

Monkeys as Metaphor

Ecologies of Representation in Dutch Travel Writing about Suriname from the Colonial Period

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Abstract

This chapter maps out the ecologies of representation with regard to monkeys in Dutch travel writing on Surinam from the colonial period. By combining insights from animal studies and postcolonial theory, it addresses the monkey as a figure of ambiguity in texts from the early up to the late nineteenth century. It shows how the ‘dreaded comparison’ between humans and animals plays out in those texts wherein both animality and humanity is created, contested, and (re)negotiated. Such actions occur through strategies of familiarisation and defamiliarisation, thereby also shedding light on the peculiarities of a Dutch colonial gaze that informed the writings of Dutch scientists, naval officers, or missionaries that were sent to Suriname in order to explore, conquer, or convert.

Keywords: Monkeys, Blackness, Dutch travel writing, Suriname, animalities, postcolonial theory

In *De laatste resten tropisch Nederland* (Remnants of the Dutch Caribbean, 1969), a collection of travel reflections and journal entries about his journey to Suriname and the Dutch Antilles during the early months of 1969, the Dutch writer W.F. Hermans (1921-1995) briefly mentions a monkey he spots whilst on a walk with his wife through Moengo, Suriname: ‘In the garden opposite the guesthouse, there’s a monkey on a chain. He is about the size of an average dog, but his penis is as large as a king size cigarette and constantly erect.’¹ Although Hermans’ portrayal of the monkey seems at first innocuous, on closer inspection it is clear that it combines elements that point to a lingering colonial gaze – the chain, the comparison to man’s most faithful pet, the insistence on the monkey’s sexual nature – that posits the monkey as an ambiguous being, wild and sexual, yet simultaneously subdued and pet-like. Neither pet nor wild animal, Hermans’ monkey can be read as a figure of colonialism’s lingering presence, which at the time that *De laatste resten tropisch Nederland* was written and published was still the remnant of the colonial era.

Monkeys also figure in travel writing about Suriname from an earlier period. They are described, admired, and sometimes eaten, in John Gabriel Stedman’s

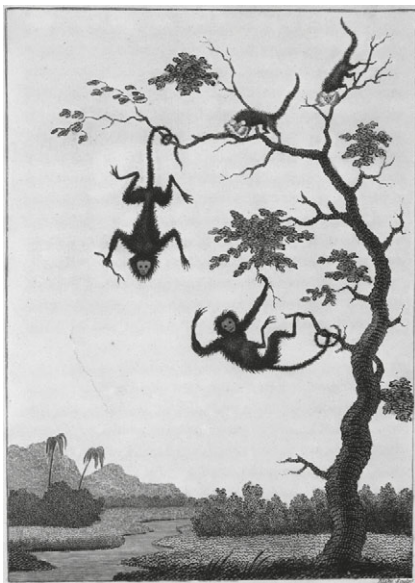


Image of two monkeys, in: John Gabriel Stedman's *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (1796), vol. 2. Collection Wikipedia Commons.

Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam (1796) – to date probably the best-known, most referenced, and most studied travel account about Suriname.² Suriname was under British rule from 1799 until the end of the Napoleonic wars. However, the Dutch regained control of the colony in 1816, which led to an influx

of Dutch men (and women) from all walks of life – merchants, administrators, clergymen, missionaries, and private travellers – who recorded and later published their impressions.³ Some of these texts, although written over the course of the nineteenth century, were not published until after the Second World War when they appeared in journals such as the *West-Indische Gids*.⁴

It is not only in John Gabriel Stedman's *Narrative* that descriptions of wild animals abound. Whether crocodiles, anteaters, jaguars, or various species of monkey, Dutch travellers marvelled at the rich fauna they encountered during their visits to plantations or their excursions into the jungle. Yet most travel accounts did not depict animals by means of drawings, illustrations, or photographs. Rather, they described the animals in writing – their size, colour, and behaviour – in order to paint an image to which their European readership could relate. As will become clear, monkeys were deemed amongst the most 'relatable' Surinamese species and, of all the animals encountered, they are the ones most written about.

Studying these monkeys and the contexts in which they appear not only provides insight into the way Dutch travel writing approaches various kinds of animals, but also opens up avenues pertaining to larger issues regarding the intersection of species and race in a colonial context. Although Elizabeth Leane cautions against such 'intersectional approaches that draw parallels between the structures of oppression operating through race and species categorisation'⁵ and instead proposes studying animals in travel writing according to their various (narrative) functions, this chapter focuses on monkeys, not only as a figure of ambiguity, but also as actual beings. This is achieved by mapping out the different contexts in

which they appear through an approach described by Neel Ahuja as ‘ecologies of representation’.⁶ According to Ahuja, this perspective provides a means via which to trace ‘the ways in which the historically situated zones of contact between peoples and nonhuman species create the conditions of possibility for semiotic activities in defined fields of social power’.⁷ The colonial space is precisely such a field of social power. Focusing on the various positions that monkeys occupy within this field, this chapter proposes to read Dutch travel accounts about Suriname through (the figure of) the monkey.

I am concerned here with the written travel accounts of white Dutch men who went, or were sent to, Suriname with a specific mission: to conquer, convert, or explore. Some, such as G.P.C. van Breugel (1798-1888), G. van Lennep-Coster (1791-1845), J.H. Nagel (date of birth unknown), and A.J. van Stockum (1864-1935), were naval officers. Others, such as A.H. Pareau (1849-1918), W.F.R. Suringar (1832-1898), and Herman van Cappelle (1857-1932), were scientists. However, most of them, such as G.B. Bosch (1794-1837), J.H. de Ridder (1816-1886), J.A.F. Kronenburg (1853-1940), and Willem Boekhoudt (1822-1894), were protestant or catholic clergymen or missionaries.⁸ With the exception of A.E. van Noothoorn (1811-1851), a teacher and a children’s books author who never set foot in Suriname and instead relied on second-hand sources,⁹ those men recorded their own observations that were, as will be shown, coloured by a similar colonial gaze – one that persisted in Hermans’ writing in the late 1960s.

Studying monkeys in travel literature from the colonial period is a delicate topic, not least since, as Frantz Fanon notes in *Les damnés de la terre* (1961), the coloniser tends to employ a zoological language when speaking about the colonised.¹⁰ This ‘dreaded comparison’¹¹ between human and animal manifests itself in Van Breugel’s (1842) likening a group of enslaved children to ‘monkeys [...] showing their soldier tricks’,¹² or Van Noothoorn (1843) comparing a group of enslaved men to a ‘flock of sheep lead by a shepherd and his dog’.¹³ This process of animalisation – an all too common technique of the coloniser – revolves around establishing various comparisons between different kinds of animals and ‘the bodies or behaviors of racialized subjects’.¹⁴

Within such comparisons, not all animals are made equal, yet the bodies of those they are compared to are. To be clear, especially in travel accounts from the colonial period, it is never white men that are likened to animals, be it monkeys, sheep, or some undefined generic animal. Yet what the French literary scholar Bénédicte Boisseron refers to as a ‘black-animal subtext [...] deeply ingrained in the cultural genetics of the global north, an inherited condition informed by a shared history of slavery and colonization’¹⁵ is a topic that has largely been avoided within the context of Dutch literature and Dutch studies on (post)colonialism.¹⁶ One of the noteworthy exceptions is Maaïke Meijer, who briefly touches on the representation

of the 'Black subject' in literature from the Dutch East Indies in the last chapters of her book *In tekst gevat: Inleiding tot een kritiek van representatie* (1996). Discussing the novels *Rubber* (1931) and *Koelie* (1932) by Madelon Székely-Lulofs, Meijer notes that – even though *Koelie* and *Rubber* were intended as a condemnation of colonial practices – the narrator consistently uses zoological terms when talking about the native population, thus effectively dehumanising them.¹⁷

Most travel accounts studied here did not have such pretensions. Although some espouse a tentative critique of slavery, others wholeheartedly defend it.¹⁸ It is against this discursive backdrop that, by combining insights from animal studies and postcolonial theory, this chapter traces the contexts in which monkeys appear and the ways in which they are represented in Dutch travel writing about Suriname from the colonial era. The initial section provides a brief sketch of recent studies that attempt to bridge the gap between the research fields cited above and proposes a shift from various modes of animalisation to studying forms of animalities instead. Based on this brief theoretical conceptualisation, the ensuing sections address both strategies of familiarisation and defamiliarisation, as well as intersections thereof.

Regarding familiarisation, one of the most common strategies found in travel accounts from the nineteenth century is a tendency to describe the exotic fauna of Suriname in terms that the European readership could relate to – either by comparing monkeys to other animals, or by referring to them in terms such as 'heer Kisi-Kisi', which effectively render them less animal- and more human-like.¹⁹ Yet besides these strategies common to travel literature as a genre, it will also be shown how familiarising strategies appear next to attempts to 'defamiliarise' the monkey, especially when trying to justify the consumption of its meat. It should be noted that I take defamiliarisation not in the sense of Viktor Shklovsky's definition,²⁰ but as a strategy that highlights the 'Otherness' of the monkey through rhetorical means that are inscribed in a colonial and racialised logic. This complementary approach maps out how the monkey can be construed as a figure of ambiguity that reflects how colonial power is constructed, negotiated, or undermined.

(Post)colonial animalities

The relationship between animal studies and postcolonial studies has always been one of contention, fraught with an impulse within animal studies and the animal rights movement to use the comparison between slavery and animals, first and foremost, 'as a tool to serve animal rights, regardless of its impact on African Americans and the Afro-Caribbean community'.²¹ In *Afro-dog: Blackness and the Animal Question* (2018), a reflection on the intertwining between dogs and Blackness, Bénédicte Boisseron traces the history of critical animal studies as

a field that has only recently begun to develop a postcolonial awareness. Boisseron shows how studies such as Marjorie Spiegel's *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery* (1988) have tended to gloss over the racialised nature of comparisons between animals and humans without acknowledging nor engaging with 'the messy persistence of racial slavery's and colonialism's afterlives'.²²

Whereas scholars such as Boisseron and Che Gossett²³ have pointed out that, in the past, animal studies did not consider Blackness, in their introduction to *Postcolonial Animalities* (2020), Suvadip Sinha and Amit R. Baishya discern a similar hesitancy within postcolonial studies to consider the animal.²⁴ Like Leane,²⁵ they identify various tensions that help explain the impulse within postcolonial studies to either disregard the animal completely or to read animals as mere metaphors or 'narrative protheses [...] without contending with the material dimensions of animal existence'.²⁶ In order to bridge this gap between animal studies, the core principle of which is that the animal is not a signifier, and postcolonial studies, a field primarily concerned with analysing discursive constructions of racial inequality and 'Otherness', Sinha and Baishya propose a focus, not on the appearance, construction, or representation of animals and instances of animalisation, but on 'animalities' instead – an approach that takes into account both the representational and the material dimension of the beings studied.

Although recent studies situated at the cross-roads between animal studies and postcolonial studies have contended with animals as diverse as dogs,²⁷ elephants,²⁸ and crocodiles,²⁹ the situation becomes messier once monkeys enter the picture. As Donna Haraway notes in her study *Primate Vision: Gender, Race and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (1989), 'simians occupy the border zones' in the Western mythology of the nature/culture divide.³⁰ In other words, monkeys remind us of ourselves, which is why, of all animals, monkeys occupy a privileged place in the human imagination. Yet this privileged place comes with a dark history – after all, literature and pop culture are rife with examples that use the monkey as 'a personification of the Other', as a figure that 'represents that which is like a human but not quite so'.³¹ Echoing Homi Bhaba's famous assertion that the 'Other' is 'a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite',³² the monkey could be said to function as a figure onto which humanity projects its fears and dreams.³³ Such a projection, however, tends to lose sight of the monkey as a material being, transforming it instead into a literary device that is taken as a reflection of what it means to be 'human' without acknowledging that this conception of being human relies on 'the elevation of white, bourgeois, European, cisheterosexual masculinity as the only way to being human in Western modernity'.³⁴

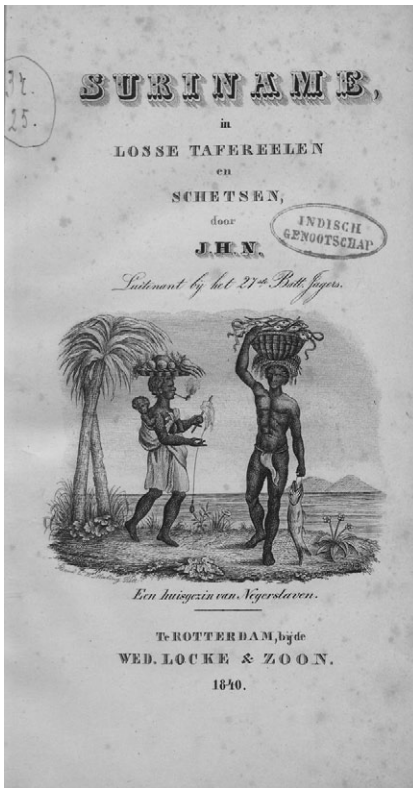
Although animals have long served as markers of humanity, especially within a colonial and racialised context, it must be stressed that within animal studies, the animal is not understood as a signifier, but as an actual being. Instead of understanding

monkeys as a projection or a literary device, this chapter takes its cue from animal studies and approaches the monkeys found in Dutch travel writing about Suriname from the colonial period, not as symbols of one thing or another, but as part of various ecologies of representation. These ecologies of representation constitute what Claire Jean Kim calls the ‘borderlands between human and animal, a fraught zone of ambiguity, menace, and transgression’ wherein both animality and humanity is created, contested, and (re)negotiated.³⁵ Bridging the gap between monkeys as material beings that are encountered as part of an ‘ecology’ and the means by which they are represented in writing, this shift from animalisation to (representations of) animalities opens new perspectives regarding the construction of differences and relationality.³⁶ Although those terms might seem at odds with one another, they are two sides of the same coin. Instead of conceptualising animalisation as a one-way-street – or rather, a *cul-de-sac* – a focus on the discursive means by which animalities are constructed takes into account the fluidity at the core of what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari refer to as ‘becoming animal’³⁷ – construing both ‘animalisation’ and ‘humanisation’ as interruptions that open up possibilities to, as Fanon would say, ‘roar back’.³⁸

Squirrels and wolves: Europeanisation and the colonial gaze

Suriname is home to eight different species of monkeys that are all native to the Southern American continent. One of the smaller ‘New World monkeys’ is a monkey colloquially known as the squirrel monkey. Just like the overarching term ‘New World monkeys’ as such, the squirrel monkey is a prime example of the linguistic power exercised by the coloniser. After all, naming the world is a way of asserting ownership over it through an act of speech.³⁹ This section discusses how this power can be located in strategies of familiarisation and appropriation. It looks at the specific conditions of Suriname as a colonial space and addresses the ways in which Dutch travel writers catered to their audience by presenting not only the ‘exotic’ wildlife of the Americas, but also the Surinamese landscapes in terms that their readership at home could relate to.⁴⁰

Translating the unfamiliar into familiar terms by relating the fauna of Suriname to European wildlife did not always involve comparisons that were as obvious as the monkey-squirrel relation, which after all both concerned fairly small animals living in trees. Sometimes, the comparisons were much more far-fetched. For instance, in a letter to his wife, Nagel notes that the ‘green crocodile, but only the male one, has a comb on its head just like that of a rooster’.⁴¹ Likewise, Van Noothoorn describes the anteater as ‘a pitch-black four-legged creature’, a ‘black animal [...] about the size of a wolf, with an exceptionally long, feathery tail and very sharp claws’.⁴² Both descriptions seem equally fantastic, not least as there is practically



Title page of J.H. Nagel, *Suriname in losse tafereelen en schetsen* (1840). Collection Leiden University Libraries.

no way to distinguish between male and female crocodiles by appearance alone. Instead of acknowledging those unfamiliar animals for what they are, Van Noothoorn, who had no first-hand experience with the wildlife of Suriname, went out of his way to stress the strangeness of the anteater by insisting on its blackness. Conversely, Nagel, who spent about three years (1828-1831) in Suriname, opts for a reverse strategy and transplants his ideas about combs on roosters to a species with which he is utterly unfamiliar.

This appropriation through language was not limited to animals. In fact, anything and everything could

be appropriated and passed through the lens of the European colonial gaze – which sometimes could also be very much a Dutch gaze. Thus, in describing the city of Paramaribo, Pareau writes that '[o]nce one realises that there are practically no walls made of stone since almost all houses are made of wood, one can imagine that Paramaribo reminds us of Zaandam and places nearby in the Zaan region'.⁴³ By focussing on the familiar – the wooden buildings – and disregarding the unfamiliar, such as the heat, the roads, the flora and fauna, or the people, Pareau effectively asserts ownership, not only by understanding, but also by grasping Paramaribo via his own background – a stance one might refer to as 'colonial Dutchness'.

This tendency to 'Dutchify' Suriname is also visible in Bosch, who provides an extensive list of things one might encounter in Suriname, before contending that one must just go and see with one's own eyes. His lengthy description contains several elements that seem to imply that Suriname is just like the Netherlands, only larger: 'And if you were to conjure up a miniature version of Suriname in your mind, imagine: a flat land with rivers, creeks and streams; [...] mansions and warehouses [...]; gardens and canals; [...] rain and sunshine.'⁴⁴ All 'exotic' elements, such as the various crops grown on the plantations – which Bosch conveniently refers to

as ‘fields’ – and animals such as hummingbirds, monkeys, and tigers are embedded in a description of a landscape reminiscent of Amsterdam and its surroundings.

Lastly, Boekhoudt, who went to Suriname in 1845 when he was just 22 years old and spent four years there working as a private teacher, expressed his first impressions in similar terms of ownership:

Wherever one sets foot in this beautiful and rich land, one encounters an abundance of life. The forests are teeming with colourful birds and butterflies, whilst the slithering snake, the roaring tiger, and the prying caiman below a bush or in a swamp are lusting for their prey. [...] Monkeys large and small, the small ones in large numbers, bring life to the branches of the trees and amuse the spectators with their hilarious hopping about. So much wealth of everything that might be called surprising, impressive, and beautiful – and so much more that escapes my memory – was presented to me by our Creator to be contemplated, no, to be admired in nature’s creation of our Dutch El-dorado: Suriname.⁴⁵

The sentiment that everything in Suriname is there only to serve the coloniser, be that the extraction of wealth or his entertainment, is not a personal failure of Boekhoudt. Rather, it is evidence of a colonial logic based on annexation – an annexation that plays out on both a linguistic and a material level. Together, these examples of appropriation point to an ecology of representation in which monkeys serve as a *pars pro toto* for the colonial space of Suriname as such.

Facing the monkey

Whereas the previous section took the monkey as its point of departure to show how attitudes towards animals reflect and were shaped by a colonial logic, this section takes a different route, looking instead at other forms of familiarisation. Not only were monkeys compared to other animals; they were also compared to humans. Such strategies of ‘humanisation’ are less prevalent than the various animal-animal comparisons discussed thus far; however, the contexts in which they appear shed an important light on the ambivalent status of monkeys within the overall system of representation, adding a further dimension to the implications of the colonial gaze.

First, there is an inclination to see a reflection of the human in the monkey, which is apparent in several travel accounts. As Bosch writes:

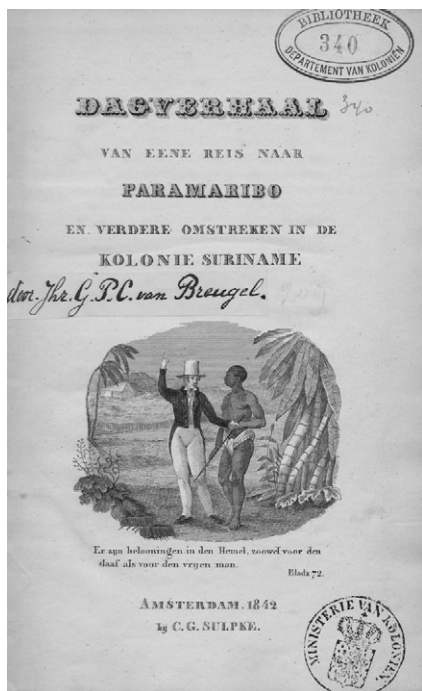
I have always enjoyed witnessing encounters between man and monkey, or vice versa, between monkey and man. Both their faces then tend to have a slightly mocking expression. And although man may use his tongue to mock his four-handed counterpart, his

features are no match for the aptness of mister Kisi-Kisi's face when it comes to expressing mockery and mischief.⁴⁶

Bosch marvels at the likeness between man and monkey, but the likeness he discerns concerns only their generic forms. This is also the case in another fragment of Bosch's travel account, in which he seems to suggest that the (generic and thus white European male) human exists on a kind of sliding scale between the (generic) monkey and the (generic) sloth.⁴⁷ Likewise, Bosch constructs the differences between monkey and man through the possession of language – one can speak, whereas the other must rely on facial expressions.

There are other travel writers who employ humanising terms when writing about monkeys, yet none try to erase the frontiers between them in quite the same way as Bosch. More often, monkeys are compared to children or vice versa. For instance, Kronenburg (1897) relays a scene he witnesses whilst in the jungle – a woman baking cassava bread with a monkey on her shoulder and a couple of children playing nearby. He writes: 'The woman is baking white cassava bread whilst a small monkey, no larger than a squirrel, frolics on her head and shoulders; a little further, there are children tumbling about in the sand.'⁴⁸ Drawing from the same linguistic reservoir, Kronenburg establishes a congruency between the monkeys that frolic ('*dartelen*') and the children that tumble ('*buitelen*') about in the sand, thereby mirroring the descriptions of Van Breugel, who likens a group of enslaved children to monkeys showing their tricks.⁴⁹ In both cases, however, it is not white children that are likened to monkeys. Although published almost fifty years apart, the parallelism that both Van Breugel and Kronenburg draw between monkeys and children relies on the same racialised logic.

Kronenburg's idyllic picture of a woman with a monkey on her shoulder betrays another demarcation line that is also evident in other texts – after all, the monkeys described as pet-like are exclusively associated with the indigenous population encountered in the rain forest. This can be related to Boisseron's assertion that the enslaved population was excluded from ownership.⁵⁰ In other words, since an enslaved person was considered to be property, they could not own a pet monkey, meaning that the description of the pet-like squirrel monkey also served as a marker of freedom for the marron population described by Kronenburg and Van Breugel. At the same time, the monkeys living in proximity to the marrons are neither domestic(ated) animals, nor are they completely wild. Rather, they are met with benevolence and an attitude Haraway would describe as 'making kin'.⁵¹ Yet both Van Breugel⁵² and Nagel make no attempt to define the relationship as anything other than a hierarchical one when describing how, in determining whether a certain kind of fruit is edible, the indigenous population apparently takes the monkey's lead: 'If the monkey is offered a piece of fruit, he will immediately teach



Title page of Gaspard Philippe Charles van Breugel, *Dagverhaal van eene reis naar Paramaribo en verdere omstreken in de kolonie Suriname* (1842). Collection Leiden University Libraries.

his master which parts of it are edible, and whether it should be eaten at all.⁵³ The explicit use of the term ‘master’ (‘meester’) constructs this relationship, not as one of pet and owner, nor as one of different species living together. Rather, the relation between marron and monkey is presented as part of a colonial hierarchy with the monkey occupying a subservient position. After all, to colonial eyes, the monkey might be familiar, but he is still inferior.

Black skin, white meat

Having now analysed various forms of familiarisation, it is time to consider strategies of ‘defamiliarisation’ that do not attempt to erase the monkey’s ‘Otherness’, but instead make an effort to emphasise it. The allegiance of some travel writers shifts rather seamlessly between the monkey-as-person, the monkey-as-pet, and the monkey-as-food. Admiring the intelligence of the spider monkey (*kwatta*, sometimes also spelled as *quata* or *coiata*) in one sentence, they see no harm in reporting on its taste when cooked in the next. Neither attaining (near-)personhood by being referred to as ‘mister monkey’, nor being considered pets, seems to spare the monkeys from being killed for their meat.

Yet not all monkeys are cooked equally, and racial subtexts influence the ways in which differences between the monkey-as-food versus the monkey-as-companion are constructed and negotiated. Where the small squirrel monkey is generally considered cute and (thus) pet-like, the larger spider monkey is described in rather less flattering terms. Stedman describes the *kwatta* as follows:

The *quata*, or *quato*, is very large, with an enormous tail: their arms and legs being covered over with long black hair, they make a very hideous appearance indeed; the more so, as the creature's face is quite naked and red, with deep sunk eyes which gives it much the appearance of an old Indian woman.⁵⁴

Activating various forms of 'Othering' relating to colour, age, and gender all at once, the *kwatta* is presented as what must be one of the most hideous beings of Suriname. This seems to be the *communis opinio*. Van Cappelle, a geologist and biologist by training, calls the *kwatta* 'the most despicable monkey of the colony',⁵⁵ and Van Noothoorn, in a passage echoing Stedman, writes:

The ugliest monkey that I have ever seen is the *coiata*. His arms and legs are covered with long black hair; his skin is red and almost hairless; his eyes deep in its skull, the ears short. If you want to hunt him, he'll climb into a tree and throws with fruit whilst making all kinds of ugly grimaces. Although he might be hideously ugly, I still enjoy a piece of him, if he's grilled, stewed, or cooked. You might say 'Bah, you're eating monkey meat?' But of course! [...] especially the meat of young monkeys, which is white, juicy, and tasty.⁵⁶

In pointing out the *kwatta*'s supposedly short ears, Van Noothoorn adds another element into the mix and removes the *kwatta* even further from the possibility of being considered a floppy-eared pet. However, more importantly, Van Noothoorn insists on the monkey's blackness as a determining factor of its unsightliness – a strategy that, as we might recall, he also deployed in his description of the anteater. Given that Van Noothoorn had no first-hand experience in consuming monkey meat and that his writing, geared towards Dutch school children, was to serve didactic purposes, it is especially telling that he seems to suggest that the black, hideous spider monkey is only redeemed by being cooked, and thus transformed into a piece of white and tender meat.

This tenderness is greatly exaggerated by Van Noothoorn, as is the eagerness to consume monkey meat at all. In fact, the consumption of monkey meat – or the refusal to do so – also served as an indication of the colonial hierarchy. In choosing to not consume monkey meat, the white coloniser sets himself apart from, as Stedman writes, 'the miserable slaves, [...] so starved, that having killed a *Coata* monkey, they broiled it, with skin, hair, intestines, and all, then tore it to pieces with their teeth, and devoured it like so many cannibals, before it was even half dressed'.⁵⁷ Despite having established the ugliness of the *kwatta* earlier on, Stedman clearly disapproves of the monkey being eaten. He even portrays its consumption as an act of cannibalism, noting that the monkey is not merely eaten,

but ‘devoured’ – as if it were not an instance of a group of hungry men consuming animal meat, but of animals eating each other.⁵⁸

Although Stedman categorically refused to take a bite, many Dutch colonisers were rather less finicky, also reporting on the consumption of monkeys other than the *kwatta*. For instance, Kronenburg emphasises that the *pitagori*⁵⁹ shot by a friar would make ‘a delicious snack for our indigenous companions’ before quickly conceding that he had also eaten it and that its taste was ‘like ox meat, although a little stringy’.⁶⁰ The fact that the monkey Kronenburg consumed was shot by a friar, somebody belonging to the colonial apparatus, that it was thoroughly prepared and used to make soup may help explain why Kronenburg had no qualms in enjoying this ‘delicious snack’. Concerning Kronenburg’s description of the monkey meat as ox meat, it should also be noted that ox meat, in the form of ‘*ossenworst*’ (raw beef sausage), was consumed in the Netherlands from the seventeenth century onwards. Kronenburg thus uses a comparison that could very well be read as another instance of ‘Dutchification’.

There is one last case of a dead *kwatta* that needs to be discussed, since it sheds further light on the relation between its supposed ugliness and its propensity for being eaten. The account is found in Van Stockum (1905), who was part of a scientific expedition that also featured a taxidermist called De Kock and a somewhat over-eager, trigger-happy hunter by the name of Pulle. The expedition ‘collected’ all sorts of monkeys that were immediately prepared by De Kock in order to be shipped off to museums throughout Europe. This constituted a departure from earlier practices. Although many early travel writers were gifted live monkeys that they took with them to Europe, many of those monkeys did not survive the journey. Killing and stuffing the animals whilst still in Suriname thus provided a welcome alternative to satisfy the colonial hunger of the European public. Naturally, Van Stockum’s expedition chose only the most beautiful specimen, as is evidenced by Van Stockum’s description of a *kwatta* (shot by Pulle ‘just because he felt like it’) as ‘a splendid, fully grown specimen with full, long, shiny black fur’, its hands covered with ‘soft, black skin resembling kidskin leather’.⁶¹ Here, it is important to note that even being described as ‘a splendid specimen’ affords the *kwatta* no protection. On the contrary, it is precisely because it was such a superb specimen that it was shot, making the *kwatta* the most lamentable monkey in Dutch travel writing about Suriname.

Conclusion

Studying animals in travel writing by combining insights from animal studies and postcolonial studies is a worthwhile endeavour. As this chapter has shown, monkeys in colonial travel writing about Suriname can be read as a reflection of a colonial logic. Taking monkeys as a focal point reveals how different ecologies of representation are constituted in such texts. Within these ecologies, monkeys occupy multiple places at once, since their status – as pet, food, or trophy – is constructed by drawing on various ‘intersection[s] of race and animality’ that are ‘based on a shared status of nonrelevance as nonhuman and nonwhite’.⁶²

As a general rule, there are two equally present, albeit conflicting strategies in the travel accounts studied here. The first is a tendency to ‘familiarise’ the animals encountered by comparing them to animals known in, and native to, the coloniser’s homeland. In the case of monkeys specifically, these animal-animal comparisons are supplemented with reflections on the likeness between monkey and man – this likeness being, more often than not, profoundly racialised. This racialisation of the monkey is particularly evident if the animal is not only admired from afar, but also consumed. In other words, monkeys that are to be consumed for their meat are animalised by passing through Blackness, removing them not only from human-kind, but also from animals considered cute enough not to be eaten. Concerning the *kwatta* in particular, the intersection of race and animality thus leads to a kind of ‘double-animalisation’.

Apart from monkeys, there are other kinds of animals ‘frolicking’ through the pages of Dutch colonial writing that are worth studying. One of those animals, the jaguar, is one of the focal points of Raoul de Jong’s *Jaguarman: Mijn vader, zijn vader en andere Surinaamse helden* (2020). In this book, De Jong recounts his fascination with one of his Surinamese ancestors about whom it is said that he could turn into a jaguar. Tracing his family history, De Jong establishes an alternative genealogy of Suriname that could also be read as a claim to a ‘species-fluid (as in “gender-fluid”)’ condition, a nonbinary identity with the privilege of unspecification and the possibility to reposition one’s “human” identity at will’.⁶³ Addressing his father, De Jong writes: ‘You are not a descendant of slaves. You are a descendant of jaguars.’⁶⁴ The monkey might not be the one that ‘roars back’, but maybe the jaguar is: ‘I saw what you have given me. There is no other story that I would rather tell. I will be the jaguarman that you deserve.’⁶⁵ Obviously, this story of the jaguar(man) roaring back is not mine to tell.

Notes

- ¹ Hermans, *De laatste resten tropisch Nederland*, 79: 'In de tuin tegenover het guesthouse zit een aap aan een ketting. Hij is zo groot als een middelsoort hond, maar zijn penis heeft het formaat van een kingsize sigaret en is voortdurend in erectie.'
- ² See for instance Bohls, *Slavery and the Politics of Place. Representing the Colonial Caribbean, 1770–1833*, 54–81; Polcha, 'Voyeur in the Torrid Zone. John Gabriel Stedman's *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam, 1773–1838*'; Pratt, *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 90–102.
- ³ As Michiel van Kempen notes, Dutch literature about Suriname experienced an uptick during the nineteenth century. Whereas there were only about four Dutch travel accounts to Suriname published during the eighteenth century, according to Van Kempen's estimates, the number climbed to more than twenty during the nineteenth century. See Van Kempen, *Een geschiedenis van de Surinaamse literatuur. Deel 3*, 151.
- ⁴ See for instance De Gaay Fortman, 'Een vijfdaags bezoek aan Suriname in 1825'; Scheltema de Heere, 'Bezoek van een Haarlemmer aan Suriname en Curaçao in 1861 en 1862'; Wagenaar Hummelinck & H. van Borcharen, 'Het dagelijksche leven op de Surinaamse koffieplantage "Kokswoud" in 1828. Een brief van H. van Borcharen gepubliceerd'.
- ⁵ Leane, 'Animals', 306.
- ⁶ Ahuja, 'Postcolonial Critique in a Multispecies World', 559.
- ⁷ Ahuja, 'Postcolonial Critique in a Multispecies World', 559.
- ⁸ Michiel van Kempen's *Chronologische signaleringslijst van koloniaal en niet-Surinaams literair werk over Suriname* has been an invaluable resource in elaborating this corpus of texts.
- ⁹ Although he never left the Netherlands, Van Noothoorn published several fictional travel accounts geared towards school children, with the intention of teaching them about geography and history. To that end, in 1843, he published *Reizen en lotgevallen van Lodewijk Vermeer, in de Nederlandsch Oost-Indische bezittingen* and shortly thereafter *Reizen en lotgevallen van Gustaaf Westerman, in de Nederlandsch West-Indische bezittingen*. These books complemented each other and, like factual travel accounts, included maps and drawings. Van Noothoorn published similar books about Russia (*Reizen en lotgevallen van Frederik Langendam in Rusland: Een lettergeschenk voor knapen en meisjes, geschikt om hen met de aardrijkskunde van dat land bekend te maken*, 1844), the United States (*Reizen en lotgevallen van Henry Warton in de Vereenigde Staaten van Noord-Amerika*, 1846) and the Netherlands (*Reizen en lotgevallen van Karel de Man, in Nederland*, 1846).
- ¹⁰ Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre*, 45.
- ¹¹ See Spiegel, *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery*.
- ¹² Van Breugel, *Dagverhaal van eene reis naar Paramaribo en verdere omstreken in de kolonie Suriname*, 56: 'waarna al de kinderen bleven, om als apen, onder de leiding van den blank-officier, hunne kunsten als soldaatje te vertoonen'.
- ¹³ Van Noothoorn, *Reizen en lotgevallen van Gustaaf Westerman, in de Nederlandsch West-Indische bezittingen*, 58–59: 'eene geheelen troep half naakte zwarte menschen, die, even als eene kudde schapen door eenen herder en eenen hond worden bestuurd'.
- ¹⁴ Ahuja, 'Postcolonial Critique in a Multispecies World', 557.
- ¹⁵ Boisseron, *Afro-dog: Blackness and the Animal Question*, ix.
- ¹⁶ Neither Paasman's *Reinhart: Nederlandse literatuur en slavernij ten tijde van de verlichting* nor Oostindie's *Postkoloniaal Nederland: Vijfenzestig jaar vergeten, herdenken, verdringen* touch upon this issue, and it is also largely absent in Blakely, *Blacks in the Dutch World: The Evolution of Racial*

- Imagery in a Modern Society*. In 'Gekleurd vertellen' (1990), Van Alphen discusses *De stille plantage* by Albert Helman with regard to this black-animal subtext, but is mostly concerned with the various discursive functions and connotations of 'white' versus 'black'. Lastly, both *De kolonie op drift* (2020) and *De postkoloniale spiegel: De Nederlands-Indische letteren herlezen* (2021) pay attention to animalisation, but like Meijer, address literature from and about the Dutch East Indies only.
- ¹⁷ Meijer, *In tekst gevat. Inleiding tot een kritiek van representatie*, 154-155.
 - ¹⁸ One of the most lurid apologies for the maintenance of slavery is articulated in the work of Lennep-Coster. Lennep-Coster argues that the men, women, and children brought to Suriname by force are not only better off because of it, however: 'The slave trade has the advantage to have saved thousands of lives of those whose death would otherwise have been certain, and has given them a life of servitude equal to and in much respects better than the life of many a craftsman or worker in Europe, with the difference that although they lack freedom, they do not care for it and would never aspire to be free if their master is a good man.' Lennep-Coster, *Herinneringen mijner reizen naar onderscheidene wereld-deelen*, 117: 'De slavenhandel bezit derhalve dat voordeel, dat hij verscheidene duizenden voor den dood behoed heeft, waartoe zij anders gewis zouden veroordeeld geweest zijn, en hen daarentegen tot een leven van dienstbaarheid geleid heeft, gelijk staande met, en in vele opzichten beter zijnde, dan de levenswijze van menig ambachts- en werkman in Europa, met dat onderscheid, dat zij de vrijheid missen, een goed, hetwelk zij niet waarden, en zoo zij een goeden meester hebben, niet verkiezen.'
 - ¹⁹ Literally 'Mister Monkey', since 'Kisi-Kisi' or 'keesie-keesie' is used by Bosch as an umbrella term for all kinds of monkeys. See Bosch, *Reize naar Suriname in brieven: Reizen in West-Indië en door een gedeelte van Zuid- en Noord-Amerika. Derde deel*, 281.
 - ²⁰ Shklovsky, 'Art, as Device', 167. A Russian formalist, Shklovsky introduced this concept of estrangement or defamiliarisation ('ostranenie') to indicate literary language that was supposed to 'de-automatise' our perception and draw attention to new ways of relating to reality.
 - ²¹ Boisseron, *Afro-dog*, xi.
 - ²² Weheliye, 'Preface', x.
 - ²³ See Boisseron, *Afro-dog*; Gossett, 'Blackness, Animality and the Unsovereign'.
 - ²⁴ Sinha & Baishya, 'Introduction: Postcolonial Animalities', 1-25.
 - ²⁵ Leane, 'Animals', 306.
 - ²⁶ Sinha & Baishya, 'Introduction: Postcolonial Animalities', 1.
 - ²⁷ See Boisseron, *Afro-dog*; Khayyat, 'The Dog That Therefore I Follow'; Sinha, 'Pariah Dogs – Precarious Cohabitation'.
 - ²⁸ See Sandhar, 'Plotting the Elephant Graveyard: Anthropomorphism and Interspecies Conflict in Tania James's *The Tusk That Did the Damage*'.
 - ²⁹ See Rooks, 'No Place for Waltzing Mathilda: Uncanny Australian Swamps and Crocodiles in *Rogue, Black Water*, and *Dark Age*'.
 - ³⁰ Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race and Nature in the World of Modern Science*, 1.
 - ³¹ Boisseron, *Afro-dog*, 28.
 - ³² Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse', 126, italics in original.
 - ³³ Jensen, *Waarom vrouwen van apen houden: Een liefdesgeschiedenis in cultuur en wetenschap*, 18.
 - ³⁴ Weheliye, 'Preface', ix.
 - ³⁵ Kim, *Dangerous Crossings: Race, Species, and Nature in a Multicultural Age*, 24.
 - ³⁶ Weheliye, 'Preface', x.
 - ³⁷ Deleuze & Guattari, '1730 – Devenir-intense, devenir-animal, devenir-imperceptible...', 285.
 - ³⁸ Ahuja, 'Postcolonial Critique in a Multispecies World', 557. Ahuja relies on the 2004 English translation of *Les damnés de la terre* (The Wretched of the Earth) by Richard Philcox when quoting Fanon, which reads that 'the colonised [...] roar with laughter'. The French original, however, reads 'le

- colonisé [...] rit un bon coup*' (Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre*, 46), which, in an older translation by Constance Farrington, is translated as 'the native [...] laughs to himself'. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington, 43.
- ³⁹ As Fanon notes in *Peau noire, masques blancs*, 14: 'Un homme qui possède le langage possède par contrecoup le monde exprimé et impliqué par ce langage.' This is rendered by Charles Lam Markmann in his translation of *Black Skin, White Masks* as follows: 'A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language.' (18).
- ⁴⁰ The way in which Stedman described the wildlife of Suriname in his *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* seems to have served as a model that other travel writers followed. Baboons are described by Stedman as 'the size of a small bull-dog' (235) whereas the *saccawinke* (red-handed tamarin) is described as 'not much larger than a Norway rat' whilst 'its feet are not unlike those of a squirrel, and its tail is bushy' (13).
- ⁴¹ Nagel, *Suriname in losse tafereelen en schetsen*, 70: 'De groene krokodil, namelijk alleen het mannetje, heeft een kam op den kop, gelijk die van een haan.'
- ⁴² Van Noothoorn, *Reizen en lotgevallen van Gustaaf Westerman*, 105: 'een pikzwart viervoetig beest [...]. Dit zwarte beest was de zogenaamde miereneter. Hij heeft de grootte van een wolf, een zeer langen staart met eene pluim aan het uiteinde en zeer scherpe klauwen.'
- ⁴³ Pareau, *Onze West. Reisschetsen*, 27: 'Wanneer met bovendien bedenkt, dat steenen muren tot de zeldzaamheden behooren, daar bijna alle huizen uit hout zijn opgebouwd, dan kan men zich voorstellen dat Paramaribo doet denken aan Zaandam en aan de naburige plaatsen in de Zaanstreek.'
- ⁴⁴ Bosch, *Reize naar Suriname in brieven*, 105: 'En wilt gij nu Suriname in miniatuur voor uwe verbeelding halen, stel u dan voor: vlak land met rivieren, kreken en beken; akkers, waarop suikerriet, katoenboomen, koffijboomen, oranjeboomen en bananen; verder huizen en lootsen; bosschen en moerassen; apen en menschen van alle natiën en tongvallen; bergen en heuvels; papegaaijen en kolibrietjes; de fraaiste planten en bloemen; slaven en indianen; tuinen en grachten; muskieten en tijgers; slangen en padden; boschnegers en mieren; regen en zonneschijn; kostelijke maaltijden en sober onthaal; sterk gekruide spijzen en heerlijken wijn; gastvrije menschen en blank-officiers in kwaden luim; weinig nieuws en veel gepraat; fraai gekleede dames en schier naakte negerinnen – dan zult u een flauw denkbeeld kunnen vormen, van hetgeen Suriname niet is; want om juist te weten, hoe het er is, en wat men er vindt, zoudt gij u zelf te Suriname moeten bevinden.'
- ⁴⁵ Boekhoudt, *Uit mijn verleden. Bijdrage tot de kennis van Suriname*, 78: 'Wáár men in dit schoone en rijke land zijne schreden zet, wemelt het van leven. Opgevuld zijn overal de bosschen met bontkleurige vogelen en vlinders, terwijl de schuifelende slang, de brullende tijger en de loerende kaaimaan onder struik en in moeras begeerig naar prooi uitzien. [...] Groote en kleine apen, de laatste veelal in rijken getale, brengen leven en beweging in de takken der boomen en vermaken den aanschouwer met hun kluchtige sprongen. Zooveel rijkdom van al wat verrassend, indrukwekkend en schoon mag heeten – en nog zooveel meer, dat aan mijne herinnering is ontsnapt – werd mij ter aanschouwing, neen ter bewondering door den Schepper aangeboden in de natuurgewrochten van Neêrlands El-dorado: Suriname.'
- ⁴⁶ Bosch, *Reize naar Suriname in brieven*, 281: 'Het heeft mij altijd eenen vrolijken oogenblik verschaft, wanneer ik een' mensch tegenover een' aap, en omgekeerd, een' aap tegenover een' mensch zag: er ligt alsdan in de trekken van beiden iets spotachtigs. En heeft al de mensch het gebruik der tong op den aap vooruit, om zijn vierhandig evenbeeld te bespotten, zoo drukt toch het geheele gelaat van heer Kisi-Kisi veel sterker en veel beter het spotachtige uit, dan zulks bij den mensch het geval is.'
- ⁴⁷ 'Nature has placed humankind between the monkey and the sloth. One is lively, the other inert; one is cunning and furtive, the other mindless and idle; one shows curiosity and seems to have human reason, the other is completely indifferent and bestial. Suriname is home to both species.'

- Bosch, *Reize naar Suriname in brieven*, 340: 'De natuur heeft den mensch aan de eene zijde den aap, en aan de andere zijde den luijaard gegeven. De eene is al leven wat men ziet, de andere is de traagheid zelve; de eene is leep en diefachtig, de andere dom en lui; de eene is nieuwsgierig, en schijnt menschelijk verstand te bezitten, de andere onverschillig en geheel dierlijk. Beide deze diersoorten vindt men in Suriname.'
- ⁴⁸ Kronenburg, *Door Suriname. Reisherinneringen uit ons missiegebied*, 55: 'Op een klein vuur of buiten de hut bakt de vrouw het witte cassave-brood, terwijl een kleine aap, wat grooter dan een eekhoortje, op haar hoofd en schouders dartelt; verderop buitelen de kinderen in het zand.'
- ⁴⁹ Van Breugel, *Dagverhaal van eene reis naar Paramaribo en verdere omstreken in de kolonie Suriname*, 56.
- ⁵⁰ Boisseron, *Afro-dog*, 151-155.
- ⁵¹ See Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*.
- ⁵² Van Breugel, *Dagverhaal van eene reis naar Paramaribo en verdere omstreken in de kolonie Suriname*, 102.
- ⁵³ Nagel, *Suriname in losse tafereelen en schetsen*, 87: 'Wanneer men dit snedige dier de eene of andere vrucht aanbiedt, dan leert hij dadelijk zijnen meester, of deze er het binnenste of het buitenste gedeelte, – het geheel of niets van gebruiken moet.'
- ⁵⁴ Stedman, *Narrative*, 10.
- ⁵⁵ Van Cappelle, *De binnenlanden van het district Nickerie. Lotgevallen en algemeene uitkomsten van eene expeditie door het westelijk deel der kolonie Suriname in September en October van het jaar 1900*, 86: 'de meest afschuwwekkende apen der kolonie'.
- ⁵⁶ Van Noothoorn, *Reizen en lotgevallen van Gustaaf Westerman*, 92-93: 'De leelijkste aap, welken ik immer gezien heb, is de *coiata*. Zijne armen en beenen zijn met lange zwarte haren bedekt; de huid is rood en bijna zonder haar; de oogen liggen diep in het hoofd, de ooren zijn kort. Wil men hem vervolgen, dan klimt hij in eenen boom en werpt met vruchten, terwijl hij allerlei leelijken gezichten trekt. Maar hij moge er afzigtelijk uitzien, toch lust ik wel een stukje van hem, wanneer hij gebraden, gestoofd of gekookt is. Foei! zegt gij welligt, lust gij apenvleesch? Wel zeker! [...] vooral het vleesch van jonge aapjes, dat wit, sappig en smakelijk is.'
- ⁵⁷ Stedman, *Narrative*, 128.
- ⁵⁸ This link between eating monkey meat and cannibalism that is insinuated here is explored in greater depth by scholars such as John Miller, who notes that 'food appears as a prominent part of the line in the ideologically charged colonial battle to produce civilised subjects from the raw material of supposedly primitive peoples'. Miller, 'Meat, Cannibalism and Humanity', 75.
- ⁵⁹ It is unclear which kind of monkey this term refers to.
- ⁶⁰ Kronenburg, *Door Suriname. Reisherinneringen uit ons missiegebied*, 38: 'na tien minuten hoorden we twee schoten vallen, en de Frater kwam terug met een *pitagori*, een grooten aap [...]. Een heerlijk boutje voor onze inlandsche reizigers. Met huid en haar werd het dier onder de heete asch gelegd, om den volgenden dag in de soep te recht te komen. Ik heb er van gegeten; het had den smaak van osschevlees, maar was wat taai.'
- ⁶¹ Van Stockum, *Een ontdekkingsstocht in de binnenlanden van Suriname. Dagboek van de Saramacca-Expeditie*, 119: 'een mooi, volwassen exemplaar met een dichte, langharige, glanzig zwarte vacht. Alleen de handpalmen [...] zijn kaal, en met een zachte, zwarte huid bedekt, die op het beste glacé-leer gelijk'.
- ⁶² Boisseron, *Afro-dog*, 108.
- ⁶³ Boisseron, *Afro-dog*, 91.
- ⁶⁴ De Jong, *Jaguarman*, 246: 'Jij stamt niet af van slaven. Jij stamt af van jaguars.'
- ⁶⁵ De Jong, *Jaguarman*, 247: 'Ik heb gezien wat jullie mij gaven. Er is geen ander verhaal dat ik liever zou doorvertellen. Ik zal er een mooi hoofdstuk van maken. Ik zal de jaguarman zijn die u verdient.'

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