

REPRESENTATION OF A CONTROVERSIAL FIGURE (ZWARTE PIET) DURING
A TIME OF RACIAL INJUSTICE AND UNREST

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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Title: Representation of a Controversial Figure (Zwarte Piet) During a Time Of Racial Injustice and Unrest

This thesis considers the blackface holiday figure of Zwarte Piet, part of the Sinterklaas holiday tradition in the Netherlands, within a context of political unrest and broader questioning of institutional racism. It examines how an annual festival and parade connects to community identity and how the country's history with colonialism and slavery influences institutional racism. It focuses on how representations of the Zwarte Piet figure is actively changing due to protests inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States. Research done on YouTube explores how towns and cities in the Netherlands choose to represent this controversial figure in the opening celebrations and arrival parade of the Sinterklaas holiday.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Since the early twenty-first century, the Sinterklaas holiday celebrations in the Netherlands have gone from a simple children's holiday to an intense political debate centered on the racial representation of the black caricature of Zwarte Piet (Black Piet), a currently controversial figure in the opening parade of the Sinterklaas holiday. Sinterklaas, which begins the winter holiday season, is an annual seasonal holiday with celebrations starting mid-November through Saint Nicholas' birthday on December 6th. The celebrations start with his arrival with the Intocht van Sinterklaas (arrival of Saint Nicholas) parade. For my thesis, I look at how different parts of the Netherlands choose to represent Zwarte Piet during a time of political unrest and questioning of institutional racism. Some of the questions I explore include the following: How do the Sinterklaas parades represent a controversial image during a time of political and civil unrest? What does it mean for the cities or towns that choose a more socially acceptable version, and what does it mean if they continue using the black-face caricature version? Will changing the public face of racism, via Zwarte Piet, help address other forms of institutional racism in the Netherlands? Some questions that will not be directly answered but will be considered for this thesis: Should traditions be preserved even if they are objectionable? Would erasing aspects of traditions erase important parts of history or culture? Can traditions that were racist in the past become nonracist in the future? The culmination of this research focuses on how questions around racism have become inseparable from the clownish character of Zwarte Piet and have resulted in changes to a beloved holiday tradition.

During a typical year, most cities and towns throughout the country host parades that include hundreds of participants and draw thousands of visitors (figure 1). Each local government decides how to do their own Sinterklaas arrival parade. In addition, the *Sinterklaasjournaal* (Saint Nicholas journal) sends out its parade through NOS, a news broadcast company in the Netherlands. While all of the parades include a similar

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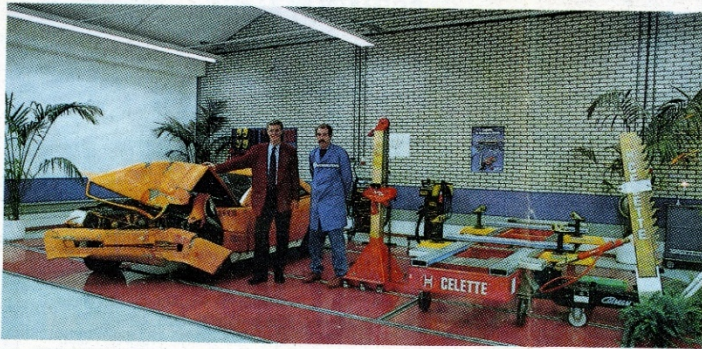
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Figure 1 This is the front page of a local newspaper in Veghel, my hometown, in December 1992. The front-page photo is of Sinterklaas and Zwarte Piet meeting local children. My mother kept this hanging on her wall because it contains my father and brother in the photo (on the far right).

representation of the main characters, they display significant differences in how they represent the Piet figure.

The Saint Nicholas character is always a slender man with a long white beard. He wears a tall red hat (similar to a bishop's mitre), red robes, and carries a long golden staff. He is accompanied by his assistants, Pieten, who help Sinterklaas deliver presents to the Netherlands' children. All the helpers are named Piet, so a single helper is just Piet, but multiple ones are Pieten (or Piets). Most Pieten have additional descriptors for their names, like Horse Piet (who takes care of Sinterklaas' horse), Present Piet, Dance Piet, Cook Piet, etc. Sinterklaas rides a white horse that can jump on rooftops at night to deliver presents and treats to children. The arrival parade greets Sinterklaas, who travels from Spain to each city via steamboat (or helicopter or train if the area has no water access); he meets the Mayor and then processes through the streets with the Pieten and hands out candy to the children along the parade route. Parade participants dress like Sinterklaas and his helpers, the Pieten. In the past, people dressed up as Piet put on a colorful outfit with gold earrings and a black curly wig; they painted any exposed skin black and their lips bright red.

And that last bit of costume is precisely what has resulted in protests, court cases, and demonstrations. Those on one side of the debate regard Zwarte Piet as a racist figure and want the black face paint gone. The other side includes those who see no harm in the traditional Zwarte Piet depictions and want to maintain the status quo. Due to the controversy, many cities have chosen to change Piet's image to make it less offensive. Schoorsteenpieten (literally: 'Chimney Peters') or Soot Pieten have replaced Zwarte Pieten at the Amsterdam Sinterklaas Parade since 2016. *Sinterklaasjournaal* has also switched to a Piet with soot smears rather than a full black face. In 2020, only six parades out of the twenty-one I surveyed included the traditional Zwarte Piet; all the rest had Schoorsteenpieten. To reiterate, each town or city has a unique arrival parade and chooses whether to use the latest version of Piet, the "old" one, or some alternative.

Due to the global pandemic, I conducted my field research virtually. Not every city and town chose to participate in the 2020 holiday season with a parade because of COVID-19 restrictions. Some did have a small, social-distanced arrival held at a secret

location to avoid crowds. The videos were posted online, which allowed for viewers from all over. I watched on YouTube and took notes on twenty-one parades. I also reviewed an additional parade from 2019, the year before, in order to compare the 2020 videos to one with a live crowd. I paid close attention to how the parades represented Piet. As per above, all but six parades included the more recent Schoorsteenpieten version; those six either had the traditional Zwarte Piet or a combination with an alternative version.

The socio-political context is critical to my examination of the Sinterklaas holiday, its history, and its relationship to current structural racism issues in the Netherlands. I begin by contextualizing Sinterklaas historically, exploring the history of the holiday, its characters, and the parade in relation to racism, slavery, and colonialism in the Netherlands. Understanding the country's involvement in colonialism and the slave trade elucidates the formation of institutional racism in the Netherlands. Next, I look at the Black Lives Matter movement and how it has affected efforts for Zwarte Piet's change in recent years. I consider how social and racial injustice and unrest have further influenced changes in Zwarte Piet. It is critical to recognize that the switch from Zwarte Piet to Schoorsteenpieten did not happen gradually; instead, it represents a paradigm shift thanks to direct societal intervention over the issue of race. The Sinterklaas tradition is publicly changing because of societal pressure, a forced change that has made many resistant to it.

My analysis focuses on the question: what version of Piet is the most socially acceptable when a culture takes accountability for its colonial past? I employ scholarship on festival, parade, and play as well as Turner's concepts of liminality and *communitas* to elucidate changes to this key Dutch calendar custom. The deeply embedded cultural significance of parades and calendar customs speaks to the challenges that change poses in general and, more specifically, to the Zwarte Piet figure.

CHAPTER II

THE CONTROVERSY

Zwarte Piet has become known worldwide as the face of racism in the Netherlands. The controversy surrounding this image has to do with the character in the parade as well as with how parade attendees dress up as the character. The image is a caricature perpetuating negative stereotype imagery reminiscent of slavery in the Netherlands. For the arrival parade, men and women dress up as the traditional character by smearing black paint all over their faces and bodies, painting their lips red, putting on a curly black wig, large gold earrings, and a colorful 17th-century Moorish outfit (figure 2). According to Schnabel, “[Sinterklaas] is accompanied by a burlesque group of black helpers, called Zwarte Piet (Black Pete), who are dressed in carnivalesque Renaissance pantaloons and jerkins, make gymnastic caprices, and toss around ginger nuts (pepernoten). This carefully staged event gets covered by national television and repeated locally” (Schnabel 2014: 92). The moment people adorn themselves in this outfit, they change from ordinary Dutch citizens to Zwarte Piet, a clownish figure that plays around, jokes, plays tricks, and serves Sinterklaas, a white man. This representation of Zwarte Piet invokes the institution of slavery (Schnabel 2014:93). Because of their offensive nature, the black-faced caricatures have sparked a debate throughout the country and attracted unwelcome worldwide attention.

For several years now, since 2011, there has been a small movement of people from various backgrounds that stand against the racially stereotypical look of Zwarte Piet (Mesman, Janssen, and van Rosmalen 2016:2). Issues surrounding Zwarte Piet are not new in the Netherlands, though they have been relatively marginalized. One of the earliest push-backs occurred in the 1980s when significant numbers of Black people immigrated to the Netherlands from the Caribbean after the independence of Suriname, a Dutch colony. Many of these new residents, who already held citizenship because their county was part of the Dutch commonwealth, took issue with the portrayal of Sinterklaas’s servant. But those early debates, small protests, and complaints were short-



Figure 2 Family photo: Sinterklaas and Zwarte Piet meeting children at a supermarket in 1992. Children give Sinterklaas artwork they have made for him. This Zwarte Piet is dressed in a 16th/17th-century Moorish outfit with a black curly wig, gold earrings, black face paint, and red lips.

lived, and there has been public silence over the issue before and after that time (Rodenberg and Wagenaar 2016:717). The country's current debate started up again in 2011 when activists Quinsy Gario and Jerry Afriyie protested at the televised Sinterklaas entry in Dordrecht (Rodenberg and Wagenaar 2016:717). By 2013 several protests and discussions had emerged around Zwarte Piet and racist representations, which have since resulted in protests, riots, and court cases (Mesman, Janssen, and van Rosmalen 2016:2). This unrest caused Amsterdam to change its Pieten to less controversial portrayals (figure 3). According to Amsterdam's main tourist website:

Zwarte Piet (literally: 'Black Peter') has long been the subject of debate in Amsterdam and the rest of the Netherlands. In 2018, the traditional Zwarte Pieten were replaced by Schoorsteenpieten (literally: 'Chimney Peters') at the Amsterdam Sinterklaas Parade. Rather than wearing the traditional blackface makeup that is at the heart of the Zwarte Piet controversy, the Schoorsteenpieten are only marked with light smudges of soot from bringing presents down the chimney. The more important characteristics of the Pieten, such as their jovial attitudes and a seemingly endless supply of cookies and sweets, remain unchanged. ("Sinterklaas | I Amsterdam" n.d.)

Amsterdam attracts visitors from all over the Netherlands and the rest of the world. The city is visible to a global audience and needed to take action to alter a problematic character. Zwarte Piet, which is a prominent feature in the holiday celebrations, started facing social and political backlash. The Pieten are a major



Figure 3 The traditional Zwarte Pieten were replaced by Schoorsteenpieten (literally: ‘Chimney Peters’) in Amsterdam in 2016 (Mourik 2020).

component of the parade, with hundreds of them dancing, playing, skating throughout the streets to entertain those people gathered; transitions to a new version are met with resistance. While Piet’s costuming has changed, the personality of Sinterklaas’ helpers remains that of the fool, the festive clown.

Many people in the Netherlands are resistant to the changes made to Zwarte Piet. For them, this character is a beloved part of their childhood traditions and should not change. They fear that changes to Zwarte Piet or even his elimination would destroy the holiday and taint their childhood memories. Traditions and rituals are meant to give individuals a sense of belonging. In the Netherlands, “[t]his shared practice is a powerful tool in constructing Dutch identity, and those who use it in this way are very explicit about who can lay claims to ‘Dutchness,’ and who cannot” (Rodenberg and Wagenaar 2016:723; also see Schnabel 2014:91). Changes made to the tradition, specifically to Zwarte Piet, can put Dutch identity at risk for some. Zwarte Piet does more than question Dutch identity; it shows who is allowed to belong and participate in the holiday and who is allowed to be Dutch. Its persistence means that only a part of the population is allowed to claim “Dutchness.” The rest are implicitly and explicitly outsiders; for them, the image of Zwarte Piet insults and mocks the Black population in the Netherlands.

In 2013, Prime Minister Mark Rutte made his position clear that Zwarte Piet is part of the holiday and should remain so; this was in response to pressure from the UN (*BBC News* 2020). That stance caused a backlash against Rutte, who is still the nation's Prime Minister at this writing (2021). The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination described the events at the time, "On November 21, 2013, UN human rights experts advised the Dutch government to facilitate the growing national debate on whether or not the portrayal of Black Pete perpetuates both a negative stereotype and derogatory image of Africans and people of African descent" (van der Pijl and Goulordava 2014). The Netherlands ignored the UN's advice, and the Dutch continued to include the black-faced Zwarte Pieten in holiday celebrations. In 2020, after another period of civil unrest in the Netherlands, Rutte reversed his position, saying that he regrets his past words and actions and agrees that Zwarte Piet needs to change (*BBC News* 2020).

Quinsy Gario is an activist and the voice for the 'Zwarte Piet is Racisme' movement (Black Piet is Racism), which was founded in 2014. Gario has a history of arrest for protesting the figure at the arrival parades and has appeared in several interviews about the debate to change public opinion and remove the controversial image from the holiday. Gario and others who protest Zwarte Piet's representation proclaim their critique by appearing at the parades wearing t-shirts emblazoned with the name of the movement. They do not cause any other disruption; their goal is to bring awareness, not to ruin the celebration. In 2011, a video was recorded of the protester Quinsy Gario being arrested and attacked by police officers during the Sinterklass arrival parade in the city of Dordrecht ("Quinsy Gario Attack - Politie Agressie Tijdens Zwarte Pieten Protest - Dordrecht. - YouTube" n.d.). A bystander shot the video, which shows the Dutch police attacking and arresting Gario, who wore a t-shirt that read "Zwarte Piet is Racisme." The video clip starts with three police officers' grabbing him and dragging him away forcibly into a side alley, away from the main street filled with crowds for the parades. You can hear Quinsy Gario shout muffled words at the officers. The police pin Gario to the ground for several minutes while they try to restrain him. In the background, you can see the crowds, the families passing through and past the alley. As people pass by the horrific scene, the video shows frightened and confused children, along with some shocked

adults. This video is only one example of the tension and extremes of the protests in the Netherlands. Police attacked Gario for simply wearing a t-shirt that called out racism. He held no weapons and did not pose a threat to the people around him. He had committed no crime.

Zwarte Piet is not just an issue during the Sinterklaas holiday. Dutch people, children and adults, use the term Zwarte Piet as an insult against black people. In the article, “‘Black Pete’ Tradition Emboldens Racism, Says Wijnaldum,” CNN’s Ben Church and Darren Lewis discuss the Dutch holiday Sinterklaas and its effect on Georginio Wijnaldum, a Black Dutch professional football (soccer) player who plays midfield for both Liverpool and the Netherlands National team. He grew up in the Netherlands and celebrated the Sinterklaas holiday like most people in the country. As a child, he thought of Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas as the ones who brought presents. In a 2019 interview with CNN Sport, Wijnaldum stated, “‘When you get older, and people are calling you ‘Black Pete’ and you were like, hey, wait, why are you calling me ‘Black Pete?’ What’s the point of calling me ‘Black Pete?’” he told CNN Sport. ‘Then you will understand. But when I was young, I didn’t understand because we get presents and it was nice’” (“Georginio Wijnaldum: ‘Black Pete’ Tradition Emboldens Racism, Says Liverpool FC Star - CNN” n.d.). As he got older, Wijnaldum regarded Zwarte Piet as a racist figure and not merely the bearer of holiday presents. Those who dress up as Zwarte Piet wear “‘full blackface, a curly afro wig, red lipstick, and large gold earrings” (“Georginio Wijnaldum: ‘Black Pete’ Tradition Emboldens Racism, Says Liverpool FC Star - CNN” n.d.). Wijnaldum does not stand behind this part of his Dutch culture and believes that the blackface costuming is not essential to the holiday and should therefore be halted. For Wijnaldum and many others, keeping that tradition of Zwarte Piet only perpetuates racism in the Netherlands.

Despite this debate, there are still plenty of supporters for Zwarte Piet in the Netherlands. According to CNN, Wijnaldum states that “‘the character’s supporters do not understand the effect it has on the country’s black population and urged more people to take the protests seriously. ‘They don’t feel what we feel as a black person. They don’t get abused like that. I don’t stand behind that culture’” (“Georginio Wijnaldum: ‘Black

Pete' Tradition Emboldens Racism, Says Liverpool FC Star - CNN" n.d.). Most of Zwarte Piet's supporters do not see the problem because they do not suffer the racism the black population in the Netherlands experiences. Wijnaldum plans to use his platform as a professional footballer to fight racism in the sport. He is prepared to protest racial abuse in the game and walk off the pitch if there is any racial abuse coming from the stands. He told CNN Sport, "I think everyone should do it [walk off]. I think that's the way you support another person, because why should you go on? If you play on, it will never stop" ("Georginio Wijnaldum: 'Black Pete' Tradition Emboldens Racism, Says Liverpool FC Star - CNN" n.d.). Wijnaldum's comments refer to a recent issue at another football match.

Protests surrounding the figure and racial abuse have been happening the last several years at various sporting matches. At a lower division football match in 2019, crowds chanted "Zwarte Piet" at a black player, which halted the match. This second division game was "between FC Den Bosch and Excelsior" ("Dutch Football Match Halted after 'Black Pete' Chants - CNN" n.d.). Excelsior team player, Ahmad Mendes Moreira, suffered racial abuse from home fans of FC Den Bosch in the Netherlands. De Bosch fans chanted racist slogans, including Zwarte Piet's songs ("Dutch Football Match Halted after 'Black Pete' Chants - CNN" n.d.). Around the same time, "[o]n the same day as the match, the city of Den Bosch saw demonstrations from both pro and anti 'Zwarte Piet' protestors" ("Dutch Football Match Halted after 'Black Pete' Chants - CNN" n.d.). Moreira walked off the pitch after thirty minutes of racial abuse from the crowds when it all became too much. Photos from the event show his teammates comforting and consoling him ("Dutch Football Match Halted after 'Black Pete' Chants - CNN" n.d.). KNVB (the National Netherlands football club) opened an investigation into the incident. According to a spokesperson, the match did not follow proper protocols for handling racist abuse. As these examples show, Zwarte Piet controversies occur not only during the holiday but have also permeated Dutch culture throughout the year.

In the segment on NPR's *Rough Translation*, "So Long, Black Pete," Gregory Warner did a series on the worldwide reactions to the protests following the Minnesota police officers' killing of George Floyd. This particular segment was on the protests and

debate against Black Pete (Zwarte Piet) in the Netherlands. The American Black Lives Matter movement affected other countries as well and caused their citizens to confront their own racial bias. In the Netherlands, Zwarte Piet represents the public face of this issue. Depictions of the character appear to mock immigrants from some of the former Dutch Colonies, such as Suriname. The deeper question, of course, is about who gets to claim Dutch identity as their own.

One of the people Warner interviewed was Amma Asante. Asante had come to the Netherlands from Ghana, got her master's degree in international relations, served on Amsterdam's City Council, and then became a member of Parliament and the only woman of color doing so at the time (“‘Rough Translation’: The Controversial Dutch Character Black Pete” n.d.). Growing up, she made Zwarte Piet crafts, dressed up as Zwarte Piet at parties, and enjoyed the character's silly performance at parades. As a child, Asante did not see any of this as a problem, but by the time she became an adult, things changed. Asante commented,

Black Pete really acts dumb and stupid, you know? And Sinterklaas is the old, wise, white, generous, almost sanctified, holy white person seated on his white horse. So there comes a moment that you're like, oh, my God. Something doesn't feel OK. You know, especially when somebody's mad at you and they call you Zwarte Piet - oh, my God. So it's an insult? You mean me? You think I'm Black Pete? You think I'm dumb, I'm stupid? (“‘Rough Translation’: The Controversial Dutch Character Black Pete” n.d.)

The inherent racism of the character profoundly affects the country's nonwhite population, making the Sinterklaas celebration just the opposite for the Netherlands' black population. This rift has divided cities and communities throughout the country, with some choosing to eliminate Zwarte Piet from their festivities and others continuing their traditional practice. Some of the predominant media networks also banned Zwarte Piet, while rival stations featured the character in their programming.

Warner's NPR segment also discusses the debate/negotiation system the Dutch commonly use for discussing controversial issues. The poldermodel is a consensus-based approach used when multiple sides do not agree with one another (“‘Rough Translation’: The Controversial Dutch Character Black Pete” n.d.). Dutch political culture employs it in order to enable civil discussions of different viewpoints. According to Asante,

It's like you talk, you talk, you talk, you talk, you talk until you reach a point of consensus ... It's about negotiating and trying to understand their point of view. And, you know, the focus of the poldermodel is we have to make something out of this together. We are all in this together ... And it works the best when, you know, we are able to lay aside our most strongest convictions of how things should be done or how the world should look like. (“‘Rough Translation’: The Controversial Dutch Character Black Pete” n.d.)

The poldermodel is meant to help people find common ground, to create a compromise that works for everyone. The goal is to find the best solution for everyone involved.

According to Asante, however, the poldermodel does not work in this case because the burden rests with the affected group to persuade the mainstream community as to the negative effects of the Zwarte Piet image on the Afro Dutch community. Even describing the effects causes trauma. The article “Essentializing ‘Black Pete’: competing narratives surrounding the Sinterklaas tradition in the Netherlands” notes, “Mothers tell about their pain on hearing that their children are addressed as ‘Zwarte Piet’ at school, something that happens to adults as well, in the streets or at work ... Others worry about the effects that symbolising a racialized master-servant relationship in schools might have on children of all colours” (Rodenberg and Wagenaar 2016:724). Emily Raboteau in “Who is Zwarte Piet” describes how some families try to avoid the holiday altogether by not attending the arrival parades. Asante feels that there are no real compromises for this racist figure; either the country will eliminate it or not.

As part of the same podcast, Warner introduced another guest, Jerry Afriyie. Afriyie is the ambassador for the anti-Zwarte Piet movement. To start a conversation about forms of racism in the Netherlands, he chose Zwarte Piet because “I think that is the most visible one. That’s why we are fighting it. And also, fighting Zwarte Piet exposes the country to its own racism, but she’s been acting like it’s not there” (“‘Rough Translation’: The Controversial Dutch Character Black Pete” n.d.). Afriyie explained that when he walks down the street, young children see him, scream “Zwarte Piet,” and hide. According to the tradition, Zwarte Piet reports children’s behavior to Sinterklaas; children thereby learn that Piet punishes children by either throwing them into a sack or hitting them with a bundle of branches. For Afriyie, the racist implications of Zwarte Piet are inescapable, and he regularly wears a t-shirt that declares “Zwarte Piet is Racisime.”

One year, police dragged “him into an ally and beat him up ” (“‘Rough Translation’: The Controversial Dutch Character Black Pete” n.d.); this was precisely the same treatment Quinsy Gario experienced. Afriyie makes it a practice to travel around the country to speak about Zwarte Piet’s offensiveness image and to assist with nonviolent protests.

An alternative narrative that many Dutch people prefer is the one that attributes Zwarte Piet’s blackness not to race but to his going down chimneys. Of course, this version does not explain the black Afro, gold hoop earrings, big red lips, and the occasional Caribbean accent. Afriyie notes that this narrative lets the Dutch off the racist hook. He states, “If you’re going to continue to say he came through the chimney, then let’s make it something that looks like it came out of the chimney” (“‘Rough Translation’: The Controversial Dutch Character Black Pete” n.d.). Chimney Piet does represent a compromise: instead of full blackface, people just put streaks of black on their face without the red lips, curly hair, or accent. This alternative image seems to have been successful, with several cities’ opting to use this new image.

But there are still issues with Chimney Piet; traditionalists refuse to give up Zwarte Piet, while the opposition insists that the real issue is about Zwarte Piet’s origin as a former child slave, which I describe in more detail in my history section below. The Sinterklaas holiday is supposed to be a children’s holiday, meant for all children, not just the white ones. The article “Essentializing ‘Black Pete’: competing narratives surrounding the Sinterklaas tradition in the Netherlands” notes,

Zwarte Piet ... needs to change as children here and now suffer from the way this figure is presented. When this narrative would be combined with the ‘feast for children’ narrative, a feast for all children, excluding none, a solution could be in reach. This would of course imply turning Sinterklaas into a true children’s feast, which, at present, it is quite obviously not. (Rodenberg and Wagenaar 2016:725)

In sum, Zwarte Piet excludes black children from enjoying the holiday the same way as white children. For GeorGINIO Wijnaldum, Amma Asante, Quinsy Gario, and Jerry Afriyie, Zwarte Piet is offensive and damaging to black Dutch people because the character promulgates and reinforces racist stereotypes that affect citizenry year-round.

CHAPTER III

THE SINTERKLAAS CELEBRATIONS

The Holiday

Sinterklaas is a winter gift-giving holiday that centers around the myth of Saint Nicholas. The whole country celebrates or at the very least acknowledges the holiday—images of Sinterklaas and other holiday figures are on display throughout the country. There are celebrations in the weeks leading up to the holiday, starting from his arrival in mid-November. As Yvon van der Pijl in “Black Pete, ‘Smug Ignorance,’ and the Value of the Black Body in Postcolonial Netherlands” puts it, “The Dutch Saint Nicholas (Sinterklaas) celebration, a folkloric festivity commemorating Saint Nicholas, is a popular annual holiday event celebrated from mid-November to December 5” (van der Pijl and Goulordava 2014). Holiday celebrations persist in parts of Belgium, Suriname, Aruba (still part of the Dutch kingdom), and wherever the Dutch have had strong influences (Mesman, Janssen, and van Rosmalen 2016:1). Sinterklaas arrives in the Netherlands on a steamboat from Spain. Accompanying him are his helpers, Zwarte Pieten, and his white horse, whom he rides around the country. The original horse was named Amerigo. The new horse is named Ozosnel. There are many celebrations between the arrival and the day of the Sinterklaas Feast on December 6th, the official Saint’s day and the holiday that celebrates it.

While Austria has a similar holiday, there, Krampus accompanies Saint Nicholas. On the night of December 5th, Saint Nicholas and Krampus visit families (Honigmann 1977). Saint Nicholas wears a bishop’s outfit, and Krampus is a red-tongued horned creature that resembles popular images of the devil; he wields a switch of birch rods to scare children (Honigmann 1977). Many schools put on plays for which children dress up as Saint Nicholas and Krampus. They recite prayers and hymns to Saint Nicholas to prove they have been good. Krampus warns and scares the children to discourage bad behavior (Honigmann 1977). In Austria and parts of North America, Krampus has become a more famous figure than Saint Nicholas during the holiday festivities.

Sinterklaas is similar to Santa Claus; both are gift-giving figures of the winter season, but they reference two different personas. Santa Claus arrives for Christmas in late December, while Sinterklaas arrives in November and leaves in early December. There are people in the Netherlands who celebrate both holidays, but Sinterklaas is more important for the Dutch people and their country. Judi Mesman and other authors in “Black Pete through the Eyes of Dutch Children” state, “The Dutch consider Sinterklaas the most important tradition in the Netherland” (Mesman, Janssen, and van Rosmalen 2016:1). The Sinterklaas holiday is one of the defining symbols of the national identity. If Sinterklaas is the major gift-giving holiday for the family, there is usually a big dinner without Christmas gifts. The reverse also happens. If the family celebrates Christmas as the significant gift-giving holiday, then for Sinterklaas, the family still put out shoes to be filled with treats and a small gift. My family primarily celebrated Christmas and did small things for Sinterklaas. We continued this practice when we moved to the United States, and, to this day, we still receive a chocolate letter and enjoy special Sinterklaas treats. Regardless of what holiday people in the Netherlands celebrate or their religious preference, everyone celebrates some aspect of the Sinterklaas holiday just as most people in the United States observe some aspect of certain holidays that have gone from religious to mainstream, e.g., Christmas, Easter, Valentine’s Day, and Halloween.

I was born in the Netherlands and spent part of my childhood there before moving to the United States. In the Netherlands, it was impossible to avoid the Sinterklaas holiday season, which started with the parade that marks Sinterklaas’s official arrival in the middle of November (figure 4). Throughout the weeks leading up to the holiday, Sinterklaas and Piet visit schools, grocery stores, and homes. Children write letters and make drawings for Sinterklaas, mail their letters or put them in their shoes between November 14th and December 5th, or hand-deliver them at various events. On the eve of Sinterklaas’s arrival in the Netherlands, children start leaving out their shoes up until December 5th. During this period, Sinterklaas leaves treats (Chocoladeletter /chocolate letters, Pepernoten, Kruidnoten, Strooigoed, etc.), and sometimes a little present in their shoes. The small presents are similar to Christmas stocking stuffers in the United States.



Figure 4 Family photo: Sinterklaas and Piet are used as decorations throughout schools during the holiday season. This is a childhood photo of me in November of 1996 with Zwarte Piet drawn on the chalkboard in the background.

On the evening of December 5th, ‘sinterklaasavond’ (Translated: Sinterklaas evening) or ‘pakjesavond’ (present evening), traditional family gatherings occur. Sinterklaasavond is the holiday’s main gift-giving occasion, and small children who still believe in Sinterklaas might open some presents that evenings, but Sinterklaas and his helpers don’t deliver most of their presents until late that night. In anticipation, children put out their shoes one final time along with a drink, treat, and carrot for Sinterklaas and his white horse. Those who have been good all year expect to be rewarded with chocolate letters, other fun treats, and toys. According to tradition, “bad” children can expect a lump of coal in their shoes instead of treats and gifts. My mother told me that the punishment would be worse than a lump of coal if I do not behave. Really naughty children get kidnapped, thrown into Sinterklaas’ sack, beaten with a stick, and taken to



Figure 5 Intocht Sinterklaas in Amsterdam 1953 (“Intocht Sinterklaas in Amsterdam” n.d.).

Spain. This version was a lot more terrifying and stuck with me as I grew older; I behaved!

Older children and adults usually open presents on ‘pakjesavond’ (present evening). On that evening, adults and older children gather and joke with each other, usually in the form of a poem or roast. These joking poems are usually directed at a particular person. Some families might pull names to see who they get assigned to, and some people have a habit of keeping track of embarrassing things that happen throughout the year and then use them in the roast/poem. These poems exemplify Dutch humor and the Dutch penchant for gentle teasing and are part of the way that family members co-create and pass on their traditions.

Sinterklaas Intocht (Saint Nicholas Arrival) Parade

The holiday season starts with an arrival parade in multiple cities throughout the country and is one of the most significant events of the year in the Netherlands; hundreds participate and thousands of visitors crowd to observe (figure 5). Participants dress the part of the characters; one person (in each city) dresses up as the Saint, with the rest dressed up as Pieten, his playful helpers. Piet is the favorite character of the story, and

those dressed as Pieten, both men and women, wear bright colors, dance, skate, do tricks, and hand out candy to those at the parade.

Anticipation for this day had been building. Children and their parents bundle up in warm clothes, gather close together in the streets, and push forward to get as close as they can to the roped-off barriers. Children smile from ear to ear, their cheeks pink from the cold and their breath visible in the crisp air. Excitement bubbles up inside them because today Sinterklaas finally arrives from Spain on his boat full of presents and his clownish Pieten. A reporter stands with the mayor on a stage in front of the crowd. Everyone hopes to get a glimpse of the magical Saint and get some tasty treats from the silly Pieten who dance and play. While everyone eagerly waits for the steamboat to arrive, the crowd enthusiastically joins in with hundreds of voices to sing the holiday's festive songs. A loud steamboat horn echoes through the area. A moment of awe passes over the children, and then screams of excitement erupt; Sinterklaas has finally arrived! The mayor greets Sinterklaas as he steps off the boat and waves to the crowds. Children jump up and down as they wave enthusiastically back. As Sinterklaas makes his way to the parade and his horse, some children shake his hands and gift him with the beautiful drawings that they worked hard to create for him. As the parade moves through the city, with Sinterklaas on his horse leading the procession and Pieten scattered around, more children reach out and wave. The Pieten throw treats into the crowd, and children stuff them in their mouths, enjoying the sweet and spiced flavors. At the end of the parade, children listen as Sinterklaas instructs them to put out their shoes to receive treats and gifts. The moment the sound of the horn blasts its way to the children's ears, the magic becomes real. For them, this is when the mystical being that brings them their presents comes to life again. For the children, this arrival parade is reality.

The Sinterklaas arrival parade includes costumes, performance, food, and the actual procession. The Amsterdam tourist webpage reports, "With more than a kilometre of floats and boats, Amsterdam hosts the largest Saint Nicholas parade in the world. Sinterklaas sails into town on a Sunday mid-November with 600 Pieten and plenty of pepernoten (small spiced biscuits), welcomed by upwards of 400,000 spectators who line the canals" ("Sinterklaas | I Amsterdam" n.d.). Hundreds of people dress in costumes that

represent the holiday's main characters. Folklore and popular culture come together. In "Popular Culture and Folklore," folklorist Jack Santino maintains that mass culture and folklore can blur when groups transform mass culture to make it their own. The parade and all its components are part of the Sinterklaas legend, which the media broadcast throughout the country for everyone to "consume." Attending the parade, or even participating in it, is a family and cultural tradition that continues through the generations.

CHAPTER IV

HISTORY OF THE CHARACTERS

The history of the characters is essential to understanding how they have changed and become integral to the holiday and its celebrations. Their origins and how they have changed over time have influenced how the holiday is celebrated today. Each character has a specific look that helps to bring the story to life. Sinterklaas is a white-bearded older man dressed in red robes, with a tall, pointed hat (the attire is best described as a bishop's outfit), and he carries a large decorated shepherd's crook. He has a large white horse that parades him around the city. On December 5th, his horse carries him across the rooftops to deliver gifts to all the well-behaved children. Zwarte Piet is Sinterklaas's helper. According to the article "Black Pete through the Eyes of Dutch Children," "Black Pete traditionally has his face painted black (much like a Blackface Minstrel), his lips red, wears an afro wig and gold hoop earrings and dresses like a Moorish page from the 17th century" (Mesman, Janssen, and van Rosmalen 2016:1). There are hundreds of Pieten, male and female, who accompany Sinterklaas in his arrival parade—hundreds of people in each dress up as the character.

Some of the core characters of the holiday have changed over the years and with no controversy. Sinterklaas' white horse is a prime example of this. When the horse first appeared in the 1850 children's book, the animal was brown. Over time the horse became white, which is now the iconic image of the creature. Amerigo was an earlier version of the horse. The name has changed, but the same image of a white horse appears in every parade and storybook. The new one that has been mentioned in parade videos the last several years is Ozosnel (translated: oh so fast). The new name indicates that this particular horse of Sinterklaas is extremely fast, making it easier for Sinterklaas to deliver all the presents to the children. The changes to the horse seemed to be natural, with no negative opinions to the change. This transformation is very different than those for Zwarte Piet, which have been considerably more controversial.

Sinterklaas

The Sinterklaas holiday in the Netherlands connects to a historical figure that has a significant meaning to the holiday and the country itself. Sinterklaas in the Netherlands, Saint Nicholas in Austria, and Santa Claus are all based on the same historical and religious figure Saint Nicholas. Saint Nicholas, the figure behind the Dutch holiday, was the bishop of Myra, a town in present-day Turkey (van der Pijl and Goulordava 2014:263). It is believed Nicholas was born on March 15th, in the year 270, in Patara in Asia Minor. Many early sources speculate that his parents died from an epidemic, and he was raised by an uncle who was the city's bishop (Pollard and Pollard 2017). Later in life, Nicholas lived at a small monastery and visited sites in the holy land from 312 to 315 (ibid). In 317, Nicholas returned to his birth city and was himself made the Bishop of Myra, and was known as a prominent defender of Orthodox Christian tradition (ibid). Nicholas died on December 6, 343. That day became a holiday in many parts of the world.

Following his death, miracles were attributed to him that caused him to become a true Saint in the Catholic religion. Saint Nicholas is known as the patron saint of sailors, dockworkers, and of children, among other things. According to some legends, Nicholas had traveled by sea to the Holy Land when a terrible storm struck (Pollard and Pollard 2017). The ship was in danger, and Nicholas prayed for the storm to calm. This act caused the storm to dissipate, and the legend credit's him with saving the ship and all its passengers (ibid). That act transformed him into the Patron Saint and protector of sailors and dock workers, which is why Saint Nicholas is also the patron saint for the city of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. According to the city's tourist website, "Saint Nicholas has had close ties with Amsterdam since 343 AD... No one really knows why he then chose to live in Spain but historians point to the Spanish domination over the Netherlands in the past" ("Sinterklaas | I Amsterdam" n.d.). This explains the part of the story of the holiday where he arrives in the Netherlands from Spain, his home, and where he returns after the holiday is over in December.

Saint Nicholas's relationship with children has to do with another legend. After three boys were killed and shoved into a barrel to hide their bodies, Nicholas brought

these boys back to life (Pollard and Pollard 2017). This act and others involving Nicholas's saving children led him to become the patron saint of Children (ibid). Saint Nicholas also "had a reputation for secret gift-giving and was declared a Saint by the Catholic Church, becoming the patron saint of many groups, including that of children. As such, Saint Nicholas became a model for the Dutch Sinterklaas and is still revered today as an admirable gift-giver" (van der Pijl and Goulordava 2014:263). His other role as patron saint of children is part of why he is the figure behind various children's holidays, while his gift-giving reputation explains the associated tradition of his distributing presents and treats.

Zwarte Piet

While the origins of Sinterklaas are easy to trace, Piet's origin story is more contested. There are a few different stories told about Piet's origins. First, there are Zwarte Piet's connections to a Moorish figure. The Netherlands used to be part of the former Spanish empire, which had a strong Moorish influence in its population and armies (Blakely 1993a: 49). Some versions of Piet's origin have him as a Moorish orphan who Sinterklaas saved by adopting him and raising him to be his assistant (Blakely 1993a:46). Some say, as I heard as a child, that he was originally a child slave. Some believe Zwarte Piet originates from a devil-type figure. Some make connections to the Krampus figure in the Austrian Saint Nicholas celebrations. Another possible connection to the figure is to pre-Christian pagan mid-winter traditions (Rodenberg and Wagenaar 2016: 721). In this version, the leftover pagan traditions that survived the process of Christianization transformed a pagan character into a devilish figure that accompanies Saint Nicholas, the "bad" counterpart to the "good" saint (Rodenberg and Wagenaar 2016:721). This story has caused some to claim that Zwarte Piet is not part of the colonial past but part of deep history and practice throughout pre-Christian Europe.

The versions I learned while growing up were typical folklore and communicated to me verbally. In one version, Piet was a slave to a terrible king. One day Sinterklaas learned about Piet and his troubles with the king and helped free Piet, who then decided to become Sinterklaas' servant through gratitude. The other version became famous because of the current controversy surrounding Zwarte Piet. In that version, Piet is not

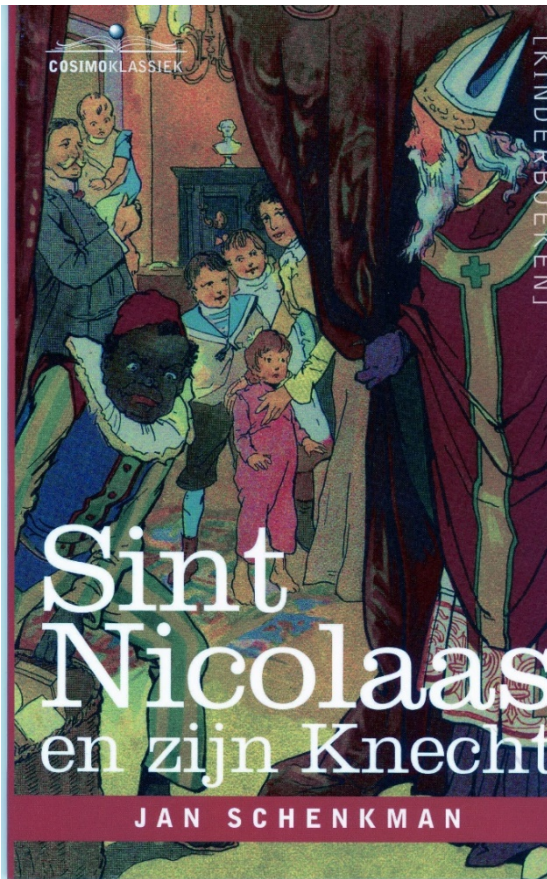


Figure 6 'Sint Nicolaas en zijn Knecht' by Jan Schenkman book covers. On the left is the 1907 version (Schenkman 2016). On the right, the 1850 version suit ("Sinterklaas | Koninklijke Bibliotheek" n.d.).

actually black. He gets the black on his skin from going down the chimneys. The black is supposed to be soot. There are some obvious flaws in that version. It does not explain the red lips, gold earrings, black afro wig, and of course, the clothes are spotless. This version also does not explain how and why Piet became Sinterklaas' servant, the only purpose this version serves is deflecting the racism claims.

Many of the current customs surrounding the Sinterklaas holiday, like Zwarte Piet, come from a children's book written in 1850 (figure 6). According to Emily Raboteau in "Who Is Zwarte Piet?" "The Dutch are often fuzzy on the details of Zwarte Piet's history. Many believe he originates in the nineteenth-century rhyming children's book Saint Nicholas and His Servant, penned by schoolteacher Jan Schenkman. Published in 1850, thirteen years before the Netherlands became among the last European nations to abolish slavery, the book depicted Sinterklaas with a black servant for the first time" (Raboteau 2014:144). This depiction of Sinterklaas and his servant, from the 1850

children's book, became the basis for his portrayal, especially in the arrival parade. The book never named the black servant who accompanied Sinterklaas.

To best understand current changes to the practice of holiday costuming and the identity of the characters for Sinterklaas in the Netherlands, it is necessary to go through a timeline of events surrounding the holiday. Most of how the holiday is celebrated today dates back to the 1850 text. The Sinterklaas festival is older than this, but this book includes the first appearance of the steamboat and Sinterklaas's unnamed helper ("Hoe Zwarte Piet Veranderde, van Pageknecht Tot Roetstrepen" n.d.). The article "Hoe Zwarte Piet Veranderde, van Pageknecht Tot Roetstrepen" (Translations: "How Zwarte Piet changed, from a servant to soot marks"), gives a history of Zwarte Piet including how the character has changed over time—starting from the 1850 children's book. This short article shows that from 1850 to 2016, the character of Zwarte Piet changed dramatically. While the holiday may be centuries old, Zwarte Piet is not. The character has changed in identity, appearance, role, and amount. The character was not constant and, for the most part, changed gradually and over time. The current changes to Zwarte Piet have been much more abrupt and, to some degree, the result of global political pressure and social correctness that some Dutch citizens regard as being forced upon the country.

In Schenkman's original *Sint-Nicolaas en zijn knecht* ('*Saint Nicholas and His servant*'), where the first image of Zwarte Piet as servant appears, the character is said to wear a white and red suit ("Hoe Zwarte Piet Veranderde, van Pageknecht Tot Roetstrepen" n.d.). Although Schenkman published several children's books during his lifetime (1806-1863), this was his most well-known and influential book¹ ("Sinterklaas | Koninklijke Bibliotheek" n.d.). The book contained many details that were well-known parts of the then contemporary tradition. This included children's putting out shoes, the sweets, and the reward and punishment for children's behaviors ("Sinterklaas | Koninklijke Bibliotheek" n.d.). The new parts of the story that Schenkman introduced included the steam boat on which Sinterklaas arrives, Sinterklaas's traveling on horseback over rooftops, a book with naughty and nice children (similar to the list Santa Clause has), and the introduction of a Moorish page who was Sinterklaas's helper

¹ Published by Gerrit Theodoor Bom in Amsterdam in 1850 ("Sinterklaas | Koninklijke Bibliotheek" n.d.).

(“Sinterklaas | Koninklijke Bibliotheek” n.d.). There is a possibility that these details were known before Schenkman wrote the tale, but this book remains the earliest printed record of them, according to Emily Raboteau in “Who Is Zwarte Piet?” and the Nationale Bibliotheek article “Sint Nikolaas en zijn knecht door J. Schenkman” (“Sint Nicholas and his servant by J. Schenkman”). This helper character slowly became today’s Zwarte Piet. The children’s book based on the already popular holiday did extremely well and was reprinted and edited for the next 50 years (“Sinterklaas | Koninklijke Bibliotheek” n.d.).

A 1907 reprint of the book that included updated illustrations became the standard imagery of the holiday characters (figure 6). Both books provide valuable information for the history of these figures. The Koninklijke Bibliotheek (KB) provides a digital scanned 1850 copy of the book that allowed me to see the original images and original text. I also looked at my own copies—reprinted replicas of the original 1850 and 1907 versions. The 1907 copy has updated illustrations but included the text from Jan Schenkman with some edited words that match the spelling changes in 1907. But the illustrations are different, and Petrus van Geldrop (1872-1939) created those for the 1907 edition. When the book was originally printed, the Saint was named Sint Nikolaas. Over time, the name must have been shortened and combined to form Sinterklaas.

The story’s basic plot is about Sint Nikolaas’s arrival in the Netherlands by steamboat from Spain. When Sint Nikolaas disembarks, he rides through the city on a horse with his helper carrying a chest of money to purchase gifts and treats for the children in the Netherlands. The story details how the Sint goes shopping for treats, books, and presents to deliver to all the good children. Sint Nikolaas and his helper, who travel on horseback over the rooftops, deliver the treats. It is crucial for children to stay good because the Sint hears and sees everything. He has eyes and ears everywhere to check up on them. The Sint even visits schools to get the teachers’ reports about students’ classroom performance and children receive extra gifts if they behave well in class. Sint Nikolaas uses a special book to keep track of the good and bad. Good children receive bags of gifts and treats in their rooms and shoes. Misbehaving children are taken and put in the Sint’s bag. The story ends with Sint Nikolaas’s farewell to the children and his return to Spain with his horse and helper.

Both versions of the story have clear images representing the contents of the narrative and its characters. The cover for the 1850 edition depicts Sint Nikolaas in a red and gold bishop's hat and a red cape trimmed with gold and lined with blue. Underneath the cape, he wears white robes with a red and gold sash hanging from his shoulders. He holds a long staff topped with a curved adornment (figure 6). The Sint is tall, slender, has a long white beard, and has light, fair skin. This image is similar to the modern version of Sinterklaas. The clothes differ slightly, but overall the clothes match a bishop's style of clothing. The colors are predominantly red, white, blue, with trim of gold. Representations of Sint Nikolaas between the 1850 version and the 1907 version are not significantly different. There are just little adornments that differ between the outfits.

The helper character in *Sint Nikolaas en zijn knecht*, looks very different in the two versions. The text refers only to the additional companion of Sint Nicolaas as his helper. Only once does the text explicitly mention the color of the helper's skin. The story states, in both the 1850 and the 1907 version, "Maar neen... 't Is zijn knechtje, Dat zwart is ven Kleur" (translation: "But no...It is his helper, that is black of color") ("Sinterklaas | Koninklijke Bibliotheek" n.d.; Schenkman 2017: 21; Schenkman 2016). The book describes the color of the helper's skin just once. It was in the early 20th century that the title of Zwarte (black) was added before the character's name, which was given to the helper years after the book was published. Images throughout the book provide more detail about his appearance and actions. In the section of the book, "St. Nikolaas op Strooiavand" (translation: Saint Nicholas on treat spreading evening), the Sint comes through the front door and throws treats to the children. The helper is in the chimney throwing down threats to the children to collect ("Sinterklaas | Koninklijke Bibliotheek" n.d.; Schenkman 2017: 21; Schenkman 2016). Note that it is the helper who comes through the chimney, which provides a connection to the alternative narrative the Dutch have for Zwarte Piet. Nonetheless, the book does describe the helper as black. It



Figure 7 "St. Nikolaas bij den Banketbakker"
(Schenkman 2017: 10). This image shows Sinterklaas
buying treats and his servant holding a bag.

also depicts the figure of a black man throughout the book, before and after he goes through the chimney. Thus the alternative narrative does not add up, but this description seems to point to the origin of the idea of Chimney Piet.

The images in the 1850 version and the 1907 version provide two very different representations of the character. The 1850 images have the helper character dressed in a white outfit with red trim on the jacket and sleeves and red shoes. The helper has black skin, somewhat curly hair, and a friendly, neutral facial expression. Overall, the helper looks like a sailor and does not stand out more than any other character in the book, except that he is the only person of color to appear (figure 7). The 1907 version has drastically different images. While they have more detail and color overall, the style of the helper's clothing differs dramatically from that of Sint Nikolaas (figure 6). The helper wears a colorful outfit with long sleeves and pants striped in yellow and green. He wears a purple vest with red trim and buttons with a large, white puffy collar, tan-colored sandals, and a red dome-shaped hat. The helper has prominent bright red lips, very curly black hair, and an angry expression. His mouth and nose protrude from his face, more

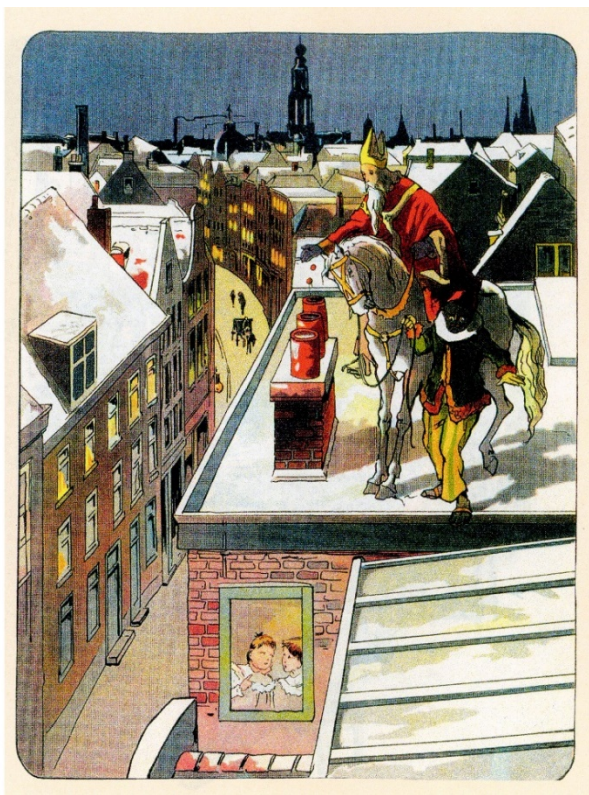


Figure 8 "St. Nikolaas op den Schoorsteen" (Sint Nikolaas on the rooftops). In these images, Sinterklaas and his servant are on the roofs to deliver treats and gifts to good children. On the left, 1850 version (Schenkman 2017: 14). On the right, 1907 version (Schenkman 2016).

than the images of the white people and the Sint. The 1907 illustrations of the helper are very similar to the more modern version of Zwarte Piet. Both wear colorful outfits similar to that of a seventeenth-century Spanish Moor. While the clothing resembles that of the nobility, it is far more clownish.

The helper's behavior also differs in the two versions. There are some similarities—the helper does most of the heavy lifting when the Sint purchases treats and gifts, and the helper also carries the chest of money. The images of Sint Nikolaas on the rooftops with his horse and helper are different (figure 8); in the 1850 edition, both the Sint and the helper are on horses, which gives the impression that the two are not so far apart in rank, though not entirely since one is a nameless helper. In the 1907 edition, when they are on the rooftops, the helper does not have a horse. Instead, he leads the Sint's horse and assists the Sint. This image shows the helper in a more subservient role than the earlier version.

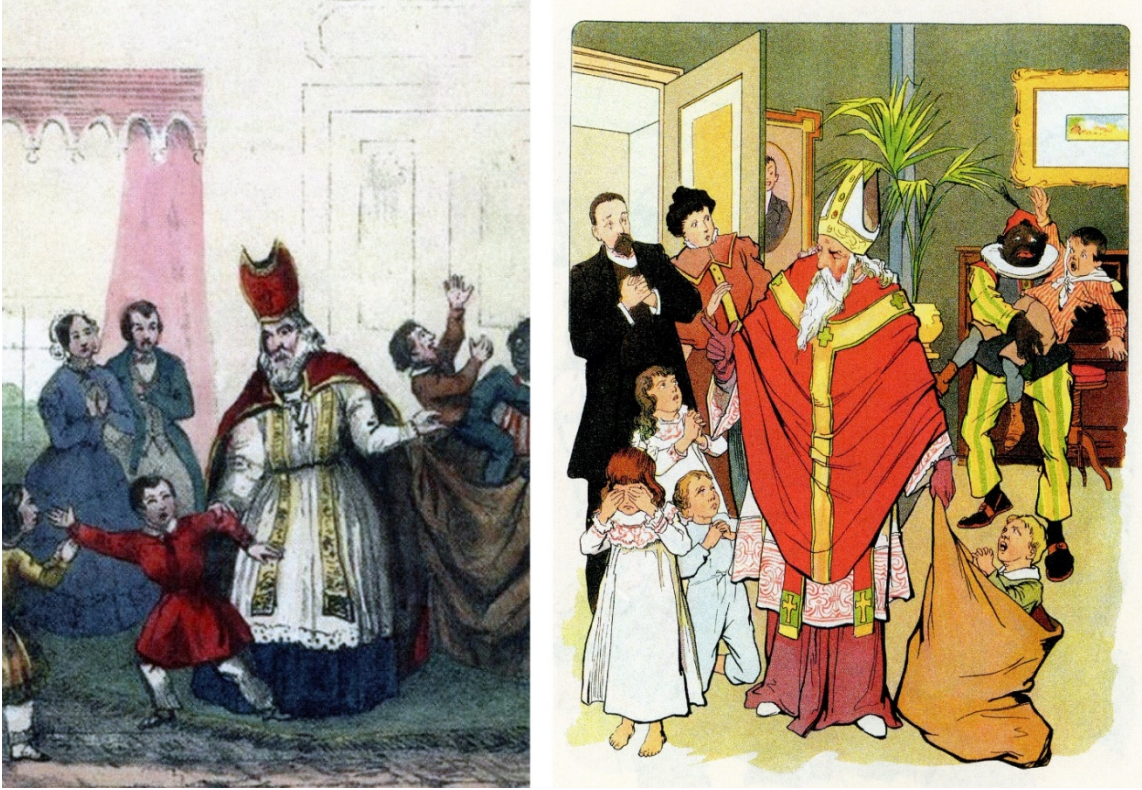


Figure 9 "St. Nikolaas bij Stoute Kinderen" (Sint Nikolaas and bad children). These images show Sinterklaas and his servant punishing children by throwing them into his sack. On the left, 1850 version (Schenkman 2017: 34). On the Right, 1907 version (Schenkman 2016).

The images of the Sint's working on his book for good and naughty children depict just the one helper in the 1850 edition; there are multiple helpers in the 1907 version. In the latter version, all of the helpers are black, which mirrors the Pieten of the modern version of the holiday. And in more recent versions, there are hundreds of Pieten accompanying Sinterklaas. When children are punished, the 1850 version shows that it is the Sint, not the helper, who grabs and stuffs them into a sack. In the 1907 version, the roles are reversed (figure 9); the Sint holds the bag and warns the other children while the helper is the one who picks up the children to shove into the bag. The updated version also depicts the helper with a bundle of branches used to beat children who misbehave. The older images do not include that representation. Overall, the 1907 book portrays depicts the helper as a much more threatening figure.

There are several components in the 1907 edition that still make their appearance in contemporary holiday celebrations in the Netherlands. The story is written in verse, and the opening lines have become a popular song that song focuses on the arrival of Sint

Nikolaas and includes his warning to children: good children receive treats, but naughty children are beaten with a stick with branches. While this warning is still repeated today, some less violent versions say that bad children will get coal instead. Arriving in the Netherlands from Spain in a steamboat became a staple in most arrival parades in towns with direct water access. Following the arrival, Sinterklaas parades through the city, just as he does in the book. A significant difference here is that the helper carries a chest of money used to purchase gifts and treats for the children. For today's parades, Sinterklaas arrives with presents and treats on his boat instead of purchasing them when he arrives. The story also indicates that good children receive something from the Sint regardless of their social class. In fact, there were differences: wealthy children got more presents and treats, while poor children got only a treat and not much else. Perhaps this was a way to explain to children why some received more and others did not. The story mentions that the Sint rides a horse through the city and on rooftops. The original image is of a brown horse; the newer version is white, which has become common in the modern version of the holiday. Nowadays, the horse also has a name and seems to get replaced by a new one ever so often. The book's most impactful representations, especially the 1907 illustration version, have to do with the helper character. The 1907 representation is similar to the modern version of Piet's outfit and behavior, but Piet's character has changed to that of a clown.

By 1859, Sinterklaas's only servant, who is shown as being a little older than the 1850 version, is referred to as 'Pieter,' and wears puffs and a beret ("Hoe Zwarte Piet Veranderde, van Pageknecht Tot Roetstreden" n.d.). Early lore about Sinterklaas' servant is as a menacing figure that deals with naughty children. Around 1900, the servant acquires his name, Zwarte Piet ("Hoe Zwarte Piet Veranderde, van Pageknecht Tot Roetstreden" n.d.). Adding the adjective of Zwarte (black) to the name of the servant character obviously refers to his skin color. By the 1930s Sinterklaas has acquired multiple Pieten, and a Spanish nobleman accompanied him on his journey ("Hoe Zwarte Piet Veranderde, van Pageknecht Tot Roetstreden" n.d.). By the late 1940s to early 1950s, Zwarte Piet has changed from a scary character to a silly, joyful, friendly one ("Hoe Zwarte Piet Veranderde, van Pageknecht Tot Roetstreden" n.d.). Overall, the Pieten's behavior in modern traditions is more clownish. They dance and play through

the parade, and in some instances the Pieten pull pranks. One of the videos from the 2020 arrival videos show some of the Pieten pushing the mayor into the water.

The Pieten's behavior is not the only thing that has changed. Their physical attributes and costuming has become more offensive. In the 1980s, Zwarte Piet began to have some of the characteristically racist features, gold earrings, bright red thick lips, and frizzy hair.

In de jaren 80 veranderen er wat uiterlijke kenmerken van Zwarte Piet. Hij wordt uitbundiger uitgedost. Er duiken pieten op met gouden oorkingen en knalrode lippen. Vanuit de Surinaams-Nederlandse gemeenschap komt er kritiek op het kinderfeest, vanwege de "racistische kenmerken". De gemeenschap start een actie om Sinterklaas te vieren zonder Zwarte Piet

(Translation: "In the 1980s, some outward features of Zwarte Piet changed. He's being decked out more exuberantly. There are Pieten with gold earrings and bright red lips. From the Surinamese-Dutch community there is criticism of the children's celebration, because of its "racist characteristics". The community starts an action to celebrate Saint Nicholas without Zwarte Piet"). ("Hoe Zwarte Piet Veranderde, van Pageknecht Tot Roetstrepen" n.d.)

At this time, there was clear pushback from the black community in the Netherlands. To them, this image of Zwarte Piet is a clear caricature that is both offensive and causes offense to a specific portion of the population.

By the early 2000s, Sinterklaas had hundreds of Pieten accompanying him, all with their particular job, "Veel pieten hebben een eigen taak. Zo is er een Inkooppiet, een Magazijnpiet, een Inpakpiet, een Wegwijspiet en een Hoofdpiet" (Translation: "A lot of people have their own job. For example, there is a Purchasing Piet, a Warehouse Piet, a Packing Piet, a Guide Piet and a HeadPiet") ("Hoe Zwarte Piet Veranderde, van Pageknecht Tot Roetstrepen" n.d.). They are all covered in black make up, have red lips, and wear gold earrings and colorful clothing. The specific description attached to the Piet names (Horse Piet, Dance Piet, Present Piet) is oddly similar to the descriptive names for slaves in the Americas, like the slave roles (field slave, house slave). Zwarte Piet connects to the image of slavery, and in some versions of the character's background above, Piet is conceptualized as a former slave.

CHAPTER V

PARADES AND FESTIVALS

Festivals

Celebrating Sinterklaas is so tied to Dutch identity that it can be considered one of the criterion for what makes someone Dutch, a key symbol for national identity (Ortner, 1973). Like many other community events, holidays, parades, and festivals, its observance expresses cultural identity and recreates community each time. Sinterklaas celebrates the saint's birthday with a variety of historical cultural practices. While there can be some variation from year to year, the parade communicates the same core message, and the promise of Sinterklaas's return each year. Cultural traditions and beliefs intertwine and become one, which is why it is so difficult to eliminate Zwarte Piet from the festival. As a polysemic symbol, Piet is also subject to multiple interpretations—and this is the key issue and challenge.

Smith defines festivals, in “Festivals and Celebrations” in *Folklore and Folklife*, as follows, “recurring moments of special significance, with the celebrations that fill them” (Smith 1972:159). Festivals are a combination of meaningful events that happen regularly; they bring together community members to celebrate, an essential factor for festivals. According to Smith, a festival's original meaning is not as crucial as the continued reason to celebrate it.

A revealing clue to the persistence of the festival is the fact that a great number of festivals continue to flourish, maintaining essentially the same form, long after their original meaning has been forgotten. This clue should suggest to the investigator that the enduring significance of the festival lies less in its avowed purpose or meaning than in the fact of celebration itself. (Smith 1972:160)

While the original meaning of a festival can be lost or changed over time, Smith notes that what is essential for a parade or festival to persist is a continued reason for participating.

The Sinterklaas parade is a recurring children's gift-giving holiday that brings joy to people during the colder season in the Netherlands. The holiday not only celebrates children and deals with rewards and punishments but is also a time to bring families

together and have fun. The family aspect is more seen on December 5th when they come together to celebrate, eat, drink, and perform joking poems about each other. The arrival parade marks the start of the holiday season for all. Over time, the religious significance of the holiday has diminished, and the focus on children and families has become more valuable. While the holiday's original meaning may have changed, the importance of celebrating it did not. For the Sinterklaas parade, the community comes together to play, have fun, and forget about everyday problems; the Saint's arrival makes him real for the children. The arrival parade videos for 2020 helped to distract children from the pandemic; it gave them something fun to participate in, despite its virtual nature in 2020. The essential functions of the holiday persist.

For every type of festival, there is an audience that goes with it. If there weren't some interest in the festival, then it would not be possible to justify the time and cost of putting it together. Festivals must have local significance. According to Klaic, "parades, processions, Fiestas, carnivals, [are] all mass events that have a certain, even if vague cultural component" (Klaic et al. 2014:36). Community celebrations connect those who belong to a local cultural community, which is why the Sinterklaas Arrival Parade continues. Not only does the parade center around an important holiday in the Netherlands, the most prominent figure in the holiday, Sinterklaas (Saint Nicholas), is also Amsterdam's official Saint.

Festivals have several essential functions, one of which is representing cultural identity. Klaic states, "Beside those group festivals seek to increase visibility for that group or community in the wider 'opaque' multicultural society, here are local celebrations of a village or an urban neighborhood that also reinforce some group identity and the association of local residents to their territory, that during such festivals appears as a symbolically marked, embellished and ambitiously decorated space" (Klaic et al. 2014:37). But not all festivals have the same longevity. Some can appear year after year for several decades, while others only a few times or even just once. Some festivals are meant as one-off events, usually for celebratory or commemorative reasons with no aim to be an annual event (Klaic et al. 2014:42). There are also festivals, "Mega-festivals," that stretch beyond a single day and instead go for weeks or months. These usually

happen for a particular season, such as the 12 days of Christmas and Sinterklaas itself, which is a separate celebration from Christmas proper. This festival and its parade have been around in some form in the Netherlands since at least the early 19th century; it continues to exist because it is meaningful to those who celebrate. This joyous children's festival puts everyone in the holiday spirit.

Because these kinds of festivals have a broad audience, they can be the perfect platform to highlight important issues. There are festivals focused on civil rights, the environment, and the climate, such as Climateurope and The Climate Action Film Festival ("Climate Action Film Festival 2021: Presented by SunCommon" 2020; see also climateurope n.d.). The multivocal appeal of the Sinterklaas arrival parades, the fact that they are televised, makes them a readily available platform to change the message about Zwarte Piet, whom may now recognize as an outdated, offensive character. Many have transitioned to Chimney Piet, a more socially acceptable personage. And because one of the main parades has made the switch and shared their reasons, other parades and schools in the Netherlands are following. The new version of Piet addresses the communities' and local government's desire to address forms of institutional racism.

In "Festival," scholar Beverly Stoeltje discusses festivals and how they communicate, are structured, and have symbolic values. Festivals are typically public events that encourage or even require participation. Stoeltje defines festivals as events that happen on regular calendar dates annually or some other regular basis. Festivals are a collective event and require group support for the community and culture. These are not individualistic events; instead, festivals are "rooted in group life" (Stoeltje 1993:261). There is a shared responsibility for creating and continuing the festivals through group participation, planning, and financial contribution. "Other unstated but important purposes of festivals are the expression of a group identity through ancestor worship or memorialization, the performance of highly valued skills and talents, or the articulation of the group's heritage" (Stoeltje 1993:261). Traditional festivals express and perform cultural identity; they demonstrate what is essential to them, common interests, and valued skills. Festivals are a time for recreational activities, for exploring and experimenting with meaning.

The Sinterklaas celebrations bring the family together and celebrate children. The holiday emphasizes proper behavior for children and is explicit about rewards and consequences. Zwarte Piet also represents aspects of community identity and values. The practice of dressing up as the figure means the individual is an active member of the community. But Zwarte Piet's image also recalls Dutch colonialism and how the Dutch Empire once regarded their black citizenry. Zwarte Piet depicts Sinterklaas's servant. In the modern-day Netherlands, this image continues to be used as the public face of racism in the country. The change to Schoorsteenpieten in the arrival parades and other holiday celebrations reveals some change in ideas about cultural identity. Now there is less tolerance for institutional racism. The image's change is the first step to making the holiday celebrations more inclusive for all.

Festival exists in a public context and is a mix of performance and participation (Stoeltje 1993:263). There are two types of participation, according to Stoeltje: passive and active. Passive attention and participation happen with big festivals and when observing from a distance or remotely (Stoeltje 1993:263). In this type of participation and festival, there is little choice in the audience's role except for audience members to refuse to participate or to more actively protest the status quo. Active participation and attention are much more a part of smaller festivals. Communication from festivals and the messages they send have multiple interpretations and involve the group's shared experiences.

In all socially based festivals, however, the messages will be directly related to the present social circumstances as well as to the past. Because festival brings the group together and communicates about the society itself and the role of the individual within it, every effort either to change or to constrain social life will be expressed in some specific relationship to the festival. (Stoeltje 1993:263)

Stoeltje's point is especially pertinent for the changing identity of Piet in the Sinterklaas holiday. The image has become less offensive and thus more socially acceptable. Piet's identity as the helper of Sinterklaas and as a fun, playful character remains the same. Parades that switched to Chimney Piet show they acknowledge the racial imagery of Zwarte Piet and are taking steps to change the public holiday celebrations to be more inclusive.

In “Christmas and Carnival on Saint Vincent,” folklorist Roger Abrahams looks at the relationship between rituals and festivals. Both rituals and festivals involve a sense of removal from everyday life while people participate in the event. Abrahams states, “Both [rituals and festivals] involve a spatial-temporal sense of ‘removal,’ an establishment of a highly redundant set of behaviors giving witness to rigid rules for the occasion (even when the central rule is to break those of everyday life) and a psychological sense of separation usually referred to as the experience of *liminality*” (Abrahams 1972:275). The article’s focus is to show that a festival’s performance is not an alternative part of a culture’s everyday life but something more central to the community’s ideals and motives. The author also brings up an interesting point in the article about “who plays” during these festivities (Abrahams 1972:278). It brings up the type of people and why they participate, who is a performer in the rituals and festivals, and the audience. For the Sinterklaas holiday celebrations, white Dutch citizens participate in the performance. The audience is mainly made up of people from all over the Netherlands. The performance is aimed at children, bring the magic of the holiday to life, but it is still enjoyed by people of all ages from diverse backgrounds. This event is performed by Dutch people for other Dutch people, reinforcing their cultural values to each other. In addition to who “plays,” the location and time these rituals and festivals that take place are essential. These events happen at specific times of the year, and any behavior that occurs at those events is only acceptable at those places and times. Festivals and rituals are a vital part of a culture’s identity and yearly community activities.

Some of the points Abrahams made in this article can be useful in relating to my Sinterklaas parade research. Abrahams point that festivals and rituals show the critical aspects of the culture’s identity applies to the Sinterklaas holiday, one of the most important holidays for the Netherlands. The way people participate or “play” during the arrival parade is an essential display of values. Costuming also shows important historical attributes of the Netherlands colonial past, particularly of Zwarte Piet. The new version, Chimney Piet, is more culturally sensitive and with the current values. “It, therefore, seems useful to see these festivities as enactments of the polarities of conflicting attitudes and alternative life-styles” (Abrahams 1972:289). Changes in the Sinterklaas holiday in the 21st century have not only reflected changing attitudes towards race and identity, but

holiday performances and protests have also themselves shifted cultural values. There are groups in the Netherlands forcing the country to confront its colonial past and institutional racism. The Black Lives Matter movement has helped confront racist issues and reveal structural racism in the Netherlands.

Performance

In the chapter “Cultural Performances: Public Display Events and Festival,” in *The Emergence of Folklore in Everyday Life*, folklorists Rory Turner and Phillip H. McArthur define cultural performances: “In cultural performances, the values, beliefs, and identities of a people are put on display for themselves and others in some sort of bounded frame. Cultural performances occur within a time and space demarcated from ongoing social life where culture is encapsulated and communicated” (Turner and McArthur 1990:83). People’s identities and cultures are intertwined with cultural performances and are more visible during the event. Public display events are large scale and public, making them a type of cultural performance. Festivals are both public display events and cultural performances that fall on a calendar schedule and occur for many reasons, such as agricultural and pastoral economy, religious celebrations, historical events, community celebrations (Turner and McArthur 1990:84). The authors’ most important contribution to festival studies is their recommendation to look at “what that festival means and what it does for the people who experience it” (Turner and McArthur 1990:85). Their research focus isn’t on authenticity but on how and why people choose to participate.

Scholar Richard Bauman in “Performance” defines and discusses how performance is an expressive way to communicate culture and values through aesthetic means. “Performance usually suggests an aesthetically marked and heightened mode of communication, framed in a special way and put on display for an audience” (Bauman 1992:41). Performance shows rather than overtly communicates a message. Performances show what is essential to the culture, such as in the Sinterklaas arrival parade. As a televised event, it performs Dutch cultural identity for those in the Netherlands and those elsewhere (it is a televised event). And that performance both reflects and fosters changes

in Dutch attitudes, thanks to the inclusion of Schoorsteenpieten, the alternate and much less offensive version of Zwarte Piet.

Performance is a mode of communication that uses physical action to help communicate. Bauman mentions that a “form of intersemiotic translation is involved here, a shift from encoding a message in one sign system (code) to another” (Bauman 1992:41). The cultural aspect needs to be considered when a message is translated from one system to another. Several questions need to be asked about performance and its communication. How is performance being translated? How is performance transcribed? How much creativity and control does a performer have over the performance and the message? “The focus of debate on these issues centers upon how much and in what ways the script or score or folkloric tradition determines performance as against how much flexibility, interpretive choice, or creative opportunity rests with the performer” (Bauman 1992:42). Who has the most control over the performance? Many factors influence how performances can change. “Performance always manifests an emergent dimension, as no two performances are ever exactly the same” (Bauman 1992:42). There is always something different whenever a performance happens, the script (if there is one) might be the same, but the performers might perform the material differently. Or the performance has to keep to some main idea and theme, but there are liberties performers can take while performing as long as they stay within “the character” they are representing.

For the Sinterklaas parade, the performances every year and in the different cities are never identical. The important thing is that they keep to the same themes, the Saint’s arrival in the city. The parade follows the same sequence of events, but how the individual performer’s act can be up to them, as long as they adhere to the character they are playing. These differences are more subtle and might not be very noticeable to the audiences since people do not expect the parades to be identical from year to year or city to city. There is variation in the costumes for the Pieten, particularly the colors and style. The clothing is similar, but when compared, differences can be seen. There are also some differences in how Sinterklaas arrives in different cities and towns. Sinterklaas arrives by boat, train, helicopter, or car. Yet there are no social and political debates focused on his method of transportation or the variation of clothing Sinterklaas and the Pieten wear.

Competent performers must be able to properly communicate to their audiences the messages they intend. “The relative dominance of performance, then, will depend on the degree to which the performer assumes responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative skill and effectiveness as against other communicative functions” (Bauman 1992:44). There are plenty of different ways to communicate messages, but that does not mean every one of them effectively makes an audience listen or remember it. Communication is culturally specific, “framing messages that convey instructions on how to interpret the other messages being conveyed” (Bauman 1992:45). Instead of coming out and directly saying what they plan to communicate, people and performances use codes, framing devices, to signal the type of communication like unique formulas, stylizations of speech or movement, appeals to tradition, and disclaimers of performance (Bauman 1992:45). Using the phrase “once upon a time,…” tells an audience that a fairy tale is about to begin and prepares the audience to listen for the message.

There are fundamental characteristics of performance, one of which is the cues that signal the performance, setting the stage and place of the performance. “All performance, like all communication, is situated, enacted, and rendered meaningful within socially defined situational contexts” (Bauman 1992:46). For a performance to be socially acceptable, it typically needs to be scheduled. Having it scheduled allows the performance to be spatially and temporally bounded. It makes it easier for the audience to accept a performance’s reality while it occurs in a specific time and place. These boundaries make it so performances can be programmed with a specific structure to tell the story/message. “These four features [scheduled, temporally bounded, spatially bounded, programmed] are in the service of an additional one, which is part of the essence of cultural performance, namely, that they are *coordinated public* occasions, open to view by an audience and to collective participations; they are occasions for people to come together” (Bauman 1992:46). The most critical aspect of performance is that it is a community event that brings people together to watch and take part in it. In the Sinterklaas parade, people who dress up as the characters perform the story of Sinterklaas’ annual arrival in the Netherlands. Changes to the costumes and appearance of Piet are intended to communicate a change in racist attitudes; the rest of the performance is the same. The character is still silly and endearing. The shift from Zwarte

Piet to Schoorsteenpieten signals that negative racial stereotyping are no longer officially tolerated—during the parade and the rest of the year.

“Play”

The main takeaway of folklorist Roger Abrahams’ “Folk Drama,” is how folk drama is a type of play activity that creates a “play world” that is removed from the regular world while still being a part of it. Abrahams states, “Drama of any sort calls for the creation of a play world by the players, generally through the use of conventional symbolic objects—masks, costumes, a special area for playing—and conventional stylized actions” (Abrahams 1972:352). Although this article focuses on folk drama in small communities, Abrahams’ concepts are applicable to larger populations. The Sinterklaas arrival parade does enact the story of Saint Nicholas, from steamboat arrival to his ride through the city and his arrival at the town center. The parade and its participants perform a specific role to act out and entertain. Participants wear special costumes and engage audiences with their performances. The Sinterklaas parade creates a play world that brings Sinterklaas to life as he makes his annual visit to the Netherlands. The parade draws its audience into its “as if” world as its characters enact the story of Sinterklaas each holiday season. “Drama is by its nature essentially a public performance—it must be capable of being understood by the audience with a minimum of reflection” (Abrahams 1972:352). Sinterklaas is a massive performance that Dutch people understand. The Sinterklaas parade has many of the same qualities as a folk drama; “folk and popular drama must use a wide variety of techniques to focus the attention of the audience on the performance. Consequently, one encounters clowning, dancing, singing, instrumental music, bombastic speeches, and other highly stylized types of performance as part of the repertoire of effects in countryside drama” (Abrahams 1972:354). The Sinterklaas holiday becomes a countryside drama writ large with clowning behavior from the people dressed up as Pieten who dance, sing, and make jokes. Even adults enter into the drama of Sinterklaas and his companions.

Performances and parades can produce a sense of “play” among participants and audience members. In “Play,” scholar Andrew Miracle discusses the concept of “play,” its behaviors, forms, and communication connections. The idea of play is usually best

described with its connection to non-play actions. Play is recognized since it is different from everyday “normal” behaviors. “Play is a state of subjective experience because its existence is contingent on there being awareness of alternatives: ‘[W]e play when we know we are okaying...If we could not conceive of acting by a set of rules that are different from those to which we have learned to adapt, we could not play’” (Miracle 1992:60). Play can exist only if it is outside everyday life, and it is something people are aware of participating in; its rules are different than those of everyday life. Play is also a social activity, but according to Miracle, when a child seems to be playing independently, they play with a fictionalized playmate making the act of play still social even though it is through the child’s imagination. “That is, touch, smell, vision, hearing, even taste, may be used along with myriad internal psychological cues in formulating a play message....However, the content of any message—the symbols defining play and appropriate play behavior—is not only species specific but also culture specific” (Miracle 1992:61). Like any other communication mode, play messages can be understood only by those who understand the context and the culture where the play takes place. For play to happen, some form of communication among the participants involved must occur: there is a signal that communicates to all involved that “this is play,” and everyone needs to respond that they understand it and participate in it (Miracle 1992:62).

Framing something as play helps provide the context, text, and form of the play state. When people participate in play, many neurological functions happen among the players, showing their adaptive function. “The physical symbolic exploration associated with play leads to pattern making that enables individuals to manipulated abstract ideas and to behave creatively” (Miracle 1992:63). Participants can also match each other’s rhythms while at play, making the process more concise. People are either at play or not. There is no in-between (Miracle 1992:65).

The act of “play” is essential to the Sinterklaas parade and the rest of the holiday season. The arrival of Sinterklaas is not just an ordinary parade in the Netherlands. Like any other communication mode, play messages can only be understood by people who understand the context and the culture where the play takes place. There is an appropriate time for play, and it only happens when people agree to it. During the Sinterklaas parade,

everyone is at “play.” The performers and the audience are part of the play from the moment the Saint arrives in November until the celebration’s conclusion in December. Everyone at the parade who is not a child is in a state of play. It is the act of play from adults in the audience and the parade that creates this reality for the children. The performers and audience members act as if this is the real Sinterklaas arriving on his authentic steamboat that traveled from Spain with his real helpers, the Pieten. The boat and the sacks the Pieten carry with them are filled with the real presents and treats that the children receive in their shoes in the following weeks. The people who perform the roles of Sinterklaas and Pieten are at play, and act as this is reality. Play for the Sinterklaas celebrations results in *communitas*, creating a close bond among people, during this liminal holiday time (V. and E. Turner and Turner 1982). But while the play ends for the performers when the parade ends, for everyone else, the play continues until after the presents are delivered, and the Saint returns to Spain.

This act of play is part of the problem with Zwarte Piet. Many people in the black community in the Netherlands have shared stories of children seeing them and calling them Zwarte Piet. The children have learned that they are there to check up on them for Sinterklaas. The children typically hide after they yell out his name, scared that he is there to punish them. The “play” around Zwarte Piet during the parade makes children believe he is real. The blackface that goes with the costuming lead children to believe that all black people are Pieten. The way people participate or “play” during the arrival parade is an essential display of values. The very deep-seated cultural importance of this holiday means that the controversy around Zwarte Piet does not get taken lightly.

Representations of Piet matter. The use of Schoorsteenpieten changes the meaning of “play” with regard to Piet. With Zwarte Piet, the “play” of the character was of a “black” person (in reality, a white person in blackface), making it seem that only black people were Pieten. With the change to Schoorsteenpieten, the ethnicity of the character no longer matters; their black markings come from the chimney. And the soot reinforces the claim that the Pieten go down the chimney.

In “Religious Celebrations,” anthropologists Victor and Edith Turner discuss how liminality exists outside the everyday world during events like rituals and festivals.

Liminality, ludic recombination, involves the element of play. In this component, there is a freedom of playful recombination of everyday life to make it unconventional. This playful action allows the people involved to gain a new perspective on their life and society.

For when elements are withdrawn from their usual settings and recombined in totally unique configurations, such as monsters or dragons, those exposed to them are startled into thinking anew about persons, objects, relationships, social roles, and features of their environment hitherto taken for granted. Previous habits of thought, feeling, action are disrupted. They are thus forced and encouraged to think about their society, their cosmos, and the powers that penetrate and sustain these. (V. and E. Turner and Turner 1982:205)

Being at play changes the mindset of people, allowing them to see things in a different light. They gain new insights that they will need in their new role as an adult.

Communitas can happen during celebrations and allow people to freely “play” with one another, creating a sense of bonding and community. For the play to work, there needs to be a community involved. Participation in the play allows the community to connect. “Communitas is, to quote Znaniecki (1936:chap.3), ‘a bond ... uniting people over and above any formal social bonds.’ In communitas, there is a direct, total confrontation of human identities which is rather more than the casual camaraderie of ordinary social life” (V. and E. Turner and Turner 1982:205). Rituals, celebrations, rites of passage bring together people outside their ordinary social structure. Coming together is an opportunity to engage with people outside their ordinary life. It allows a collective bonding that would not happen in any other way. According to Turner, “Pure communitas exists briefly where social structure is not” (Turner 1982:206). This is why communitas can happen during celebrations and rituals, while social order gets suspended for a time. Without social order, it allows people to freely “play” with one another, creating a sense of bonding and community.

The Sinterklaas arrival parade is indeed a time of liminality, of “social limbo” where the standard social order suspends for a time. During this period, the usual ways of life alter, so a type of “play” can exist. For the Sinterklaas arrival parade, cities cease to act as they usually do, and everyone gathers to welcome a legendary figure. During this event, people play and act as if this person is the real Sinterklaas. Since all the people

participating exist in the liminal time together and play, a state of *communitas* emerges as people come together as one community outside the social order during a time of socially sanctioned play.

Changes to Traditions

Another way to think of seasonal festivals is to view them as spectacles, “a large-scale, extravagant cultural production that is replete with striking visual imagery and dramatic action and that is watched by a mass audience. The spectacle is especially characteristic of modern societies, socialist and capitalist, but is also found in traditional societies significantly affected by modern influences” (Manning 1992:291). The things that fall under spectacle are exceptionally vast, but usually seem to draw large crowds and exhibits community pride, such as sporting events and mega-festivals. Manning notes that “Turner saw spectacles as one of the many performance genres in which modern peoples playfully but reflexively symbolize the assumptions, norms, and conventional roles that govern their ordinary lives” (Manning 1992:294). Like many other performance types, spectacles demonstrate to large audiences essential aspects of their culture. The spectacle is a metaphor for modern life and can influence social life and processes. “Such phenomena as spectacles impose their symbolism on social process and often exert a major influence on the direction of those processes” (Manning 1992:291). For the Sinterklaas arrival parade, changes in the Piet character *Zwarte Piet* to *Schoorsteenpiet* have clearly influenced social life in the Netherlands. Although there was much resistance to this change, it is happening, nonetheless. RTL, a significant media broadcasting company in Europe, announced in 2016, that it would not show any *Zwarte Piet* images in any of its networks during the Sinterklaas holiday season (“RTL Kiest Voor Schoorsteenpiet” n.d.). Because of this public switch in their parade, other towns and cities have been following suit, making the character transition more acceptable since it first appeared in the main parade.

A spectacle is not just one thing or event. It is a combination of things—parades, pomp, play, and more, all of which communicate to their audience the purpose of the event, the culture, and its themes. “The accommodative capacity of spectacle is perhaps its most distinctive modern feature. As a “super” genre, spectacle is a suitable form for

mass culture. Spectacle does not obliterate or replace other genres; rather, it encompasses and frames them, situating them in a wider and more general communicative context” (Manning 1992:299). Spectacle is an inclusive event that takes many components and brings them together. The holiday season of Sinterklaas is part of the spectacle, starting with the large arrival parade to the holiday’s conclusion. Most of the larger parades that reach a wider audience, including the televised one through the *Sinterklaasjournaal*, communicate essential messages, especially to the children. The image of Piet is critical, as is how different images are communicated and to which communities. The use of Zwarte Piet illustrates the continuation of public institutional racism; it makes explicit that a specific population does not belong and is disrespected. Employing the new modified version of Schoorsteenpiet sends a message of change, that the Netherlands must accommodate and accept its more diverse population and address the public face of racism. How the majority culture portrays Piet is critical to the Sinterklaas spectacle.

It’s easy to assume that traditions, festivals, spectacles, and parades are static entities that are practiced the same way every year. But that belief is not valid; people and cultures change over time, so these events change. Parades are also not static things. The Sinterklaas arrival parade is a vital community tradition as well as a tourist attraction for both Dutch residents who sometimes travel to some of the bigger parades and people from other countries who come to see the celebrations. Scholar Michael Dylan Foster’s “Inviting the Uninvited Guest: Ritual, Festival, Tourism, and the Namahage of Japan” looks at the Japanese New Year’s Eve tradition, Namahage, and how it changed from a private traditional/ritual to public performance for tourism. Originally this was a local tradition celebrated within the community for its members. But the practice changed when it became a tourist attraction. Like other holiday traditions, there are many variations in its performance. What is used for tourism is one modified representation. Being part of a tourist attraction also includes marketing the images and meanings of a tradition. And the Namahage figure in Japan’s marketing is not too different from how Santa Claus, Krampus, Bigfoot, and Sinterklaas are marketed in their respective cultures with their images used to promote all sorts of consumer goods. Foster notes that traditions do continually change as cultures, people, and governments change. If they don’t change with the times, they can be left behind and forgotten. Zwarte Piet is starting

to change because of its racist imagery. The growth has been slow and challenging but necessary; the Netherlands must become more culturally sensitive.

Producers and consumers are active participants who interact in the event, creating a subjective authenticity for the tourists experiencing this ritual for themselves to enjoy (Foster, n.d.:323). And in the larger cities, change seems more critical, given the importance of tourism and larger numbers of local participants. Some of the more rural and smaller populated cities and towns, which have mostly in-group celebrations, have tended to keep the traditional image of Zwarte Piet.

In “Introduction to Tastelessness,” Moira Smith and Rachelle H. Saltzman examine the idea of tastelessness, censure, and censoring. Tastelessness encompasses jokes that are inappropriate for being racist, sexist, or having obscene content. “Not only jokes, but any folklore that expresses sentiments and attitudes that someone finds objectionable can fall into this category: we know that folklore can be sexist, racist, homophobic, or xenophobic” (Smith and Saltzman 1995:85). Some cultural traditions are changing because of their offensive qualities and their bad taste, such as Native American mascots for sports teams in the United States and Zwarte Piet in the Netherlands. To find a good definition of tasteless folklore, though, one would have to consider what bad taste is. There are disagreements on what the concept is. Bad taste links closely to proper etiquette and moral context.

Audiences are essential when it comes to censure and censorship of folklore that would be considered tasteless. Responses can indicate a judgment of tastelessness or poor taste. The role of the audience with performance is that one influences the other. Based on the audience’s reaction, the performers will change the performance aspects based on those reactions. The authors point out that “The relative paucity of audience-centered studies in performance-oriented work is surprising when we recall the essential role that the audience plays in the very definition of performance; without the audience, performance can hardly be said to exist” (Smith and Saltzman 1995:88). Audience reactions to jokes, performances, festivals, or any other folklore are essential. Based on their reactions, the folklore could change to please the audience and help its continued survival. The reason bad taste can be so hard to define is because of context and culture.

Different groups of people might not find the same things as offensive. Implications of bad taste also have connections to contextual flaws in performance. “Contextual flaws consist of violations of culturally affirmed restrictions governing whether, when, where, and to whom performance may take place” (Smith and Saltzman 1995:88). When we look at whether something was considered offensive or in bad taste, we have to consider the context and the ethnographic perspective. Taste is socially constructed. There are types of taste: universal, personal, and community. There are unspoken rules on what jokes can be told when and to whom. These rules help determine how something will be treated. The image and the costume for *Zwarte Piet* have been censured for their tastelessness and even censored because of the offensive nature of the character and the blackface make-up and costume. Audience reactions, both at home and around the world, have had their effect on how the Netherlands is dealing both with *Zwarte Piet* and national attitudes about institutional racism. The result has been to force parades to modify the image to a more acceptable one.

CHAPTER VI

DUTCH COLONIALISM, THE SLAVE TRADE, AND RACISM

In this section, I consider the history of Dutch colonialism and involvement in the slave trade in order to understand current controversies over the image of Zwarte Piet. Since this holiday figure is currently at the center of a debate about racism, it is essential to explore the history of institutional racism in the Netherlands. The Dutch were a colonial empire for a time and profited from the transatlantic slave trade, from the early 17th century to mid 19th century, in a number of ways I consider below (Van Welie 2008: 47). Zwarte Piet must thus be viewed as a representation of Dutch slavery and colonialism.

Several have pointed out the figure's connections to caricatures of former slaves. Scholars Jeroen Rodenberg and Pieter Wagenaar, in the article "Essentializing 'Black Pete,'" state, "Two points are central to this narrative: because it is a tradition stemming from the colonial era, Zwarte Piet is, in essence, a racist stereotype of black people, constructed in the nineteenth century to justify slavery and reproduced until today. This form of racist stereotyping has to stop immediately for racism harms society at large. Secondly, putting an end to the tradition can be done easily, as it is an invented tradition only, and of quite recent origin at that" (Rodenberg and Wagenaar 2016: 723). Rodenberg and Wagenaar argue that this representation harms Dutch society, reminding some of the population that they do not belong in the Netherlands. Zwarte Piet mocks their identity, and by not changing Zwarte Piet's image, the Dutch are ignoring their history and continuing to harm their citizens. Zwarte Piet has become the public face of institutional racism in the Netherlands. I agree with the authors that the Netherlands needs to be held accountable for its role in colonialism and the slave trade and made to recognize that Zwarte Piet represents a racist past that has persisted into the present.

Colonialism and Slavery

The Dutch had a profitable enterprise as a colonial power, from the 17th to late 19th centuries, in which colonialism and slavery were inextricably intertwined. Colonialism and slavery were part of multiple projects by European governments to

exploit and dominate groups of people and their resources within hierarchical power structures (Deen 2018:12). In the article, “Why Is There No Post-colonial Debate in the Netherlands?” Scholar Ulbe Bosma argues that the colonial past is still present in Dutch culture but is rarely explicitly acknowledged or discussed. As Bosma states, “In the Netherlands, traces of the colonial past are everywhere, but rarely in an explicit post-colonial context” (Bosma 2012:193). He describes how many other countries have gone through a post-colonial debate. France, for example, has one connected to the Algerian War of Liberation of France, which has led them to have a societal-wide reflection and discussion. According to Bosma, “There was a sense of urgency to stop the work of forgetting and to acknowledge how violent decolonization process had marked the national histories both of Algeria and France” (Bosma 2012:194). The author emphasizes how important it is to acknowledge a nation’s violent and terrible past by engaging in post-colonial debate and critically examining a country’s own history. This acknowledgment is something France is attempting to do, yet the Netherlands, up to this point, has not.

The primary Dutch colonies were the Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia (1816-1942); Cape Colony (1652-1795); Suriname (1667-1975); Dutch Caribbean islands, now the Netherland Antilles (1634); Brazil (1630s-1661); and New Netherlands, now New York (1624-1664) (Blakely 1993b; Van Rossum 2018). Dutch colonies “were initially founded and governed by the East [founded in 1602] and West [founded in 1621] India trading companies, the main instruments through which Dutch commercial might in Asia and the New World was built” (Blakely 1993b:3-4). Most of these colonies were initially used as trading depots for moving goods around the world, then later established official colonies. The Netherlands traded slaves, coffee, tobacco, sugar, and local goods through the West and East India trading companies, selling to the Americans, Europe, and their own country and colonies. The nation also had fortresses and activities along the West African Coast (1612-1872) to use as trading colonies with the Dutch Caribbean and Brazil (Blakely 1993b:3,20-21). The Netherlands’ involvement in the trans-Atlantic slave trade began in the late 16th century through the West India trading company supplying Spanish, French, and Dutch colonies with African slaves (Blakely 1993b:4,7). Their colony in Curacao became a slave depot in 1654, and the rest of the Dutch Antilles set up

sugar plantations (Blakely 1993b:7). The slave trade lost its profitability, and thus slowed their participation in the practice in the 1780s when England and France outcompeted them (Blakely 1993b:8). From 1501-1866, the Netherlands exported an estimated total of 554,300 African Slaves to the New World (Van Welie 2008:53). The Dutch empire officially ended slavery in 1863 (Blakely 1993b:8). Suriname and Indonesia both achieved independence from the Netherlands in the 20th century. Cape Colony, New Netherlands, and the Brazil colonies were taken by other colonial powers, such as England and Portugal, in the 17th century (Blakely 1993b). Aruba, Curacao, and St. Maartan are all still part of the Kingdom but now operate independently (M. van B. Zaken 2016). Bonaire, Saba, and St. Eustatius are also Caribbean islands and still belong to the Kingdom and are municipalities of the Netherlands (M. van B. Zaken 2016).

The slave trade focused on profits from transporting and trading “products.” The Transatlantic slave trade was a one-direction migration, where ships filled with product sailed from Western Europe to the West Coast of Africa, where goods were traded for African Slaves (Van Welie 2008:51). Slaves were then sailed to the Americas and traded for high commodity goods (sugar, coffee, and tobacco) (Van Welie 2008:51). These commodities then were transported back to Europe to be sold.

Scholar Rik Van Welie, in “Slave Trading And Slavery In The Dutch Colonial Empire: A Global Comparison,” provides a historical quantitative account of the global slave trade and the part the Dutch colonial empire had to play in it. According to Van Welie, “From the early seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century, slavery played a fundamental role in the Dutch colonial empire. All overseas possessions of the Dutch depended in varying degrees on the labor of slaves who were imported from diverse and often remote areas” (Van Welie 2008:47). The Dutch involvement in the slave trade is an unavoidable part of their history, but the country does not fully recognize it or is willing to talk about it. Modern scholarship and activism have started to push for more discussion of the Dutch colonial past and apologize for their involvement. The Dutch, however, do not want to discuss their slave trade past. If there is a discussion, it is met with a defensive reaction. Despite the resistance, historians want to “unsilence” the past and bring slavery studies to the forefront (Van Welie 2008:48).

Van Welie notes there is an interesting paradox when it comes to the Dutch and slavery: “that the seventeenth-century Dutch took great pride in their hard-fought freedom and climate of tolerance at home, while simultaneously employing hundreds of thousands of slaves in their overseas dominions” (Van Welie 2008:49). Within the borders of their own country, the Dutch attempted to distance themselves from seeing the effects or existence of slavery. The slave trade was held at a distance and rarely entered their own country. If colonists returned to the Netherlands with their slaves, they faced losing their “property” with laws enforcing their freedom (Van Welie 2008:49). Because of this physical and psychological separation from slavery, the Dutch didn’t need to come to terms with that part of their history (Van Welie 2008:50). This history is different from what the United States had to go through with having former slaves being visible and vocal within their borders. The United States had an everyday physical reminder of the effects of slavery and was forced to deal with it. The Netherlands did not have that same problem.

The Dutch Antilles began as a colony in 1634 under the Dutch West India Company (Sharpe 2005:297). The Netherlands used their Caribbean islands as a central slave depot. The Dutch slave ships would move through the Caribbean then onto their colonies in Brazil and New Netherlands (Sharpe 2005:297). This use of a stopping point in Curacao was helpful for the Netherlands. By the nineteenth century, the slave trade was ending, so Curacao lost some value to the Netherlands. The Dutch Antilles got valued again in the 1930’s from the creations of the oil industries there (Sharpe 2005:298). Dutch education and language got imposed on the area, and race segregation issues emerged (Sharpe 2005:298). Power and status were tied to the color of people’s skin (Sharpe 2005:298). The Netherlands’ interest in the Caribbean fluctuated, and how it was managed has been categorized as “careless colonialism” (Sharpe 2005:298).

The Netherlands’ goal in the Dutch East Indies was to make Indonesia a full-fledged colonial state (Doel 2010). Its most significant interest was to develop the indigenous population to be what the Dutch thought was best. There was, of course, resistance with the Dutch governing the local populations. WWII and the conflict with

Japan changed the tides regarding the Dutch occupation in Indonesia (Doel 2010).

Indonesia fought for Independence, and the Dutch heavily resisted it. According to Doel,

Sukarno and Hatta declared the independence of the Republic of Indonesia on 17 August 1945. ... The Dutch first tried to bring the Republic of Indonesia back into line with negotiations, then war followed in 1947, costing the lives of thousands of Dutch people and many tens of thousands of Indonesians. The Dutch authorities were primarily driven by the idea that they could not give up their responsibility for the Indonesian population and that it was their duty to develop the country further. (Doel 2010:203)

In 1949, Indonesia finally achieved independence, which the Netherlands was forced to recognize.

Bosma gives some history on the Dutch decolonization process, which started after WWII in 1945. The Netherlands and Indonesia were part of each other's national identities. There was an exchange of food and goods. Indonesia also used the Dutch language and political system (Bosma 2012). Indonesia gained its independence from the Netherlands on December 27th, 1945, which was the end of a long and violent conflict. After independence, Indonesia still had 10,000 Dutch people, one of the official languages in the region was Dutch, the elites were Dutch educated, and the political system was Dutch (Bosma 2012). In 1956, Indonesia saw the Dutch as a colonial power, and they broke diplomatic relations with them and banned the language for a time (Bosma 2012). The Dutch had viewed their colonies as their creation, and they formed part of each other's national identities. When Indonesia gained its independence, it left "a lot of resentment in the Netherlands" (Bosma 2012:195). The conflict and independence with Indonesia had a ripple effect on the "cultural relationships between the metropolitan Netherlands and the Dutch West Indies" (Bosma 2012:196). The Dutch language became the language of colonialism in Indonesia and some other colonies. Surinam, whose independence came in 1975, did not have a common language, so Dutch continued to be used.

The Dutch do not fully recognize their part in decolonization, which is seen in the former colonies' history. One example is that the colonial war with Indonesia is not seen as a part of colonialism but presented as part of WWII's tragedies. The Dutch place blame elsewhere. In the 1960's, there was a significant migration from former Dutch

colonies. The postcolonial migration population in the Netherlands got excluded from minority discourse, which caused people's identities to be ignored. "This meant that more than half of the post-colonial migrant population in the Netherlands was excluded from the minorities discourse and later on from the multicultural discourse as well" (Bosma 2012:198). Cultural and racial identities were therefore forgotten and ignored rather than addressed in Dutch cultural discourse. This mentality that some minority identities are not worth the effort to fully recognize or adequately deal with could lead to ignorance with the Zwarte Piet racism.

Migration, Immigration, and the "Other"

In the 1970's, the Dutch government attempted to sever its connections with their Caribbean colonies. Curacao resisted independence, the island nation saw more benefits remaining a part of the Netherlands than being independent, and remains part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands but has its own government (Doel 2010:203-204). Suriname gained its independence in 1975 (Doel 2010:204). According to Doel, "A veritable exodus of Surinamese people to the Netherlands was the result, and 250,000 Surinamese people (half of the total population) would finally come and live in the Netherlands. In the meantime, the Dutch Antilles managed to avoid independence" (Doel 2010:204). This mass migration caused discussion of the Netherlands' role in the trans-Atlantic slave trade and its history with slavery since descendants of that enterprise were now moving to the country.

Scholar Michael Sharpe, in "Globalization and Migration: Post-Colonial Dutch Antillean and Aruban Immigrant Political Incorporation in the Netherlands," looks at the historical relationship the Dutch had with its Antilles and Aruba islands and the migration from the Caribbean in recent decades. For a long time, the Netherlands did not have the same interest in their Caribbean colonies as they did in their Indonesian colony. The Netherlands increased its attention to the Caribbean for oil interests, but interest dwindled when that went away. "The 1985 closing of the Lago (Exxon) and Isla (Shell) oil refineries in Aruba and Curacao and the 1986 granting of Aruba's 'status aparte' or separation from the Netherlands Antilles initiated a mass migration of poor and working class people from those 'overseas countries' to the Netherlands that has yet to cease"

(Sharpe 2005:291). The movement of migrants from the Caribbean caused new communities to enter the Netherlands, sparking debate over what it means to be Dutch. The migrants from Dutch Antilles and Aruba had a shared legal citizenship with the Netherlands. According to Sharpe, “Many post-colonial immigrants retain the formal citizenship of the colonial host society as a consequence of the extension of citizenship ‘as a form of ideological integration.’ ... In the Dutch case, many perceive these immigrants as ‘foreigners with a Dutch passport’” (Sharpe 2005:292). The predominantly white Dutch population in the Netherlands at the time saw these migrants as legally Dutch, but not culturally Dutch.

The Dutch Antilles and Aruba are self-governing countries that are part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, with their defense and foreign affairs remaining part of the kingdom’s responsibility (Sharpe 2005:293). Citizens of Aruba and the Dutch Antilles have Dutch nationality and citizenship and thus full mobility (ibid). The three main migration events from Suriname and the Dutch Islands were: 1) Just before the declared independence of Suriname in 1975; 2) The closing of oil refineries in Aruba and Curacao in 1985; and 3) the conferment of Aruba’s “status aparte”² in 1986 (Sharpe 2005:294). Sharpe breaks down some of the minority groups living in the Netherlands,

The most prominent ethnic minority immigrant groups in the Netherlands include Surinamese (290,000), Turks (280,000), Moroccans (233,000), and Antilleans (106,000). From 1984 to 1999 the number of Antilleans tripled to about 106,000. By 2000, 117,090 first-generation Antilleans and Arubans and their second-generation descendants were living in the Netherlands. Of the Surinamese descent population, in 1998, more than 105,000 comprised a second generation that was the product of Surinamese-Dutch relationships. (Sharpe 2005:294)

According to Sharpe, “The Netherlands extension of Dutch citizenship to the Dutch Caribbean was primarily designed to look favorable in the eyes of the United Nations and the world following the devastating loss of their Indonesian colony. This

² Status aparte allows Aruba to operate independently from the Netherlands while still being apart of the Kingdom. “Status aparte is a Latin phrase referring to the ‘special status’ of a dependent territory or a region or a country, being an area that does not have political independence or sovereignty, but is rather considered as a special administrative region” (“Status Aparte” 2020). The use of status apart is seen with Arbus in 1986. “Aruba seceded from the Netherlands Antilles in 1986, a victory much fought for by political activist and local hero Betico Croes. In this process of “Status Aparte,” Aruba obtained a separate status as an autonomous country in the Kingdom of the Netherlands” (“Aruba History - What’s the History of Aruba? | Aruba.Com” n.d.).

extension of citizenship rights did not anticipate the cause that precipitated Dutch Caribbean out migrations to the Netherlands” (Sharpe 2005:303). More migrants left the Caribbean and moved to the Netherlands than the country had expected. And it is still an ongoing process. Because of the large influx of new people into the Netherlands, the country set up courses to assimilate the newcomers. Sharpe continues, “Since 1998, new residents from the ‘overseas countries’ and elsewhere are obliged by law to attend a year-long Dutch integration course for which they must initially pay half although they are reimbursed upon its completion. Many would argue that this is an illustration of the construction of second-class citizenship for new Dutch Antillean and Aruban residents of the Netherlands” (Sharpe 2005:304). This forced integration reinforces the idea of what it is to be Dutch. These classes make sure that original migrant identities are abandoned and replaced with the “right” way to do things, namely from majority-white Dutch culture. It almost seems like the Netherlands is disregarding its former colonial identity to make a new identity that is strictly white Dutch. Since these people are coming from the Caribbean, their perspective is vital to understanding *Zwarte Piet*, as *Zwarte Piet* sometimes has a Caribbean accent that seems to be mocking the specific people from that region. The Suriname, Dutch Antilles, and Aruba immigrants who face *Zwarte Piet* issues are reminded that their ancestors were victims of the Dutch slave trade. History has become a mockery through the figure’s costuming and representation in arrival parades.

Race is still relevant in social and political life, even if it is taboo in the Netherlands. Deen states, “In the Netherlands, however, talking and writing about race explicitly has been largely a taboo since the Second World War, even within academia ... In Europe, in general, race is a category that is mostly associated with the Holocaust of World War II and less so with colonialism” (Deen 2018:12). Race is a touchy subject in the Netherlands, and the only honest conversations about race are associated with WWII instead of their history of colonialism and slavery. Deen has also noted conversations around who is allowed to be considered Dutch, “The presence of citizens from (former) colonies, migrants from Turkey and Morocco, and refugees fleeing war and crises, has met with rising concerns about Dutch citizenship and the criteria that determine who belongs to the nation” (Deen 2018:13). This idea connects back to the article, “Why Is There No Post-colonial Debate in the Netherlands?” scholar Sherilyn Deen discusses the

classes migrants took so they could learn how to be Dutch. This mentality pushes the idea that there is a “correct” way to be Dutch, and anything different gets questioned.

Deen describes *Zwarte Piet*, which uses blackface costuming, as the “manifestation of racism.” Wekker examines “how meanings of blackness in the Dutch context are reproduced through this figure, portraying the primitive ‘happy black,’ who ‘neither has a worry in the world nor a brain in his head, but who sings, dances and cracks jokes all day long and whose greatest joy it is to please white folks and their children’”³ (Deen 2018:13). Deen states that this is a version of a black person white people are comfortable being around in the Netherlands. Part of the problem with this racist figure is that the Dutch do not see it as racist. There is a lack of recognition of slavery, colonialism, and racism in Dutch culture. These topics are virtually absent from the Dutch educational system. The author discusses how the Dutch should feel about their past and the arguments that get brought up, either that they should feel guilty or just accept it and move on from the feelings to enter the conversation. The conversations around slavery and colonialism are all about feelings rather than facts and their effects on modern-day society.

In “‘Postcolonial’ (in the) Netherlands,” scholar Gert Oostindie discusses how the Netherlands has had a debate for sixty-five years, since WWII, about immigration and migration. He continues the discussion with how it relates to the identity of the Netherlands and postcolonialism. Even though immigration and migration are consistently controversial topics, the Netherlands has admitted vast numbers of immigrants, doubling the population of the country during this time. According to Oostindie, “This change raised the issue of how migrants and their children related and ought to relate to Dutch culture. Inevitably, the question that then had to be answered is what that culture, or identity, actually was” (Oostindie 2011:215). The focus of the controversy on immigration and migration was the question: What does it mean to be Dutch?

³ See also Deen 2018

There are different ways the Dutch categorize migrant groups, divided based on how “Western” they are. People from Indonesia are considered more “Western,” while people from Surinam and migrant workers from eastern Europe are considered “non-Western.” The Netherlands sought a way to transform labor immigrants and post-colonial migrants from visitors to citizens. Like other former colonial powers in Europe, there is a post-colonial boundary in the Netherlands, here predominantly a socio-cultural one. Immigrants have to assimilate in the Netherlands by learning how to do things the Dutch way (Bosma 2012:200). Migrants have to attend classes on how to be Dutch through mandatory classes offered by the state. As Bosma states, “Indische⁴ Netherlanders had to take courses on proper housekeeping, the Dutch way. Lesson number one was how to do it as cheaply as possible. Only those who followed the entire course were eligible for ‘how to party the Dutch way’” (Bosma 2012:200). The concern about newcomers is that they would be different culturally and would not do things the “Dutch way.” The goal was and is to assimilate immigrants without a trace.

The Indonesian Dutch seem to have an easier time assimilating and being accepted in the Netherlands. This easier transition could be because it was probably more manageable for the Indish Dutch to assimilate since they were already considered more Dutch, more “western” (Oostindie 2011:217). But the Indish community did not fully assimilate. They also had an impact on Dutch culture. Indonesian food has become extremely popular. Through food, the Indonesian community has been able to hold onto their original identities better. The Moluccan⁵ community, an ethnic group from the eastern islands in Indonesia, did not assimilate as smoothly as the Indonesian. The Moluccan community was placed in residential districts explicitly created for them, which was separate from the white Dutch communities creating distance and hostility

⁴ Indische is a term in the Netherlands referring to people from Indonesia or anything from the former Dutch East Indies.

⁵ The Moluccas are islands part of the Province of Maluku in the East Republic of Indonesia (van Engelenhoven, n.d.: 1). When the Republic of Indonesia got its independence, Molucca sought its independence separate from Indonesia by proclaiming an Independent Republic of South Moluccas with the help of the Dutch colonial army, Royal Dutch East Indies Army (KNIL) (van Engelenhoven, n.d.: 3; see also “Moluccans” n.d.). A civil war broke out between the two groups, the Dutch transported over 12 thousand Moluccan’s who refused to integrate with Indonesia to the Netherlands in the 1950’s (van Engelenhoven, n.d.: 4). The Dutch failed to negotiate a Moluccan independence from Indonesia and sought to integrate the Moluccans into the Netherlands by creating residential districts, Molukse wijk (Moluccan neighborhood) specifically for the community and their descendants (“Moluccans” n.d.).

between Moluccans and other Dutch Citizens (“Moluccans” n.d.). Some blamed the difficult transition of the Moluccan’s the low levels of education of first-generation community members.

The migration from Suriname and the Mediterranean took place around the same time. Both immigrants from Suriname and the Mediterranean became labeled as non-western groups, but despite that, the Suriname assimilation went a bit better than expected (Oostindie 2011:219). The Afro-Surinamese community was a bit more outspoken during their assimilation than the Indisch community and their fight to keep their own identity. The fight for their identity could be connected to the slave trade past of the region they came from and the part the Netherlands played in it (Oostindie 2011:220). According to Oostindie, “This short summary of the developments of the last six decades underlines the stark contrasts that exist, but also suggests clear convergences. An erosion of the meaning of ‘community’ and ‘identity’ is apparent in most groups, facilitated by a turn towards Dutch culture that may or may not stem from the colonial era, and by the changing of the generations and high degrees of exogamy” (Oostindie 2011:220-221). An essential part of identity for the various migrant groups was their race. They all experienced various forms of racism and xenophobia, which fueled their identity claims. With the Netherlands becoming more multicultural via these forms of immigration, the Dutch identity concept was put into question and forced to accommodate numerous viewpoints and cultural identities.

There is a general lack of post-colonial studies in the Netherlands and barely a discussion of it in public. Scholar Oostindie states, “In a nation where the number of new citizens with no previous ties to the Netherlands was growing, demands for the colonial past to be recognized were increasingly drowned out by other voices in a cacophony of identity claims. But where each group wants to add its own ‘thing’ to the idea of nationhood, without paying much attention to what is important to other groups, there is little hope for a community of all citizens” (Oostindie 2011:240). The competing perspectives and group identities tied to Dutch colonialism make it difficult for all of them to be heard. The Dutch choose not to deal with the conversation of the colonial past in present dialogues with diverse groups.

As Belkenhol and Jaffe have noted, with the anthropological lens's shift to its own culture, more racial issues in the Netherlands' research come to light. They state, "Such an investigation of process of racialization is particularly relevant as it speaks to the postcolonial moment in the Netherlands. Although the political process of decolonization has been ongoing for almost seventy years, the nation arguably has not yet come to terms with historical change" (Balkenhol and Jaffe 2013:8). The Netherlands has not faced its past colonial actions and instead has mainly ignored them. This act of ignoring is evidenced via the racism that migrants experience. This racism is clear with Zwarte Piet's character in Sinterklaas and explains why it has been so challenging to get the Dutch to alter the character.

The focus on immigrants in the Netherlands is to make them 'Dutch' to fit into the Netherlands' culture: "What it means to be Dutch remains elusive, as is evident in the multiple efforts to provide a firmer grounding for a national sense of self" (Balkenhol and Jaffe 2013:9). It is hard to get migrants to become part of the "Dutch culture" when it is not clear what it means to be Dutch. Who are the Dutch? What is Dutch culture? It is essential to consider these points when trying to figure out why it is hard for the Dutch to give up the Zwarte Piet character for Sinterklaas. For some, part of the problem is the perception that migrants are threatening white Dutch identity in the Netherlands. All these different identities and cultures have changed what people thought it meant to be Dutch. Becoming a more multicultural country means people start questioning and changing things in the Netherlands. Zwarte Piet becomes an easy target of questioning and desire for change because it is a racial representation of slavery. Most of the incoming population in the Netherlands were from former Dutch colonies. People who have ancestors connected to the slave trade are generally offended by this caricature and want it to change. Migrants and immigrants who push to eliminate or change the character are viewed as attacking not just the holiday but also Dutch identity.

In the article "Norms and Contestations: Ethnicized and Minoritized Students as Space Invaders in Dutch Higher Education," Koen Leurs and Sandra Ponzanesi looks at how non-white Dutch citizens (like the Surinamese) get treated differently at Dutch universities and made to feel like outsiders. Universities typically try to present

themselves as representing a diverse community, but at least in some Dutch universities, they do not represent the diverse Dutch community. Leurs and Ponzanesi use the concept of social space, defined as “the result of a set of material, imagined and embodied relations.” As they describe, “Every social space is characterized by its own expressive culture, which slots and sets the boundaries to particular material, imagined and embodied relations. We consider how the university institution also has its particular ‘normative’ ways of being” (Leurs and Ponzanesi 2013:76). Social spaces have general norms for behavior and dress. Universities have their social space that has their own culture and standards for expected behaviors and aesthetics, and have hierarchies and politics influenced by gendered, racial, classed, and religious ideologies (Leurs and Ponzanesi 2013:76). Students who look different from the norm, meaning white Dutch who typically wear jeans and a nice shirt, are looked at differently and made to feel like outsiders. These students have different clothing, eat different foods, and have different faiths (Leurs and Ponzanesi 2013:85-86).

When continuously feeling slotted as different and being considered as somehow other than the norm, their feelings of belongingness in the so-called ‘egalitarian’ space of the university are problematized. Invading the educational space, religious and ethnic-minority students feel their presence is made highly visible as their bodies ‘disturb the normal institutional landscape.’ (Leurs and Ponzanesi 2013:86)

People feeling like they do not belong extends outside of the university setting. Sentiments of being “space invaders” have popped up in the other articles about migrants as well. People are made to assimilate when their identity does not match the norm.

Leurs and Ponzanesi collected data on the Netherlands and universities to see the ethnic percentages in both (Leurs and Ponzanesi 2013:80). It shows that the University of Utrecht has a tiny percentage of Dutch immigrants compared to the Netherlands’ actual population. The universities are more concerned with gaining international students than getting immigrants (first or second generation) from their own country. For universities, the number of international students adds a level of prestige that domestic students do not. Leur states (based on responses from interviews),

I feel that the European ethnic background is well represented, but the Caribbean territory, which is also a part of Dutchness, is few and far between. The social

space of the university, as enacted through the dominant bodily configuration of the white professor, establishes and hierarchically perpetuates whiteness as the norm. As such there remains crucial work to be done to confront the colour blindness and in particular the blinding whiteness of academics. (Leurs and Ponzanesi 2013:82)

The top of the hierarchy at the university is predominantly white males. There are primarily white male professors on the faculty. As the hierarchies trickle down, it gets a little more diverse. There is more diversity when you are looking at the lower personnel levels (gardeners, cleaners, food workers). According to Leur and Ponzanesi, if there were more diverse faculty, it would create a more diverse and welcoming environment. The authors show that even in the higher education system, there is a problem of institutional racism.

Racism in the Netherlands does not just happen in everyday culture and politics. It is also happening and taught at universities. Emily Raboteau, who defines and looks into the background of Zwarte Piet and comments on the Dutch involvement in the slave trade in “Who is Zwarte Piet?” states, “The Dutch weren’t slave owners: They were shareholders” (Raboteau 2014:148). The Netherlands rarely saw the direct effects of colonialism and slavery within their borders but profited from it. It created a line of separation that the country chose not to confront directly. This statement from Raboteau shows that Dutch have a history of separation from racial history and have created issues in addressing international racism and history in modern contexts. Universities do not adequately represent the diversity in their own country and have left effects in the curriculum.

Other groups in the Netherlands also face forms of discrimination and othering. In the article “How Should I Live as a ‘True’ Muslim? Regimes of Living among Dutch Muslims in the Salafi Movement,” Martijn de Koning discusses how people, both white and Arab, with the Muslim faith, are clashing with the Dutch identity. Anyone different from what is considered the norm in the Netherlands is viewed as an outsider. Koen Leurs, in the article “Norms and Contestations: Ethnicized and Minoritized Students as Space Invaders in Dutch Higher Education,” shows how students are made to feel like “space-invaders” based on their skin color, clothing, food, and actions. The issues of “othering” and feeling like “space invaders” get to the heart of the concerns surrounding

Zwarte Piet. Part of the debate around this controversial figure is focused on an “us” versus “them” mentality. Those fighting to keep the tradition as-is believe that “outsiders” are trying to destroy a beloved holiday and thus their Dutch identity. The lack of discussion around colonialism and slavery has made some citizens ignorant of the racism of blackface costuming and mock depictions of Zwarte Piet. For some Dutch people, it is just a fun holiday tradition and therefore not a big deal. But there clearly is a problem surrounding the racist figure. It further excludes nonwhite residents from Dutch identity by showing them their skin color is something to mock.

CHAPTER VII

MOVEMENTS AND DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST RACISM

#BlackLivesMatter

The US-based #BlackLivesMatter movement went global in 2019/2020 and inspired the rest of the world to confront their own forms of institutional racism. People in several other countries started protesting in solidarity with citizens of the United States to stand against racial injustice. The movement started as a Twitter hashtag, and now it is the calling card for a more significant movement aimed at fighting social justice based on discrimination. Russell Rickford, in the article, “Black Lives Matter: Toward a Modern Practice of Mass Struggle,” states,

Black Lives Matter began, quite modestly, as #BlackLivesMatter. The hashtag was created in 2013 by Patrice Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi—California and New York-based organizers active in incarceration, immigration, and domestic labor campaigns—after the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the murder in Florida of seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin. The slogan’s deeper significance as the rallying cry for an incipient movement crystallized in 2014 during the Ferguson, Missouri uprisings against police brutality. In the words of activists, the hashtag leapt from social media “into the streets.” Black Lives Matter, which Garza has called “a love note” to black communities, now serves as shorthand for diverse organizing efforts—both sporadic and sustained—across the country. (Rickford 2016:35)

The #BlackLivesMatter movement describes itself as “a movement, not a moment” (Linscott 2017:76). According to Linscott, the movement #BlackLivesMatter gained attention and increased membership after the 2013 acquittal of the man who killed Trayvon Martin, George Zimmerman, and the 2014 police killings of Michael Brown and Eric Garner (Linscott 2017:76). Protest from the Black Lives Matter movement has increased in the last four years, 2016 to 2020, focusing on the increased police brutality, the police killing of innocent black men and women, and standing against the Trump administration. The protests make themselves known through social media, with the hashtag being used mainly on Twitter and Instagram. Linscott also states that the movement does not only focus on issues of race: “Crucially, the group does not limit itself to matters of race, police brutality, and anti-black violence; indeed, the movement supports LGBTQ activism, trans* issues, feminism, immigration reform, economic

justice, and so on. In its assault on the structural foundations and specific instantiations of anti-black violence, the movement is thoroughly entangled in both the present and the past” (Linscott 2017:76). #BlackLivesMatter seems to focus on standing up against all types of injustice based on discrimination.

The movement, founded by women, caught worldwide attention this year when George Floyd was murdered, and the protests spread across the globe. The movement went from being in the United States to countries all over the world from outrage over horrific events seen in viral videos of his death (Hill et al. n.d.). The movement calls out shortcomings in politics, policing, courts, etc., and aims to bring attention to the inequalities and fight against them. In an article for Politico, “Europe Seeks Own Response to Black Lives Matter,” Esther King discusses Europe’s reaction to the Black Lives Matter protests earlier this year. According to King, “The Continent doesn’t have a good track record when it comes to tackling racism — or even admitting it exists. Despite the prevalence of racial profiling, police brutality and discrimination against non-white citizens in labor and housing markets, Europe hasn’t seen a tide-turning civil rights movement capable of making an impact on the political sphere” (King 2020). European citizens are using the protests in the United States as a jumping-off point to finally confront the racial issues that are currently a problem throughout the continent. Peaceful protest with borrowed slogans and methods from Black Lives Matter popped up throughout Europe. There were protests in Belgium, France, The Netherlands, etc. that were reacting to what was happening in the United States and redirecting attention to racial injustice in their own countries.

“Massive Amsterdam Protest against George Floyd’s Death” is a short article about the protests in the Netherlands that were in solidarity with the ones happening in the United States after George Floyd’s death. In June of 2020, over the outrage of events in Minnesota, more than 50,000 people across the Netherlands knelt during demonstrations (Holligan 2020). In Amsterdam, thousands of people gathered to protest peacefully, despite COVID restrictions, chanting “I can’t breathe,” and no violence was reported (“Massive Amsterdam Protest against George Floyd’s Death” n.d.). “Around 10,000 filled Amsterdam’s Dam square, ignoring calls for social distancing and shouting ‘Black

lives matter’ and ‘No justice, no peace,’ press agency Reuters said” (“Massive Amsterdam Protest against George Floyd’s Death” n.d.). More protests were set to take place in The Hague, Groningen, and Rotterdam in June and July 2020. The protest in Amsterdam was aimed to show solidarity and to bring attention to issues in the Netherlands. “In particular the organizers referred to the death of Mitch Henriquez from Aruba, who died following a violent arrest in The Hague five years ago, and the arrest of Jerry Afriyie in the Zuid-Holland town of Gouda during an anti-Black Pete (“Zwarte Piet”) demonstration in 2014” (“Massive Amsterdam Protest against George Floyd’s Death” n.d.).

Civil rights activism in Europe is slow-going and has not led to any significant political change. According to King,

The comparison is unfair, in many ways, because Europe’s history with race relations is so different from that of the U.S. There was not the same plantation-style system of slavery in modern Europe; it largely “exported” its racism to its colonies, which it plundered for wealth and cheap labor. Most migration from Africa to Europe is relatively recent, starting in the 1960s. In most European countries, there are people who remember when large numbers of migrants first arrived. (King 2020)

Europe has not seen a significant civil rights movement because their connection to their colonial past has only recently come to the forefront, with migrations from those affected places happening sixty years ago. The unrest has been building, and only now are European countries forced to confront their racism because of the worldwide Black Lives Matter protest.

The teaching of colonial history leaves out many bloody and adverse effects. King states, “Being a black or brown person in Europe means being confronted from a young age with teachings that paint colonialism as a worthy enterprise” (King 2020). Several issues are usually not discussed in Europe concerning race, but this movement is starting to help change things, not much but a little. In the Netherlands, the Prime Minister claims to have changed his views concerning race and Zwarte Piet. According to King,

...following anti-racism protests in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said his attitude to the tradition had undergone ‘major changes’ after speaking to black children who told him they felt discriminated. Rutte, who in 2014 admitted to having dressed up in blackface as part of the

celebrations, predicted that in the next few years, there ‘will be no Zwarte Piets any more.’ (King 2020)

Mark Rutte’s change in opinion occurred after massive solidarity protests across the Netherlands with some of those demonstrations calling out their country’s own race issues. Zwarte Piet went from being a problem within Dutch borders, to gaining global attention alongside racial issues in the United States. These protests showed that the Netherlands had similar racial injustice as the US. This comparison created political pressure for Mark Rutte, along with other European leaders, to address and change institutional racism. For the Netherlands, it meant it was time to address the Zwarte Piet figure since it is the country’s most obvious racial image. Racial issues do not belong to one country or group of people: several European countries have to work to face their colonial past and current racism.

The article “Black Lives Matter: ‘Why the American Protests Have Resonated in the Netherlands’” is an opinion piece from Marieke Epping at Leiden University. This article was written in reaction to the Black Lives Matter protests in the United States after George Floyd’s death and how it has impacted the Netherlands. According to Dutch colonial historian Karwan Fatah-Black, “We find it easier to take to the streets to protest something overseas than Zwarte Piet” (“Black Lives Matter: ‘Why the American Protests Have Resonated in the Netherlands’” n.d.). Fatah-Black mentions two problems that started after abolishing slavery and are still happening today, attributing them as part of the cause for this constant social unrest. The first problem is the construction of white political identity and destiny (“Black Lives Matter: ‘Why the American Protests Have Resonated in the Netherlands’” n.d.). The second is the disadvantaged positions (limited access to education, health care, etc.) people of color have had for many generations dating back to slavery (“Black Lives Matter: ‘Why the American Protests Have Resonated in the Netherlands’” n.d.). The problems about race in the Netherlands have been happening since the trans-Atlantic slave trade. It is essential to understand the Netherlands’ colonial history when trying to understand the current racial unrest.

Nugah Shrestha, in “The Black Lives Matter Movement Protests in the Netherlands,” writes an opinion piece for Utrecht University on the role the Black Lives Matter movement has with inspiring social justice groups in the Netherlands. Shrestha

mentions that the Netherlands had protested against institutionalized racism for several weeks. These demonstrations have been in support of Black Lives Matter and racism that exists within the Netherlands. According to Shrestha,

After years of populist and racist anti-immigrant sentiments in Dutch politics and public debate, it appears that a new anti-racist and harmonious movement is growing. A movement that is tired of the everyday racism individuals and groups in our country have to experience and criticizes racist EU migration policies that have the drowning of tens of thousands Black people and people of color in the Mediterranean as a macabre side-effect. (“The Black Lives Matter Movement Protests in the Netherlands - Opinion - Universiteit Utrecht” n.d.)

The author discusses the Black Lives Matter movements’ background and then discusses the institutional racism in the Netherlands versus the tolerant self-image the country has projected of itself.

In the Netherlands, racism is an uncomfortable topic in public debates, and the country usually sees itself as tolerant and claims there is no racism in the Netherlands (“The Black Lives Matter Movement Protests in the Netherlands - Opinion - Universiteit Utrecht” n.d.). Despite the denial of racism in the country, there is rampant institutional racism: “Institutional racism is a sociological concept that refers to the systematic exclusion and/or discrimination of groups based on written and often unwritten rules, traditions, manners and behaviours” (“The Black Lives Matter Movement Protests in the Netherlands - Opinion - Universiteit Utrecht” n.d.). This institutional racism exists in the Dutch housing market, education system, traditions (Zwarte Piet), language, policing, etc. The Zwarte Piet debate is forcing people in the Netherlands to face racism in one of their traditions. The debate around Zwarte Piet and the blackface tradition represents the broader issue of institutional racism the Netherlands has to confront: “The discussion to abolish “Black Pete” has been ongoing since the 1940s and the recent uprise of the debate was answered with a lot of aggression by pro-Black Pete people in the Netherlands, but it has also given black Dutch people and people of color a theme to mobilize around and to battle the more general problem of institutionalized racism on the micro and macro level” (“The Black Lives Matter Movement Protests in the Netherlands - Opinion - Universiteit Utrecht” n.d.). Several social justice groups have started in the Netherlands. All of them

deal with institutional racism in the Netherlands, including groups trying to eliminate Zwarte Piet.

Kick Out Zwarte Piet

There have been movements in the Netherlands that have protested Zwarte Piet at the arrival of Sinterklaas and other Sinterklaas events for several years now. Kick out Zwarte Piet (KOZP) was initiated in 2014 by the ‘Zwarte Piet is Racisme’ (Black Piet is Racist) movement (“Kick Out Zwarte Piet (KOZP)” n.d.). This organization and movement aim to stop black-face and alter the controversial figure. The main goal for Zwarte Piet is Racisme is to change Zwarte Piet to a fun friendly character that can be celebrated by all groups and no longer represents a racist mocking image (“Stichting Nederland Wordt Beter - Voor Een Toekomst Zonder Racisme En Uitsluiting.” n.d.). The demonstrations from this organization during the Sinterklaas entry is used to continue a dialogue and raise awareness over the issue of a racist caricature (“Kick Out Zwarte Piet (KOZP)” n.d.). Zwarte Piet is Racisme have been demonstrating in the Netherlands since 2011 (Spaans 2020). In 2020, there was a call from the Kick Out Zwarte Piet organization to protest throughout the country against Zwarte Piet. The Zwarte Piet is Racisme (Black Piet is Racism) Facebook page posted ““Het is niet mogelijk om Black Lives Matter te steunen zonder tegen Zwarte Piet te zijn,” (translation: “It is not possible to support Black Lives Matter without being against Zwarte Piet”) (Rosman 2020). The group calls for everyone who joined the Black Lives Matter demonstrations to join in the fight against Zwarte Piet (Rosman 2020). The organization claims that if Dutch citizens supported #BLM and were against institutional racism in the United States, then they should support the Zwarte Piet is Racisme movement and stand up against institutional racism in their own country. The anti-Zwarte Piet organizations protest heavily during the holiday season when the controversial image becomes prevalent through parades, books, products, etc., all over the country.

Activist Naomie Pieter, spokesperson for Kick Out Zwarte Piet and founder of Black Queer & Trans Resistance Netherlands, was involved in the Black Lives Matter demonstrations in the Netherlands over the summer of 2020. Pieter was a victim of police violence while demonstrating against Zwarte Piet alongside activist Jerry Afriyie in 2016

in Rotterdam (Spaans 2020). She received injuries to her shins and a bloody nose (ibid). Afriyie was restrained by police when he attempted to help her (ibid). In an interview where Naomie is responding to the #BLM matter protests in the Netherlands, she states:

Al die duizenden mensen die de straat opgaan tegen racisme, dat veranderde bewustzijn... Het was historisch vanwege de pandemie, en ook vanwege Black Lives Matter. Er zijn in Nederland nog nooit zo veel demonstraties geweest als in het afgelopen jaar. Maar ik vond het ook pijnlijk. Al die mensen op de Dam, die daar stonden vanwege een incident in Amerika. Ze hadden allemaal gezien hoe een zwarte man zeven minuten lang werd vermoord. Dat was dubbel: ik was blij, ik was trots, maar ik dacht ook: waar waren jullie al die tijd? (Spaans 2020)

(Translation: “All those thousands of people taking to the streets against racism, that changed consciousness... It was historic because of the pandemic, and also because of Black Lives Matter. There have never been so many demonstrations in the Netherlands as in the past year. But I also found it painful. All those people on Dam Square, who were there because of an incident in America. They had all seen a black man murdered for seven minutes. That was double: I was happy, I was proud, but I also thought: where have you been all this time?”)

Naomie was proud of the number of people that joined the solidarity protests in her country. Still, the people reacted to something horrific that happened in the United States, while similar racial violence has happened in the Netherlands. In an interview, she gives three examples of young men killed by police while in custody in the Netherlands (Spaans 2020). Naomie explains in the interview for *Het Parool* that racism is very present in the Netherlands.

Een land met een slavernijverleden kan niet anders dan racistisch zijn. Dat zit in het dna. Meer dan de helft van Nederland is trots op de koloniale geschiedenis. Dat onschuldige van Nederland, het idee dat wij een progressief kikkerlandje zijn waar racisme niet bestaat, dat is bullshit. Ik bedoel niet dat alle mensen slecht zijn, maar alle systemen zijn doordrongen van racisme. En daar wil ik tegen vechten. Het heeft vierhonderd jaar geduurd tot Nederland beseft dat het slavernijverleden niet goed is, hoelang gaat het dan duren voor het racisme en het bij-behorende erfgoed de wereld uit zijn? Dat gaat in mijn leven niet meer gebeuren. Maar ik wil graag helpen de deur net iets verder open te trekken. (Spaans 2020)

(Translation: “A country with a history of slavery cannot help but be racist. That is in the DNA. More than half of the Netherlands is proud of its colonial history. That innocence of the Netherlands, the idea that we are a progressive little country where racism does not exist, that is bullshit. I don’t mean that all people are bad, but all systems are permeated with racism. And I want to fight that. It has taken 400 years for the Netherlands to realize that the history of slavery is not good,

how long will it then take before racism and the accompanying heritage have disappeared from the world? That is not going to happen in my lifetime. But I would like to help open the door just a little further.”)

The Netherlands has a long history of colonialism and slavery. It is part of the country's foundation. A lot of wealth and growth of the country came from the exploitation of others in their control. As a result, racism is very present in the country and exists in all aspects of the culture. Zwarte Piet is just the public face of racism. People like Naomie Pieter and Jerry Afriyie want to take steps to change institutional racism in the Netherlands and address the colonial past and how it was a horrific time in history. Movements like 'Zwarte Piet is Racisme' aim to change Zwarte Piet and use it as a stepping stone to changing other forms of racism in the country.

In the article “Tracing Pasts and Colonial Numbness: Decolonial Dynamics in the Netherlands,” Sherilyn Deen focuses on the political movements and moral appeals made by social activists and decolonial and anti-racist movements, and how those appeals trigger conversations and questions about Dutch culture and the country's history of slavery, colonialism, and racism. In the past few years there have been more social movements in the Netherlands that protest against racism and discrimination. There have been calls to decolonize institutions, like museums and universities. One movement has pushed #DecolonizeTheMuseum, which wants to bring awareness to colonial history to the forefront (Deen 2018:11).

CHAPTER VIII

CHANGES BEING MADE WITH ZWARTE PIET

Changes to Zwarte Piet have been slowly happening over nearly 20 years, when anti-Zwarte Piet demonstrations began by a small group in the Netherlands. The recent waves of Black Lives Matter related protests in the country have sparked more changes to Zwarte Piet than in previous years, due to a recognition that the Netherlands has a problem with institutionalized racism. Overall, however, the switch from Zwarte Piet to a new, less offensive version has been slow. This section reviews the types of changes that are being made to the figure of Zwarte Piet, as well as the conversations surrounding them.

There are changes in parts of the Netherlands to the tradition of Zwarte Piet. Instead of blackface, with the afro, gold earrings, red lips, and accent, some parades are using Schoorsteenpieten. The character wears the same clothing style, but there are only black streaks on their face instead of full blackface, similar to the look of someone that went down the chimney. There are no big red lips or gold earrings either, but some parades still use a curly wig. Schoorsteenpieten's version matches the invented story that Piet is not black but gets his dark color from going down the chimney. To match that narrative, some cities,⁶ publishers,⁷ broadcast companies,⁸ etc.,⁹ are switching to Schoorsteenpieten. This new version is an excellent image to transition with since it matches Piet's made-up story some Dutch citizens love to use when explaining that Piet is not black. But in reality, Piet is black. He is supposed to be a former slave or a Moor, and the story of the chimney causing the black skin is simply used to avoid Piet's racist historical background. The larger cities have been making the switch to Schoorsteenpieten due to outrage over the figure, and cities like Amsterdam are more in the worldwide spotlight and receive more tourism. It is more essential for them to make the switch since they receive more criticism and it affects their tourism income. Less

⁶ Amsterdam, Arnhem, The Hague, Utrecht, Maastricht

⁷ Clavis

⁸ NOS, RTL, Sinterklaasjournal

⁹ Facebook, Instagram

populated and more rural cities and towns are not making the same switch. Some are still using Zwarte Piet, and there is not as much global or national attention to how these areas are practicing the tradition. There is a difference in how people want to practice the tradition, and the image cities and the Netherlands want to show the world. There are still individuals who want to keep the original figure and choose to post images containing Zwarte Piet or personally dress up as Zwarte Piet, which can be seen in the crowds who were present in the 2019 parades. The Dutch like to see themselves as tolerant people, but this tolerance is contradicted by Zwarte Piet's continued appearance. Some cities and towns are responding to the controversy of Zwarte Piet by changing to an alternative Piet, while others are deciding to remain with the original image.

RTL, a large media broadcasting company in Europe, announced in 2016 that it would not show any Zwarte Piet images on any of its television networks during the Sinterklaas holiday season ("RTL Kiest Voor Schoorsteenpiet" n.d.). Instead, they will only broadcast parades using Chimney Piet, the version Amsterdam has used in its parades since 2014¹⁰ ("RTL Kiest Voor Schoorsteenpiet" n.d.). According to the company, Zwarte Piet no longer fits the mindset of the era, and there needs to be a change to his representation. In a statement, RTL commented that they understood the different sides of the debate, with one caveat, "maar in deze discussie zou het niet moeten gaan over gelijk, maar over begrip hebben voor elkaar" (translation: "but in this discussion it should not be about being right, but about understanding each other") ("RTL Kiest Voor Schoorsteenpiet" n.d.). This article shows the increased efforts organizations are taking to distance themselves from a racist character and turn to something more appropriate and accepted throughout the world.

The *Sinterklaasjournaal* (Saint Nicholas Journal) is a fictional news program that covers the annual arrival and adventures of Sinterklaas and the Pieten in the Netherlands until the evening of December 5th (*Sinterklaasjournaal (TV Series 2001–) - IMDb* n.d.). The NOS, the most significant news company in the Netherlands, which hosts the *Sinterklaasjournaal* and covers one of the official Sinterklaas' arrivals in the Netherlands,

¹⁰ Amsterdam had a mix of Piet types in 2014, some Zwarte Pieten and some Chimney Pieten. In 2016, Amsterdam made the switch to only have Chimney Piet represented, Zwarte Piet was officially banned from the arrival celebrations.

sent out a video in 2017 that introduces a new version of Piet (NOS 2017). This video shows the *Sinterklaasjournaal* introducing a white girl as Piet without any black face paint. As this has been described, “Tonight, the Sinterklaas journal featured two Petes for the first time: the Huispiet [House Pete], who had traditionally been painted black, and an unpainted white girl in a Pete suit who was allowed to sail with Sinterklaas from Spain for the first time” (NOS 2017). In a previous attempt to change Piet’s image, NOS tried different colored Pieten (red, yellow, green, etc.), where bright colors were painted on faces, or rainbow Pieten with multicolored face paint (van der Pijl and Goulordava 2014). Unfortunately, these earlier attempts did not stick, with pro-Zwarte Piet groups rejecting these types of changes.

In 2014, some attempts had already been made in more populated cities to change Zwarte Piet’s appearance. For the national parade of Sinterklaas’ arrival in the city of Gouda, there were two alternate versions of Piet: Stroopwafelpieten (cookie Pieten) and Kaaspieten (cheese Pieten) (“Hoe Zwarte Piet Veranderde, van Pageknecht Tot Roetstrepen” n.d.). The costuming aspect mainly remained the same, except for the face painting. Rather than painting the face black, the arrival parade in Gouda had people paint their faces like iconic food products in that region of the Netherlands. For the Stroopwafelpieten, the face is painted brown, like the cookie, with a cross-hatching pattern resembling the cookie’s ridges. The Kaaspieten has the face paint yellow with some black circles resembling the holes in the cheese. This version of Piet was a fun attempt to bring other aspects of Dutch culture into the mix.

The same year, Amsterdam also made changes by slowly fading-out Zwarte Piet by having a quarter of the helpers have soot smears on their faces, rather than having the whole face painted (“Hoe Zwarte Piet Veranderde, van Pageknecht Tot Roetstrepen” n.d.). The soot smears imply that the helper got some on his skin from the chimneys. Then in 2016, the traditional Zwarte Pieten were entirely replaced by Schoorsteenpieten (literally: ‘Chimney Peters’) at the Amsterdam Sinterklaas Parade. As one source described, “Rather than wearing the traditional blackface makeup that is at the heart of the Zwarte Piet controversy, the Schoorsteenpieten are only marked with light smudges of soot from bringing presents down the chimney. The more important characteristics of

the Pieten, such as their jovial attitudes and a seemingly endless supply of cookies and sweets, remain unchanged” (“Sinterklaas | I Amsterdam” n.d.). The character is still joyful and playful, handing out candy to children, but instead of having full black-painted skin (face, neck, chest, arms, and legs), there are soot smudges, lining up better with the chimney explanation than full black paint. According to Rosman, some parades wanted to compromise by using Gray Piet (Rosman 2020). This version would be precisely like Zwarte Piet, but with lighter face paint. According to anti-Zwarte Piet groups, this image is borderline racist, too close to Zwarte Piet, and they prefer soot Piet in this regard (Rosman 2020).

Many children’s book publishing companies have followed suit for removing the offensive character. In October of 2020, Clavis, the largest Dutch-language children’s book publisher, stopped publishing books altogether with images of Zwarte Piet (Becker 2020). Clavis was the last publisher that was still sending out books with images and mentions of Zwarte Piet (Becker 2020), as all others had stopped earlier that year. Since the company will not release works with the old version, the company was forced to destroy the last stock containing Zwarte Piet, which amounted to seven thousand units in October (Becker 2020). Bookstores more generally had reduced purchasing those books since public opinion on the controversy was changing (Becker 2020). Clavis, along with other publishing companies, now only send out books with the appropriate version and modifying older books with soetveegpieten (soot Pieten). Thick red lips, afro wig, and gold earrings are banned from the character as well (Becker 2020). Even local libraries have been adjusting their Sinterklaas collection by removing books with Zwarte Piet. Nieuwe Veste are removing those books from their collection, and nothing with the name Zwarte Piet or its images will remain (“Nieuwe Veste Haalt Alle Boeken Met Zwarte Piet Uit de Collectie | Bredavandaag | Hét Nieuws Uit Breda” n.d.). Eindhoven Library is doing the same to their collections, citing the need for inclusivity via a statement explaining that having Zwarte Piet in books discriminates against part of the population, so it’s time to change it so that everyone can enjoy and participate (“Studio040 - Eindhovense Bieb Haalt Boeken Met Zwarte Piet Uit Collectie” n.d.).

School districts have also started to ban Zwarte Piet on their campuses. Schools in the three major cities in the Netherlands started to make the switch to Soot Sweeper Piet, another name for Chimney Pete, in 2017 (“Scholen Schakelen over Op Roetveegpiet: ‘Zwarte Piet Is Met Pensioen’ | Binnenland | AD.NI” n.d.). More schools started to change in 2020 after massive protests throughout the country over racism. Primary schools in Oosterhout announced in October of 2020 that they will be using Roetveegpieten (Soot Sweeper Piets) (“Roetveegpieten Komen Naar Alle Basisscholen in Oosterhout | Oosterhout | Bndestem.NI” n.d.). The district, which has 21 primary schools in the municipality of Oosterhout, chose to follow the version *Sinterklaasjournaal* uses during their televised entry of Sinterklaas (“Roetveegpieten Komen Naar Alle Basisscholen in Oosterhout | Oosterhout | Bndestem.NI” n.d.). The schools assert that they want to make sure all children will get a chance to enjoy the holiday festivities at school without having to confront any racist representations (“Roetveegpieten Komen Naar Alle Basisscholen in Oosterhout | Oosterhout | Bndestem.NI” n.d.).

Social media platforms have taken their stance on the issue of Zwarte Piet as well. Facebook, through the Oversight Board, has banned images of Zwarte Piet from both Facebook and Instagram because of its racial stereotyping (Sabel 2021). A video containing images of Zwarte Piet was removed on Facebook in December 2020 (Sabel 2021). The user challenged the decision and in response, the Oversight Board—a council made up of twenty people with legal and journalism backgrounds to make decisions over what violates Facebook policies—stated that the images of Zwarte Piet violate Facebook’s hate speech policy through racist imagery (Sabel 2021). Facebook and Instagram are social media platforms that exist globally and must consider multiple diverse backgrounds when considering user policies. They were thus responsive to accusations of Zwarte Piet as racist in recent social movements in the Netherlands. The banning of Zwarte Piet on these platforms is a huge win for anti-Zwarte Piet groups in the Netherlands.

In 2013, in response to public protest and international pressure from the UN the Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte made a statement that black Piet is just black, and there isn’t much he can do about it (Deutsch 2020). Rutte has since changed his stance on the

issue due to the #BLM matter solidarity protests. In a 2020 parliamentary debate that focused on anti-racism protests in the Netherlands held in solidarity with BLM protests in the United States, Rutte stated that he recognizes the racism and discrimination Zwarte Piet has caused some Dutch citizens, and emphasized his belief that this aspect of the tradition needs to end (Deutsch 2020). This is a significant change from his 2013 comments on the matter. In response to Rutte's 2020 statement, Linda Nooitmeer, a chairwoman of the National Institute for the Study of Dutch Slavery and its Legacy, stated, "The magnitude of a leader in a country stating this is enormous. ... You can have all the legislation you want ... but if the people in power, the leader of the country, doesn't seem to support it - and that's what it looked like in 2013 when he said that about Black Pete – then the struggle will be harder" (as quoted in Deutsch 2020). Having the leader of the Netherlands comment on the racism of Zwarte Piet will undoubtedly help push for further change to the character.

Wider public opinion of Zwarte Piet has also changed over the years. According to Rosman,

Research by current affairs program EenVandaag among 29,000 members of the Opinion panel showed today that the percentage of Dutch people who want to stick to Zwarte Piet continues to fall. In 2013, 89 percent of the respondents wanted Zwarte Piet not to change color, last year [2019] that percentage had dropped to 71 percent and this year [2020] it dropped further to 55 percent. That is still a small majority of the Dutch. People who have changed their mind do so mainly 'to keep the peace.' (Rosman 2020)

Public opinion has thus moved away from Zwarte Piet, with more and more people supporting Schoorsteenpieten, which is not seen to have the same racist connotations.

CHAPTER IX

CURRENT REPRESENTATIONS OF PIET IN THE ARRIVAL PARADES

Since 1952, the Sinterklaas Intocht has been broadcasted nationally (Rodenberg and Wagenaar 2016:716). A different city or town is nominated to host the arrival parade that will get broadcasted on national television. The parade is about Sinterklaas arriving in the Netherlands from Spain at the start of the holiday season. The welcoming committee usually includes the Mayor, the Child Mayor for the day, some reporters, thousands of adults and children who watch from the comfort of their own homes or are standing in the crowds at the arrival location. Although one city broadcasts it nationally through the *Sinterklaasjournaal*, every town and city still does its own arrival that can be seen live, through local news. Now it is viewable online.

As mentioned earlier, pressure from citizens of the Netherlands, political pressure from the UN, and outrage from other people worldwide in the wake of the 2020 #BLM protests have led to changes of the Zwarte Piet figure. For the ethnographic component of my research, I had originally planned to do in-person participant observation of parades in the Netherlands. I had originally planned to conduct research in the Netherlands, where I spent my early childhood, attending as many of the parades as I possibly could. But all that planning and excitement came to a crashing halt in March 2020 with COVID. Many cities and towns in the Netherlands canceled their parades, according to official accounts in Fall 2020 “It ha[d] already been announced that a number of municipalities, including Maastricht, The Hague and Eindhoven, decided to cancel local arrival events (intochten) due to the coronavirus” while others kept the location secret to avoid drawing crowds (“Sinterklaas 2020 in Nederland: Landelijke Intocht | Holland Explorer. Travel & Lifestyle” n.d.). My fieldwork came to look very differently than I had initially planned. Instead of being in person, I planned to do it all remotely. Most places uploaded their

videos online so people could still see the arrival of Sinterklaas and his helpers in the Netherlands to deliver their gifts.

Instead of being in the Netherlands¹¹ to be a part of Sinterklaas' arrival celebrations, I was at home in Oregon during a lockdown from COVID. I sat in front of my computer with my feet on the table, holding a mug of hot chocolate, with dozens of tabs open, watching the "Intocht van Sinterklaas" (Arrival of Sinterklaas). I might not get to feel the same emotions from the crowds around me, but in watching these videos from all over the country, including my hometown, I still had a feeling of nostalgia and holiday spirit.

I managed to find sixteen arrival videos (seven cities, seven towns, one province, and one imaginary location) to watch for the 2020 holiday season, from cities, large and small towns. Fifteen of the videos were from local governments that managed to host the arrival with a secret location, date, and time. The fifteen towns that did the arrival parade are shown in figure 10. The sixteenth arrival video, which is not in figure 10, was from the *Sinterklaasjournaal*, who used a secret and fictional location for his arrival in the Netherlands (NTR n.d.), stating, "In 2020 Sinterklaas arrival will be corona-safe. This year Sinterklaas arrives to the Netherlands on Saturday, the 14th of November to an imaginary town Zwalk. The place literally does not exist. Sinterklaas intocht will be broadcasted on NPO3 channel on 14th of November at 12:00" ("Sinterklaas 2020 in Nederland: Landelijke Intocht | Holland Explorer. Travel & Lifestyle" n.d.). According to the Dutch news article, the location was a fictitious one with a whole storyline created to center around it. Due to COVID restrictions, the Sinterklaas arrival was changed to a secret location, with reporters and a host from the *Sinterklaasjournaal* covering the event. There was the usual drama in the video that seems to come with every typical Sinterklaas

¹¹ Netherlands Population in November 2020: 17,469,635; Immigration: 17,762 ("StatLine - Population Development; Region by Month" n.d.).



Figure 10 Google Map of 2020 Sinterklaas Arrival Locations.

arrival. There was an issue with the boat which got fixed; a mysterious moving sack (which had a hidden person in it); a mix-up between the coal for the boat and the presents and where it had to be stored; and some drama with the busses that contained Mayors and children from various towns. When Sinterklaas arrives, he gets on his horse, and all the Pieten and reporters parade to the Piet House where they will be staying while in the Netherlands. Sinterklaas will be “working from home” this year, but the Pieten will still deliver all the presents. The Pieten, who have the typical clothing and some soot, bring the presents to the house and sort through them. Sinterklaas greets Mayors and children who parade in front of the house with letters, drawings, and a special treat specific to their hometowns. This event is the reverse of a typical Sinterklaas parade. Usually, Sinterklaas is the one who parades through the city and hands out treats and gifts to the children viewing the festivities. Sinterklaas used the Schoorsteenpieten instead of Zwarte Piet, which they have done for three years now.

Most of the 2020 arrival parades used Schoorsteenpieten instead of Zwarte Pieten. Figure 11 shows which locations used Zwarte Piet (blue pins), Schoorsteenpieten (purple pins), or a combination or alternative versions of Piet (pink pins). Six locations, in

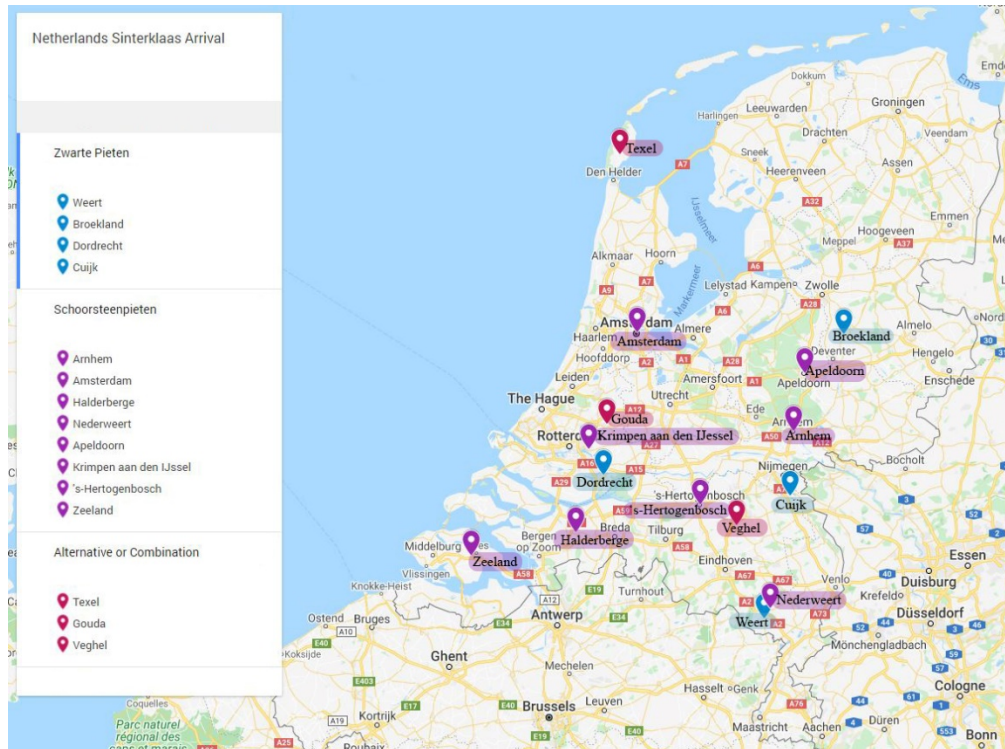


Figure 11 Google Maps image with the 2020 Sinterklaas Arrival Locations color-coded with the type of Pieten represented. Blue used Zwarte Piet; Purple used Chimney Piet; Pink used an alternative or combination of types.

particular, the city of Arnhem,¹² the city of Amsterdam,¹³ the town of Halderberge,¹⁴ the town of Nederweert,¹⁵ the city of Apeldoorn,¹⁶ the town of Krimpen aan den IJssel,¹⁷ the province of Zeeland,¹⁸ and the city of ‘s-Hertogenbosch¹⁹ used Schoorsteenpieten for their arrival parade, with facial soot marks instead of full black face paint. Although most still used a black wig, there were no accompanying racial caricatures like red lips or gold

¹² Arnhem’s Population in November 2020: 162,219; Immigration: 397 (“StatLine - Population Development; Region by Month” n.d.).

¹³ Amsterdam’s Population in November 2020: 987,939 ; Immigration: 2,465 (“StatLine - Population Development; Region by Month” n.d.).

¹⁴ Halderberge’s Population in November 2020: 30,428; Immigration: 19 (“StatLine - Population Development; Region by Month” n.d.).

¹⁵ Nederweert’s Population in November 2020: 17,161; Immigration: 16 (“StatLine - Population Development; Region by Month” n.d.).

¹⁶ Apeldoorn’s Population in November 2020: 164, 609; Immigration: 81 (“StatLine - Population Development; Region by Month” n.d.).

¹⁷ Krimpen aan den IJssel’s Population in November 2020: 29,452; Immigration: 10 (“StatLine - Population Development; Region by Month” n.d.).

¹⁸ Zeeland’s Population in November 2020: 279,927; Immigration: 156 (“StatLine - Population Development; Region by Month” n.d.).

¹⁹ ‘s-Hertegenbosch’s Population in November 2020: 155,586; Immigration:92 (“StatLine - Population Development; Region by Month” n.d.).

earrings. In contrast, four locations, the city of Weert,²⁰ the town of Broekland,²¹ the city of Dordrecht,²² and town of Cuijk,²³ used blackface Zwarte Piet for their arrival parades. These are smaller towns located a bit farther away from some of the bigger cities and chose not to change the image despite political and social pressure. Three locations used a combination of Zwarte Piet and Schoorsteenpieten or some other alternative. Of these, the town of Texel²⁴ featured Zwarte Pieten and Pieten that had their face painted half green and half black. The town of Veghel²⁵ had only two Pieten, one Zwarte Piet and the other Schoorsteenpiet. Having both versions of Piet could be Veghel's attempt at compromise, under current social and political pressure for change, by featuring both figures in this year's arrival – satisfying groups on both sides of the aisle. The city of Gouda²⁶ was unclear what version they used, but based on past years, they have always had at least a mix Piet types or some alternative. In past years their Pieten were painted after food.

The city of Arnhem reinforced the new narrative of Schoorsteenpieten. The location and time of the parade were kept secret from the public, with the 20-minute video released on November 14, 2020 (Sint Arnhem 2020). There is a soft-spoken narrator throughout the film, who is identified as Wait Piet, who supposedly arrived ahead of Sinterklaas to get arrangements ready for his stay. The film shows the empty city streets, with its residents fast asleep in their beds at home. Sinterklaas arrives in Arnhem in the middle of the night on a small steamboat with a few different Pieten, who are looking to meet Wait Piet. There is some drama in the film—the story goes as follows. Sinterklaas and the Pieten with him are having trouble finding Wait Piet since the door to the building is locked, and they cannot communicate with each other. Wait

²⁰ Weert's Population in November 2020: 50,044; Immigration: 54 ("StatLine - Population Development; Region by Month" n.d.).

²¹ Very small town, and does not have official population records

²² Dordrecht's Population in November 2020: 119,203; Immigration: 108 ("StatLine - Population Development; Region by Month" n.d.).

²³ Cuijk's Population in November 2020: 25,365; Immigration: 7 ("StatLine - Population Development; Region by Month" n.d.).

²⁴ Texel's Population in November 2020: 13,637; Immigration: 10 ("StatLine - Population Development; Region by Month" n.d.).

²⁵ Town too small to have official population records

²⁶ Gouda's Population in November 2020: 73,771; Immigration: 59 ("StatLine - Population Development; Region by Month" n.d.).

Piet was at the top of the building and alerted Sinterklaas' boat with a flare when they arrived in the city for where they had to go. Unfortunately, Wait Piet got locked at the top on the balcony. The building's entrance was locked as well, so Sinterklaas and the other Pieten could not enter. Wait Piet became worried about Sinterklaas finding a place to rest and sleep. After some adventures through the city, Sinterklaas, his horse, and the Pieten finally found a place to stay. Throughout their adventures, through the city, one of the Pieten has a small adventure camera on a stick he uses to record their travels. The Pieten exhibit silly behavior, whereas Sinterklaas is a little more serious. It shows Wait Piet worried and upset about what happened to Sinterklaas and wondering if she will ever find them at the end of the film. As she sits there worried, a gloved hand grabs her shoulder. She turns around and is happy to see Sinterklaas.

Throughout the film, the Pieten—the one on the roof and the three accompanying Sinterklaas—have no blackface or black paint elsewhere on their skins, nor soot anywhere. None of the Pieten appear to wear wigs, and their natural hair shows under the hats. They all wear a brightly colored version of the 16th/17th-century Spanish style outfit that has become typical for the Pieten to wear in the country's arrival parades over the past several years. They wear basic sneakers that are very modern compared to the rest of the outfit and have a hat with a feather. Near the end of the video is where the creators reinforce the new narrative of Piet. Wait Piet is stuck on a rooftop balcony. The door had locked behind her, and she is unable to leave. She is sad and scared that she cannot join Sinterklaas and is worried about how they are doing out in the city, unable to come into the building.

While she is sitting on the roof top balcony upset, she wipes her clean forehead with the back of her hand, which reveals, as she turns to the camera to look at Sinterklaas, who found her, a black soot mark (Sint Arnhem 2020). The two images in figure 12 show this action and the resulting mark on her face. The whole video shows the Pieten with neither black paint nor soot marks, until the very end with Wait Piet. This image is symbolic of the story people in the Netherlands have used to justify why Zwarte Piet is black. People claim that Zwarte Piet's skin is black because he gets covered in chimney soot going down the chimney to deliver gifts and treats. There is still paint, but instead of



Figure 12 Screenshots from the Arnhem Sinterklaas arrival video. These clips show Wait Piet rubbing her hand on her face leaving a soot mark behind (Sint Arnhem 2020).

fully covering the skin, it appears like soot smears. This final image from Arnhem’s arrival video supports this new narrative and character. This Piet got soot and dirt on her skin from the dirty roof where she spent most of the night on, and it was ultimately rubbing onto her face. None of the Pieten in this video had paint on their skin before this moment because, according to the narrative, none of them had gone through a chimney yet. Before that moment, there was no reason for them to have soot marks. This image is communicating to audiences the new narrative explaining the new Pieten look. Arnhem was the only arrival video that used this method. Other videos featured the Pieten already with soot marks upon their arriving by boat with Sinterklaas.

The Sinterklaas arrival video in the city of Amsterdam was performed like a breaking news broadcast (figure 13) (NH Nieuws 2020). There was a reporter in the studio and others in the field covering the arrival of Sinterklaas live. It starts with reporters questioning whether or not Sinterklaas will arrive this year because of COVID. The reporters have been finding signs of the presence of Sinterklaas, his horse, and the Pieten. There is a dedicated hashtag (#zoeksinthotline) for people to report signs of the Sinterklaas’ arrival and help find his location. Eventually, one of the reporters finds Sinterklaas’ boat where there are Pieten unloading presents, and Sinterklaas is taking a morning break and having some breakfast. Sinterklaas apologizes for being late and blames Head Piet for not keeping track of time, then arrives to meet the Mayor and Kid Mayor and have a socially distanced zoom call with a few families to answer questions about this year and Sinterklaas’ personal life. The broadcast had a dramatic element, evidenced by the search for Sinterklaas, anxiety about his missing horse, and fear that he might not show up at all. It even featured a remote interview with Sinterklaas’ neighbor

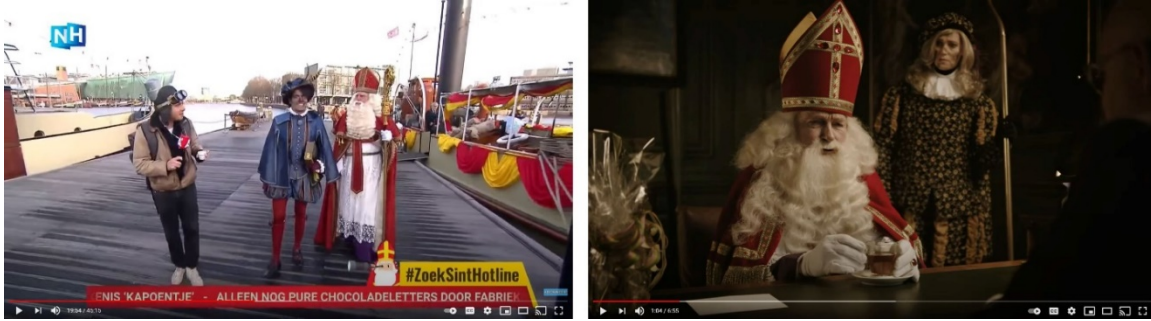


Figure 13 Images of Schoorsteenpieten for the 2020 arrival. Left, Amsterdam (NH Nieuws 2020). Right, 's-Hertogenbosch (Gemeente 's-Hertogenbosch 2020).

in Madrid, Spain (the neighbor only spoke Spanish). Sinterklaas ultimately reassures the children in Amsterdam that they can put out their shoes, and treats and presents will still arrive, and that more boats with the rest of the Pieten will arrive soon.

The Pieten dress in the typically colorful 16th /17th-century Spanish-style outfits, without their faces painted. They have only a few soot smears, following the new version of Schoorsteenpieten, which Amsterdam has been featuring since 2014. Most of the Pieten still have curly black hair, but without the accompanying red lips or gold earrings. This image is similar to what some of the other cities have done with their Schoorsteenpieten. The video for the 2020 Sinterklaas arrival in the town of Krimpen aan den IJssel is short and features Sinterklaas and two female Pieten arriving in the city wearing the typical Piet clothing and have soot marks on their faces (Gemeente Krimpen aan den IJssel 2020). The Zeeland arrival video also features a few Pieten, all with soot marks on their faces instead of blackface (SJB Zeeland 2020). Most of the videos feature the Pieten with black hair, which is not the dominant hair color in the Netherlands. Only a few parades had Pieten with blond or brown hair. In the short video of Sinterklaas for the 2020 holiday season in the city of 's-Hertogenbosch, which was part of a video series, the Pieten have light soot marks, lighter than the Pieten in Amsterdam, on their faces and wear the typical 16th/17th-century Spanish outfits (Gemeente 's-Hertogenbosch 2020). The Pieten do not wear wigs, and the female Piet has bright long blond hair (figure 13). Other towns and cities also set up their videos to look like news broadcasts, kept the location secret, followed COVID guidelines, and introduced some kind of drama that added suspense to the video. The typical drama for 2020 was questioning whether or not Sinterklaas would arrive at all in the time if COVID.

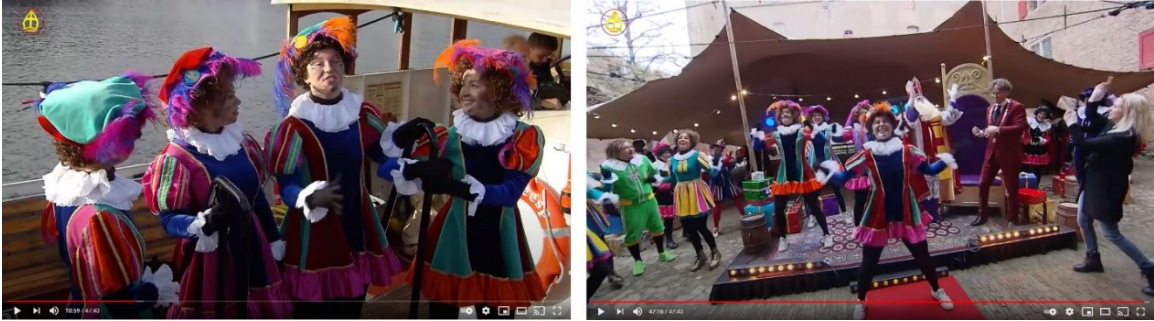


Figure 14 Images of Schoorsteenpieten at the Halderberge arrival (Sinterklaas in Halderberge 2020).

The Sinterklaas arrival in the town of Halderberge was also at a secret location to avoid bringing in crowds because of the COVID pandemic (Sinterklaas in Halderberge 2020). A reporter and camera crew searched for Sinterklaas and then followed him around when he arrived. Like many of the other arrival videos for 2020, there are questions about whether Sinterklaas would arrive at all. The mayor had arranged a safe place for Sinterklaas, at a castle near the town. Just like with Arnhem and Amsterdam, the Pieten are Schoorsteenpieten that have soot smears instead of full blackface (figure 14). Most wear the typical Spanish type outfits, except the clothing is brightly colored. Not all the Pieten wear wigs, and some show their natural hair. There are some variations in the costuming for the Pieten, depending on their roles. Cool Piet wears a tracksuit and metal chains, presenting a more modern look similar to rapper fashion which has a history with blackness. Listening Piet wears the same outfit as many others but has enormous ears to make it easier to listen. Other types of Pieten featured in the video are Dance Pieten, Singing Pieten, Present Pieten, and Juggling Pieten. Throughout the video, there is singing, dancing, parading around the castle, showing drawings children have made, and Sinterklaas assuring the children there will be Sinterklaas celebrations this year, just socially distanced. In the end, the mayor gives Sinterklaas the key to the city as usual, and Sinterklaas talks directly to the children of Halderberge through the camera and tells them to make sure to leave out their shoes, as he has arrived in the Netherlands.

The arrival of Sinterklaas in the town of Nederweert took place at city hall, where the mayor walked in and discovered the building filled with presents (Nederweert24 2020). In the background of the video, some Pieten are running around the building and hiding. At first glance, the Pieten seem to have blackface, but at the end of the video, when the audience has a clear look at the Pieten, they are wearing black masks with soot



Figure 15 Both images show the use of masks for some of the arrival videos. On the left is from the Nederweert video and features two Pieten wearing black masks (Nederweert24 2020). On the right is from Cuijk, and have Sinterklaas wearing a white mask, and Piet is wearing a black mask (Piet Vermeulen 2020).

marks on their skin underneath. The black face mask on the Pieten looks like the black face paint used for Zwarte Piet from a distance, it is unknown if the black masks were intentional for the Pieten, but it does look like Zwarte Piet from a distance instead of Schoorsteenpieten. In other videos, the Pieten wear COVID masks that are black, as shown in figure 15. Similarly, in the town of Cuijk arrival video, when Sinterklaas and Zwarte Piet (Cuijk used Zwarte Piet instead of the updated version) enter the local government building wearing masks, Sinterklaas wears a white mask, and Zwarte Piet wears a black one (Piet Vermeulen 2020). At the end of the arrival video in the town of Texel, it also shows Pieten wearing black masks (Texel kijken en luisteren 2020). For the videos that feature Zwarte Piet, Texel and Cuijk, and black face masks, the color of the mask blends in with their black face paint. The town of Nederweert arrival video had Sinterklaas mention that Schoorsteenpieten are with him, making it clear that this area uses the new version, despite the black COVID facial covering. The Nederweert video mainly focused on Sinterklaas answering questions from children and Sinterklaas assuring children that the holiday will still happen. The Pieten are shown occasionally in the background of the video, until the end where the audience sees them chatting at a table.

The city of Dordrecht used Zwarte Piet in their arrival of Sinterklaas video (Chris Hoogerwaard 2020). The video starts with a lost Piet walking through the city. This Piet has a similar outfit to the Schoorsteenpieten, but instead of soot marks, this Piet has full blackface, a black curly wig, and red lips. He is lost and asks help from passing strangers to help him find city hall. Piet shares his crazy adventure about how he got to the city, and the video features some more wacky clips of Piet trying to find his way to city hall.



Figure 16 Examples of 2020 Zwarte Piets. Left, Dordrecht (Chris Hoogerwaard 2020) . Right, Weert (WeertFM 2020).

The video also shows the Mayor and Child Mayor concerned about Sinterklaas' arrival. When they go to sleep, the Kid Mayor dreams of Cook Piet making sweet treats and singing songs. Cook Piet wears a chef outfit and hat, and has the same black face as the Lost Piet (figure 16). In the morning, Piet arrives and works with the Mayor and Kid Mayor to make a video about the plan for Sinterklaas Arrival. In the end, Sinterklaas and another Piet arrive and say they came by train. Sinterklaas tells the kids to put out their shoes for gifts and treats.

The city of Weert had a similar representation of Piet in their arrival video (WeertFM 2020). The Piets in this video has a full blackface and red lips, and typical clothing (figure 16). Sinterklaas is on his boat with the Piets on the way to Weert. Where they get lost and arrive at night with no one around, it turns out they arrived a day early because Planner Piet changed the clocks so they would not be late. Sinterklaas calls the Mayor when they arrive and see no one, and the Mayor informs them they are a day early and in the wrong spot. Then Sinterklaas and his Piets (Planner Piet and Steering Piet) time travel and teleport to the auditorium. This video shows the use of some smartphones by Sinterklaas and Piets. The smartphones show the characters in the tradition are adapting to modern times. So if some aspects of the tradition can modernize, why can't the image of Zwarte Piet change in Weert?

The arrival of Sinterklaas in the small town of Broekland for 2020 did not enact the Sinterklaas arrival at all. Even though most cities had to adjust their arrival because of COVID, they generally still did some sort of arrival (Bastiaan Veltien 2020). In this version, the Piets are already in Broekland, in the Piethuis there, but there is no sign of Sinterklaas. The Piets all have blackface, a curly wig, red lips, gold earrings, and typical



Figure 17 Images from the Texel arrival with Zwarte Piet and Green Piet (Texel kijken en luisteren 2020).

clothing. The video focuses on Pieten reminiscing on past arrivals by showing various video clips of previous Sinterklaas Intocht videos. All the previous parades show the use of Zwarte Pieten and using alternative methods of transportation through the area. There are instances where Sinterklaas is riding a motorcycle instead of his white horse. Using a motorcycle instead of a horse shows that this town is capable of changing aspects of the arrival parade, so why are they resisting changing Zwarte Piet?

The arrival in the town of Cuijk has the Pieten in the video wearing black paint all over exposed skin, not cleanly done or as dark as other Pieten in other arrival videos, but it is blackface (Piet Vermeulen 2020). The videos with Zwarte Piet are apparent, the costuming involves covering every part of exposed skin in black paint. Some have it lighter than others. The Broekland video uses dark paint on the Pieten. It is so dark that it gave me an uncomfortable reaction while watching the video. Cuijk uses a lighter paint on the Pieten, but regardless of the shade, there are both obviously blackface.

The Sinterklaas arrival in the town of Texel had two versions of Piet, Zwarte Piet and Green Piet (figure 17) (Texel kijken en luisteren 2020). Sinterklaas arrives by boat with some of his Pieten. Some of them have a full blackface, red lips, curly black wigs, and wearing the usual outfit, while other Pieten have a split face, with one side black and the other green, and red lips and the same outfit as Zwarte Piet. The painted faces of Green Piet matched the Texel flag, which has both green and black represented on it. Sinterklaas was “surprised” by this change but liked the new looks. Perhaps this subtle change is Texel’s way of finding a compromise to the controversy and transition to something new. The video shows some silly behavior from the Pieten. They remove the boat’s presents, joke around, one coming off the boat with toilet paper on their shoe,



Figure 18 Images from the Veghel arrival with Zwarte Piet and Schoorsteenpiet (Sint in Veghel 2020).

another is wearing a life preserver, etc. Some of the Pieten even pull a prank on the Mayor by grabbing him and dumping him into the water.

It is unclear what version of Piet the city of Gouda used in its video, as the video only shows the back of Sinterklaas and Piet's heads (SinterklaasInGouda 2020). Piet did have a curly black wig, but several Schoorsteenpieten also used curly black wigs like Zwarte Piet. As a result, I am unable to determine whether or not Gouda is using the new version or the old. In the past, Gouda has used alternative Pieten that resemble cheese and cookies.

My hometown, Veghel, used both Zwarte Piet and Schoorsteenpieten in their arrival video (Sint in Veghel 2020). Sinterklaas arrives in the Veghel Harbor in a small boat with two Pieten. The male Piet has soot marks, no wig or red lips, and is wearing the typical outfit. The other Piet is a woman who has full blackface and red lips. She is dressed in a similar outfit with sparkles. Having both versions of Piet could be Veghel's attempt to transition to the new version of Schoorsteenpieten, with both represented in this year's arrival. In past years, Veghel has used only Zwarte Piet. Perhaps with the current social and political pressure for change, the town tried to compromise this year with both. To show an attempt to change while still keeping the version that pro-Zwarte Piet groups want and to ease people into the new version. Although not every city and town participated by doing an arrival parade for Sinterklaas for 2020, it is evident from the videos available that Schoorsteenpieten has become the preferred choice for local governments in their arrival parades. Over half of the 2020 parades used Schoorsteenpieten, while the rest used Zwarte Piet or its combination.

A survey from PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency focused on the proportion of Dutch residents of foreign origin in 2014. The results included two main categories: Foreign origin (Minorities of non-western²⁷ and western) and Native Dutch (M. van A. Zaken 2017). People of foreign origin make up 21% of the total population. In the four largest cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht), foreign origin takes up nearly half (ibid). In the rest of the Netherlands, including more rural areas, people of foreign origins only make up 18% of the population (ibid). The cities and towns that used Schoorsteenpieten, Arnhem, Amsterdam, Halderberge, Nederweert, Apeldoorn, Krimpen aan den IJssel, Zeeland, and 's-Hertogenbosch, have either large populations or are located near larger cities. Amsterdam is one of the largest cities in the country and has one of the most significant diversity percentages; because of this, Amsterdam was among the first locations to make the switch to an alternative Piet. Apeldoorn, Arnhem, Zeeland, and 's-Hertogenbosch are larger cities that are surrounded by more urban areas and have larger populations. The towns that use Schoorsteenpieten are located near larger cities and would most likely have more diverse populations than rural areas. The locations using Zwarte Piet, Weert, Broekland, Dordrecht, and Cuijk, are located in more rural areas and have smaller populations compared to some of the locations using Schoorsteenpieten. Veghel, who is a smaller town, used a mix of Piet types; this could be due to the fact they are located near 's-Hertogenbosch and are starting to model their Piet after the larger city or to try and address social change. With more minorities in the larger cities, there is more cultural sensitivity and explain why those cities have made the switch to something more culturally sensitive.

²⁷ Antillean, Suriname, Morocco, Turkey, other

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

It has become clear in the Netherlands, based on previous social movements and the Black Lives Matter movement, that Schoorsteenpieten has become the socially acceptable version to use in the Sinterklaas arrival parades. Although the figure has been changing since its first documented appearance in 1850, the first attempts to publicly change the image of Zwarte Piet began with the immigration of greater numbers of black Dutch citizens to the Netherlands in the 1980's. As change has been a constant over nearly two hundred years, changes will likely continue into the future as well. Although there was apprehension to change among Dutch citizens who thought this meant losing an important part of their tradition, the current changes are widely thought to have maintained the spirit of the character minus the racism. The costuming for this holiday is a chance for Dutch people to join in on holiday customs, and playing Piet's role gives people a chance to act in a goofy way that they would not normally do. While the country is taking baby steps to fix racist presentations of the character, it will take time until everyone is happy with the result. In time, the character will ideally no longer have traces of racism and will be a character that everyone accepts and loves.

As outlined here, there has been a debate around Zwarte Piet since the 1980s. While plenty of Dutch Citizens do not see a problem with Zwarte Piet and believe it is not racist, the examples I provided demonstrate that this sentiment is not valid. The CNN Sports articles I described show that Zwarte Piet is commonly used as an insult against black people in the Netherlands. We saw the term used to intimidate and ridicule a black footballer from the United Kingdom. We also witnessed prominent Dutch black citizens—Georginio Wijnaldum, Amma Asante, Naomie Pieter, Quincy Gario, and Jerry Afriyie—share personal stories of being called Zwarte Piet as an insult and racial slur or being attacked because of the image of the figure. These instances provide evidence that this is not simply an innocent figure, but a significant problem of blind institutional racism. There is an attempt to change the figure to something more appropriate. Slowly, Zwarte Piet is being banned from some cities and broadcast networks for the Sinterklass Intocht and choosing to use the current replacement of Schoorsteenpieten.

Zwarte Piet is not a harmless holiday tradition. The figure, inspired by Dutch colonialism and slavery and a prominent contemporary figure of racism, has a severe negative impact on the Black population in the Netherlands. For any chance of racism, colonialism, and the history of slavery to be dealt with in the Netherlands, the Dutch have to come to first acknowledge the racism of Zwarte Piet. As Alan Dundes argued that folklore is a window onto culture, so is Zwarte Piet a window onto the Dutch mindset in this regard. As we have seen, the representation of the figure in the arrival parades is divided between Schoorsteenpieten and Zwarte Pieten. This debate tells us that the Dutch, despite their international reputation for tolerance, still have a lot of work to do with confronting racism in their own society.

I do not see this problem being resolved anytime soon, and the current compromise is still problematic for both groups. Still, if changes continue to be made, Zwarte Piet will likely disappear from the public celebrations altogether. As I've examined here, arrival parade decisions are decentralized, with every city and town deciding for themselves. Nevertheless, out of the sixteen 2020 parades I considered for this study, only four chose to keep using Zwarte Piet. As we have seen, three used a mix of figures, which is still problematic but shows a willingness to change, and nine used the new figure of Schoorsteenpiet, showing larger and more urban towns and cities are willing to listen to the criticism of Zwarte Piet and understand that there is a need to change. As my study has shown, this breakdown is primarily between urban and more populated cities and towns and less urban/rural small towns and cities, with all of the parades continuing to use the figure falling into the latter category. If the Netherlands finally got rid of Zwarte Piet, that ultimately means they would be heading in the right direction for addressing other types of institutional racism in the Netherlands. In order for this to happen and to be widely accepted, the national government needs to make efforts to bridge the gap in terms of multicultural understanding and acknowledge of racism, perhaps via education, between urban and rural areas in the Netherlands.

Perhaps the Dutch government has to make a unilateral decision to ban Zwarte Piet. However, that will not happen while immigration is still a heated topic and causing people to question "Dutchness." "The reason the cultural contestation surrounding

Zwarte Piet has been so fierce over the past few years obviously has to do with tensions in the multicultural society. There are groups in Dutch society who feel threatened by the influx of immigrants they have witnessed during their lifetime; who perceive this as a ‘loss’ (Rodenberg and Wagenaar 2016:725). Banning the figure outright while many are still holding on to it might cause a devastating rift that fuels far-right Parties. Changing Zwarte Piet is putting the idea of Dutchness at risk. Sinterklaas is linked to Dutch identity, so by changing the figure, some believe it will destroy whatever Dutch identity they may have. Some people are resistant to change because they fear they might lose a part of themselves. This ideal only applies to white Dutch citizens. Black citizens are being actively excluded from the Dutch identity when it is connected to traditions like Zwarte Piet that treat people of color as a joke rather than a full member of society. The link between the Dutch identity and Zwarte Piet shows Black citizens that they do not belong. For the Netherlands to become inclusive for all its citizens, then the Dutch identity needs to separate itself from discrimination traditions.

According to scholar Robert Smith, in “Festivals and Celebrations,” a festival’s original meaning is not as crucial as the continued reason to celebrate it. The original meaning of Zwarte Piet in the Sinterklaas holiday may have a history of racism, but that does not mean the character has to continue being a representation of the colonial past. The character can change and continue to be an integral part of the holiday without the racist attributes. The important part is that the character has become a fun and beloved figure without being offensive. Changing the figure’s meaning is not as important as keeping them as a part of the holiday. So if changing Zwarte Piet to Schoorsteenpiet is the best way to keep it part of the tradition, then that is all that matters. Change happens to all types of traditions. Sometimes traditions disappear as they are no longer relevant to contemporary communities, and sometimes they change to reflect changing societal values. Scholar Richard Bauman in “Belsnickling in a Nova Scotia Island Community” discusses how the belsinckling tradition disappeared as the society that practiced it changed since the tradition could not change with the community. Bauman ended his paper with a discussion of change and lost aspects of this tradition. Traditions change as the world, community, and culture change. When traditions no longer exist in a community, it shows that the holiday’s values and traditions are no longer needed,

valued, or fit into the changing society. Traditions also change because of new values from new generations. For the Japanese Namahage tradition, as Foster mentions, the holiday would have disappeared if not for tourism. Scholar Ian Russell, in “In Comes I, Brut King,” looks at how an old mummer’s tradition gets altered and modernized over a few generations. The change in the Sinterklaas holiday with Zwarte Piet matches the changing culture of the Netherlands’ communities. The figure’s image and the costuming are not appropriate for a diverse Dutch citizenry today. If the Netherlands wants Piet to continue being part of the Sinterklaas tradition, then it needs to adapt to the current cultural attitudes around racial injustice.

Scholar Susan Davis in “A History of Parades and Ceremonies” shows that parades and ceremonies are essential to multiple groups for many different reasons, but that does not mean they are events with unity and consensus among people who participate in them. This lack of unity is true of the Sinterklaas parade. Piet’s change is causing a rift in the participation, but they are still participating even with the changes. Many of the people against Zwarte Piet still have fond memories of the holiday as a child. They care about the holiday but want Piet’s representation to be different. Some of the people against Zwarte Piet are not against the holiday, but against the racist image, which as we saw is used as a slur, and the blackface costuming. Many people against Piet’s change are still participating with Chimney Piet since it is a holiday meant for the children. People do not always seem to realize that traditions change. As Davis states, “Traditions and processes of traditionalizing, whether official, vernacular, or fugitive, as selective; selectivity is a key process in the production of culture and communication. Not all cultural patterns are traditionalized, and not all traditions persist” (Davis 1986:16-17). This idea is essential to note. Not everything survives with a tradition. The current state of the Netherlands, with all the protests, shows that Zwarte Piet simply cannot survive, nor should he. As we’ve seen here, the new figure of Schoorsteenpiet is a compromise, allowing the core function of the character to continue in a more socially accepted version.

In “The Carnavalesque and the Ritualesque,” scholar Jack Santino explains how ritualesque public display events attempt to evoke change in the culture. By changing Piet

to something more inclusive and less offensive, there is a social change happening in the Netherlands. As I've mentioned, this change could help transition to other talks about racism in the Netherlands. Traditions and holidays can be used as a symbol of rebellion. For Sinterklaas, holiday groups are using Zwarte Piet's image to protest and reinforce values in the country. The anti-Zwarte Piet group is using this image to protest institutional racism in the Netherlands. The movement wears shirts to the parade, reading 'Zwarte Piet is Racisme,' to bring attention to the holiday's racism. Opponents of this movement use memes to express their outrage at the changes being made to Zwarte Piet and express their resistance to it.

Whatever happens in the debate over Zwarte Piet, it is clear that the country's mindset is changing. Since the eighties, this debate has been happening, but while not much attention was given to it before, now things are changing. Countless protests popped up all over the country in 2020 in solidarity with Black Lives Matter protests in the US. The solidarity protests turned attention inward onto their own country's issues with institutional racism. In the Netherlands, this seemed to be the big push the Zwarte Piet is Racisme movement needed to spark real change. Suddenly, more attention was given to Zwarte Piet's issues, where even members of the government started commenting. Many companies, news agencies, and cities have now banned the image of Zwarte Piet.

Change is happening, although it is still slow, and there are still many continuing problems of racism in the Netherlands. The character's black caricature needs to be eliminated altogether. Piet needs to become something different, something that will not offend and can continue to be part of the holiday without being used as a racial attack on any group of people. Some want the Piet character removed entirely from the holiday, but that will likely not happen and only complicates the debate. Using the poldermodel, we saw prominent Dutch black activist Jerry Afriyie suggest using the alternative figure of Schoorsteenpieten, which in his view is a compromise between the two. The figure is still a cause for debate and still makes both sides unhappy, but it is so far the best compromise. The introduction of Schoorsteenpieten seems to show that some parts of the country are heading in the right direction. If the Netherlands continues this push for

change, within the next ten years, there may no longer be Zwarte Piet at the Sinterklaas Intocht.

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