sixteenth century, turning the city into a hub in early capitalist and colonial trade networks.<sup>11</sup> In 1611 the first modern stock exchange opened its doors,<sup>12</sup> attracting investors from all over Europe to speculate in unprecedented financial products and services. The booming trade also brought new ethical challenges. Already in 1580, the humanist Dirk Volkertsz Coornhert (1522–90), whose work was a major influence on Bredero,<sup>13</sup> published *The Merchant (De koopman)*, a dialogue instructing merchants to serve society rather than themselves.<sup>14</sup> In Coornhert's *Ethics* (1586), a humanist treatise on the good life, the merchant repeatedly provides a negative example of avarice and hedonism.<sup>15</sup>

*Moortje* can be considered a comic interpretation of Coornhert's social criticism; however, in making Negra the title character of the play, it also raises new questions. In *The Merchant* a clear distinction is made between the merchant's ethical duties towards Christian society and towards any non-Christian society they might encounter. A telling example involves almsgiving: though a Christian should never deny assistance to another Christian in need, 'Christ has covertly forbidden almsgiving to strangers ... [T]he number of wealthy and ambitious pagans is so

manifold that they are more than enough to lavishly support the poor who are equal to them in wickedness ...'<sup>16</sup> This attitude towards non-Christian trading partners leaves the door open to different forms of unfair trade. However, while Coornhert only considers non-Christians overseas, Bredero stages the arrival of the Other in Amsterdam. *Moortje* disputes whether taking advantage of the colonial Other – either as trading partner or as commodity – does not leave an ‘ethical remainder’ in Dutch society, a sense of unease about financial and moral indebtedness. Unease provokes comic situations in *Moortje*, but it also raises questions about colonial appropriation, that is, the act of taking or using the Other’s properties, culture or body for one’s own purposes. Under which conditions is appropriation still legitimate? How does appropriation of the Other affect the self? And how much can one appropriate before one becomes alienated from oneself? To answer these questions, the article examines how racial thinking is entwined with the discussion about trade in *Moortje*.

### **Theory and methods**

This article takes a postcolonial perspective on early modern literature, which is urgent, not only because texts like *Moortje* contribute to our present understanding of colonial history but also because they have been constitutive of ideas that still resonate in today’s discourse on race. This is particularly true for the Netherlands, where the veneration of the ‘Golden Age’ (1588–1672) has been and still is a central element in nation-building and Dutch identity.<sup>17</sup>

In the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, the word *race* (*ras*) was not used in the modern sense, to divide groups of people based on their supposed hereditary qualities.<sup>18</sup> However, as Alison Blakely’s comprehensive study *Blacks in the Dutch World* (1993) has shown, racial thinking was the order of the day, as evidenced, for example, by negative associations with Blackness in the Dutch language.<sup>19</sup> Racial thinking was also imbricated in early modern knowledge systems, such as Aristotle’s theory of natural slavery, climate theory and Christian theology, most prominently the Ham ideology, which designated Africans as the descendants of Noah’s perverted son Ham.<sup>20</sup> It is safe to assume that, to Bredero, skin colour and ethnicity were charged with cultural meanings, though the equation of an African appearance and slavery would still require the large-scale transatlantic human trafficking of the seventeenth century.<sup>21</sup> The early seventeenth century is therefore considered a transition period of racial discourse, ‘either [as] the last period in history where ethnic identities could be understood as fluid, or as the first moment of the emergence of modern notions of “race”’.<sup>22</sup>

One of the most famous results of this discursive junction, in the English context, is Shakespeare's *Othello* (1603),<sup>23</sup> and similar inconsistencies in the representation of race should be anticipated in Dutch theatre of the same period. To study racial thinking in *Moortje*, this article adopts W. J. T. Mitchell's notion of race as a medium, 'an intervening substance, ... a repertoire of cognitive and conceptual filters through which forms of human otherness are mediated ...'<sup>24</sup> Considering race as a linguistic and cultural 'filter', instead of a set of hereditary qualities, makes it possible to see the many inconsistencies and fluidities in Negra's and Katrijntje's representations as a result of racial thinking.

An analysis of race in *Moortje* must also regard intersections with gender. The representation of both women in terms of their age and attractiveness, for example, is gendered and has great significance for their distinct commodification and appropriation as slaves. As Lara Bovilsky has pointed out in *Barbarous Play: Race on the English Renaissance Stage* (2008), discourses of race and gender 'are not fully separable in the early modern period and indeed possess numerous identical features ...'<sup>25</sup> Desdemona, for example, is called 'fair' in comparison to Othello but is 'blackened' by her supposed 'sexual corruption' and her position of victimization.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Negra's appearance leads to mix-ups about her gender, which is further reinforced by the palimpsestic presence of the eunuch and Writsart's disguise.

The race and gender analyses focus on the processes by which Negra and Katrijntje are commodified on the market and appropriated by their new owner. This economic focus is prompted by the text, which explores the economic and ethical boundaries of commodification and appropriation. This article builds on recent studies of 'affective economies' that examine knowledge, commerce and art, including literature, as inter-related domains.<sup>27</sup> Considering that '[i]n the early modern Netherlands, knowledge processes came to depend heavily on markets and commerce, with information and knowledge growing into an essential element for economic growth',<sup>28</sup> this article assumes that discursive knowledge of race was thoroughly affected and shaped by colonial trade. The arts were implicated in this process, as 'essential instruments in the economy of promise', to reify 'future imaginaries, turning them into tangible elements of economic practice'.<sup>29</sup> The notion of affective economies clarifies how *Moortje*, on the one hand, was implicated in the instalment of an increasingly racist colonial discourse enabling the commodification of human beings and, on the other, was itself a form of commodified knowledge, customized for the Dutch market by Bredero and his publisher.

Commodification and appropriation have been conceptualized in traditional Marxist theory as two 'fundamentally opposed' economies.<sup>30</sup> If commodification is the treatment of any object as something that can be bought and sold, then commodities are 'alienable' objects exchanged between reciprocally independent transactors. The exchange of commodities establishes quantitative relationships between the objects transacted, the underlying idea being that market exchanges also 'alienate' those who practise them.<sup>31</sup> The appropriation of a commodity by its new owner is considered a reverse process, in which the object becomes 'inalienable' to the owner. In anthropological gift theory, proper gifts are considered personal and inalienable,<sup>32</sup> precisely because the donor's intention is for the recipient to appropriate the gift, thus strengthening their personal relationship. Manifestly, the 'ideology of the gift' is constructed in antithesis to that of market exchange.<sup>33</sup> That both enslaved women in *Moortje* function as gifts enables a comparative analysis of their commodification and appropriation, which, this article hypothesizes, provides insight into early seventeenth-century criticism of market forces which, for the first time, encompassed the colonial Other.

The first section of this article reconstructs *Negra's* and *Katrijntje's* enslavement, based on information in the play. Particular attention is paid to the influence of skin colour and ethnicity on the distinct processes of alienation and dehumanization that contribute to their commodification. The second section uses gift theory to examine how both women are passed on as gifts and appropriated by their new owner. The final section studies two texts in *Moortje's* peritext,<sup>34</sup> in which Bredero relates colonial appropriation to cultural appropriation of classical theatre and foreign languages, making the production of knowledge about the colonial Other visible as in fact a violent appropriation.

### **Enslavement and commodification**

The play's representation of *Negra's* and *Katrijntje's* enslavement reflects what most people knew of the slave trade in the early seventeenth-century Republic, which was often imprecise.<sup>35</sup> *Negra*, for instance, is called a 'Moor', which originally referred to inhabitants of Mauretania but soon came to designate any North African, non-white or even Islamic person.<sup>36</sup> As *Negra* has been given very few lines, her origin must be assembled from scattered utterances by different characters throughout the play. According to her buyer, the merchant's son *Ritsart*,<sup>37</sup> *Negra* was born in Angola, where she was purchased by a Portuguese slaver, who sold her to a Dutch skipper.<sup>38</sup> This trajectory is representative of

contemporary knowledge of the slave trade, because in 1576 the Portuguese had founded the trade post São Paulo de Luanda in Angola, which would become the greatest supplier of enslaved Africans to Portuguese Brazil.<sup>39</sup> When Ritsart remarks that '[i]n this city there are people who make this trade, / In Pernambuco ...',<sup>40</sup> he refers to Sephardic Jews who had retained their Portuguese trade relations.<sup>41</sup> Formally, the Republic would not become involved in the transatlantic slave trade before 1636.<sup>42</sup>

Katrijntje represents the less well-known, yet historically no less relevant matter of white slavery. After her parents were killed in the Dutch Revolt, Katrijntje is adopted by a greedy uncle, who intends to sell her 'to the *TURKS OF BARBARIANS*'.<sup>43</sup> Bredero uses capitals to refer to the Dutch spectre of the Barbary pirates: Ottoman and Berber privateers based in the ports of North Africa but operating throughout the Mediterranean and the North Atlantic to collect slaves for the slave markets of North Africa and the Middle East.<sup>44</sup> Before Katrijntje and the uncle reach North Africa, their ship is seized by Roemert, a Dutch privateer who may well have joined the Barbary pirates.<sup>45</sup> Roemert takes Katrijntje to Amsterdam, thinking she will make a nice 'servant or lady's-maid' for his sweetheart Moy-aal.<sup>46</sup>

Both Katrijntje and Negra have been enslaved before they first enter the stage, but there is an important difference: while Negra has been an object of market exchange, Katrijntje's value has never been expressed monetarily. That Katrijntje has not literally been commodified does not mean that Roemert does not consider her an object of exchange. In return, he expects sexual favours from Moy-aal, and he threatens to reclaim Katrijntje when Moy-aal does not provide.<sup>47</sup> Moy-aal, in turn, aims to restore Katrijntje to her wealthy family in exchange for a reward.<sup>48</sup> Finally, Katrijntje's marriage to her rapist may be considered an exchange, in the sense that her family redeems the shame of the rape. Moy-aal tracks Katrijntje's brother, who can 'give away' Katrijntje, for her to be manumitted through marriage. While Katrijntje's enslavement occurred in North Africa, it is continued in the Republic. Although slavery had been banned, the exchange of Katrijntje for all sorts of favours and services is facilitated by role patterns, whereby beauty, virtue and high birth clearly contribute to her value as an object of exchange.

Negra has been commodified at least twice: once in Portugal and once in Amsterdam, but probably in Angola as well. Her enslavement and commodification are legitimized by denigrating language in the play.<sup>49</sup> When compared to Katrijntje, Negra is structurally considered less beautiful because of her skin colour,<sup>50</sup> and while Katrijntje's beauty

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is related to whiteness – ‘Unprecedented beauty has adopted her face. / She has a natural colour which is not powdered’<sup>51</sup> – Negra is considered ugly because she has a Black African appearance:

Her face and nose are flat, and from her thick lips  
One would cut off with sharp scissors.  
Her eyes they are big, and the white is yellow as Tench,  
Shimmering as a cat at night, the skin is partly  
Dull grey, and the hair is grey like a Weasel’s.<sup>52</sup>

Here race clearly works as a medium, a filter through which everything that characterizes Negra as African is perceived as ugly and inferior. In addition to being denigrated, Negra is infantilized when she is interrogated, scolded and forbidden to defend herself, and she is dehumanized when called a ‘deformed human’, ‘beast’ and ‘monster’, or even a ‘baboon’, ‘guenon’ and ‘pig’.<sup>53</sup>

The racist stereotypes that legitimize Negra’s commodification are at odds with flattering remarks by Ritsart and Koenraat, Ritsart’s servant. After all, they aim to present their purchase as a valuable gift. Koenraat speaks highly of Negra’s ‘sound and smooth complexion’, ‘her lovely face’, ‘[h]er proud, fresh youth’, as well as her skilful writing, playing of the lute, and singing: ‘[W]hatever she does, she does masterly’, being a ‘very intelligent person’.<sup>54</sup> When his listeners keep mum, he adds, ‘[T]hey are both silent, that is enough praise.’<sup>55</sup> Koenraat’s praise probably created a comic juxtaposition with Negra’s figure onstage. Classically trained readers may also have recognized the intertextual reference to Terence’s eunuch. In classical theatre eunuchs typically worked at Persian courts; they were well educated and, due to their high-pitched voices, were extraordinary singers.<sup>56</sup> Given their supposed asexuality, eunuchs were often depicted as harem servants,<sup>57</sup> which explains why Terence’s eunuch was supposed to protect the other woman’s virginity in the brothel. The palimpsest of the eunuch in *Moortje*, added to Writsart’s disguising of himself as Negra, creates confusion about Negra’s gender in the play. When the rape is discovered, Negra is suspected, and the girls in the brothel ponder, ‘If she were a woman, how would she have done it? / It is against nature ...’<sup>58</sup> They determine that Negra must be a man: ‘I have been told ... / That the Moors are very fond of Women’, although ‘[t]heir fear of death or punishment breaks their lecherous desire.’<sup>59</sup> Meanwhile, the audience is aware the real rapist is a white male, creating a tragic irony that undermines the racial stereotypes. The scene demonstrates how stereotypes of race and gender are used interchangeably to explain the events,



stretching Negra's identity to the point of fluidity. This fluidity plays out in Negra's commodity value, which is an ongoing topic of discussion in the play. The privateer estimates Negra's price at fifty-two stivers, and that of the 'parasite' at four pints of beer, until Koenraat reveals that Ritsart paid a thousand guilders, which Ritsart's father finds highly overpriced.<sup>60</sup> The confusion about Negra's price shows that human beings were a new sort of merchandise that the market had not come to grips with. Referring to Saidiya Hartman's notion of the 'metaphorical aptitude' of Blackness, Negra's skin colour can be understood to represent the many uncertainties and risks of the new colonial trade, and thus a lack of knowledge in white merchants: '[B]lackness provided the occasion for self-reflection as well as for an exploration of terror, desire, fear, loathing, and longing.'<sup>61</sup> This is why racial ideas in *Moortje*, even if they are at points dehumanizing, do not simply facilitate Negra's commodification but rather contribute to a fluid identity which continues to elude the white audience.

The idea that market exchanges 'alienate' those who practise them implies that people become subject to the laws of the market and alienated from their own desires. The famous tulip mania of the 1630s, for instance, led merchants to invest in flower bulbs, engendering a speculative bubble based on implausible or inconsistent views, far exceeding the asset's intrinsic value.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, characters in *Moortje* act against their convictions or interests out of sheer greed, for *Moortje* to become a play about alienation. Writsart's disguise may be considered a metaphor for this alienation, to which a racial dimension is added with the use of blackface. Studies of blackface have observed how black skin was considered 'a costume, a mask, or a masquerade that can be put on, played upon, and disavowed'.<sup>63</sup> Ian Smith refers to *Othello* to explain how early modern theatricality staged Black identity as wholly material and unsubstantial.<sup>64</sup> This absence of consciousness or 'soul' amounts to the 'flatness of self' that Iago abhors in *Othello*. White subjectivity, on the contrary, was conflated with a double identity of an inner self and outer performance. Writsart, for example, manifests an inner self that is cunning and an outer performance that is lustrous, when he dresses up as Negra. In his outer performance, he resembles the 'one-dimensional' Black villain. His brother, Ritsart, does not disguise himself, but abuses Negra's Black subjectivity more indirectly. When he interrogates Negra in an attempt to identify the rapist, her testimony is fully transparent.<sup>65</sup> Shocked to learn his brother is the culprit, Ritsart then forces Negra to change her testimony. Since Negra has no mind of her own, she utters the words he puts in her mouth, covering up the brother's crime. Writsart and Ritsart are two sides of the same coin, and through their

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'doubled double subjectivity', white subjectivity reveals itself as alienated. 'Ritsart' and 'Writsart' are both nicknames for 'lusty males',<sup>66</sup> indicating that their naturally rational desires, as white men, are thwarted. Together they manifest two sides of alienation; Writsart takes on Negra's identity to satisfy his lust, while Ritsart frames Negra for his brother's crimes to save the family's reputation. Utilizing once more Hartman's notion of 'metaphorical aptitude', and considering that both sons abuse Blackness as disguise, it is not far-fetched to interpret Ritsart as a metaphor of 'fair' trade that will inevitably reveal itself as based on atrocities committed in the name of white paternalism, as overtly manifested in Writsart.<sup>67</sup> Alienation can thus be understood as an effect of colonial trade and the ethical challenges it poses for white merchants.

In *Moortje* alienation is also presented as the effect of 'black magic', which is again related to the overseas colony. The play involves a 'parasite', a stock character in classical comedy,<sup>68</sup> who incites Koenraat to use 'Nigromancye' against his masters: '[T]hen you will lecture and summon the Devil'.<sup>69</sup> Koenraat thereupon suggests that Writsart disguise himself as Negra to possess Katrijntje, presenting blackface as a form of black magic. Magic is also attributed to Negra's robe, which Ritsart describes as follows:

a beautiful East Indian robe,  
Painted in an Art that I do not know,  
However one rolls and folds it, it does not crack or dishevel,  
Many Indians are artfully skilled People:  
Further, regarding the garb, it either adorns the Man,  
Or distorts him, depending on who wears it:  
And if she [Negra] would wear it again, she would immediately  
appeal to you.<sup>70</sup>

The robe is painted in a strange 'Art' and possesses mysterious qualities, conjured by the 'Indians'. Its main power is to either adorn or distort its wearer. Here, too, 'black magic' effectively signifies optical illusion, enacted by an obscure and indigenous force that may turn against its white user. Both Koenraat and Writsart fall victim to these forces once their schemes are revealed, and the girls in the brothel deceive Koenraat into thinking that Writsart will be punished with castration. Castration is an emasculation and an act of othering, compared to eunuchism – 'as the Turks do' – and circumcision – 'in the Jewish way' – putting an end to the 'conquests' of the white males.<sup>71</sup> As such, black magic can be interpreted as a force aimed at settling colonial accounts, avenging the

violent practices by which inalienable objects and human beings have been commodified.

### **The more appropriate gift**

Gift-giving was an important aspect of the cultivation of slavery in colonial networks. Elite families strengthened their mutual relationships through the gifting of enslaved servants, particularly special or dear ones.<sup>72</sup> In the Dutch Republic, where slavery was officially banned yet increasingly tolerated, gift-giving seems to have functioned as a 'soft' form of exchange, avoiding the 'hard' commodification processes of the slave trade.<sup>73</sup> This section analyses how the gifting of Katrijntje and Negra in *Moortje* fits into this pattern and how race affects their distinct 'appropriateness' as gifts.

As mentioned in the introduction, gift theory distinguishes between market products and gifts based on their capacity to be either alienated (commodities) or appropriated (gifts) by the seller/donor and buyer/recipient. Economists have criticized the ideological distinction between gifts and commodities, contending that in proper market economies any gift can be reanalysed as motivated by self-interest.<sup>74</sup> Such a claim could certainly be made for gift exchanges in *Moortje*, however, the play also puts market mechanisms into perspective, presenting the difference between gift and commodity as more gradual; gifts can retain qualities of commodities, while commodities may develop inalienable properties. For a purchased product to become a successful gift, its commodity status has to be camouflaged, involving a variety of strategies, such as packaging, removing the price tag or accompanying the gift with a story.<sup>75</sup> Russell Belk has outlined conditions for the 'perfect gift',<sup>76</sup> which I will use to analyse gift-giving in *Moortje*. Firstly, the perfect gift contains something of the donor, demonstrating their altruism and self-sacrifice as well as imbricating them in social relations. Secondly, the perfect gift does not serve mere sustenance but is personalized for a specific recipient. Thirdly, the perfect gift surprises and delights the recipient because of its novelty or luxuriousness.

Based on the above criteria, Katrijntje offers numerous opportunities for appropriation. Firstly, the privateer has himself captured Katrijntje and brought her home on his ship, all the way from the Barbary Coast. His gift is thus accompanied by an exciting narrative that involves his personal effort. Moy-aal is hardly impressed, until she recognizes Katrijntje as her stepsister, who was temporarily adopted by her mother. The gift could not have been more personal, meeting the second requirement. Thirdly, Katrijntje makes an exquisite gift, because she is beautiful, virtuous and of high birth. Concerning this analysis of Katrijntje as a perfect gift, several remarks can be made. On the one

hand, Katrijntje loses her appropriateness as a gift once she is recognized as family, thus gaining personhood. On the other, as mentioned before, both Roemert and Moy-aal aim to capitalize on Katrijntje, implying that she functions as an object of exchange rather than as a gift. Katrijntje's perfect gift status seems to compensate for these circumstances when Katrijntje is 'given away' to Writsart, married to him to cover up the rape. The intersectional perspective enables the insight that the rape (crime) and the marriage (gift) run parallel to the crime of enslavement and the gifting of enslaved servants; the gift softens an otherwise ruthless trade deal.

Based on Belk's conditions, Negra makes a less-than-perfect gift. Firstly, Ritsart purchased Negra in the Amsterdam harbour with his father's money, which did not involve any form of self-sacrifice or adventure. Secondly, since Moy-aal explicitly asked Ritsart for a Black chambermaid, the gift is useful and unsurprising. However, because of her African appearance, Negra is definitely a novel gift. Benjamin Schmidt described how the Dutch market during the seventeenth century rapidly developed an appetite for global exotica.<sup>77</sup> According to Schmidt, the 'exotic' appealed not only because it was novel and wonderful but especially because Dutch merchants found ways of marketing the products from the 'gift-bearing continents' as 'agreeable', that is, accommodating the European consumer.<sup>78</sup> Although Negra's appearance is exotic, it is described as strange, ugly, scary and certainly not agreeable. When she is suspected of a crime, her gift status is completely nullified. Significantly, Negra never arrives at Moy-aal's but returns to her donor, Ritsart. Negra is never fully commodified and never becomes a successful gift. While her fluid identity resists commodification, she is too alien and unagreeable to be appropriated as a gift. She is dead stock.

Negra leaves the stage when Ritsart is trying to hide her in his house. To cover up the scandal, the family is forced to appropriate Negra:

I did not know how  
To prevent this case from coming to light  
Which is so foul I cannot cleanse it:  
[to Negra:] If you mock again your Master's command,  
Sit there gawking, pout as hard as you can.<sup>79</sup>

Negra is removed from public space, not only because she knows the true facts about the rape, but also because she embodies the crime. Her very appearance would bring shame to the family. From the dark interior she may 'gawk' and 'pout', similar to the well-known beholder and

'moral spy' in Dutch genre paintings.<sup>80</sup> Negra's perspective, however, is not that of a Dutch 'burgher' but features a racial gaze from outside Dutch society. According to Stuart Hall, race is a 'floating signifier' that cannot be finally fixed:

There is always a certain sliding of meaning, ... always someone a constitutive outside, whose very existence the identity of race depends on and which is absolutely destined to return from its expelled and abjected position outside the signifying field to trouble the dream of those who are comfortable inside.<sup>81</sup>

Negra does not die like Othello, nor is she expelled like Aaron in *Titus Andronicus* (1594); instead, she must be appropriated, and from this enclosed yet 'abjected position', her gaze will haunt her white offenders. Her unwanted presence will work its 'black magic' on the white private space, bringing discomfort and shame to their conscience.

Negra's forced appropriation can be further explained using Gloria Wekker's notion of 'white innocence'. This self-image of the Netherlands as a nation free of racism, and 'thus a guiding light to other folks and nations', requires the suppression of 'an unacknowledged reservoir of knowledge and affects based on four hundred years of Dutch imperial rule ...'<sup>82</sup> This is how Wekker explains the paradox in Dutch postcolonial discourse between, on the one hand, a public self-representation of tolerance and, on the other, the proliferation of unventilated racist ideas in the private sphere. This paradox, this article submits, interweaves ideologies and self-images dating back to the seventeenth century, such as the split personality of the white merchant and the black spectre of colonial shame in *Moortje*. White innocence enables an analysis of whiteness in *Moortje*, showing how the confinement of Black servants was facilitated by an ideology of tolerance based on the separation of public and private space, architectonically marked off by the classical white facade of the canal house. The hiding of Negra can then be acknowledged as the witting negation of colonial atrocity, challenged from the inside by colonial trauma in the making.

### **Appropriation in the peritext**

The processes of colonial appropriation in *Moortje* are mirrored by the processes of cultural and linguistic appropriation of Terence's *The Eunuch* by Bredero. Two preliminary texts reflect on this appropriation: the dedication 'To the noble lord, my lord Jacob van Dijck' ('Aen den edelen heer, myn heer Jacob van Dijck') and a scholarly justification of the adaptation, 'Address to the Latin scholars'

(‘Reden aande Latynsche-geleerde’).<sup>83</sup> The texts discuss the appropriation of foreign languages by Dutch citizens, and the adaptation of classical culture by Dutch humanists. In support of the Dutch Revolt, scholars like Simon Stevin, Petrus Scriverius and, again, Coornhert had worked hard to establish a Dutch literature and language, based on classical principles.<sup>84</sup> *Moortje* manifests Bredero’s scholarly and political ambition to elevate Dutch culture to the classical examples or, rather, to appropriate the classical examples for the young Republic.

Compared to earlier translations of *The Eunuch*,<sup>85</sup> Bredero’s adaptation was very free and daring in moving the story to Amsterdam, while adding new characters and scenes. In the dedication Bredero explains that he aimed to adjust alien elements to suit the liking of the Amsterdam audience.<sup>86</sup> For these adjustments Bredero uses the metaphor of torture in ‘Address to the Latin Scholars’: ‘I have audaciously abducted this embellished history from the world’s treasure room, Imperial Rome, and what is more, dragged it to my paternal city and broken it on the wheel’.<sup>87</sup> Bredero presents *The Eunuch* as a person and himself as a raider, like the privateer in *Moortje*. The metaphor becomes even more peculiar if one considers that Terence was a man of colour, probably an African born in Roman enslavement.<sup>88</sup> The peritext thus compares the adaptation of *Moortje* to colonial appropriation, with Rome as the pillaged continent.

Bredero justifies his ‘abduction’, asserting that the previous translator, Van Ghistele, had been much crueller, dressing *The Eunuch* up ‘with beggars clothes of a hundred thousand trinkets, foreign rags and other exotic bits of cloth’.<sup>89</sup> To Bredero this cruelty consists in bad translation, characterized by too many loanwords and ostentatious foreign expressions. Van Ghistele is here associated with Writsart, the lecherous merchant’s son who dresses up as an Angolese woman. Instead, Bredero has aimed to dress *Moortje* ‘according to our customs, decent to my ability, and consistently in the same style’.<sup>90</sup> His adaptation is therefore more radical, yet less ‘cruel’.

Bredero’s greatest worry in ‘Address to the Latin Scholars’ is the corruption of the Dutch language by foreign influences. ‘Courtiers’, ‘clerks’ and ‘busy merchants’ indiscriminately ‘impoverish and violate the language’.<sup>91</sup> They are ‘people who use corruption and confusion of words for their noble embellishment’.<sup>92</sup> Bredero does not deny that the globalization of Amsterdam requires an expansion of the language too, but new words should follow the Dutch morphology and phonology. Such an appropriation of foreign words may be radical, tortuous even, but it is preferable to alien elements roaming around in the Dutch language. Examples of both occur in *Moortje*: while Katrijntje’s rape (radical appropriation) results in inclusion, all efforts to appropriate

Negra come to naught, for her to remain an alien and disturbing element in society.

Bredero supports his plea for appropriation with a reflection on gifting. In the dedication Bredero reminds Van Dijck, ‘One should not consider the size of gifts, but by whom and how they are given.’<sup>93</sup> He then refers to an anecdote by Socrates about a poor student who was too poor to pay his teacher for his education: ‘[T]herefore I give you everything that is in my power, that is, my self ...’<sup>94</sup> The student takes the idea that a proper gift contains something of its donor to the extreme; he gives himself away in the hope of being appropriated by his master, which may be considered a metaphor for education. Bredero uses the anecdote to encourage the Latinists to publish their scholarly work in the vernacular: ‘Your knowledge is worth nothing if you keep it to yourselves: nobody is born for himself.’<sup>95</sup> It is not entirely clear, however, whether the Latinists should compare themselves to Socrates in appropriating classical culture or to the student in giving themselves away. The scholar emerges as a double-sided figure in *Moortje*’s peritext. While Bredero first represented himself as a raider, he now represents scholars, including himself, as men who sacrifice or even enslave themselves for the purpose of knowledge. As has been observed by Dorothee Sturkenboom, the double-edged image of the scholar in seventeenth-century Dutch culture shares common ground with that of the Dutch merchant, who is a privateer overseas and a soft and civilizing force at home.<sup>96</sup> The merchant and the scholar merge in Caspar Barlaeus’s ideal of the *mercator sapiens*, which was also the title of his inaugural address at the Athenaeum Illustre in 1632.<sup>97</sup> Science and trade would reinforce each other in ways that not even Barlaeus envisioned. Scholars were involved in the production of a racist discourse that would justify and disguise atrocities committed in the name of trade for centuries to come. *Moortje* and its peritext uniquely show how seventeenth-century Dutch scholarship and literature involved a violent appropriation of the Other, in which the white self remains obscure.

### Conclusions

This article hypothesized that *Moortje*, published in 1617, prompted reflection on the ethical challenges of colonial trade. It explored the relations between colonial trade and an increasingly racist colonial discourse through an intersectional analysis of race and gender, arguing that *Moortje* can be read as foreshadowing postcolonial shame and ‘white innocence’.

The analysis of commodification processes in *Moortje* led to conflicting insights. Whereas some racist utterances in the play dehumanize Negra,

other racial stereotypes, especially those at the intersection with stereotypes of gender, contribute to the fluidity of her identity and prevent complete commodification. Katrijntje's whiteness, in contrast, prevents full commodification, while her gender allows for different forms of objectification. This conflict in the buyers and sellers was explained as an expression of their economic alienation, caused by the white merchant's attempts to commodify the Other. This alienation is dramatized in *Moortje* through the use of blackface and the dual image of the merchant as brutal privateer and spoiled merchant's son.

The analysis of appropriation showed that *Moortje* reveals more about whiteness as race than it does about Blackness. Combining Ian Smith's notion of white subjectivity and Gloria Wekker's concept of white innocence, whiteness in *Moortje* became visible as a classical facade covering a dark annex housing feelings of guilt and shame. This separation of private and public space in Dutch culture has been pivotal in enabling 'tolerance' up to this day. Whether tolerance concerned clandestine churches or enslaved servants, it implied a looking away from the compromised life forms in the private space.

Finally, the analysis of the peritext demonstrated how *Moortje* relates colonial appropriation to cultural appropriation. The peritext describes Bredero's appropriation of Terence's *The Eunuch* as cruel yet necessary torture to prevent alien elements from disturbing Dutch culture. In contrast, Bredero represents scholars, himself included, as themselves slaves of knowledge without self-interest. The dual image of the merchant thus returns at the level of scholarship, clarifying how trade and knowledge are interdependent in the colonial enterprise.


The image of trade as a neutral and fair practice has prevailed in the Netherlands up to this day. It explains why the Dutch considered the claim 'We have only transported them' sufficient justification for Dutch participation in the slave trade. As long as the violent side of the merchant is allowed to hide behind the image of the civilized *mercator sapiens* or *mercator honestus*,<sup>98</sup> commercialism and racism will sustain each other in Dutch identity. *Moortje* demonstrates that the image of the white merchant exists merely by the grace of the Black Other, the Other in fact being a projection of the white merchant's dark side.

This analysis of *Moortje* shows that seventeenth-century Dutch theatre contains a wealth of perspectives on and representations of early colonialism, not least because it was able to accommodate such a high degree of ambiguity and polyphony. It should not be our intention to plunder this treasury – speaking in Bredero's terms – but rather to explore its wonderful and often atrocious contents together with all participants in this global history, in a diverse and inclusive context.



For this to happen, it is crucial that Dutch and international scholars combine profound knowledge of seventeenth-century literature and theoretical insights from critical analysis.

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### Notes

1. G. A. Bredero, *Moortje, waarin hij 'Terentii Eunuchum' heeft Nae-ghevolght* (Amsterdam: C. L. vander Plasse, 1617). The play was first performed in 1615 for the Amsterdam Chamber of Rhetoric De Eglentier. All quotations are based on G. A. Bredero, *Moortje en Spaanschen Brabander*, E. K. Grootes (ed.) (Amsterdam: Athenaeum-Polak & Van Gennep, 1999). All English translations are my own.
2. Terence based *The Eunuch* on an Athenian comedy of the same name by Menander (c. 342/41–290 BCE), of which only fragments remain. See Michel Fontaine, 'The Terentian Reformation: From Menander to Alexandria', in Michel Fontaine and Adele Scafuro (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Comedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 539–54.
3. 'also die slach van menschen hier so seer niet en zyn bekend ...' Bredero, *Moortje*, p. 18.
4. E. K. Grootes, 'Nawoord', in Bredero, *Moortje*, pp. 378–410 (388).
5. Dienne Hondius, 'Access to the Netherlands of Enslaved and Free Black Africans: Exploring Legal and Social Historical Practices in the Sixteenth–Nineteenth Centuries', *Slavery and Abolition*, 32:3 (2011), pp. 377–95 (383–4).
6. Karwan Fatah-Black and Matthias van Rossum, 'Slavery in a "Slave Free Enclave"? Historical Links between the Dutch Republic, Empire and Slavery, 1580s–1860s', *WerkstattGeschichte*, no. 66–67 (2015), pp. 55–74 (59, 61–2). On free Africans in Amsterdam see Mark Ponte, "'Al de swarten die hier ter stede comen": Een Afro-Atlantische gemeenschap in zeventiende-eeuws Amsterdam', *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis*, 15:4 (2019), pp. 33–62.
7. Hondius, 'Access', p. 380; and Fatah-Black and Van Rossum, 'Slavery', pp. 60–1.
8. Markus Vink, 'Freedom and Slavery: The Dutch Republic, the VOC World, and the Debate over the "World's Oldest Trade"', *South African Historical Journal*, 59:1 (2007), pp. 19–46; Wil Dijk, 'An End to the History of Silence? The Dutch Trade in Asian Slaves: Arakan and the Bay of Bengal, 1621–1665', *IIAS Newsletter*, 46 (2008), p. 16; Matthias van Rossum, 'The Carceral Colony: Colonial Exploitation, Coercion, and Control in the Dutch East-Indies, 1810s–1940s', *International Review of Social History*, 63:S26 (2018), pp. 65–88; and Dick Harrison, *Geschiedenis van de slavernij: Van Mesopotamië tot moderne mensenhandel*, Ger Meesters (trans.) (Utrecht: Omniboek, 2019), pp. 389–91.
9. I analyse the meaning of slavery in *Moortje* in 'Enslaved to the Passions: Slavery, Emotions, and Trade in a Seventeenth-Century Dutch Comedy', in *Slavery in the Cultural Imagination: Pretext, Silence, and Dissent in the Neerlandophone Space* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, forthcoming). For an analysis of race in *Moortje*, see Anston Bosman, "'Best Play with Mardian": Eunuch and Blackamoor as Imperial Culturegram', *Shakespeare Studies*, 34 (2006), pp. 123–57.
10. Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), p. 2.

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11. Clé Lesger, 'Clusters of Achievement: The Economy of Amsterdam in its Golden Age', in Patrick O'Brien (ed.), *Urban Achievement in Early Modern Europe: Golden Ages in Antwerp, Amsterdam and London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 63–80 (70–3).
12. Lodewijk Petram, 'The World's First Stock Exchange: How the Amsterdam Market for Dutch East India Company Shares Became a Modern Securities Market, 1602–1700' (PhD dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 2011), pp. 30–1.
13. Jeroen Jansen, 'Introduction', in G. A. Bredero, *Proza*, Jeroen Jansen (ed.) (Hilversum: Verloren, 2011), pp. 9–66 (27, 35); and René van Stipriaan, *De hartenjager: Leven, werk en roem van Gerbrandt Adriaensz. Bredero* (Amsterdam: Querido, 2018), p. 34.
14. D. V. Coornhert, *De coopman, aanwysende d'oprechte conste om Christelyck ende met eenen gelycken moede in 't winnen ende verliesen coophandel te dryven*, S. van der Woude (ed.) (Amsterdam: Corvey, 1969).
15. D. V. Coornhert, *Ethics: The Art of Living Well: By Means of Knowledge of the Truth about Man, Sin, and Virtue*, Gerrit Voogt (transl.) (Hilversum: Verloren, 2016). On Coornhert and *Moortje*, see Pajmans, 'Enslaved to the Passions'.
16. 'Christus [verbiedt] sulx genoeg bedecktelyck aen den vreemde te doen ... het getal der godtlose rycke luyden is so menichvuldich, oock soo eersuchtich, dat zy meer dan ghenoech zyn om die armen in godtlosicheydt huers ghelyck wesende, ryckelyck te onderhouden ...' Coornhert, *De coopman*, p. 20.
17. H. Helmers and G. Janssen, 'Epilogue: The Legacy of the Dutch Golden Age', in H. Helmers and G. Janssen (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to the Dutch Golden Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 390–9 (395); and Joep Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), p. 201.
18. 'Ras', in *Woordenboek der Nederlandse taal* (WNT) (Leiden: Instituut voor de Nederlandse Taal, 2018).
19. Alison Blakely, *Blacks in the Dutch World: The Evolution of Racial Imagery in a Modern Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 78. See also Dienke Hondius, *Blackness in Western Europe: Racial Patterns of Paternalism and Exclusion* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction, 2014), pp. 16–17.
20. On the history of 'race', see Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996). On 'natural slavery', see Hannaford, *Race*, pp. 43–57. On Ham, see A. N. Paasman, 'West Indian Slavery and Dutch Enlightenment Literature,' in A. J. Arnold and V. M. Kutzinski (eds), *A History of Literature in the Caribbean: English- and Dutch-Speaking Regions* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2001), pp. 481–90 (482). On climate theory, see Hannaford, *Race*, p. 198.
21. Harrison, *Geschiedenis van de slavernij*, pp. 219–20.
22. Ania Loomba, "'Delicious Traffick": Racial and Religious Differences on Early Modern Stages', in Catherine Alexander and Stanley Wells (eds), *Shakespeare and Race* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 203–24 (203). See also Lara Bovilsky, *Barbarous Play: Race on the English Renaissance Stage* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 136.
23. On race in *Othello*, see Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995); Ania Loomba, 'Periodization, Race, and Global Contact', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 37:3 (2007), pp. 595–620; and Margo Hendricks, 'Surveying "Race" in Shakespeare', in Alexander and Wells, *Shakespeare and Race*, pp. 1–22.

24. W. J. T. Mitchell, *Seeing through Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), p. xii.
25. Bovilsky, *Barbarous Play*, p. 39. See also Ania Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, Colonialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 59–63.
26. Leah Marcus, 'Constructions of Race and Gender in the Two Texts of *Othello*', in Ania Loomba and Melissa Sanchez (eds), *Rethinking Feminism in Early Modern Studies: Gender, Race, and Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 113–32 (126–30).
27. Inger Leemans and Anne Goldgar, *Early Modern Knowledge Societies as Affective Economies* (London: Routledge, 2021); and Susanne Schlünder and Andrea Stahl (eds), *Affektökonomien: Konzepte und Kodierungen im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).
28. Leemans and Goldgar, *Affective Economies*, p. 4.
29. *Ibid.* pp. 17–18.
30. Mark Osteen, *The Question of the Gift: Essays across Disciplines* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 229.
31. Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (New York: Random House, 1983), p. 155; and James Carrier, *Gifts and Commodities: Exchange and Western Capitalism since 1700* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 28.
32. See Osteen's discussion of inalienability in Osteen, *Question of the Gift*, p. 233.
33. *Ibid.* p. 229.
34. The peritext, as understood by Genette, involves all paratexts, authorized and unauthorized, that are published within the volume of the literary text. See Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 4–5.
35. On contemporary knowledge of slavery in *Moortje*, see Nigel Smith, 'Slavery, Rape, Migration: The View from the Amsterdam Stage, 1615', *Shakespeare Studies*, 48 (2020), pp. 80–6; and Pajmans, 'Enslaved to the Passions'.
36. 'Moor', in WNT; and Elmer Kolfin, *Black in Rembrandt's Time* (Zwolle: W Books, 2020), p. 26.
37. Bredero, *Moortje*, l. 1857.
38. *Ibid.* ll. 385, 880.
39. Harrison, *Geschiedenis van de slavernij*, pp. 235, 242.
40. 'Hier zynder oock in stadt, die sulcken handel dryven, / In Farnabock ...' Bredero, *Moortje*, ll. 233–6. 'Farnabock' is a phonetic spelling of Pernambuco, in Portuguese Brazil.
41. Hondius, 'Access', p. 380; and Fatah-Black and Van Rossum, 'Slavery', pp. 60–3.
42. That is, after the Dutch conquered Portuguese Brazil (1630), São Jorge de la Mina and Luanda (1641–8). Harrison, *Geschiedenis van de slavernij*, p. 250; and Michiel van Groesen, *Amsterdam's Atlantic: Print Culture and the Making of Dutch Brazil* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), p. 108.
43. Bredero, *Moortje*, l. 232.
44. Harrison, *Geschiedenis van de slavernij*, pp. 157–61.
45. There are multiple examples of Dutch Barbary pirates. *Ibid.* pp. 161–2.
46. 'meydt of Kamenier'. Bredero, *Moortje*, l. 298.
47. *Ibid.* ll. 1293, 2251.
48. *Ibid.* l. 312.
49. On early modern patterns in racialization, see Hondius, *Blackness in Western Europe*, pp. 2–5.
50. Bredero, *Moortje*, ll. 529, 1065.

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51. 'Dat nuwe schoonheyt heeft haar aansicht aanghenomen. / Sy heeft een eyghen verf die niet is gheblancket.' Ibid. ll. 1009–11.
52. 'Wiens beck en noos is plat, en van wiens dicke lippen / Men eenen afval souw met een scherp schaaertje knippen. / Haar óóghen die zyn gróót, en 'twit is Zeeltich gheel, / Dat glinstert als een kat by nacht, 'tvel is ten deel / Appelgraauw, en 'thayr is grijs ghelijck een Wesel.' Ibid. ll. 1926–30.
53. Ibid. 'mismaackten mensch' (l. 1065), 'ghy beest' (l. 1944), 'monster van een mensch' (l. 1945), 'bavyaan' (l. 1887), 'meer-aap' (l. 1949) and 'vercken' (l. 1957).
54. 'Besiet een weynich doch haar liefelijck ghelaat / Haer fiere, frische jeucht is in haer beste staat / ... Sy schrijft goet vaerdich schrift, sy kan oock lustich lesen. / Sy handelt braaf de Luyt, sy singt heel soet Mussyck, / Sy doet oock wat sy doet, sy doet het meesterlijck; / Voor een seer geestich mensch so wort sy u ghegheven ...' Ibid. ll. 1318–19, 1325–8.
55. 'Sy swijghen alle beyd' dat is ghenoech ghepresen.' Ibid. l. 1324.
56. Katherine Crawford, *Eunuchs and Castrati: Disability and Normativity in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2018), p. 105.
57. Ibid. p. 163. On eunuchs in the early modern English stage, see pp. 103–29.
58. 'Want ist een Vrouw gheweest, hoe souw sy dat beginnen? / Tis teghen de natuur ...' Bredero, *Moortje*, ll. 1866–9.
59. 'My was wel eer geseyt ... / Dat die Moorianten zyn genegen seer tot Vrouwen. / ... / De angst voor doot of straf haar gayle lust wel brack.' Ibid. ll. 1878–81.
60. Ibid. ll. 1314–15, 3012.
61. Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 7.
62. Mike Dash, *Tulipomania: The Story of the World's Most Coveted Flower and the Extraordinary Passions it Aroused* (New York: Three Rivers, 1999).
63. Mitchell, *Seeing through Race*, pp. xii–xiii.
64. Ian Smith, 'White Skin, Black Masks: Racial Cross-Dressing on the Early Modern Stage', *Renaissance Drama*, 32 (2003), pp. 33–67 (34).
65. Bredero, *Moortje*, ll. 1957–8.
66. See 'Ritsaard' and 'Writsaard', in *WNT*.
67. For the ideal of *le commerce doux*, see Dorothee Sturkenboom, *De ballen van de koopman: Mannelijkheid en Nederlandse identiteit in de tijd van de Republiek* (Gorredijk: Sterk & De Vreese, 2019), p. 370. See p. 372 on the parallel between indigenous people and women.
68. On the parasite in classical comedy, see George Duckworth, *The Nature of Roman Comedy: A Study in Popular Entertainment* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), pp. 265–7.
69. 'Want ghy sult dan de Dros beleesen en besweeren'. Bredero, *Moortje*, l. 815. See also l. 808.
70. 'misschien dees kleeren hem ontcieren, / Want gist'ren had hy an een schoon Oostindisch kleedt, / Gheschildert met een Kunst die'ck selver niet en weet, / Want hoement rolt en vouwt 'tsal barsten noch verslenschen, / Veel Indianen zyn kunstighe kloecke Menschen: / Voorts wat het kleet angaet, dat verciert vaak de Man, / Of het ontciert, naa 't is den ghenen die 'theeft an: / En waar sy weer ghepronckt, sy souw u licht bevallen.' Ibid. ll. 1907–14.
71. Ibid. 'Ghelijck de Turcken doen' (l. 2811); and 'op zyn Jootsch besnijt' (l. 2863).
72. Nicole Maskiell, 'Elite Slave Networks in the Dutch Atlantic', in Michiel van Kempen et al. (eds), *Shifting the Compass: Pluricontinental Connections in Dutch Colonial and*

- Postcolonial Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), pp. 186–205 (201). See also Hondius, *Blackness in Western Europe*, p. 133; and Fatah-Black and Van Rossum, ‘Slavery’, p. 60.
73. Maskiell, ‘Elite Slave Networks’, p. 194.
74. David Cheal, *The Gift Economy* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 4–8, quoted in Osteen, *Question of the Gift*, p. 231.
75. Carrier, *Gifts and Commodities*, p. 10.
76. Russell Belk, ‘The Perfect Gift’, in Cele Otnes and Richard Beltramini (eds), *Gift-Giving: A Research Anthology* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1996), pp. 59–84 (61–8).
77. Benjamin: *Geography, Globalism, and Europe’s Early Modern World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), pp. 5, 227. On exoticism and blackness, see Hondius, *Blackness in Western Europe*, pp. 42–3.
78. Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism*, p. 3.
79. ‘kwist niet op wat manier / Dat ickt ontkomen sou dat eereyckst souw tóonen / De saak die is so vuyl ick kanse niet verschóonen: / Spot met u Meester weer als hy u yet ghebiedt, / Sit daar en koekeloert, en pronckter dat ghy swiet.’ Bredero, *Moortje*, ll. 1977–81.
80. Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (New York: Vintage, 1997), pp. 210–11. See also pp. 460–1, 575.
81. Stuart Hall, ‘Race: The Floating Signifier’ [video], lecture (London: Goldsmiths College, 1997), YouTube, <https://youtu.be/PodKki9g2Pw>, accessed 17 December 2022.
82. Wekker, *White Innocence*, p. 2.
83. See Jansen’s commentaries on both texts, in Bredero, *Proza*, pp. 154–63, 200–13.
84. See Jansen’s ‘Inleiding’ and ‘Voorredes’, in Bredero, *Proza*, pp. 28–9, 204–8.
85. Bredero did not read Latin and based *Moortje* on a Dutch translation by Cornelis van Ghistele (1555) and a French translation by Jean Bourlier (1566). See C. A. Zaalberg, ‘Inleiding’, in G. A. Bredero, *Moortje*, P. Minderaa et al. (eds) (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 1984), pp. 9–92 (13, 18); and Grootes, ‘Nawoord’, p. 387.
86. Bredero, ‘Aen den edelen heer, myn heer Jacob van Dijck’, in *Moortje*, pp. 9–13 (12).
87. ‘Ick ... heb vrypostelijck de versierde geschiedenis uyt de schat-kamer van de werelt, uyt dat Keyserlyck Roomen ghevoert, maer dat meer is, in mijn Vaderlijcke Stadt ghesleept en gherabraect ...’ Bredero, ‘Reden aande Latynsche-geleerde’, in *Moortje*, pp. 14–17 (14).
88. Bredero calls Terence ‘de Kartaginees TERENCEUS’. Bredero, ‘Aen den edelen heer’, p. 12. On Terence’s assumed African origin, see Bosman, ‘Best Play’, p. 127.
89. ‘een bedel-rock van hondert duysent snorrepippen, van kromme-lappen, en ander uytheemsche geleende snipperlingen’. Bredero, ‘Reden’, p. 15.
90. ‘op onse wijze en na mijn macht eerlijck, en uyt eenderhandt eenparich ghekleet’. *Ibid.* p. 14.
91. ‘Hovelingen en Stadts schrijvers ... Kooplieden, en andere die haar eyghen spraack verarmen en gewelt doen’. *Ibid.* p. 15.
92. ‘mensen, die dese verbasteringh of verwerringh van woorden ghebruycken voor een edele frayicheyt?’ *Ibid.* p. 16.
93. ‘Men moet niet anmercken hoe groot de giften zyn, maar van wie die, en hoe die gegeven worden.’ Bredero, ‘Aen den edelen heer’, p. 10.
94. ‘daaromme gheef ick u alle dat in mynder macht is, dat is, myn selven ...’ *Ibid.* pp. 10–1. From Seneca, *De beneficiis* 1.8.

## *Trade and Race in Bredero's Moortje*

95. 'Al u weten is niet, soo varre ghy't maer u selven weet: niemant is sijn selver gheboren.' Bredero, 'Reden', p. 16. From Cicero, *On Duties* 1.22. See Jansen, 'Voorrede', in Bredero, *Proza*, p. 212.
96. On the parallel of merchant and scholar, see Sturkenboom, *De ballen*, p. 371. On the dual image of the merchant overseas and at home, see p. 370.
97. Marika Keblusek, 'Mercator Sapiens: Merchants as Cultural Entrepreneurs', in Marika Keblusek and Badeloch Vera Noldus (eds), *Double Agents: Cultural and Political Brokerage in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 95–110.
98. Sturkenboom, *De ballen*, pp. 371–2.