

The Foreign Crave: The Afro-Atlantic presence in 17th-Century Netherlandish paintings, 1600-1700

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Summary

This research topic pays close attention to the representation of Afro-Atlantic individuals with a focus on 17th century Dutch painting. I believe that researching the subject of Africans, and the way they were depicted in Early Modern Art would be fruitful, as it helps give a more accurate image of the way Africans were perceived by 17th century Dutch locals, and in more general, Europeans as a whole. This research aimed to investigate the way these individuals were presented by 17th century Dutch artists rather than what was written in records or archival documents. This is because researching the topic this way gives us more personal information that is not directly or clearly revealed in records or papers.

For this research we ask: How do Afro-Atlantic individuals function amongst other commodities in portraiture, genre painting, and history painting? Creating a catalogue of over sixty 17th century Dutch paintings, and separated by their theme/specialization, the thesis will address this research question by analysing formal and meaningful elements of four different categories: Afro-Atlantic individuals as servants, and page boys, Afro-Atlantic in genre painting, Afro-Atlantic as protagonists in portraiture, Afro-Atlantic in History painting.

This research has led to several conclusions partially based on each category that was focused on. Firstly, depicting African individuals alongside the assortment of objects in many of the compositions, overall convey a noticeably foreign image/identity, which the Dutch are fascinated by. This explains the common pairing of Afro-Atlantic individuals with the foreign parrot from South America, the umbrella from India, and porcelain from China. Another conclusion identified was that there normally was a hierarchy between two figures. The African individual, in most cases, was occasionally depicted as the servant to a white, Dutch male or female sitter. This leads me to believe that a key reason Dutch artists depicted an African figure as an inferior servant was to enhance the beauty and/or wealth of the sitter, the protagonist in the painting. A separate reason for this pairing may have been because of an artistic interest to depict the contrast of the white sitter, and African servant's skin.

Chapter 1

Introduction:

For my last written assignment I chose to research and discuss the history of the presence and migration of Africans in the Netherlands (specifically Amsterdam), as well as their involvement in Dutch daily life, and more importantly, how they were perceived by the majority of the Dutch community. This research resulted in the intriguing conclusion that there was, in fact, an African community in Amsterdam that participated in Dutch daily-life, that both celebrated and attended marriages, and had families. Having covered the socio-historical aspects of the Afro-Atlantic population's presence, growth and expansion in the Netherlands, I was driven to further research the way they were represented and depicted in Dutch painting. This is because I believe that it would result in a more accurate understanding of the way they were perceived more generally in Dutch society.

Research question:

How do Afro-Atlantic individuals function amongst other commodities in portraiture, genre painting, and history painting in the seventeenth century low Countries?

This thesis will address this question by analysing formal and meaningful elements of four categories of painting:

1. Representations of Afro-Atlantic individuals as servants, and page boys
2. Representations of Afro-Atlantic individuals in genre painting
3. Representations of Afro-Atlantic individuals as protagonists in portraiture
4. Representations of Afro-Atlantic individuals in History painting

Historiography:

Although this subject had only been introduced less than two decades ago, the subject of the African presence in 17th century Dutch art has now been largely discussed and evolved by authors across Europe, making the subject fairly popular over this decade. We will now see how authors within the past two decades have addressed Africans in 17th century Dutch portraiture. This chapter will discuss scholarship tied to the presence of Africans in the Netherlands through the 17th century as well as their meaning and status in an array of portraits. There are two separate categories in which this subject is discussed, first is the African presence in Dutch painting, and second is the socio-historical aspects of the African presence in 17th century Netherlands.

Gina Jamie Wouters's Master's Thesis *Exploitable Commodities: The Representation of Blacks in Netherlandish Still-life Paintings* (2005) is one of the initial secondary written sources that discusses African figures in Dutch painting, particularly, still-life. In this Masters thesis, Wouters discusses the various 'types' of still-life, and the presence of African figures in these different 'types'. Wouters concluded that there was a pictorial tradition of incorporating African individuals in Dutch still-life painting; African figures were included in compositions either as a decorative, didactic, or symbolic element. This thesis was supervised by Dr. Elinoor Bergvelt and Elmer Kolfin of the University of Amsterdam, the latter now a founding author of the field.

One of the initial authors to have discussed, analysed and investigated the presence of Africans in Dutch painting was Elizabeth Mcgrath. In her article "Jacob Jordaens and Moses' Ethiopian wife", (2007) which featured in the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld institutes*, Mcgrath discusses the scene in Antwerp as well as the image of Africans in artists from Antwerp with regards to Jacob Jordaens. In this article, the emphasis is placed on Jordaens' *Moses and his Ethiopian wife*, a painting located in the Rubenshuis in Antwerp. Mcgrath discusses the symbolic meaning of the Ethiopian wife given by Jordaens as well as his interest in the biblical story, as well as his motivation for the creation of the piece. In this article, Mcgrath confirms that there was an pictorial interest in the pairing of Moses and his Ethiopian

wife in Calvinist Netherlands, and that Jordaens' subject matter was copied and imitated by Dutch artists later on in the century.

Elmer Kolfin was another one of the other initial authors of the field, as he has written various articles concerning the subject of Africans in 17th century Netherlands. In 2008, Kolfin co-edited and authored, with Esther Schreuder, *Black is Beautiful: Rubens to Dumas*, a catalogue that focuses on the presence of Afro-Atlantic persons in Dutch art with an emphasis on Southern Netherlandish artist Paul-Peter Rubens. In this article Kolfin discusses works associated with the exhibition held in De Nieuwe Kerk, Amsterdam also 2008. In Kolfin's article "Rembrandt's Africans" made 2010, which featured in David Bindman's volume *The Image of the Black in Western art*, Kolfin discusses the presence of Afro-Atlantic individuals in Dutch history paintings, with an emphasis on Rembrandt and his history pieces. Additionally, Elmer Kolfin was one of the authors of *Black in Rembrandt's Time* a catalogue to the Rembrandthuis' exhibition that ran from March through May 2020. Alongside Kolfin, Stephanie Archangel, Mark Ponte and Epcó Runia all collaborated for this catalogue. Both the catalogue and the exhibition investigate the presence of Africans in Dutch art, as well as a presence of a small African community in Amsterdam.

Throughout the decade there has been a popularity in the subject of Africans in Dutch art, alongside however, a multitude of authors have discussed the socio-historical aspects of the Afro-Atlantic community in Amsterdam, as well as other areas in the Netherlands. Academic historian Allison Blakely, for example, discusses Dutch history as well as Dutch (racial) attitudes such as 'the noble savage' and 'moor', and the development of these images throughout the modern era. *Revealing the African Presence* (2013) is another catalogue to an exhibition held in the Walters art Museum in 2012. This catalogue discusses the migration of Africans as well as their growing population in Western Europe. The exhibition sheds light on the role of Africans in Western Europe as well as their presence in both European society and art throughout the modern era. The last two chapters of this catalogue focuses on African men and women that were free in Renaissance Europe, as well as representations of African elite such as African ambassadors and rulers. The catalogue has an emphasis on revealing ways in which Africans were

accepted in European countries, and revealing cases in which they were represented with praise and nobility by Europeans, more specifically the Dutch.

Dienke Hondius sheds light on the migration of Africans to the Netherlands in *Slavery Heritage Guide to the Netherlands* (2014). This source has a special focus on migrants moving to Amsterdam, and highlights the connection between the trade of slaves and their presence in the city. The *Slavery Heritage Guide to the Netherlands* is a fruitful academic book that lets us know the specific locations in Amsterdam are directly/indirectly connected to the slave trade, and slave history. The source works as a guide regarding information on the African community in the Netherlands, specifically Amsterdam. Hondius doesn't make any theoretical conclusions, rather, most of what is written in the guide is based on archival documents and records.

Mark Ponte is a historian who focuses on the African community in Amsterdam, as well as evidence of the daily activities the community participated in the city. In his article, "An Afro-Dutch Community in Seventeenth Century Amsterdam" (2014), Ponte uses an array of archival documents as evidence for some of the activities the Afro-Dutch community participated in. Ponte found that there were marriages within the community, but at the same time they participated in marriages. Ponte believes that the community was a significant part in Dutch 17th century society, and archival sources, and records justify this. Ponte recorded more of these findings in his section in *Black in Rembrandts Time* (2020), giving more cases in which the community participated in daily activities as well as some evidence shown by Dutch painting, and prints. Ponte's conclusion is that there was a certain type of acceptance by the Dutch towards the African community that lived in Amsterdam, which has been backed up by records and archival documents. Both Hondius and Ponte's sources rely heavily on archival sources for their conclusions, both of which confirm that there was an Afro-Atlantic community in the Netherlands who participated in daily-life activities.

Theoretical framework:

There are ongoing discussions as to the appropriate terms to give to figures to be discussed. For example the word ‘slave’ was found to be highly inappropriate, this is because nobody is ever born a slave, people at this time were made slaves. In this case, the appropriate term should be ‘enslaved’. Similarly, there have been varying opinions on what the most appropriate term is for figures to be discussed in paintings from the catalogue. The term ‘moor’ for example is one that is derogatory, and will be refrained from being used in this paper. Even though the term black may be viable, it is one that does not address the roots of the individuals discussed. In her thesis Gina Wouters mentioned that it was most common for the Dutch to have painted real African models for the paintings and portraits. This research study will therefore use the term African or Afro-Atlantic as it is both politically correct, and appropriately defines their origin.

There are some terms and concepts frequently used in the field that need further description and discussion. Some of these concepts were used regularly in Gina Wouters thesis “Exploitable Commodities” written fifteen years ago. In her thesis Wouters gives a clear description of exotic and exoticism, especially as a stereotype used in the field. Wouters associates the term exotic with Africans, “it is the wild and primitive side of inhabitants of this continent that enhance their exotic connotations ... However, the enormous Dutch interest in aspects of cultures other than European during the seventeenth-century ... strengthens the need to devote a specific section to this very aspect linked to Africans”.¹ Wouters states that, along with the “luxury articles such as exotic animals or a rarities cabinet with valuable jewels ... blacks were regarded more as sort of exotic phenomenon as opposed to their general association with the wild”.² This research paper infrequently uses this term, taking into account that it is a European term that defines materials, products, behavior and culture outside of Europe.

Additionally, there are some other terms used in this research paper that need further explanation. Genre or genre painting for example is not only used frequently, but was noted as its own chapter for this

¹ Gina Wouters, “Exploitable Commodities: The Representation of Blacks in Netherlandish Still-Life Paintings, 1640-1720”, (RMA thesis: University of Amsterdam, 2005), 78-79.

² Wouters, 79.

research. An accurate description of this specialization is therefore needed in order to correctly classify and categorize the paintings chosen for the catalogue. Genre painting can be categorized as scenes that illustrate people engaged in common activities, or rather a group with no identity attached individually or collectively engaging in activities of daily, everyday life. The difference between a genre and a still-life piece is that still-life has an emphasis on the commonplace objects rather than the people.

A *tronie* is a frequently used term in this research paper, especially used regularly in the fourth chapter where African figures were portrayed as sitters. Although a difficult term to describe, I would define *tronie* as a painting similar to characters depicted in history painting. The way this paper would describe *tronie* is; a painting that often depicts an anonymous sitter, with either exaggerated facial expression or specific historical/identifiable costume. Though it may have the appearance of a portrait, *tronies* were not intended as portraits.

Methodology:

The catalogue is composed of sixty paintings that incorporate an African/afro atlantic figure either as the main subject of the painting or in contrast, as a subsidiary figure. The temporal/geographical focus of this research will be 17th century Netherlands, this is because of several factors. First and most importantly is that there was a relatively large community of Afro-Atlantic individuals that migrated to the Netherlands, the Slavery Heritage Guide written by Dienke Hondius explains that “a small number of enslaved African ... men and women, or their descendants ended up in the Netherlands during the slave period ... merchants brought them to several European port cities including Amsterdam”.³ Secondly the vast majority of European artworks that have African individuals included in their compositions in the seventeenth century, was Dutch.

All images chosen for this paper, and attached to the appendix were retrieved from RKD.nl. The RKD (or The Netherlands institute for Art History) is a research facility with a collection of pictures of

³ Dienke Hondius, Dineke Stam, Jennifer Tosch, & Nancy Jouwe, *Gids Slavernijverleden Nederland / Slavery Heritage Guide The Netherlands*, (Arnhem: LM Publishers, 2014) 16.

artworks that are both available in digital or analogue form. The website of the RKD acts as a database with a special focus on Early Modern Netherlandish art. Over the past years however, they have focused on broadening their scope to Western European art that ranges from the Early modern world (17th-18th century) to the Late Modern world (19th-20th century). Today, the RKD institute holds the largest art historical library on Western Art from the late Middle Ages to the present, covering not only paintings, drawings and sculpture, but also includes monumental art, modern media, and design.

When making the catalogue, an aim was to gather a selection of paintings that vary in specialization. Using RKD's search engine, I used several keywords that were common in titles of paintings that included an african model. These keywords include: black, african, servant, moor and page. From images related to these keywords, I chose paintings that had the specialization of portraiture and history painting or those that could be considered as part of both, or that lie in between the two specializations. For example in Jan Boekhorst's *Standing Black Woman as the Personification of the Continent of Africa* as well as a *Man in a Cuirass with two Servants* under the monogram JAD, both paintings contain historical elements, the latter most especially seems to depict a historical scene. However both paintings stylistically remain under the category of portraiture as both artists appear to be depicting a sitter. It is important to note that in every profile for a painting in the database there are two separate titles, an original/Dutch title, and an English one. Rather than manually translating the paintings' given title to English, the English title will be used for the catalogue.

The selection of portraits and history paintings were then categorized by type, namely: page boys/servants with present day figures and families, genre scenes, portraits of identifiable African figures, biblical scenes, and classical mythology scenes. To clarify further, paintings categorized as part of 'page boys with present day figures' include family portraits, and portraits of an identifiable figure (master) with his/her servant alongside or in the background. The subsection of genre scenes for this paper will be a category in which an Afro-Atlantic figure is blended into a genre scene. Portraits of identifiable figures is a unique category that can be described as portraits of identifiable African individuals, in which the African individual alone is the main subject of the painting. For Biblical scenes, paintings with the aim of

replicating a scene from the bible were chosen for this category. The two biblical scenes chosen for this category were the Adoration of the kings/magi and the Baptism of the Eunuch. Lastly, classical mythology scenes will be classified by the paintings' association to Greek and Roman stories or parables that include at least one African figure in its composition. The way this research will approach these sources is to have a combination of a careful description and a visual/formal analysis of these sources, as well as a discussion of the iconography and symbolism contained in the paintings.

For this research it is important to take note of Margriet van Eikema Hommes's book on the Discoloration in 15th-17th century oil paintings. Hommes's source scientifically proves that darker colours such as blue and brown, as well as those that included red lake heavily discoloured overtime. Hommes' proven hypothesis must be taken into account, as discoloration may have played a big role in the current 'invisibility' of some of the African figures to be discussed further on in this research. With that being said, it is important to take into account that for some of the paintings featuring Afro-Atlantic figures that are blended into the background (almost invisible), it may not entirely have been the artists doing, and may possibly have been a result of the paints' discoloration.

Along with the formal/visual description of paintings, this research will investigate the iconographic context of certain objects represented in compositions, in order to come to a closer understanding of the object/paintings' meaning. This paper will make use of Panofsky's theory regarding iconology and disguised symbolism, Panofsky believes that everyday motifs and objects could take on symbolic significance, or "iconographic" significance.⁴ What I therefore plan to achieve in terms of the approach is to have a balanced combination of uncovering the iconographic value of objects in a painting, along with their formal/visual analysis. The approach will therefore consist of identifying both the objects and figures in a composition, and further explain and identify their meaning and associations.

⁴ Preziosi, Donald. *The art of art history: A critical anthology*. Oxford University Press, 2009. 225

Impact of the COVID pandemic

There is no question that the COVID-19 crisis had a negative impact on this research. During the progress and completion of this research there has been limited opportunities to visit local archives, libraries, as well as museums. This was a result of the extended lockdown from February through-out May. Books, documents, artworks were therefore limited to what could be retrieved on online libraries and databases. Additionally, this thesis heavily relied on the exhibition *Here: Black in Rembrandt's Time* which was meant to run from the 6th of March until the 31st of May, 2020. Although I was able to visit and record most of the exhibition, museums had closed down less than two weeks after its opening marking the virus' 'first wave'. Ultimately, the pandemic and its growth, hindered research opportunities and made it more difficult for myself and fellow researchers to engage with physical sources, and artworks.

Overview of Chapters

This research paper consists of four chapters each of which cover a specialization. The first chapter will discuss the selection of portraiture of Dutch sitters that also feature an African servant/pageboy. The second chapter is a discussion of genre scenes; paintings of this category consist of African figures as part of the genre composition. The third chapter focuses on history scenes, biblical scenes or classical mythology scenes. Paintings in this chapter consist of interpretations of biblical/historical/mythological narratives such as the Adoration of the Magi, and the Baptism of the Eunuch. The fourth and final chapter is dedicated to portraiture in which the sitter/protagonist of the painting is of African/Afro-Atlantic descent.

Chapter 2: Portraits, African servants, Page boys

There are several explanations for the Netherlands' growth and expansion of African communities, and this is directly related to their trade of slaves. It is important to note that slavery was not legal in the Dutch Republic, therefore, slaves should have been 'set free' upon their arrival in Northern Netherlands; it is unclear, however, how strictly the law was abided to. The earliest concentration of Africans was present in Zeeland where during 1596 "a group of a hundred and thirty slaves ... some were buried in churchyards in the Netherlands".⁵ Blakely has argued that the rest of this community "melted into the surrounding population".⁶ This shows that there is the possibility that African servants and page boys in portraiture, tronies and history/biblical scenes were modelled after real Africans individuals during the 1600's. In 17th century portraiture, it was common for Africans models to serve the function of 'page boy' or 'servant' in a composition. Dienne Hondius confirms this, mentioning that Dutch paintings "show well-dressed black children, living as servants or status symbols in the homes of the elite"⁷

Before a descriptive analysis of paintings with this theme, it is first important to explain what is meant by 'servant' and 'page boy', and descriptively, what the term consists of. For this paper, 'page boys' will be interpreted as personal assistants or attendants, often outdoors tending to horses of their masters. Out of the selected group of 61 paintings, 7 of them closely fit this description. A servant can be described as an individual who is in service of another person or household, with a main purpose of helping and performing domestic duties. Looking at the catalogue, when compared to the number of 'page boy' paintings, there was a much larger number of servant paintings. Out of the sample size of 61 paintings, 26 of the paintings chosen fit the description of 'servants with present day figures/families'.

Two paintings of African pages were painted by Jacob Jordaens. Jordaens' *The Master's Eye makes the Horse Fat* (fig. 52) (1600-1649), is a painting that features a young page boy tending to the horse of its master. As the master stands waiting for the arrival of his horse, the boy holding the leash delivers the horse to its master. There is a humanist moral to this painting which can be interpreted from

⁵ Alison Blakely, *Blacks in the Dutch world: the evolution of racial imagery in a modern society*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) 226.

⁶ Blakely, 226.

⁷ Hondius, Stam, Tosch, and Jouwe, *Slavery Heritage Guide The Netherlands*, 16.

the title itself. There are several different variations to the meaning, the most common interpretation of this expression is that, if the master keeps a close eye on the work of his employees, the result of the work will be far superior. Interestingly, this expression can be directly associated with a master and his relationship to his servant, a theme which is arguably portrayed in this piece by Jacob Jordaens. John Moffit discusses his thoughts on Jordaens' painting, describing the composition and expresses his views on how the moral ties in with the composition. Though the commissioner of the piece is not known to us, it is likely that he aims to depict an allegory. In the painting, the 'master' can be identified by his luxurious dress on the left foreground, Moffit believes that the master "proudly regards his prized possession, a white and dappled horse being led to his presence by a Moorish servant ... Behind the lord of the manor is a lady who, by her age, is likely his daughter, and beside the master a servant pours food into a trough for the spirited horse".⁸ Moffit begins to explain his thoughts on how the paintings' moral is visually represented in the piece, stating that the flourishing horse which occupies the centre of the scene symbolizes "the result of good management".⁹ The stallion is proven to be 'flourishing' as he is described to be executing a specialized and exquisite equestrian posture known as 'volte en courbette'. Interestingly, the 'Moorish servant', alongside the 'flourishing horse', may also be tied to the story's moral as they both take up the centre of the piece. There are two separate variations to the servants' status in the painting, one is that the servant can be seen as one of the master's employees, with the task of looking after the masters' horse. In contrast, the Moorish servant may in fact resemble one of the masters' 'prized possession' which he "proudly regards".¹⁰ This case is made convincing by the positioning of the horse and servant which occupies the centre of the piece, and has caught the attention of the master, and the two figures stood behind him.

Jordaens' *Rider performing a levade (1645) (fig. 53)* features a different composition. In this piece the cavalier and his horse occupy the centre of the composition executing the aforementioned

⁸ John Moffitt, "A Humanist Source for Jacob Jordaens's 'Proverbial' Scene of Horse-Taming" *Source: Notes in the History of Art*, vol. 27, no. 4, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008) 27–28.

⁹ Moffit, 28.

¹⁰ Moffit, 28.

posture of ‘volte en courbette’. The horse and his master are in front of a classical arched structure, decorated with gold in parts of the pillars, and heavily lavished with ornaments. Standing next to the right pillar is a young man with his dog, and to his left an African, both witnessing the performance. The status of the individuals have changed when compared to Jordaens’ previous piece, the two individuals behind the cavalier are part of the audience, and strengthen the status of the rider by spectating with admiration. The African figure occupies the space behind the cavalier, painted with lavish clothing, and a cavalier hat. Interesting to note is that as much as it was manufactured in Europe, the cavalier hat as well as its craft consisted of foreign materials.¹¹

In Timothy Brook’s book *Vermeer’s Hat*, he explains the origin of the materials of the cavalier hat, as well details on where exactly the hat was manufactured. Before the fifteenth century, the leather that came from these hats were from indigenous European beavers, however because of the continuous clearing of the woods and forests they were eradicated.¹² The trade of beaver fur then moved to Scandinavia which again “drove Scandanavian beavers to extinction”.¹³ Brook explains that during the sixteenth century two new sources of beaver pelts opened up, the first was Siberia however the Russian supply was claimed to be “unreliable”.¹⁴ Brook mentions that “the other source opening about the same time was Canada”.¹⁵ The source reveals that the Eastern coast of North America was “full of beavers” and that “native trappers were prepared to sell them at a good price”.¹⁶ Soon after Europe had heard of North America as a good source for this pelt, “their demand skyrocketed”, soon after beaver pelts entered the European market in large quantities by the start of the 17th century.¹⁷ Besides the leather of the hat, the feather was also known to be a foreign African material derived specifically from ostriches.¹⁸ Brook

¹¹ Timothy Brook, *Vermeer’s Hat: the Seventeenth Century and the Dawn of the Global World*. (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013) 44.

¹² Brook, 42.

¹³ Brook, 42.

¹⁴ Brook, 43.

¹⁵ Brook, 43.

¹⁶ Brook, 43.

¹⁷ Brook, 43.

¹⁸ Brook, 42.

mentions that France had a huge stock of this pelt, aiming for an “endless supply”, this was needed to be the leading manufacturer of the cavalier hat.¹⁹

Another piece which features similar characteristics as the previous two paintings discussed is Jan van Rossum’s *Portrait of an unknown man on horseback, with a servant (1669-1678)*(fig. 44). There are two figures in this piece, a master and his page boy. Van Rossum places both figures in front of a flat landscape where the master can be seen on his horse which is trotting next to the page boy. The master’s page boy is depicted walking beside his master with a walking cane. The difference in status is evident by the master’s elevated position on his horse, the page boy is depicted on foot and does not have his own horse. The function of the African servant in Van Rossum’s piece is to enhance the status of the (his) master.

Helena Enders’ thesis on the role of children in 17th century Dutch paintings is key to this study. In a section of her research, she discusses the role of African children most especially in Dutch portraiture. One of the paintings discussed in her article was Adriaen Hanneman’s *Posthumous Portrait of Mary I Stuart, with a servant (1664)* (fig. 27). Located in the Mauritshuis, The Hague, Hanneman’s portrait was painted for Prince William III on behalf of his mother Mary I Stuart. The purpose of this painting is to commemorate the status and wealth of Mary Stuart after her death. There are several components, and artistic strategies in the painting that Enders believes was worth discussing. The composition features two figures, Mary I Stuart who is described to be wearing a white satin dress which is wrapped by an orange Brazilian feathered cloak, and an ostrich feather turban. The opposite side of Mary’s cloak is white, and depicted with colourful, decorative floral patterns. In part, the painting symbolizes Dutch pride, this is evident by the orange colour of the feather cloak, as well as the orange feather turban. Enders believes that the presence of the African servant contributes to presenting a “dualistic relationship of intimacy and dominance”.²⁰ On the left, a young African servant also dressed in

¹⁹ Brook, 42.

²⁰ Helena Enders, "The Role of Children in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Paintings: Social Distinction and National Identity." (Senior Independent Study Thesis: The College of Wooster Libraries, 2018) 64.

satin can be seen wrapping a bracelet of pearls delicately on Mary's arm. Mary Stuart is placed in front of a dark tapestry, accentuating the smoothness and colour of her skin, and white gown. The young servant stands in front of a classical landscape which includes a cloudy sky, and two sculpted statues are placed in the distance. Here, the servant's dark skin is contrasted with the bright colours of the classical landscape, a common pattern that can be seen as well in other paintings to be discussed.

Behind Mary Stuart is a dark-coloured carpet with a golden floral design on its surface. It shouldn't be forgotten that carpets and tapestries were also very much a foreign product with Eastern roots. Onno Ydema wrote *Carpets and their Datings in Netherlandish Paintings*. In the book, the author identifies the different carpets that appear in Netherlandish painting, Ydema associates the patterns and designs with where and when the carpets were originally manufactured. After studying representations of such carpets in Dutch painting, Ydema states clearly that "carpets exported by Persian in this period predominantly belonged to the group of floral and cloudband carpets".²¹

When discussing Hanneman's composition, Helena Elders indicates that the presence of the African figure contributes to a variety of meanings. First, to accentuate the radiance of Mary Stuart's beauty. Elders believes that the young servant is painted "rougher", she states that "more notable brushstrokes comprising his dark skin contrast that of the fair elegant woman to his left".²² Looking at the way Mary Stuart is dressed, the audience is left following a path of pearls. A path that starts on the left side of her turban to the right, down to the pearl necklace that is wrapped around her neck, to the bracelet wrapped around her arm by the servant. Following the path, the bracelet leads the viewer to the African servant decorated with a pearl earring, and further left, more pearl necklaces placed resting inside a gleaming shell. The presence of Mary Stuart's dominance can be seen simply by the polarity of beauty, and status. Samuel van Hoogstraten believed that visual contrast can be achieved by "adding a Moor to a Maiden"²³ In this portrait Hanneman therefore achieves this goal, by contrasting the African servant with the background, Mary with the dark tapestry, and most importantly, the servant's distinctly rough skin

²¹ Onno Ydema, *Carpets And Their Datings In Netherlandish Paintings*. (Zutphen: Walburg, 1991) 59.

²² Enders, "The Role of Children in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Paintings", 55.

²³ Samuel Van Hoogstraten, *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst* (Utrecht: Dawaco, 1969) 96.

with Mary's. Justified by Enders, she states that "the rather distinct brushstrokes on the servant child's head and neck only further his position as an afterthought and tool; he provides a service to Mary quite literally in his job description, but also visually as a prop used to enhance her beauty and status".²⁴

The African servant does not solely function as one that emphasizes Mary's beauty, Enders believes that there is a separate reason for the child servants' inclusion in the composition. In this piece, she believes that the young servant is subjected to commodification and functions as a luxurious, exotic 'prop'. Along with the pearls, Brazilian feathered cloak, and the Ostrich feather turban, the young African servant is part of the list of exotic items presented in the composition. Featherwork such as the headdress draped across Mary's chest were imported from the Americas, and Enders believes that these objects had a high value, and are regularly seen in high class, and royal collections. Hanneman's piece justifies a fascination by the Dutch royals, and upperclassmen for the dramatic representation of luxury and foreign objects and materials in 17th century Netherlands.

Ulinka Rublack's research and publications specifically focus on material culture and its link with European dress in the Early Modern Era. In the *American Historical Review* she wrote an article that discusses the extent to which Europeans valued feathers, specifically its use in dress, information of its trade and exchange with the Netherlands, as well as an explanation to where this fascination of this product by the Dutch stemmed from.²⁵ Primarily, Rublack gives an explanation as to why feathers were well-loved by the Dutch as a material as well as part of fashion. Rublack states that the fascination of feathers "was made possible by extensive trade with Africa, and influenced by intercultural experiences of the Americas - affective worlds, new perceptions, and practices connected to this animal material".²⁶ Several other reasons for its growth in value in the Netherlands is because it was a new (foreign) material with wide capabilities of craft and design, as well as its aesthetic. Rublack states that "feathers and indigenous featherwork became notable objects of exchange, capable of influencing European craft

²⁴ Enders, "The Role of Children in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Paintings", 64.

²⁵ Ulinka Rublack. "Befeathering the European: The Matter of Feathers in the Material Renaissance." *The American Historical Review*, vol. 126, no. 1. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 23.

²⁶ Rublack, 23.

traditions and forms of display through a process of material crossing”.²⁷ As for its appreciated aesthetics, Rublack believed that “featherwork forged new understandings of delicacy and ingenuity, as well as new sensory experiences of texture and colour”.²⁸ Like Mary Stuarts’ ostrich feather turban, Rublack confirms that indigenous featherwork in the form of feathered head ware became “a new fashion trend during the 16th century”.²⁹

Rublack also gives a detailed outline of how feathers were gathered in Africa, details of its exchange with Europe as well as its manufacturing process, and craft and their migration to European markets. The author states that “Ostrich feathers were traded through trans-Saharan camel trade routes connecting Western and Northern Africa”.³⁰ Ostriches were claimed to be quite difficult to be hunted, male ostriches for example were imposing, fast, and strong, but the local men did this efficiently. Rublack states that “African men on camels or horses skillfully hunted them during late spring and summer to gather their superior dense black and white plumage, which they offered to caravans in bundles that were carefully graded for quality”.³¹ A single ostrich was claimed to yield a striking amount of forty marketable feathers, many of which were traded on from the Nile valley to Turkey where they decorated and manufactured helmets.³² In order to satisfy European needs and consumption, Rublack claims that the Datini merchants “imported three-hundred thousand feathers via Algiers to Mallorca between 1396-1410 alone, shipping them onto Marseille and Flanders”.³³

In comparison Caspar Netscher’s *portrait of Lydia van Vredenburg, with a servant (1669)* (fig. 34)) arguably consists of similar luxurious objects. Netscher is a Dutch portrait and genre painter and is highly specialized in the depiction of Asian and Middle Eastern carpets, silk, and brocade and depicts these materials with great attention to detail in his portrait of Lydia van Vredenburg. The painting features a similar composition to Hanneman’s where there are two figures of varying status, a central

²⁷ Rublack, 23.

²⁸ Rublack, 23.

²⁹ Rublack, 23.

³⁰ Rublack, 24.

³¹ Rublack, 24.

³² Rublack, 24.

³³ Rublack, 27.

figure and a subsidiary one. Lydia occupies the centre of the composition and is wearing a glowing silk gown. Lydia is placed in front of a dark landscape painting within a landscape wallpaper. Like Hanneman's portrait, the dark landscape painting behind Lydia assists in enhancing the clarity of her face. To the left of the composition is a decorative red carpet which lies on top of a table. According to Ydema's book on carpets in Netherlandish painting, although hard to distinguish, this carpet is either from Persia or India. Both Indian or Persian carpets are often indistinguishable, but detailed examinations of the floral patterns and stems could lead to a closer understanding of its origin.³⁴ Moreover on the tapestry is a frame, but what was framed appears very unclear. Interestingly, the use of pearls, also a luxury product imported from beyond Europe, is a recurring theme depicted in portraits of identifiable females. In Netscher's piece, a necklace of pearls lies on the tapestry with its end hanging in the front edge of the table. Lydia van Vredenburch wears a pearl necklace around her neck, and is depicted wrapping another set of pearls on her arm like the servant in Hanneman's *Portrait of Mary Stuart* (fig. 44). On the right of Lydia van Vredenburch is a young servant that can be seen holding and serving a bronze bowl full of peaches. Similar to the portrait of Mary Stuart, the servant in this painting acts as a subsidiary figure intended to support the main figure, Lydia Vredenburch. The African figure serves a supporting role and is evidently in an inferior position in the composition. The child servant, significantly smaller than Lydia, holds peaches for her, and is depicted directly gazing upwards to the sitter. The presence of the supporting figure is intended to create a contrast between the two figures, and contributes to the sitter's beauty. Similar to Hanneman's portrait of Mary Stuart, the aim of this piece is to showcase the array of luxury products in a way that emphasizes the sitter's high rank and beauty, namely, the tapestry laying on top of the table, the silk dress, and the pearls wrapped around Lydia's wrist and neck.

This composition by Netscher incorporates similar elements to Anthony Van Dyck's famous *Portrait of Princess Henriette de Vaudémont-Phalsbourg, duchesse de Lorraine* (1634)(fig. 35). This composition dated earlier consists of the sitter, Henriette, who stands out in the foreground. On the left of

³⁴ Ydema, *Carpets And Their Datings In Netherlandish Paintings*, 86.

this painting an African servant is standing next to the main sitter providing service as he offers her a basket of flowers. There are two separate background elements, one is a stone wall in which a glistening gold tapestry is placed over the wall. To the right, Van Dyck composes a background that consists of a clouded landscape, and a stone pillar surrounded by a garden of flowers. In this piece, Van Dyck uses several methods to strengthen the sitter's beauty and rank. Princess Henriette is elongated and elevated. Wearing a pearl necklace and earrings, her smooth white skin compliments this luxury product. Henriette's right hand is placed on the shoulder of the young African servant which is a sign of dominance and authority over the figure. The child servant is depicted in an extremely inferior position. Presented with servants clothing, the young African is depicted gazing directly above, to the sitter's face. The servant's sole function in the composition is to compliment the sitter, as he is depicted 'serving' a bouquet of flowers, and contrasts Henriette's skin and length.

Caspar Netscher's *Portrait of an unknown woman, with a servant (1666)* (fig. 47), similarly depicts the African servant in an inferior position. The sitter appears to be seated on a chair, wearing a white silk gown, plucking a grape from the bronze fruit bowl on the table on the left foreground of the painting. The sitter is depicted in front of a dark, cloudy landscape, and is the only figure in the composition that is fully spotlighted. This therefore gives the sitter a beautiful glowing radiance. Again, the sitter is depicted with pearls, with a pearl necklace lying wrapped around her neck, as well as two pearl bracelets on each wrist, and two big pearl earrings on each ear. The background on the left side of the painting is dark, and covered by a red tapestry. The table to the left is also covered by a red tapestry and is accentuated by the spotlight, resulting in glowing reflections of the red fabric. On the left background of the painting there is a visible circular spotlight that reveals part of the red tapestry as well as the face of an African servant. Surrounding the table as well as the African servant's face with a warm red colour is an intentional artistic strategy that brings these representations closer to the viewer. Though spotlighted, the face appears to be covered by shade resulting in his facial details and features to be unidentifiable. In Netscher's portrait, the portrayal of the 'barely visible' African servant serves the purpose of visual contrast. Netscher seems to take an interest in the contrast between the darkness of the

African servants' skin and the colours of the white grapes, peaches as well as the gleaming reflection of the bronze bowl. Compared to the paintings previously mentioned for this section, this piece by Netscher is an ideal example of the visual and social juxtaposition of two figures. Though the sitter in this piece is not identifiable, the artist aims to emphasize both the social rank, and enhances the beauty of the unknown woman, the servant in fact is a tool that contributes to this. The African child is placed and painted to act as the submissive figure, he stands in the left background, and is barely spotlighted, resulting in most of his facial features to be hidden. The most distinguishable of his features are his eyes which are gazing attentively to the sitter as if to authenticate her beauty. The sitter on the other hand can be conceived to have a high social rank simply because of the presence of the servant. The ownership of a servant was considered to be secluded to people who were able to afford them, therefore justifying the sitters' rank.

Casper Netscher painted a separate piece with the same title *Portrait of an unknown woman, with a servant* (1675) (fig. 46). Sharing similar features as certain paintings mentioned previously in this section, Netscher creates a composition with two figures in front of an outdoor garden. The scene is set in the evening in a garden, behind the figure on the left there is a modern interpretation of a Roman statue right by the courtyard in the background, this courtyard is surrounded by trees, and on the top left corner of the painting is a cloudy night sky. Netscher depicts two figures that create a scene in the foreground, the woman who is arguably the sitter, and her servant. The sitter is depicted by the artist wearing a white and blue blouse, and a gleaming golden gown that flows down to the floor. Interestingly, the sitter is depicted with the colours of the Dutch flag, and may have been a nationalist element added to the painting by the artist or the sitter. The woman is sitting on a stone step, on her left hand that rests on her left knee, she holds a flower crown. The artist depicts a pearl necklace wrapped around the sitters neck, and a pearl earring on each ear, the sitter gazes directly at the viewer as she is seen picking a flower from a basket of flowers offered to her. The figure to the left side of the painting is depicted as if he is a young servant under the command of the sitter. This African figure can be seen wearing an orange servants attire, and is depicted kneeling on a stone step with a basket full of flowers placed on his right knee. The African

servant can be seen gazing directly at the sitter, and some flowers can be seen lying on the floor beneath the legs of the sitter, as if these flowers were dropped by the sitter. There is no doubt that the role of the young African is an inferior one and that is to serve the sitter. The servant is kneeling on one knee, offering the basket of the flowers and gazing at the sitter, validating his role as a figure that serves the sitter, and more importantly in this painting, validating the sitter's power and wealth. Besides wealth and power, the presence of the servant also helps enhance the physical features of the sitter, acting as a good contrast to the sitter's white skin. Additionally, by gazing directly towards the sitter, the servant validates and possibly enhances the beauty and radiance of the sitter.

Johannes Mijtens' *Portrait of Elizabeth Albertina of Anhalt-Dessau*, Duchess of Saxe-Weißenfels (1665-1706) (*fig. 31*) shares similar qualities to the previously mentioned pieces of this chapter. Granddaughter of Amalia van Solms (1602-1675) and daughter of Henriette Catharina, this portrait of Princess Elizabeth Albertina was cherished by her relatives. Elizabeth's mother Henriette Catharina had been so charmed by the piece that it was asked to be replicated six times, however only two extra copies were produced and completed. The portrait features three figures in the foreground of a hilly landscape with a river below a clouded sky. Elizabeth Albertina of Anhalt-Dessau, who is shown in full length, is depicted at the centre of the painting seated on a red cushion. The sitter is depicted wearing a grey silk dress over a loose yellow silk dress, as well as a lace cap on her head. On the left foreground Elizabeth can be seen interacting with a dog, specifically a black and white King Charles Cocker Spaniel. To the Princess' right is a young African servant directly gazing at the sitter. The servant is depicted wearing an orange attire, perhaps an intentional decision by the artist/commissioner as a symbol for Dutch pride. He is also depicted wearing an earring on his left ear, holding up a parasol for the sitter. In this piece it is evident that the servant is depicted in an inferior position. The sitter rests comfortably on the cushion, given attention by the dog and the servant. The Young servant however was portrayed kneeling on his right knee, giving his full attention and support to the princess. The servant was therefore placed in this position to enhance the social and economic rank of the sitter and her family. The parasol which is held up

by the servant is used to protect the child's white skin against a sun tan. The parasol was in fact another foreign product that derived from Eastern countries, most especially, India.³⁵ The parasol held up by the servant is distinctly of Indian design. Historian Hermann Goetz discusses the visual representation of parasols as well as their origin. The parasol in this painting matches one depicted in the right foreground of Willem de Poorter's *Samson and Delilah* (1632-1633).

Karel van Mander III's *Portrait of Prince Jørgen of Denmark (1653-1708), with a servant* (fig. 28) is one other portrait of an identifiable figure portrayed alongside an African servant. Artist Karel van Mander places Prince Jørgen in the centre of the piece, he is spotlighted, and dressed with knight's armour on his torso, and wearing a blue sash. To this far right the viewer is shown slight reflections of a knight's helmet. Blended in the dark background, and placed behind Jørgen is an African servant gazing directly upon the sitter. The servant's facial expressions can be seen as he is portrayed with a deep smile. The servant is dressed with a white lace cap, a red top, with a small reflection of an earring on his right ear.

Another portrait painting worth mentioning is Johannes Mijtens' *Family Portrait of Mary of Orange-Nassau (1642-1688) and Hendrik of Nassau Zuylestein, with a servant* (fig. 29). This painting is a depiction of three separate figures in front of a wooded landscape. On the left-centre of the piece, Hendrik of Nassau-Zuylestein stands upright carrying a sword upwards, and is the tallest figure in the composition. Hendrik is wearing a lavish outfit in which red, white and gold are the prevailing colours. Hendrik wears a cavalier hat topped with a large amount of ostrich feathers. Author to *Vermeer's Hat*, Timothy Brook discusses ways in which the product of the cavalier hat was very much and entirely a foreign one.³⁶ As mentioned previously, Brook proves how the hats' leather was a material that only came from North America, specifically from beaver.³⁷ The ostrich feather attached to the hat was a material collected and

³⁵ Hermann Goetz, "An Indian element in 17th Century Dutch art." in *Oud Holland - Quarterly for Dutch Art History*, no. 54 (Leiden: Brill, 1937) 224.

³⁶ Brook, *Vermeer's Hat*, 31.

³⁷ Brook, 31.

traded from Africa.³⁸ As explained by Ulinka Rublack in her article, there was a huge trade of Ostrich feathers from West Africa to North Africa where the material had been transported to European markets, merchants and traders.³⁹ More about the hats' materials and manufacturing process will be mentioned later in this chapter. Mary of Orange-Nassau is depicted on the left foreground of the painting, and can be seen playing or being distracted by one of the laces from Hendrik's attire, particularly his right sleeve. Young Mary is depicted wearing a pink attire with a white undershirt. On the right side of the painting, beside Hendrik, the artist depicts a white horse with a beautiful red saddle with intricate golden ornaments, the saddle is also cushioned by a comfortable red pillow. The horse gazes directly at his master and young Mary playing with his lace. To the right of the horse is an African page boy. The page boy can be seen holding the horse's leash, gazing directly at and interacting with the horse as if he were being looked after. The young page boy is depicted wearing an orange attire, possibly symbolic for the colour of the Netherlands. Additionally he is depicted wearing a blanket half-wrapped around his back as if he were cold, and finally the page boy is decorated with a pearl earring on his left ear similar to those addressed in previous paintings. There is a common pictorial theme of a young African servant taking care of his master's horse. Such as in depictions in Jordaen and Van Rossum's pictures there is a common pictorial interest in depicting a page boy serving his master. For this painting there is a contrast between the servant's black skin and the white skin of the master's horse.

Another painting from the catalogue that, to some extent, shares similar features is the *Portrait of Amalia van Kurland* (1653-1711) (fig. 32). Though the artist remains anonymous, the composition is similar to some of the pieces discussed in the earlier sections of this chapter. The sitter occupies the centre of the composition and is depicted wearing a light green gown, gazing directly at the viewer. The sitter Maria is depicted with curly hair, and is decorated with pearls around her body and dress. Wrapped around the sitter's neck, the artist depicts a pearl necklace. The artist also decorates the upper section of

³⁸ Rublack. "Befeathering the European", 24.

³⁹ Rublack, 24.

Amalia's dress with pearls, wrapped in a spiral pattern from the left shoulder, through the ribbon on the middle, up till the right shoulder. The decoration of pearls continues to her left and right shoulder blades, and finally two pearl bracelets are wrapped around each of her arms. The sitter Maria is placed in front of an interior background which consists of a wall, behind a red curtain to bring the sitter closer to the viewer. To the sitter's right side and to the left foreground of the painting, the artist depicts an African servant wearing a yellow attire, along with a white scarf around his neck. Similar to Anthony Van Dycke's composition in his *Portrait of Princess Henriette de Vaudémont-Phalsbourg*, the servant in this painting is also carrying a tray full of a variety of flowers. There is a strong contrast between the clarity of the sitter's face compared to that of the African servant; this may be explained by the gradual discoloration of dark paint overtime. As mentioned in the introduction, taking Margriet van Eikema Hommes's book on the *Discoloration in 15th-17th century oil paintings* into account discoloration may have played a big role in the current 'invisibility' of the young servant's face. With that being said, it may have been possible that the lack of visibility of the young servant's face was because of the paint's discoloration, some of the servant's features and facial structure however are still visible. What the viewer can see is that the servant is completely focused on the sitter, with his eyes and face positioned towards Maria. The visual and material contrast in this piece is between the glowing sheen given by the pearls and the soft absorbing darkness of the black skin. This argument had previously been introduced in Thijs Weststein's chapter on *Cultural Reflection on Porcelain in 17th Century Netherlands*. In discussing Juriaen Van Streek's *Still-life with an African Boy*, Weststeijn argues that the artist took an interest in the visual contrast "between the soft darkness of the black slave's skin and the porcelain's reflective sheen."⁴⁰ The function of the servant in this piece is therefore to serve Maria, and to justify her high rank, as well as her beauty.

Jan Weenix's *Portrait of an Unknown Woman (1696)* (fig. 45) shares similarities with some of the earlier portraits discussed in this chapter where the servant is depicted by the artist as a page boy. In this

⁴⁰ Thijs Weststeijn, "Cultural Reflections on Porcelain in the Seventeenth-Century Netherlands" in *Chinese and Japanese Porcelain for the Dutch Golden Age*, ed. by Jan van Campen and Titus Eliens. (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgeverij, 2014), 227.

painting, the artist depicts two figures set in a dark, cloudy garden. In this outdoor scene the sitter is placed in the centre of the foreground. The sitter is an unidentifiable woman wearing a turquoise dress, with a pearl necklace wrapped around her neck, she is depicted resting on a set of outdoor steps. The woman rests on the stone pavement, sitting on top of a brown cloth that extends behind the sitter. To the right of the painting beside the woman's left arm two sculpted figures were depicted. Above these sculpted figures the artist depicts an array of flowers, and below the sculptures a white parrot, another product with a foreign origin, can be seen with its eyes directly facing the sitter. Another important part of the composition is the servant to the left of the painting. The servant's profile is barely visible and covered by the shade, however, it is certain that his body is positioned in a way that faces the sitter as if he were gazing at her. In this piece there is a notable visual contrast between the servant skin and the bright white skin of the parrot. The servant is dressed with a brown attire with white sleeves, a white turban with a feather, and barely visible is the pearl earring which can be seen on the servant's right ear. The artist depicts the servant holding a tray of flowers, and presenting them to the sitter. The sitter's right hand can be seen reaching in on one of the flowers in the tray presented by her servant, however, is not engaged with the servant whatsoever as her face is directed towards the viewer. An example of this is the pile of broken shells next to the sitter's left foot, below the steps, and next to that seated on a stone wall. The reason for the depiction of the parrot in the composition is because of its interest as one of the many exotic/foreign products admired by the Dutch. As a result the depiction of the parrot as well as other foreign goods became a pictorial tradition.

Jacob van Oost's piece *Woman in her spinet, with a servant* (1660-1669) (fig. 48) shares similar elements to Jan Weenix's portrait. In this composition the artist depicts two figures accompanied by two animals. Jacob van Oost depicts the main figure, an unidentifiable young woman, sitting on a wooden piano bench, playing on a spinet piano. This woman is depicted wearing a black gown, with both her hands occupying specific keys of the spinet, with her eyes gazing directly into the viewer. The background of the composition consists of only a few elements, the figures are placed in front of a plain

clouded landscape, where only clouds can be seen. On the upper left corner of the painting a dark brown curtain is pulled to the left side. Below this curtain Van Oost depicts a small landscape painting sitting directly behind the woman's spinet. Behind the woman sitting on the stool is a dark-toned servant, depicted wearing a light blue attire. On his left hand the servant carries a bundle of grapes from the stem, the grapes are then hanging down from the stem. Standing on the servant's other arm is a green parrot, the parrot's full attention is given to the grapes on the servant's left hand. On the servant's right hand there is a leash which the servant holds gently. Below the servant and behind the sitter on her spinet is a dog, the leash that the servant holds on his right hand is most-likely for either the parrot or the dog. Coloured black and brown, the dog can be seen gazing directly at the viewer, similar to the sitter. The dark-toned servant painted by the artist functions in several different ways. Firstly to strengthen the protagonist, or the sitter. This servant can be seen carrying the parrot, as well as the dog, which may in fact be owned by the sitter or her family. The depiction of the servant therefore strengthens the sitter's rank and level of wealth. The sitter also functions in a way that creates a contrast between light and dark. The servant's dark toned skin can be contrasted with the whiteness of the sitter's skin, this results in the balanced contrast between the two skin tones. Lastly and most intriguing is the way the servant is posed. The African servant is depicted gazing somewhere on the far left side of the painting. At first it seems as if the servant is gazing at the sitter, but after closer inspection, it is evident that the artist depicts the servant as part of a display. Although the servant is depicted carrying the parrot, grapes, and possibly holding the leash to the sitter's dog, the fact that the servant does not interact with the viewer or the sitter confirms the servant's status as inferior. The painting therefore gives a feeling that the African servant poses as part of a display, and functions as one as well, rather than being given the function of serving the sitter.

Pieter Nason's *Portrait of Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen, with a servant* (1666 x 1674) (fig. 39) is one other portrait painting that features an African servant. The composition features only two figures, the sitter and his servant placed in front of an interior scene. Johan Maurits was an important figure for the Dutch in the 17th century, as he worked for the Dutch West India Company, and was later

appointed by them as the Governor of the Dutch possessions in Brazil during 1636. After his campaign against the Spanish-Portuguese forces, and defeating them in several encounters, he dispatched forces to fight Portuguese and their possessions on the coast of Africa. He then continued his conquest with the help of those who were against Spanish rule. Johan Maurits was also responsible for extending Dutch possessions in Brazil, building new settlements in the North and North-Eastern part of Brazil with the help of Haarlem architect Pieter Post. Post helped design a new town which consisted of public buildings, bridges, channels, and gardens in a Dutch-style, later being named Mauritstad after Johan Maurits himself.

The sitter, Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen, is standing upright gazing directly at the viewer. Pieter Nason depicts Johan Maurits wearing a gleaming undershirt with decorative features running across the middle, and in the upper chest area a small blue sash can be seen running diagonally across Maurits' chest. Over this undershirt is a thick fur coat which covers most of the sitter's body. On both of the sitters' hands are beige leather gloves, where on the sitter's left hand the artist depicts this hand grazing a sword that hangs on his left hip. For the background of the composition the artist places Johan Maurits in the middle of a classical archway. Above the classical archway hanging towards the right side of the painting, a green velvet-like curtain can be seen partially covering half of the classical pillar on the right side of the painting. Below the classical pillar, and partially visible is the set of armor lying on the floor on the bottom right of the composition. The armor set includes gauntlets, pauldrons, chausses as well as a chest piece. The depiction of this armor next to the sitter is a reference to his high position in the Dutch army, commanding the cavalry and taking part in campaigns of 1645 and 1646. Even further below the set of armor is a circular/oval figure, the artist depicts a coconut. The depiction of the coconut is symbolic, and relates to the sitters association and legacy in Dutch-Brazil Charlotte Hoitsma's thesis "Owning the 'Exotic' a research into the relation between iconography and material in seventeenth century Netherlandish decorative and applied arts objects with depictions of Africans" discusses the visual representation of coconuts in 17th century Dutch painting. Coconuts could be collected as it was and were very valued at that, however in her thesis Hoitsma states that "in almost all cases it was mounted so that it

could function as a cup”.⁴¹ Interestingly the Dutch believed that properties in a coconut had medical benefits and were used to form remedies. Georg Everhard Rumphius’ description of coconuts is also featured in Hoitsma’s thesis. Rumphius, a German-born botanist who worked for the Dutch East India Company, believed that the coconut had healing powers, confirming that it could cure ailments, specifically, inflammation. Interesting to note is that Johan Maurits had a fascination for coconuts, and valued them deeply. The Dutch, under the command of Johan Maurits, were responsible for introducing coconut palms from South Asia to South America where they were not indigenous. His grounds and settlements in Brazil were in fact lined with rows of palm trees.

On the left side of the painting is a table covered by what seems like the same fabric as the curtain hanging above. A green velvet-like fabric covers the table, and hangs down with the ends touching the floor. Behind the table is an African servant holding up a piece of paper or parchment, and on the right hand he holds a pen. Attached to the pen are long feathers, it is unlikely that any European bird had large feathers like those depicted in this composition. The length and shape of these feathers seems as if they are ostrich feathers, another strong and clear link to Africa as well as Dutch pride given by their orange colour. The young servant is depicted wearing a pearl earring, as well as a dark-red attire. The servant gazes directly at Johan Maurits as if he were asking the sitter to sign the sheet that he holds on his right hand, establishing the sitter’s dominance, and authority over the servant. The function of the servant in this piece is partially to strengthen the status of the sitter. The servant’s depiction as well as the depiction of the coconuts and the feather are clearly symbolic of the sitters organization of the Dutch trade routes of the WIC. Through these routes, Johan Maurits was in charge of transporting and trading these foreign products.

In conclusion, the bulk of the paintings chosen consists of a (generally white, Dutch, upper-class) sitter, who is accompanied by an Afro-Atlantic servant or page-boy. A frequent similarity among the paintings chosen for this section is that the servant was usually represented as inferior most especially

⁴¹ Charlotte Hoitsma, “Owning the Exotic, A research into the relation between iconography and material in seventeenth-century Netherlandish decorative and applied art objects with depictions of Africans” (RMA Thesis: Utrecht University, 2018), 53.

when compared to the sitter. The servants' role in the selection of paintings was to illustrate both the beauty and the wealth of the sitter. After going through an iconographic analysis it is evident that several of the foreign objects presented in the composition, as well as the servants themselves had iconographic value. Some of the objects that were frequently represented in paintings of this chapter.

Chapter 3: Genre scenes

This chapter deals with representation of African models/figures that is considered part of the genre specialization. The paintings chosen for this chapter should fit the description of a scene which consists of people interacting with each other or objects, placed in front of an interior or exterior background. There is no doubt that their presence was fairly common among genre scenes, as well as their depictions alongside luxury, and foreign products. The fascination to pair the African model with luxury, and exotic products are illustrated in various other 17th century paintings such as in Hendrick van der Burch's genre scene *The Game of Cards*. In Van der Burch's piece, there are four figures, two adults seated across each other by the table playing a game of cards. Laying on the table is a foreign carpet only covering the left side. This carpet shares a similar floral design to that represented in the *Portrait of Lydia van Vredenburg*, therefore according to Onno Ydema, the carpet can be considered to be either an Indian or Persian carpet.⁴² In the composition, the figure on the right is a male wearing a bright red cavalier costume with a cavalier hat. As mentioned previously, and referring to the book by Timothy Brook, the cavalier hat consisted of foreign materials.⁴³ Its craft consisted of beaver pelt imported from North America, and feathers of an ostrich which was imported from Africa.⁴⁴ Across his chest is a sash which holds his cavalier sword in place. The man's bright red attire results in the figure being brought closer to the viewer rather than receding. This man is depicted playing a game of cards with the woman seated across him. On her left hand, this woman is depicted showing one of her cards to the cavalier. The woman is depicted wearing a brown lace cap and a brown dress with a red ribbon. On the piece's left foreground a

⁴² Ydema, *Carpets And Their Datings In Netherlandish Paintings*, 87.

⁴³ Brook, *Vermeer's Hat*, 41.

⁴⁴ Brook, 41.

young child is depicted interacting with a puppy. The small white puppy is placed on a cushion lying down on one of three chairs in the composition. Lastly, standing behind the table is a young African servant holding a porcelain pitcher. This pitcher may have either been imported from China, or a piece of delftware manufactured in Delft. The artist, however, does not give the necessary details of the pitcher to accurately predict where exactly it was manufactured. For this genre scene, as discussed in previously, Van der Burch must have been interested in the visual contrast of the servant's dark skin and the white porcelain pitcher which he holds and is depicted pouring wine into a wine glass. The discussion of the visual contrast between an African servant's skin and the reflective sheen of porcelain, specifically in Thijs Weststein's *Cultural Reflections on Porcelain in 17th-Century Netherlands*, shows that this was a common artistic strategy in genre paintings that included African subjects. The artist depicts the servant wearing an orange outfit and places him in front of a foreign map. Interestingly, at first glance, it seems as if the woman is handing one of her cards over to the young African servant, placed directly behind the table. However, after closer observation, the servant seems to be holding something else. There may be some hidden symbolism in this section of the painting, as the artist would have changed the composition to help with the clarity of this part of the painting. Perhaps this may have been an artistic strategy to help guide the viewer's eye from the woman, straight through the servant reaching the porcelain jug. Helena Enders also discusses this genre piece in great depth. In her chapter that discusses the role of children in 17th century painting, she discusses the role of the young African servant in Van der Burch's piece. Ender's states that the artist "subscribes to this Dutch perception of black individuals as exotic objects ... particularly in choosing to portray the black figure as a child".⁴⁵

Willem Eversdijck's *Portrait of an unknown man, with a servant and hunting booty (1660-1669)* (fig. 43) features two figures in front of a landscape. This piece sits between a portrait and a genre piece. What solidified the decision to include Everdijks piece in this chapter is because of its strikingly genre elements, this includes the will to display and showcase objects in the composition. The sitter appears to

⁴⁵ Enders, "The Role of Children in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Paintings", 63.

be sitting on a rock upon a hill, his right hand points to his booty, and his left interacts with one of two hunting dogs in the composition. The hunting dog on the right part of the painting rests his head on the sitter's left knee, whereas the dog on the left side is lying down beside the legs of the sitter. Behind the sitter is an African servant wearing a yellow top and placed in front of a dark background of trees. The servant is depicted showcasing more hunted booty as he holds up a hare from his back legs. Lying on the pavement is a red satchel most likely containing hunting material. The difference in clothing between the sitter, and the servant justifies their difference in rank. The sitter wears lavish clothing, whereas the African wears common clothes, validating the sitter's rank as 'master', and the African as the 'master's servant. Everdijck's piece is a showcase of the skill and expertise of the sitter/master, and the presence of the servant contributes to this. As he presents the game caught by his master, the presence of the servant in the painting helps strengthen the sitter as well as his abilities as a hunter.

Another genre piece worth mentioning is Frans van Mieris the Elder's *Woman Standing before a Mirror (1661-1663)* (fig. 40). This piece was made between 1661-1663. The composition consists of several elements, a wooden chair is depicted in the central foreground of the composition in which a red fur cloak lies on the stool. Behind the stool a black and orange coloured tapestry is depicted lying on top of a table. Again, the carpet, like the pearls and the servant, were foreign imports. The carpet represented in this composition has a striking resemblance with an illustration in Onno Ydema's book. Both fig. 88 and fig. 89 in Ydema's *Carpets and their Datings in Netherlandish Paintings* which are Indian floral and cloudband carpets have a similar design to the one represented in Van Mieris's composition. Though it is extremely difficult to distinguish between Persian and Indian carpets, it seems as if this carpet has the resemblance of an Indian variant of a Persian tapestry. Furthermore, on the table two objects can be seen, one appears to be a copper or silver gift box, and in front of this a folded piece of paper, presumably a written letter. On the upper left side of the painting, however barely visible, is the depiction of a mirror. The outline of the mirror in the painting is given by a narrow vertical white line acting as the reflection of the border of the mirror. There are two figures in

the scene, the woman on the right is the main figure in the scene. This woman is depicted wearing a beautiful glowing white top along with black gown and a black lace cap decorated with white laces. In the composition the woman can be seen posing dramatically as the index and middle finger of her left hand is placed on her left knee, covered by the gown. Her right hand gently sits and rests in between her shoulder and collar bone. The placement of this hand was done intentionally to guide the audience's view to the woman's jewelry, the pearl necklace which she wears around her neck. Interacting with the pearl necklace lying around her neck, Van Mieris gives the impression that the woman has finished dressing, putting the last article of clothing and putting the last touches to her attire with her full attention at the mirror while doing so. The woman gazes restlessly at the mirror reflecting herself which creates the scene. Far behind the woman placed on the right background of the painting Van Mieris depicts a man through a doorway reading on a table. The light coming from a window in the background gives this figure, and the scene visibility. The depiction of this small scene in the background adds depth to the composition, and may be associated with the scene created by the woman in the foreground.

Arguably with slight visibility, the last figure stands on the centre of the piece, and is placed behind the table, and woman. A young African female is depicted as a servant of the woman before the mirror. Her lack of visibility is evident, however as mentioned previously by Margriet van Eikema Hommes, this may have been a result of the paint's discoloration. This young woman is depicted wearing a beige lace cap, and a light blue attire, as well as glowing reflections of two earrings on each ear. The colours of the maid servant's attire is striking, with a combination of white and turquoise, and what seems to be details of patterns. The young African servant is depicted as inferior to the woman gazing at the mirror, the artist represents her as having a lower social rank than the woman with jewelry. The maidservant can be seen serving the woman as she offers a jewelry box, holding and presenting the box with both her hands. The servants' full attention is given to the woman before the mirror as she gazes upwards towards the woman's necklace. For this scene, the servant waits for the woman to decide which of the jewelry she wants to wear and that suits her attire. It is important to note

that like the tapestry and the pearls, the servant was considered as part of these foreign imports.

Ultimately, the presence of the maid servant is crucial in this piece as it contributes to the creation of the entire scene. However it is evident that her role is an inferior one, one that strengthens both the woman's social rank and beauty as she chooses her jewelry, and gazes at her own reflection on the mirror while doing so. In the scene, there is a strong visual parallel between the servant's white eyes that gaze directly at the sitter, a visually present feature of the servant, and the lady's pearls.

Quentin Buvelot has written an entry which provides a description of the formal aspects of this piece, discussing the objects placed in the scene, as well as the figures which create the scene and what this means overall. Buvelot claims that the scene is a resemblance of human attachments to sensual pleasures, and believes that several elements in the composition contribute to this meaning. The mirror is one of the objects in the scene that is related to sensory pleasure. Buvelot believes that the mirror is "associated with vanity or sensual pleasure ... that the woman uses the mirror here to adorn herself with jewelry seems to confirm this meaning".⁴⁶ Buvelot confirms that the folded piece of paper on the table is indeed a written love letter, contributing to the drama of the scene, and can be seen as further evidence of her interest in the sensual pleasures. Lastly, the man in the background of the scene acts as a complete contrast to the woman. Interestingly, Buvelot believes that "the man reading represents the opposite attitude: the life of the mind and the desire to acquire knowledge and wisdom".⁴⁷

Interestingly, Buvelot refrains from mentioning another example in the composition which is arguably associated with sensory pleasures and that is the depiction of the servant in the background of the piece. The young African servant is holding up a jewelry box for the woman, another example of the woman being tempted by visual pleasures. Another example of what the Dutch considered a sensory pleasure was exotic and/or foreign products of which the servant was part. African slaves were considered by the Dutch as an exotic 'tradeable' product, and were usually valued by upper class, and royals. The young servant in this piece may therefore have been depicted by the artist as one of the

⁴⁶ Quentin Buvelot, "Woman Standing before a Mirror". In *The Leiden Collection Catalogue*, no. 3, ed. by Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. and Lara Yeager-Crasselt. Journal Article in theleidencollection.com, 2020.

⁴⁷ Buvelot, "Woman Standing before a Mirror".

many sensory pleasures presented in the scene. Additionally, the look of the servants' clothing resembles that of a kimono, a Japanese import commonly adorned by the Dutch, especially Dutch scholars and intellectuals. Wybe Kuitert's research on Japanese robes helps us distinguish its appreciation and value in the Netherlands. The servant's Japanese robe was "sought after by the mercantile, artistic and political elite of the Netherlands" in the second half of the 17th century. Kuitert states that "fashionable men liked to have their portraits painted of themselves dressed in Japanese robes and many Dutch painters had a *Japonsche rock* for sitters in their studio".⁴⁸ Apart from the upper class and rich merchants, it is reported that many Dutch scholars and intellectuals showed great interest in Japanese robes. Manuel Llano discussed the topic of Japanese material culture in the Netherlands and reported his ideas in a blog. Here, Llano states that "although these robes were a general symbol of wealth and cosmopolitanism, they soon acquired clear connotations of erudition".⁴⁹ Llano identified that *Japonsche rock* "were most commonly depicted in conjunction with writing utensils, books and globes; and almost invariably against the backdrop of a well-supplied library".⁵⁰ Llano reports Japanese robes worn by well known scholarly figures in paintings of Antoine van Leeuwenhoek (1632-1723), Hadriaan Beverland (1650-1716), Govert Bidloo (1649-1713), and Gisbert Cuper (1644-1716).

In Frans Van Mieris's *Woman Standing Before a Mirror*, It is likely that the servant's robe was imported from the East, as is made evident by how the textile is depicted by the artist. In closer investigation and detail, the fabric of the robe appears to be almost shiny and reflective indicating that it was most likely made with silk, a material that could only be found in the East. The robe itself may have in fact played a role in the narrative of Van Mieris's composition, seeing as the man in the background is depicted to be behaving like an intellectual/scholar, with full attention to his book.

⁴⁸ Wybe Kuitert, "Japanese Robes, Sharawadgi, and the Landscape Discourse of Sir William Temple and Constantijn Huygens" in *Garden History* no. 41. (London: The Garden Trust, 2013), 166.

⁴⁹ Manuel Llano, "The Japanese Gown as an Unlikely Dutch Scholarly Symbol.", Journal article in skillnet.nl/the-japanese-gown-as-an-unlikely-dutch-scholarly-symbol/. Accessed 6 Mar. 2021.

⁵⁰ Llano.

There is therefore undoubtedly a strong link between kimonos as a foreign product and fashion for scholars, intellectuals as well as the upper class, artistic and the politically elite.

Nicholaes van Helt Stockade's *Double Portrait of an Unknown woman and boy in Fantasy Costume, with Servant (1614-1669)* (fig. 55) is another portrait that includes an African servant in its composition. Van Helt Stockade paints a portrait of two figures in an outdoor scene and places all figures depicted in front of what seems like a courtyard. On the left side of the painting a woman sits on a stone pavement, the woman is depicted wearing a red and black gown, the sleeve of the dress on her right arm is black. Below the woman the artist depicts a black cavalier hat, attached to it a large ostrich feather. Lying on the ground, this hat can be distinguished by the shape as well as the noticeably large white ostrich feather which curves to the foreground. As covered previously, the materials that make-up the cavalier hat were entirely foreign. Manufactured in Europe, specifically France, the history, material and manufacturing process has been previously outlined in Timothy Brook *Vermeer's Hat*.⁵¹

In Van Helt Stockade's piece the woman is posing with her left arm upwards so that it peacefully rests vertically, while the woman's right arm is gently placed on her dress which lies on the stone pavement. Both her arms are gently placed this way to gracefully showcase the pearl bracelets that are wrapped around each arm. A pearl necklace is also depicted wrapped around the woman's neck, and hair. The face and body of the woman is placed in front of trees in the background, giving a contrast between the dark trees and her radiant skin. For the right section of the painting, the artist included numerous figures which complete the scene. Beside the woman on the left is a young boy with long blonde hair that rests below his shoulders. The boy is depicted wearing a white attire with a red sash that starts from his right shoulder and wraps around his left waist. The young boy is depicted by the artist holding up a dead hare from the legs up. The artist depicting the boy with the hare, gives the audience the feeling that this boy went hunting, this 'scene' is further justified by the depiction of

⁵¹ Brook, *Vermeer's Hat*, 34.

the two hunting dogs to the far right . To the further lower right section of the painting and beside the young boy carrying the booty, the hunting dogs stare directly towards the dead hare. Under the black and white hunting dog, the artist depicts a container, perhaps one where all the booty is kept after hunting. Behind the young boy and shadowed in the background is the depiction of two separate figures, a young African servant holding the leash of his master's horse. Yet the master of the servant is unknown, the servant is depicted standing in the background taking care of the horse. The servant can be seen wearing a cavalier hat, and a brown and black attire, and stares directly towards the woman. The fact that the servant is paired with the cavalier hat is a noticeable coincidence in the painting considering the cavalier hat was an item of clothing that consisted of two valued foreign materials.⁵² As mentioned previously in the chapter, Brooks states that the hat consisted of beaver pelt which came from North America, and the feather attached to it was a material that came from ostriches, gathered in Africa.⁵³

There are several elements in the painting that justify the position of the African man as servant or as one with a lower social status. First and most noticeably is where the artist places him in the composition. The servant occupies the space behind the young boy, this space is dark and secludes him from the two figures in the foreground. The two figures in the front are spotlighted, posing for the portrait, and by doing so, interacting with each other. In contrast, the servant in the background does not pose, his face is covered by the shadow, and he is depicted by the artist holding a horse's leash as if he were looking after the horse for someone of a higher authority. This outdoor double-portrait is therefore another example of how the presence of an African servant is responsible for creating a contrast between figures of a higher authority. For this painting specifically, the African servant in the background is a contrast to the figures in the foreground as the artist gives him a lower social status compared to the figures in front of him, this is justified by the way the artist positions him in the background, as well as his lack of interaction with the figures in the foreground.

⁵² Brook, 41.

⁵³ Brook, 41.

Nicholas Berchem's unique outdoor genre piece, *Elegant Company on a Harbor Quay* (1663-1667) (fig. 54) is a piece that has a lot of different elements which create both a hectic and dramatic scene. Firstly the scene is set during a cloudy day, the clouds are like those in Italianist Dutch painting, and so are some of the elements in the composition such as the statue prominently standing on the right side of the painting. Other elements of the background consist of a large architectural structure behind the statue, and to the left, boats can be seen anchored in the distance. Sailors can also be seen on the left side of the background resting by the harbor. In the foreground, Berchem depicts a merry company on the left part of the foreground. To the right side of the statue, a musician can be seen playing the lute, captivating a woman as she watches him play. In the foreground, the artist depicts the more important figures which create the scene. Two women can be seen above the set of steps, the woman in front wears a blue and white gown, decorated with pearls in the upper part of her dress, and a pearl necklace wrapped around her neck, a sign that this woman was of a slightly higher class. The woman standing behind is depicted wearing a yellow and black dress, and can be seen whispering to the woman in front of her. Both women seem to have their full attention to the African man kneeling towards them presenting to them a parrot. A knight leaning towards the right side can be seen witnessing the scene taking place with enjoyment, he is depicted relaxed, with an identifiable smile on his face, along with his full attention to the African man kneeling by the steps. In this composition, the parrot plays an important role as it is usually referred to the Americas. This bird was widely associated with the New World, and was normalized to be a "symbol specific to Brazil".⁵⁴

When compared to the paintings discussed previously in this chapter, and the last chapter, this piece by Nicholas Berchem is quite unique. This genre piece has elements which are arguably unfamiliar to those discussed earlier. For most of the portrait paintings discussed in the first chapter such as *Portrait of Lydia van Vredenburg*, *Van Mander's Portrait of Prince Jørgen of Denmark*,

⁵⁴ Benjamin Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad: the Dutch Imagination and the New World, 1570-1670*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 340.

Netscher's *Portrait of an unknown woman, with a servant* the African figure in these compositions frequently take on the role of a servant, or a role that is always inferior to the sitter depicted in the portrait. What is common for the paintings discussed in this chapter such as Van Helt Stockade's *Double Portrait of an unknown woman and boy in fantasy costume*, Van Mieris's *Woman Standing in front of a Mirror*, and Eversdijck's *Portrait of an unknown man , with a servant, and hunting booty*, is that the African figures do contribute to the creation of the scene, although they are usually depicted serving a 'master'. For Everdijck's piece, the servant displaying the hunted game contributes to the scene, but for these paintings the African usually serves a lesser role than others depicted in these scenes. In contrast, for the scene painted by Nicholas Berchem the role of the African figure changes drastically. The African figure gracefully kneels one of the steps, and is dressed with an elegant colourful attire, a yellow outfit with a blue and red cape. This figure is also dressed with a turban with a feather attached to it, as well as decorated with a gleaming pearl earring on his left ear. This figure is given a powerful role in the scene, as he is placed in the centre of the foreground and seems as if he is the protagonist of the scene. Three other figures are depicted revolving around this man, and captivated by him as he grasps their full attention. This African figure depicted in the foreground seems to impress these people around him.

Ultimately, there must be a specific reason for the African figure's powerful role in Berchem's scene. The African figure was indeed no servant, the fact that he is carrying his own sword justifies this claim. A possible explanation for his authority in the scene is the African figure's 'worldly experience'. With his original roots from Africa, Dressed in a foreign attire (possibly the Indies, Persia or India, however not identifiable with a precise area), and carrying a parrot (usually derived from South America), the figures revolving around the African may be in awe because of their fascination with his worldly knowledge and origin as a foreigner. The artist gives an image that the African figure came directly from overseas. As the ships are anchored right by the harbor on the left background of the painting, and the scene takes place right by the harbor, and most importantly, the display of the parrot, all of these factors contribute to forming an image of these men arriving overseas. It can be

argued that this African figure shares similar colours to the parrot he is holding. The African man's cape is coloured red and blue, sharing the same exact colours as the parrot. This may have been an intentional symbol given by the artist as he may have aimed to highlight both the parrot and the African's 'foreignness'. Another specific element that highlights this is the turban with the feather attached to it. As discussed earlier, feathers as well as their craft was something that developed in African, in which the Dutch were fascinated by.⁵⁵

Another separate explanation for the African figure's strong role in the scene is because of the knowledge he had attained of the outside world. The group of people gazing directly at him may in fact be amazed by the idea that he has visited and has gained experience of many different places of the New World. Whether the people admire the African individual for his roots, or rather his world knowledge and/or experience, the painting demonstrates no differences to social hierarchies. The African man kneeling in the central foreground of the painting is, without a doubt, the protagonist of the scene, and one that is admired by the people revolving around him. Taking this into account, this piece can strongly be contrasted with most of the paintings discussed in the earlier sections. In these previous paintings, the African man or woman were usually given the role of a servant by the artist or commissioner. The African man or woman functioned as figures that strengthened the sitter, in a way that showed their interests, beauty, wealth, or social power. However by creating this composition, the artist aims to present the African figure as one of the leading figures, who had experienced travels from Africa (his roots), to the East (given by his lavish attire as well as his pearl earring), all the way to the New World and the Americas (given by his parrot). Ultimately, this is a composition which highlights a specifically 'Dutch' interest and adoration for foreign/exotic/luxury products.

Franciscus Haagen's *Portrait of the children of Johann Christian von Kretschmar und Flämischdorf (1650-1693) and Susanna Vernatti (1659-1708), with a servant* is another piece in which the African figure in the painting acts as the subsidiary figure (fig. 38). This piece contains similar

⁵⁵ Rublack. "Befeathering the European", 20.

features to Jan Weenix's *Portrait of an Unknown woman* (1669) and Johannes Mijtens' *Portrait of Elizabeth Albertina of Anhalt-Dessau* (1665-1706) discussed earlier in this chapter. Haagen's painting consists of four figures placed in front of an outdoor garden scene. The left background is a dark wooded area, whereas the right side consists of a half-clouded landscape with blue skies. Three of the figures depicted are the children of Johann Christian von Kretschmar, a captain of the Dutch army, and a Colonel-commander of the Dutch guards. The figures depicted are therefore, the children of a Dutch commander, a position of high rank in the Dutch army. In fact, the family of Van Kretschmar were well-known throughout the 16th to the 19th centuries, and were also a family who belonged to the Dutch nobility since 1814. The family's coat of arms is represented in the upper left corner of the painting, a red and white checkered emblem with a crown being surrounded by wings. On the left side of the painting is a depiction of a statue of the Greek goddess Aphrodite, the goddess of love, beauty, pleasure and passion which relates, a link to the pleasures presented in this very composition. Two of Johann's children are depicted in the foreground, one sitting by a stone step, wearing a yellow silk robe and can be seen iterating with a puppy. This child's eyes gazes directly at the viewer. The other child in the foreground is depicted wearing a red robe, as well as a red feathered hat. This child can be seen posing in a contrapposto stance, as if he were a classical statue, most of his weight is on his back leg gazing directly to the viewer. The last of Johann's children is depicted behind the circular fountain to the right of the Aphrodite statue. This child's elbow rests on the circular structure, wearing a dark-coloured kimono as he calmly gazes at the viewer.

The last figure is depicted further back, behind the circular structure in the centre the artist paints a young African servant wearing a red attire, and decorated with a pearl earring on his right ear. The servant is depicted wearing a hat with a feather attached to it. The feather, as mentioned previously, can be seen as a specifically African material, and may potentially be a reason for its pairing with the African servant.⁵⁶ This has been explained in detail in Rublack's article.⁵⁷ This African figure can be seen holding

⁵⁶ Rublack, "Befeathering the European", 23-24.

⁵⁷ Rublack, 24.

up a red-coloured umbrella. Like the servant, it should be stated that the parasol originally has foreign roots. As stated previously in Johannes Mijtens' *Portrait of Elizabeth Albertina of Anhalt-Dessau*, the parasol was a design that came from the East, most specifically, India. Author Goetz who has researched its presence in Europe as well as its roots in India gives an idea of its different designs. After further investigation of the parasol in Haagen's composition, it is evident that this is a South Indian parasol given by the illustrations in Goetz's research, specifically represented by illustration *b* in *fig. 2*.⁵⁸

Interestingly, the servant holds up the parasol, but not for any of Johann's children. The young servant can be seen posing for the viewer as he gazes to the right side of the painting, resulting in the profile of his face only being revealed. In the right foreground of the painting the artists depicted a stone/clay flower pot, where a colourful parrot can be seen standing on the top rim. As mentioned previously, the parrot is a symbol of the New World, specifically Brazil, like the servant both convey a meaning of 'foreignness'. Interestingly, and possibly connected to this is that the young servant in the background is not holding the umbrella up for the children, but holding up in a way that harmonizes with his pose/posture. The young servant is not serving the children, but rather poses as part of the depicted decor. This gives a feeling that the artist depicted the servant for decoration or display like the parrot and the statue, rather than giving him the purpose of serving Johann Van Kretschmar's children. With that being said, the function of the parrot, and the servant may be similar in Haagen's piece. Strikingly, the depiction of the statue of Venus strongly suggests that elements such as the parrot and the young servant were considered by the Dutch public (or possibly the Van Kretschmar family) to be one of the many visual pleasures, but may also have been displayed to introduce a contrast between classical antiquity and Africa.

Another one of the pieces chosen for the catalogue that is considered to be a genre painting is Louis Vallee's *A woman is handed fruit by a servant*. The reason why this painting was chosen for this chapter is because the painting recreates a scene rather than depiction a specific sitter. The title of the

⁵⁸ Goetz, "An Indian element in 17th Century Dutch art", 224.

painting does not reveal a sitter, and more importantly, the sitter is not identifiable. Within the composition, the artist depicts two figures that create a scene. The two figures occupy the foreground of the painting, and are placed in front of a classical clouded sky, on the left background the artist depicts a classical pillar, with vines circulating the pillar. The figure in the centre of the painting is depicted sitting on a stool that is dressed with a dark brown fabric that hangs down the left side of the painting. The artist dresses the woman in the centre with a white blouse under an orange cloak, as well as a long and beautiful yellow/golden dress. The artist also decorates this woman with an eye-catching, white, feathered headdress and a gleaming pearl earring on both ears. Again, feathered headgear has been heavily claimed to be valued much by the Dutch.⁵⁹ Mentioned previously by Rublack in her article, the Dutch appreciated the craft of feathers in fashion, as well as the trade of feathers.⁶⁰ To her left, and on the right side of the composition, the artist depicts a ‘servant’ as mentioned in the title, thereby already given a lower role by the artist. The female servant is depicted by the artist wearing a loose, dark blue dress, where her left shoulder is revealed to the viewer. The artist decorates the servant with a gleaming pearl earring on her left ear, and is depicted facing, and gazing directly at the other woman. Additionally, the female servant can be seen kneeling down on her right leg and offering the other woman a bowl of fruit, specifically apples, peaches and oranges, and lemon. It is worth mentioning that certain fruits depicted in this bowl were imported from outside the Netherlands, and were foreign to the Dutch. The orange for example was a fruit that originated in China, and was imported to Europe from there. Both the lemon and the peach were fruits that came and were imported from the Mediterranean; the peach specifically, was regarded as one of the more costly delicacies. The woman in the centre of the painting can be seen interacting with these offered fruit, and delicately holds the stem of one of the fruits with her index finger and her thumb. Interestingly, under the female servant, and under the left leg of the servant, the artist paints a detail of a spear, specifically the blade, and part of the handle as well. The inclusion of the spear in the composition adds meaning and may in fact be symbolic. The artist's depiction of the spear below the servant may be

⁵⁹ Rublack, “Befeathering the European”, 23.

⁶⁰ Rublack, 23.

explained by a Dutch perception of the people of Africa. Both the artist, and the Dutch public may have had the perception of the people of Africa as primitive, or savages thereby depicting the spear beneath the servant.

The painting may also have a Calvinist meaning. Simon Schama's book *The Embarrassment of Riches* discusses how 17th century Dutch painting may have and can be interpreted as having Calvinist connotations. In his book, Schama interprets the meaning the artist places in a number of paintings, discussing the common issue of temptation, specifically of sensual pleasures. Schama explains that those who are tempted and deluded by sensual pleasure lead "lives of sin and piety".⁶¹ Schama discusses this point alongside Dirck van Baburen's *The Procuress* and Nicolaes Maes's *Prayer without End*. Schama suggests that Maes's old woman "awaits death in virtue, stripped of the deluding folly of things. Her meal is lenten, the sparse and sacred food of herring and bread ... Money, like food or the burden of their sensual life, has happily fallen away from them ... They are ready for the life of the spirit".⁶² Maes's piece represents resisting the temptations of one's sensual life. In complete contrast, Van Baburen's piece represents the "evil corruption of appetite". In this composition, the woman is tempted by sexual pleasure, Schama states that "once their own sensual appetite is jaded, they transfer its urge from lust to commerce, from sex to money".⁶³ The scene created by Louis Vallee may strongly be a representation of the temptation of earthly and worldly desires, as well as the desire of possessions. There are several ways in which the scene can be interpreted as such. The scene shows the woman's desire for the offered fruit, tempted by the servant on her left. The artist depicts the woman in the centre of the composition interested in the array of fruits, as she delicately holds the stem of one of the fruits on the bowl. Secondly, Vallee depicts the servant on the right of the composition in a strikingly seductive manner, another common reminder, and a theme artists would intentionally represent in their compositions. This scene as a whole is

⁶¹ Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: an Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 431.

⁶² Schama, 431.

⁶³ Schama, 431

therefore an illustration of the sitter being tempted by sensual pleasure, and was a visual reminder given by the artist to fall away from such desires.

Adriaen van Utrecht's *Allegory of prosperity (1640-1652)* (fig 56) is one other genre scene that features three different figures in its composition. The painting is of a palace interior scene with a crowned young woman, a dark-toned servant as well as a kneeling farmer. The servant is depicted wearing fine clothing, and more noticeably, a hat with a feather attached to it, a possible common fashion theme for African servants. As mentioned previously, and explained by Ulinka Rublack in her article, there was a fascination by the Dutch for the aesthetics of feathers, as well as featherwork and their presence in clothing and fashion.⁶⁴ In this painting along with previous cases, the African servant is the one who wears the item of clothing with a feather. Is this a coincidence or could it possibly be a common theme, not only a link to foreignness, but African in particular.⁶⁵

Moreover, the composition features an array of valuables and luxury products by their feet, these luxury goods are depicted around the entire scene. On the background to the right side of the painting is an arch that reveals part of a landscape. The landscape includes a single tree, in front of a clouded sky. Within Adriaen van Utrecht's palace interior a farmer kneels at the right side of the composition. The farmer carries a spade, and is depicted wearing half a shirt which reveals his left shoulder and entire left arm. The farmer gazes to the bottom left part of the scene, where all the array of luxury products are on the floor. On the left of the scene the artist depicts a table covered by a black cloth. Van Utrecht fills this table with a golden plate/tray, next to a golden stand. The artist also depicts a jewelry box that had been tipped over, where an array of necklaces and bracelets can be seen hanging out of the jewelry box and down from the edge of the table. At the foreground and by the feet of the figures is an entire row filled with different valuable goods. To the left side of this row the artist depicts gold decorative objects, as well as a silver platter. Next to the silver platter is a blue pouch filled with gold coins. The artist depicts the

⁶⁴ Rublack. "Befeathering the European", 23.

⁶⁵ Rublack, 24.

coins pouring out of the blue pouch. In the front of the pouch the artist depicts a set of porcelain (or Delftware) plates stacked up on each other. One big plate, three smaller plates stacked up on each other, and two small bowls, one at the top of the stack, and one hanging by the edge of the lowest porcelain plate. To the right of these luxury products, Van Utrecht displays a basket filled with various vegetables such as leak, artichoke, and several other root vegetables. In front of the basket the artist depicts a set of carrots, lettuce, and other root vegetables. It is worth mentioning that the Dutch had a high fascination for Chinese porcelain, and had begun its manufacturing process in the Netherlands, where in Delft they appeared to imitate the Chinese most successfully. The Dutch public, inclusive of well-known Dutch artists of the 17th century such as Johannes Vermeer “had a demonstrable interest in Chinese ceramics”.⁶⁶

Furthermore, the figure on the left part of the painting seems like a servant, but is dressed with a wealthier outfit than the farmer. Though not mentioned as a servant in the piece’s title, the artist depicts this figure wearing a dark vest, as well as a bonnet-type hat with a white feather attached to it. This figure is also depicted by the artist wearing a gold necklace with a circular ornament attached to it, and can be seen handing over what seems to be a leaf crown to the female figure in the centre of the composition. The figure in the centre of the composition can be seen as the leading figure, with the most authority, and dressed with the most expensive clothing. This figure wears a white blouse under a red gown with gold coloured ornaments and a emerald-coloured pearl on her chest. Van Utrechts depicts this woman with a beautiful blue cape which flows behind her. This woman is decorated with a pearl necklace wrapped around her neck, two pearl earrings on each ear, and a beautiful gold crown that sits on top of her head. This woman can be seen interacting with both the servant to her right, and the farmer on her left. The servant hands her the leaf crown, whereas the older farmer seems as if he is kneeling for her, as she gently places her hand on the top of his scalp. Interestingly, the African servant is not depicted ‘lesser than’, and seems as if he carries the same status as the farmer to the right of the composition.

⁶⁶ Weststeijn, “Cultural Reflections on Porcelain”, 223.

Jan van Campen's *Part of the Triumphal Procession, with Gifts from the East and the West* (1649-1651), is considered to be a painting of gifts (products) given from the East and West. The composition is large, and consists of a great amount of foreign objects, figures, and animals. In the foreground of the composition Van Campen depicts a huge group of people carrying and showcasing the gifts. Some of the figures can be seen holding a bowl of fruit, others interacting with each other as well as the gifts they are showcasing. On the left side of the painting there are five younger looking figures, the one on the left with the yellow clothing is depicted holding a white bowl filled with an abundance of shells with varying shapes and sizes. By this figures' knees further to his left covered by the shadow, the artist depicts a pineapple. Behind the group of younger figures depicted in the front of the composition is the figure of an African woman, this woman is depicted holding a red-coloured parrot on her right hand and gazing and interacting with the parrot. What is noticeable about this figure is that her features are extremely shadowed. As mentioned previously this may have been this artist's intent, or rather, may have been a result of a pigments' discoloration.

Amongst the group of people the one in particular that stands out and that is the African/Afro-Atlantic woman. This figure can be seen on the left of the composition and is dressed with a white blouse and a floral crown. Some of the gifts from the West in this composition include the two parrots in the painting, one coloured red is held by the African woman on the left side of the painting, and the other coloured white is sitting on top of the white porcelain pot on the upper central part of the composition. Related to the parrots, feathers were also a foreign import. Discussed in relation to some of the earlier paintings, feathers came from ostriches and were hunted by locals from West to North Africa.⁶⁷ Rublack discusses the frequent appearance of feathers in Dutch clothing and fashion, and the appreciation and fascination for the aesthetics of feathers as well as featherwork and its craft.⁶⁸ On both the left and right side of the white parrot, a circular pattern of feathers can be seen which must have been a gift from the West. Some of the gifts from outside of Europe and in the Mediterranean area include the two bowls

⁶⁷ Rublack, "Befeathering the European", 24.

⁶⁸ Rublack, 24.

of lemon held by the woman with the yellow dress. Furthermore, some of the products (gifts) from the East included in the composition consist of the white porcelain bowl to the right of the bowl of lemon. Porcelain products were one of China's biggest imports and was undoubtedly loved by the Dutch. Another recognizable East-Asian import in the composition is the Samurai Armor which can be seen at the very top of the piece, and is located at the centre of the painting. This set of samurai armor was noticeably a Japanese product, and was gifted by the Tokugawa Shogun to Prince Maurits.⁶⁹

This painting by Jacob van Campen conveys several meanings that are partially similar to the paintings discussed in this chapter. The African woman does not function to enhance the beauty of a single/group of sitters, in this composition this woman contributes to the idea of foreignness represented by the abundance of foreign products/goods displayed. The first feeling the artist tries to convey in this painting is the abundance of 'gifts', as mentioned in the title. By depicting and showcasing the goods in a dignified, and majestic manner, Van Campen's piece demonstrates how much the Dutch value such products, more so, the idea and representation of foreignness. The scene is in fact, part of a Roman style procession, a ritual that celebrates the return of a victorious general, his army, along with captured goods and treasures of the victory.

The second chapter focused on the visual and iconographic analyses of paintings that were classified as genre. Much like the first chapter, apart from a couple of anomalies, the African/Afro-Atlantic in the composition is regularly depicted as inferior. The slight difference between the first chapter and this chapter is that the scene is normally surrounded by a group of people, the first chapter regularly included two figures (the sitter and the servant). Another difference between the two chapters is that for the first chapter, the artist regularly depicts the sitter as well as the servant indoors (although there are one or two anomalies in which the sitter and servant were depicted in a garden/outdoor scene). Besides this, the objects, materials and clothing are similar between the two chapters. Commonly

⁶⁹ Adam Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun: The Dutch Encounter with Tokugawa Japan*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 25-26.

depicted items of clothing include cavalier hats, silk dresses, feathered turbans etc. Some of the commonly depicted objects in these scenes include tapestries, and pearl necklaces and other jewelry depicted in jewelry boxes. Umbrellas is one other commonly depicted object that is featured more in genre paintings in the catalogue. Some fruits are commonly depicted in the first and second chapter, for example mandarins (both of which come from China), also from China is porcelain, a material that was loved and manufactured by the Dutch.

Chapter 4: Portraits of African figures as the sitter/protagonist

This chapter focuses on portraits of African figures in Dutch 17th century painting, where they are the sitter, protagonist, or have the lead role in the painting. Hendrick Heerschop's *African Boy in a Richly Stitched Robe (1654-1659)* (fig. 3), for example, is a portrait that features one African figure as the leading figure in the painting, depicted wearing expensive golden attire. This painting was one of many that featured in the exhibition *Black in Rembrandt's Time* in the Rembrandthuis. Heerschop's piece features an African figure wearing bright gold coloured clothing, The artist depicts earrings on both ears having a reflection, small glints of each of the earrings were delicately depicted by the artist. The artist depicts the sitter to be wearing a beautifully stitched robe locked on his chest, the robe covers both the sitter's shoulders and hangs down beneath the bottom of the painting. Around the sitter's neck, the artist depicts a gold chain which is connected to a circular object that he seems to be holding with both of his hands. Mentioned in the catalogue to the Rembrandthuis's *Black in Rembrandt's Time*, the Dutch title of the piece is called *Koning Casper*, suggesting that Heerschop is depicting one of the three kings that followed the North Star that ultimately led to baby Jesus. The gold circular object the sitter holds is described to be one of the three presents given to Jesus the day Mary had given birth to him. Though some people may consider this piece as a biblical scene, the artist depicts this biblical figure as a portrait. The catalogue to *Black in Rembrandt's time* confirms the intentions of the artist and what or who the artist is trying to depict. The book confirms the depiction of one of the three magi in the biblical story of Jesus's birth, comparing the depiction of the sitter to the style of Rembrandt. In discussion of Heerschop's

painting, it is mentioned that the man depicted in the painting is the African Magus during the biblical story of the birth of Jesus, and is considered to be one of Hendrik Heerschop's best works.⁷⁰ There may however be confusion in the titling of the painting. The usual name of the Arabian king in the biblical stories is Balthasar, and is traditionally referred to the King of Arabia and specifically gave the gift of myrrh to baby Jesus, used throughout history as a perfume, incense, and/or medicine. Caspar, who is mentioned as the title of Heerschop's piece, is an entirely different individual, as it is known that the Arabian king was Balthasar, and not Caspar. In the biblical stories, Caspar was not described to have excessively dark skin tone, however was described to be an Indian scholar, with roots in the East. Therefore there either is an error in the catalogue, or more likely, Hendrick Heerschop decided to give excessively dark features to the Middle-Eastern King Caspar.

Another portrait worth mentioning in this chapter is Willem van Mieris's *Portrait of a Young African woman* (1677-1744) (fig. 10). Van Mieris's piece features a single figure (the sitter) in a vignette, an African woman occupying the central space in a relatively dark interior. This piece by the artist is a vignette or *tronie* depending on whether the individual (modelling the piece was real) was meant to be a portrait, though the lack of facial expression given by the sitter, the way the sitter is dressed, gives the impression that this piece resembles a *tronie*. The woman in the painting is depicted by the artist wearing eye-catching clothing, such as a white blouse, covered by a dark sash that covers both her shoulders. She holds part of the sash on her left hand showing its length. The woman in the painting wears a beautiful red-coloured headdress. In the centre of the headdress directly above the woman's forehead is a circular silver piece, attached to a yellow-coloured feather which stands upright. Although not a feathered headdress, this piece can be considered a confirmation of Rublack's argument of a Dutch fascination for

⁷⁰ Elmer Kolfin, Epcó Runia, Stephanie Archangel, Mark Ponte, Marieke De Winkel, and David De Witt *Black in Rembrandt's Time*. (Zwolle: WBOOKS, 2020), 113.

featherwork, and feathers implemented in fashion.⁷¹ This is because the fascination of feathers was only made possible by its “extensive trade with Africa”.⁷² As Rublack discusses “material crossing”, it can be understood that that the combination of European clothing (or rather clothing valued by Europe) with the African woman as the sitter, Willem van Mieris’s piece can be considered to be an illustration of this “crossing”.⁷³

More importantly, the artist seemingly aims to highlight the beauty of the sitter as he depicts the African woman wearing a pearl earring on her right ear (possibly on her left ear as well), and a pearl necklace wrapped around her neck. When further studying the composition it is clear to the audience that the artist wished to highlight the beauty of the sitter, and may have possibly been interested in the combination of the complexion of the sitter with the white blouse, as well as the reflections of the pearl earring and necklace. Another interpretation of the meaning behind this piece is that the artist may have intended to represent foreignness, given by the pearl jewelry, the ostrich feather attached to the turban, and the depiction of this african woman as the sitter. As Ulinka Rublack justifies the “fascination” for the foreign products from Africa and their craft, which feather and featherwork are a part of.⁷⁴

Interestingly, Van Mieris’s painting shares similar qualities to Karel van Mander III’s *African man with a Turban and Armor* (1645) (fig. 1), painted a fraction earlier than Van Mieris’s piece. Van Mander’s composition consists of a single figure occupying the central space of a dark/shadowy interior. Like Van Mieris’s piece the figure is depicted by the artist wearing a headdress, however, more evidently a white cloth-turban. The turban has a light-brown feather attached to it that stands upright, also a string of silver-like beads runs across the centre of the turban. When looking at the feathered turban as a valued feathered-clothing product, we cannot forget Rublack’s explanation of where it was actually made. They were transported to Turkey where the locals crafted and “manufactured” helmets and feathered turbans.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Rublack, “Befeathering the European”, 23.

⁷² Rublack, 23.

⁷³ Rublack, 23.

⁷⁴ Rublack, 23.

⁷⁵ Rublack, 22.

As discussed in the earlier chapters, there has been a frequent pairing of feathered clothing products and African servants and sitters. Since feathers, as well as featherwork has its roots in Africa this connection may not be a coincidence due to their common pairing.⁷⁶ Furthermore, the sitter is depicted with a dynamic pose, with the back of his right hand placed on his hip, and his left hand rests on a stand, what seems to be an arm of a chair, however is too unclear to specifically define. The African figure in Van Mander's piece is depicted wearing a dark blue attire with a cape, a red cloth wrapped around his waist which creates his trousers. The artist depicts the sitter with heavy armor, the artist gives the audience a small glance of the sitter's armor which can be seen on the left part of the sitter's chest, a reflective white and gold plate can be seen. Also depicted by the artist are different ornaments around his body which consist of a sword kept inside the red cloth, chains which are wrapped diagonally across the sitter's chest, and most especially earrings, one on each ear. It is fairly difficult to make claims on the status that the artist gives to the sitter. On one hand, the artist depicts the sitter to have both a strong pose and a strong personality, this is given by his firm stance as well as his direct eye-contact with the viewer. The turban worn by the sitter is one of the items of clothing that are foreign in the painting. In the catalogue to the Rembrandthuis's exhibition *Black in Rembrandt's Time*, Elmer Kolfin discusses this piece in more depth, along with other similar variants under the category of tronie. In the catalogue, the author makes clear that when painting an African individual in a history painting or in a tronie, it was more likely that they were painting African models from real life.⁷⁷ The author explains that the powerful individuality of such tronies suggests that they were painted from a living model, and then at a later moment the costumes were added. The author states that there are three variants to the way African individuals were dressed, and decorated in both history paintings and tronies. First is the characterization of the exotic/foreign outfit in which the most common attribute would be the turban often in combination with a cloak and a precious buckle. In association to Karel Van Mander's *African man with Turban and Armor*, Elmer Kolfin states that Dutch artists would include attributes that give the African models the appearance of a "biblical black

⁷⁶ Rublack, 23.

⁷⁷ Kolfin, Runia, Archangel, Ponte, De Winkel, and De Witt *Black in Rembrandt's Time*, 30.

king”.⁷⁸ Some of the attributes that contribute to this impression is their occasional depictions with swords and other weapons, their depiction wearing rich exotic dress, as well as rich decor such as earrings and other forms of jewelry. The combination of these decorations which is illustrated by Karel Van Mander in his piece, *African man with Turban and Armor*, gives the audience an impression of the African figure as a “Northern African prince” comparable to Othello, a Northern African general in the service of the Venetian army. In the midst of Venice’s war with the Ottoman-Turks over the island of Cyprus, Othello was leading the Venetian army, and was the leading role in Shakespeare’s famous tragedy.

Mark Ponte’s section of the catalogue *Black in Rembrandt’s Time* discusses the possibilities and likelihood of African model’s as well the thriving African community in 17th century Netherlands, specifically Amsterdam. Ponte discusses whether there is a connection between the presence of African individuals in 17th century Dutch art, as well as their growing presence in the Netherlands. Research has shown that there was ample opportunity for Dutch artists to paint such individuals from life. Through archival documents and records, Ponte has found evidence for the growth of this African community, and claims that more and more people of African descent came to the Dutch Republic (whether or not enslaved), or seldomly as sailors. From the beginning of 1630, a small community of free individuals of African descent largely grew in population in Amsterdam. This community lived in the vicinity of Jodenbreestraat, where in the same period Rembrandt lived, in what is now the Museum Rembrandthuis. Ponte states that the African community that lived in Jodenbreestraat reached its peak in the late 1650’s. Ponte not only justifies this claim which records weddings of people from this community etc., but also proves how this is often illustrated in 17th century Dutch painting. Ponte discusses his point in association with Jacob Van der Ulft’s *The Market on Dam Square in Amsterdam*. A close-up of the fish market located on the right foreground of this painting shows an African boy looking at the selection of fish presented on top of the baskets. Ponte believes this is one of the many pieces of visual evidence that not

⁷⁸ Kolfin, Runia, Archangel, Ponte, De Winkel, and De Witt *Black in Rembrandt’s Time*, 30.

only proves that there was an African community, but also that this community participated in Dutch ‘daily-life’.

Dutch Artist Gerrit Dou’s *Tronie of a young black man* (1635) (fig. 64) is one of his paintings that features a young African man as the protagonist of his piece, which likely has been painted from life. This is one of the many paintings that was presented in the Rembrandthuis’s exhibition on the African presence in the Netherlands during the 17th century, *Black in Rembrandts Time*. Gerrit Dou’s tronie shares similar elements to the tronies discussed previously in this chapter, as the sitter occupies the centre of the piece in a shadowy interior scene. More important to discuss for a tronie are the posture, clothing and facial expression of the figure in the painting. When compared to Karel van Mander’s *African man with Turban and Armour*, the facial expression of the young man in Dou’s piece appears to be much more calm and plain, as opposed to firm. The figure depicted in Dou’s tronie is wearing a blue attire, with a reflective golden chain that runs diagonally across the figure’s chest. The artist depicts the figure wearing a white cloth turban in which a small feather is attached on the left side. Again another African servant/sitter depicted with feathered clothing. Either coincidence or intent, there is a frequent pairing between feathered clothing and Africans depicted in painting, this may be because of the products roots, and manufacturing in Africa.⁷⁹ Additionally, the leftover cloth of the turban can be seen hanging down behind the figure, further covered by shadow. What is noticeable is the depiction of a small earring on the figure’s left ear, visibly given by the small reflection of its circular shape, as well as the chain connected to his ear. This painting by Dou is noticeably a more intimate tronie when compared to Van Mander’s *African Man with Turban and Armour*.

It is worth mentioning that Dou was one of the apprentices of Rembrandt, in whose studio he worked earlier in his life. From this picture we can tell that Rembrandt may have possibly shared his interest in the realistic depiction of facial features, especially features of African men. For their depictions, Rembrandt frequently uses foreign/exotic attires specifically for tronies and history paintings.

⁷⁹ Rublack, “Befeathering the European”, 24.

Ivan Gaskell discusses the relationship Gerrit Dou had with his master Rembrandt. Gaskell mentions that at the start of 1631, and the preceding years, Dou had worked in Rembrandt's studio as an apprentice. In *The Rhetoric of Dress in Seventeenth-Century Dutch and Flemish Portraiture*, Emilie Gordenker discusses the interest in exotic fashion by Rembrandt and his apprentices, believing that it was common for both Rembrandt and his apprentices to incorporate exotic dress, or objects in their compositions. With Rembrandt's *Man in Oriental Costume* ("*The Noble Slav*") under discussion, the author states that "the manner in which he used exotic attire is typical for Rembrandt".⁸⁰ The author continues with her point, mentioning that "more important than the origin of the costume, then, seems to have been the accumulation of rich garments that emphasized the exoticism and Eastern character of the dress".⁸¹ Specifically in "*The Noble Slav*" and in many other pieces, It is known that Rembrandt and his apprentices executed tronies of men and women wearing a foreign-looking or historical garb. Gordenker mentions that Rembrandt and his pupils therefore "used costumes to locate the figure in a fictional realm". This point can be justified when looking at Gerrit Dou's *Tronie of a young black man*, as the feathered turban he depicts originated in the East and in Northern Africa. There is therefore a connection between tronies made by Rembrandt and Gerrit Dou in the execution of rich garments and clothing that emphasized an Eastern character. Also, one can see the influence Rembrandt had on Gerrit Dou's composition's in the realistic depiction of features, and the use of foreign elements in costume and in the composition as a whole. Again as expressed by Mark Ponte previously, it is likely that for Gerrit Dou's piece, he painted an African model from life, a clear reason for the figures striking individuality, and accurate facial features.

The painting to discuss next, and an ideal comparison to Gerrit Dou's *Tronie of a young black man* is Rembrandt's *Two Moors*. Rembrandt creates a composition with two figures occupying the central space. No objects are depicted around the composition, nor a proper background. The piece centres on the

⁸⁰ Emilie Gordenker, "The rhetoric of dress in seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish portraiture." in *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*. (Baltimore: Walters Art Museum, 1999), 92.

⁸¹ Gordenker, 92.

two African figures represented by the artist. The catalogue to the Rembrandthuis's exhibition: *Black in Rembrandt's Time* discusses this piece in its preface. In the preface, the author believes that it was Rembrandt who made the most famous painting of an African figure. Rembrandt's *Two Moors* is a striking piece for several reasons. First, African figures in 17th century Dutch painting mostly gained supporting roles, "however for this piece both figures have the leading role, and are the only subject in the painting".⁸² These two figures are given their individual facial features and are represented realistically. This piece led to the rise of several questions as to Rembrandt's connection with these figures, and whether or not they were real African models, or rather, made up by Rembrandt. The author further discusses ways in which the figures had a close connection with each other, questioning their relationship as friends, or even brothers. This painting raises questions based on the image African individuals were given by artists in 17th century Dutch painting. Explained by the numerous studies of African models, further studying facial expressions, and changing exotic attires in tronies and history scenes, the author believes that there is no doubt of an interest in their representation whether as a leading figure or subsidiary figure. Though the *Two Moors* is not necessarily a tronie, what is likely is that the piece is a study of African individuals, which derives from a personal interest by the artist himself, this also may be one of the explanations (and influences) for Dou's depiction (and interest) of the African individual, in his *Tronie of a young black man*.

Kolfin discusses this piece, along with many other representations of Africans by Rembrandt himself. In his chapter in *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, entitled "Rembrandt's Africans", Kolfin discusses Rembrandt's intentions' as well as the formal aspects of Rembrandt's Africans. Specifically for the two African men depicted in Rembrandt's piece, he believes that it is a unique piece when comparing it to many of the other tronies of Africans made by Dutch artists during this century. In his chapter, Kolfin states that "the men in Rembrandt's painting of the two Africans have an extraordinary lifelike appearance. They are not shown with the features generally seen in tronies of Africans, like pearl earrings, bow and quiver, turban or Turkish costume, and arms" such as in Karel Van Mander's painting discussed

⁸² Kolfin, Runia, Archangel, Ponte, De Winkel, and De Witt *Black in Rembrandt's Time*, 7.

earlier in this chapter.⁸³ Kolfin continues his description of Rembrandt's study of the two Africans, stating that the figure in the front has the resemblance of a Roman-portrait bust, where "a drawing by Rembrandt of one such bust shows that he must have had models of this type in mind when planning the painting as does the dress of the men".⁸⁴ Here, Kolfin gives several reasons to the possibility (or lack thereof) that the two protagonists in the *Two Moors* were modelled by real African individuals, and Rembrandt drew these individuals from life. Kolfin states that it had been generally assumed that this painting was based on two live models, resulting in the figures' 'life-likeness', but, he reveals that we should keep an open mind "about the possibility that one or both of the men were actually painted from a sculpted head ... which according to his inventory of 1656, Rembrandt had a Moor[']s head] cast from life".⁸⁵

Kolfin introduces another point which makes *Two Moors* a unique tronie/history painting, especially in the depiction and representation of African individuals. The right figure is depicted by Rembrandt wearing a Roman military tunic, along with drapery over the shoulder almost in the fashion of a short mantle, again resembling a Roman portrait bust, where Kolfin believes that Rembrandt frequently casts his 'African figures' in "unspecified historical roles". Kolfin states that none of Rembrandt's studies and tronies are Africans depicted as 'contemporary figures'. This reveals that the artist "clearly was not interested in the role of Africans in seventeenth-century Dutch society, nor in their African life and identity".⁸⁶ When thinking of and depicting Africans, Kolfin believes that Rembrandt thought differently compared to the average Dutch artist of the 17th century. Kolfin states that "when Rembrandt thought of Africans in figure studies, he had it in mind to assign them a place in a historical or theatrical scene. This applies equally to the so-called tronies ... often dressed up in an exotic fashion ... a substantial part of Rembrandt's oeuvre".⁸⁷ Kolfin further argues for the idea that this piece was intended to be a study, not only of facial features, but more importantly, of colour, tone and contrast between light and dark. Kolfin

⁸³ Elmer Kolfin, "Rembrandt's Africans". In *Image of the Black in Western Art*, ed. by David Bindman, Henry Louis Gates and Karon Dalton, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2010), 275.

⁸⁴ Kolfin, "Rembrandt's Africans", 275.

⁸⁵ Kolfin, "Rembrandt's Africans", 297.

⁸⁶ Kolfin, "Rembrandt's Africans", 275.

⁸⁷ Kolfin, "Rembrandt's Africans", 275.

asserts that “the painting is a study of tonal colour values and light ... the browns ochers range from dark orangey brown to olive green ... the face was painted extraordinarily economically, with only one layer of very thin and fluid browns and ochers over an under-modelling of transparent reddish brown ... if anything, Rembrandt’s *Two Africans* is a study of the flesh tones of dark skin like Rubens’s sketch of four Africans”.⁸⁸ The author believes that this deep interest by Rembrandt to study different flesh tones, and to accurately depict them functioned as an example to his pupils, which was a reason for their (Gerrit Dou etc.) life-like depictions of Africans. Ultimately Kolfin makes clear that there were a fraction of artists that refrained from depicting Africans in a 17th century Dutch context, rather, placing them in a historical or theatrical scene. Additionally, a fraction of these artists, including Rembrandt, Rubens and their pupils had a general interest in the accurate depictions of African features, and skin colour, and the effects of light on dark skin.

In the first section to the Rembrandthuis’s catalogue *Black in Rembrandt’s time*, Elmer Kolfin discusses the three paintings, *Portrait of Pedro Sunda*, *Portrait of Diego Bemba*, and most importantly out of the three *Portrait of Dom Miguel de Castro*. These three pieces were primarily attributed to Albert Eckhout, it is still unclear who the artist truly was, now being either attributed to Jasper or his brother Jeronimus Beckx. These three pieces by Beckx feature Congolese Africans as the main protagonist/sitter. Commissioned by the Dutch West India Company (WIC), these three portraits were made during their three month stay in the Netherlands from Congo. Of the three, it is clear that both Diego Bamba and Pedro Sunda are depicted as inferior to Miguel de Castro, as is made evident by the way all three individuals are dressed. In his portrait, Miguel de Castro is dressed with an elite European attire, an attire described to be worn by the upper class. The attire was gifted to him by John Maurice, Prince of Nassau-Siegen. Miguel de Castro is depicted wearing a greyish-white undershirt, decorated with an intricate pattern, and at the bottom of the undershirt the artist depicts a pink-coloured ribbon. Placed over the undershirt is a short-sleeved vest with a white collar. A greyish-white sash runs diagonally across the sitter's chest, this

⁸⁸ Kolfin, “Rembrandt’s Africans”, 298.

sash is also decorated with intricate patterns. In the painting, the sitter is depicted in a mountainous outdoor setting covered mostly by the clouds and skies.

There are two striking elements in Beckx's composition that affirms Miguel's high status. The cavalier hat, as discussed in the previous chapter, was made from beaver pelt which was a material that could be found in North America.⁸⁹ Also, the ostrich feather attached to the hat was a product that came directly from Africa, the feathers' orange colour may likely have been a symbolic reference to the Netherlands.⁹⁰ Although possibly a coincidence, this painting is another example of a pairing between an African servant/sitter and a feather most probably because of the feathers' African roots.⁹¹ This has been explained clearly in Ulinka Rublack's article on featherwork, a craft admired heavily by the Dutch.⁹² Both the material of the hat and the feather attached to it combine and manufacture to make an elegant and luxurious product which was the cavalier hat. To own, or be depicted with such a hat justifies Miguel's status as member of the elite. Another minute element in the painting can be seen at the bottom right side. With only slight-visibility, Beckx depicts a beautiful grip of a cavalier sword, beautifully carved and designed. As discussed earlier, the ownership of a sword strictly confirms a free individual. Don Miguel de Castro was not just a free individual, by the depiction of such a beautifully carved and luxurious sword, along with his luxurious attire, the sitter was a wealthy individual, strictly considered as part of the higher-class elite.

In Beckx's two other portraits, both sitters are depicted wearing far less expensive attire. Both Pedro Sunda and Diego Bemba are dressed with the same green attire, justifying their equal status as Miguel's accomplices. Their green outfit is decorated with golden patterns on the top and bottom of their sleeves, and gold buttons running down the centre of the attire, and again the sleeves of the attire. In his portrait Pedro Sunda is depicted holding an elephant tusk, ivory being one of Congo's most valuable and expensive

⁸⁹ Brook, *Vermeer's Hat*, 31.

⁹⁰ Rublack, "Befeathering the European", 23.

⁹¹ Rublack, 24.

⁹² Rublack, 20.

materials. Diego Bemba is depicted holding a much admired Congo-item, a woven gift-box. A striking difference between Beckx's *Portrait of Pedro Sunda* and *Portrait of Diego Bemba* and his *Portrait of Don Miguel de Castro* are the sitters' gazes. For Miguel de Castro his eyes gaze directly at the viewer, resulting in a greater personal connection with the viewer. For portraits of Miguel's accomplice Pedro Sunda, he gazes to the left side, and Diego Bemba gazes to the top-right side, both are depicted posing, without eye-contact and showcasing their 'gifts' to the viewer, justifying their position as servant/accomplice.

The fourth chapter focused on the selection of portraiture where the African/Afro-Atlantic is depicted as the sitter and protagonist of the painting. The fourth chapter can be considered to be a complete contrast to the first, where Afro-Atlantic individuals were regularly depicted as the inferior figure. In this chapter and being the only subject in the painting, the African/Afro-Atlantic is regularly depicted as strong, and their emotions/feelings can be identified clearer. There are however, cases in which the African sitter is dressed with foreign/historical clothing, having the resemblance of a tronie/history painting. Ultimately when compared to the first two chapters, compositions in which the African/Afro-Atlantic individual is depicted as the sitter/protagonist drastically differs when they are depicted as servants. They are represented with more power (depicted with a certain sense of superiority), and their emotions and presence seems to impact the viewer much more. However, in depictions of Africans with foreign/historical clothing artists would aim to convey foreignness and try to resemble a tronie/history painting.

Chapter 5: History painting and biblical scenes

This next chapter will pay closer attention to the depiction and status given to Africans individuals depicted in historical or biblical scenes painted by Dutch artists. This category of painting can be described as depictions of scenes from ancient history, biblical history, or the local history of the Netherlands. Whatever scene is presented, it must contain an African figure as either protagonist or as a filler character

that completes the scene. Examples of well-known biblical scenes that contain an African figure include the Adoration of the Kings, represented by Saint Balthasar King of Macedonia, and the Baptism of the Eunuch which is a Biblical scene which always presents an African individual. The painting represents a scene from Acts 8:26-39. Primarily, a Eunuch is a word of Greek origin meaning a man who has been castrated, employed to serve and guard the woman's living quarters in a court. Eunuch's were usually described as slaves or servants who had been castrated to make the reliable servants where physical access to the ruler could wield great influence. In short, the biblical scene of Acts 8:26-39 describes Phillip the apostle to be taken by the Holy Spirit to meet a highly placed Ethiopian court official who is reading Isaiah on the way home from Jerusalem to Gaza. The Ethiopian then asks to be baptised by Phillip as a believer in Jesus as God's Messiah. The Bible however, does not clearly state what the Ethiopian's beliefs were prior to being baptized (possibly Jewish).

In Pieter Lastman's painting of this biblical scene he manages to capture a sense of foreignness, but at the same time, biblical accuracy (fig. 26). In the right foreground of Lastman's piece Saint Phillip can be seen wearing a brown robe, and over this robe he wears a large beige fabric. Phillip the Evangelist here is depicted the exact moment baptising the eunuch as he places the underside of his hand on the African figure's forehead. The eunuch being baptized is depicted kneeling on his right knee, gazing frontside with his eyes directed to the skies. The eunuch kneeling is depicted wearing a large red robe, this man wears a long 'rope-like' fabric that is wrapped around the figure's waist, and can be seen hanging down and reaching the ground. This figure can be seen crossing his arms with his hand on each of his shoulders as if in a sort of prayer. In the central foreground the artist depicts a dog facing the viewer. To the left of the dog another African figure can be seen holding up the bible, the figure is depicted wearing a blue robe, and over this blue robe is a red cloak. This man can be seen gazing at the ritual at hand, holding up a specific page of a book. The depiction of this figure holding the book is another part of this biblical scene which is commonly depicted by artists who reproduced this biblical scene. Behind this figure is the carriage where two men are seated. Both men are depicted witnessing the baptism, one of which stands, and the other has his body turned around to face the scene. The man on the left of the carriage holds an umbrella whereas the

other man to the right holds the whip for the carriage. The inclusion of the umbrella is an added foreign element in the scene. In this composition, Lastman adds landscape elements behind the foregrounded scene. This includes a tree on the left background behind the carriage, and a small stream is placed behind the scene in the central foreground, an intentional body of water to perform the baptism.

Rembrandt Van Rijn's *The Baptism of the Eunuch* is one of his earlier pieces, painted when he was only 20 years old. Because of Rembrandt's connection to Pieter Lastman, being one of his pupils, there is a strong possibility that Lastman's composition in *Baptism of the Eunuch* may have influenced Rembrandt's depiction of the same biblical scene. Though in Lastman's depiction of the scene, there are elements that were made different to Rembrandt's, in contrast, there are elements in Lastman's scene that are shared with Rembrandt. In Rembrandt's scene painted three years later than Pieter Lastman's scene, he depicts three African figures within a landscape that is, according to the Bible, set in between Jerusalem and Gaza. The African figure placed in the front of the scene is kneeling on one knee, wearing a long beige fur coat that reaches the ground, this figure is also wearing a red undershirt with a striped pattern, and is also decorated with a reflective earring. Attached to this figure's waist is what seems like a rope made out of a specific fabric, which is wrapped around his hip and hangs down reaching the floor. The figure kneeling is being baptized by Phillip the Evangelist who stands behind this figure (defined by his long grey beard) with his hand and palm wide open above the kneeling figure's head. Phillip is depicted with a long greyish tinted beard, with a long beige cloth dress. The two other African figures can be seen behind Phillip, and the figure kneeling. One to the right of the kneeling figure is depicted squatting down holding a type of fabric that is bundled in a sphere, this appears to have the shape of a turban, possibly of the figure kneeling, or the figure holding it. This figure is dressed with a beige cloth dress, protected and covered by a dark-green cape. The bottom of this attire, closer to the figure's legs, has a beautiful curved pattern, a vague reminder of the attire being one that is foreign especially to the Netherlands. The last Ethiopian can be seen standing and posing behind the one with the green attire. This figure can be seen holding what seems to be a bible (or rather a huge book of importance to the

ceremony), this is most likely the case as it seems as if it was needed for the baptism, and almost seems as if passages are read from this book for the baptism. As he holds this book, the figure gazes directly at the ritual at hand and focuses closely. This figure wears a long blue robe, which is decorated with reflective buttons on the right and left sleeve, as well as the central area below the figure's neck. Strikingly different to the two Ethiopians in front of him is that he is also dressed with a blue feathered turban. All of the Ethiopians presented in the foreground such as the one wearing fur attire, the one with green attire, as well as the one with the blue robe seem to be wearing foreign attire, and attire that accurately depicts the time period of the scene. The attire of the figure being baptized in the foreground is strikingly primitive, which is a result of his fur coat.

The figures on horseback, and the one riding the carriage are described to be soldiers witnessing the baptism, all are carrying their own swords, and the carriage owners can be seen holding a whip for the horses. These men are also dressed wearing robes and turbans all of which directly gaze at the scene. Ultimately, the biblical scene as a whole marks the introduction of Christianity in Ethiopia as well as the creation of the Ethiopian Church. While accurately depicting this biblical story Rembrandt creates a scene which is full of emotion, and seems as if he perfectly captures a specific moment in time, this is given by reactions of the soldiers, and the other Ethiopian men. Rembrandt also illustrates the 'foreignness' of the Ethiopian men, this is mostly based on their 'foreign' clothing. The Ethiopian man being baptized in the foreground is depicted wearing a strikingly 'primitive-looking' attire which may have been a possible intention by the artist to emphasize 'foreignness'.

Rombout van Troyen's depiction of the same biblical scene, *Baptism of the eunuch (Acts 8: 31-38)*, painted five years later than Rembrandt's shares both similarities and striking differences to the one painted by Rembrandt. Firstly, in Rombout van Troyen's representation, the scene appears to be painted from a distance, featuring and offering more details to landscape elements such as the rocky hills and mountains, as well as the small bridge, and the slightly visible village/town above the bridge, built on the hills. Van Troyen perhaps depicts either their (the Ethiopian eunuch's) close arrival to Gaza or rather,

their early departure from Jerusalem. One of the differences in Van Troyen's piece is the depiction of only two rather than three Ethiopian eunuch's. Both of the Ethiopians are depicted kneeling on both knees, the one being baptized by Phillip is wearing a black outer robe with a white undershirt, he puts both palms together as if in a prayer. The second African figure depicted in this scene can be seen further to the right of the painting. This figure is dressed with a large red attire/robe and is also shown kneeling. This character is also decorated with an earring on his left ear. What is worth mentioning is that this figure seems to also be carrying a large book, which is intentionally facing Phillip the Apostle as well as the eunuch being baptized, another one of the similarities to the Rembrandt scene. Further to this characters' right is a yellow fabric which is laid on the ground, a white coloured turban sits on top of this fabric, attached to this turban is a blue-coloured feather. Standing behind this fabric, a man wearing a red robe, a large white turban and a yellow coloured cloak can be seen, this man is closely witnessing the ritual taking place. Further in the background behind this man, two older looking men can be seen in the middle of a discussion, and another man can be seen in a carriage. Barely seen are the two horses attached to this carriage, a similar feature to Rembrandt's painting of the same scene. Though Van Troyen's painting has more detail to landscape, and Rembrandt's focuses more on the people's expressions in the scene, both share similar compositional elements such as the horses, the people witnessing the ritual as well as the carrying of the bible. When compared to the composition made by Rembrandt, it is clear that Rembrandt's version successfully recreates a specific moment in time even more so than Van Troyen. Van Troyen however, like Rembrandt manages to capture the foreignness of the Ethiopians given by the variety of clothing in the scene.

Whereas Rembrandt creates a composition completely devoted to the moment of the biblical scene (inclusive of individual and personal expressions), and Rombout Van Troyen creates one that devotes much more to elements of landscape, Pieter Lastman arguably focuses on both, with partial clarity of individual expressions as well as partial devotion to landscape elements such as the stream of water, the mountainous landscape on the right background, and slightly noticeable, the small architectural structure located on the top right section of the painting placed on the very top of the mountain. Through the investigation of all

three paintings of this biblical scene, all of the three artists' pieces manage to evoke a sense of 'foreignness', this is given by all the depictions of foreign outfits, turbans, eastern fabric, and for Lastman's specifically, the umbrella.

Another commonly depicted biblical scene, arguably more common than the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch, is the Adoration of the three kings. This is a crucial, and well-known scene in the Bible that defines the birth of Jesus as well as the gift-giving of the three kings who followed the star of Bethlehem and awaited the birth of the Messiah. After following the northern star, the three kings traveled to Bethlehem, Jerusalem and gave three individual gifts to baby Jesus. The three gifts were ordinary offerings given to a royal/king, frankincense (an aromatic resin used for perfumes and scents), myrrh (a gum resin used for scents, perfumes and medicine), and gold. According to the tradition of the Western Church, Melchior was described to be a Persian scholar as well as a king of Persian. Balthasar was described to be a Babylonian scholar, often being represented as a king of Arabia. Lastly, Caspar is described to be a king of India. In David Tenier's depiction of this scene, he depicts the barn where baby Jesus was born; this structure was placed on the left side of the composition. Also on the left side of the composition Joseph can be seen leaning and witnessing the adoration, whereas Mary is depicted with a halo, sitting down, closely witnessing the adoration as well. The three kings are depicted from the central foreground of the scene to the left foreground of the scene. On the left side of the painting Teniers depicts King Balthasar who can be identified wearing a white turban, behind Balthasar Teniers depicts another young African figure, most-likely an accomplice of King Balthasar. To the right of Balthasar, King Caspar is depicted, who can be identified by his green attire. King Caspar is depicted holding a wrapped headdress, as if a turban, and on the other hand he is depicted holding a chalice, one of the gifts that are to be given to baby Jesus. In the composition King Melchior is depicted with a luxurious yellow robe; he can be seen kneeling on his left knee holding Jesus with both his hands and kissing him directly on his cheek. Behind the barn, David Teniers depicts some other architectural elements of Bethlehem. Behind the three kings, the artists created a large crowd both standing, and mounted on horses to witness the adoration of the three kings as if an extremely special occasion. In front of the classical clouded skies created by the

artist, two angels are depicted interacting with each other, and witnessing the event. For this biblical scene created by Teniers as well as others who attempted to recreate this scene, it is fair to argue that the artists' intention for the creation of such biblical scenes is to make the composition biblically and historically accurate. This includes characters and costume, the architectural setting of Bethlehem, and recreating actions and details mentioned in the biblical narrative.

Therefore to conclude this chapter, it should be understood that artists of the Dutch Golden age wished to make an accurate representation of such biblical scenes through emotion or separate details created in the composition. Biblical scenes therefore are a specialization that should be considered an outlier in this research project; these specializations do not give an accurate idea of the social perception of Africans in the Netherlands. For the biblical scene of the Baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch the three paintings made by Rembrandt, Lastman, and Van Troyen shared a great amount of similarities based on details that the scene should have included in their compositions, although recreated differently by the three artists. For example, all three artists commonly depicted the Ethiopian holding the bible towards Philip during the baptism. Their compositions also share the details of a carriage with two horses, as well as the landscape element of a river bank/stream. It is therefore fair to say that artists aimed for a biblically and historically accurate representation of this narrative.

For the Adoration of the Magi scene, there was a mistake in its inclusion for this research paper. Though this biblical scene as well as its representation by Dutch artists accurately illustrates a degree of 'foreignness', there was a mistake in that none of the characters were originally from areas in Africa, or had roots related to Africa. After looking at representations of this biblical scene by Dutch artists, there are frequent confusions towards the origin of the three kings. After looking at Tenier's representation of the scene, as well as other artists' depictions, at least one of the three Kings (occasionally Caspar), is either depicted with overly-dark tones for a King of India, or carry excessively African facial structure and features. A possible explanation for this is that Caspar may have been modelled by Africans. In the *Renaissance Quarterly*, Walter Gibson discusses the first stages of depicting one of the Magi's with a

darkened skin tone. During the Middle-Ages, the depiction of the three magi was closely associated with three continents, Europe, Asia and Africa. Gibson, however, explains, that by the early 16th century marking the end of the Middle-Ages, “the Black Magus was no longer associated with imperial ambitions ... renewed attempts to contact Prester John, the exploration of Africa, and the efforts of a rejuvenated Catholic church to assert universal authority: these were among the circumstances that ensured the eventual triumph of the Black Magus in Europe”.⁹³

Ultimately, for the biblical scene of the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch, it is fair to say that the Ethiopians in the scene had a lower status than Phillip the apostle, and the soldiers in that background. In contrast, these are biblical narratives, and the Dutch artists wished to recreate an accurate representation of this narrative. With that being said, for the specialization of biblical scenes, it is fair to say that it is extremely difficult to make any accurate conclusions to what Dutch people thought of Africans, as well as their status.

The fifth chapter paid close attention to paintings that were considered to be part of history paintings. Paintings of this chapter included interpretations of biblical, historical and mythological scenes. This chapter focused on two specific biblical scenes; the Adoration of the Magi, and the Baptism of the Eunuch. After having analysed artists' interpretations of these scenes, I have come to an understanding that these artists attempted to achieve a balance between a realistic representation of the history/timeline (including geography, clothing, materials etc.) as well as an accurate interpretation of the biblical scene itself.

Conclusion

The research aim for this paper, as well as the approach in terms of analysis, was to combine an iconographic approach in order to determine an object's meaning with a formal/visual analysis of the selected paintings.

⁹³ Gibson, Walter S. *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 2. Cambridge, 1987. 324.

The second chapter was dedicated to portraiture. The bulk of the paintings chosen for this chapter consists of a (generally white, Dutch, upper-class) sitter, who is accompanied by an Afro-Atlantic servant or page-boy. A frequent similarity among the paintings chosen for this section is that the servant was usually represented as inferior most especially when compared to the sitter. The servants' role in the selection of paintings was to illustrate both the beauty and the wealth of the sitter. After going through an iconographic analysis it is evident that several of the objects presented in the compositions, as well as the servants themselves had iconographic value. Because of their foreign identity, objects such as carpets, cavalier hats, pearls, and feathers conveyed an idea that the Dutch knew much about (and dominated) the foreign world, and their material culture. The Afro-Atlantic servants shared the iconography as both a luxurious and foreign commodity that was valued, transported and traded (by Western Europeans) throughout the century. African servants, also having a foreign identity, contributed to the concept of Dutch strength and knowledge overseas.

The third chapter focused on the visual and iconographic analyses of paintings that were classified as genre. Much like the second chapter, apart from a couple of anomalies, the African/Afro-Atlantic in the composition is regularly depicted as inferior. The slight difference between the first chapter and this chapter is that the scene is normally surrounded by a group of people, the first chapter regularly included two figures (the sitter and the servant). Another difference between the two chapters is that for the first chapter, the artist regularly depicts the sitter as well as the servant indoors (however there are one or two anomalies in which the sitter and servant were depicted in a garden/outdoor scene). Besides this, the objects, materials and clothing are similar between the two chapters. Commonly depicted items of clothing include cavalier hats, silk dresses, feathered turbans etc. Some of the commonly depicted objects in these scenes include tapestries, and pearl necklaces and other jewelry depicted in jewelry boxes. Umbrellas is one other commonly depicted object that is featured more in genre paintings in the catalogue. Some fruits are commonly depicted in the first and second chapter, for example mandarins (both of which come from China), also from China is porcelain, a material that was loved and manufactured by the Dutch. Apart from the Dutch admiration and value of foreign products (of

which the Afro-Atlantic servant is part), their representation in such compositions emphasized a sense of ‘foreignness’, and contributed to the concept of Dutch knowledge of the foreign world, as well as Dutch greatness overseas.

The fourth chapter focused on the selection of portraiture where the African/Afro-Atlantic is depicted as the sitter and protagonist of the painting. The fourth chapter can be considered to be a contrast to the first, where they are regularly depicted as the inferior figure. In this chapter and being the only subject in the painting, the African/Afro-Atlantic is regularly depicted as strong given by their posture, and that their emotions/feelings can be identified clearer, this is evident in Heerschop’s *African Man in a Richly Stitched Robe*, and Van Mander’s *African Man in a Turban and Armor*. There are however, cases in which the African sitter is dressed with foreign/historical clothing, having the resemblance of a *tronie/history* painting. Ultimately when compared to the first two chapters, compositions in which the African/Afro-Atlantic individual is depicted as the sitter/protagonist drastically differs when they are depicted as servants. However, in depictions of Africans with foreign/historical clothing artists would aim to convey foreignness and try to resemble a *tronie/history* painting.

The fifth chapter paid close attention to paintings that were considered to be part of history paintings. Paintings of this chapter included interpretations of biblical, historical and mythological scenes. This chapter focused on two specific biblical scenes; the Adoration of the Magi, and the Baptism of the Eunuch. After having analysed the artists' interpretations of these scenes, I have come to an understanding that these artists attempted to achieve a balance between a realistic representation of the history/timeline (including geography, clothing, materials etc.) as well as an accurate interpretation of the biblical scene itself.

Conclusively, through the visual description and iconographic analyses of paintings in the catalogue, the findings lead to a variety of conclusions, first is that African/Afro-Atlantic servants, along with the several objects depicted in these compositions convey an identity that is noticeably foreign. In Frans van Mieris’s *Woman in Front of a Mirror* for example, the female servant is depicted wearing what looks like a kimono. It is fair to say that artists such as Van Mieris’ attempt to convey a sense of

foreignness by depicting objects outside of the Netherlands that is very much valued by the Dutch. These include objects such as pearl necklaces and bracelets, tapestries, porcelain etc. Animals such as parrots, which came directly from South America, were also frequently depicted in some of the scenes and were equally loved by the Dutch. Moreover, it is evident that there is a dynamic and hierarchy between the sitter and the African servant. In most cases, the African individual is depicted as a servant to the sitter. The African servants are not only depicted as the inferior figure in the compositions, they have a clear function/role given by the artist to enhance the beauty and/or wealth of the sitter.

Opportunities for future research

There are a few ways in which this research can be improved. Primarily, my research is limited only to oil paintings, and not drawings and prints. Perhaps the investigation of other media such as drawings and prints would yield separate results, and therefore is a limitation to my research, and an opportunity for future research. Another way in which this research can be enhanced is to investigate the ways in which Individuals from the East Indies were depicted in Dutch painting, and possibly compare their presence with that of Africans/Afro-Atlantic. Further researching this topic will give us knowledge on the difference between the ways in which Africans and Indonesians are represented. According to the *Slavery Heritage Guide* there was as much a community of Indonesians in Amsterdam as a community of Africans, both of which were foreign to the Netherlands.⁹⁴ A study that focuses on such a comparison would not only be beneficial for further research, but would help us understand if both Africans and Indonesians were perceived similarly. Lastly, the image-based analysis of my research could have been complimented and enhanced by 17th century literature. Engaging with this material would be a relevant and interesting compliment that would help outline the way in which Afro-Atlantic individuals were represented in records, poetry, theatre, travelogues etc.

⁹⁴ Hondius, Stam, Tosch, and Jouwe, *Slavery Heritage Guide The Netherlands*, 16-17.

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Appendix (List of Illustrations):

Portraits, Genre and History Paintings depicting African figures between 1600-1700

1. *Moor with Turban and Armor* (1645), Karel Van Mander (III), Statens Museum for Kunst Copenhagen (Denmark)



2. *Moor with Turban* (1627-1629), Attributed to Jan Lievens, Private collection, Amsterdam (The Netherlands)



3. *Moor in a Richly Stitched Robe* (1654-1659), Hendrick Heerschop, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (Germany)



4. *Portrait of Don Miguel de Castro* (1643), Anonymous (possibly Jaspas or Jeronimus Beckx), National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen (Denmark)



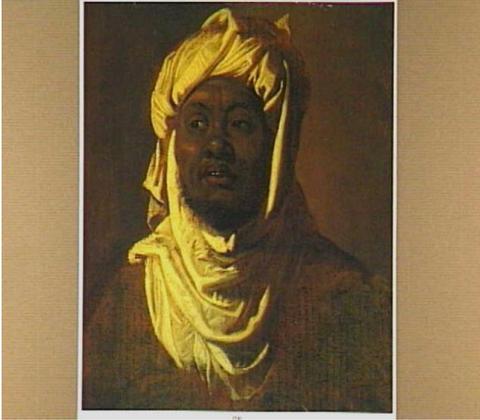
5. *Head of an African with a Turban, a Shell in his hand* (1620-1625), Abraham Bloemaert, private collection Beatriz e Mário Pimenta Camargo, São Paulo (Brazil)



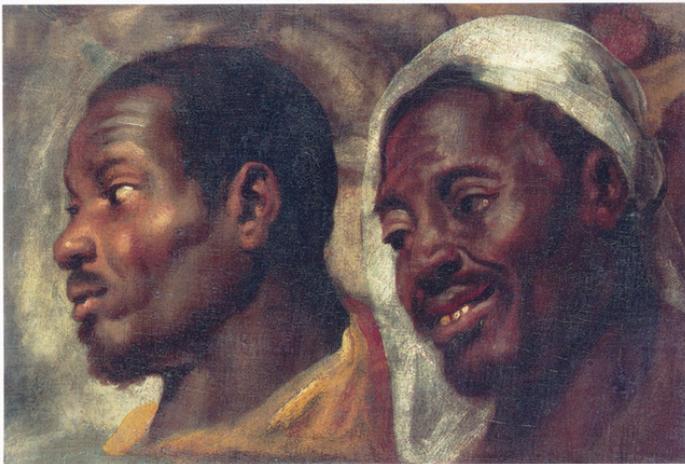
6. *Seated black man with umbrella* (1660-1665), Gerbrandt van den Eeckhout, Private collection



7. *Study portrait of a black man in Arab costume* (1620-1621), Paul Peter Rubens, Private collection, Christies, Norris, London (United Kingdom)



8. *Two Study Heads of African Men* (1608-1678), Jacob Jordaens, Private collection



9. *Portrait of a Young African Woman* (1677-1747), Willem van Mieris, New Orleans Museum of Art (U.S.)



10. *Standing Black Woman as the Personification of the Continent of Africa* (1650), Jan Boekhorst, The Princely Collections, (Liechtenstein)



11. *Head of Black man* (1600-1649), Paul Peter Rubens, Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main (Germany)



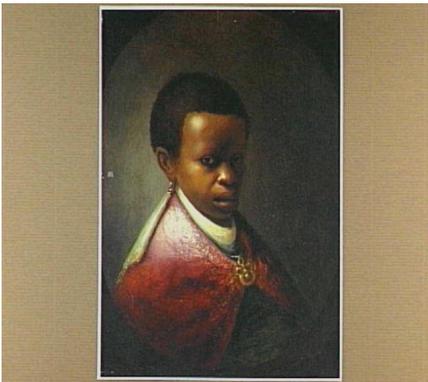
12. *Four Study Portraits of a black man* (1615-1620), Paul Peter Rubens or Anthony van Dycke, Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België, Brussels (Belgium)



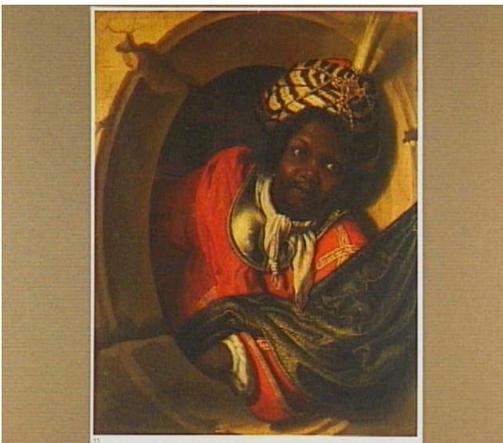
13. *Two Moors* (1661), Rembrandt, Mauritshuis, The Hague, (The Netherlands)



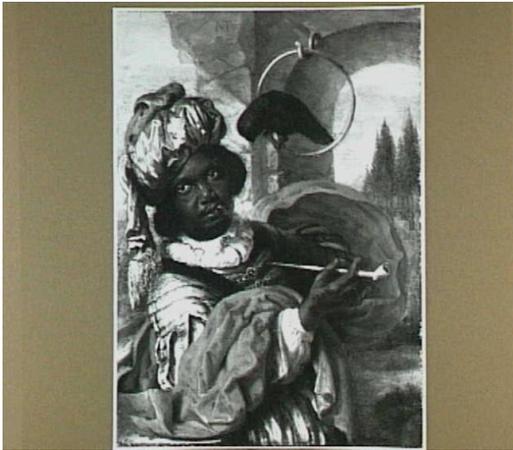
14. *Portrait of an unknown man* (1634), School of Rembrandt, Private Collection



15. *Black boy with a flag hanging from a window* (1658-1684), Batholomeus Maton, Art Dealer, London (United Kingdom)



16. *An elegantly dressed Dark-skinned boy holding a pipe* (1658-1684), Batholomeus Maton,
Daphne Alazraki Fine Art, New York City (U.S)



17. *Portrait of an unknown woman with her servant* (1632-1649), After Anthony Van Dycke

18. *Portrait of an Unknown black man (woman?)* (1640-1650), Anonymous Southern
Netherlands, art dealer S. Nijstad, The Hague (Netherlands)



19. *Charlemagne in Prayer* (1660), Jacob Jordaens, Musée des Beaux-Arts d'Arras, Arras
(France)



20. *The Baptism of the Eunuch* (1626), Rembrandt, Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht



21. *Adoration of the Kings* (1610), Rombout Uylenburgh, Ons' Lieve Heer op Solder,
Amsterdam (The Netherlands)



22. *Adoration of the Kings* (1637-1649), David Teniers, Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, Warsaw (Poland)



23. *Adoration of the Magi* (1650), Otto Wagenfeldt, St. Jacobi zu Hamburg, Hamburg (Germany)



24. *The Baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch* (1646-1674), Aert Jansz. Marienhof, Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, Karlsruhe (Germany)



25. *Baptism of the eunuch* (Acts 8: 31-38) (1630), Rombout van Troyen, Lawrence Steigrad Fine Arts, New York City (U.S.)



26. *Baptism of the Eunuch* (Acts 8: 31-38) (1623), Pieter Lastman, Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, Karlsruhe (Germany)



27. *Portrait of Mary Stuart* (1631-1661), with a Servant (1664), Adriaen Hanneman, Mauritshuis, The Hague (The Netherlands)



28. *Portrait of Prince Jørgen of Denmark (1653-1708), with a servant (1660-1665), Karel Van Mander (III), The National Museum of History Frederiksborg Castle, Hillerød (Denmark)*



29. *Family portrait of Mary of Orange-Nassau (1642-1688) and Hendrik of Nassau-Zuylestein (? -1673), with a servant (1660-1670), Johannes Mijtens, Mauritshuis, The Hague (The Netherlands)*



30. *Portrait of Princess Henriette de Vaudémont-Phalsbourg, duchesse de Lorraine (1605-1660), with a servant (1634)*, Anthony van Dycke, Private Collection Earl of Roseberry, Mentmore (United Kingdom)



31. *Portrait of Elizabeth Albertina of Anhalt-Dessau (1665-1670)*, Johannes Mijtens, Historical Collections Foundation of the House of Orange-Nassau, The Hague (The Netherlands)



32. *Portrait of Maria Amaila van Kurland (1653-1711) (1650-1699), Anonymous, Private Collection (The Netherlands)*



33. *Portrait of a Woman named Sophia Princess of the Palatinate (1630-1714), with a Servant, (1650), Anonymous (The Hague), Private Collection (the Netherlands)*

34. *Portrait of Lydia van Vredenburg, with a servant (1669), Caspar Netscher, Private collection, Maastricht (the Netherlands)*



35. *Portrait of Princess Henriette de Vaudémont-Phalsbourg, duchesse de Lorraine (1605-1660), with a servant (1634)* , Anthony van Dyck, Private Collection Earl of Roseberry (United Kingdom)



36. *Portrait of Sophie Amalie from Brunswick Luneburg (1628-1685), with a servant (1649), Karel van Mander (III), private collection Earl of Rosebery, Mentmore (United Kingdom)*



37. *Portrait of the family of Melchior de Stanza (? -?) With a servant and a self-portrait Gonzales Coques (1645-1655), Studio of Gonzales Coques, (location unknown)*



38. *Portrait of the children of Johann Christian von Kretschmar und Flamischdorf (1650-1693) and Susanna Vernatti (1659-1708), with a servant (1686), Franciscus Haagen, Private collection*



39. *Portrait of Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen (1604-1679), with a servant (1666-1674), Peter Nason, Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, Warsaw (Poland)*



40. *Woman Standing in front of a Mirror* (1661-1663), Frans van Mieris, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin
(Germany)



41. *A Game of Cards* (1660), Hendrick van der Burch, Detroit Institution of Arts (U.S.)



42. *A Woman is handed fruit by a Servant* (1650-1653), Louis Valtin, Bonhams, London (United Kingdom)



43. *Portrait of an unknown man , with a servant, and hunting booty* (1660-1669), Willem Eversdijck, Nederlands Kunstbezit Collection, (the Netherlands)



44. *Portrait of an unknown man on horseback, with a servant* (1669-1678), Jan van Rossum, private collection Géza von Osmitz, Pressburg (Germany)



45. *Portrait of an Unknown Woman* (1696), Jan Weenix, Art dealer, Munich (Germany)



46. *Portrait of an unknown woman, with a servant* (1675), Caspar Netscher, Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig, Leipzig (Germany)



47. *Portrait of an unknown woman, with a servant* (1670), Caspar Netscher, art dealer Johnny Van Haeften, London (United Kingdom)



48. *Portrait of an unknown woman on her spinet, with a servant* (1660-1669), Jacob Van Oost, Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien, Vienna (Austria)



49. *Vanitas still-life with a Globe, Books, and a Print of a Black woman* (1661), P. Van Eijse, Kohn Marc-Arthur, Paris (France)



50. *A Dark Man as a Soldier* (1640-1660), Anonymous (Southern Netherlands), Private collection

51. *Page with two Horses* (1655), Albert Cuyp, Royal Collection Trust, London (United Kingdom)



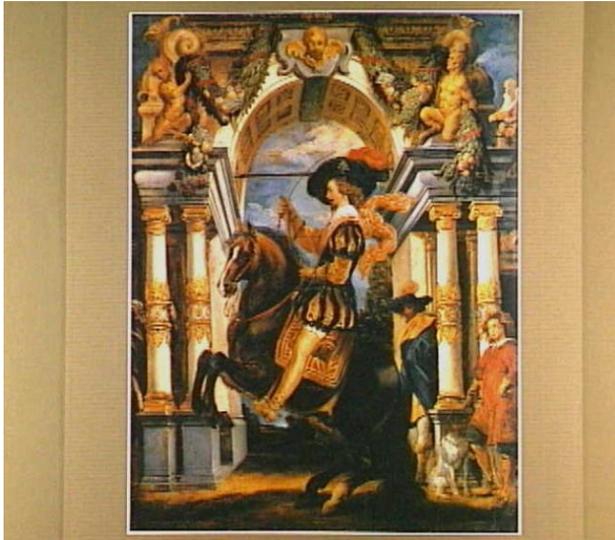
52. *The Master's eye makes the Horse Fat* (1600-1649), Jacob Jordaens, Musée du Louvre, Paris (France)



53. *Rider Performing a Levade*

Jacob Jordaens

(1645)



**54. *A Gallant Company on a Quayside* (1663-1667), Nicholas Berchem, Wadsworth Atheneum
Museum of Art, Connecticut (U.S.)**



55. *Double Portrait of an unknown woman and boy in fantasy costume, with servant* (1650-1674),
Nicholaes van Helt Stockade Private Collection Maastricht (the Netherlands)



56. *Allegory of Prosperity* (Palace interior with a crowned young woman and a kneeling farmer with valuables and products of the land at their feet) (1640-1652), Adriaen van Utrecht,
Private collection



57. *A man in a Cuirass with two servants* (1640-1649), Possible Monnogrammist JAD, Sotheby's
London (United Kingdom)



58. *Southern Landscape with Equestrian combat* (1649-1681), Herman va Lin, private collection
Göteborg (Sweden)



59. *Bathsheba at her Toilet* (1594), Cornelisz Van Haarlem, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (the Netherlands)



60. *Four Singing People: Allegory to Music* (1622-1644), Attributed to Jan Lievens, Private collection

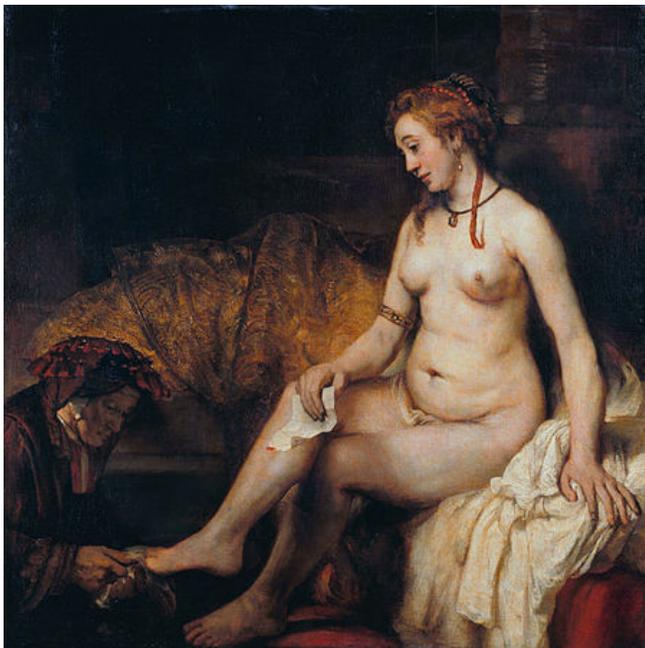
61. *Chariclea nurses wounded Theagene with Egyptian robbers approaching* (*Heliodorus: Aethiopica*) (1640-1649), Karel van Mander (III) Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel (Germany)



62. *The Four Continents of Africa* (1664-1700), Godfried Maes, private collection James Hazen Hyde, New York City/Paris



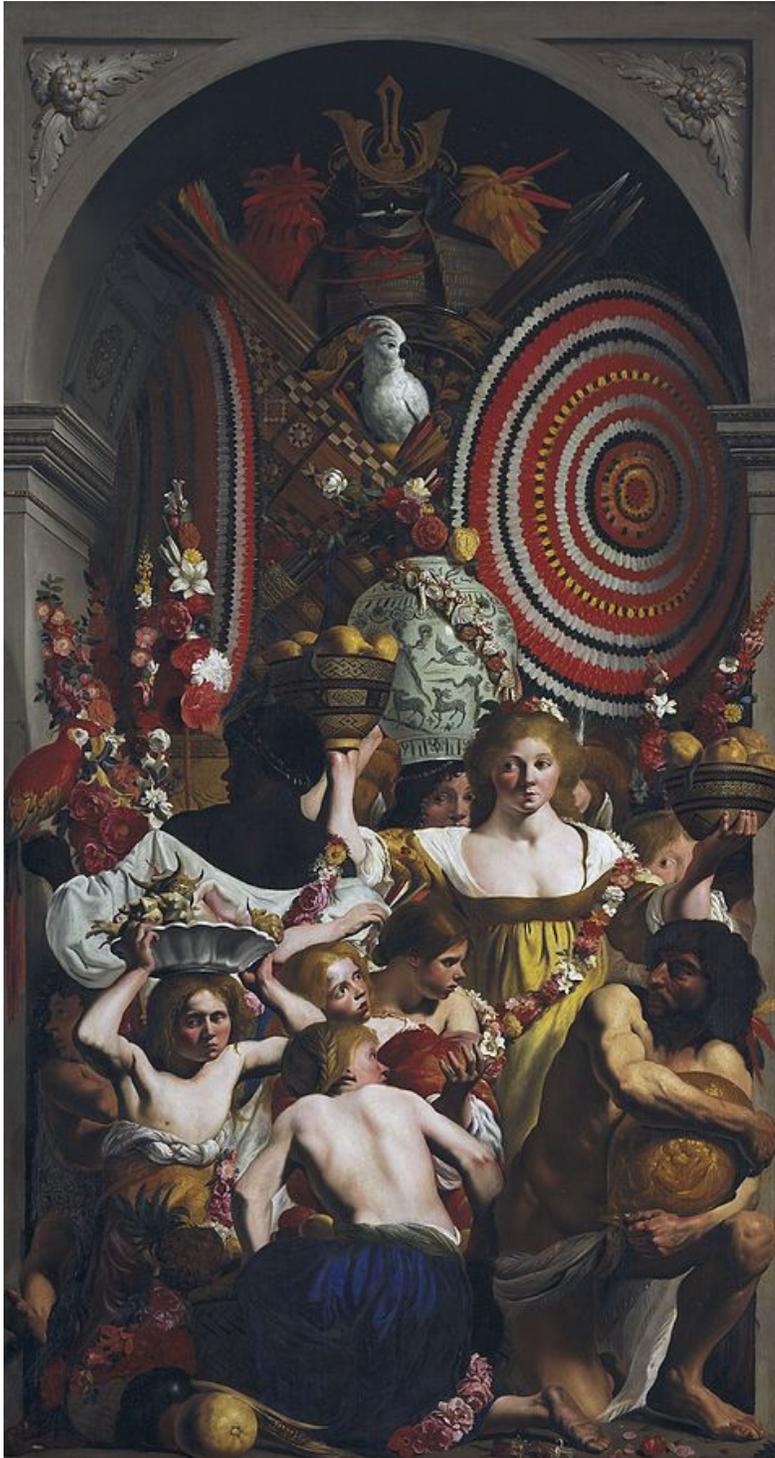
63. *Bathsheba at her Toilet* (1643), Rembrandt/or Rembrandt's studio, The Louvre, Paris (France)



64. *Tronie of a young black man* (1635), Gerrit Dou, Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum,
Hannover (Germany)



65. *Part of the Triumphal Procession, with Gifts from the East and the West* (1649-1651), Jan van Campen, Huis ten Bosch Palace (Oranjezaal), The Hague



66. (detail) *De Markt op de Dam te Amsterdam*, 1653, Jacob van der Ulft, Amsterdam,
Stadsarchief

