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Slavery and abolitionism: a Dutch history through intersectionally explored stories

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Content

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Introduction

Last year, 2013, was a special year in the history of Dutch slavery. The Netherlands commemorated its abolition of exactly a hundred-and-fifty years ago. It was a year of remembrance and celebration, with an aim of making the Dutch and the people in the former colonies more conscious of this specific part of history (Stichting Herdenking Slavernijverleden 2013 2013). A difficult task, since slavery is somewhat of a non-issue in Dutch public debate. It is a history which many, especially former slave trading and slave owning countries, would rather forget (Nimako and Willemsen 2011, Emmer 2003). Yet it is also a necessary task to help tell and remember this history, especially since slavery still exists in the contemporary world. Media attention and academic research can complement each other in this respect.

The lack of attention for the history of slavery is thus reflected in both the cultural canon and in historical and academic works on the subject. Until the fifties of the previous century there was little interest from historians in the subject of slavery. The sources that are available often focus on economic aspects (Heijer 2013). Quantitative researches show for example numbers of amounts of slaves, ships and profits. Quantitative information that for example Emmer, Dantzig and Vrijman provide are not unimportant, but this type of work does lack information that can only be revealed through a qualitative research angle. An example of such a qualitative research angle would be a research of life histories. Historians such as Nimako and Willemsen, Oostindie and Tang acknowledge this and also note that knowledge production on transAtlantic slave trade proves to often have been partial, distorted and Eurocentric (Nimako and Willemsen 2011, Oostindie 1997, Tang 2003). These historians have also shown connections between slavery and state formation, citizenship and the modern world order and social structures.

An overly quantitative and economical focus and a Eurocentric point of view are not the only flaws one can detect in the main discussion regarding slavery. This history of slavery has namely still too often been described as a history of men, in which women are thus absent. Recently there have been laudable attempts to modify this picture, both in the academic and cultural world. Ketelaars, for example, shows in his recent work *Compagnies dochters* (2014) a diverse range of roles that women have played in this history which was previously often

described as a men's world. The theatre group Urban Myth zooms in on Elisabeth Samson (Urban Myth 2014), a black female slave owner who contributed to the emancipation of black Surinamese in the Netherlands. And Captain shows in the walking tour 'Traces of slavery in Utrecht' (2012) how the white Dutch woman Petronella Moens made her opposition to the slave trade clear in published texts in amongst others the critical publication De leer-zame Praat-al [The instructive Blab-Mouth] (1790-1792) (Captain 2012:70). Some progress has thus been made in this respect, but there is more research to be done regarding stories, roles, actions and influences from women in the history of slavery. As Bosch (2014) notes regarding the inclusion of women in writings on history in general, criteria to be included in history have created a skewed picture. The imagined dichotomy of public-private life, combined with an emphasis on achievements in public life and within this on the achievements of men, has often excluded women. Yet when attempting to modify this picture, it is not only important to look at how many and which women are included, but also to critically reflect on in what way this is done (Bosch 2014). Writing life histories can be a valuable tool in such an attempt (Bosch 2014).

Works on slavery thus often show the stories of men. At the same time, these histories are oftentimes told in a way that conveys a victims/perpetrators dichotomy. Stories are portrayed through an imagined divide between evil white European men and enslaved, feminised, black, mostly male, people. Quantitative studies give us general numbers from both sides, the profits made by good business instinct of the Europeans and the suffering enslaved blacks. The picture is thus often portrayed in a simplistic way, rather than coming closer to the complex reality. Opposed to the stereotype, there were for example wealthy black female master enslavers.

Merely generating more attention for slavery is therefore not enough, the ways in which histories on the subject are told and what type of information is provided should be taken into careful consideration. By doing so, underexposed perspectives can enter the picture and co-create a more complex, in-depth history of slavery. I would therefore like to tell histories of slavery from a perspective that is rarely used by historians to examine those stories. I would like to explore the history of slavery and abolitionism with special regards to intersectional differences and influences, specifically including gender, ethnicity and religion. This will help deconstruct the dichotomy between victim-perpetrator and show different axes of subjection. I will elaborate on the theoretical framework in chapters two and three.

With regards to the locations that will form the stage of the stories I will analyse, I choose to focus on elements of Dutch history. In the canon of the history of slavery, Anglo

Saxon stories are rather dominant. I therefore choose to focus on underrepresented elements, in this case of Dutch history. My choice for the Netherlands and its former colonies, rather than another non-Anglo Saxon country, is also tied to myself. Being Dutch and speaking the language gives me the opportunity to read and access sources written in Dutch and residing in the Netherlands. I am fully aware that a national perspective on this international history is necessarily partial, but it will contribute to the picture as a whole.

As said before, women are often excluded in studies and dominant views of slavery. In order to show different axes of difference and deconstruct prevailing dichotomies, I will focus on the stories of different women in different positions regarding the history of slavery. I will describe the stories of slave owners Elizabeth Samson (1715-1771) and Maria Susanna Du Plessis (1739-1795), and of abolitionist Petronella Moens (1762-1843). I have chosen these specific women not only because of their relatively famous and interesting stories, but also because of the scarcity of accessible, and especially extensive, stories from women regarding slavery and my personal access as a Dutch student to their stories. With relatively famous, I mean that these women are famous in certain contexts. Within gender studies, within literature studies or within Surinam for example, rather than being famous in main stream writings or discussions on slavery. And since it are often the relatively powerful who leave traces in history (Captain 2012), I have not included stories of those enslaved. The scarcity of accessibility to stories is also related to why I did not do new archival research for this project. While there might be many more interesting and relevant stories to discover, starting new archival research is like trying to find a needle in a haystack. One simply does not know where to start, since these stories are buried rather than systematically displayed in archives. And then the credibility of these sources need to be critically reflected on as well, which all exceeds my timeframe for this project. While the stories are thus known to some, having these three life stories of women in the second half of the eighteenth century together in one research, does complicate and thereby contributes to the main stream discussion on slavery.

With this research, I aim to contribute to the Dutch history of slavery through analysing the stories of specific women in different positions. In order to do so I will first discuss theory regarding intersectionality and the deconstruction of dichotomies. Secondly, I will sketch a brief historical outline regarding slavery and Dutch involvement herein. Then I will focus in each chapter on a specific woman with a relation to slavery, namely Elizabeth Samson (1715-1771), Maria Susanna Du Plessis (1739-1795) and Petronella Moens (1762-1843). I will look at their lives with regards to intersecting axes of difference and its connections to their position in regards to slavery. Following which I will once again connect

these personal histories to information provided in the mainstream discussions of both international and Dutch slave trade. In this way I will show how my analysis of the women's stories add and complicate these mainstream discussions. I will thereby also reflect on how this legacy of slavery still influences present day societies. In conclusion I will reflect on the usage of intersectional theory for deconstructing dichotomies and ways of remembering histories in regards to slavery.

Chapter one: Methodology and theory

Introduction

This research is a historical research, in which I will use both primary and secondary sources for my analyses. In the preparation of this research project I could profit from the expertise I gained and the network I developed during my internship at Kosmopolis Utrecht. This internship proved to be very valuable in directing me towards literature, stories and ideas regarding slavery. It also pointed me towards the discussion of the lives of three specific women in different roles in the history of slavery, namely Maria Susanna Du Plessis, Elizabeth Samson, and Petronella Moens. In discussing and analysing these stories, I will pay attention to intersecting axes of difference, thereby making use of theories regarding intersectionality in order to deconstruct the prevailing dichotomy of victim-perpetrator in slavery. With an intersectional approach I will thus show different power relations than the oversimplified, stereotypical divide between black and white in slavery. This stereotypical divide is present in both popular and main stream academic representation. While some academics and social groups are thus aware of the stories of the three women and of the simplicity of the dichotomy, the intersectional point of view I take and connections I will make to main stream discussion will show a way in which life histories can make main stream history more complex.

In the following chapter, I will first shortly discuss theories of power relations and dichotomies. After this, I will explore intersectionality as a concept and working tool. I will consider commentary on intersectionality and I will consider the axes of difference I will use in my analyses. I will then point out my point of view on theory regarding the characteristics involved in these axes of difference and shortly describe how these characteristics were stereotypically valued in the timeframe I speak of. A framework regarding slavery with specific attention to Dutch elements will be set in chapter two.

1.1 Power relations, dichotomies and the subject

Though known for his theories regarding power, in the afterword of ‘Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics’ (1982), Foucault himself states that not power, but the subject had been the general theme of his research of the then last twenty years. Though an elaborate discussion of his work exceeds the scope of this thesis, I will use Foucault’s theory on the subject to develop a theoretical perspective on power relations in slavery. What is of importance, is that Foucault distinguished three modes of sub/objectification which transform human beings into subjects. Being a subject suggests a form of power which

simultaneously subjugates and makes subject to. The three modes of subjectification are: (1) modes of inquiry which try to give themselves the status of sciences, (2) dividing practices, (3) the way the human being turns him/herself into a subject. The second mode, which refers to dividing practices, indicates that the subject is either divided inside him/herself or divided from others, through dichotomies like the mad and the sane, the sick and healthy. This process objectivizes him/her (Foucault 1982). The dividing practices can be used by those who try to give themselves the status of sciences, thereby combining the first two modes. Humans are divided or distinguished from others through classification and then giving different meanings to such potentially equal categories. Dominance then becomes expressed or established (Chandler 1995, Culler 1985, Derrida 1976). Yet people have many characteristics which cannot be looked at separately and just be piled up, as I will argue in the next paragraph. This would repeat dichotomies and maintain the status quo, rather than showing something that comes closer to the complex reality. Foucault also states that power does not come from above, rather that we maintain it. This shows the necessity of deconstructing dichotomies and making the main stream picture of slavery more complex. Therefore, I will use intersectionality as a theory and method to deconstruct power relations to this goal.

1.2 Intersectionality

The term intersectionality was first coined by Kimberly Crenshaw in 1989. She stated that one cannot look at situations by analysing axes of difference like gender, ethnicity and religion separately and then adding them together. One should rather accept that these axes of difference are co-constitutive and that they should therefore be analysed as such. They should be viewed as co-productions and mutual transformations.

Crenshaw used black women as an example of how single axis frameworks obscure experiences. She showed through court cases how seeing race and gender as mutually exclusive categories, both within the realms of experience and analysis, ‘erases Black women in the conceptualisation, identification and remediation of race and sex discrimination by limiting inquiry to the experiences of otherwise-privileged members of the group’ (Crenshaw 1989:140). Thus there is a focus on the most privileged within a certain group that is in some way disadvantaged, by for example by gender or race. Within race discrimination this means that there tends to be? a focus on class-privileged non-white males, while with gender discrimination it tends to be viewed in terms of class-privileged white females.

This experience of the ‘privileged but for…’ group is not necessarily the same as the experience of others with amongst other things, the same crucial characteristic. The

experience of a white class-privileged female can be, but is not necessarily the same as the experience of a Black class-privileged female for example. Crenshaw makes this clear through using the following metaphor:

> "Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, form all of them…. Sometimes the skid marks and the injuries simply indicate that they occurred simultaneously, frustrating efforts to determine which driver caused the harm" (Crenshaw, 1989:149)

A black woman in this traffic analogy could thus be hit by race discrimination exactly like male blacks, by discrimination on the basis of gender the same as white females, by double-discrimination through the combined effects of race and gender discrimination, or she can also be targeted as a black woman. The last type not being the sum of race and gender discrimination, but a violation targeted specifically on black women as a group, a class in itself. Other axes of difference like religion, class or sexuality further complicate the picture.

Acknowledging these multiple ways in which one experiences things means acknowledging that sometimes one would like to represent experiences on the basis of a larger group, like women, while at other times one wants to express experiences for a more specific group, like black women. This does not only apply to the examples I mentioned of gender, race and class, but also for other axes of difference like for example religion and nationality.

1.3 Commentary on intersectionality

Intersectionality as a theory and method has become very influential for feminist theory (Puar 2012, Lykke 2011). The concept has been much praised, discussed and critiqued. Amongst others there has been a fear of privileging certain subjects and categories of difference, as well as black-boxing the concept. I will mention some of these critiques in the following paragraph and how I will deal with them in this thesis.

Puar observed that intersectionality has most often been used as a method to show the difference of women of colour. Within this attention paid to women of colour, the focus has mostly lied on African American women. It therefore almost seems like there has been a hierarchy in axes of difference, in which certain intersections would lead to ´better knowledge´. Crenshaw herself for example said ´As a result, Black women - the class of

employees which, because of its intersectionality, is best able to challenge all forms of discrimination – are essentially isolated and often required to fend for themselves' (Chrenshaw 1989:145). Crenshaw had thus been criticised for this 'standpoint' way of thinking (Harding 1991), which seems to imply that black women are the best knowers. Though I will not follow her in this respect, her insight for my discussion of slavery are valuable. Asides from this point, it seems that in the usage of the method analysts often focus on certain axes of difference like gender, class and race. These characteristics thus become privileged in analyses which is not always accompanied by an explanation of why these specific differences are seen as crucial for a certain situation, rather than other characteristics. These reflections on the use of the theory/method do not discredit intersectionality, they just mean that these issues need to be addressed. The methodology of intersectionality itself states that all identities are lived and experienced as intersectional. Shifting attention to other groups (not African American women) and categories (not race, gender and class), and accounting for choices can improve the usage of the method.

For my research the axes of gender, race, class, religion and citizenship are the most important ones. This does not mean there are no other influential axes of difference, yet these are the characteristics on which information is recorded. I will not look at certain axes with the idea that those intersections would lead to better knowledge. However, I will look at some of the more often privileged axes. This is partly a practical consequence, since information regarding gender, race, class, religion and citizenship have been recorded while I have been unable to find other facts. At the same time, I would like to argue that exactly because these characteristics and situations in which they intersected were recorded means that they are likely to have been the most influential axes in the histories that I will research. Especially since they prove contrary to stereotypical dichotomies in slavery, whilst the persons themselves must have been privileged in some of their characteristics, for only often those with power left most traces.

In reaction to the critique regarding the privileging of certain characteristics and intersections, Lykke argued against a fixed definition of intersectionality and called for keeping an open mind as well as justifying through contextualising choices regarding the usage of certain axes of differences and not others. She argued for 'a type of intersectional analysis that should take into account a need for thorough contextualisation and reflection on political-theoretical genealogies of specific intersections, as well as an equally pressing need for openness to rhizomatic lines of flight (non-hierarchical connections between heterogeneous and multiple phenomena touching each other in unexpected ways (211))

towards new intersections' (218). This avoids black-boxing the concept. Black/boxing means that 'concepts turn into rhetorical devices, something that people refer to without reflecting on implications and contexts´ (Lykke 2011:210). In the case of intersectionality, this could happen when the analyst simply creates an open-ended line of categorisations in need to be analysed, rather than actually analysing. I have therefore devoted the following paragraph and the next chapter on contextualising my choices, of both subjects and chosen intersections.

Intersectionality as Crenshaw envisioned it does indeed focus on motion and identification as a process. Yet there are critiques on the usage of the method, claiming that the way in which intersectionality is used often results in fixating identity at a certain point in time and place rather than about how the intersections come into being. These critiques accuse of a predominance of selfhood, a focus on fixing identity and thereby especially promoting the human body (Puar 2012, Phillips 2006). However, in this research this information on intersecting axes from characteristics of humans in a certain time and place is exactly what can contribute to making the mainstream existing picture regarding slavery more complex.

Thus in my research I will look at the data from a perspective that accepts that intersecting axes of difference are co-constructive, co-produced and mutually transformative. And that these intersecting axes should be looked at as a process rather than a consequence, cause or something fixed, even though I will pinpoint certain situations to show my point. I will use certain often privileged intersecting categories of difference, as this was my choice in restricting my research project.

1.4 Intersecting axes of difference: gender, ethnicity, religion, citizenship and class

Gender, ethnicity, religion, citizenship and class are the axes of difference that I will specifically look at. I chose these categories despite previously raised critique regarding the privileging of these categories. These are simply the categories on which information is available for my cases, namely Maria Susanna Du Plessis, Elizabeth Samson and Petronella Moens. Availability of information on these subjects is also connected to why these women are all privileged in some way, the privileged are the ones who most often leave long lasting traces (Captain 2012). Thus stories of enslaved are often not kept in records. The fact that information revealing the aforementioned categories are left in historical data also indicate the importance and influence attributed to these categories in that period of time. I will therefore also quickly describe some dominant meanings of categories within these characteristics during the timeframe that concerns me here.

I support the theories that the terms like gender, ethnicity, religion, citizenship and class are not given conditions but processes, performances, constantly in the making (Butler 1990, Skegg 2004, Eriksen 2010). They are defined both by the subject and others, inside and outside, by structure and agency, through exclusion and belonging. This should be kept in mind while I will show how these characteristics come together in a certain moment and place.

Each of these categories require a short description with regards to the situation in my chosen timeframe, namely between the fifteenth and nineteenth century. I will continue my description of the meaning of these categories within in this timeframe in more detail in the following chapters, as well as explaining my choice for this timeframe. For now it should be noted that with regards to gender, males were seen as superior over females. Females had less rights than men and their sexuality was prone to attack. For women to be together with a man without being married was seen as scandalous.

With regards to ethnicity, racism needs to be taken into account. Black people were seen as inferior to white people. In Suriname, a colony of the Netherlands, all descendants from different 'colours' were also appointed different names by Europeans. Thus Foucault's dividing practices whereby subjects are differed, also in the name of science, are seen at work here. *Mulatten* were descendants from black and whites, *mestiezen* from mulatten and whites, *kastiezen* from mestiezen and whites, *poestiezen* from kastiezen and whites. Karboegers were in their turn children from blacks and Indians or blacks and mulatten (Slavernijenjij.nl 2014). The group one belonged to did not automatically mean that your position as either enslaved or free person was decided. Being a mulatto for example meant you were coloured, not that you had a certain status. However, the lighter the skin meant the more privileges you were given and the higher the chance you could be bought free. An enslaved could thus be bought free, which was called manumitted. A manumitted person received a lower status and more limits than a person who was born free (McLeod-Ferrier 1993). These differences between being born free, being manumitted and being enslaved indicate the statuses one can have regarding what I now choose to combine under the term of citizenship. White people would always be more privileged than black people who were born free, whether by legal rules or prejudice. This shows that citizenship cannot be separated from race in this point in time.

Class and religion are the two remaining characteristics I would like to discuss. Simply put, wealth meant power. The more money, the higher the class. Though once again opportunities were limited by race. Christianity was the main religion in Europe, so this was

also the religion held highest in esteem as seen from the dominating social group. Churches were influential, as well as Christian morals amongst white elites.

I will thus explore specific intersections between gender, ethnicity, religion, citizenship and class in certain situations in the lives of Elisabeth Samson, Maria Susanna Du Plessis and Petronella Moens in the following chapters. Through analyses of their stories I will deconstruct dichotomies regarding slavery, showing a more complex picture than slave-perpetrator roles. Before I will do so, I will first use the next chapter to generally describe the situation of slavery and specifically the Dutch involvement herein between the fifteenth and nineteenth century.

Chapter two: a short history of Dutch slavery

Introduction

In this chapter I will sketch a brief historical outline regarding slavery and Dutch involvement herein. Nimako and Willemsen (2011) pointed out that knowledge production on transatlantic slave trade has been partial, distorted and often Eurocentric, which indeed shows from most available works on the subject (also Tang 2013). Until the fifties of the previous century there was little interest in the subject of slavery by historians and available sources often focus on economic aspects (Heijer 2013). Since then, many works have been quantitative and still mostly economical. P. Emmer is a historian who has written influential studies on slavery from such a quantitative and economical perspective. His work is very contested and controversial. I have chosen not to discuss his work here; my methodological approach implies that I take issue with him. Writers as amongst others Nimako, Willemsen and Oostindie have addressed the issues regarding overemphasis on quantitate and economic perspectives, and made attempts to redress the balance. While keeping this in mind, I will also try to show this overview of the history of slavery in a way less distorted way by including those works which create a more complex point of view. First, I will look at the concept of slavery. Second, I will concentrate on slavery in my timeframe, between the fifteenth and nineteenth century. Third, I will discuss what slavery entails within this period of time. Fourth, I will explore the Dutch side of this story, the Dutch elements within the history of slavery. Fifth, I will elaborate on the abolition of slavery, specifically in the Netherlands. Finally, I will describe what I will present in the following chapters.

2.1 Slavery

Before I start elaborating on slavery, it is important to state that I will avoid the word slave and rather use the term enslaved. I do this to emphasize that one is made a slave, not born one. No one becomes voluntarily enslaved. This also means that I will use the term master enslavers rather than slave masters (Captain 2012, Nimako and Willemsen 2011). This should also be kept in mind when reading the words slavery and slave trade.

Slavery, and consequently slave trade, is not a recent phenomenon, the oldest of written histories show references to it (Vrijman 1937). Nobody knows when, where or who the first person was who became enslaved (Tang 2013). Slavery already existed in Africa before the Europeans arrived (Dantzig 1968). This does not automatically mean that Africans who were enslaved and transported were already enslaved before they arrived there (Nimako and Willemsen 2011). Even if the term ´slave trade´ is continuously used throughout

historical descriptions, which wrongfully implies not only that they were enslaved before the trading and that there was consequently a previously existing slave class, but also that there was cooperation or collaboration from some of the enslaved.

Slavery thus did exist before the period of European expansion and colonisation, yet I will focus on the period from the fifteenth century, when Europeans arrived across the Atlantic, until the end of the nineteenth century, a while after official abolition of slavery. 1814 was the year in which slave trade became forbidden in the Netherlands, and legal abolition of slavery came in 1863. My timeframe will therefore be between the fifteenth and the nineteenth century. In this period slavery took on different characteristics. It was a type of slavery which can be defined as chattel slavery, whereby enslaved were seen as personal, movable property. Chattel slavery is different from previous forms of servitude like vassals and pawns, because chattel slavery lacks any element of consent or contract (Lovejoy in Postma 1990, Fogel 1989 in Nimako and Willemsen 2011).

2.2 Slavery between the fifteenth and nineteenth century

It was around 1625 that the largest part of Europe had interests in slave trade (Balai 2013). It should be mentioned that not all countries that form Europe now were (large) players in slave trade.

Nimako and Willemsen make the roles of the regions in different aspects of slave trade clear:

> ‘Europe was the location of ideas, design, planning and innovations in slavery and slave trade; Africa was the source of banditry, abduction and the captivity of vulnerable peoples (Rodney 1974); the Caribbean and the Americas were the sites of production by enslaved labour (James 1980) and Europe again was the destination of the consumption of the goods produced by the enslaved (Williams 1994)’ (2011:3).

People were captured mostly in Africa, humiliated by physical examinations, branded on the skin, transported in horrifying circumstances to the Caribbean and the Americas. There they were forced to work for others, mostly on plantations or as house slaves, while exposed to ‘their masters’’ whims (Jordaan 2013). It was hard work, they ‘chopped, planted, picked or harvested, carried, cooked, served, washed and cleaned, so that the enslavers on the plantations could pursue their non-menial activities – reading, writing, sport, and so on’ (Nimako and Willemsen 2011:52).

Nimako and Willemsen also give an idea of the number of enslaved transported:

> ‘Between 1500 and 1600 the majority of African captives transported across the Atlantic for enslavement were transported by the Portuguese or on Portuguese ships (266,100), followed by Britain (2,000). However between 1600 and 1650 the Netherlands replaced Britain as the second major transatlantic transporter; the figures for this period are as follows: Portugal (439,500), Netherlands (39,900) and Britain (23,000). The smaller countries transported more captives than the larger ones in the first 50 years of the seventeenth century. This changed after the Peace of Westphalia (1648) as European states became more delineated. The figures for 1651-75 were Britain 115,200; France 5,900; Netherlands 59,500, Denmark 200; Portugal 53,700’ (Nimako and Willemsen 2011:19).

Larger countries thus transported a larger share of enslaved people after the Peace of Westphalia, which shows the importance of state formation processes. The European interests in slavery can be tied to such processes of state formation. Slave trading companies namely needed legal and financial support from states in order to be profitable. Multiple treaties in which European states acknowledged each other, and did not acknowledge others, discussed negotiations about Atlantic slave trade (Nimako and Willemsen 2011). Reciprocal recognition was necessary for the legitimacy of sovereignty of states, which also needs the monopolisation of violence by the state. Exclusive rights and authority to use violence in a territory thus enforced sovereignty and acknowledgement of other states. This was fuelled by feelings of nationalism, which always imply feelings of belonging and exclusion (sources like Eriksen 2010, Yuval-Davis 2006). Rivalry amongst Europeans was a cause of the European expansion and colonisation in this period (Huntington 1993, Palmer and Colton 1987, Tilly 1986 and 1990). States thus needed to back slave trading companies and issue them monopolising rights in order to compete with other European states.

From the fifteenth until halfway to the seventeenth century there were no clear international rules that regulated transatlantic slave trade and slavery (Nimako and Willemsen 2011). But the legal backing of slave trade and slavery by European states was necessary for it to flourish. An international legal framework made slavery legitimate business enterprises according to Europeans. Slave trade and slavery were an economic, social and cultural system across the countries. This emerging world order laid the foundation for the interstate system and law as it is nowadays. Nimako and Willemsen even claim that Atlantic slavery ‘has had an enormous influence on the world economy and the role of Europe within it’ (2011: 185).

2.3 The Dutch history of slavery

Several areas have been colonies of the Dutch at a point in time, whether it was while the Dutch were a Republic, a united monarchy or a monarchy. The Dutch Indies, Suriname and the Dutch Antilles were the ones that stayed in Dutch hands for a long period of time. There were at least three large Dutch organizations that played part in slave trade, namely the state founded and sponsored West-Indische compagnie (WIC), the Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC) and the Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie (MCC) (Balai 2013, Parthesius 2011). Dutch organised slave trade can be divided into two periods. The first one being from 1621 until 1730, where the WIC had a monopoly for trade in the Atlantic and thereby shipped around 273.000 enslaved. The second period is from 1730 until 1803, wherein private initiatives shipped around 275.000 enslaved (Tang 2013). The previously mentioned numbers were lower, since the amounts shown here reflect a later period in time, in which the slave trade had grown even larger. According to Oostindie (1997), the Dutch part in the total of transatlantic slave trade was approximately five percent, half a million enslaved. Transatlantic slave trade was not the only slave trade in the world at that time (Parthesius 2011), and not all enslaved were traded, but it is the most written about up to now.

Not all enslaved who were forced to cross the Atlantic survived. On average, around 16% died. Ships were sometimes slow, shipwrecks occurred and infectious diseases would hit in the unhygienic circumstances. Crew was not protected from this either. Around the end of the eighteenth century these numbers somewhat improved, due to technological progress, experience with transporting enslaved and better food and hygiene (Tang 2013). As explained above, life at plantations was often not much better.

The plantations in the Dutch Caribbean had its highest rates of productivity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Around 1770, sugar plantations in Suriname had approximately a hundred-and-fifty enslaved on average. For coffee plantations the number lies around a hundred-and-twenty-five. Half a century later these numbers became a hundred-and-seventy, ninety-five and for cotton plantations a hundred-and-twenty-five (Oostindie 1997). Changes in numbers were often related to economic prospects and technological developments. In Suriname most plantations produced one of the following things: sugar, coffee, cotton or cacao. Eventually, it became clear that over the whole there was never enough profit made from the plantations (Oostindie 1997).

As said before, Nimako and Willemsen (2011) state that slavery across the Atlantic played an important part in the formation of states across Europe, which includes the formation of the Netherlands. State formation is related to ideas of freedom and citizenship.

European citizens became freer, felt that they had gained the right and freedom to enslave others. Non-Europeans became less free, freedom for them might have meant 'finding a place to call home without being hunted, dehumanized and humiliated' (Nimako and Willemsen 2011:5). Enlightened concepts such as freedom were not considered universally applicable. Equality was not for all (Tang 2013). Dehumanisation was a way in which slavery was justified by Europeans. Blacks were seen as subhuman, less evolved. They were stereotypically thought of as pagans and as cruel and sexually promiscuous. It was assumed that they had no work ethic. European dominance thus led to the concept of the superiority of the European man. Racism was sanctioned by state power and violence.

Christianity was the main religion in Europe at that time, but it did not preach against slavery or racism on moral grounds. Bible passages were even used to justify slavery, like the story of Cham in Genesis chapter 9: 18-27 (Tang 2013). There were also those who thought that slavery was essentially wrong, but that it was justified since non-whites were pagans who needed to be surrounded by Christianity. This gave an opening for enslaved who converted, since though there was a lack of clear rules regarding slavery from the fifteenth until the middle of the seventeenth century, it was considered conventional wisdom that Christians don't enslave Christians (Nimako and Willemsen 2011). One reason why the VOC forbade their passengers to bring enslaved to the Netherlands was thus because enslaved were often immediately converted. Since no one would then pay for the previously enslaved and the expenses on the boat anymore, this was bad business for the VOC. Besides becoming a Christian while in the Netherlands, enslaved could also become free through manumission (official declaration of freedom after requesting so from the government) by the wish of the master enslaver due to a close relationship, or because one bought oneself or was bought free, or by running away (Vrij 2013). However, running away would not make one officially free and there was a considerable chance of being caught (Plet 2014). Moreover, free former enslaved and born free non-whites were still considered second rate citizens (Vrij 2013). It is difficult to find a number indicating the amount of manumitted people due to a lack of persevered records. Beeldsnijder states that the amount of manumissions in Suriname in the first half of the eighteenth century was about twelve a year (1991), only a fraction of the number of enslaved.

Being Christian could upgrade the status of a black person a little bit, since it was the main and most esteemed religion in Europe at that time. Christianity influenced all parts of life in Dutch society, including ideas on the role of men and women in it. Married women were regarded as subordinate in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. However, (white)

women could not be treated as slaves. They were seen as connected souls in their souls to men. Women should be friendly, modest, submissive, loyal and hard working in the household. They were considered to be as less important than men. Moreover, in the Netherlands women were often allowed to do business, if they were given permission by their husband or if they were over 25 years old and unmarried or widowed (Ketelaars 2014).

2.4 Abolition of slavery

Throughout the world, the abolition of slavery came about in various ways and often in different phases: through revolution (Haiti, 1804), through legislation (British colonies, 1838; Dutch colonies, 1863) or through civil war (United States of America, 1865) (Nimako and Willemsen 2011). Enslaved revolted both actively and passively, thereby probing power balances and forcing change (Tang 2013, Plet 2013). As said above, slave trade was abolished in the Netherlands in 1814 and slavery in 1863. This is relatively late. The Netherlands never had a mass movement against slavery, like for example Great Britain had. There was only a small number of people active in the debate, or non-debate, in the Netherlands (Nimako and Willemsen 2011). 'De Maatschappij ter Bevordering van de Afschaffing van de Slavernij' [the Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery] was founded in 1840, yet without royal approval (Tang 2013). The limited abolitionist movement did however have an influence on the parliament (Heijer 2013). In Suriname king Willem III was represented as a hero who abolished slavery, but the Netherlands was actually pressured by Great Britain at the end of the Napoleon wars to follow their example (Oostindie 1997). International pressure, resistance from enslaved, and a lack of a larger economical profit thus ensured the bill for abolition pushed through.

The Dutch bill for abolishment was based on four principles, known as 'the complete economy of the law':

1. 'Emancipation had to take place right away and not gradually.
2. The master enslavers were entitled to some sort of compensation or indemnification.
3. The government would supervise freedmen/women for a period of ten years.
4. Immigration was to be under control and supervision of the government'

(Nimako and Willemsen 2011:96).

In Dutch politics the abolition of slavery was named emancipation. However, while one can see legal abolition of slavery as a historical event in which enslaved obtained legal freedom, emancipation implies more of a process (Nimako and Willemsen 2011). To be emancipated can be seen as 'to get out from under, to be able to press ahead with no obstacles

in one's path, to enjoy some measure of unencumbered thought or movement, *from* a situation of constraint *to* one of some kind of freedom (Scott 2012:7, emphasis by author). Emancipation would suggest large steps towards the ending of injustice. Yet it were the master enslavers who obtained compensation for their loss of 'property'. In Suriname this was around 300 gulden for an enslaved. This was paid from resources acquired in the Dutch colony the Dutch Indies, which was at the height of its productivity in the early nineteenth century. At first it was planned to make the enslaved pay their (former) masters, but those plans were abandoned. These resolutions do however once again indicate the economical approach of the Dutch to the 'slavery problem'.

I discussed some of the racial views that Europeans including the Dutch had of the enslaved. It was thought that the enslaved in Surinam were lazy by nature and that they did not need much money or material goods to survive. It was popular opinion that if freedom would be given without guidance that they would not want to work, that they would be unproductive and withdraw from civilisation. In order to prevent that, the Dutch set up the system wherein previously enslaved were obliged to have a ten-year-contract, often at the same plantation (Daalder, Tang and Balai 2013, Oostindie 1997, Siwpersad 1979). They would get paid now, but also had to take care of their selves, leaving them with barely enough economic means to get by and no real political rights such as voting. Emancipation did thus not mean that black and coloured people were regarded as being the same as whites, nor did it mean equality as opposed to inequality.

It should be noted that emancipation as a process, as a legacy of slavery, is still unfinished. Even if there now is equality before the law, this does not mean that people are similar in all areas of life. Scott (2012) notes how the liberal notion of the abstract individual does presume this, how it abstracts people from the power relations in which they are located, while in reality it does not alter structures of domination in the social realm. In mainstream discussions on slavery these differences become clearly visible. Commemoration of the abolishment in slavery is still dealt with very differently in the Netherlands, Suriname and the Antilles. Both in the public domain and the collective memory of Dutch society, slavery often remains a non-issue (Heijer 2013, Nimako, Adbou and Willemsen 2014). I will deal more with this in the conclusion.

2.5 The following chapters

Different historical examples can show various expressions of the aforementioned repression, pacification and resistance. Slave owners, enslaved and abolitionists tell stories from different

standpoints. The following chapters will therefore explore three different stories of women with connections to slavery. Elizabeth Samson was a wealthy black female slave owner, who fought to be able to marry a white man. Maria Susanna Du Plessis is an example of a wealthy white female slave owner whose supposed cruelty could be considered the embodiment of repression. The white Petronella Moens was a writer, a poet and abolitionist. Each of these stories will contest the stereotypical divide between white male enslavers and 'their' black victims. They will show how co-constructed characteristics vary power relations in different situations at certain points in time.

Chapter three: Elizabeth Samson

Introduction

Elizabeth Samson (1715-1771) was a wealthy black female slave owner, who used legal procedures in order to be able to marry a white man. Samson lived in Suriname and owned several plantations. Her story shows us something different than dualisms as white-black, perpetrator-victim, enslaver-enslaved, and stereotypical images of those blacks who were wealthy. In this chapter I will first explain the situation of Suriname in the seventeenth century. Second, I will describe Samson's life story. Third, I will elaborate on her connections to slavery. Fourth, I will conclude with a short summary of the chapter and its ties to the larger context as described in chapter two. Chapter six will later on bring together all the casa and the context of slavery.

3.1 Suriname in the seventeenth century

In order to understand Samson's life, I first have to elaborate on the situation in Suriname in the eighteenth century. The society was more or less divided into several (artificial) groups. Since it was a Dutch colony, one of the groups consisted of whites, the colonists. However, these colonists were not only Dutch, but also for example French, Swiss and German. The white population were mostly military men, civil servants or plantation-owners. The Sociëteit van Suriname, who officially owned the colony, also supplemented the army they had there from several European countries. Jews can be considered a separate group amongst the whites, since they were rather aloof and had somewhat different rights (Beeldsnijder 1994, Wolbers 1970, Dragtenstein 2002). A second group can be described as blacks, in Dutch contemporary times discriminatorily referred to as '*negers*'. Blacks did not have the same social standing as people from other groups and thereby other 'colours', as explained in chapter one. The group one belonged to did not automatically mean that your position as either slave or free person was decided. Vrij (2013) gives an indication of the distribution of white inhabitants and free people from African or partly African origin in Paramaribo in the eighteenth century. The last group grew from around 260 in 1762, to 740 in 1781, to 3000 in 1811 and 4950 in 1833. The amount of white inhabitants stayed around 2000 within this period. The first group does not include Maroons, those who escaped from their enslavement by running away. They made up the last social group in Suriname (McLeod-Ferrier 1993). Foucault's dividing practices are exemplified in this division of ethnicity and 'citizenship'; being free or enslaved.

The Maroons created political problems in the colony. It was one of the issues in the much larger and complicated dispute between governour Mauricius and his opponents, who were called the Cabale. Mauricius was governour of Suriname in the period 1742-1751. He planned to make peace with Maroons and acknowledge them as free 'negers', as had happened before on Jamaica in 1793. The members of the Cabale however, found this to be a sign of cowardice, an insult for the ownership rights of master enslavers and a bad example for those enslaved (Meiden 1987, Wolbers 1970). Eventually a commission was called into life by the Sociëteit van Suriname, as a reaction to the complaints made by the Cabale. The commission decided it would be best if Mauricius left the colony. According to Wolbers (1970), Mauricius had written in his diary (1750) that the commission attended many parties of the Cabale and that their judgement was likely to have been influenced by this. There are two other governours in Suriname worth mentioning here, since they play a part in stories of my case study. Those governours were Johan Raye van Breukelerwaard, governour before Mauricius between 1735-1737 and Jan Nepveu, governour after Mauricius between 1756-1757 ad interim and between 1768-1779.

3.2 Life story

Elisabeth Samson was born a free black woman. This thus gave her the lowest possible status regarding race, but being born free was socially better than being a slave or being bought free, manumitted. Elisabeth's mother, Mariana, was at the time of Elisabeth's birth manumitted. Elisabeth grew up in the household of her elder mulatto half-sister, Maria Jansz. Maria Jansz. was married to white F.C. Bossé, a businessman, plantation owner and later part of the important political organ 'raad van het Hof van Politie'. McLeod-Ferrier (1993) suggests Samson received an education in the household of Bossé, since Samson could read and write, and that Bossé possibly assisted Elisabeth in her business deals.

In her younger years, around the age of twenty-one-years old, Samson was falsely accused of spreading false rumours. She had reported to governor Raye that a man named Peltser had talked negatively about him. The governor found this highly insulting and demanded a trial against Peltser. However, other witnesses would not confirm Samson's story. Therefore, the lawyer Van Meel decided that Samson should be found guilty of perjury and of endangering the life of Peltser by spreading lies (Otto 2014, McLeod-Ferrier 1993). Racist sentiments were found in for example letters from Raye, in which he wrote that blacks were hateful against whites and Christianity (Algemeen Rijksarchief 's Gravenhage-Sociëteit van Suriname, 164 Brief Raye aan Directeuren van de Sociëteit). Raye thus attacked Samson

because of her race and religion. Lawyer Van Meel wrote to the Sociëteit van Suriname that Samson was considered a public whore in her home town, likely referring to her status as an unmarried woman while living together in a household with a man who is not her father (Algemeen Rijksarchief ‘s Gravenhage -Archief Staten-Generaal, Lias W.I.C. 5778 I.). Samson was here thus attacked on a combination of her race, gender, sexuality and religion. I have been unable to find however what Samson´s religion was. There was not enough proof to condemn white male Peltser, thus black female Samson became the victim. Grounds for not believing her were the colour of her skin and the fact that she was an unmarried woman, which made her in the eyes of the general population an untrustworthy, hateful, public whore.

At first, in 1737, Samson was found guilty, but she already had enough money to travel to the Netherlands and set the record straight. At the age of nineteen, Samson was already on a list regarding master enslavers who inhabited Suriname. McLeod-Ferrier (1993) suggests that she perhaps inherited these enslaved or that maybe she went into the business like her brother-in-law Bossé. Either way, Samson had enough capital and knowledge to fight the verdict in the Netherlands. She was cleared of the charges in 1739, at which time governor Raye had already passed away. Samson thus already knew how to use the Dutch justice system at that time in her life. She went back to Suriname and later became the concubine of Carl Otto Creutz. Creutz had sided with governor Mauricius, who was later banned from the colony after his conflict with the Cabale. After Creutz’ death (1762), Elisabeth married the white Hermanus Daniel Zorbe (after her first prospective white partner Cristoph Policarpus Braband died), the first marriage between a black (thus not coloured) woman and a white man (McLeod-Ferrier 1993, Otto 2014).

According to McLeod-Ferrier, Samson’s relationship with Creutz was one of equal partners, same age, same strong will. After Creutz’ death there is evidence of Samson’s business skills, as she brought her real estate value from an estimated 200.000 gulden to a million guldens in eight years’ time (1763-1771). Her estimated income is between forty- and a hundred-thousand gulden, whilst governour Mauricius income was around ten-thousand gulden (Otto 2014). Samson earned her fortune through managing plantations and investing. She also advised her sister. It must be said that it was an economically beneficial time and Samson passed away before an economic crisis hit. Samson was educated, she could read and write and took care of her own business correspondence. She did not wait for the favour of or money from a man. When she wanted to get married, she did not marry for money. McLeod-Ferrier even argues that the husband basically did not matter anyway, it was the social status of being married to a white man that Samson desired (1993). Samson knew that money buys

many things, and money was indeed the main reason why Dutch authorities finally approved of the match. The Dutch namely hoped that through inheritance the money and property would be owned by a white person after Samson would pass away, especially since she did not have any children (Letter from marriage commission to Sociëteit of Suriname from February 23, 1764 in McLeod-Ferrier 1993). She never had any children in her marriage either, thus leaving most of her money to her white widower.

3.3 Role in slavery

Samson managed, bought and sold plantations, corresponded herself about trade, and continued to do so after Creutz, with whom she lived in concubine, died. Samson and Creutz were not married, but she did become an heir of Creutz. Samson and Creutz had a testament, which stated that both where half owners of the real estate they then possessed, and that the partner would become fructuari owner. This meant that the partner could manage estates as he or she pleased, and get all the profits. The limitation was that one could not sell the property and others inheritants would inherit made profits from investments after the other died. The enslaved however were Samson's private property and would therefore not belong to Creutz had she died first. After Creutz had passed away, Samson thus became half-owner and fructuari owner for the other half of compounds at the Wagenwegstraat, the country seat La Solitude, and the coffee plantation Clevia. The house slaves at her house in the Wagenwegstraat did not live in her house, her slave house was on a separate land next to her house (McLeod-Ferrier 1993).

Samson then proceeded to buy coffee plantations Toevlught and Welgemoed, she inherited with sister Nanette plantations Catharina'sburg and Vlaardingen, bought Creutz' half of Clevia and La Solitude, buy with Nanette plantations Salzhalen, Belwaarde, Onverwacht and another country seat. Samson thus owned plantations and enslaved on these plantations and advised her sister to acquire plantations too. After Creutz' death they became business partners and continued to be so until Elisabeth Samson died in 1771 (McLeod-Ferrier 1993, Otto 2014).

It is not entirely clear why Samson bought Creutz' half of Clevia and La Solitude while she was fructuari owner. McLeod-Ferrier finds it unlikely that she planned to sell the successful plantation. She suggests that perhaps she simply wanted to possess it out craving for status, or she did not want (white) heirs from Creutz in Germany to inherit from her success later on (1993). Either way, Samson thus ensured full ownership over her plantations and possessions. These official ownership records and possibilities to buy more plantations

and enslaved show the possibilities women did have with regards to business and work in the Netherlands and its colonies. That is, if one had the money to do so.

Money and trade was arranged by Samson through a trading company in Amsterdam, namely Pieter Reijdenius en zoon. Apparently, doing business with a black woman was not so much a problem for the Dutch when she was wealthy. Elisabeth and Nanette Samson were important exporters of coffee. In 1767 they even had their own ship built, named De Juffrouw Nanette en Elisabeth (Otto 2014, McLeod-Ferrier 1993). I would argue that it was meant as a status symbol. Expressing your wealth was an important practice amongst elites in this period of time (Wolbers 1970, McLeod-Ferrier 1993). Sadly, the ship sunk in 1769. The crew was saved, but the cargo sank (Otto 2014, McLeod-Ferrier 1993). The ship was not the only way Samson expressed her wealth. As said, she had many enslaved, according to inventory sheets McLeod-Ferrier found around 267 enslaved (1993). Inventory sheets of her house and possessions also show an abundance in (luxury) items, as for example many tables, cabinets, animals and (alcoholic) beverages (Inventories in McLeod-Ferrier 1993). During her marriage to Zobre, Samson even hired a gardener from the Netherlands, thus not a local, to beautify the gardens of her their plantations. A Dutch gardener had higher esteem to the elite than a local, and Samson apparently found this to be of importance as well. Like McLeod-Ferrier (1993), I would like to argue that Samson tried to fit in with the (white) elite in that period of time. In some way her riches and taking over customs as exposing your wealth might have helped her in this pursuit, yet amongst white elites such a wealthy black woman flaunting her riches might have evoked envy and grudges against her. But she had gained her wealth and status symbols legally and largely through her own work rather than gaining it through being sexually attractive to men. Samson did thus not fit into the existing stereotypical image at the time of a rich black woman, who supposedly only gained the money through either being sexually attractive at some point in time and bearing children for him who he would take care of, or through remaining sexually attractive and therefore, together with their children, being included in the testament. The existence of this stereotype implicates that there were more wealthy black women in Suriname at that point in time. However, Samson´s unmarried status whilst living with a man still made her, in the eyes of people back then, a public whore. Asides from her race, thus something that staggered her social position.

In 1764, two years after Creutz' death, Samson filed for a marriage with white Christoph Policarpus Brabant. In Suriname they were unsure about what verdict to reach, since they felt that it was wrong and probably was forbidden but could find no proof of such prohibition. There was no precedent of a white man marrying a black woman either. There

were examples of them living together, and examples of white men marrying coloured women, but not of this. So civil servants decided to pass the question on to the Sociëteit of Suriname, while stating that it would be morally wrong and could encourage others, but that Samson was wealthy and that the money would come back into white hands. They also encouraged that if this marriage would be allowed, that other such marriage would be discouraged by denying those white men any office in the colony. Samson pleaded her case through her business solicitor in the Netherlands, Pieter Reijdenius. The verdict that this marriage was allowed came back after three years, when Brabant had already passed away (1766). This situation reveals how racists' sentiments had settled in the minds of the white Dutch committee, while there were no legal rules backing it. The law itself was less racist than the way it was executed.

When Samson wanted to marry another white man in 1767, namely Hermanus Daniel Zobre, she immediately received permission (McLeod-Ferrier 1993). Sadly, there is little known about the period after her marriage or the circumstances surrounding her death. Her reasons for the marriage are not facts that can be found in historical sources, but I can speculate. I do so because I argue that all the trouble she went through to be able to marry a white man, and her apparent willingness to go through it again a second time, indicate that love (if there at all) could not be the sole motivation.

McLeod-Ferrier (1993) also speculated on her motivations, though her claim that it did not matter who the husband was seems somewhat ungrounded to me. However, I do agree with her that Samson's desire to marry could not simply be related to gaining higher social status through creating offspring with a lighter tone of skin colour. Mulatto rather than black offspring would indeed give at least the offspring higher social status, but one did not need to be married to have offspring. Though she had been together with at least three men, Samson never had any children. Perhaps this path of social climbing was one she could not take because of biological obstacles. Simply having the desire to live with a white man could also not be Samson's reason to go through all the trouble to receive permission to get married. As I said before, she had lived with Creutz for thirteen years unmarried. And they had arranged for her to inherit as well, so money was not the issue either. Especially since at this time Samson was already wealthier than the men she desired to marry.

So I agree with McLeod-Ferrier (1993) that Samson's strong desire to marry and her actions to defy the normal social order more likely had to do with status. Samson was wealthy and had many material goods. It was custom to flaunt such material wealth, which probably did not go over well by the white upper class. They could not criticize her wealth itself and

Samson could not change the colour of her skin. She could however attempt to change her marital status by marrying up. Before that she lived with men unmarried, which was seen as shameful. One had to be married in a church, otherwise she was seen as a whore. By using her wealth and connections to fight for her right to marry a white man, Samson enforced her social position by ensuring that her female sexuality could no longer be attacked. In some way her crusade cleared the way for other potential marriages between black and white, but at the same time, as a result, rules became legally established to forbid higher job positions for white men who did so. White women with black men was even more socially unacceptable. It is unknown who attended Samson's wedding and if she indeed gained more acceptance of the white upper class through her marriage. The Sociëteit of Suriname gained what they desired out of the marriage though, almost all of the money went to the white Zobre.

3.4 Conclusion

Elisabeth Samson was a freeborn black wealthy female, who was somewhat educated. She was a business woman and a slave owner. Samson knew how to use justice system, as became clear from her encounters with Dutch law. Samson was not the for that time stereotypical wealthy black woman. She made her own money, rather than being wealthy because she was sexually attractive to a wealthy white male. Samson desired a higher social status and wanted to get married, specifically to a white male. Though Samson was black, she was not principally against slavery. While this raises a large ethical question mark, it was not uncommon. According to Vrij, there were many non-white master enslavers, also those who 'owned' family members (2013). I have not been able to find an indicating amount. I do agree with Vrij's statement that it could even be argued that a person in Samson's situation, where ownership over enslaved was socially and legally accepted, would be less confronted with ethical questions surrounding slavery than for example a European in whose country keeping enslaved was abolished (though not having them overseas). I have found no information on how Samson treaded her enslaved.

Ethical questions aside, the life story of Samson does argue against the dualistic images of black-white and victim-perpetrator. Samson was not a mere victim in her situation. She used agency for social climbing, by which she did follow the rules of 'white' society. By this I mean that she tried to improve her position by marrying a white male, thus no longer living in concubine and marrying up in society's vision of that time. While Samson could not change some categories in which she was put through (Foucault's) dividing practices, others she thus did change. Samson was a black master enslaver and became wealthy largely because

of it. Her wealth and capacities as a business woman helped Samson in her emancipatory goals, perhaps enabled by her status as a freeborn as well.

Chapter four: Maria Susanna Du Plessis

Introduction

Historian Cynthia McLeod-Ferrier states that Maria Susanna Du Plessis (1739-1795) is the most famous woman in the history of Suriname (KRO McLeod-Ferrier 2013). She is not as present in the Dutch collective memory. Through storytelling and folktales Du Plessis' story has become one with many variations and exaggerations. Documents show that she certainly was a female slave owner (Algemeen rijksarchief 's Gravenhage). It is somewhat unclear whether she was white or coloured (not black, see chapter one). She is assumed to be one of the cruellest women in history, who mistreated, tortured and even killed her enslaved. Like Samson's' story, Du Plessis' life too shows us discrepancies with stereotypical dichotomies regarding slavery. In this chapter I will first describe the life story of Du Plessis. I will then discuss her involvement in slavery and address the contradicting points of view of historians McLeod-Ferrier and Neus-van der Putten (KRO 2013, Neus-van der Putten 2003). In the conclusion of this chapter I will once again reflect on the importance of the variations in power relations in the (supposed) situations in the life of Du Plessis.

4.1 Life story

Maria Susanna Du Plessis (1739-1795) was the daughter of Dutch lawyer Salomon du Plessis (1705-1785) and Johanna Margaretha van Strijp (1706-1769). Her mother was born in Suriname, and had inherited some plantations from her first husband, Daniel Pichot (died in 1734). Her father was a Huguenot from the Netherlands and arrived in Suriname in 1734 as a lawyer in service of the WIC. In 1738 he quit that job to become a plantation-administer. In the 1740s he was one of the leaders of the Cabale, a group of plantation owners who revolted against governour Mauricius. He left for the Netherlands to sue Mauricius in 1747, lost the process eventually and was banned from returning to Suriname, where his wife and daughter stayed (Haas 2014, Codfried 2011, Meiden 1987).

Maria Susanna Du Plessis married two times in her life. First she married Frans Laurens Willem Grand (±1730-1762) at the age of fourteen in 1754. Grand passed away when Du Plessis was merely twenty-three years old, leaving her to be a young widow. Grand left her the plantation he had owned since 1755, Grand Plaisir, which he had later renamed Nijd and Spijt. The plantation mostly produced coffee and cacao, and did good business. Du Plessis was thus a rather wealthy woman. One year after Du Plessis inherited the plantation, she went to visit Amsterdam for a year. Most likely to visit her father, who looked after her

business interests. Du Plessis returned to Paramaribo and remarried with Frederik Cornelis Stolkert (±1747-1804) in 1767, on the plantation Nijd en Spijt (Haas 2014, KRO 2013).

Stolkert owned the plantation Hecht en Sterk. In their prenuptial agreement, which was also altered only one week after the wedding, Du Plessis arranged that Stolkert would have no rights regarding the administration or management of her possessions. And these possessions were of a substantial amount, her plantation alone was valued at 228.940 gulden, including her enslaved, in 1768. Du Plessis divorced Stolkert after fifteen years of marriage in 1783. That Du Plessis as a woman was able to divorce Stolkert proves she had some agency. There is no indication of children in either marriage, since none were mentioned in her testament besides her family and some enslaved. After her death Du Plessis left a valuable plantation, house and luxurious possessions, valued together over a hundred-thousand gulden (Haas 2014, KRO 2013).

Du Plessis petitioned for a divorce from Stolkert because, as she stated, of his 'buitensporigheden in handel, wandel en gedrag' and because she felt 'voor haar leven niet secuur' anymore (Neus-van der Putten 2003:93). Which basically means that she claims that he abused her and that she feared for her life. She then moved into a house on the corner of de Plein and de Gravenstraat, nowadays still known as the Du Plessis-house. She changed her testament in 1791, thereby revoking previous testaments which were likely to be in the advantage of Stolkert, as well as revoking a bequest previously made to enslaved Aurora, who she had manumitted in 1780 (Haas 2014, Neus-van der Putten 2003). I will explain more about Aurora in the next paragraph. For now I would like to note that though Du Plessis was exposed to her husband's abuse, because of her wealth and social position she did have the possibility of legally disadvantaging him and securing her own assets and wealth. She thus had agency, even though she was disadvantaged by being a woman in situation in her time.

Du Plessis was buried at the burial ground De Oude Oranjetuin, where her mother and first husband also rest. Her grave tomb reads the text Du Plessis herself chose: 'Eindelijk ben ik tot rust gekomen' [Finally I found peace]. Some take her words to be a reflection on her cruel deeds, others simply assume she refers to having lived a life full of labour. The fact that her tomb stone became cracked encouraged many interpretations, like God punishing her through having lightening divide her grave in half or cows deliberately lifting her tomb with their horns to break it (KRO 2013).

4.2 Role in slavery

Du Plessis was thus without doubt a slave owner. In 1795, the year of her dead, a list was created of the number of enslaved on her plantation Nijd en Spijt: fifty men, forty-four women, fifty-three boys, and thirty-nine girls, thus in total 186 enslaved. As a reminder, Samson had 267 enslaved according to her records. However, simply being a wealthy non-black business woman who owned slaves is also not why Du Plessis has become so famous. Many stories surround her, such as having drowned a baby, stabbing an enslaved in her chest or even cutting her breasts off, and secretly killing and dumping enslaved in the river through a tunnel that supposedly ran under her house. It will probably never be known what really happened, and in this paragraph I will discuss both rumours and explanations that surround the written evidence that has been left.

Historians McLeod-Ferrier and Neus-van der Putten (KRO 2013) disagree about what is likely to have happened. Both state that through story telling the facts have undoubtedly been exaggerated, but McLeod-Ferrier claims there is more truth in some of the stories than Neus-van der Putten, and with her Codfried (2003, 2011), acknowledge. McLeod-Ferrier has chosen to believe the words of Scottish-Dutch soldier John Gabriel Stedman, who wrote a book in 1796 (translated in 1799) about his travels in Suriname in 1773-1777. She states: ‘Een heleboel van de Surinaamse geschiedenis gaat terug naar op wat hij [Stedman] allemaal precies heeft geschreven, en wanneer we dat allemaal wel aan, waarom zou je alleen dit niet aannemen?’ (McLeod-Ferrier in KRO 2013: 24.46 mins). McLeod-Ferrier thus believes Stedman’s account of Du Plessis, because she believes his credibility is proven since many other facts of the history of Suriname were written down by him as well. I will elaborate on the credibility of Stedman later on in this paragraph.

Stedman wrote regarding Du Plessis, then Mrs. Stolkert:

> ‘Walking out on the 1st of May, I observed a crowd of people along the water-side, before the house of Mr. S— Ik— r, where appeared the dreadful spectacle of a beautiful young mulatto girl, floating on her back, with her hands tied behind, her throat most shockingly cut, and stabbed in the breast with a knife in more than eight or ten difierent places. This was reported to have been the work of that infernal fiend, Mrs. S — Ik— r, from a motive of jealousy, suspecting that her husband mijght fall in lovfe with this poor unfortunate female. This monster of a woman had before drowned a negro infant merely for crying, as I have said ; nay, she was accused of still greater barbarity, were greater barbarity possible.’ (Stedman 1799: chapter 17)

Stedman thus tells the story of a female master enslaver who singlehandedly drowned a baby of an enslaved because the child would not stop crying. This story was also told by a A. Barrau in 1790, in a magazine called 'Bijdragen tot het menselijk geluk' (Haas 2014). The helplessness of the baby contributes to the cruelty of the crime, making it seem that Du Plessis, as a woman, did not have motherly feelings or did not view the black child as human.

Stedman also wrote the story that Du Plessis mauled an enslaved mulatto girl with a knife, because she was convinced that her husband Stolkert liked the girl. This story kept on growing through oral tradition throughout the years, making it so cruel that Du Plessis was apparently so jealous that she cut off the breasts of the enslaved and served them to Stolkert for dinner, 'because he liked them so much'. Du Plessis is here portrayed as being so jealous of another woman that she attacks the sexuality of the, according to Stedman, innocent girl. The husband is not given any fault, it was simply considered to be in the mind of Du Plessis that he might fall in love with the girl. An irrational and cruel action from Du Plessis. The mulatto girl was later given a name as well: Alida. Around the first of July there is still a Miss Alida pageant in Suriname, as part of celebrating the abolition of slavery. Alida is made a heroin in the history of Suriname, a national symbol which required Du Plessis to become demonised (Neus-van der Putten in KRO 2013, see Anderson 2006 for more on the relation between (glorified) stories and nationalism).

The house that formed the stage of the disaster also appeared in something McLeod-Ferrier said (KRO 2013): when Du Plessis left the house for the plantation, she would walk alongside the river with all the beautiful female enslaved, because of her jealousy. If she left them at home, her husband would touch them. The husband was not allowed to accompany them to the plantation. Sexual promiscuity of the husband seems not to be the main issue in these stories, the jealousy of the hot-headed woman becomes the centre of the stories. It seems here that the axe of sexuality masks the axe property and ownership. Rather than slavery, adultery and cruelty becomes the main focus of Du Plessis' story. The house that Du Plessis lived in after her divorce is rumoured to have had a tunnel through which Du Plessis would go to kill slaves and dump them in the river. The porous ground under her house however would have ensured that if such a tunnel existed that it would always be filled with water. This is only one of the disproved myths surrounding Du Plessis.

As a matter of fact, there is no conclusive proof of any of the cruelties atributed to Du Plessis. McLeod-Ferrier believes the 'eye-witness' report Stedman wrote, accounting him credibility because he wrote things down in the time Du Plessis also lived, while he also mentions eyewitnesses to her crimes. In his turn, Codfried calls Stedman's work more or less

fictive reports (2011). Neus-van der Putten, Haas and Codfried argue that it is more likely that the stories came to life as a way of revenge against Du Plessis. Perhaps as a result of the feud between Du Plessis' father and governour Mauricius. Or as Codfried suspects, perhaps Stolkert was behind it and was it part of a battle for the ownership of plantation Nijd en Spijt (Codfried 2003). Stedman was apparently friends with Stolkert and Stolkert's stepfather governour Jan Nepveu, and he could have helped out in a smear campaign against Du Plessis (Codfried 2011, Neus in KRO 2013, Neus 2003). Codfried (2011) compared sources and concluded that Stedman's accusations were based on crimes of others. The killing of the child, Codfried claims, was built on a charge from 1733 (six years before Du Plessis' birth) against planter Christiaan Bisschof, who was accused by fifteen enslaved of having killed seven enslaved people (in Dragtenstein 2002). Stedman's accusation of having stabbed an enslaved woman to death beside her house on the first of May of 1775, because Du Plessis felt she was trying to seduce her husband, was likely to have been based on a newspaper article from the twenty-fifth of February 1775. The article is a call for information from the authorities, owing to the find of the body of a young mulatto woman floating on the Suriname Rivier, with her hands bound on her back and her throat cut (Codfried 2011). Horrible stories that have happened thus, but not necessarily by the hand of Du Plessis.

Stedman and people retelling his accounts were not the only ones who exaggerated the stories surrounding Du Plessis. Teensta wrote in the nineteenth century that Du Plessis was accused of the murder of 'her' enslaved 'Aura', according to her as written in the minutes of 'de Politieke Raad (February 14, 1792) [Political Council], from which Stolkert was part of the board. However, the minutes only show that Stolkert accused Du Plessis of having the by her previously manumitted Aurora abducted and hiding her children from the authorities at her plantation (Codfried 2011, Neus 2003). This was the only time Du Plessis was ever sued, and it later turned out that Aurora was still around. Aurora's children later received jewels after Du Plessis' death. (Neus-van der Putten in KRO 2013). I mentioned Aurora before in relation to Du Plessis' testament, in which Aurora became excluded from inheriting from her and banned from the plantation. Once again the popular story thus tells of how Du Plessis mistreated one of her enslaved coloured women, as though Du Plessis felt she could do whatever she liked to 'her property'. Not seeing them as humans, but as something that the powerful Du Plessis could do whatever she pleased with (McLeod-Ferrier 2013). It is unclear, according to Neus and Codfried, why the women were in conflict. Perhaps the children involved were conceived by a male member of Du Plessis' family and thereby seen be Du Plessis as family (Codfried 2003).

Perhaps Du Plessis' involvement with certain children can also be seen as evidence contrary to her vengeful and cruel reputation. According to a note in the baptismal, Du Plessis was asked to be a godmother in 1792 for Marcus Jan Jobin, a son of the family in law of her first husband Grand. She was also godmother of a half-nephew from her mother's side, Ephraim Daniel Pichot. She also adopted in her testament of 1791 an enslaved boy 'haar geliefde mulatten slaaf en bediende Frederik' [her beloved mulatto enslaved and servant Frederik], who was to study in the Netherlands and given a house and land by two brothers Pichot (family of Du Plessis, later adopting the family name Pichot Du Plessis). She too left inheritance for a couple of enslaved and their descendants (Testament 1792, Codfried 2011, Neus-van der Putten 2003). A remarkable sentence appears in a letter that Du Plessis wrote to a business partner in the Netherlands: 'Het is ook voor mij geenszins aangenaam de verwoestende geschiedenis van slavensterfte te melden, waaruit verdriet voorkomt.' (KRO 2013: 29.14). [I do not find any spark of pleasure in reporting the devastating history of the deaths of slaves, which causes grief]. Then again, this grief could be attributed to the loss of economic property and ownership of labour.

4.3 Conclusion

Maria Susanna Du Plessis was a wealthy female master enslaver. It is unclear whether she was white or coloured, which I find interesting in itself, since race was of such importance back then. Perhaps, and I am just speculating, she was white and it did not seem worth mentioning that such a wealthy woman was white, since assumed superiority of the race indicates it. Or maybe she was coloured and it was not mentioned because her social position was embarrassing to whites as Elisabeth Samson's was. Or leaving her skin colour open to interpretation made it easier to demonise Du Plessis as a white European perpetrator for later Surinamese nationalistic generations.

What is clear is that she and the stories surrounding her, interpreted in whatever way, defy the stereotypical dichotomy of white European male perpetrators against black victims. On the one hand Du Plessis can be described as a female perpetrator, solely 'owning and managing' her enslaved, who were at least for a part coloured rather than the stereotypical black. The race of mistreated enslaved were somehow always mentioned in stories. Never was Du Plessis accused of abusing a white person. Taking her cruelty one step further puts Du Plessis in the role of a cruel, vengeful, and mostly jealous woman. Jealous of the beauty and sexuality of other women. Irrational in her actions, which she can afford herself because of

her wealth. Sexuality then becomes the main axe of difference, which keeps other axes, like property, from sight.

On the other hand, Du Plessis can be described as a victim of smear campaigns and demonising. For economic reasons by her ex-husband, and nationalistic reasons in traditional folk stories. She was attacked on the grounds of being a jealous woman, who should not have owned possessions and enslaved because of her irrational behaviour. The fact that she was apparently a skilled businesswoman who managed to raise high profits is not taken into account by these stories. It is interesting how religion does not seem to be important in the story of Du Plessis. Her gender, sexuality, class and possibilities within the law seem to be of larger importance. Likely because these were the things she was attacked on and the things that helped her defend herself.

There seems to be no comparable story to Du Plessis' about a man in public discussions. The story seems to be sensationalised and seen as an exception. That female master enslavers were no exception seems to be masked by this sensational story. A way in which the story can be told without threatening the dichotomy between white male perpetrators and black victims of slavery too much. Critically reflecting on this story as I have done in this chapter shows how intersectionality as a method can demonstrate Foucault's dividing practices and how these practices are sometimes used to obscure the complexities of the situation of slavery.

Chapter five: Petronella Moens

Introduction

Petronella Moens (1762-1843) was a writer, poet and abolitionist. She produced novels, plays, poems and articles. Since she was probably blind[1] she had to dictate her texts to friends and hired professionals. She was a politically progressive woman, advocating for example suffrage for women and abolition of slavery. In this chapter I will first sketch a historical overview of the political situation in the Netherlands in the eighteenth and nineteenth century in order to situate Moens' ideas. Second, I will describe Moens' life story, throughout which I will indicate important parts of her life and their influence on Moens' experiences and ideas. Third, I will elaborate on her ideas regarding Christianity, politics and gender. I will continue with describing her connections to slavery and ways in which some of her characteristics come together here to create her position in life. I will then give a short conclusion by summarizing and starting to tie her story to the larger context of historiography of slavery as described in chapter two. This chapter is larger than the previous case study chapter, since more works and ideas have been documented from Moens than from Samson and Du Plessis. It is not strange that Moens has left more traces of her life and thoughts, as she was a rather well-known writer situated in the Netherlands. Once again, well-known in certain situations, mostly amongst Dutch literacy. Chapter six will later on bring together all the cases and the context of slavery.

5.1 The Netherlands in the eighteenth and nineteenth century

Politics influenced Moens' life and work and I will therefore first give a short historical overview of the political situation in the Netherlands during her lifetime (1762-1843). The Dutch Republic had had some wars with both France and England in the past, but around the 1780s alliances to both opposing countries seemed to divide the Republic. Prins and stadhouder Willem V van Oranje-Nassau was (accused to be) on the side of the English who were at war with what was becoming the United States of America, while others sided with France and their ideal of liberté, égalité et fraternité. The Dutch patriots, as they called themselves out of love for their country, thus fought for more individual freedom and human rights. They felt that citizens should have the power that now resided with the stadhouder and aristocracy. They wanted the Republic to regain their lost international power and tried to achieve so gathering and picking up the weapons. They proclaimed the Bataafse Republic in

[1] Though often referred to in contemporary works and in research as blind, an ophthalmologist and a graphologist stated after separate investigations that she was not totally blind (Veltman-van den Bos 2000)

1795. The new Republic was very dependent on France and the enlightened ideas from their revolution.

In 1806, the French emperor Napoleon appointed his brother Lodewijk Napoleon to be king of Holland, making it a monarchy only to be dissolved four years later, when the Dutch became a part of the French empire. Napoleon was defeated in 1813, making the Netherlands a monarchy again. A constitution was accepted in 1848, ending the absolute power of the monarch.

With regards to colonies and slavery, the Dutch Republic (1588-1795) had already managed to trade overseas through amongst others the VOC and WIC. Suriname had been in the hands of the Republic from 1667 until the French time (1795-1813), and the Dutch owned it once again after the English in 1813. The French had actually abolished slavery in all of its colonies in 1794, only to restore it in 1802 to finally abolish it definitely in 1848. England had only abolished slavery in its colonies in 1838. Since Suriname was in the hands of England during the time that the Netherlands was in the hands of French, Surinamers thus never profited from this temporary abolishment. The Netherlands finally abolished slavery in its colonies in 1863 (Rijksmuseum 2012).

5.2 Life story

Members of the Moens family occupied important social positions in the Netherlands. Moens' great-grandparents were already Dutch. Petronella Moens herself was born in Kubaard, near Franeker in the north of the Netherlands, in 1762. She was the second daughter of a preacher man, and she had an older and younger sister. An older brother passed away at a young age. Moens' father, Petrus Moens, was taught by the unorthodox Herman Venema. Venema preached active tolerance, in which one does not only accept that others have different views, but one tries to understand the reasons for these views. This religious and progressive background would influence Petronella Moens' contacts and works (Captain 2012, Hagen 2014, Veltman-van den Bos 2000).

Petrus Moens was married to Petronella's mother Maria Lyklama à Nijeholt, who was born in Franeker in 1732. When Moens was two years old, the whole family moved to Aardenburg in Zeeuws-Vlaanderen. At the age of four, Moens became blind or at the very least visually impaired after an attack of smallpox. Her mother had passed away previously in that year (1766). According to Veltman-van den Bos (2000), Moens' zest for life returned with the help of her family and her love for animals, enabling an as normal as possible childhood for the studious Moens. Moens' father taught her by reading Dutch works aloud. It

was around 1782 that her poems became too large for Moens to create through handiwork. Therefore, her two sisters, and later a female secretary, helped her in her career as a writer. Moens never married, even though she saw it as a woman's duty to be a mother and raise and educate (Captain 2012, Hagen 2014, Veltman-van den Bos 2000). That she did not marry means she had more time to concentrate on her ideas and works

Not only her family, but also her personal and literary friends, and her contacts at literary societies, rhetoricians and freemasonry, were of importance to Moens' life. Moens' connections across the country are reflected in her 'vriendenrol', an album in which friends and families wrote. Amongst them were clergymen, persons from the literary world, civil servants and men of learning (Veltman-van den Bos 2000, Veltman-van den Bos and de Vet 2009). Moens might not have been able to see (well), but due to her remarkable memory and perseverance she was able to dictate her works including novels, poems, plays and articles. Her works were acknowledged and celebrated. Moens became a member of a range of literary societies and rhetoricians, where ideas, interpreters and public came together. These societies often had middle-class, freemasonry members (Mijnhardt 1987 (in Veltman-van den Bos 2000). A religious interest in physics was rather popular in these societies, which is also reflected in Moens' work (Moens 1797, 1816, 1817, 1826).

Veltman-van den Bos researched the reception of Moens' work. She concluded that Moens' reception in her own time was mixed. As said, Moens was acknowledged and celebrated. She was seen as a valuable member of the community. However, some also criticized her exaggerated metaphorical language and her children's books. Her subjects tended to put social use in the first place, meaning that utility of the material was put before anything else (like style). According to Veltman-van den Bos (2000), in her lifetime, the popularity of Moens work stemmed mostly from her personality and her ability to make friends, thus from love, compassion and admiration. Moens' work was then celebrated, but she was far from being rich in the last years of her life. She passed away at the age of eighty years old, in Utrecht (Netherlands). Veltman-van den Bos argues that after her death, her works were soon forgotten for a while. In the last decades of the previous century, she became a matter of interest again for students of culture, history, education, sociology and gender (Veltman-van den Bos 2000).

5.3 Politics, Christianity, and gender

Paragraph one of this chapter has shown the turbulent times Moens lived in. Moens herself published her political ideas in many works over a larger period of time. As was not

uncommon, her political alliances changed over time. During the Bataafse Revolution, Moens was a patriot, on the side against the Stadhouder who she had once before hailed in a poem (1785). She blamed the economic situation and (supposed) moral decay on the Stadhouder and his followers. She argued for enlightened ideas such as freedom of press, equality and brotherhood. Equality in her point of view, was not a synonym for sameness. The equality Moens advocated thus meant equality as opposed to inequality, rather than equality in the sense that everyone was the same and there were no differences. Moens felt that people (men and women, whites and blacks, Christians and people from other religions, class) should have their own place, and social standing, in a society. Acknowledging differences between for example men and women (like difference feminism as opposed to equality feminism does), and social classes then becomes necessary to achieve such equality. Moens states on this subject:

> 'Bestond de geheele maatschappij uit geleerden, uit wijsgeeren of beoefenaars van hooge wetenschappen, wie zoude dan onze huizen bouwen, onze kleeding vervaardigen en in duizend andere behoeften voorzien? (1835: Betoog 4, p61)

This perception of all human beings being 'naturally equal', yet not all being as developed as Europeans was not uncommon in Enlightenment thought. Stuurman (2010) shows how Enlightened thinkers often proclaimed a universalistic notion of the 'natural equality' of all humans, while at the same time establishing a 'global pedagogical authority of the "enlightened" over those who had not yet seen the light' (2010:5). The enlightened were hereby Europeans, and Europe was seen as the most advanced, albeit not necessarily the most virtuous, stage of world history. History was thus envisioned as a progression through time, with enlightened thought as the most advanced outcome.

In line with this supposed superiority of enlightenment, Moens also first celebrated France, their revolution and even Napoleon Bonaparte himself.

> 'Doet Bonaparte elks hart van vreugde en wellust kloppen' (Moens 1802:66).

Yet after her work *Bespiegelingen over Europa* (1802), Moens did not publish on political events for a period of over nine years (Veltman-van den Bos 2000). She wrote the novel *Aardenburg* in this period of time, on which I will later expand about. In 1813, Moens celebrated the defeat of France and once again supported the house of Oranje, this time King Willem I, son of Willem V.

While she was thus politically multifaceted, Moens herself claimed that:

> 'Geene hatelijke partijschap zal ooit mijn geschrijf ontheiligen' (1798).

The ‘partijschap’ hereby refers to different ideologies within the group of patriots, which she thus vowed not to write hateful things about. Moens thus did not support one specific political leader within the group, but rather chose for a humane and Christian ideal. She advocated central control with God as a leading power for the building of a new state (Moens 1798, Veltman-van den Bos 2000). Her ideas seem somewhat contradictory with regards to state and religion. She argued for separation of state and church, stating that when justice and love for one’s neighbour are brought into practice by all, that it should be enough for a society to function properly.

> ‘Ik wil alleen zeggen, dat, op rechtvaardigheid en menschenliefde, die den inhoud der geheele christelijke zedenleer uitmaken, eene geode Staatsregeling kan gegrond worden en dat de Jood en Mahomedaan, wanneer zij rechtvaardigheid en menschenliefde beoefenen, goede nuttige burgers kunnen zijn, schoon zij noch den naam, noch de zielbevredigende genoegens der waare Christen bezitten’ (Moens 1798).

So, according to Moens, Jews and muslims can be good citizens even though they are not true Christians. The separation of state and church was for Moens not the same as the separation between society and religion. And according to Moens, for a society to be functioning properly, religion in society had to be stimulated by the state. A simple national religion stimulating justice and love for one’s neighbour was the answer for her. ‘een verbeterd, verlicht, of een geheel hervormd volk is waarlijk godsdienstig’ (Moens 1796). On the one hand, Moens thus seems to advocate separation of state and church, and equality and acceptance for all, while on the other hand she wants the state to stimulate what she feels is the core of the rightful religion, namely justice and love for one’s neighbour. Moens seems to find those values basic and universal, much more important than rules which specific ideologies within Christianity created, and eventually what will spread Christianity throughout society (Veltman-van den Bos 2000).

Christianity actually seeped through all of Moens’ work, it was fundamental for her life and opinions. Moens attempts to motivate people’s life choices through showing how, according to her, a good Christian would behave. Her family background, like her father’s unorthodox teacher Venema, and her friendship with a range of preachers from diverse ideologies are undoubtedly connected to this. Not only did she visit the Reformed Church, which she and her family belonged to, she also attended Baptist and Lutheran ceremonies. Her ideas were rather tolerant, especially for that point in time, but they were also contradicting. The active tolerance that Venema taught her father and by extension Moens,

had its limits for her. Her works were free of anti-Semitism and she argued against racist sentiments regarding blacks. Yet, she lacked sympathy for the Roman Catholic Church, Muslims and Turks (Veltman-van den Bos 2000). While being forward thinking on some subjects, liberté, égalité et fraternité did thus not extend to all groups in life. While her political alliances changed over time, her idea of what she felt to be the core of Christianity was never open to discussion.

Christianity also showed in Moens' specific interest in writing for her female compatriots around 1830, as can be seen in 'legaat aan mijne vrouwelijke landgenooten (1829)' and 'Dagboek voor mijne vrouwelijke landgenooten (1826-1831)'. She mostly focused on the role she thought women should have as mother and educator. She wrote on a wide range of pedagogical subjects. She had little respect for women who had no interest in business of home and hearth. This did not mean that she felt, like many others did, that women should only learn about the household and upbringing. Her progressive thinking led Moens to believe that women should also have knowledge and social insight, that they should read books and papers. However, women should do so to the end of becoming good companions for their husbands. Uneducated, immoral women would namely be a bad influence on (strong) men (Moens in Veltman-van den Bos en de Vet 2001). Once again, while progressive, thus not infinitely tolerant. Moens clearly saw different roles for men and women, wherein equality as opposed to inequality would be achieved through acknowledging and living these differences. It is unclear why Moens never married herself.

Aside from Christian morals and different virtues for men and women, Moens also promoted better upbringing, healthier foods, airier clothing, suffrage for women and a better justice system through better prisons and just verdicts. Upbringing, in her opinion, should always be in the light of utility and usefulness, as many enlightened thinkers advocated. (Captain 2012, Veltman-van den Bos 2000, Veltman-van den Bos en de Vet 2009 en Moens).

5.4 Role in slavery

Moens was an abolitionist (Moens 1790-1792, 1797, 1816 Euphoria, 1817). As can be seen from the dates, she repeatedly and over a longer period of time occupied herself with the subjects. It is unclear to me whether she published in the magazine most prominent in the abolition movement in the Netherlands, namely the magazine created by De Maatschappij ter Bevordering van de Afschaffing van de Slavernij. Amongst the Dutch literati against slavery, her gender was not uncommon (Veltman-van den Bos 2000). Such writings and their following influence were thus not limited to men. However, her citizenship, education and

opportunity to write and publish were typical characteristics of published writers on the subject, since almost all who published were freeborn, white, educated people. Moens' arguments against slavery contained a clear religious component, as well as a certain lack of negative, discriminating racial stereotypes.

Moens wrote a poem called 'Bij het afschaffen van den slaavenhandel door de Fransche Natie' [Upon the abolition of slavery by the French nation] in 1797. The poem talks of the French nation, because of the political situation in 'the Netherlands' as explained before. Moens was at this point in time still looking at France as a place of positive and enlightened ideas. As a reminder, the French had abolished slavery between 1794 and 1802.

Mijn God! Ik vind geen woorden,
Die mijn gedachten schildren.
De menschheid is veradeld;
De vrije Fransche Natie,
Verbreekt der slaaven keten;
zij noemt verdrukte Negers,
Haar vrijgebooren broeders.-
De menschheid is veradeld;
Zij wringt gevloekte boeien,
Van langgekromde halzen.
Ik zing voor u, ô Godheid!
Met stervend stof omkleed.
[Moens 1797].

Through this poem I find the Christian and enlightened ideas of Moens clearly reflected. The poem reminds of a hymn, praising God. God is called upon and honoured. Moens states that humans are 'veradeld', that they have become noble by freeing enslaved and seeing them as brothers. An interesting phrase for Moens, since she rebelled against the nobility as a patriot. Important to know here is that Moens argued mostly against the power gained by birth right of nobility, of being seen as noble without earning it (Moens 1794).

> 'Gij, die gelykheid in een valschen zin vereerd, Leert waaren adelstand van trotsheid onderscheiden. Elk is, als mensch geluk; maar hy wie deugd waardeert En 't oplkaard verstand door oefening uit wil breiden, Die groote ziel heeft roem by God en mensch verdiend, Zelfs 't laatste nakroost eert in hem der engelen vriend (Moens 1794:313)

In the poem on the French nation, Moens finds the abolishment of slavery to be an act worthy of being seen as noble in the eyes of God. The enslaved should, according to her, be seen as

equals worthy of brotherhood. This still does not mean that they were the same as other races, yet, as I argue later, Moens felt they had the capacities to become 'more developed'. Christianity, knowledge of the situation of slavery, education and opportunity to dictate and publish come together here for Moens.

The novel *Aardenburg, of de onbekende volksplanting in Zuid-Amerika* [Aardenburg, or the unknown settlement in South-America] was written by Moens in 1817. It is an exotic, utopian story in which white, black and brown people live together in harmony and slaves are bought free. In the story there are two Dutch men who start their own plantation in South-America. They reluctantly become master enslavers, since they needed workers to ensure their livelihood. '… Noodzakelijk door aankoop van een aantal negers tot het beoefenen van de landbouw en het aanvangen van de bepaalde huishouding voorzien. Met een onverwinnelijke afkeer van mensenhandel werd deze gewichtige taak volbracht' (Moens in Veltman-van den Bos en de Vet 2001:72). They were repulsed by the custom, and they specifically chose to buy those who were unwanted by others because of their resistance or sadness, or because they seemed to be noble souls the master enslavers, who judged them by their appearance, to be touched by God or to being capable of becoming a good (read Christian) person. The first group turns out to be a 'good investment' for the master enslavers, since their humanitarian behaviour ensures peaceful coexistence and hard work from the enslaved. These master enslavers want to learn from and teach the enslaved. They promise the enslaved to reward hard work and moral behaviour with material goods, education and ultimately freedom. This Christian attitude without self-serving interests from the Dutch even encourage the black twelve-year-old Almart to protest against negative stereotypes of whites existing in his native Gambia:

> 'Ach, mijn vader zegt dat de blanken vreselijk boos zijn, en het bloed van de arme negers drinken. Laat mij heen gaan en hem zeggen dat gij goed zijt. Ik zal hem hier bij u brengen, ook Lada, Mana en haar moeder. Wij zullen u allen dienen, totdat ik vrij ben, of zo lang het ons hier lust. Adolf deed de knaap oprijzen, en beloofde hem met het eerste schip naar Afrika te zenden, want hij wilde, door vertrouwen en goedheid, de trouwhartige liefde van de jonge neger waardig zijn (Moens in Veltman-van den Bos en Vet 2001:76).

The boy not only wishes to set the record straight against such negative stereotypes, especially since it was a Moor who captured him in the first place, but he also wishes to take his loved ones with him to work for the master enslavers until he can buy himself free. That he was taken by a black person seems to be an attempt from Moens to put white people in a more

positive light. Mutual faith ensures that the boy and his family indeed come back, thereby disproving some Catholic Spanish traders, who had earlier declared the master enslavers for fools. This was an obvious sneer to the Spanish, who the Dutch had been at war with, which also included a religious conflict. Nationalism and religion trump tolerance here.

The rightful Christian ideal, according to Moens, thus encouraged a better situation for all. By treating others with some respect the master enslavers thus benefit, as well as other whites might. This is thus the political ideal of Moens that I described before as well. Seeing people as equal, but not the same, and having everyone practice the core ideals of Christianity as described by Moens, would ensure a healthy, positive society with the possibility of becoming a close to perfect society. Not a communist society thus, since there were still different social classes and private ownership. The question can be raised whether on moral grounds, one even needs to look further than the fact that the master enslavers felt like they could enslave and own people. Does it even matter what type of master enslaver one is?

Another situation of interest in Aardenburg, in which Moens once again celebrates Christianity and educationfor women, is the marriage between white European male Stotgart and the black female Gurma out of love(Moens in Veltman-van den Bos en de Vet 2001:80). So here we see a marriage between a white male and black woman, which Elisabeth Samson had fought so hard for. Gurma is not portrayed as the strong, independent Samson was however. Stotgart had manumitted Gurma and teaches her about God, love and useful subjects. She thus becomes the perfect female, raising their son and being a good partner for her husband. Having those values are once again more important to Moens than race.

The situation in the novel was not yet her ideal outcome, since principally, Moens was against slavery. However, she deemed it acceptable in practice as a temporary situation. Eventually slavery had to be abolished, but good colonists and master enslavers could create a better situation for all and spread Christianity. This was not an uncommon argument for the Dutch abolitionists, as could be seen from discussions surrounding the emancipation debate (Klinkers 1997). Moens did still not promote combining state and church, but argued for simply justice and love for one’s neighbour being promoted and leading for society. I can only wonder how justice and love for one’s neighbour could be seen as embraced in a situation of slavery. For Moens, humanitarian ideas of education and religious ideals of baptism meant that enslaved could enter in Christian society. Economic and other beneficial aspects to enslavers of slavery were not considered unimportant by Moens either, yet in the end of the argument she felt that it would be better to abolish slavery altogether.

This was fuelled by Moens' ideas of equality, and her conviction that black people ultimately had the same rights as whites. Emancipation of blacks in terms of values according to Moens seems to be a condition for 'being given' these rights. Whites might have found themselves superior, but Moens found that blacks had the same capacities. So blacks were not inherently inferior, non-whites weren't horrible creatures, and through social climbing blacks could reach higher potentials. Moens saw black skin as a consequence of climate and she still considered them 'normal people' (1817(:118)). Skin colour was thus not considered a biological fact by Moens. Perhaps Moens´ lack of sight had influenced her opinion towards the equality of all regardless of skin colour. In ´essence´ people of all ´races´ are thus the same according to Moens, but Europeans were more enlightened and knowledgeable, and more importantly, morally better Christians.

5.5 Conclusion

Moens was a progressive, social, Dutch, Christian, white, female, (almost) blind writer in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. She was one of the rather small amount of public Dutch abolitionists. She was against slavery in principle yet deemed it somewhat acceptable as a temporary situation, in which Christianity could spread when all lived together in harmony through mutual faith and kindness. Her exotic-utopian work Aardenburg shows her view on slavery most clearly. Christian master enslavers herein create the situation in which enslaved can buy themselves free through hard work and good moral behaviour. Christianity thus strongly influenced her view of abolitionism, rather than that she used the bible to justify slavery. Her education, knowledge and involvement in the literary and other social worlds influenced her thoughts on slavery as well, as can be seen from her work. Her abolitionist point of view also ties in with her ideas on race and equality in right and capacity, albeit not yet fulfilled capacities. Perhaps her loss of sight influenced these rather progressive ideas regarding skin colour as well. Unlike slave traders, Moens put Christian moral behavioural codes and thoughts of equality, as opposed to inequality, before the importance of economic advantages. In terms of axes of difference, this means that Moens seems to give morality and religion more weight than race.

Chapter six: connecting

Introduction

In this chapter I will show how the previously examined histories of Elisabeth Samson, Maria Du Plessis and Petronella Moens relate to the dominant vision of international and Dutch slave trade. I will hereby discuss the deconstructed power relations and how they portray a more complex situation than prevailing stereotypical dichotomies. I will do so by focussing on slave owners in the first paragraph, on slaves in the second paragraph and abolitionists in the third paragraph.

6.1 Slave owners as white, male, European perpetrators

The stereotypical view in historical and popular cultural memory of slave owners regarding chattel slavery is that they are white European men. Often seen as wealthy, and as Christians, since this was the dominant religion in European societies in those times. Europe was seen as the location of ideas and the destination of produced goods, while Africa was the place where people became captured to become enslaved in the Caribbean and the Americas, owned by whites (Williams 1994). Europeans were backed by their countries through which slavery could become an economic, social and cultural system across countries (Nimako and Willemsen 2011). With its ties to state formation it can be said that ideas of freedom and citizenship generally affected slavery in such a way that European citizens became freer, and they felt that they had gained the right and freedom to enslave others. Non-Europeans in turn became less free, freedom for them might have meant 'finding a place to call home without being hunted, dehumanized and humiliated' (Nimako and Willemsen 2011:5).

Seen in this way, as described in chapter two as well, it can thus be said that slave-owners are seen in main stream academic and popular discussion as white European perpetrators, who enslaved black victims and who became wealthier and powerful at the cost of the defenceless enslaved. However, the stories of Elisabeth Samson and Maria Susanna Du Plessis tell another story. Here we see the stories of two female slave owners. Samson was born a free black woman, and with the help of her business skills she gained more material wealth and managed to get official permission for marrying a white male. She actively pushed to move up in her social class. Even though Samson lived in concubine and later married, the enslaved were 'her personal property'. Samson's brother even owned his mother and sister as enslaved for a while. Samson was thus black, but not a victim enslaved by Europeans. As a woman from Suriname, daughter of a manumitted slave, she was also able to handle her own business affairs and make profits from them. It was actually not uncommon that master

enslavers were not white and Samson's story exemplifies this (Vrij 2013). Samson's life also exemplifies how gender and sexuality were characteristics often co-creating each other in situations in which they would influence one's social position. An unmarried woman was scandalous, yet a black woman marrying a white man was very difficult to arrange.

Maria Susanna Du Plessis' life story is one of many rumours and doubtful information. She was a wealthy female master enslaver. It is unclear whether she was white or coloured, which is interesting in the light of the importance of race for the dichotomy in the stereotypical story of slavery. Perhaps she was white and the lack of mentioning her skin tone is only a sign of assumed white superiority, wherein white is thus the unmarked category (Chandler 1995), Or maybe she was coloured and this is not mentioned because now it is easier to place her as white perpetrator in Surinamese cultural memory where she is actively remembered. Whatever was true or false about the stories, she was definitely a woman accused on grounds relating to her gender and sexuality, the jealous irrational woman. Her wealth and social position (and lack of proof possibly due to innocence on the things she was accused of) assured her protection from the law.

Samson's and Du Plessis' stories show that the stereotypical image of white (male) perpetrator versus black victim, often feminised, is not the only reality and thus a dualism that needs to be broken through. I do not wish to imply that there were no cruel white European male slave owners or that they were not amongst the wealthiest and most powerful, nor that slavery itself was not filled with horrors. I merely wish to show a more complex picture and indicate that having certain characteristics does not strip ones agency away or directly fixes ones position.

6.2 Slaves as black feminised victims

The stereotypical image of slaves can be considered the opposite of the European white male enslavers, namely black African victims who became enslaved. They are often feminised as well. Black in this stereotype as opposed to white does here thus not take 'coloured' into account. Race and the distinctions between white, coloured and black were important for the Dutch social system, yet the categories of being coloured barely has a place in main stream international debate.

Enlightened concepts such as freedom were not considered universally applicable by most Europeans. Equality was not for all (Tang 2013). Dehumanisation was a way in which slavery was justified by Europeans. Blacks were seen as subhuman, less evolved. They were stereotypically thought of as pagans and as cruel and sexually promiscuous. It was assumed

that they had no work ethic. European dominance thus led to the concept of the superiority of the European man. Racism was sanctioned by state power and violence. That the law itself was not as racist at all times shows from Samson's story.

Stories of manumission and being free-born are examples of how not all blacks were enslaved, and how black people were even master enslavers themselves. Manumission itself also shows that there is a process, being enslaved or free is not a fixed identity. Elisabeth Samson for example, a free born black woman, was the daughter of a woman who was manumitted by her son, who thus owned their mother himself. Elisabeth Samson grew up to own slaves herself as well. The same goes for coloured people. Many were enslaved themselves, while others enjoyed protection and higher social statuses, though never equal to whites. The mere existence of coloured people, results for white and black intermixing, troubles the racist prejudices and supposed distinctions. By blurring the lines, coloured people disprove the supposed dichotomy by themselves. This is only strengthened by my deconstruction through showing different power relations.

6.3 Abolitionists

Throughout the world, the abolition of slavery came about in various ways: through revolution (Haiti, 1804), through legislation (British colonies, 1838; Dutch colonies, 1863) or through civil war (United States of America, 1865) (Nimako and Willemsen 2011). Enslaved revolted both actively and passively, thereby probing power balances and forcing change (Tang 2013, Plet 2013). As said above, slave trade was abolished in the Netherlands in 1814 and slavery in 1863. This is relatively late. The Netherlands never had a mass movement against slavery, like for example Great Britain had. There was only a small number of people active in the debate, or non-debate, in the Netherlands (Nimako and Willemsen 2011). 'De Maatschappij ter Bevordering van de Afschaffing van de Slavernij' [the Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery] was founded in 1840, yet without royal approval (Tang 2013). The limited abolitionist movement did however have an influence on the parliament (Heijer 2013). In Suriname king Willem III was represented as a hero who abolished slavery, but the Netherlands was actually pressured by Great Britain at the end of the Napoleon wars (Oostindie 1997). International pressure, resistance from enslaved, and a lack of a larger economical profit thus ensured the bill for abolition pushed through.

I discussed some of the racial views that Europeans including the Dutch had of the enslaved. It was thought that the enslaved in Suriname were lazy from origin and that they did not need much to survive. It was popular opinion that if freedom would be given without

guidance that they would not want to work, that they would we unproductive and withdraw from civilisation. In order to prevent that, the Dutch set up the system wherein previously enslaved were obliged to have a ten-year-contract, often at the same plantation (Daalder, Tang and Balai 2013, Oostindie 1997). They would get paid now, but also had to take care of their selves, leaving them with barely enough economic means to get by and no real political rights.

Through the life and works of Petronella Moens we can state that not all white Europeans believed in the racists' stereotypes as described above. She felt that skin colour was simply a consequence of climates. For Moens, Christian ideals and morals dictated that slavery should be abolished. However, she felt it to be acceptable as a temporary situation when the ´good moral behaviour´ of enslavers would educate and convert the enslaved, which would finally lead to the ability of living free and together in harmony. Unlike slave traders, Moens put Christian moral behavioural codes and thoughts of equality, as opposed to inequality, before the importance of economic advantage. Her acceptance of slavery as a temporary situation was somewhat in accordance with the desire from the Dutch for the idea of emancipation rather than only official abolishment of slavery.

An interesting detail in Moens' story is that she argued for motherhood for women, while she herself never married or became a woman. Neither did Samson nor Du Plessis. The fact that they did not have children likely gave them more possibilities as business women and a writer. Having children probably would have limited their agency, compromising their positions.

6.4 Conclusion

The stories of Samson, Du Plessis and Moens thus show how dichotomies prevailing in mainstream debate of slavery, so far as there is debate in the Netherlands, need to be complicated. Slavery was full of horrors. But it was not simply white European men against black victims. Women were involved and should be included on both sides. Gender and sexuality were characteristics often co-creating each other in situations in which they would influence one's social position. Race was not as strictly separated and as decisive of positions as it is often portrayed as. Race influenced one's social position, yet wealth often seemed just as influential. As well as whether someone was born free, born an enslaved or manumitted. Christianity as a religion inspired high esteem of practitioners, yet regarding slavery the religion could be interpreted as supporting any argument for or against any type of slavery.

Looking forward

I have shown through analysing the stories of Elisabeth Samson, Maria Susanna Du Plessis and Petronella Moens that power relations differ in various situations, and that slavery cannot simply be seen as white males enslaving black people. In reality the situation was much more complex, though not less horrific. Intersectionality has proven to be an important method in deconstructing this dichotomy. Foucault coined the term dividing practices, showing how people are made sub/objects through categorisation and hierarchies within these categories. My discussion of the stories of Samson, Du Plessis and Moens show how deconstructing these power relations through intersectionality expose the simplicity of the stereotypical dichotomy and how the situation can be seen as more complex.

The various partial histories of my cases and the ways in which they connect to and complement each other also tells us something about the postcolonial present. It tells about the places there are and the people in it, about the inequalities and the desires for emancipation, about the necessity for reflecting on the past. It should be noted that emancipation as a process, as a legacy of slavery, is still unfinished. Commemoration of the abolishment in slavery is still dealt with very differently in the Netherlands, Suriname and the Antilles. Both in the public domain and the collective memory of Dutch society, slavery often remains a non-issue (Heijer 2013, Nimako, Adbou and Willemsen 2014). Nimako and Willemsen coin the term parallel histories and intertwining belonging for describing the situation regarding the history of Dutch slavery (2011). It basically refers to the idea that people in the same space have different memories. These memories influence how people see their (national) identity (Assmann 1995, Anderson 2006). For the Afro-Dutch community the legacy of slavery is an issue on their minds, as seen by their efforts to put in on the political agenda, while for the dominating part of Dutch society it seems not be a point of interest.

That it is often not a mainstream discussion does not mean that slavery is not intertwined with the demographic composition of Dutch society, memory, belonging and taste nowadays (Nimako, Abdou and Willemsen 2014:48).Nimako, Abdou and Willemsen argue that both slavery and racism are ‘founded on social and power relations, structures and institutions’, and that these social formations influence how slavery is commemorated (2014). While the Afro-Dutch community in the Netherlands attempts to put the Dutch slavery legacy on the political agenda, by for example a slavery monument and institute, and a place in the historical and cultural canon, it is not yet accepted by the dominant conceptual framework in a significant manner (Nimako, Abdou and Willemsen 2014:48). A framework that is in need of not only more attention and memorisation, but also in need of a more complex reality and

integration of multiple sides of history. With this work I hope to have made a small contribution to this cause.

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