BLACK BODIES: RACIAL REPRESENTATION AND PERFORMANCE IN GEORGIAN-PERIOD DRAMA

Yasser Shams Khan

Wolfson College

Supervisor: Dr. Timothy Michael



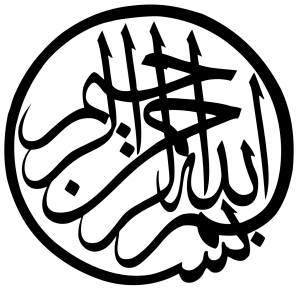
Faculty of English Language and Literature

University of Oxford

A thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Michaelmas Term 2019



DEDICATED TO MY PARENTS

PROF. SHAMS-UR-REHMAN KHAN

AND

ANJUM ARA SHAMSI

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are so many beautiful people without whom this thesis and the person writing it would not have been possible. Although I claim authorship of this thesis in all its failings, I have to credit the numerous others whose interactions, guidance, support, and friendship have been the collective producers of all that is valuable in it.

I am grateful to the immense generosity of the Felix Scholarship Trust for granting me the funds to pursue my doctoral studies in Oxford with comfort and peace of mind. I could not have considered studying in Oxford without their support.

I am especially grateful to my supervisor Dr. Timothy Michael for his incisive comments, encouragement, enduring patience, and guidance. I truly cherish his mentorship. I would also like to sincerely thank Dr. Olivia Smith who has been the most comforting College Advisor. She is an amazing problem solver and responded promptly whenever I reached out to her.

I am also grateful to have known an extraordinary man, who had the capacity to effect, influence, and transform ways of thinking in our most formative years. As I grew older, I found that almost every intellectual idea I've had in the last ten years has gone back to his lectures and conversations. This extraordinary man was Sunil Dua, probably the most brilliant teacher that I would have the privilege of being associated with. I had this acknowledgment in mind when I first accepted my offer at the University of Oxford. The only difference being that I did not think I would have to refer to him in past tense.

Amongst my friends, there are so many that I am greatly indebted to, but alas a page is insufficient to express my gratitude towards all of them. To give just a clause for their contribution in the development of this work is a grave injustice, but let it be known that their influence is marked on every page and every word in this thesis. Thank you to Paresh, Ashwin, and Tannu for having read substantial chunks of this thesis and responding with generous comments as only true and honest friends can. Thank you to Niyati, Amogh, Fahad, Maryam, Lipika, Ankita, and Anahitha for having created that sense of community that is a cushion that protects you when you fall. I have fallen many times on them but they just don't know it. Thanks to Jean-Philippe for those morning café conversations in our very own Berlin School of Thought and to Kelly for being a part of this academic struggle, and to Tapan Basu for all his encouragement.

I would also like to thank Allegra, who has been a gracious host, a generous friend, and a remarkable conversationalist. Thank you for all those sessions helping me to prep for my viva and for providing shelter and comfort during a global pandemic.

I would also like to thank Wolfson College and all its staff members for being the home beyond a home. Memories of Wolfson and its community will be a lifelong companion.

I am most indebted to my family and its newest member, Shahtaj, my partner and fiancé, who has been integral to the completion of this project and gave me that final boost of confidence that I so needed. My brothers, Faraz and Zehran, are the pillars upon which our little tribe stands. It is to my parents, that I dedicate this work, for whom no statement of acknowledgement would be sufficient.

ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the shifting popular cultural representations of the black body in Georgian-period drama. It enquires into the form and function of the black body in a variety of theatrical racial representations (noble savage, grateful slave, comic servant, vengeful Moor, rebel slave, racial type). By analysing these specific manifestations of the black body in their historical contexts, the thesis reconstructs a narrative of the periodic shifts in the formalization of the black body from late Restoration drama through sentimental drama to melodrama and other illegitimate dramatic forms like pantomimes and monopolylogues. In this thesis, I argue that these black character types are but varying provisional solutions to the representational crisis of a liberal empire that is economically dependent upon the institution of slavery and the slave trade.

In considering the black body as a noble savage, the formal conflict between feudal notions of nobility and the more democratically sentimental notions of common humanity is staged in a manner in which popular narratives like *Oroonoko* and *Inkle and Yarico* were subtly altered, marking a shift from a noble body to a sentimental body during the eighteenth century. By the mid-eighteenth century, sentimental formalizations of the black body as grateful slaves and comic servants, under a representative regime of benevolent imperialism, supplanted the noble savage character. After the eruption of revolution in France, and Britain's involvement in the Revolutionary Wars, the black body was reformulated as a melodramatic rebel slave, competing with other melodramatized performances of vengeful Moors and sentimental slaves. The melodramatization of the black body was accompanied by its increasing racialisation in the early-nineteenth century, with the emergence of the racial type, which was performed in freak shows, lampooned in racial burlesques, and ultimately challenged in the performance of monstrosity.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ..... **I**

ABSTRACT ..... **II**

PROLOGUE **1**

FRAMING THE BLACK BODY 4

THE BLACK BODY ON STAGE 12

INTERROGATING "BLACKNESS" IN RACIAL REPRESENTATIONS 14

THE BLACK BODY AS ALLEGORY 43

THESIS REPERTOIRE 51

CHAPTER ONE: *OROONOKO* AND *YARICO*; OR, THE PERFORMATIVE RECONFIGURATIONS OF THE NOBLE SAVAGE PARADIGM **59**

THE NOBLE SAVAGE PARADIGM 61

THE NOBLE BODY 67

THE SHIFT TO SENTIMENTAL SYMPATHY AND RECONCILIATION 76

MORAL EQUIVALENCE OF UNEQUAL OTHERS 91

HUMANITARIANISM AND MARKET DISCIPLINE 104

SPECTATORIAL POSSIBILITIES 116

CHAPTER TWO: PRETENDED PIETY; OR, THE IDEOLOGY OF BENEVOLENT IMPERIALISM **123**

LIBERTY AND SLAVERY: AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY PARADOX 125

BENEVOLENT IMPERIALISM: THE COMMUNITY OF THE FREE 130

BENEVOLENT IMPERIALISM: PARADOX OF COMMON HUMANITY 144

THE PLANTER AND THE SAILOR 162

THE ABOLITIONIST MASK OF THE METROPOLITAN 170

THE ABSENT REBEL 182

CHAPTER THREE: NARRATIVE POSSIBILITIES; OR, THE MELODRAMATIZATION OF THE RACIAL BODY 188

MELODRAMA, RIGHTS, RACE, AND MONSTROSITY 190

STAGE APPARATUS AND PERFORMANCE IN *OBI; OR, THREE-FINGERED JACK* 198

MELODRAMATIZATION OF THE VENGEFUL MOOR IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY 225

THE "WILFUL CONFUSION OF MOOR AND NEGRO" 241

MANAGEMENT OF FANTASIES IN RACIAL MELODRAMAS 247

NARRATIVE POSSIBILITIES 258

CHAPTER FOUR: THE BLACK BODY; OR, THE PERFORMANCE OF MONSTROSITY 265

THE HOTTENTOT VENUS: PERFORMANCE OF NULLITY 268

CHARLES MATHEWS' "BLACK FUN" 287

FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER AS A BLACK BODY 298

BLACKENED BODIES: THE PRE-EMERGENCE OF UNIVERSAL SOLIDARITY 308

EPILOGUE 321

BIBLIOGRAPHY 328

PROLOGUE

> The present was the age of revolutions. The most surprising events had occurred on the stage of real life, and the mimic world followed the course which seemed to strike down all reasonable expectations.
>
> James Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*[1]

For many inhabitants of Georgian London (1714-1830) the theatrical stage offered the most accessible frame for viewing the colonial world, a frame which was visually legible by literate and illiterate alike. It is thus of particular significance to understand the cultural processes involved in the formation of popular cultural representations of populations that became the colonized subjects of an emerging British Empire. These "racial" representations cannot be separated from the concomitant representation of British national identity that was being forged in the crucible of political, social, and economic revolutions of the period.[2] The expansion of colonial rule after the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) and the growing mercantile economy – particularly the African slave trade – precipitated the necessary conditions for the financial and industrial revolutions in Britain.[3] This integrated metropole-

---

[1] James Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*, 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1827), 2: 345.

[2] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London: Pimlico, 2003), 369-71. Also see "Britishness and Otherness: An Argument," *Journal of British Studies* 31, no. 4 (1992): 312.

[3] The classic text that explores the connections between mercantilism of the slave economy and industrial capitalism is Eric Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944). Three essays, written by Barbara Solow, Joseph Inikori, and David Richardson explore the theme of "Caribbean Slavery and the Industrial Revolution" in Barbara L. Solow and Stanley L. Engerman, eds., *British Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery: The Legacy of Eric Williams* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). More recent studies on plantation slavery emphasize the importance of financialization of slave property and maritime insurance as necessary conditions for the expansion of mercantile capitalism. See John J. Clegg, "Capitalism and Slavery," *Critical Historical Studies* 2, no. 2 (2015): 284; Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery and the Philosophy of History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 38.

colonial framework is the broad context for my thesis, in which I focus on the shifting popular cultural representations of the black body on the London stage.

Much recent scholarship has archived and critically investigated racial representations in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theatrical culture. While some studies, like Hazel Waters' *Racism on the Victorian Stage*, have primarily focused on the evolution and dissemination of cultural racial assumptions through black stereotypes on the English stage, others, like Daniel O'Quinn's "Theatre and Empire," raised the related question of how global domination inflected theatrical production in Britain.[4] O'Quinn's *Staging Governance* went further to argue that theatrical culture not only tracked the crises in the relationship between the metropolitan and the colonial holdings, but also managed the "national reactions to the recalibration of imperial sovereignty in the late eighteenth century."[5] Many of these significant works have individually contributed to expanding our knowledge of the theatrical networks of regulation and censorship,[6] and of performances of slavery, race, and rights, illuminating the circum-Atlantic connections involved in the diffusion of the socio-aesthetic of race across the Atlantic.[7]

---

[4] Hazel Waters, *Racism on the Victorian Stage: Representation of Slavery and the Black Character* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 2; Daniel O'Quinn, "Theatre and Empire," in *The Cambridge Companion to British Theatre, 1730–1830*, ed. Daniel O'Quinn and Jane Moody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 233.

[5] *Staging Governance: Theatrical Imperialism in London, 1770-1800* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 1.

[6] David Worrall, *Theatric Revolution: Drama, Censorship and Romantic Period Subcultures 1773-1832* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). These theatrical networks become the frame for Worrall's analysis of race in *Harlequin Empire: Race, Ethnicity and the Drama of the Popular Enlightenment* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007).

[7] Jenna M. Gibbs, *Performing the Temple of Liberty: Slavery, Theater, and Popular Culture in London and Philadelphia, 1760-1850* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).

However, none of these works specifically focuses on the predominant image of racial representation and performance during this period, i.e. the black body. Discussions of the black body are usually subsumed either by larger thematic concerns of race, rights, and slavery, or by a focus on the theatrical practice of blackface. The latter, in particular, has been a central issue of investigation in recent studies on race and the politics of performance.[8] Foregrounding the black body, on the other hand, allows for an analysis that converges many of these themes and discourses in specific concrete formalizations – like the noble savage, the grateful slave, the rebel slave etc. – that can be analysed in their historical context and dissected into their component parts. More importantly, this analysis narrativizes the periodic shifts in the formalization of the black body, connecting materials that construct the legitimate and illegitimate representations of the black body in dramatic texts, prints, pamphlets, treatises, parliamentary debates, and scientific and pseudo-scientific texts and exhibitions.

What is now accepted as a general assumption among scholars is that in stage representations of race, particularly in representations of blacks, the theatrical and the imperial discourse intertwine such that the power to determine the representation of the Other implies the power over the Other.[9] Thus, in analysing the shifting popular cultural representations of the black body, I highlight the structures of power that determine particular

---

[8] See Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); W. T. Lhamon, *Raising Cain: Blackface Performance from Jim Crow to Hip Hop* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[9] See Kathleen Wilson, "The Good, the Bad, and the Impotent: Imperialism and the Politics of Identity in Georgian England," in *The Consumption of Culture, 1600-1800*, ed. Anne Bermingham and John Brewer (London: Routledge, 1997), 242-48; Laura Brown, "The Romance of Empire: Oroonoko and the Trade in Slaves," in *Ends of Empire: Women and Ideology in Early Eighteenth-Century English Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 27-32.

types of representations within a spectrum of legitimate racialist perspectives through which the black body is framed.

Framing the Black Body

There is one particular episode that best captures the type of questions that frame this thesis. A report published in the *Newcastle General Magazine* on 1st February 1749 relates the conduct of two African spectators who had come to see Thomas Southerne's dramatic adaptation of Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* at the Covent Garden theatre:

> When they came into the Box, the polite Audience (true English), received them with a loud Clap of Applause, which they each of them acknowledged with a very genteel Bow, and took their seats. The Case of Oroonoko's being made a Slave, by the Treachery of a Captain, was so similar to their own, their seeing People of their own Colour on the Stage, seemingly in the Distress themselves had been, and Mr Delane performing the Part of Oroonoko so admirably just, struck their young Hearts with Wonder and Surprize; the distresses of Oroonoko, his meeting with his Imoinda, the Account of his barbarous Usage, all combined to raise in their Bosoms such sentiments of Humanity, that Tears, those Types of generous Minds, flowed plentifully from their Eyes: The Royal Youth, indeed, could stand it no longer, but retired, at the end of the fourth Act, and returned again to see the Entertainment, when the fifth Act was over; his Companion remained, but was the whole Time drowned in Tears, which seemed to have such a sympathizing effect on the Audience, that few there were but joined in.[10]

Immediately, we can recognize three frames in which the black body is formalized in this report: the first is the theatrical frame in which a white actor (Mr. Delane) performs the character of an enslaved African prince in blackface; the second is the spectatorial frame in which the onstage blackened body of Oroonoko is seen by the white spectators as a reflection of the offstage black bodies of the African spectators ("similar to their own," "seemingly in the Distress themselves had been"); and the third is the framing of the onstage and offstage performance of the actors and spectators by the news report in the *Newcastle General Magazine*. The author of the report is a witness to Mr. Delane's theatrical performance of Oroonoko, as well as to the offstage performance of the two African spectators, who entered

[10] "Untitled Item," *Newcastle General Magazine, 1748-1760* February, 1749. (2), 96-97.

the theatre with a "genteel Bow," shed tears at Oroonoko's distress, one of whom dramatically exited the theatre when the spectacle onstage was too much to bear (according to the reporter's conjecture, of course), thus granting the onstage performance the credit of being somewhat authentic. Indeed, the report presents two spectacles for the white audience: one on the stage and one amongst them in the conduct of the two Africans.

This third frame, however, also illustrates the performance of the white spectators, the "Audience," for whom the twin spectacles had such a "sympathizing effect" that "few there were but joined in [communal grief]." The sympathetic white audience observes not only the blackfaced Oroonoko's distress but also the effect of the onstage spectacle upon the two offstage black spectators sitting amongst them. In *The Actor: A Treatise on the Art of Playing* (1750), the actor and critic, John Hill, contemplated the spectator's pleasure on viewing theatricalized suffering of unequal Others:

> The view of the miseries of others always is painful to us, when those miseries are such as ourselves are equally expos'd to with those whom we see suffering them; but, on the contrary, we find a sort of consolation in looking upon those misfortunes which we see others labouring under, and which we are convinc'd, by reason and the nature of things, can never fall to our own share. The representation of this case gives us pride instead of humility, and a peculiar kind of pleasure instead of the common uneasiness.[11]

According to Hill, the spectacle of suffering which spectators know they can never experience gives a sense of "consolation," "pride," and "a peculiar kind of pleasure," instead of "common uneasiness" and pain felt by the same spectators when viewing miseries which they might actually experience. This distinction is crucial, because what we have then in the report is not a theatrical interracial community unified by their common sentiment evoked by the spectacle before them; rather, the more privileged white spectators assume their role as subjects of sympathy, expressed in the self-congratulatory patriotic acknowledgment, by the

---

[11] John Hill, *The Actor: A Treatise on the Art of Playing* (London: printed for R. Griffiths, 1750), 109.

reporter, of the "polite Audience (true English)," while the two African spectators are singled out as objects for the sympathetic gaze, or as mere extensions of the drama on stage. The suffering of the blackfaced Oroonoko made the pathos evoked by the fictional representation much more fulfilling for the white audience members when they witnessed the response of the "authentically" African spectators sitting amidst them.

The brief analysis of the above report illustrates the central concerns of this thesis. Firstly, I understand the black body as a phenomenon that is always framed. I thus pay much attention to the logic of framing that formalizes the black body according to the historical conventions that establish the frame. Secondly, the very fact that the frame formalizes the black body raises the related question of the authenticity of the black body, which relates to broader questions about the nature and function of the theatrical frame in general. Samuel Johnson's famous line, "The Drama's Laws, the Drama's Patrons give," reminds us that the changing nature and function of the dramatic laws are not merely a consequence of the internal dialectic of the evolution of dramatic forms, but are also dependent upon the external social relations of patronage and market forces which restructure and reform the theatrical institution according to a very different evolutionary logic. Johnson's verse was written for the opening of the theatrical season at Drury Lane under the new management of David Garrick and James Lacy in 1747. Since the 1730s, the management of Drury Lane, particularly after the death of Sir Richard Steele, "disintegrated into almost complete chaos amid an extended public discussion of the proper conduct of a theatrical enterprise."[12] After the transference of the patent from experienced thespians like Robert Wilks, Barton Booth, and Colley Cibber to new owners with no theatrically-oriented abilities, namely Mary Wilks, Hester Booth, and John Highmore, the conflict between managers and actors reached an

[12] Arthur H. Scouten, "Introduction," in *The London Stage, 1660-1800. Part 3: 1729-1747*, ed. Arthur H. Scouten (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961), lxxxix.

impasse which eventually led some actors like Theophilus Cibber, son of Colley Cibber, to defect to the New Haymarket theatre in opposition to Drury Lane. The *Grub Street Journal* (7th June 1733), summing up the conflict, argued that the case was one in which "the useless and unprofitable members of any society [the managers], should feed upon the profits arising from the excellencies of all the rest [the actors]."[13]

Garrick resolved the recurring financial problems that plagued Drury Lane even during the 1740s in ways which indicated a shift in theatrical patronage that favoured the spectators in the pit and the gallery. During the Restoration, the theatres had great support from Charles II, but by the early eighteenth century, one of the primary means of ensuring theatrical income was the issuance of tickets, either in advance or at the door.[14] To ensure a greater sale of tickets, Garrick increased the seating capacity of the pit, and by 1762, he "succeeded in driving a lounging nobility off the stage proper, as well as from behind the scenes," limiting this privilege only for the members of the Royal family.[15] At about the same time, John Rich, the manager of Covent Garden, also realised that "his main financial support came from pit and gallery."[16] Rich and his son-in-law John Beard, who succeeded him as the manager of Covent Garden, both catered to the tastes of the pit and gallery and offered a repertory weighted towards comedy, music, and song.[17] Theatrical success on the whole depended largely on the manager's shrewd understanding of the nature of eighteenth-century

---

[13] Quoted in ibid., xci.

[14] Emmett L. Avery, "Introduction," in *The London Stage, 1660-1800. Part 2: 1700-1729.*, ed. Emmett L. Avery (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1960), lvi.

[15] George Winchester Stone, "Introduction," in *The London Stage, 1660-1800. Part 4: 1747-1776* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962), xxxi-xxxii.

[16] Ibid., li.

[17] Ibid.

audiences.[18] Johnson's dictum acknowledges this shift in theatrical relations in the eighteenth century capturing the anxiety it entails in its insistent "must": "The drama's laws the drama's patrons give, / For we that live to please, *must* please to live" (my emphasis). Garrick was a master of ascertaining the general mood of his nightly patrons, but, more than that, he was particularly successful at producing and disseminating theatrical taste and mediating his own status as a celebrity.

Leslie Ritchie, in her study on David Garrick, argues that "Garrick possessed an almost inconceivable level of cultural power."[19] He was "the first actor to exploit the power of the press in the production and mediation of celebrity," intuitively aware of the "need to tempt an audience's appetite with infinite variety," and he was successful in creating his own body of "obliged critics … in a manner that conferred professional prestige and recognition upon the group."[20] In other words, Garrick's celebrity status as an actor and a highly successful manager of a patent theatre was to a large extent due to his control of "published advertisements, pamphlets, letters, poems, and essays which promoted his acting and his theatre," and were disseminated through papers such as *St. James's Chronicle*, the *Public Advertiser*, the *Morning Post*, and the *London Packet*, all of which were under his proprietorship.[21] Ritchie describes a possible eighteenth-century scenario which illustrates the point succinctly:

> It was entirely possible for a theatre-goer in the 1760s to attend Drury Lane Theatre (partly owned and managed by Garrick) to see a play which Garrick had written or adapted, featuring a prologue or epilogue written by Garrick, in which Garrick himself was acting. That play-goer had likely been enticed to

[18] Ibid., clxxii.

[19] Leslie Ritchie, *David Garrick and the Mediation of Celebrity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 2.

[20] Ibid., 230, 101, 84.

[21] Ibid., 1-2.

> go to the play by an advertisement, puff or review written by Garrick, placed in a newspaper partly owned by Garrick.[22]

Johnson's prologue, like several others that were produced by and for Garrick, provided the Drury Lane theatre manager with "performative and print opportunities to differentiate his theatrical product … from others on offer, and to define what kinds of variety in the repertoire ought to receive cultural approbation."[23] In other words, Johnson's prologue inclined the audience in favour of legitimate drama, or as Stone puts it, it offered an invitation to the public to *share* responsibility for choice of repertory:[24]

> 'Tis yours this night to bid the reign commence
> Of rescu'd Nature, and reviving sense;
> To chase the charms of sound, the pomp of shew.
> For useful mirth, and salutary woe…[25]

Garrick effectively marketed Drury Lane theatrical productions as legitimate high culture, in contrast to his competitor, John Rich, who offered cheap thrills and pomp.[26] What is granted to spectators in the above lines is the power to determine theatrical taste, but what these lines mask, as Ritchie shows, is how much power Garrick exercised in manipulating spectatorial expectations thus fashioning cultural taste after his own image through his control of various media connected to theatrical entertainment. "The Drama's Laws the Drama's Patrons give / For we that live to please, must please to live" can thus be interpreted differently from an earlier reading in which dramatic productions were dependent upon the market, in which consumption determined production; with the final turn of the screw, production is once

---

[22] Ibid., 2.

[23] Ibid., 105.

[24] Stone, "Introduction," clix.

[25] Samuel Johnson and David Garrick, *Prologue and Epilogue Spoken at the Opening of the Theatre in Drury Lane* (London: E. Cave, 1747), 7.

[26] Ritchie, *David Garrick and the Mediation of Celebrity*, 103.

again privileged, as Garrick proves to be a master of producing the illusion in which the consumer believes his desires determine theatrical taste, when, in fact, his desires are precisely what are being manufactured, by Garrick, through the subtle art of mediation in the rich eighteenth-century mediascape. To do so, Johnson's prologue presents the predicament endured by the manager with sympathetic humour:

> hard is his Lot, that here by Fortune plac'd,
> Must watch the wild Vicissitudes of Taste.
> ……..
> Let not Censure term our Fate our Choice,
> The Stage but echoes back the publick Voice.[27]

Sustaining the illusion that choice fundamentally rests with the spectator, Ritchie argues that "Johnson's prologue establishes Garrick as a figure who will serve the public taste, even if he believes it to be folly."[28] What is clear from the eighteenth-century context is that theatrical managers had to intelligently negotiate varying demands and hurdles placed upon them: they had to simultaneously tackle the Examiner of Plays, taking into account theoretical censorship to avoid financial loss; they had to be attuned to spectatorial mood to avoid riots and disturbances; and where possible, they had to actively engage in manipulation of taste and expectation, all the while promoting themselves, their art, and their theatrical commodities.

As primarily a business enterprise operating to make a profit, theatrical institutions attempted to satisfy a diverse "public voice," composed of distinct social classes of unequal status. A more abstract reading of Johnson's verse would suggest that it considers its diverse patrons equivalent on an abstract, transcendent level of morality. The verse can be read as a symptom of the need to make an unequivocal statement about the legislative authority of this

---

[27] Johnson and Garrick, *Prologue and Epilogue Spoken at the Opening of the Theatre in Drury Lane*, 6-7.

[28] Ritchie, *David Garrick and the Mediation of Celebrity*, 104.

diffused group of patrons, a shift towards moral abstraction that so troubled moralists, fearing that theatres were pandering to public taste.

The third central concern of this thesis, underscored by the report on the two African spectators, is thus the focus on moral abstraction expressed by the "sentiments of Humanity," described through bodily effusions like tears, as well as feelings of sympathy and anguish that "struck the young Hearts with Wonder and Surpize."[29] The body itself becomes a prominent frame of analysis, as it acts as a conduit for the expression of universality, here understood as "humanity" that circumscribes the "Types of generous Minds." Indeed, I focus a great deal on this abstract notion of "humanity" which is figured as a type of mental attitude that recognizes the humanity of unequal beings by disavowing the particularity of racially and socially differentiated bodies. Theatricalized bodily expressions and effusions, in fact, become a means to transcend marks of racial and social difference, and construct a universal *sensus communis*, in which all persons are recognized as morally equivalent beings.

I locate this dilemma of the moral equivalence of unequal Others as a historical problem of the moral crisis of a liberal empire economically dependent upon colonial slavery. In the age of liberal Enlightenment, slavery, an otherwise pre-modern relation of personal domination, transforms into a large-scale economic institution that expands and intensifies after the first (Protestant) liberal revolution in England, or what is celebrated as the Glorious Revolution (1688). This intimate connection between early liberalism and slavery in England simultaneously creates a representational dilemma of depicting a liberal Empire that outlaws slavery in its national territory, but propagates and legitimizes it in its colonies. The various representations of the black body that I look at offer numerous solutions to this particular representational dilemma which defined, in Felicity Nussbaum's terms, England's struggle "to reconcile its notions of a 'free and virtuous empire' with an emerging conviction about its

[29] "Untitled Item," 96-97.

national and racial supremacy."[30] These representational solutions take different forms, sometimes through sentimentalism of the noble savage paradigm (Chapter One), or through frameworks of benevolence and gratitude that recreate inhuman practices of domination as providential structures of salvation and order (Chapter Two), or through melodramatic forms of spatial segregation (Chapter Three), or even through the depiction of categorically different racial types (Chapter Four). These various strategies, dramatic forms, motifs, and characterizations are a testament to the inconsistent conceptions of black bodies as but provisional solutions to the representational crisis of the empire as a virtuous enslaver.

The Black Body on Stage

The central question of this thesis is: what is the form and function of the black body in theatrical representation and performance in British Georgian drama? Through the shifting formalizations of the black body, I attempt to capture the process whereby the liberal humanitarian project of moral recognition of unequal Others comes into its own as an effective material force. The argument I present is twofold: on the one hand, I trace the shifts and transformations of the representations of the black body through various character types, namely, the noble savage (Chapter One), the grateful slave and the wily servant (Chapter Two), the vengeful Moor and the rebel slave (Chapter Three), and the pseudo-scientific racial type and the monster (Chapter Four); on the other hand, I investigate the possibility of a radical alternative – the negative of the predominantly classical liberal spectrum of legitimate opinions – which is all the more conspicuous by its absence and silence in these representations.

In Chapter One, I introduce the concept of radical sympathy, which is offered as an

[30] Felicity Nussbaum, "Theatre of Empire: Racial Counterfeit, Racial Realism," in *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity, and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840*, ed. Kathleen Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 71.

alternative to liberal sympathy because it marks the limit of sympathetic identification. Sympathetic identification works by identifying with the Other or with sentimental characters that sympathise with the other. In radical sympathy, the other occasions the inability in the spectator to identify with themselves. The sentiment of shame in these texts reconfigures the spectator's relation to the sentimental hero. This is done by adding statements in the text, often spoken by sentimental characters, that compel spectators to reflect upon their own complacency. In the second chapter, I elaborate at length on three dominant ideologically contrary positions – positions held by the planters, the sailors, and the metropolitan elite – only to reconfigure them as minimal variations within a shared space that upholds the same basic assumptions of ethnic superiority, national pride, and imperial legacy. These positions are necessarily built upon the common conception of grateful slaves. By reducing these dominant perspectives as minimally variant and sharing common conceptions and assumptions, I speculatively offer the possibility of a fourth position, that of the rebel slave, as an absent presence, which is nonetheless immanent in the dominant narratives as the negative image of the grateful slave. In the third chapter, I determine the absence of the perspective of genuine resistance in racial melodramas by showing how resistance is curtailed through various strategies of containment. In the last chapter, I offer the anagogic meaning of the black body as a counter to the diminutive and derogatory representations of the black body in racial burlesques and freak shows. By reworking interpretations of texts like Lillo's *The London Merchant* (Drury Lane, 1731) through the radical perspective offered by characters like Millwood, I suggest that such references to slavery and the condition of women are not just metaphorical conflations but forceful juxtapositions of two oppressed groups who form a collective not just by their marginalization from an official order, but also by their act of rebellion. Their respective struggles are part of a collective struggle against tyranny, affirming the universality of struggle over and above the particular identities of race,

class, and gender that do not exist independently of the historical relationship to struggle. It is thus the universality of struggle that connects and intersects identities, communities, and groups in forms of antagonistic solidarities. In the final analysis, I offer the pre-emergence of universal solidarity as part of the anagogic significance of the black body.

The underlying argument is ultimately a critique of classical liberalism, an attempt to expose the illusion of plurality and multiplicity in racial representations (a form of tolerance presupposed by classical liberalism towards unequal Others) as its opposite, an intolerance of the questioning of its own premises which necessitate the repression of other possibilities. In other words, by analysing the theatrical frame that formalizes the black body, I examine the representations and performances involving black bodies as but formal solutions to the representational crisis of a liberal slaveholding empire.

Interrogating "Blackness" in Racial Representations

The earliest significant work on racial representations in British drama was Wylie Sypher's 1942 study, *Guinea's Captive Kings*, which, up until the late 1990s, as Jeffrey Cox notes, was "the only survey we have of drama on the subject [of (anti)slavery]."[31] Alongside Sypher's survey of racial representations in English literature, there is the less known 1942 monograph, *The Negro in English Romantic Thought*, written by Eva B. Dykes, the first Black American woman to receive a doctoral degree. Both Sypher and Dykes laid the initial foundation for a literary analysis of black representations in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England. They established a workable canon of black representations in British poetry, prose, and drama, defining the fundamental traits and outlining the dominant stereotypes of the period.

---

[31] Jeffrey N. Cox, ed. *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period*, vol. 5: Drama (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), vii.

Dykes, in particular, looked at the networks of resistance against slavery that evolved out of direct contact amongst writers and their acquaintance with works on travel, history, and culture.[32] The purpose of her study, as she states in the Preface, was to ascertain the reasons for the "sympathetic attitude towards the negro."[33] Although her work primarily serves as a survey of anti-slavery literature during the Romantic period, its utility for my own study has been twofold: firstly, it is a convenient resource to trace the workings of sympathy for the blacks across the English Romantic tradition, and secondly, it identifies the "ever-recurring motifs and characteristic stock features," the "ever-recurring patterns of ideas and imagery" that are reworked again and again with minor but nonetheless significant alterations.[34]

Sypher offers a similar panoramic survey of anti-slavery verse, drama, and fiction. However, the most significant aspect of Sypher's work in relation to my own is the notion of the pseudo-African. According to Sypher, the "pseudo-African tradition is at the centre of anti-slavery [propaganda]."[35] Once it is understood that the racial representations being dealt with are "pseudo-African," then the question of authenticity can be done away with.[36] Although this point might seem trite, it is surprising how often it has resurfaced in recent criticism in various guises. Toni Morrison speaks of "black surrogacy" and the significance

---

[32] Eva Beatrice Dykes, *The Negro in English Romantic Thought; or, a Study of Sympathy for the Oppressed* (Washington, D. C.: The Associated Publishers Inc., 1942), 4-6.

[33] Ibid., unpaged.

[34] Ibid., 154.

[35] Wylie Sypher, *Guinea's Captive Kings: British Anti-Slavery Literature of the 18th Century* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1942), 7.

[36] Sypher cites Baron de Wimpffen, an Austrian military commander during the Napoleonic Wars, who acknowledged that the authentic "Negro [was] no better known to his panegyrists than his detractors … He is constantly with one, everything he is not with the other. It is sufficient for one to refuse him a quality or a virtue, for the other to grant it to him." Ibid., 3.

of "the fabrication of an Africanist persona" as "an extraordinary meditation on the [white] self; a powerful exploration of the fears and desires that reside in the writerly conscious."[37] In a similar vein, Felicity Nussbaum also deals with pseudo-Africans, which she identifies as "racial counterfeits," just as Joseph Roach configures them as "effigies" and "surrogates."[38] Pseudo-Africanism, thus, is itself a recurring trope in critical analyses of black representations in Western culture. Henry Louis Gates used a theatrical analogy when he spoke of "the filter of racist images that [whites] placed over the black face of humanity, like a mask over an actor."[39] What these critics (including myself) are attempting to grapple with is the nature of this mask.

Two other pioneering works, which establish intimate connections between capitalism, slavery, and race, are C. L. R. James's 1938 *The Black Jacobins* and Eric Williams' 1944 *Capitalism & Slavery*. In the Preface to the first edition, James writes that he sought to

> demonstrate in their movement, the economic forces of the age; their moulding of society and politics, of men in the mass and individual men; the powerful reaction of these on their environment at one of those rare moments when society is at boiling point and therefore fluid.[40]

Williams, influenced by James, also endeavoured to present "strictly an economic study of the role of Negro slavery and the slave trade in providing capital which financed the Industrial Revolution in England and of mature industrial capitalism in destroying the slave

---

[37] Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 17.

[38] Nussbaum, "Theatre of Empire: Racial Counterfeit, Racial Realism," 74; Joseph R. Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 36.

[39] Henry Louis Gates, "The Face and Voice of Blackness," in *Facing History: The Black Image in American Art, 1710-1940*, ed. Guy C. McElroy (Washington, D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1990), xxix.

[40] C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (London: Penguin, 2001), xix.

system."[41] Although the primary tenets of James's Marxist analysis of the "only successful slave revolt in history"[42] and Williams' economic history of British capitalism and Caribbean slavery have been much debated, revised, and supplemented since their publication, with the unearthing of new facts and the application of new theoretical frameworks, one key methodological assumption that serves as a guiding principle for my project is that "[p]olitics and morals in the abstract make no sense": "The political and moral ideas of the age are to be examined in the very closest relation to the economic development."[43] It is by taking this statement as foundational that I critique the liberal humanitarian project of recognising the moral equivalence of unequal Others in the first two chapters of this thesis, the first of which examines the performative reconfigurations of the noble savage paradigm (Chapter One), followed by a critique of the ideology of benevolent imperialism (Chapter Two). The thesis argument synthesises the kernels of thought gathered through reading these four pathbreaking works in conjunction with one another, bringing together racial representations of pseudo-Africans on the London stage to critically analyse sympathetic attitudes of predominantly white spectators to the plight of black slaves, in the context of liberal sentimental humanitarianism, political revolutions, and economic transformations across metropole-colonial networks.[44]

The later works of Anthony Gerard Barthelemy's *Black Face, Maligned Race: The Representation of Blacks in English Drama from Shakespeare to Southerne* (1987) and Hazel

---

[41] Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery*, vii.

[42] James, *The Black Jacobins*, xviii.

[43] Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery*, 211.

[44] It is interesting to note that although all four works are situated in a historical context in which there was a real looming threat of fascism amidst a world war, yet the object of critique focuses on the liberal regimes of the allied powers of England, France, and America and their treatment of slaves and others, as if to counter the self-righteous triumphalist self-image occasioned by the war against Germany.

Waters' *Racism on the Victorian Stage* (2007) are two studies of specifically dramatic representations of blacks on the British stage that cover periods that precede and follow the Georgian period, respectively. Both these studies offer contrasting methodological frameworks in dealing with black representations on stage. While Barthelemy analyses how black characters signify racial symbols within dramatic texts from 1589 to1695, Waters focuses on the institution of slavery, built upon the social relations of appropriation, domination, and exploitation, as the determining social context for the racial image of black characters in early Victorian theatrical culture from 1820s to 1850s.

The problem with Barthelemy's perspective is that rather than historicising racial symbols and blackness itself as products of sociohistorical processes that produce myriad effects, not of all which could be considered racial, he takes racial symbols as a priori characteristics that define representations of black characters. He writes:

> Long before those real black men reached English shores, however, black faces had been seen on English stages. The dramatic representation of black characters on the English stage in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries obviously reflected English attitudes towards blackness and English experiences with black men, both real and imagined.[45]

But what does Barthelemy mean when he writes about "blackness"? Is it an allusion to the symbolic, allegorical, or theological meaning of "blackness," or to the English attitudes to dark-skinned people? What he considers obvious is full of ambiguity. Can these "attitudes" be defined as properly racist or racial attitudes? That would strictly depend on how we define racism and, more critically, when we date the emergence of a conscious racial attitude towards people designated as blacks. In other words, was the proverbial Ethiop of Aesop's fable the same black as the "Negro" slave? If so, is the perception of blackness a-historical and not influenced by varying socio-economic relations?

---

[45] Anthony Gerard Barthelemy, *Black Face, Maligned Race: The Representation of Blacks in English Drama from Shakespeare to Southerne* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 1.

Rather than seeing how the stereotype works within the context of the text, Barthelemy begins with a pre-existing notion of a racial stereotype that is imposed on his readings of a variety of texts. Such an analysis trivialises even the depth of a character like Othello whom he describes thus: "He is the black man who provokes a crisis by his sexual relationship with a white woman."[46] Although Barthelemy is right in suggesting that Iago's ultimate triumph is entrapping Othello in the confines of a stereotype, of which jealousy becomes a significant characteristic, yet, the question to ask is, whether jealousy is primarily a racial characteristic? And if so, how does it become racialised? Barthelemy does not deal with these issues and concludes his reading of Othello by stating that "No matter how innocent or noble, black men, once they attempt to involve themselves sexually with white women, become *personae non gratae* in the community."[47]

An alternative reading would question whether the spectators who viewed the representations of blacks in English drama, in the period Barthelemy looks at, understood "black" as a racial category? Were the characteristics of blacks determined as racial characteristics? This is an important question and one that frames my own project. To identify black characters in plays, one must already have some notion of "blackness" as a racial category, but this is precisely the dilemma I confront: that if the object of enquiry is the black body, how can one determine which characters are designated as black bodies without already having some notion of black bodies to identify such characters? Althusser and Balibar subscribed to a similar circular rhetoric to delineate their philosophical reading of *Capital* which "is only possible as the application of that which is the very object of our investigation, Marxist philosophy":

> It is therefore a question of producing, in the precise sense of the word, *which seems to signify making manifest what is latent, but which really means*

[46] Ibid., 154.

[47] Ibid., 150.

> *transforming (in order to give a pre-existing raw material the form of an object adapted to an end), something which in a sense already exists*. This production, in the double sense which gives the production operation the necessary form of a circle, is the production of a knowledge. To conceive Marx's philosophy in its specificity is therefore to conceive the essence of the very movement with which the knowledge of it is produced, or to conceive knowledge as production. (My emphasis)[48]

Not unlike Althusser and Balibar's interpretive manoeuvre, my endeavour to trace black bodies in this study is at once an attempt to make manifest that which is latent, and yet the process of doing so transforms that which already exists into an object of knowledge (i.e. the black body) adapted to a particular end, to examine the processes of racialization in popular cultural "racial" representations.

Although I use the conventional criteria to initially identify black bodies as blackfaced performances, my argument hinges on dismantling the conditions in which black bodies are so defined, in order to illuminate the frames in which the social category of "blackness" is crystallised as a product of specific social relations. This is what distinguishes my approach from Barthelemy's. The confusion that emerges on how to designate blacks and who should be included in this category is important because it shows how the category of "black" is itself problematic. Barthelemy seems to take it for granted, as if blackness is a given, self-evident, sensuously observable characteristic, and so the assumptions about the category "black" need not be questioned. By shifting from examples given from the late sixteenth-century to late seventeenth century, Barthelemy overlooks significant political, economic, and social changes that shaped the plays and the manner of representation and perception of blackness. Furthermore, despite analysing dramatic texts that were performed, Barthelemy pays little attention to the body and to the performance context, and more

---

[48] Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar, *Reading Capital*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1970), 34.

specifically to how blackness as a stereotype was exploited by dramatists for specific dramatic effects.

In contrast to Barthelemy's approach, Waters looks at "some of the ways in which the development of dramatic performance and theatrical fashion drew on and re-presented underlying material reality."[49] Her focus on the "process of development during a period of rapid and formative social change" and the evolution of racial assumptions in Britain is methodologically closer to my understanding of the processes of racism on the British stage.[50] Her analysis is informed by a theoretical understanding of racism as a phenomenon, which according to A. Sivanandam, "does not stay still; it changes shape, size, contours, purpose, function – with changes in the economy, the social structure, the system and . . . the challenges, the resistances to that system."[51] Racism, as it emerged in the nineteenth-century context, was largely determined by the institution of slavery, which, Waters argues, exerted a "major material and structural influence on the ways that blacks were depicted."[52]

Where I differ from Waters is in my focus on the black body rather than the black image. Although focusing on the theatrical body might raise the expectation that I will specifically explore the embodiment of blackness by actors, I want to make clear that the notion of "body" in this study is understood in a much more expanded manner. I analyse the body in three distinct but related modalities, of which embodiment is but one aspect. In the first modality, I explore the material features of theatrical representation of black bodies (i.e. blackface, gestures and histrionics, props and stage setting etc.) which does involve analysis

---

[49] Waters, *Racism on the Victorian Stage*, 1-2.

[50] Ibid., 2.

[51] A. Sivanandan, "Challenging Racism: Strategies for the 1980s," in *Communities of Resistance: Writings on Black Struggles for Socialism* (London: Verso, 1990), 64.

[52] Waters, *Racism on the Victorian Stage*, 5.

of actors, their acting styles, and the related issues of embodiment. I discuss Jack Verbruggen's Oroonoko, John Bannister's Inkle, Charles Dibdin's Mungo, Charles Kemble's Jack, J. P. Kemble's Zanga, and Mathew Lewis's imitations of numerous black characters primarily to raise issues of embodiment, spectatorial expectation, and the politics of blackface performance. In the second modality, I focus on black bodies as character types, like the noble savage, the grateful negro, or the rebel slave. In other words, I look at how these varied manifestations of the black body necessarily frame the body as per generic expectations, as well as narrative and ideological requirements. In the third modality, I offer an allegorical reading (in the Jamesonian sense) of the black body that encapsulates the four levels of interpretation – literal, mystical, moral, and anagogical (upon which I will expand below) – in an attempt to offer a comprehensive understanding of the multivalent possibilities of the black body that allows one to move between the local meanings of embodiment and the utopian liberatory possibilities signalled by the attendant "anagogic" interpretation. Basically, the body is analysed in terms of its dramatic effects, its characterological form, and its polyvalent meanings, which is what I specifically refer to as formalizations of the black body into particular types of representations.

By analysing the body in this way, I am ultimately dealing with how the black body was imagined in all its polysemous fluidity during this period. The analysis, however, shifts from imagining black bodies in their various formalizations to configuring real bodies as racially "black," as in the case of the Hottentot Venus, and the racialization of Ira Aldridge's first performance on the London stage. The Hottentot Venus and Ira Aldridge are "black" bodies that are straightjacketed into racial types which, I argue, is just another way of imagining blackness. Thus, even this representation of black bodies can be subjected to an allegorical analysis to destabilize its rigid formulations. In other words, the black body is understood as a representative paradigm which allows one to enquire into certain themes

(moral equivalence of unequal Others, sentimental reconciliation, patriotic nationalism) and interrogate certain normative aesthetic principles (the noble savage paradigm, ideology of benevolent imperialism, melodramatic theatrics, theatricalization of race) by which these themes were framed. The black body in this analysis is used as a heuristic or analytical category to organise the literary, performative, and discursive material in order to examine the historical process by which the concept of race came to inform the representation of "racial" Others.

My own perspective on the racial category of "blackness," as has already been signalled above, is that if "black" is understood as a historically constituted racial category, then there is a historical process by which certain people or characters have been blackened or classified as "blacks." What we take to be a classification determined by such natural differences as skin colour and hair type is in practice a classification based on the social significance granted to certain types of natural differences over and above other overlooked natural differences (eye colour, hair colour, height etc.). According Roxanne Wheeler, "skin colour emerges as the most important component of racial identity in Britain [only] during the third quarter of the eighteenth century."[53] In other words, skin colour is a socially-determined "natural" difference. That is why the recurring theoretical tropes of pseudo-Africanism ("racial counterfeit," "Africanist persona," and "surrogacy") become significant – because they do not presume that "black" as a racial category is self-evident, but that it emerges through a historical process. It is within this context that my final chapter looks at the theatrical adaptations of Frankenstein's monster as a body that is racially "blackened" – in other words, a "black body" character that is overlooked in Waters' analysis of racial

[53] Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 9.

representations on the Victorian stage because of her insistence on specifically focusing on characters that are determinately black as per ethnic, national, or racial classification.

There is a subtle distinction between Waters' theoretical understanding of racism and my own. Whereas Waters regards racism as an evolving theory of the inequality of races, I understand "race" as a basic concept of analysis that is itself a product of racial ideology that needs to be interrogated. Even though Waters understands racism as an evolving phenomenon in which the depictions of Blacks change, she does not question the assumed hypostasis of the concept of "race" which informs our social unconscious. The uncritical acceptance of the idea of "race," according to French sociologist, Colette Guillaumin, "implies that races play a role in the social process not merely as an ideological form, but as an immediate factor acting as both determining cause and concrete means."[54] In similar terms, Robert Miles argues that most social scientists, despite rejecting scientific racism, "have 'redefined' race as a social category and utilise it as both explanans and explanandam, in an attempt to constitute 'race relations' as a discrete object of analysis, about which theories can be formulated, tested, and reformulated."[55] For this reason, in my analysis of theatrical representations and performances of black bodies in Georgian theatre, I determine the social processes that define blackness – a racial definition that emerged as a

---

[54] Colette Guillaumin, "The Idea of Race and Its Elevation to Autonomous Scientific and Legal Status (1980)," in *Racism, Sexism, Power and Ideology*, ed. Robert Miles (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 64. This important edited collection of Guillaumin's essays introduces her theoretical interventions on debates concerning racism and sexism as structurally related phenomena. Her ideas have a strong resonance with other influential theorists of race like Robert Miles, Michael Banton, and Paul Gilroy, particularly her striking formulation, "Race does not exist. But it does kill people." Ibid., 107. On the social constructedness of race and its all too real consequences, see Robert Miles and Malcolm Brown, *Racism* (London: Routledge, 2003), 64-66; Michael Banton, "Race as Social Construct," in *Racial Theories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 235; Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), 12-13.

[55] Robert Miles, "Beyond the 'Race' Concept: The Representation of Racism in England," *Sydney Studies in Society and Culture* 4: The Cultural Construction of Race (1988): 8.

rationalization of the gradually increasing geographical localization of the appropriation of slave labour predominantly from the Gulf of Guinea.[56]

In my understanding, racial relations and slavery are deeply imbricated with class relations in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century. Fredric Jameson's complication of the classic Marxian division between base and superstructure in *Allegory and Ideology* (2019) helps us to introduce slavery and the discourse of race and racial relations into the reconfigured Marxian model.[57] To paraphrase Jameson, the base is generally subdivided into the forces of production (the technology of a given mode) and the relations of production, which collectively describe the structure of the labour process. The superstructure is the collective name for the political and juridical institutions, as well as the cultural forms of expressions. This initial opposition between base and superstructure is reduplicated within the superstructure itself where the "materialist" component would designate "one form or another of the state or the law, while the superstructures of the superstructure will be assigned to the relative sandboxes of culture, religion, philosophy, and the like."[58] Foucauldian materialism, which informs the theoretical framework adopted by Daniel O'Quinn, Joseph Roach, and Paul Youngquist, generally figures within the materialism of the superstructure, in which politics and political power are alone considered as the truly materialistic level. The more fundamental lower level of the economic being (from a Marxian perspective) is sublimated into those superstructures themselves, as in the case of Youngquist's exploration of the four discourses that produce the "proper body" and their concomitant monstrosities in

---

[56] Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 160; David Brion Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 66-67; Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800* (New York: Verso, 1997), 326-31.

[57] Fredric Jameson, *Allegory and Ideology* (London: Verso, 2019), 210-14.

[58] Ibid., 211.

the nineteenth century: liberalism, free-market economics, nationalism, and professionalized medicine. But even when the economic base is given precedence, a more mechanical form of materialism would fetishize the forces of production (technology and science), assuming that it is the technological revolutions (the industrial revolution then, and the digital revolution now) that are the driving force of the economy. A proper historical materialism, however, would recognise that it is the social relations of production – the labour process itself – which is the true "material" component, while the forces of production – technology and science – are (in a material sense) "superstructural" to the relations of production, and largely determined by them. Afterall, it is the relations of production that assures the existence, the survival, and the reproduction of the community or society as a whole.

But where do slavery, race, and racial relations figure within this configuration? If, as the Marxist economist Michael Lebowitz argues, "the tendency to divide workers" functions as "part of the essence of capital, indeed an essential aspect of the logic of capital," then racial division is not a secondary phenomenon, but a structural one.[59] In that sense then race and slavery are integrated at every level of the base-superstructure model. Racial relations, which cannot just be reduced to slave labour, are part of the collective labour process that forms the base of base, whose form is preserved and legitimised institutionally and ideologically by all the other levels. For example, the racial sciences (craniometry, physiognomy, comparative anatomy, etc.) are an integral aspect of the forces of production providing the scientific and technological know-how of management of the labour process. The institution of slavery as a whole requires the legislative authority of the political state and a whole organisational and disciplinary apparatus for the labour process to be operational,

---

[59] Michael A. Lebowitz, "The Politics of Assumption, the Assumption of Politics," *Historical Materialism* 14, no. 2 (2006): 39. A similar point is stressed by Étienne Balibar in Balibar and Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class*, 2. Also see David Roediger's "Thinking through Race and Class in Hard Times" in David R. Roediger, *Class, Race, and Marxism* (London: Verso, 2017), 1-29.

thus forming the material base of the superstructure. Racial representation, that which is the primary concern of this thesis, is part of the cultural and ideological expression, that is, it is amongst the superstructures of the superstructure. A Marxian reconfiguration of race and slavery in terms of the base and superstructure would appear as such:

Superstructure of superstructure:	culture – racial representations
Material base of superstructure:	power and domination (politics, the state) – institution of slavery
Superstructure of base:	technology (forces of production) – racial sciences
Material base of base:	the labour process (relations of production) – racial relations

Unlike the later nineteenth century, where race relations were becoming firmly established with the ascendance of social Darwinism and scientific racism in Britain and codified in the Jim Crow laws in the United States, the Georgian period, on the other hand, was a witness to the transitions in the conceptions of race, in tandem with socio-economic transformations, and imperial recalibrations. Several significant works trace these historical shifts in the institutional context of theatre, amongst which Jane Moody's *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770-1840* and David Worrall's *Theatric Revolution: Drama, Censorship and Romantic Period Subcultures, 1773-1832* and *The Politics of Romantic Theatricality, 1787-1832* are especially insightful.

Moody's *Illegitimate Theatre* has been particularly influential in defining "a new framework for interpreting the genres, dramatic institutions and performances in late Georgian London."[60] She develops the concept of "illegitimacy" not only to explore the space of illegitimate theatricality, but also the social, cultural, political, and aesthetic significance of the emergence of an illegitimate subculture and its intrusions and overlaps, as well as influence over a hegemonic "legitimate" cultural sphere. Her most significant insights

[60] Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1.

concerning illegitimate theatricality underlie the analyses of black bodies that I offer in this thesis, particularly her illustration of the political significance of an illegitimate culture, which arose as a consequence of licensing and prohibition of speech, but which, nonetheless, evolved into a dynamic, radical space for a wholly new form of aesthetics based on corporeal (bodily) expressivity.

Barry Sutcliffe expands the twofold significance of the word "legitimate": its first meaning, following the 1737 Licensing Act, was simply describing a "lawful type of performance," licensed by the Examiner of Plays, and hence legitimate; its second meaning, however, was an ascription of aesthetic quality and moral worth.[61] The 1737 Licensing Act granted absolute statutory powers to the Lord Chamberlain, a senior court official who was in charge of the Royal household, to license theatres in London. He was also granted the authority to censor spoken drama fourteen days before its performance on stage. The Act was a draconian law passed by a Whig government under the leadership of Robert Walpole, who ensured that subversive positions on politics, religion, morality, or sexuality were effectively stifled. David Thomas explains that Walpole presented the Bill as a revision to the laws relating to vagrancy, which "reduced the status of actors in unlicensed premises to that of social outcasts," thus granting complete monopoly (or duopoly) over staged plays to London's two patent theatres, Drury Lane and Covent Garden.[62] The legalistic notion of "legitimate" was thus an "important tool of government in enforcing censorship" by means of licensing theatres and scrutinising play manuscripts.[63] This legitimacy functioned as an

---

[61] Barry Sutcliffe, ed. *Plays by George Colman the Younger and Thomas Morton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1-7.

[62] David Thomas, "The 1737 Licensing Act and Its Impact," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre, 1737-1832*, ed. Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 96. The Haymarket Theatre was first granted a license in 1766 to perform plays through the summer months when the two other theatres were closed.

[63] Sutcliffe, *Plays by George Colman the Younger and Thomas Morton*, 2.

organising generic principle, limiting the performance of traditional tragedies and comedies to the "major" theatres; however, as Moody shows, this injunction against "spoken drama" had productive effects for the numerous "minor" theatres that were being licensed by local magistrates in and within twenty miles of London and Westminster.[64] "Minor" theatres, such as Sadler's Wells, Astley's Amphitheatre, and the Royal Circus, were permitted to stage "public entertainments," some of them specialising in equestrian performances and circuses, while others in pantomimes and burlesques involving singing and dancing. These theatrical forms eventually circumvented the legal injunction against "spoken drama" by becoming quasi-dramatic with a narrative plot, offering, at times, very topical entertainment (*The Destruction of the Bastille*, Royal Circus, 1789), and deploying experimental and innovative dramatic techniques (the water tank at Sadler's Wells was used to stage spectacular naval melodramas). These popular "illegitimate" dramatic forms became associated with buffoonery and spectacle in contrast to the dignity, poise, and loftiness of legitimate drama. In other words, the legalistic differentiation between legitimate and illegitimate drama was at one with aesthetic judgment between high art and low art and its alleged moral effects on the masses, either inclining them towards order or inciting them towards anarchy. Sutcliffe notes the derision expressed by Richard Cumberland towards new playwrights who have "abandoned the cause of *legitimate* comedy."[65] For Cumberland, Sutcliffe states, these playwrights are "active anarchists, dedicated to challenging the very laws of nature" on which legitimate drama is founded, a sentiment which according to the aging playwright was, unfortunately, in line with the spirit of the age: "It is a gaudy, thoughtless age."[66] Edmund

---

[64] Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre*, 1-9.

[65] Richard Cumberland, *Memoirs of Richard Cumberland*, 2 vols. (London: Printed for Lackington, Allen, & Co., 1807), 1: 270.

[66] Sutcliffe, *Plays by George Colman the Younger and Thomas Morton*, 4. Cumberland's quote in Cumberland, *Memoirs of Richard Cumberland*, 2: 362.

Burke would also deploy this sense of moral and political depravity of illegitimate drama in describing the French Revolutionaries as "comedians of a fair before a riotous crowd."[67] Jeffrey Cox and Michael Gamer offer a convenient summary of the scholarly arguments on legitimacy:

> Legitimacy gestured towards patent or "major" theatres (as opposed to "minor" upstart ones), towards conventional tragedy and comedy (as opposed to innovative genres such as melodrama and burletta), and towards notions of traditional political authority (as opposed to principles associated with revolutionary France and the "pretender" Napoleon.[68]

The word "legitimate" thus functions as a legal, aesthetic, and ideological category determining in turn the "illegitimate" by injunction and exclusion.

However, I would like to further expand the significance of "legitimate" and "illegitimate" beyond this binary configuration, as represented by major and minor theatres and their attendant ideological significance, by suggesting that there is a second level of legitimacy and illegitimacy as befits a properly allegorical analysis. What is suggested by theatrical scholars is that there are differences between articulated positions in which some are situated in the legitimate sphere and others in the illegitimate; but this is the first level of allegorical interpretation. Legitimate and illegitimate performances, whether in major or minor theatres, are both still fundamentally "legitimate" as they are permitted to be articulated or expressed either through royal patents or magistrate licenses. It is, in fact, this cultural consolidation of varied positions which works to affirm the ideological hegemony of classical liberalism in the eighteenth century. This understanding of theatrical legitimacy is derived from the political context of the 1737 Licensing Act, which has been examined by

---

[67] Edmund Burke, "Reflections on the Revolution in France, 1790," in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke. Vol. 8, the French Revolution, 1790-1794*, ed. L. G. Mitchell and William B. Todd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 119.

[68] Jeffrey N. Cox and Michael Gamer, eds., *The Broadview Anthology of Romantic Drama* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2003), xxiii.

Julia Swindells as a necessary extension of eighteenth-century party politics into the cultural sphere:

> Whatever the turbulence of party at the beginning of the eighteenth century, it is possible to understand party division not as a symptom of civil strife and disunity but as a manifestation, a display of the confidence of the ruling class. … The drama of party unfolded within a parliamentary consensus, *where the oppositional element in party politics had become not only legitimate but also a prerequisite for shaping government along new lines*. (My emphasis)[69]

It is the struggle and opposition between different political positions in parliamentary politics in this period, in other words, the very struggle that contextualises Robert Walpole's push for theatrical legislation like the 1737 Licensing Act, that "demarcates the terrain of inclusion, in many ways maintaining the status quo" by managing dissent through the exclusion of people that are not part of the landed elite, as well as through the exclusion of political positions that do not fall within the spectrum of legitimate dissent.[70] The bifurcation of major and minor theatres into legitimate and illegitimate theatricality is then effectively an expression of diversity within the legitimate spectrum of theatrical dissent. Although censorship might seem to hamper the effort to assimilate dissent, what becomes clear in this historical moment is how some oppositional, illegitimate positions were accepted by situating them within a sphere of legitimate dissent, while other oppositional, illegitimate positions were excluded, by legal injunction. In this manner, censorship, Moody notes, "seemed to offer an institutional framework through which managers and government could achieve their common repressive objectives."[71]

---

[69] Julia Swindells, "The Political Context of the 1737 Licensing Act," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre, 1737-1832*, ed. Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 119-20.

[70] Ibid., 120.

[71] Jane Moody, ""Fine Word, Legitimate!": Toward a Theatrical History of Romanticism," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 38, no. 3/4 (1996): 230.

What is thus opposed to this form of legitimacy is the unutterable, illegitimate performances that are beyond patents and licenses, and hence beyond major and minor theatricality, even as the latter might gesture towards this second level of illegitimacy, as observed by Moody and others when elaborating upon subversive tendencies in counter-cultural theatrics. I will elaborate upon some of these "illegitimate" tactics within "legitimate" plays in the following chapters as moments that gesture towards the second level of illegitimacy, contesting the overarching aesthetic and ideological message of the play. To make it clear, these two levels of legitimacy and illegitimacy can be schematised as follows:

		Legitimate	Illegitimate
Level 1	Legitimate:	**Legitimate legitimacy** Major Theatres, Shakespeare, legitimate drama (traditional tragedies and comedies)	**Legitimate illegitimacy** Minor Theatres, illegitimate theatricality (burlesques, melodrama, pantomimes etc.)
Level 2	Illegitimate:	**Illegitimate legitimacy** Bartholomew Fair	**Illegitimate illegitimacy** Political and Racial Unconscious (Black Body)

This allegorical remodelling of the binary between legitimacy and illegitimacy into a quadratic schema more accurately represents the "culture of Georgian theatre," which, according to David Taylor, is "one of significant generic fluidity and experimentation; of continual transactions between legitimate and illegitimate modes and arenas of performance (in which the very notion of 'legitimacy' was endlessly recalibrated)."[72] As the fourfold table illustrates, illegitimate performances in the minor theatres do become part of the theatrical repertoire of major theatres (Drury Lane and Covent Garden) by the early-nineteenth century, ultimately overshadowing legitimate drama, primarily because productions in major and minor theatres were effectively "legitimate" performances (level 1: legitimate legitimacy and legitimate illegitimacy). The second level, however, is much more difficult to ascertain.

[72] David Taylor, "Introduction," in Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre, 1737-1832* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 3.

Still working within the level 1 framework of legitimacy and illegitimacy, Jeffrey Cox, as a textual editor, confronts the problem of the "illegitimate aesthetic" of Romantic-era theatre, suggesting that the "editor's task is to take up the traces of what was once a live performance in order to create a self-consciously textual representation of what we call theatrical experience."[73] I would suggest that a similar effort would be required to recover the second level of illegitimate theatricality. Paul Youngquist has, in fact, made such an effort to reclaim a space of illegitimate legitimacy, "spaces that contested [the] normative function" of the proper body.[74] One such space was the Bartholomew Fair, an annual fair held at Smithfield for three days in September, where a lively menagerie of the most different and exotic (human) beings roamed amidst the crowd, celebrating themselves as attractions without signalling towards the norm of the proper body. Youngquist demonstrates how "Bartholomew Fair was a space of deviance, a collective social practice that a few days each year challenged the normative force of the proper body."[75] In this space, monstrosities matter as a counter-cultural force, wilfully suspending habitual proprieties: "[M]onstrosities could be valued for their singularity, their positive otherness to the proper body."[76] It is clear that monstrous performances at the Bartholomew Fair were of a different order of illegitimate theatricality than what Moody identifies as the "illegitimate theatricality" of minor theatres. Youngquist differentiates the Bartholomew Fair as a social event distinct from the freak shows, and I would add, from the blackface theatrical performances in major and minor theatres. While the racialised performances in major and minor theatres were, as Daniel

---

[73] Jeffrey N. Cox, "'Illegitimate' Pantomime in the 'Legitimate' Theater: Context as Text," *Studies in Romanticism* 54, no. 2 (2015): 160.

[74] Paul Youngquist, *Monstrosities: Bodies and British Romanticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 43.

[75] Ibid., 45.

[76] Ibid., 47.

O'Quinn argues, properly autoethnographic instances, elevating the value of the normative white "proper" body, Bartholomew Fair, in contrast, conferred positive value on monstrous bodies, without marking them as pathologically deviant.[77] I suggest that the Bartholomew Fair is an instance of illegitimate *legitimacy* because the cultural possibility of monstrosities that it permits is still in reference to the legitimacy conferred to the proper body; in other words, spaces like Bartholomew Fair are social events that legitimise (still holding on to proper notions of legitimacy) the illegitimate. This is different from the legitimate forms of illegitimacy in minor theatres because here it is illegitimacy that dominates and determines its own monstrous condition as legitimate, hence Bartholomew Fair is a space where monstrous bodies are not autoethnographic instances, as is the case with the former.

The final permutation – illegitimate illegitimacy – is the realm of the unutterable and the unrepresentable. It is the realm of the political unconscious, or what I would refer to as the racial unconscious, in which the black body functions as, what Žižek would call, the sublime object of ideology, "a positive, material object elevated to the status of the impossible Thing."[78] The black body informs the racial unconscious, which is beyond any specific formalizations of the black body treated on stage; the black body, as I construe it, signals a form of illegitimacy that undergirds the conventional understanding of theatrical legitimacy and illegitimacy as fundamentally legitimate expressions in major and minor theatres. As illegitimate illegitimacy is unrepresentable, it is only accessible in moments that break free from representable forms of legitimacy. What this means is that there are moments of possible contestation or even liberation in the performance of black bodies in the major

---

[77] Ibid., 49. For an elaboration of autoethnographic performance, see O'Quinn, *Staging Governance*, 13.

[78] Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 2008), 77. The anagogic meaning of the black body functions as a sublime body, "which persists beyond the corruption of the body physical," even as "this postulated existence of the sublime body depends on the symbolic order." Ibid., 12, 13.

and minor theatres as they gesture towards the illegitimate illegitimacy of the black body. The reason that the most subversive aspect of the black body remains within illegitimate illegitimacy is a direct consequence of theatrical censorship.

The effect of censorship on theatrical writing was a primary condition for the legitimate formalizations of the black body in the major and minor theatres. Failure to comply on the part of actors, managers, and playwrights with the decisions and protocols established by the Lord Chamberlain "could be met with unlimited fines, loss of livelihood, and even imprisonment."[79] These consequences discouraged new writing as managers preferred old plays that did not have to undergo such scrutiny.[80] The obvious effect of this dependence on tried-and-tested dramas was the resulting popularity of Shakespearean plays which constituted a large portion of the seasonal repertoire.[81] But apart from Shakespeare, theatre managers found that comic or farcical afterpieces, pathetic tragedies from the Restoration period, and sentimental comedies were more likely to pass theatrical censorship, and so new theatrical writing had to conform to accepted popular formulaic plots. For this reason, a large number of representations of slavery and slaves during this period can be confined to these specific genres: Southerne's *Oroonoko* is a Restoration tragedy, Colman's *Inkle and Yarico* is a comic opera, Bickerstaffe's *The Padlock* is a farcical afterpiece, Bates' *Harlequin Mungo* is a harlequinade, and Fawcett's *Obi; or Three-Fingered Jack* is a melodramatic pantomime, just to name a few. What we observe in the various representations of black bodies and of slavery explored in this thesis is that because these representations are largely confined to the theatrical representations in major and minor theatres, they are

---

[79] Thomas, "The 1737 Licensing Act and Its Impact," 97.

[80] Thomas notes that "an average between two and four new mainpieces were performed each season at each of the patent playhouses." Ibid., 100-01.

[81] Between 1747 and 1776, Shakespeare made up 20% of the total repertoire at Drury Lane, and 16% at Covent Garden. Ibid., 101.

fundamentally *legitimate* expressions of legitimate and illegitimate theatricality. Hence, in these representations, it is difficult to find criticism of the British Empire and its involvement in the slave trade, even as criticism was targeted towards individual merchants, slave-traders, and slaveowners. However, even as this critical attitude of the first-level of legitimate expressions (legitimate legitimacy and legitimate illegitimacy) is somewhat restrained, it is the second-level of illegitimate expressions, in particular illegitimate illegitimacy that is creatively repressed and makes its presence felt most conspicuously as an absence. For example, in Chapter Two the black body as an "absent rebel" (a properly illegitimate illegitimacy) configures the legitimate forms of expression in major and minor theatrical productions featuring black bodies as grateful slaves and comical servants. In Chapter Three and Four, revolutionary resistance and the black body as a monstrosity informs the racial (political) unconscious, the unrepresentable collective that finds expression in the short-circuiting of overt monstrosity and overtly-determined racial types. This absence is not a consequence of neglect or oversight on the part of the producers; rather it is a consequence of the ideological horizon circumscribed by the legal and institutional injunctions established by theatrical legislation and censorship.

David Worrall, in his works, explores with empirical detail and historical perspicacity the myriad creative negotiations between government regulations, exercised through the Lord Chamberlain's Examiner of Plays, and various forms of artisanal radicalism that fomented in a period of sporadic social unrest resulting from the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, and the effects of rapid industrialisation.[82] However, in offering what he describes as a "social historiography or anthropology of drama," the aesthetic and ideological complexities of dramatic texts are often reduced to deterministic correlation with historical facts.[83] For

[82] David Worrall, *The Politics of Romantic Theatricality, 1787-1832: The Road to the Stage* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 7; *Theatric Revolution*, 1-2.

example, in his analysis of *The Benevolent Planters* (1789) and *Harlequin Mungo* (1787), in which Worrall tries to offer the "different aspects of the national response" to slavery, he concludes that, "the social stratification of London attitudes to slavery, as represented in the theatres, was a *function* of their venue and location as much as it was a *function* of the attitudes of any individual author" (my emphasis).[84] So, *Harlequin Mungo* "reflected many of the liberal or radical characteristics" of London's East End, while *The Benevolent Planters*, performed in Haymarket's Theatre Royal, "was largely the determinant of the unprogressive social attitudes to slavery represented in their play."[85] The problem here is not the inaccuracy of the assessment; rather the issue is the uncritical acceptance of empirical data as self-evident, so much so that the complexity of images, metaphors, and language within a text is reduced to being merely a function of venue. In other words, such interpretations flatten the levels of mediation between a text and its context, and ultimately reduce the text to a functional, deterministic entity subordinate to its context.

Apart from studies that largely focus on the institutional context, there are a number of other important works that have directly dealt with black representations in the period that I focus on and have been essential to the development of several ideas in this thesis. Worrall's *Harlequin Empire*, particularly chapter two, deals with representations of race on the Georgian stage, offering an insightful commentary on the distinct theatrical conventions of blackface and black mask.[86] Franca Dellarosa's *Slavery on Stage* serves as a critical investigation as well as an anthology of selective plays involving representations of slavery in British theatre from 1760s to 1830s. While on the one hand we have the historical and

---

[83] *The Politics of Romantic Theatricality*, 9.

[84] Ibid., 105-06.

[85] Ibid., 105.

[86] Worrall, *Harlequin Empire*, 23-55.

structural conditions for theatrical culture, primarily in the works of Worrall and Moody, on the other hand, we have, in Dellarosa's analysis, a focus on genre and mode, which offers "a privileged angle for the exploration of both issues in poetics and the systemic relations between texts and the wide contexts of culture and society."[87] Jenna Gibbs' *Performing the Temple of Liberty* also offers an insightful comparative, transatlantic perspective on performances of slavery, race, and rights in London and Philadelphia, bringing together a vast amount of material related to theatrical and popular culture, highlighting, in particular, the interconnections between thespians, playwrights, and theatrical institutions across the transatlantic channels.

Amongst others, works that focus on body and performance in the Georgian period have been foundational to this project, particularly Virginia Mason Vaughan's *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500-1800*, Joseph Roach's *Cities of the Dead* and *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting*, and Paul Youngquist's *Monstrosities*. Vaughan's analysis of performance of blackness, particularly the later chapters on "Avenging Villains" and "Royal Slaves," are an important contribution to understanding blackface "as a polyphonic signifier that reflected changing social contexts," and shows how the very "language of blackness, too, was multivalent."[88] Vaughan's analysis chronologically begins with medieval folk dramas and stretches all the way to modern debates about cross-racial casting. While Vaughan's panoramic analysis identifies patterns of blackness within theatrical conventions which layer the performance of blackness across centuries, my study is more limited in its scope, specifically focusing on the dramatic alterations and transformations in the manner in which the black body was formalized after Britain's

---

[87] Franca Dellarosa, *Slavery on Stage: Representations of Slavery in British Theatre 1760s-1830s* (Bari: Edizioni dal Sud, 2009), 15.

[88] Vaughan, *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500-1800*, 2, 4.

ascendency as a liberal empire up until the arrival of the first black actor on the London stage in 1825. This period is specifically significant for my analysis for it marks the moment of emergence of the racial type which, I argue, is a central innovation of the representational crisis of a liberal empire.

Joseph Roach's *Cities of the Dead* analyses the circum-Atlantic spaces of New Orleans and London, focusing on the transmission of history through its embodiment as traces in performances.[89] Roach offers a critical vocabulary to analyse the means by which communities perpetuate a sense of cultural identity through performance. The body is theorised in terms of its cultural positioning, interpreting corporeal ideas and experiences through traces of performance communicated over time. For Roach, performance is at once a substitution, restoration, and reconstruction of the past, and it is the combined effect of all three through which memory is transmitted and transformed through time. He expands upon the "kinaesthetic imagination" as the embodied history of performance, tracing the transmission and transformation of cultural memory through ritual performance. He develops the concept of effigy to describe the performative process of kinaesthetic imagination where actors serve as surrogates through whom communities are enabled to perpetuate themselves. The effigy is a conceptual paradigm "to invoke an absence, to body something forth, especially from the distant past."[90] Actors embody through their performance a shared language, comprehended by the spectators, communicated and understood in the theatrical space. The performance seems to precede the surrogate (the acting body), which is treated like a vessel through which virtual performance actualizes itself; bodies become the temporary locus of historical memory in a genealogy of performance.

---

[89] Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 2.

[90] Ibid., 36.

If, however, one were to adopt a more archival analysis of bodies, Paul Youngquist's *Monstrosities* offers an analysis of historical bodies by identifying evidence of corporeal experience from the past in documented form. The monstrous bodies of Charles Byrne, Daniel Lambert, Lady Crachami, Miss Biffin, and other Romantic personages are drawn from archival texts, etchings, paintings, and prints. These archival bodies are fixed through their historical placement. Probably the most significant conclusion that one can draw from Youngquist's analysis is how one is culturally predisposed to overlook certain aspects of embodiment as already given or merely practical. These overlooked features of the "proper body" are rendered "normal" by virtue of being invisible for a thorough critical investigation, thus establishing the dominance of normativity. In the chapter on racial bodies, Youngquist focuses "on the relationship between late eighteenth century aesthetics and medicine in making race a property of bodies."[91] An "aesthetics of racial representation implicates the visual arts in the emergence of raciology, rendering black bodies an occasion for reproducing a norm of whiteness."[92] Youngquist, however, does not explore the theatricality of race, even as he acknowledges its performative valence with reference to Butler's thesis on performativity of gendered identity.[93] My focus is thus squarely on the emergence of theatrical practices of performance of race i.e. racial performances that make possible judgments and classifications of racial types as fundamental categories within raciology.

In a more dialectical-relational conception of the body, that which this study aspires towards, the body is not considered closed or atomised, nor is it purely discursive or cultural. The body is not understood as a passive site marked by the regulatory and disciplinary

---

[91] Youngquist, *Monstrosities*, 58.

[92] Ibid., 60.

[93] Youngquist: "Such a norm is not a prescription so much as a performance of embodiment." Ibid., xv.

practices of power, even as these processes of power are undoubtedly important in the materialization of the body. The body, as David Harvey suggests, "is grounded in an understanding of real spatio-temporal relations between material practices, representations, imaginaries, institutions, social relations, and prevailing structures of political-economic power."[94] The marks of racialization upon the body, which Alexander Weheliye describes as the "hieroglyphics of the flesh," mask the political, economic, social, and cultural disciplining of human bodies into "assemblages of the human, not-quite-human, and nonhuman."[95] And such is the case for Youngquist, for whom "singular bodies become subject to regulatory norms in liberal society," concealing the relations that marginalise them by exclusion from the norms of the proper body that they bring into existence by virtue of their singularity.[96] Norm is invisible and yet dominant and pervasive. It is unrepresentable except by difference. The proper body as a cultural norm of embodiment "emerges as a means of regulating corporeal agencies in liberal society."[97] It is this relational conception of the body that is marked by slavery and racism through definitive processes of racialization, of which formalization and typicalization are merely specific theatrical strategies for marking the black body in this way. But it is the relational conception of the body that also gives way to a liberatory critique, for the body escapes the regulatory and disciplinary relations of power that can never fully capture the body in all its materiality. As Eagleton states, "[t]he body has its reasons, of which the mind knows little or nothing."[98]

---

[94] David Harvey, "The Body as an Accumulation Strategy," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 16 (1998): 420.

[95] Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 43.

[96] Youngquist, *Monstrosities*, xiv.

[97] Ibid., xv.

[98] Terry Eagleton, "The Ideology of the Aesthetic," *Poetics Today* 9, no. 2 (1988): 337.

A more text-focused enquiry, such as Jeffrey Cox's Introduction to the anthology of drama on slavery (Volume 5 of the eight-volume *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period*), highlights the variety of conflicting representations of blackness that were enacted on stage. Cox's comments have provided the necessary initial thrust to my analysis of black characters like Oroonoko, Yarico, Three-Finger'd Jack, Selico, Gambia, and Harlequin Negro. As he points out, the resulting antislavery sympathy was diluted in a "strange mix" of sentiments based on notions of black inferiority, even as the plays often championed the gradual improvement of the Caribbean slaves.[99] The consequence of the multiplicity of meanings of these conflicting representations of blacks in eighteenth-century dramatic texts was moral and ideological ambiguity.

Even interpretations of "abstract slavery," which make slavery analogous to other forms of oppression, constitute a necessary component of the production as well as consumption of these plays. Cox is right to say that by treating the slave condition as a universal condition, we express a regrettable indifference towards concrete history and specific political events that diminish the particularity of the atrocities committed by imperial powers in their involvement in the African slave trade.[100] But I would argue that the universal significance of the metaphor of slavery and its correspondent representation in the form of an enslaved black body cannot be altogether rejected. Having to choose one or the other interpretation as more relevant is a denial of the hermeneutic multiplicity and a disavowal of the levels of mediation that informs the creation and reception of black bodies. What is important to note is that "universal humanity" and "abstract slavery" can be historicised as particular ideological resolutions of the crisis of liberal or benevolent imperialism. The admission of "universal humanity," as Cox notes, can undoubtedly be used to absolve

---

[99] Cox, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 5: xviii.

[100] Ibid., 5: xi.

"England's collective crime against Africa" which cannot be admitted on stage.[101] But while Cox does acknowledge the sentimental potential of a notion such as "universal humanity," which, by papering over differences and particularities, paves the way for sympathy, he does not admit the more radical possibility of solidarity afforded by this utopian potential. It is in an attempt to account for this multiplicity of meanings that I adopt the allegorical method of analysis.

The Black Body as Allegory

The key methodological processes that I expand upon in this thesis are formalization and typicalization. At the most rudimentary level, these processes describe how we move from some putative historical reality marked by slavery and racism through stage representations to a liberatory critique. To comprehend this shift, it is important to understand the relationship between the body and the processes of racialization, formalization, and typicalization as defined in this analysis.

I focus on processes of racialization to show how conceptual categories like "race" should be interrogated as specific historical constructs, rather than assuming its perceived evidentiary status as pre-conceptually present upon the body.[102] Alexander Weheliye underscores the contribution of Black studies as a "substantial critique of western modernity" engaged in the investigation of "processes of racialization with a particular emphasis on the shifting configurations of blacks."[103] Racialization, Weheliye emphasises, "is understood not

---

[101] Ibid., 5: xii.

[102] My thinking about racialization is indebted to Frantz Fanon and W. E. B. Du Bois. See Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 150.; W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. Brent Hayes Edwards (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[103] Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 3.

as a biological or cultural descriptor but as a conglomerate of socioeconomic relations that discipline humanity into full humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans," in which "blackness designates a changing system of unequal power structures that apportion and delimit which humans can lay claim to full human status and which humans cannot."[104] Weheliye's configuration of "Man" in Enlightenment discourse offers a point of intersection with Youngquist's "proper body" and with O'Quinn's delineation of racial characters as autoethnographic instantiations. Weheliye argues that "[i]n the context of the secular human, black subjects, along with indigenous populations, the colonized, the insane, the poor, the disabled, and so on serve as limit cases by which Man can demarcate himself as the universal human."[105] Similarly, for Youngquist, the mad body, the addicted body, the abnormal body, and the afflicted body together constitute the monstrous body that is deemed monstrous in relation to the "proper body." O'Quinn makes a similar argument in the theatrical context in which the "combination of self-presentation and self-evaluation, which drives the relationship between audiences and the material culture of the theatre, is understood as a form of autoethnography."[106] In its autoethnographic phases, "theatrical imperialism in London helped lay the ground for the *embodied imperial subject* of the early nineteenth century" (my emphasis).[107] The "embodied imperial subject," the "proper body," and "Man" describe attempts to deconstruct the abstract universality of Enlightenment discourse and emphasize, what Weheliye considers as the foundational assertion of Black studies, that these

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid., 24.

[106] O'Quinn, *Staging Governance*, 13.

[107] Ibid., 27-28.

formulations "misconstrue how profoundly race and racism shape the modern idea of the human."[108]

In line with this critique of western modernity, I specifically explore the theatricality of racism as it emerges in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries through the shifting political relations that create a liberal community of the free which excludes racial Others (the "not-quite-humans" and "nonhumans"), even as it includes them in the culturally circumscribed sphere of humanity. Racism is thus historicised as a particular function of the discourse of empire in its liberal guise. In chapter One, I explore the defeudalizing rhetoric of nobility and the separation of the "noble" mind from the enslaved body as part of the process of racializing natural bodies. In Chapter Two, I argue how imperial (benevolent) ideology intensifies the process of racialisation, even as it promotes humanitarianism. In Chapter Three, the melodramatization of the acting body is coupled with the scientific racialisation of the black body which converge in the racial representations of vengeful Moors and rebel slaves. In the last chapter, the theatricality of racialisation, specifically its performative aspect, becomes more prominent with the emergence of the racial type and its emphasis on specific marks of racialisation. However, the racialisation of monstrosity also opens up the possibility of a counter-reading of race because the polysemantic associations of monstrosity inflect interpretations of race. To racialize the monster (I specifically look at the theatrical adaptation of Shelley's *Frankenstein* to make this argument) is not merely to constitute the black as monstrous, but to identify the collective intersectionality that the undefined form of monstrosity makes representable through the figure of the Black. Abject blackness and monstrosity, as both Weheliye and Youngquist will agree, offer a liminal vantage point which occasions the reimagination of other forms of being and becoming human: "When being deemed less than normal becomes an occasion for becoming more, norms aren't transcended

[108] Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 4.

so much as transformed – toward the possibilities of new embodiments."[109] I explore this space of liminality through counter perspectives offered in the first two chapters in terms of radical sympathy and the absent rebel position, and in terms of rebellion and monstrosity in the following two chapters. The argument is not merely a historicist circumscription of the general concept of man or humanity, demonstrating its limitations by exposing those it excludes from within its precincts. Rather, in the terms that Weheliye defends the work of Black feminists, Hortense Spillers and Sylvia Wynter, the task is to

> tackle notions of the human as it interfaces with gender, coloniality, slavery, racialization, and political violence without mapping these questions onto a mutually exclusive struggle between either the free-flowing *terra nullius* of the universally applicable or the *terra cognitas* of the ethnographically detained.[110]

Without sublating the specificity of other struggles into a bland universality (*terra nullius*), nor particularising the struggle within the terrain of some essentialist identitarianism (*terra cognitas*), I stress the anagogic significance of the black body through its allegorical interpretation, signalling towards a possibility for a liberatory critique.

The irony of the process of racialization is that it is when blackness becomes fundamentally associated with the body that it becomes most dissociated from it. In the formation of the racial type, blackness becomes its own abstract standard to which the racialised body must now conform to. In the cases which I explore in Chapter Four, the black bodies of Sarah Baartman and Ira Aldridge are beholden to the diktats of the racial type of Hottentot and racial burlesque, respectively. Racialised blackness is not so much a property of the black body as much as the black body is reduced to becoming a property of blackness. Blackness, Weheliye acknowledges, "functioned as one of the key signifiers for the socio-political articulation of visual distinctions among human groups in modernity," and, is an

---

[109] Youngquist, *Monstrosities*, xxviii. Also see Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 29.

[110] Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 24.

important conceptual category in Black scholarship which has been subjected to "a series of comprehensive analytical frameworks – both critical and utopian – in the service of better understanding and dismantling the political, economic, cultural, and social exploitation of visible human difference."[111]

Taking as axiomatic that the black body is always framed, the frames thus determine the ways of seeing the black body, guiding perceptions, satisfying spectatorial expectations, and providing the logic for the construction of forms of black body that conform to social expectations. I use the term "frames" to designate disciplines and practices that contribute to the formulation of specific types of objects of knowledge. Within each frame, there are typicalizing procedures specific to the frames of construction through which the particular object of knowledge is produced. By typicalization I mean the manner or process through which "types" are produced in specific fields of knowledge production. In the theatrical frame, for instance, typicalizing procedures come into effect through dramatic genres, treatises on acting and acting styles, theatrical apparatus, visual culture, theatrical reviews, and the like. All of these contribute to the creation of character types. The result of these typicalizing procedures is a particular formalization of the object of knowledge (in this case, the black body) into concrete manifestations, such as the noble savage, the grateful slave, the comic servant, the rebel slave, etc. By formalization I mean the manner or process through which "types" are given a specific, historically determined form. Each formalization is analysed in terms of its dramatic effects, its characterological form, and its polyvalent meanings. It is by analysing the periodic changes in these formalizations, I propose, that one has access to broad historical shifts in how these specific formalizations emerge at particular historical moments. Through these formalizations of the black body, one can examine the typicalizing procedures, which although specific to the theatrical frame, are part of a broader

[111] Ibid., 4.

historical shift in knowledge production, and so justify a more interdisciplinary approach. The argument that I present here analyses the shifting formalizations of the black body to unravel the transition in typicalizing procedures as part of the process of racialization. Simply put, the shift in formalizations of the black body captures the process whereby the liberal humanitarian project of moral recognition of unequal Others intertwines with the intensification of the processes of racialization. The contradiction arising from this entanglement is what determines these formalizations of the black body as formal solutions to the representational crisis of a liberal slaveholding empire.

Typicalization and formalization are thus specific processes through which bodies, which Roach identifies as a key media of representation, are raced, effectively establishing, affirming, and reproducing these social race relations.[112] The processes of typicalization and formalization of black bodies are a means to create formulaic generic typologies of blackness or ideal types. These types reinscribe black bodies in a particular manner that necessarily erases other modalities of embodiment. The idealization into types of black bodies inscribed in particular formalizations imposes uniformity, establishing the ideological currency of the type.

In each chapter, I trace a particular formalization of the black body in itself and as part of a series of successions illustrating the stages of development within a sequence and its link to other external manifestations. In these representations, dialectically opposed pairs of concepts are juxtaposed to reveal the truth of a contradictory social reality. In Chapter One, nobility and savagery are juxtaposed in the noble savage paradigm; in Chapter Two, the conceptual antagonism and complementarity in social relations between liberty and slavery are explored through representations of grateful slaves and blackfaced comic servants; in

---

[112] Joseph R. Roach, "Theatre History and the Ideology of the Aesthetic," *Theatre Journal* 41, no. 2 (1989): 157.

Chapter Three, the juxtaposition of legitimacy and illegitimacy in dramatic forms like melodramas and melodramatic characterisations like rebel slaves serve as a mediation of socio-political issues of legality and illegality during the revolutionary years; and lastly, in Chapter Four, I explore the dialectical relation between racial types and exceptions in performances of monstrosities. These antithetical concept-pairs converge in constellations which demystify both the concepts and the reality they attempt to define. These very categories can be refunctioned into tools for a dialectical materialist analysis.

A Marxist interpretive strategy, according to Pierre Macherey and Etienne Balibar, "inscribes literature in its place in the unevenly determined system of real social practices."[113] For a proper materialist analysis, the "literary productions must not be studied from the standpoint of their unity which is illusory and false, but from their material disparity. One must not look for unifying effects but for signs of contradictions (historically determined) which produced them and which appear as unevenly resolved conflicts in the text."[114] It is through this lens that I analyse the frames that formalize the black body.

This methodological proposal elevates the interpretive value of allegorical analysis, which Fredric Jameson identifies as "one way of sorting through these multiplicities and finding analogies between the differentiations, identities among the differences."[115] Allegorical analysis serves as a useful framework of literary analysis as it bundles together distinct negations, and relates differences and multiple levels of interpretations as contiguous possible readings without forcing them to coalesce into one single narrative. The allegorical

---

[113] Pierre Macherey and Etienne Balibar, "Literature as an Ideological Form: Some Marxist Propositions," *Oxford Literary Review* 3, no. 1 (1978): 5.

[114] Ibid., 8.

[115] Jameson, *Allegory and Ideology*, 345.

method functions to "reveal [a work's] structure of multiple meanings."[116] It is distinguished from the "bad allegory" that reduces meaning to a two-level system in which one level corresponds in a one-to-one relation with a second, more meaningful level.[117] In contrast to this, the allegorical method supports an analysis that entertains contradictions, negations, and subtle differences as meaningful explorations of the semiotic field, which I use to explore the representation of black bodies.

One way to structure these interpretive possibilities is through the fourfold allegorical system – the literal, mystical, moral, and anagogical levels – of traditional biblical exegesis, collectively designated as the allegorical mode of interpretation. The literal is the immediate surface level interpretation, while the mystical is the conventionally allegorical second-level interpretation imputed to texts. The moral is the individual, personal interpretation of texts usually garnered through biographical or psychological details, while the anagogical is the spiritual, collective, utopian interpretation of a text or the promise that is never present. I use the allegorical method to order the various interpretations of the black body that are predicated on various relationships (parallelisms, juxtapositions, contradictions, and negations) discovered within and among the representations situated in their historical context.

---

[116] Ibid., 10.

[117] Jameson distinguishes between this conventional meaning of allegory as a literary form from the allegorical method. The allegorical method opens up the narrative to multiple meanings, organised around a four-level structure (literal, mystical, moral, and anagogical), originally devised by the Orthodox Church to interpret the Life of Christ and the New Testament as the fulfilment of the prophecies of the Old Testament. See Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Routledge, 2002), 14-15.

Thesis Repertoire

Even as the idea of Empire is central to the argument that I present, I primarily pool together resources that focus on the Atlantic part of the British Empire that deal with slavery, the circum-Atlantic triangular trade, the American Revolution, and the juridical and parliamentary debates around issues like Black immigration to England (*Somerset v Stewart*, 1772), abolition of the slave trade, and the emancipation of slaves. There are two primary reasons as to why I have confined my analysis to the Atlantic part of the British Empire. Firstly, and most obviously, is the fact that I focus on the processes through which "black" bodies are racialised in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. I do not want to conflate the blacks of West Indies and the East Indians into a single category of the Other as if they are products of the same processes of racialization. Secondly, the Atlantic and Indian colonies were fundamentally quite distinct economic and political systems, even as they were connected to the metropole as extensions of Britain's commercial empire. It was, after all, to justify slavery – the necessity of absolute dominion of largescale plantation-owners over their property in land and people – and their dependence on competitive markets for profit and sustainability that one witnesses the evolution of a racial science ideologically connected with processes of racialization, typicalization, and formalization. However, my concern with these processes in racial representations of black bodies on the London stage does not in any way suggest that theatrical representations of India and Indians preclude similar phantasmatic projections of national and racial supremacy. On the contrary, as O'Quinn has persuasively illustrated,

> [r]egions as culturally diverse as Africa, North America, India, Scotland, and Ireland became the object of an emergent ethnographic imagination whose primary objective was to provide an alibi for colonial rule. Thus nations were characterized either as naturally subservient or unfit to govern themselves as always already enslaved or hopelessly prone to despotism.[118]

[118] O'Quinn, *Staging Governance*, 39.

What O'Quinn calls the "Anglo-Indian problematic" specifically concerns the hybrid nature of the East India Company (EIC) as a commercial entity as well as an agent of sovereign governance.[119] The EIC had transformed from a commercial venture engaged in trade in port towns in India to a territorial power with a military force to challenge its European competitors and the indigenous rulers.[120] The differences between the routes taken by British imperialism in the East and West Indies is too stark to not be given their due, and so I have left questions pertaining to theatrical representations of India and Indians in the eighteenth century as beyond the scope of the present study.

Apart from the representation of Indians, the racial representation of black bodies does develop alongside representations of, what can perhaps be designated as, ethnically-differentiated characters like the figure of the Jew, the Irish, the Scotsman, the Welsh, and other such minorities residing in Georgian England.[121] Michael Ragussis's *Theatrical Nation: Jews and Other Outlandish Englishmen in Georgian Britain* defines itself as a fundamentally different project from what I offer in this study on black bodies. Ragussis looks at the representation of diverse ethnic minorities on the London stage, often marked by processes of racialization, yet what distinguishes these representations from theatrical black bodies is that these ethnic minorities are acknowledged as "Englishmen," as noted in the title of the book. The black Other stands outside this internally-divisive, yet ultimately unifying, national identity. Ragussis's first chapter contextualises the diverse ethnic representations in terms of

---

[119] Ibid., 45.

[120] For a recent history of the East India Company, see William Dalrymple, *The Anarchy: The Relentless Rise of the East India Company* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019).

[121] For a focused study on Jewish representation in British literature, see Michael Scrivener, *Jewish Representation in British Literature 1780-1840: After Shylock* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). For an analysis of representation of ethnic minorities on the London stage, see Michael Ragussis, *Theatrical Nation: Jews and Other Outlandish Englishmen in Georgian Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

a "Family Quarrel" which underscores the assumed sense of belonging to a larger group identity defined by the nation. The concept of the "nation" is thus absolutely significant for Ragussis's analysis:

> the theatre mirrored and reproduced the nation as a contested space, illuminating the ways in which performers, playwrights, audience members, journalists, and the public at large, motivated by competing ethnic and nationalist claims, sought to win control of the theatre, and by extension, of the nation.[122]

Although the English, as the majoritarian community, tried to "maintain [ethnic minorities] as purely theatrical, as a form of ethnic spectacle," only to be "used on the stage to locate and secure the boundary between Englishness and otherness,"[123] Ragussis illustrates how the "minorities themselves made the theatre a site of resistance by protesting plays that negatively represented them."[124] The national identity was thus not a unitary imposition from above, but a complex negotiation ("quarrels") as to what constitutes it. In comparison to other ethnic representations, the figure of the Jew seems to have more symbolic valence as it "began to function as integral to newly emergent definitions of England as a commercial nation early in the eighteenth century," but also because it "was used comparatively as a focal point in a variety of ethnic comparisons."[125] Ragussis's analysis effectively reveals how a nationalist identity ("Briton"), which in Étienne Balibar's terms can be categorised as "fictive ethnicity," attempts to confer a political and cultural unity of a nation on a heterogeneous pluri-ethnic state.[126] But the nation, according to Immanuel Wallerstein, is fundamentally a

---

[122] *Theatrical Nation*, 13.

[123] Ibid., 2.

[124] Ibid., 4-6.

[125] Ibid., 31-32.

[126] Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1991), 52.

"socio-political category, linked somehow to the actual or potential boundaries of a state," whereas ethnicity refers to a "cultural category" pertaining to a set of attitudes, behaviours, and practices that are distinguishable from other ethnic identities.[127] "Ethnicity" and "nation" are modal categories that define various social identities of a people, and they are usually part of the discourse concerning the contradictions of the project of nation-building, which aspires to create an identity of national belonging, while simultaneously threatening to eliminate ethnic diversity through assimilation. In other words, ethnicization and nationalization revolve around one of the primary contradictions of historical capitalism: the aspiration for theoretical equality, while maintaining a hierarchy between ethnicities, which promotes practical inequality. By not drawing the distinction between a socio-political category like nation and a fundamentally cultural category like ethnicity, Ragussis treats national and ethnic identities as if they are competing on the same conceptual level, when in fact they are part of an identity politics that is fuelled by the contradictions of capitalism. My analysis of black bodies thus privileges the empire over the nation, even as I acknowledge that Britain's national identity became more defined as a consequence of the anxiety of a multi-ethnic metropolis like London. While Ragussis examines the theatrical context to explore the crystallization of national identity, with the participative quarrelling amongst recognised ethnic groups within London, I use the same theatrical context to explore the complexity of racial identity that drove a wedge between different "kinds" of humans, rather than just different types of people. Although race and ethnicity often overlap especially in the case of the Jew, I try to maintain an analytical distinction between the two to determine more specifically the processes of racialization.

Briefly then, the argument is chronologically structured in four chapters, examining the various formalizations of the black body:

---

[127] Ibid., 77.

Chapter One: Oroonoko *and* Yarico*; or, The Performative Reconfiguration of the Noble Savage Paradigm*

In this chapter, I trace the alterations in the representation and performance of popular noble savage characters like Oroonoko and Yarico. By first historicising and problematising the myth of the noble savage, I redeploy the concept of the noble savage as a paradigm through which I analyse the alterations in dramatic adaptations of Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688) and Richard Steele's "Inkle and Yarico" story (1711). Both these narratives became popular in the eighteenth century, inspiring many theatrical adaptations. The first dramatic adaptation of Behn's novel was Thomas Southerne's *Oroonoko* (Drury Lane, 1695), which was later altered by John Hawkesworth (Drury Lane, 1759), Francis Gentleman (Edinburgh, 1760), and John Ferriar (1788). Similarly, Steele's story was adapted into a tragedy by Mrs. Weddell (1742), and later by George Colman (Haymarket, 1787) and John Thelwall (1787) into a comic-operatic drama. The alterations in these various adaptations reconfigure elements within the noble savage paradigm, which is identified as a constellation of generic conventions and narrative themes. The reconfiguration of these generic conventions signifies a shift in spectatorial attitude towards the black body from a sympathetic investment in the noble body of a royal prince(ss) (Southerne's *Oroonoko* and Weddell's *Inkle and Yarico*) to a sympathetic investment in the enslaved, naturally-virtuous body (Ferriar's *The Prince of Angola* and Colman's *Inkle and Yarico*). I analyse this shift in sympathetic investment on the part of the spectator in correlation with the emergence of sentimentalism and the concomitant liberal sympathetic attitude that recognises the moral equivalence of unequal Others.

Chapter Two: Pretended Piety; or, The Ideology of Benevolent Imperialism

Following from the liberal attitude of recognising the moral equivalence of unequal Others, I problematise the notions of liberty and slavery as an eighteenth-century paradox.

Through this frame, I investigate the new formalization of the black body – as grateful slaves and comic servants – configured around the moral framework of common humanity articulated in terms of benevolence and gratitude. I first explore the ideology of benevolence through George Lillo's *The London Merchant* (Drury Lane, 1731), George Colman's *The English Merchant* (Drury Lane, 1767), and Richard Cumberland's *The West Indian* (Drury Lane, 1771). I then focus on grateful slave characters in James Cobb's *Paul and Virginia* (Covent Garden, 1800), Thomas Bellamy's *The Benevolent Planters* (Haymarket, 1789), August von Kotzebue's *The Negro Slaves* (1796), and Archibald Maclaren's *Blackman and Blackbird* (Edinburgh, 1799), and comic servant characters in Isaac Bickerstaffe's *The Padlock* (Drury Lane, 1768), Henry Bate's *Blackamoor Wash'd White* (Drury Lane, 1776), William Macready's *The Irishman in London* (Covent Garden, 1792), and Frederick Reynolds' *Laugh When you Can* (Covent Garden, 1798). Through these formalizations of the black body, I explore the ideology of benevolent imperialism, which functions as the overarching liberal paradigm within which I locate the conflicting proslavery and antislavery positions. While in the first chapter, I articulate the qualitative differences between apparently similar performances of the noble savage paradigm, in this chapter, I reveal how seemingly unrelated, oppositional ideological positions can be juxtaposed to reveal a configuration in which they converge, when seen from the perspective of the black body as a grateful slave or comic servant.

Chapter Three: Narrative Possibilities; or, The Melodramatization of the Racial Body

In this chapter, I primarily focus on the emergence of the new formalization of the black body as a rebel slave in early nineteenth-century racial melodramas, performed in conjunction with older representations of vengeful Moors. This transformation of the black body from being a noble savage or a grateful slave to becoming a rebel slave is also

conditioned by the corresponding shift from sentimental drama to melodrama. I analyse John Fawcett's *Obi; or, Three-Finger'd Jack* (Haymarket, 1800), George Colman's *The Africans* (Haymarket, 1808), Matthew Lewis's *The Castle Spectre* (Drury Lane, 1797), John Cartwright Cross's *King Caesar* (Royal Circus, 1801), and Thomas Morton's *The Slave* (Covent Garden, 1816) as examples of racial melodramas. However, acknowledging the variety of black characters competing for theatrical space during this period, I thus also look at the popular early nineteenth-century performances of Edward Young's *The Revenge* (Drury Lane, 1721) and Shakespeare's *Othello*. I attempt to map these competing black-body performances as various narrative possibilities on the London stage that sustained the credibility of Britain's emerging empire during a period of revolutionary wars and political instabilities.

Chapter Four: The Black Body; or, The Performance of Monstrosity

In the final chapter, I examine the typicalizing procedures that produce the racial type through various pseudo-scientific discourses, before analysing the theatricality of racialisation in two cases: the London freak show that exhibited the Hottentot Venus in 1810 and Charles Mathews' popular racial burlesque. After establishing the conditions through which the racial type was configured, theatricalised, and performed, I offer a racial reading of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1819) through Richard Brinsley Peake's theatrical adaptation, *Presumption; or, the Fate of Frankenstein* (English Opera House, 1823). I explore the possibility of considering the theatrical adaptation of Shelley's monster as a black body in the tradition of black characters that are the subject of this thesis.

I consider the black body as a site of contestation of the very forces that create it, and hence see it as a process of materialization that stabilizes over time into fixed meanings

marked by racial inferiority and difference. The black body is not a singular formalization, but neither is it merely a free-floating discursive representation, however important these representations may be in the materialization of the body. Rather, the black body is an objectification of social processes, and so the study of black bodies must be grounded in an understanding of real spatiotemporal relations between material practices, representations, institutions, social relations, and prevailing structures of political-economic power. While the theatre was a "mimic world," as James Boaden describes it in the epigraph that opens this Introduction, it was also, at the same time, a site where images of the external world were self-fashioned or "forged" (as Linda Colley puts it) precisely through these dramatic spectacles that serve as necessary mediations to supplement the unseen relations of colonial dominance and provide substance for the colonial imaginary.

CHAPTER ONE: *OROONOKO* AND *YARICO*; OR, THE PERFORMATIVE RECONFIGURATIONS OF THE NOBLE SAVAGE PARADIGM

This study begins with black bodies in the form of noble savage characters. It is as a noble savage that a black body character, like Oroonoko or Yarico, was first introduced in the West Indian (New World) slavery context. Having said that, it turns out that the "noble savage" is itself a highly problematic and contested concept, which needs to undergo the same scrutiny to which the "black body" will be subjected. As our analysis of black bodies assumes that the black body is always framed, I begin with the noble savage paradigm as one such primary frame of analysis. By understanding the noble savage concept as a paradigm, I can dissociate my analysis from the arguably erroneous assumption that the myth of the noble savage actually existed in the eighteenth century. I dissect the well-known myth into its constituent parts – nobility, savagery, appraisal of natural virtue, and degeneration of culture – and reconstitute those parts as elements within a paradigm in order to analyse critically the myth of the noble savage as part of the historical process of formalization as well as racialisation of the black body.

In this chapter I will trace the alterations in representation and performance of noble savage characters like Oroonoko and Yarico through the eighteenth century. Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688) and Richard Steele's popular rendition of the *Inkle and Yarico* story in *The Spectator* (13 March, 1711) provide the basic narrative framework for the subsequent dramatic adaptations of *Oroonoko* and *Inkle and Yarico*. Behn's *Oroonoko*, Moira Ferguson argues, "generated a paradigm for British colonialist discourse," the basic construction of which remained in place during the eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, even as the "[e]lements of the paradigm inevitably shifted as historical events unfolded."[1] While

[1] Moira Ferguson, "Oroonoko: Birth of a Paradigm," *New Literary History* 23, no. 2 (1992): 339.

Ferguson emphasizes the consistency of the paradigm, this chapter focuses on the reconfiguration of elements within the paradigm. The alterations in dramatic representation of noble savage characters are considered as clues of this performative reconfiguration, which mark a shift in the way spectators sympathized with the black body on stage. How is it that a character like Oroonoko, who was represented as the paragon of nobility in the early part of the century, shifted in meaning by 1787 such that he came to represent common humanity? On the one hand, I argue that this hermeneutic flexibility of the noble savage paradigm – from extolling feudal distinctions of nobility to expressing "common" or "natural" sentiments – reflects the defeudalizing discourse of sympathy, evident in the shift in spectatorial attitude towards the black body in the form of the noble savage; on the other hand, this process of defeudalizing the rhetoric of nobility (from noble status to a "natural" virtue) is also a process of racializing the natural body, as will become evident when the myth of the noble savage is historicised.

I begin by examining the myth of the noble savage as part of a specific racist agenda in the mid-nineteenth century, and then identify the particular elements of the concept (the generic conventions and narrative themes) that will constitute the noble savage paradigm, which is the frame that formalizes the black body in a New World slavery context. Using the paradigm, I then demonstrate how the early representations and performances of noble savage characters like Oroonoko and Yarico are configured as noble bodies, in opposition to common slaves. I then trace the subsequent alterations of the representation and performance of Oroonoko and Yarico throughout the period as clues of a reconfiguration of the elements of the noble savage paradigm. This reconfigured paradigm offers a sentimental critique of the institution of slavery, through which I explore the emergence of the sympathetic community of the free. I explain this shift in spectatorial attitude of this community of the free towards the black body as part of a liberal sentimental humanitarian movement that recognised the

moral equivalence of unequal Others, offering an analysis that grounds this shift as a solution to the more local crisis of patronage and the more global crisis of expanding liberal empires. I end this chapter by looking at two unperformed plays, both of which were alterations of *Oroonoko* and *Inkle and Yarico*, as performative possibilities of an alternative spectatorial attitude that will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter.

The Noble Savage Paradigm

The myth of the noble savage ascribes nobility, or virtues associated with nobility, to a savage discovered in a primitive state, who is, thereby, held to be morally superior to the morally corrupt, but nonetheless "civilised," European. Associated with the myth is the espousal of egalitarian ideals of a thinker like Rousseau, who is said to have consecrated the noble savage in his primitive state as part of a virtuous natural order, which European civilisation has shunned in favour of an inegalitarian, hierarchical, and unjust social order.

The problem with the myth is not just that the noble savage as described above did not figure in eighteenth-century representations, but that the myth itself that imputes this concept of the noble savage to the eighteenth century, and particularly to Rousseau, also did not in fact exist until 1859. Ter Ellingson's *The Myth of the Noble Savage* exposes the myth itself as a false claim that needed to assert the widespread belief in the myth of the noble savage for a specific political purpose. According to Ellingson's thesis, the noble savage is a discursive construct which was invented in 1609 by Marc Lescarbot, a French Lawyer and ethnographer, specifically as a concept of comparative law rather than as a moral exemplum. However, Ellingson illustrates that the concept of the noble savage as described by the myth was not resurrected until 1859 by John Crawfurd, the soon to become President of the Ethnological Society of London, as part of a racist agenda against the anthropological advocacy of human rights based on notions of "natural" egalitarianism, which was precisely

the thing being ridiculed by the myth of the noble savage. As Ellingson surmises:

> The myth of the noble savage, if we examine it closely, is constructed so as to assert the existence of what it purports to critique, the existence of a belief in the absurd juxtaposition of the incompatible attributes of nobility and savagery. By projecting the absurdity of the construction itself onto a figure such as Rousseau, selected as the emblematic representation of more serious ideas (and their advocates) that are the real targets of the attack, the myth operates by oblique and obfuscatory symbolic manipulations to attain its intended purpose, the creation of a self-authenticating and self-perpetuating rhetorical program for the promotion of racial superiority and dominance.[2]

In other words, what Ellingson's convincing narrative exposes is the racist foundations on which the myth of the noble savage is constructed.

The myth of the noble savage served as a mask for later anthropologists to disguise their advocacy of a particular type of political and social organisation that ensured the continued exploitation of masses of colonised people. One such anthropologist, Kenneth Mackenzie, mocks the advocates of aboriginal rights, stating that:

> Anthropologists do not pretend to the protection of aborigines but they at the same time have no interested motives in their extinction; to them the negro and the red man afford interest and instruction alike; but, unlike a very unfortunate, not to say malignant, set of men at the present day, they do not desire to exalt the inferior at the expense of superior races. If the tendency is that they die out, that tendency, thus a natural one, cannot be finally arrested, although mitigation may be possible.[3]

James Hunt, an influential proponent of comparative anthropology, offers a diagnosis of the affliction he designates as the "rights-of-man mania," which plagues "statesmen, philosophers, and men of science."[4] The afflicted, he observes, have "thoroughly assimilated in their mind the one gigantic assumption of absolute human equality, which is generally

---

[2] Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 297.

[3] Kenneth R. H. Mackenzie, "Sproat's Studies of Savage Life," *The Anthropological Review* 6, no. 23 (1868): 374.

[4] James Hunt, "The President's Address," *Journal of the Anthropological Society of London* 5 (1867): lix.

known as the rights of man."[5] The myth of the noble savage, it can be surmised, was ultimately constructed to dispel the "assumption of human equality," which allegedly "was first heard of in the latter half of the [eighteenth] century, and since then it has been taught in our universities; and at the present day it has become a part and parcel of the system of political economy on which we rear our legislators."[6] Hunt clarifies his own conservative political affinities quite candidly, stating that, "my emphatic opinion that the existence of a well-selected hereditary aristocracy in any country is more in accordance with nature's laws than those glittering trivialities respecting human rights which now form the stock-in-trade of some professors of political economy, and many of our politicians."[7]

Ellingson's analysis of the myth of the noble savage provides a lens for my own analysis of black bodies as noble savages in the eighteenth century. Her analysis lays bare the institutional structures that formed the myth of the noble savage as motivated by a specifically racist agenda. In other words, Ellingson emphasises the necessity of historicising the noble savage concept as a culmination of a social process whereby racial symbols like blackness, savagery, and primitiveness are consolidated to form the foundation of the noble savage myth. Her analysis, thus, serves as a point of departure for my investigation into the eighteenth-century conditions in which the "noble savage" and the "black body" are so defined.

The difference in my approach from Ellingson's is that once the nineteenth-century myth of the noble savage is deconstructed into its component parts, it can be reorganised in terms of an eighteenth-century paradigm, which allows us to re-evaluate the racial category of "blackness" through the reconfigured meanings of nobility and savagery in the various

---

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., lxi.

alterations in dramatic adaptations of Oroonoko and Yarico. Understanding the noble savage concept as a paradigm assumes that the unity of nobility and savagery in the myth is illusory and false; rather, both concepts work as dialectically opposed pairs which are necessarily juxtaposed to reveal the contradictions within the social reality itself. The reconfiguration of narrative themes and conventions that compose the noble savage paradigm are historically determined, and so the paradigm functions as an effective ideological reflection and resolution of mediated social contradictions.

The noble savage paradigm is composed of a cluster of generic conventions and narrative themes, often contradictory to one another, yet conceptually united in a formal constellation or pattern. There is a well-established literary-theoretical tradition that analyses literary characters in this way, particularly Roland Barthes and Jurij Lotman, both of whom examine the character as a composite construction of semes and relations, respectively. In *S/Z*, Barthes understands character as a complex web of semes attached to a proper name:

> When identical semes traverse the same proper name several times and appear to settle upon it, a character is created. Thus, the character is a product of combinations: the combination is relatively stable (denoted by the recurrence of the semes) and more or less complex (involving more or less congruent, more or less contradictory figures).[8]

The recurrence of the combination of semes that "traverse the same proper name" is what is commonly designated as characteristics or traits. For Lotman, the character is a relational composite based on the principle of binary differentiation in relation to other characters surrounding it:

> The mutual superimposition of these binary segmentations creates bundles of differentiation. These bundles are identified with personae and become characters. The character of a personae is a set of all the binary oppositions between him and other personae … as given in the text … [I]n other words, it is a set of differential features. Thus, character is a paradigm.[9]

---

[8] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 67.

[9] Jurij Lotman, *The Structure of the Artistic Text*, trans. Ronald Vroon (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1977), 251.

Lotman's conception of the character as a bundle of differential relations emphasizes the fact that a character cannot be isolated as an autonomous unit within the text. As a paradigm, the character represents "a set of possibilities unified on the level of the conceptual structure and variational on the level of the text."[10] This conceptual unity and textual variation of the character is fundamental to my argument in this chapter. Rather than a psychological character with mental abilities and motivations, the noble savage paradigm is a semic configuration that is meaningful because it encodes narrative possibilities, contexts, and a network of associated characters from which its meaning is derived.

The following are the basic narrative themes of the noble savage paradigm: the idealization of primitive culture, the gesture of hospitality extended to white foreigners by unsuspecting natives, followed by enslavement at the hands of corrupt merchants, and the new context of New World plantation slavery. Also included in the noble savage paradigm are themes like the pathetic dejection of the enslaved which takes the form of a lament or a complaint, the pathos of the distraught enslaved lovers, the failed rebellion against the masters, and the utopian possibility of sacrifice that frees the enslaved from bondage with some hope of reconciliation after death. Most of these narrative themes constitute the basic plot of *Oroonoko* and *Inkle and Yarico*.

From the above narrative context, four elemental components that constitute the noble savage paradigm can be isolated: the primitivist ethic of the pastoral, the nobility, heroism, and love intrigue of the heroic-romance, the tragic fate of the character, and the sympathy garnered through heightened sentimentalism. These otherwise free-floating features are stitched together to create the semiological skin that covers the black body of the noble savage. I redeploy the noble savage concept as a paradigm to account for the historically-

[10] Ibid., 255.

determined shifts in how nobility, savagery, blackness, and primitiveness were understood within the theatrical context, marked by a shift in the spectators' sympathetic investment in black-bodied "noble savage" characters.

My conjecture is that, depending on the configuration of these elements within a constellation, different characteristics become dominant or visible to the spectators. Characteristics like the privileged distinction of nobility and the universal quality of "natural" virtue are both a part of the romance and pastoral conventions that compose the paradigm. Within the pastoral convention, the figure identified as the "noble savage" is idealized as a person in a state of innocence uncorrupted by civilization; Golden Age ideals of an absolute past clash with aristocratic conventions of romance, which privilege cultural refinement as a mark of distinction that sets the hero apart from other common characters. This coupling of the romance and the pastoral persists as a formal contradiction between the refined courtly expression and the theme of rustic simplicity. This formal tension is the fundamental polarity of the noble savage paradigm, condensed in the conjunction of two words: "nobility" and "savagery."

As I will demonstrate below, the earlier plays, particularly Thomas Southerne's *Oroonoko* (Drury Lane, 1695) and Mrs. Weddell's *Inkle and Yarico* (1742), incorporate the specific configuration of the noble savage paradigm that privileges nobility, while the later plays like John Hawkesworth's and Francis Gentleman's alterations of *Oroonoko* (Drury Lane, 1759; Edinburgh, 1760), and George Colman's operatic *Inkle and Yarico* (Haymarket, 1787) emphasize the "natural" capacity to be virtuous. While the heroic-romance and tragic conventions supplement the cluster of features configured around feudal notions of nobility at the beginning of the eighteenth century, more democratic notions of sentiment and sensibility take centre-stage at the end of the century, associated with the everyman-quality of the noble savage. In what follows, I trace the alterations in dramatic representations of *Oroonoko* and

Yarico as clues of this performative reconfiguration of elements within the noble savage paradigm.

The Noble Body

John Dryden's *The Conquest of Granada* (1672) offers the only clear use of the term "noble savage," designating the early representations of the noble savage as configured around the noble body rather than the natural body. However, it presents a peculiar dilemma when dealing with the (New World) concept of the noble savage primarily because of its (Old World) Moorish setting. The context in which Dryden uses the term is when the hero, Almanzor, is sentenced to death by Boabdelin, the King of the Moors, because he refused the king's orders to stand down during a factional feud between two warring noble families in the Moorish kingdom. Defying the king's authority, Almanzor exclaims:

> No Man has more Contempt than I of Breath,
> But whence hast thou the Right to give me Death?
> Obey'd as Sovereign by thy Subjects be,
> But know, that I alone am King of me.
> I am as free as Nature first made Man,
> E'er the base Laws of Servitude began,
> When wild in Woods the noble Savage ran. (Act 1.i)[11]

There are a number of significant ideas in this passage that engages with the concept of the noble savage. The idea that man is naturally born free and only later becomes chained by "Laws of Servitude" connects not only to Lescarbot's West Indian savages who exercise the "heavenly privilege" of hunting "without distinction of persons," but also to Lahontan's black-bodied, white-faced savage who tramples upon the book of laws, the crown, and the

[11] John Dryden, *The Conquest of Granada by the Spaniards* (London: Printed for J. Tonson and T. Bennet, 1704), 6.



Figure 1: Frontispiece of Lahontan's *New Voyages to North-America, Vol. 2* (1703)

sceptre (Figure 1).[12] Lahontan's savage as a noble body was thus a product of a specific historical moment, in which the early New World colonial encounters provided a setting for the confluence of Christian theology, Renaissance classicism, and aristocratic feudalism. The contrast between the white Greco-Roman face and the dark body signals the visual juxtaposition of nobility and savagery without resorting to naming it as a noble savage. Almanzor, to be sure, is no savage in the wild, yet he claims the independence and the sovereignty of self that such a savage, unbounded by social norms and conventions, would supposedly exercise. More than a savage, Almanzor is definitely a noble. Although his origins are obscured in the beginning of the play, it is eventually revealed that Almanzor is the lost son of the Duke of Arcos, a Spaniard no less, who still continues to fight for the Moors against the Spaniards out of duty, a most honourable noble virtue if there ever were one. Almanzor as a noble savage is ultimately a European nobleman.

The point about the early representations of the noble savage as configured around the noble body is made clear by the fact that neither in *The Indian Queen* (1664) nor in *The Indian Emperour* (1665), plays dealing with the Incans and the Aztecs, does Dryden even once use the term "noble savage." When he does use the term, it is to designate a character that is noble by virtue of being born into a noble family, rather than being naturally virtuous in accordance with the laws of nature. Such is the case with the first stage adaptation of Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*.

Thomas Southerne's *Oroonoko* was first performed at Drury Lane theatre in

[12] The earliest instance of the use of the term "noble savage" is in the work of French ethnographer, Marc Lescarbot, whose English translation, *Nova Francia* (1609), is said to be the source for Dryden's use of the term in *The Conquest of Granada* (Printed 1672). See Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage*, 22. Lescarbot discusses the nobility of savages in a concluding section titled "The savages are truly noble" in a chapter on "Hunting." See Marc Lescarbot, *Nova Francia: A Description of Arcadia, 1606 (1609)*, trans. Pierre Erondelle (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1928), 267.

December 1695. *Oroonoko* proved to be an "uncommon success," notes one contemporary. [13] It established its reputation as a staple in the theatrical repertoire, which attracted the attention of new playwrights who wanted to adapt Southerne's drama to their own times. In 1759, during the Seven Years' War, when England was expanding its colonial empire, John Hawkesworth, a Director of the East India Company associated with the Samuel Johnson circle in London, made a number of crucial alterations in Southerne's play that had a lasting influence on all subsequent dramatic adaptations of *Oroonoko*.

Southerne's own deft translation of Behn's novel into a play involved much foreshortening, compressing, and amplifying, transforming the central character into the mould of an aristocratic romance hero, more pathetic and tragic than his fierce novelistic counterpart.[14] While the novelistic Oroonoko inspired fear in the narrator who thought "that he… would come down and cut all our Throats," the dramatic Oroonoko was more averse to the idea of bloodshed, hesitating to commit violence: "tho I languish for my Liberty,/ I would not buy it at the Christian Price/ Of black Ingratitude" (Act 3.ii).[15] Southerne's *Oroonoko* adopted a mix of tragic and comic elements popular in Restoration tragedies. Perhaps the most significant aspect of the play that lent itself to sentimental treatment later in the eighteenth century was that Oroonoko's conflict was not an internal conflict within the tragic character that was the hallmark of Shakespearean tragedies; rather his predicament was due to observable external circumstances, the enslavement of a prince. The comic elements in *Oroonoko*, on the other hand, which were characteristic of Restoration comedies with their cynical attitude towards marriage, shocked the sentimental sensibilities of a later generation.

---

[13] *A Comparison between the Two Stages*, (London 1702), 30.

[14] John W. Dodds, *Thomas Southerne, Dramatist* (New Haven: Yale University, 1933), 132.

[15] Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko, or, the Royal Slave: A True History* (London: Printed for William Canning, 1688), 209; Thomas Southerne, *Oroonoko, a Tragedy* (London: Printed by J. Darby, 1722), 48.

Southerne made his own alterations to Behn's text, expunging much of the violence and torture in the novel, especially the gratuitous final episode of Oroonoko's dismemberment at the hands of colonial authorities. He heightened the pathos of his play's final scenes by making Oroonoko kill his beloved Imoinda, then the evil Lieutenant-Governor, and finally himself.

Southerne's Oroonoko, however, was not Rousseau's primitive man, even as his "native innocence" offered a scathing contrast to the "Christian Arts" used by civilized whites to speak fair in order to flatter and deceive (Act 5.iii).[16] His "native innocence" was not yet configured as the common humanity of the ordinary slave but as the essential humanity of a tragic noble character. When Oroonoko walked onstage behind a silent retinue of slaves, "last of all in Chains," Blanford, the sympathetic white character, remarked: "Most of 'em know no better! They were born so, and only change their Masters. But a Prince born only to command, betray'd and sold! My Heart drops Blood for him" (Act 1.ii).[17] Southerne depicted Oroonoko as singular and distinct, visually emphasizing his royal status as a prince and his separation from the mass of common slaves. Whereas the myth of the noble savage assumes that it is the state of nature that bestows nobility upon the savage, Oroonoko, as an actual early representation of the noble savage, underscores the significance of the feudalistic conception of nobility as a matter of hereditary descent. Freedom, bravery, chivalry, and dignity follow from the noble body insofar as one is born a noble. In a similar vein, Behn's Oroonoko "had nothing of Barbarity in his Nature, but in all Points address'd himself, as if his Education had been in some European Court."[18] It turns out, after all, that Oroonoko was taught by a French tutor. Behn modelled Oroonoko after the classical heroes, and it is

---

[16] Southerne, *Oroonoko, a Tragedy*, 79.

[17] Ibid., 24.

[18] Behn, *Oroonoko*, 19.

interesting to note that the absolute blackness of his skin is itself understood relatively as a mark of distinction, which is transposed into a "racial" mark of enslavement, a point which will be emphasised later: "His Face was not of that brown, rusty Black which most of that Nation are, but a perfect Ebony, or polish'd Jett… His Nose was rising and *Roman*, instead of *African* and flat."[19]

In keeping with Behn's characterisation, Southerne's Oroonoko was portrayed by Jack Verbruggen, a physically well-built actor with a "good voice," best known for his "rough-hewn characters."[20] *The Laureat* in 1740 described him as an actor that "had a roughness in his manner, and a negligent agreeable wildness in his action and his mien, which became him well."[21] He was well positioned to play a character like Oroonoko, complementing simultaneously the noble countenance and the "native innocence" that constituted his persona.

In Verbruggen's performance, all four elements of the noble savage paradigm – primitivist ethic, heroic-romance, tragic fate, and sentimental sympathy – find expression, but their configuration emphasizes his distinguished "native innocence," tragically heightened by his class position. Southerne's play adopted the heroic-romance and tragic conventions, in which a larger-than-life character suffers misery, evoking pity and terror in the audience, just as his pathetic situation evoked sympathy for a "royal slave" without the need to criticize the

---

[19] Ibid., 20-21. Laura Brown reads Aphra Behn's royal slave as "a locus classicus of the trope of sentimental identification by which the native 'other' is naturalized as a European aristocrat." Laura Brown, *Ends of Empire: Women and Ideology in Early Eighteenth-Century English Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 35.

[20] Philip H. Highfill, Kalman A. Burnim, and Edward A. Langhans, *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers & Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800*, vol. 15 (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993), 136.

[21] Quoted in ibid.

institution of slavery. If the spectators were to have any doubt on this point, Southerne inserted an apology for the planters, offered by Oroonoko himself:

> If we are slaves, they [the planters] did not make us slaves;
> But bought us in an honest way of trade:
> As we have done before 'em, bought and sold
> Many a wretch, and never thought it wrong. (Act 3.ii)[22]

Oroonoko's hesitation to castigate the planters directly was contrasted with the more rebellious perspective of his loyal but subordinate companion, Aboan, a confrontation that distinguished Oroonoko's experience from the more common slave experience:

> Oroonoko: But we find
> The Load so light, so little to be felt,
> (Considering they have us in their power,
> And may inflict what Grievances they please)
> We ought not to complain.
>
> Aboan: My Royal Lord!
> You do not know the heavy Grievances,
> The Toils, the Labours, weary Drudgeries,
> Which they impose; Burdens more fit for Beasts,
> For senseless Beasts to bear, than thinking Men.
> Then if you saw the bloody Cruelties
> They execute on every slight Offence;
> Nay, sometimes in their proud, insulting Sport:
> Your Heart would bleed for 'em. O! could you know
> How many Wretches lift their Hands and Eyes
> To you, for their Relief! (Act 3.ii)[23]

In the above lines, Aboan relates the harsh conditions of slavery suffered by the common slaves, offering a stark contrast to Oroonoko's experience of a "Load so light, so little to be felt" that "We ought not to complain." The common slaves were treated with little sympathy; their plight overshadowed by the tragedy of a royal slave. But how does a royal slave motif fit within a New World slavery context? Adam Beach's analysis of Behn's *Abdelazer* and *Oroonoko* highlights an interesting connection between Old World bondage and New World

[22] Southerne, *Oroonoko*, 48.

[23] Ibid., 48-49.

slavery which can shed some light on this.

Beach argues that scholars have neglected the Islamic Mediterranean context of slave institutions during the Restoration period, thus giving more emphasis to Behn's *Oroonoko* as a novel that "inaugurates a New World discourse on slavery," overlooking the significance of her play, *Abdelazer* (Duke's Theatre, 1676), which features an enslaved vengeful Moor.[24] He suggests that "New and Old World slaveries need to be read together as part of a larger global history of human bondage."[25] Once we accept that Old World slavery was quite familiar to Behn and her contemporaries, the interconnections between varied slave representations during the period become more interesting. For one, as Beach points out, "Oroonoko's treatment as an elite slave serves as the importation of an Old World slave practice into a New World setting," and also, the Moorish context of Dryden's noble savage implies the playwright's awareness of both forms of human bondage.[26] Probably the most evident shift in terms of representation from Old World to New World slave discourse is the shift from Muslim Moors of the North African Mediterranean region to the Sub-Saharan Africans of the West African regions. Behn's *Oroonoko* and its theatrical adaptations thus mark a transition in representations of black bodies from one sub-group of dark characters to another. I will explore the ensuing tension between the representations of these two sub-groups (Moors and "Negros") in greater detail in Chapter Three. For now, it is sufficient to note that it is the noble body of the royal slave that serves as the link between the Old World Mediterranean context and the New World plantation context. In other words, Oroonoko, the royal slave, walks upon the stage as a residual image of Dryden's Almanzor, a noble body who claimed

---

[24] Adam R. Beach, "Global Slavery, Old World Bondage, and Aphra Behn's "Abdelazer"," *The Eighteenth Century* 53, no. 4 (2012): 413.

[25] Ibid., 427.

[26] Ibid.

to be as free as a noble savage.

After the failure of his rebellion in Act 5, Oroonoko's scornful comment on the common slaves further reiterates this point:

> I own the Folly of my Enterprise…
> To think I could design to make those free
> Who were by Nature Slaves; Wretches design'd
> To be their Masters' Dogs, and lick their Feet.
> Whip, whip 'em to the Knowledge of your Gods,
> ……..
> I would not live on the same Earth with Creatures,
> That only have the Faces of their Kind:
> Why should they look like Men, who are not so?
> When they put off their noble Natures, for
> The grovelling Qualities of down-cast Beasts,
> I wish they had their Tails. (Act 5.ii)[27]

Common slaves, bereft of "noble Natures," were considered no better than brutes. The distinction here between the common slaves and Oroonoko is not grounded in terms of race. As Colette Guillaumin notes, the early connotations of "race" were more closely associated with nobility, blood, family, and household.[28] Dryden's *The Conquest of Granada* bears evidence to this semantic field covered by race. In the exchange between the warring noble families, race is used more often to refer to themselves and their line of descent rather than to define the other: "A Band of *Zegrys* ran within the Place, / Match'd with a Troop of Thirty of our Race"; "Thy Villain-Blood thou openly didst place / Above the Purple of our Kingly Race" (Act 1.i).[29] However, there is one reference to "race" in Dryden's play which indicates its later negative connotations to refer more commonly to other "inferior" communities: "Their Mungril Race is mix'd with Christian Breed, / Hence 'tis that they those Dogs in

---

[27] Southerne, *Oroonoko*, 67.

[28] Guillaumin, "Specific Characteristics of Racist Ideology (1972)," 44.

[29] Dryden, *The Conquest of Granada*, 5.

Prisons feed" (Act 1.i).[30] But in the early eighteenth-century context, "race" usually applied solely to noble families, and was semantically related to other terms like "blood" and "noble."[31] Guillaumin points to the unique transformation in the meaning of the word "race" by the end of the century:

> A word ["Race"] which in the old days applied only to the aristocracy is nowadays reserved for 'racialised' peoples, two groups which could not be further apart in terms of both economic and political power. From designating an institutional power group, it has shifted to cover categories of people without any legal definition, who have nothing to do with the exercise of power.[32]

It is only after the expansion of the British empire and the intensification of the slave trade that the term "race" changed in meaning to refer to Arab, Asiatic, Jew, Israelite, and Negro. In contrast to the later denigration of the "racialised" black body as a bestial body, the dark noble body is a pre-racialised formalisation of the black body. In the above passage from Southerne's play, Oroonoko emphasized the dignity of the royal slave as a noble body at the expense of the common slaves. The distinction between the two was a feudal-aristocratic distinction between a noble prince and commoners, a distinction which would become difficult to maintain in the subsequent adaptations inspired by the twin movements of sentimentalism and humanitarianism. John Hawkesworth's alterations of Southerne's *Oroonoko* elevated the common slaves to a more prominent representative position in the play that disrupted this feudal distinction by evoking sympathy for their plight.

The Shift to Sentimental Sympathy and Reconciliation

In Hawkesworth's 1759 alteration, Oroonoko and Aboan's contrasting perspectives

---

[30] Ibid.

[31] Guillaumin, "Specific Characteristics of Racist Ideology (1972)," 42.

[32] Ibid., 44.

were supplemented with a variety of scenes involving common slave characters. In Act 2, scene 3, Hawkesworth added a new slave song-and-dance sequence that gave a more prominent representation to an entourage of common slaves lamenting their slave condition: "Love and Joy must still be free" for both disdain "The sounding Scourge, and galling Chain" (Act 2.iii).[33] In this scene, Oroonoko enters as a spectator, along with Blanford, the Lieutenant-Governor, and Stanmore, further highlighting the distinction between him and the common slaves. But this distinction marginalizes him as a spectator viewing the central action (the slave song-and-dance) performed by common slaves. However, despite giving more representational prominence to common slave characters, Hawkesworth retains the dignity of his noble hero as in the scene where Aboan attempts to inspire the common slaves to rebellion:

> There is among you now a mighty Prince,
> Great as a tutelary God in Arms;
> Before the Lightning of whose dreaded Sword,
> These pale, cold, half-form'd Tyrants that insult ye
> Wou'd vanish, like thin Mists before the Sun. (Act 1.iii)[34]

Unlike in Southerne's play, where the separation of the royal slave and the common slaves focuses spectatorial sympathy solely on Oroonoko, in Hawkesworth's alteration, sympathy is evoked by the plight of the common slave, even as Hawkesworth maintains Oroonoko's image as a noble body.

Another crucial alteration, made by Hawkesworth, was the excision of the parallel comic subplot. This alteration was necessary, according to Samuel Johnson in a review of the play, for "the tragic action was interrupted, not only by comic scenes, but by scenes of the

---

[33] John Hawkesworth, *Oroonoko, a Tragedy, as It Is Now Acted at the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane. By His Majesty's Servants. By Thomas Southern. With Alterations* (London: printed for C. Bathurst; and the rest of the proprietors, 1759), 23.

[34] Ibid., 14.

lowest buffoonery, and the grossest indecency."[35] Southerne's play began with a comic plot focusing on two sisters from London arriving in Surinam to find profitable suitors. The opening dialogues between Lucia and Welldon introduce us to a very different sort of play:

> Lucia: What will this come to? What can it end in? You have persuaded me to leave dear England, and dearer London, the Place of the World most worth living in, to follow you a Husband-hunting into America: I thought Husbands grew in these Plantations.
>
> Welldon: Why so they do, as thick as Oranges, ripening one under another. Week after Week they drop into some Woman's Mouth: 'Tis but a little patience, spreading your Apron in expectation, and one of 'em will fall into your Lap at last. (Act 1.i)[36]

Hawkesworth, by contrast, reoriented the drama to focus on the inhumanity of slavery and the hypocrisy of unsympathetic West-Indian planters. The opening scene introduces four planters awaiting the arrival of a fresh supply of slaves. One of them comments that "we shall have enough of 'em I warrant you, when they come to breed," to which the others derisively reply:

> 3d Planter: Breed! It's a sign you're a new Comer; Pox on 'em, a parcel of lazy, obstinate, untractable Pagans; – half of 'em are so sulky when they first come, that they won't eat their Victuals when it's set before 'em, and a Christian may beat 'em 'till he drops down before he can make 'em eat, if they han't a mind to it.
>
> 2d Planter: Beat! aye faith, he may beat those that will eat, long enough before they will work: And what with their starving themselves, and what with the Discipline they require before they will put out their strength; they die as fast as rotten Sheep, plague on 'em! The poor industrious planter loses the Money they cost him, and his Ground runs to Ruin for want of their Labour. (Act 1.i)[37]

Even before the slaves are introduced to spectators, the pathetic conditions of their existence on the plantation and the callous attitude of the planters evoke sympathy for them and

---

[35] In the *Critical Review* for Dec., 1759, VIII, 480-481. Quoted in Dodds, *Thomas Southerne, Dramatist*, 152.

[36] Southerne, *Oroonoko*, 11.

[37] Hawkesworth, *Oroonoko*, 5-6.

revulsion towards the planters. The contrast between the two openings of what is essentially the same play could not have been starker. Hawkesworth commented in the prologue that these comic scenes "stain'd the sacred Page," accusing Southerne to be a "Slave to Custom in a laughing Age."[38]

By drawing the spectator's attention visually to the plight of the common slaves through song-and-dance spectacles, giving the common slave characters more representational prominence, and expunging from the dramatic plot the distracting comic scenes, Hawkesworth expanded the moral compass of the play from Southerne's singular focus on the noble body of an enslaved prince to a sympathetic portrayal of common slaves. In doing so, he tightened the dramatic plot to offer a sentimental critique of the institution of slavery.

Even in the Inkle-and-Yarico adaptations we see a similar transition from a focus on the noble body to a sentimentally depicted natural body. In Mrs. Weddell's, *Inkle and Yarico* (1742), the position of the principal sympathetic spectator within the play is occupied by Amyntor, the planter's son, who, like the character of Blanford in *Oroonoko*, mediates the perspective adopted by the audience.[39] The sympathizing characters in these plays serve as a point of identification for the audience to view the spectacle of the suffering noble body because such characters share an equally privileged status with the sympathizing offstage spectators. The necessity of such a character within the play that mediates sympathy for the suffering protagonist distinguishes the privileged subject of sympathy (Blanford, Amyntor, the audience) from the unequal object of sympathy (Oroonoko, Yarico).

---

[38] Ibid., 3.

[39] Not much is known of Mrs. Weddell, who wrote the first dramatic version of the *Inkle and Yarico* narrative. Jeffrey Cox, in his anthology of drama on slavery, follows Allardyce Nicoll in attributing the play to a Mrs. Weddell. Although intended for performance at the Covent Garden theatre, the play was rejected, "with only a supercilious objection to its shortness," according to the author. See Cox, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 5: 1, 5.

The significance of the onstage sympathetic spectator can be judged by the fact that Weddell grants Amyntor centrality within the dramatic scene. Rather than depict Yarico's enslavement as a spectacle directly viewed by the audience, Weddell mediates Yarico's suffering through the character of Amyntor. Amyntor's account of Yarico's situation is replete with descriptions of appropriate sympathetic responses of those surrounding her, but more importantly he makes it a point to contrast Yarico's suffering as distinct from what the common slaves suffer:

> Ev'n their Drivers,
> Who ev'ry Day are us'd to torture others,
> Stood list'ning to her Grief, nor could withhold
> A sympathizing Tear – Soft Pity reigned,
> Till the whole Circle of her griev'd spectators
> Bore one continued Face of sorrow,
> And felt half her woes. (Act 3.v)[40]

The slave drivers, who were otherwise jaded from torturing common slaves, could not withhold their emotions when confronted with the spectacle of the suffering Yarico. A little later, Amyntor describes the reaction of the same onstage spectators to Yarico's death:

> Then, with a Sigh,
> Pierc'd every Heart around, her Spirit broke,
> And her pure Soul got free …
> … A melting Groan Echo'd from each Beholder, and each Heart
> Throbb'd her departing Peal; swift-streaming Tears
> Gush'd in full Torrents from each Eye; and Death
> Half-seiz'd her griev'd Spectators – At the Relation,
> My sense scarce kept its Boundaries, and my Fancy
> Still keeps her in my Sight, nor can these Streams,
> That gush impetuous, wash her from my View. (Act 3.v)[41]

In other words, what is depicted onstage is not Yarico's pathetic situation, but Inkle's changing attitude as Amyntor relates Yarico's situation to him. The spectators witness the shift in Inkle's earlier indifference ("I am not/ By Tears or Threats, to be prevailed upon/ To

[40] Cox, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 5: 65-66.

[41] Ibid., 5: 67.

act against my interest") to his later remorse ("My slow-returning Senses now declare/ Me guilty of the blackest perfidy!").[42] But, being a merchant, whose "thirst for Gold/ Brings only Bitterness, Remorse, and dark/ Confusion," he is doomed to die. By an act of providential justice, Inkle is unwittingly killed by Honorius (the personification of [aristocratic] honour), the brother of Violetta, the woman whom Inkle had wronged prior to the events of the play.[43] There is no salvation for Inkle, just as there is no sympathy for the stock of common slaves, as noted by Amyntor:

> Although my life has been employed among
> The Groans of sighing slaves, in her Affliction
> Something appears beyond a Common Suffering:
> For, through the Rage of Anguish and Despair
> Is seen, the tender Softness of a Mind
> Too great to bear Adversity. (Act 3.iii)[44]

As in Southerne's *Oroonoko*, so too in Weddell's *Inkle and Yarico*, the elements within the noble savage paradigm are configured to stress the nobility and tragic romance of the noble savage, distinguished as she is from "Common Suffering" of common slaves. Julie Ellison, in her study of emotion and sympathy in eighteenth-century plays focusing on stoic fathers and sympathetic sons, notes that the sensibility of the community of sympathetic spectators thus formed by witnessing the spectacle of noble suffering is "predicated on the social equality of elite men" in which "an internalized standard of honour differentiates the gentleman from the 'mere vulgar of mankind.'"[45] Sympathy for the noble body of the noble savage becomes the occasion for consolidating an exclusive community of the free that can conveniently exclude any consideration for the plight of the common slaves through rhetorical and visual strategies

---

[42] Ibid., 5: 59, 67.

[43] Ibid., 5: 68.

[44] Ibid., 5: 58.

[45] Julie K. Ellison, *Cato's Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 27.

deployed by dramatists within established tragic, heroic, and romance conventions.

George Colman's operatic *Inkle and Yarico* (Haymarket, 1787) challenges many of these established traditional theatrical conventions and significantly reconfigures the noble savage paradigm in terms of the sentimentally virtuous natural body. The English opera distinguished itself from Italian opera (which Michael Burden insists was the only other kind of opera that the British knew about up until the 1780s) in that it employed spoken texts rather than being sung throughout. It was often called "musical drama," with an added emphasis on narrative composed of dramatic scenes.[46] The way in which the suffering body and the spectating body are framed in these dramatic scenes is crucial to the formation of the type of spectatorial community envisaged. A comparison between the diametrically opposed manner in which Mrs. Weddell and George Colman treat the first encounter between Inkle and Yarico demonstrates not only how this important dramatic scene works differently in the two plays but also illustrates the different configurations of the noble savage paradigm and the differing forms of sympathetic investment in the character of Yarico. The encounter between Inkle and Yarico is presented as a scene within a scene in which the audience is made to observe the character in the foreground observing the character in the background. In Weddell's play, the scene is constructed in such a way that the audience observes Yarico and her companions observing Inkle; while in Colman's play, the audience observes Inkle and his servant, Trudge, observing Yarico and her maidservant, Wowski.

In Weddell's play, Yarico, upon seeing Inkle, exclaims:

> What do I see!
> Be still: behold a form celestial there!
> See! From the clouds he's come! And with him brought
> The brightness of his Parent-God the Sun! (Act 1.iii)[47]

---

[46] Michael Burden, "The Writing and Staging of Georgian Romantic Opera," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre, 1737-1832*, ed. Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 425.

[47] Cox, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 5: 17.

Before this scene, the audience had been introduced to Inkle, who was grieving about how he wronged Violetta, taking advantage of her "fond Heart" and ruining her reputation, exposing her to "insulting sneer."[48] Upon hearing Yarico comparing Inkle to a "form celestial," the audience, knowing his true character and the fate of Violetta, would have been made aware of the tragic irony and the fate to befall the poor noble savage. Right after Yarico's observation, her companion offers an alternative perspective on the scene beheld by the audience:

> The most rapacious
> Of all Mankind wear that deluding Outside,
> The better to deceive the Innocent. –
> These are the Ravagers who bear our Friends
> To distant Realms, to Slavery, and to Death;
> Where all who fall into their Hands, alike
> Are miserable; nor Virtue there avails
> Nor sex, nor Birth:– The princely Youth, or Maid,
> Find no Distinction there: Pity's unknown;
> Deaf to Humanity, the imperious Master,
> Perhaps a Beggar born, inflicts a Task
> Of Slav'ry on a Prince; whose gen'rous Arm
> Unskill'd in menial Acts, subjects his Back
> To Stripes, whom Nature form'd to sway an Empire. (Act 1.iii)[49]

Perhaps in no other passage is there a clearer emphasis on the nobility of the noble savage than here. What seems to be a comment on the slave trade does not express a criticism of slavery but a sense of revulsion at the subversion of class hierarchy. The native woman is appalled not so much by the enslavement of her kinsmen, but by the fact that slavery reduces all, without distinction, to the same state of misery; neither the "princely Youth" nor the "Maid" are spared. What is more intolerable is that the enslaver, the "imperious Master," might as well be a lowly "Beggar born" commoner, who "inflicts a Task/ Of slav'ry on a Prince." When Inkle approaches the natives and acknowledges that he used "to traffick on the Afric coast," he unwittingly assumes the unsympathetic identity of a slave-trader, which had

---

[48] Ibid., 5: 16.

[49] Ibid., 5: 18.

just been described a moment ago by the native woman. From the very first encounter, Inkle is positioned as a threat to Yarico, duplicitous in his bearing, and without any hope of redemption.

In contrast to Weddell's unredeemable Inkle, George Colman adopts a sentimental comic form, transforming the *Inkle-and-Yarico* story into a narrative of redemption, making significant alterations to ensure a sentimental reconciliation between the two characters.[50] Sentimental comedies in general portrayed affecting stories with an underlying message of moral reform and, according to Misty Anderson, they were particularly effective in the mid-eighteenth century at "reconciling aristocratic notions of values with emerging middle-class notions of individual worth."[51] In Colman's scene, the audience follows Inkle and Trudge into a cave, which, as per stage directions, is "decorated with skins of wild beasts, feathers, &c. In the middle of the scene, a rude kind of curtain, by way of door to an inner apartment" (Act 1.iii).[52] In other words, it is Inkle who acts as the onstage spectator from whose point of view the audience will observe him observing Yarico. This inversion of Weddell's construction of the dramatic scene is crucial. Unlike the subversion of class hierarchies that structured the dramatic scene in Weddell's drama, here the spectators are invited to identify with Inkle as one amongst them.

---

[50] George Colman the Younger, son of the Haymarket theatre manager, George Colman the Elder, took over management of the establishment in 1789 after his father was declared insane. He became the Examiner of Plays from 1824 till his death in 1836. See William J. Burling, "Colman, George, the Younger (1762-1836)," ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, Online ed., *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/5977.

[51] Misty G. Anderson, "Genealogies of Comedy," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre, 1737-1832*, ed. Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 349.

[52] George Colman, "Inkle and Yarico," in *The British Theatre, with Biographical and Critical Remarks by Mrs Inchbald* (London: Printed for Hurst, Robinson, and Co., 1824), 17.

In the scenes preceding the encounter, Colman's Inkle is introduced to the audience as a fearless merchant adventurer, out to make his fortune. Inkle's uncle, Medium, comments on his cavalier attitude: "Zounds, one would think, by your confounded composure, that you were walking in St. James's Park, instead of an American forest: and that all the beasts were nothing but good company" (Act 1.i).[53] With Inkle, every moment is an opportunity for enrichment, improvement, and growth, and not even being shipwrecked and lost could dampen his entrepreneurial spirits:

> Inkle: My heels! Here's a pretty doctrine! Do you think I travel merely for motion? What, would you have a man of business come abroad, scamper extravagantly here and there and everywhere, then return home, and have nothing to tell, but that he has been here and there and everywhere? 'Sdeath, sir, would you have me travel like a lord? (Act 1.i)[54]

Mockingly distinguishing himself from a lord, Inkle's response is an indication of the fundamental transformations in British society and social relations towards the end of the eighteenth century. Although Colman's father, the elder Colman, had previously staged a popular drama, *The English Merchant* (Drury Lane, 1767), featuring a benevolent and heroic English merchant whose very name, Freeport, preaches free-market liberalism, the historical context for the younger Colman's play had drastically changed.

After the credit crisis which adversely crippled the metropole in 1772, and the subsequent loss of the thirteen American colonies, the British Empire was on the brink of a potential collapse. Burke bemoaned the dire situation following the bankruptcy of the East India company when he stated during the debate on the East India Bill: "Was it not the sudden plunder of the East that gave the final blow to the freedom of Rome? What reason

---

[53] Ibid., 9.

[54] Ibid., 10.

have we to expect a better fate?" (18th December 1772).[55] Daniel O'Quinn argues that Britain emerged from the decades of constitutional, military, and economic crises in the 1790s "through a recalibration of imperial interests" marked by a "transformation from mercantile to a territorial empire."[56]

For O'Quinn, plays like *Inkle and Yarico* are significant cultural documents that negotiate and present "the transformations in British society on a nightly basis."[57] In an extended analysis of the play in *Entertaining Crisis in the Atlantic Imperium, 1770-1790*, O'Quinn examines the racialization of class relations through an exploration of the play's sexual politics. The recalibration of colonial interests is "thoroughly enmeshed both in the stabilization of the white middle-class body in the metropole and in the complex engagement with the end of the American war."[58] In her review, Elizabeth Inchbald redirects the critique of mercantilism towards a critique of slavery. For O'Quinn, Inchbald retroactively shifts the ground in imitation of the "current order of things," which he reads as "part of a large-scale rewriting of colonial history following the American Revolution aimed at suppressing the prior relationship between the American and the Caribbean colonies."[59] But more than slavery, it is mercantile ideology that is the subject Colman's dramatic scrutiny. As O'Quinn argues, it is through the fatherly character, Sir Christopher Curry, that Colman is able to offer an exculpatory narrative that legitimizes British imperial interests even while chastising its

---

[55] "Debates in the Commons on the Bill to Restrain the East India Company from Appointing Supervisors in India," in *The Parliamentary History of England* (London: Printed by T. C. Hansard, 1803), 672-73.

[56] O'Quinn, *Staging Governance*, 24.

[57] Ibid., 11.

[58] Daniel O'Quinn, *Entertaining Crisis in the Atlantic Imperium, 1770-1790* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 276.

[59] Ibid., 277.

mercantilist basis: "Curry is not a man of commerce but rather a colonial administrator, and as such he retains a certain distance from the merchant class that comes under sharp scrutiny in Colman's play."[60] Within the narrative of the play, the mercantilism of the first British Empire, represented by Inkle's greed, transitions towards military imperialism, represented by Campley's martial masculinity.[61] According to O'Quinn, the Narcissa-Campley marriage plot allegorises the union between colonial administration (Narcissa is the daughter of the colonial administrator) and the military, marking the shift towards territorial military intervention.[62] As the only non-interracial couple in the play, Narcissa and Campley define a non-sentimental middle-class normativity in stark contrast to the other two interracial couples, Inkle-Yarico and Trudge-Wowski. On the one hand, the relationship between a morally deformed Inkle and a noble savage Yarico defines the sentimentally exotic extreme of the spectrum, while, on the other hand, the lower-class relationship between Trudge and Wowski defines the other extreme of unsentimental hypersexualization. In sum, O'Quinn concludes, "[b]oth sets of interracial couples are consigned to the constitutive outside of the middle class," whereas "the play's normative couple, Campley and Narcissa, remain importantly undefined."[63] The importance of O'Quinn's reading of Colman's play is the focus on the twin processes of racialization and sexualization of the characters that define the sexual politics of the play in favour of an emergent white middle-class normative body that becomes the standard for later forms of biological state racism.

However, in the context of the opera, the exclusion of Inkle from normativity only subordinates the role of the merchant in the imperial venture, which means that Colman's

---

[60] Ibid., 281.

[61] Ibid., 282.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid., 299-300.

Inkle, no matter how despicable his actions, must be offered the opportunity to be reconciled in order to exculpate the larger imperial project. In an extension of O'Quinn's argument, I argue that the necessity of Inkle's reconciliation informed the manner in which Colman sought to stage the crucial encounter between Inkle and Yarico – hence the loaded significance of the scene in which Inkle enters Yarico's cave with Trudge (Act 1.iii).[64] On parting the curtain that reveals a hidden chamber, the two adventurers, along with the audience, view the sleeping natives. Inkle's first response is significant for it offers a drastic contrast to Weddell's treatment of the scene.

In Weddell's scene, the audience is introduced to Inkle's character and acquainted with the treachery he has committed with Violetta, after which he withdraws into the background to be observed by Yarico. In Colman's scene, the audience observes Yarico from the point of view of Inkle without first being acquainted with her character. In other words, the natives are initially presented as a pure spectacle, framed by curtains, ensconced in the bowels of the cave. In this instance, the "savagery" of the noble savage is emphasized over and above the nobility of the noble savage. The audience is not introduced to Yarico as a noble princess as was the case in Weddell's play; rather she is framed, as in numerous traveller's accounts of the period, by the natural surroundings that figure her as "natural" body in its pre-civilizational simplicity and prelapsarian moral purity; rather than being configured as a noble body, Yarico's representation emphasizes the naturalness of her state of being.

The audience identifies with Inkle's response, as a reliable and identifiable onstage spectator. It is thus significant that Inkle's response is not calculating but sentimental: "By heaven! A woman / And beautiful as an angel!"[65] This response is in stark contrast to Inkle's

---

[64] Ibid., 17.

[65] Ibid., 17-18.

later mercantile response to Yarico's idyllic pastoralism when he justifies why he needs to sell her off as a slave:

> Hear me, Yarico. My countrymen and yours differ as much in minds as in complexions. We were not born to live in woods and caves. 'Tis misery to us to be reduced to seek subsistence by pursuing beasts. We Christians, girl, hunt money, a thing unknown to you. Here 'tis money which brings us ease, plenty, command, power, and everything; and, of course, happiness. You are a bar to my attaining this. (Act 3.iii)

Although Colman's play critiques Inkle's mercantilism through Yarico's constancy, its strategy for doing so is quite different from Weddell's. In Weddell's play, the audience had to be distanced from Inkle's mercenary instincts from the very first scene; the mention of Violetta foreshadows Inkle's death at the hands of Violetta's brother, Honorius, through an act of providential justice. No such fate is prefigured for Colman's Inkle. In Colman's play, Inkle, as a sentimental hero (despite obvious flaws in his education) is presented as a sympathetic spectator, a figure that has the potential for reconciliation.

It is often noted that Colman had asked John Bannister, the actor who played Inkle, "What are we to do with Inkle?" to which the actor replied, "Oh, let him repent!" and so it was settled, "which brings the piece to a satisfactory, if an awkward conclusion."[66] This anecdote reminds us of the element of contingency that was a necessary part of the dramatic production process, and perhaps of creative processes in general. But even such contingencies can be taken into account as expressions of social and generic expectations. Colman's decision to have John Bannister play Inkle is telling in itself, for Bannister was known to play affable characters, and perhaps, from this casting choice, it may be surmised that Inkle's reconciliation with Yarico was more than a plausible denouement. John Adolphus comments on Bannister's Inkle:

> To see Bannister playing a character in which his large eye never cast forth a beam of benevolence, – in which his countenance never expanded for a

[66] John Adolphus, *Memoirs of John Bannister*, vol. 1 (London: Richard Bentley, New Burlington Street, 1839), 168.

> moment to express the impulse of a humane heart, or the excitement of a quaint conceit, – was indeed to see him driven from the fair fields in which Nature had destined him to dwell.[67]

Inkle's reconciliation almost seems driven by spectatorial expectation of Bannister's repertoire of characters, which included, amongst other well-received performances, Dick (*The Apprentice*, 1778), Doctor Quintessence (*Dissipation*, 1781), and Lord Falbridge (*The English Merchant*, 1767). In addition to this, I would argue that genres are formalizations of social expectations, and the comic operatic form, in which Colman adapted the *Inkle-and-Yarico* narrative, also demanded a sentimental reconciliation between Inkle and Yarico, a formal closure otherwise inconceivable in a tragic mode.

The threat to traditional forms of distinction, in which noble characters, like Yarico as well as Oroonoko, are made to suffer to serve the lowly class of merchants and planters, is what makes the predicament of the noble savage tragic. As the fall of great individuals is the primary subject of tragedies, the tragic mode fails to encapsulate a genuine criticism of slavery by individualizing the experience of slavery in the character of a tragic hero(ine). But the noble savage characters of Oroonoko and Yarico were also open to a more sentimental treatment that in fact expanded the moral horizon, and envisaged the possibility of reconciliation. Sentimental reconciliation, however, worked on a number of levels, effectively negotiating inequalities under the rubric of moral equivalence by treating the condition of slavery as a collective tragedy not just for the mass of slaves, but also for those privileged sympathetic members of the community of the free that were unwittingly complicit in their enslavement.

The underlying assumption of this expanded assimilative morality was the basic commonality and innate humanity of all human beings. This assumption was the basis for the humanitarian movement of the late eighteenth century, which acknowledged the abstract

---

[67] Ibid., 167.

moral equivalence of unequal beings. Individual moral acts like sympathy, benevolence, and charity did not alleviate or eliminate inequality; their ultimate moral strength was in recognizing and acknowledging the moral equivalence of those unfortunate beings – slaves, women, lower classes – that were hitherto excluded from the community of the free. Such sentiments were counter to the ethics of traditional dramatic forms. There were no humanitarian causes associated with heroes of classical tragedies; the heroes were singular and distinct and their tragedy was just as singular and distinct. But in the case of the noble savage, situated within the context of slavery, individual tragedy gave way to a collective tragedy, for which new dramatic forms like comic opera and musical entertainments became the more appropriate mode of representation conducive to a more liberal sentimental spectatorial attitude. In the next section I explore the conditions of the emergence of this liberal sentimental attitude for which the moral equivalence of unequal Others is paramount.

Moral Equivalence of Unequal Others

As many historians have noted, the rationale for this shift towards humanitarianism lies in the shifting socio-economic context of the eighteenth century.[68] No simple interpretative framework can quite capture the precise connection between the superstructural phenomena of humanitarianism and the substructural capitalist production processes. Historians, like Eric Williams and David Brion Davis, to put it baldly, understood the abolitionist movement as an expression of the cultural power of the new industrial capitalist elites overturning not just feudal authority but also the monopolistic dominance of merchant

[68] For the most illuminating perspectives on this extensive body of literature, see Chapter 9: "The 'Saints' and Slavery" in Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery*, 178-96.; Part 4: "The Basis of Abolition and Emancipation" in Solow and Engerman, *British Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery*, 191-282; David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), 85-86; Chapter 8: "Antislavery and Capitalism" in Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986), 162-66.

capitalists over the Atlantic trade. Such explanations unveiled the ideological function of morality as a means to regulate and discipline the underclasses in order to further the interests of the dominant class and ensure its cultural hegemony.

In contrast to this social-control thesis was the more classical liberal view that assumed the compartmentalization of morality in some transcendent realm of moral choice, separate from its socio-economic context.[69] Such a view sought to reclaim the legitimacy of a genuine moral drive behind the humanitarian efforts of abolitionists, which could not easily be categorized merely as a means of social control. The abolitionists were fighting against the power of economic giants heavily invested in the continuation of the slave trade, which was a profitable and indispensable part of the British economy. The success of abolitionism was thus understood, by Seymour Drescher, to be an "*econocide*" [economic suicide], brought about by the moral effects of, what Norbert Elias called, the ever-expanding "civilizing process."[70] In a similar vein, Roger Anstey located the politics of abolitionism in the changing ideological and theological attitudes of the late eighteenth century, particularly in the success of the Evangelical movement in preaching the incompatibility between slavery and liberty.[71]

For my argument, I rely on much of this historical and sociological literature on slavery, abolitionism, and capitalism to explain the reconfiguration of the noble savage paradigm that signals a transformation in the spectator's perception of the primary locus of

---

[69] For a useful summary of the debate between these two perspectives, see Thomas L. Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 1," *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 2 (1985): 340.

[70] Seymour Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 162-86; Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, ed. Eric Dunning, Johan Goudsblom, and Stephen Mennell, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 227-28.

[71] Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810* (London: Macmillan, 1975), 200-35.

sympathy, the suffering body. While in the beginning of the eighteenth century, the locus of sympathy was the noble body of the enslaved prince, by the end of the century, with the emergence of abolitionist discourse in the 1780s, it shifts to the slave body. In other words, the reconfiguration of the noble savage paradigm marks a shift in the socio-aesthetic of sympathy from a sympathetic investment in a noble body (sympathetic recognition of status equality amongst peers) to a sympathetic investment in a slave body (sympathetic recognition of the moral equivalence of socially unequal Others).

The notion of moral equivalence subscribes to the principle of exchange: only when two things are considered as abstractly equivalent to a third thing could exchange be possible. Commodity exchange, for Marx, was also based on equivalence, in which disparate commodities made by qualitatively different forms of concrete labour become exchangeable insofar as what is deemed equivalent is the abstract value of labour-time invested in the commodity.[72] Similarly, in a classical liberal perspective, morally equivalent beings were deemed sympathetically exchangeable insofar as what was deemed equivalent was the abstract sentimental value of the moral capacity to be virtuous, broadly designated as "humanity."

From this perspective, equivalence was preached not at the social or political level of equality but at a transcendent level of morality, a level deemed independent of the vagaries of social conventions. For this reason, I agree to some extent with Drescher and Anstey on their understanding of the independence of the moral sphere from the socio-economic context. The consideration of moral equivalence of socially unequal persons takes us beyond the observable social distinctions of the disparity in status, economic inequality, and racial

[72] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes, vol. 1 (London: Penguin in Association with New left review, 1990), 127: "… the exchange value of commodities must be reduced to a common element, of which they represent a greater or a lesser quantity."

designation. When a person is deemed as morally equivalent, then the effort is to see beyond race, class, and gender differences, and to see the person first and foremost as a moral being. For example, in Weddell's Preface, the writer acknowledges that no matter how "disagreeable" Yarico's blackness appears to a well-meaning spectator,

> it should not prejudice the Minds of a Wise People, and fond of Liberty, who consider all Men as Denizens of the Earth's plenteous Blessings, nor think the casual Tincture of the skin, differing from the European Hue alienates any from the indubitable Rights they are naturally entitled to, as Fellow Creatures.[73]

The "indubitable Rights," the abstract value of morally equivalent beings, belongs to the transcendent moral realm, often situated within the mythical realm of "nature."

The "state-of-nature" functions as a significant conceptual construct in eighteenth-century philosophical speculations on the exercise of moral virtue. Human nature, as an extension of external nature, was guided by a universal and uniform moral sense that acted independently of the faculty of reason.[74] While reason was derived from cultural sophistication, morality and sentiment were more "naturally" associated with man's innate being. Shaftesbury admits that "rude Nature… in its primitive Simplicity, [is] a better Guide to Judgment, than improv'd Sophistry, and pedantick Learning."[75] Nature functions here as the negative of civilization, and the person in proximity to whatever civilization is not is held in high regard as being closer to a mythic prelapsarian Golden Age. In light of this independence from social and cultural mores, Peter Weston argues that the myth of noble savage offers one the philosophical basis for the bourgeois subject:

---

[73] Cox, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 5: 6.

[74] Lois Whitney, *Primitivism and the Idea of Progress in English Popular Literature of the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1934), 117. Also see Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment, and Slavery, 1760-1807* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 4.

[75] Anthony Ashley Cooper Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, 3 vols. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2001), 1: 206.

> This is the myth of the free, unitary subject, *prior* to both language and society, who, guided by reason, *chooses* to authorize society to legislate for him. This philosophical position, therefore, not only constructs "nature" as a state of independence and liberty, but also provides the individual subject an *a priori* ground for criticizing, or withdrawing his authorization, from society. It is here that the "noble savage" is truly born. (The term is Dryden's dating from 1672).[76]

Weston alludes to Dryden's use of the term "noble savage" but, as I have shown above, the context in which Dryden uses the concept is quite different and even opposed to Weston's imposition upon the myth of the noble savage another myth, that of the "free, unitary subject." While Dryden's noble savage was a nobleman, Weston's noble savage emphasizes the "natural" in an effort to defeudalize the notion of nobility and thus democratize virtue. Weston's noble savage is but a particular reconfiguration of the noble savage paradigm in the mid-eighteenth century to underscore characteristics that define the natural man as an abstract, standard model of basic humanity, "*prior* to both language and society."

The traces of this shift towards "natural" sentimentalism are evident in the alteration of the ending lines of *Oroonoko* spoken by Blanford, the sympathizing character that mediates spectatorial sympathy. In Francis Gentleman's 1760 alteration of Southerne's *Oroonoko*, Blanford extols Oroonoko's natural virtues over and above his nobility:

> In life, in death, his character maintain'd,
> He shone a great example to the world.
> If the bright sallies of a soul untaught
> Could cast such lustre round – how should we blush,
> With such advantages in moral life,
> To grovel in the loathsome shade of vice? (Act 5.v)[77]

Contrast these lines to those spoken by the same character in Southerne's play:

> I hope there is a Place of Happiness
> In the next World for such exalted virtue.
> Pagan or Unbeliever, yet he liv'd

---

[76] Peter J. Weston, "The Noble Primitive as Bourgeois Subject," *Literature and History* 10, no. 1 (1984): 63.

[77] Francis Gentleman, *Oroonoko or the Royal Slave. A Tragedy. Altered from Southerne, by Francis Gentleman* (Glasgow: printed by Robert and Andrew Foulis, 1760), 87.

> To all he knew: And if he went astray
> There's Mercy still above to set him right.
> But Christians guided by the Heav'nly Ray,
> Have no Excuse if we mistake our Way. (Act 5.v)[78]

Unlike in Gentleman's version, where Blanford praises Oroonoko as a "soul untaught" who shines as a "great example to the world," in Southerne's play, it is Oroonoko's "exalted virtue" which is deemed worthy of appraisal. Southerne further directs his critique at Christians, who have no excuse to deviate from the path of righteousness and virtue. The pagan Oroonoko could still be excused, for he knew no better when he rebelled against his masters. In Gentleman's alteration, on the other hand, the untaught virtues of the noble savage establish an abstract "natural" moral standard against which Christian moral corruption can be measured; rather than Oroonoko, it is the Christians who have gone astray. The principle of moral equivalence comes about once noble "exalted" virtues are no longer regarded as the prerogative and privilege of the nobility. To explain how morality became untethered from its basis in class status, I will revert to a socio-economic analysis to ground the preconditions necessary for the recognition of moral equivalence, reiterating Eric Williams' dictum that the "political and moral ideas of the age are to be examined in the very closest relation to the economic development."[79]

The precondition for the recognition of the moral equivalence of socially unequal Others can be determined by the transformation and shift in perception brought about by the extension of market logic into the moral sphere of life. Thomas Haskell argues that:

> [T]he rise of capitalism … had a more telling influence on the origins of humanitarianism through changes the market wrought in *perception* or *cognitive style*. And it was primarily a change in cognitive style – specifically a change in the perception of causal connection and consequently a shift in the conventions of moral responsibility – that underlay the new constellation of attitudes and activities that we call humanitarianism. What altered cognitive

[78] Southerne, *Oroonoko*, 90.

[79] Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery*, 211.

> style in a "humanitarian" direction was … the expansion of the market, the intensification of market discipline, and the penetration of that discipline into spheres of life previously untouched by it.[80]

Haskell's argument is important as it offers an alternative perspective to David Brion Davis's social-control thesis. According to Haskell, there were two significant transformations in cognitive style that brought about a "humanitarian" sensitivity to suffering. The first was an awareness of causal connections brought about by the integration of naval networks across the Atlantic, where the purchase of commodities in one continent became the condition for the selling of commodities in another; economic activities of buying and selling were but moments in the continuous circulation of capital. The second was the moral accountability associated with the awareness of the causal connection between trade in goods (which included slaves) and the concomitant misery suffered by those from which surplus was being extracted. Haskell argues that the rise of abolitionism in the 1780s was a consequence of the tectonic shifts in sensibility, particularly after 1750, when the "conventional limits of moral responsibility observed by an influential minority in society expanded to encompass evils that previously had fallen outside anyone's operative sphere of responsibility."[81] Haskell's analysis is effective in explaining the origins of a particular form of humanitarianism, in fact the dominant form of humanitarianism, which we can identify as liberal humanitarianism.

From the above context, three characteristics that define liberal humanitarianism can be isolated: a disinterested but privileged sympathetic subject-position, a personal affective relation to institutionally caused suffering, and the logic of moral equivalence. To identify the moral equivalence of unequal persons and to recognize their suffering as worthy of sympathy requires a sentimental subject-position that is itself free from social conventional bonds of status and privilege, making such a subject-position an abstract placeholder, infinitely

---

[80] Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 1," 342.

[81] Ibid., 359.

exchangeable with any other sentimental subject of sympathy. As an extension of market logic in the moral sphere, it is imperative to understand how the sentimental subject specifically corresponds to the economic subject of exchange.

Ian Baucom elaborates on this point when he argues that speculation in economic practices and speculation in moral practices were collectively a part of the eighteenth-century epistemological shift from the "real" value of land, bullion, and other tangibles to the imaginary value of stocks, bonds, bills-of-exchange, and insured property.[82] This epistemological shift was accompanied by the construction of a new image of social personality in contrast to the Lockean individual who needed a material anchor in the form of property. J. G. A. Pocock in *Virtue, Commerce, and History* argues that the late eighteenth-century individual existed in a world of imaginary values:

> Government stock is a promise to repay at a future date; from the inception and development of the National Debt, it is known that this date will in reality never be reached, but the tokens of repayment are exchangeable at a market price in the present. The price they command is determined by the present state of public confidence in the stability of government, and in its capacity to make repayment in the theoretical future. Government is therefore maintained by the investor's imagination concerning a moment which will never exist in reality. The ability of merchant and landowner to raise the loans and mortgages they need is similarly dependent upon the investor's imagination. *Property — the material foundation of both personality and government — has ceased to be real and has become not merely mobile but imaginary*. … When the stability of government in the present became linked to the self-perpetuation of speculation concerning a future, something happened which forms an important part of the history of ideas concerning unlimited acquisition and accumulation. (My emphasis).[83]

If the foundation of identity was no longer material but immaterial, then identity itself "ceased to be real" and had "become not merely mobile but imaginary." By extension, economic and moral concepts of what was knowable, credible, valuable, and real were

---

[82] Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic*, 16.

[83] J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 112.

themselves transformed during the eighteenth century with the rise in financial speculation and credit. Influenced by Pocock's analysis, Ian Baucom and a range of other scholars from Deidre Shauna Lynch to Catherine Gallagher began to argue that "the early- and mid-eighteenth-century novel shaped itself and sought to shape its readership" within this paradigm shift from real to speculative values.[84] Lynch, in *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning*, argues that the novel aspires to produce a representation of authentic interiority, which, despite being a fictional construct, is granted meaning and value as a sincere exploration of subjectivity and motivation which lies behind the artifice of the visible surface gestures. For Lynch, it is only in the eighteenth century, with the emergence of a proper market culture and its financial institutions and credit economies that the notion of inner meaning of character becomes intelligible in historically specific and institutionally mediated ways.[85] Similarly, Gallagher, in her work, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820*, enquires into the social "nobody" as an important novelistic construct also necessary for the functioning of finance capital, which needs an anonymous, interchangeable subject in order for bill-of-payments to be exchanged within a credit market:

> The release into the culture of strongly marked suppositional identities, belonging to nobody and hence temporarily appropriate to anybody, therefore, should be seen as one amongst many modes of facilitating property exchange and investment in the period, of creating the speculative commercial and sentimental subject.[86]

The financial revolution in England contributed as much to the sentimental novelistic discourse of social types as to the economic reification of the "real" existence of speculative

---

[84] Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic*, 67.

[85] Deidre Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 9.

[86] Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 194.

values. The "fictionality" of novelistic characters (the "suppositional identities") emerge as universally-engaging subjectivities because they permit access to inner feelings, and it is this "illusion of immediately appropriable sentiments [which] free sentiments belonging to nobody and therefore identifiable with ourselves."[87]

Both Lynch and Gallagher look at the rise of the novel in the eighteenth century in the context of representing interiority as the "deepest, truest knowledge of character" in an effort to make legible interior motives behind exterior actions.[88] Lisa Freeman, however, offers a contrasting perspective on identity in *Character's Theater*. By examining the eighteenth-century stage rather than the novel, she argues that the concept of "character" rather than the paradigm of the subject figures as more central in the representation of identity in the late-eighteenth century. The stage provides a space to apprehend identity in terms of surface relations between characters rather than the compensatory illusion of interiority indulged by the novelistic subject. Freeman, while conceding that the modern subject as theorised by Gallagher and Lynch was emergent in novelistic discourse, insists that it was not the only model of identity available, nor that it would be used in all other forms of representations. The stage representations "appear formulaic and repetitive," fulfilling generic demands, all the while focusing attention on extrinsic qualities.[89] Freeman takes account of the change in meaning of "character" which had earlier been tied to claims of rank in a fixed social order. By the early eighteenth century, character lost its self-evident meaning and became fictionalised, that is, character became a "fabrication, forgery, and fraud" and the act of understanding "character" now "required skills in observation, penetration, and

---

[87] Ibid., 171.

[88] Lynch, *The Economy of Character*, 28.

[89] Lisa A. Freeman, *Character's Theater: Genre and Identity on the Eighteenth-Century English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 17-18.

interpretation."[90] This concept of theatrical character was just as implicated in the contemporary debates over economic value and epistemological authority that Pocock had elaborated. In the shift from property and bullion as stable markers of identity to credit and speculation, Freeman locates the theatrical notion of "character" as distinct from the novelistic subject because it no longer "bore any necessary meaningful resemblance to its inside… and the gap between perception and meaning widened into the space of fiction and theatricality."[91] Thus, the theatre exploited the concept of character which understood identity "not as an emanation of a stable interiority, but as the unstable product of staged contests between interpretable surfaces."[92] Theatrical character was given meaning not through recourse to some deeper interiority, but through genres, which supplied an interpretive framework to assess competing claims between interacting characters. Genres, in other words, "functioned as the double lens through which the narratives and social identities of character could be projected and construed."[93] What I take to be Freeman's most pertinent contribution to my argument is the notion of identity based on a concept of "character" that is defined in terms of its position in a theatrical exchange which is framed by generic conventions. In these terms then, the perception and recognition of the suffering of unequal Others hitherto overlooked in the traditional representations of tragic characters (like Oroonoko and Yarico) configured as noble bodies, become characters whose meaning is determined by social protocols of exchange, an abstraction not so much of identities but of social types that are determined by the function they adopt within social interactions. Like economic equivalence, which eliminated the qualitative particularity of the object in order to

---

[90] Ibid., 22.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid., 27.

[93] Ibid., 44.

make it an exchangeable commodity, a similar decorporealizing logic of equivalence was at work when considering the moral equivalence of sentimental beings, who were reduced to some basic abstract sense of humanity that was predicated upon sympathetic exchangeability instead of some essential notion of subjectivity.

In fact, the character of Oroonoko embodies, quite literally, the tension between the anonymous interchangeability of an abstract subjectivity, and the desire to stall exchangeability in favour of the uniqueness of the kingly noble body. In her analysis of Behn's *Oroonoko*, Gallagher points out that:

> The narrator painstakingly explains that the word "black" distinguishes the bodies of people who can be bought and sold from those of people who cannot. To a twentieth-century reader the history of slavery makes this linkage obvious, but in the seventeenth century, before racial ideologies of slavery developed fully and as the institution itself was being racialised, it bore reiterating. … "Black" is a word that is used to describe a skin tone differing from all others that allows a body to have an abstract exchange value independent of any of its other physical qualities.[94]

The tragedy of Oroonoko can thus be read as the transition from the indispensable singularity of the kingly noble body to the commodified, abstractly exchangeable body of the slave, cut off from all social relations that could identify the slave as an individual particularity. "Blackness" is, at once, a feature specifically connected to "racialised" bodies, but also signifies, in its sheer abstractness, exchangeability of bodies on the slave market.[95]

From the above discussion, it seems that there is a structural overlap between the slave body, the sentimental subject of sympathy, and the economic subject of exchange. All three subject-positions are empty "bearers" of abstract values occupied by particular persons that assume these positions only by subscribing to the decorporealizing logic of equivalence. Just as the economic subject of exchange is reduced to an empty placeholder in a commercial

---

[94] Gallagher, *Nobody's Story*, 76.

[95] Ibid., 77.

contract, so too is the slave, who is cut off from all social connections in order to become an exchangeable body on the slave market with an abstract price on his head. Similarly, the sentimental subject of sympathy, who adopts an abstract, free, unitary subject-position, is also cut off from all social ties and entitlements, in order to embrace basic humanity as the abstract substance of moral equivalence. Noble virtues were no longer the privilege of the nobility but were innate to all persons, regardless of race or class, and associated with common humanity.

This shift from a sympathetic investment in nobility to a sympathetic investment in the "natural" capacity to be virtuous, by the 1780s, was evident in the introduction of morally equivalent lower-class characters who were worthy of sympathy. A sympathetic lower-class character like Trudge was a novelty in the *Inkle-and-Yarico* tradition. He channelled spectatorial sympathy for the plight of the common slave, now given a more prominent dramatic representation in the figure of Wowski. When asked by a planter of Wowski's value, Trudge retorts, "Just as much as she has saved me – my own life."[96] In response to the planter's inquiry about the monetary value of Wowski as a slave, Trudge calculates Wowski's moral equivalence (a life for a life) based on the moral economy of gratitude. It is in these scenes that the spectators would be rooting for Trudge, laughing along with him rather than at him. Trudge, a representative of the lower classes and a stock comic fool, gains prominence as one of the moral focal points of the play.

Trudge's heartfelt gratitude for Wowski had more appeal within the new configuration of the noble savage paradigm than the previous form of sympathetic investment in nobility, more so for it presents the lower classes as respectable and virtuous in their own right. This is evident in the following remarks by Trudge: "take my scribbling; take my frizzing; take my wages; and I, and Wows, will take ourselves off together – she saved my

[96] Colman, "Inkle and Yarico," 32.

life, and rot me, if anything but death shall part us."[97] Such sentiments of heroic fortitude and magnanimity, previously associated with high-class characters, were now expressed through sentimental scenes involving lower-class characters and common slaves. Just as "nobility," as a quality of good character, was no longer associated with a particular social class, similarly, sympathy, also, was no longer a means to affirm the status equality of peers as was the case in the early eighteenth century, but a means to negotiate inequality through moral equivalence to some abstract notion of humanity, which was devoid of racial difference and class distinction, and was assumed to be innate, primal, and universal.

Humanitarianism and Market Discipline

The strategy described above involves the disavowal of racial otherness, which is expressed in *Oroonoko* when the protagonist boldly asserts:

> Tear off this Pomp, and let me know my Self:
> The Slavish Habit best becomes me now.
> Hard Fare, and Whips, and chains may overpow'r
> The frailer Flesh, and bow my Body down:
> But there's another, nobler Part of me,
> Out of your Reach, which you can never tame. (Act 1.ii)[98]

Oroonoko makes the crucial distinction between a body that dons the slavish habit and suffers the ignominy of being whipped, but reclaims his sense of dignity in the transcendent "nobler Part of me," that is beyond enslavement. The necessary manoeuvre here is to think of "humanity" in terms of the "mind" or the "nobler Part," rather than by reference to the body. Humanity is the substance of moral equivalence, an inward faculty that remains separate and untarnished by the vicissitudes of corporal incarceration, and which ultimately lets the social hierarchical order remain as it is.

My contention is that humanitarianism, as represented in these plays, was a means for

---

[97] Ibid., 33, 58.

[98] Hawkesworth, *Oroonoko*, 12.

endorsing an ethics associated with smooth transactions in the market, thus establishing a market ethics and discipline. The critique of the institution of slavery in the *Oroonoko* and *Inkle and Yarico* plays is undercut by an overt emphasis on market ethics and discipline which is predicated on abstract equivalence in spite of social inequality. Oroonoko's noble body ("the nobler part of me") is distinguished from his natural body ("the frailer flesh") and this distinction is crucial because it marks a transition in the representation of Oroonoko from a powerful foreign figure to a universalized Everyman. It is only with the subsequent representations of grateful slaves and comical black servants, which I analyse in the next chapter, that the stereotypical figure of the African slave emerges as a repository of sentimental value to affirm the humanity of the benevolent master. But the transition from a noble body to a natural body is observable in the reconfiguration of the noble savage paradigm in the alterations of *Oroonoko* and *Inkle and Yarico*.

In Aphra Behn's novel, Oroonoko's tragedy was a consequence of a shift away from an old romance deference of nobility to a colonial social order run by low ranking officers. For Emily Kugler, Behn's text falls in line with "romance racial models" in which Oroonoko's noble body represents a universal chivalric code of honour.[99] She argues that the Coramantien society Behn's white narrator explores evokes the cultured but decadent orientalism associated with the Ottomans and their Mediterranean holdings. While Behn's original prose text focuses on an African kingdom, deploying romance tropes used to depict Muslim cultures and Old-World slavery, relaying strong references to Ottoman power, its military prowess, and its long civilizational history, the later dramatic adaptations dissociated Oroonoko from this very tradition and represented instead a pagan African prince who was a victim of the transatlantic slave trade and belonged to a culture which lacked the same level

[99] Emily M. N. Kugler, *Sway of the Ottoman Empire on English Identity in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012), 93.

of sophistication associated with the Ottomans as perceived by Europeans. One consequence of this was the shift towards "natural" nobility. Thomas Paine describes this shift from the noble body to the natural body as a transition from an aristocratic order to a liberal democratic order: "Aristocracy has not been able to keep a proportionate pace with democracy. The artificial *noble* shrinks into a dwarf before the *noble* of nature."[100] Youngquist states the case succinctly, emphasising the transfiguration of the noble body into an abstract model of the natural body: "Where earlier an exemplary body was unique (the luxuriant courtier, the indomitable king), from now on it would be normal (the common citizen, the average man). An unmarked standard becomes the means of determining an individual's value."[101] Oroonoko's distinction between the "frailer flesh" and the "nobler part of me" undergoes a similar transfiguration from defining an exemplary, noble body, which is distinct from common labouring and slaving bodies, towards a natural, abstract body defined by the nobler part that remains racially unmarked and socially independent.

The separation between socially-dependent body and universally-independent mind was necessary for liberal philosophers like John Locke. In condemning absolute monarchy, Locke recognised the absolute right of propertied individuals which was extended to plantation owners in their right to exercise absolute power over their slaves:

> But there is another sort of servants, which by a peculiar name we call slaves, who being captives taken in a just war, are by the right of nature subjected to the absolute dominion and arbitrary power of their masters. These men having, as I say, forfeited their lives, and with it their liberties, and lost their estates; and being in the state of slavery, not capable of any property, cannot in that state be considered as any part of civil society; the chief end whereof is the preservation of property.[102]

---

[100] Thomas Paine, *Political Writings*, ed. Bruce Kuklick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 100.

[101] Youngquist, *Monstrosities*, 22.

[102] John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, ed. C. B. Macpherson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980), 45-46.

The propertied individual might be considered "free" as it is his property that grants him independence. But the unpropertied individual is part of a network of dependencies. In the transition from the noble body to the natural body, it was the presumed abstract universality of "Natural Rights" that ultimately questioned the particular privileges of the feudal tradition and gave rise to the concept of moral equivalence. Locke asserted the inviolability of individual freedom from conditions of slavery; but the universality of individual freedom, which a modern interpretation would take to be the sole prerogative of a Lockean form of classical liberalism, needs to be situated within Locke's more particular understanding of liberty and equality. Like Locke, Montesquieu also made a clear distinction between specific types of equality:

> The principle of democracy is corrupted, not only when the spirit of equality is extinct, but likewise when they fall into a spirit of extreme equality, and when every citizen wants to be upon a level with those he has chosen to command him. … This licentiousness will soon taint the mind; and the restraint of command be as fatiguing as that of obedience. Wives, children, slaves will shake off all subjection. No longer will there be any such thing as manners, order, or virtue. (Book VIII. Ch. 2)[103]

Montesquieu's notion of equality actually advocates the moral equivalence between strictly unequal people. This equivalence does not entail any concrete form of equality in status or society. According to Montesquieu, a situation of "extreme equality" would be highly inconvenient for the functioning of a proper democracy, and so governance should be left to the people who have the time and resources to govern, namely the aristocracy. The "true spirit of equality" necessitates the exercise of moderation in its application of equality, which guarantees power in the hands of the few (Book VIII. Ch. 3).[104] It is no surprise that Montesquieu and Locke admire the Glorious Revolution of 1688, which established a

---

[103] Charles de Secondat Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, 4th ed., 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Printed for A. Donaldson, 1768), 1: 145.

[104] Ibid., 1: 148.

constitutional monarchy and a democratic system of aristocratic parliamentary rule, a classic example of moderate equality as against the extreme equality advocated by the more radical Jacobins during the French Revolution. As Domenico Losurdo accurately notes, "the [Lockean] opposition between royal power and the freedom of the individual" is an opposition that effectively conceals "the real political and social subjects involved in the struggle."[105] The Lockean form of possessive individualism does not refer to the universal abstract individual of the Rights of Man but to the particular individual with social status that is determined by contemporary property relations. Locke's appeal to individual liberty against Filmer's monarchical absolutism is not an appeal for universal liberty for all: workers, slaves, women, and servants are all excluded. As Ferdinand Lassalle notes in his *The System of Acquired Rights* (originally published in 1861): "The rights that liberalism demands … are never meant for the individual as such, but always for an individual in a particular situation, an individual who pays certain taxes, an individual who owns capital, etc."[106] The construction of the universal concept of man is an achievement of intellectual abstraction that is as much a product, as it is a condition, for the historical socio-economic and political developments of necessary abstract social relations. Without notions of free markets, free trade, and democratically free institutions, one could not envisage free individuals, just as without notions of free individuals, such institutions could not come into place.

In this new setting, Locke's defence of individual liberty, particularly the sacrosanct property relations, marks a radical shift from Behn's concern with seventeenth-century political debates around sovereignty and the rights of kings towards the rights of the

---

[105] Domenico Losurdo, *Hegel and the Freedom of Moderns* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 115.

[106] Quoted in ibid., 123.

property-owning community of free individuals. Within this shift, all men were essentially equal, dissolving distinctions of ranks between nobles and commoners. Edmund Burke understands this network of dependencies as a contractual hierarchical social organization which functions much like a joint-stock company:

> In this partnership [private contract within a joint stock company] all men have equal rights, but not to equal things. He that has but five shillings in the partnership has as good a right to it as he that has five hundred pounds has to his larger proportion. But he has not a right to an equal dividend in the product of the joint stock; and as to the share of power, authority, and direction which each individual ought to have in the management of the state, that I must deny to be amongst the direct original rights of man in civil society; for I have in my contemplation the civil, social man, and no other.[107]

Thus, all men undoubtedly have "equal rights, but not to equal things." This is the case for moral equivalence despite social and political inequality; the equivalence of moral agents is not in doubt even if they occupy distinct positions in the social hierarchy. The slave is thus a man, but a man without stock, and so has neither the advantages nor the duties of a free citizen. The difference between a slave and a free citizen is ultimately based on the social relations that guarantee the propertied class the independence of mind while enslaving the body of the unpropertied classes.

Locke's defence of liberty is fundamentally conditioned by the ability and access to own property, which excludes women, slaves, and indigenous populations of America from being free. Within this context then, the *Oroonoko* narrative is reconfigured in the post-1688 English stage from a defence of absolute monarchy to an advocacy of proper market ethics and discipline. Hawkesworth's Oroonoko suffers not because slavery is a morally dubious commercial activity but because one unfortunate participant in the slave trade, Oroonoko himself, has been duped by his fellow trader, the captain of the slave ship, from his rightful ownership of property in himself. By rebelling, Oroonoko occupies the ambiguous position

[107] Burke, "Reflections on the Revolution in France," 110.

of a rebel slave, which will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Three. As a rebel slave, Oroonoko stands outside the official diktats of law, but as an outlaw, he is simultaneously defined by the law. In such a state, Oroonoko is free of any social contract and he claims his freedom by committing suicide. Unlike Behn's version, where Oroonoko's body is hacked off bit by bit by the colonial authorities, the stage version of Oroonoko dies a free man.

As noted earlier, in Hawkesworth's play, the other principal rebel slave characters, Aboan and Hotman, are developed in more substantive ways, giving these instigators of rebellion a more defined motivation to incite Oroonoko to rebel. With the focus on common slave characters like Aboan, Hawkesworth draws attention to the plight of common slaves rather than just focusing on the tragedy of a prince. However, Hawkesworth's play, although sentimental, does not offer an unequivocal statement against slavery. Despite the many alterations in his version, Hawkesworth retains the dialogues expressing Oroonoko's defence of the planter's right to buy slaves, thus offering a justification for his own enslavement. Hawkesworth's incorporates Lockean principles in his version, establishing moral equivalence of racial others even while justifying their social and political inequality.

For Locke, Burke, and Montesquieu, the dissociation of the body from the mind was a necessary step for the further association of the mind (of the propertied individual) with humanity in general. The abstract concept of "humanity" craftily excludes the body (in its sheer materiality) from its domain. But this abstraction is a subtle form of manipulation which masks the real conditions of privilege that allow this separation between innate humanity and enslaved body to be entertained. For example, even after he is enslaved, Oroonoko believes in his own innate superior status, which he claims is "out of reach" from the condition of enslavement. What the play attempts to demonstrate is that characters in a state of slavery are morally equivalent members of the community of the free as their noble minds are separate from their incarcerated bodies. However, the problem is that slaves are in

a condition in which their body is not their own, which is precisely what excludes them from the community of the free. Such a community is only possible for a proper body that is disengaged from labour and the requisite concerns of self-reproduction as an owner of property. In other words, such a state of being is altogether alien to a slave as much as to a servant or labourer. It is precisely for this reason that any profession that required manual labour was considered unfit for governing, an act which, it was claimed, required the independence of mind. Locke, Burke, and Montesquieu demean slaves and labourers for their menial work, and prefer the rule of government in the hands of the non-labouring and leisurely propertied elite. For these writers, the body is driven by corporeal drives, physically limited by its materiality, and tarnished by marks of dependencies, like labouring for a living, as well as marks of racialization, like skin colour.[108] The separation of body and mind in these works is part of a process of racialisation of the natural body, which culminates in racially-differentiated "natural" bodies. However, it is precisely this palpably distinct presence of the body, marked by differences, which is an obstacle that needs to be overcome to observe the common underlying (humanizing) essence within. As the intensity and the division of labour render the workers incapable of being in full possession of their faculties, Locke construes this lack as a condition for their being treated as "children" that need to be controlled, disciplined, educated, and civilised. For this reason, the slave body, with regard to its racialization and enslavement, is precisely the body which cannot be included into the community of the free, even as literary representations attempt to conceive the socially unequal black body as morally equivalent, an attempt at symbolically resolving a real social contradiction. Oroonoko's declaration differentiating the "nobler part of me" from the "frailer flesh" illustrates the character's initial delusion that he can retain his noble self in spite of his

[108] John Locke, *Some Considerations of the Consequences of the Lowering of Interest, and Raising the Value of Money* (London: Printed for Awnsham and John Churchill, 1692), 114; Burke, "Reflections on the Revolution in France," 100-01.

material conditions. By the end of play, however, with the assistance of Aboan and Imoinda, Oroonoko learns the truth that his social condition determines the state of (in)dependence of the mind, the "nobler part" of him.

In effect, the black body in literary representations can only serve as an object of sympathy, as a reminder to the community of the free that what lies beneath the bodily surface is some abstract notion of common humanity; the "white" body, on the other hand, is the physical embodiment of the abstract notion of common humanity which is free from marks of racial distinction, even as it is a product of the racialisation of the black body. This humanitarian perspective of sentimental moral equivalence emerges from the social conditions of privilege that enable, as in the classical liberal view, the separation of morality from those very social conditions. In other words, this separation of morality from its conditions of possibility allows the privileged sentimental subject to overlook the fact that the same liberal social conditions that were responsible for the recognition of slavery as an abomination were the very conditions responsible for the intensification of the slave trade.[109]

As a further extension of market logic into the moral sphere, as I have suggested along with Haskell and Baucom, one of sentimentalism's effective functions was to make market practices more efficient and necessary, encouraging virtuous practices like trust, keeping faith in contractual promises, and checking corrupt practices like duplicity, fraud, and thieving. Those that break promises or engage in deceitful trading practices become the

[109] Losurdo traces this intensification of slavery through a comparative analysis of three liberal revolutions in Holland, England, and the United States. After the revolt against Philip II, a liberal Holland "immediately engaged in overseas expansion and slave trading" just as England, after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, managed to gain a monopoly over the slave trade, after being granted a thirty-year *asiento* at the conclusion of the War of Spanish Succession in 1715. See Domenico Losurdo, *Liberalism: A Counter-History*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London; New York: Verso Books, 2011), 21, 27. In the American context, Robin Blackburn calculates that "[t]he total slave population... reached around 330,000 in 1700, nearly three million by 1800, and finally peaked at over six million in the 1850s," Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery* (London and New York: Verso, 1997), 3.

ultimate villains in narratives whose ideological sentimentalism and humanitarianism is itself a product of the same market logic. Oroonoko's "exalted virtue" is primarily his honesty in transactions, which is contrasted to the "Christian Arts" of deception as practised by the Governor. In the following lines, Oroonoko contemplates using deception against the Governor:

> If I should turn his Christian Arts on him,
> Promise him, speak him fair, flatter, and creep
> With fawning steps, to get within his Faith,
> I could betray him then, as he has me. (Act 5.i)

But he immediately doubts whether he can act so:

> But am I sure by that to right myself?
> Lying's a certain Mark of Cowardice:
> And, when the Tongue forgets its Honesty,
> The Heart and Hand may drop their Functions too,
> And nothing worthy to be resolv'd or done
> Honour should be concern'd in Honour's cause,
> Let me but find out
> An honest Remedy. (Act 5.i)[110]

In Colman's *Inkle and Yarico*, the duplicitous practices of merchants are further highlighted only to be condemned. Inkle explains how his father inculcated within him selfishness, and the principle of looking out only for yourself at all costs, the very same "Christian Arts" that *Oroonoko* condemns: "Inkle: As I grew up, he'd prove – and by example – were I want, I might e'en starve, for what the world cared for their neighbours; why then should I care for the world? Men now liv'd for themselves" (Act 3.iii).[111] Sir Christopher abhors such principles and declares how such extreme individualism would only lead to the dissolution of society rather than its enhancement: "Sir Christopher: O curse such principles! Principles which destroy all confidence between man and man – Principles which none but a rogue

[110] Hawkesworth, *Oroonoko*, 54.

[111] Colman, "Inkle and Yarico," 65.

could instil and none but a rogue could imbibe" (Act 3.iii).[112] Inkle's renunciation of his father's principles is presented as the triumph of sentimental natural virtue over duplicitous artifice:

> Renounce intirely. Ill-founded precept too long has steel'd my breast … nature 'gainst habit combating within me, has penetrated to my heart; a heart, I own, long callous to the feelings of sensibility; but now it bleeds, and bleeds for my poor Yarico. Oh, let me clasp her to it while 'tis glowing, and mingle tears of love and penitence. (Act 3.iii)[113]

In *Oroonoko*, the Lieutenant-Governor and the slave trader are the two villains that disrupt an otherwise "peaceful" trade in slaves, a trade in which Oroonoko himself was involved without any sense of moral repugnance. Blanford, once again the moral voice of restraint, regulation, and propriety, rebukes the Lieutenant-Governor for breaking his promise to Oroonoko, who had surrendered on terms of "Peace and Safety" (Act 4.iv).[114]

> Have you no Reverence of future Fame?
> No Awe upon your Actions, from the Tongues,
> The cens'ring Tongues of Men, that will be free?
> If you confess Humanity, believe
> There is a God, to punish or reward
> Our Doings here: Do not provoke your Fate.
> The Hand of Heaven is arm'd against these crimes,
> With hotter Thunderbolts prepared to shoot,
> And nail you to the Earth, a sad Example;
> A Monument of faithless Infamy. (Act 5.i)[115]

The Lieutenant-Governor justifies the action on the pretext of "public Good," but Stanmore replies that "The public Good must totter, when the Base / Is Fraud, and Craft, and prostituted Honour" (Act 5.i).[116] The providential "Hand of Heaven," like Adam Smith's "invisible

---

[112] Ibid.

[113] Ibid., 65-66.

[114] Hawkesworth, *Oroonoko*, 48.

[115] Ibid., 51.

[116] Ibid.

hand" of the market, functions to regulate the system, to punish those that deviate from the ethics of the market, and reward those that conform to it.[117] The Lieutenant-Governor's "Breach of Faith" is an attack on the "Bond that holds Society together" which, once broken, will jeopardize "Rule and Order …[following which] Anarchy must desolate the World" (Act 5.i).[118] The play makes it a point to stress the significance of keeping faith in the "Word." Stanmore reminds the Lieutenant-Governor:

> Remember, Sir, he yielded on your Word;
> Your Word! Which honest Men will think should be
> The last Resort of Truth, and Trust on Earth. (Act 5.i)[119]

As Haskell notes, it was only in the eighteenth century that promise-keeping became "so widespread that it could be elevated into a general social norm" through which "societies first appeared whose economic systems depended on the expectations that most people, most of the time, were sufficiently conscience-ridden (and certain of retribution) that they could be trusted to keep their promises."[120] The conclusion to be drawn is that the primary moral critique of these plays that feature noble savage characters is ultimately directed not against the institution of slavery but against immoral market practices.

The alterations in the *Oroonoko* and *Inkle-and-Yarico* plays offer clues as to the reworking of the plays to display the common slaves as morally equivalent but socially unequal characters, just as the central protagonists are re-presented as natural bodies rather

---

[117] Adam Smith, The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith. Vol. 2, an Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), http://oxfordscholarlyeditions.com/view/10.1093/actrade/9780199269570.book.1/actrade-9780199269570-book-1. 456.

[118] Hawkesworth, *Oroonoko*, 51-52.

[119] Ibid., 52.

[120] Thomas L. Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 2," *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 3 (1985): 553.

than noble bodies. The presentation of natural bodies as abstract standard models of basic humanity or natural sentimentalism begged the question of how morality became untethered from its basis in class status? I examined the pre-conditions necessary for moral equivalence, which were established by the general extension of market logic into the moral sphere, through which a relation of correspondence was established between the economic subject of exchange and the sentimental subject of exchange. Without the abstract disinterested subject-position necessary for a system of generalized commodity exchange and speculative financial transactions, morality could not be untethered from its class context, which was the condition for the decorporealizing logic of moral equivalence. The privileged recognition of the moral equivalence of unequal Others was what defined the liberal spectatorial attitude to suffering. In other words, sentimental virtues were no longer based upon class status but upon the principle of exchange. An ever-expanding market society is the drive behind sentimental humanitarianism, which disciplines society as per the rules and regulations of proper exchange relations, whether at the level of theatrical entertainment in relation to the market-patrons, or at the level of global trade. Thus, the primary critique offered in these plays is not so much against the institution of slavery, but against fraudulent, inappropriate, immoral, and insincere market ethics.

Spectatorial Possibilities

The interpretive significance of analysing this shift through performative alterations of the same basic narratives illustrates, as I have shown, the aesthetic mediation, in cultural productions, of the emerging market logic that also permeates cultural institutions like theatre. Market logic, after all, offers the preconditions necessary for the dominance of the liberal attitude to suffering. But the question arises if there was an alternative to this liberal spectatorial attitude in the late eighteenth century?

The two final adaptations of *Oroonoko* and *Inkle and Yarico*, John Ferriar's *Prince of*

Angola (1788) and John Thelwall's *Incle and Yarico* (1787), offer performative possibilities of a different spectatorial attitude. These plays work as possibilities precisely because they were never actualized or performed on the English stage. I will briefly analyse a few significant alterations in these adaptations which signal a possible alternative spectatorial attitude, which I will develop more substantially in the next chapter.

It was not until 1788 that a propagandist anti-slavery adaptation of *Oroonoko* was written. The printed version of John Ferriar's *Prince of Angola* (1788) makes an unequivocal attempt to identify itself as part of a larger political campaign against the African Slave Trade. The cover page has lines from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* which state its purpose quite clearly:

> I have heard
> That guilty Creatures, sitting at a Play,
> Have, by the very Cunning of the Scene,
> Been Struck so to the Soul, that presently
> They have proclaim'd their Malefactions.[121]

Ferriar wants his play to function as Hamlet's "Mousetrap," to move the public to acknowledge their guilt even in their acquiescence to allow the trafficking of fellow humans across the Atlantic. It is no accident that Ferriar's play was printed in Manchester, where there was a major effort to campaign against the slave trade.[122] In the Preface, Ferriar makes it clear:

> When the attempt to abolish the African Slave Trade commenced in *Manchester*, some active friends of the cause imagined, that assembling a few of the principal topics, in dramatic form, an impression might be made, on

[121] John Ferriar, *The Prince of Angola: A Tragedy, Altered from the Play of Oroonoko. And Adapted to the Circumstances of the Present Times* (Manchester: Printed by J. Harrop, 1788), [n.p].

[122] Thomas Clarkson mentions Ferriar as one amongst the signatories who sent a letter in October 1787 approving the formation of the Committee for the Abolition of Slave Trade, and offered their assistance for the promotion of the cause in Manchester. See Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament*, 2 vols. (London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1808), I: 452-53.

> persons negligent of simple reasoning.[123]

For Ferriar, the significance of the dramatic form for the purpose of the political campaign lies in its visuality and its visceral appeal to the senses. The spectacle makes an impression upon the viewers and affects them emotionally to convince them of the atrocities of slave trade rather than attempting to persuade them through reasoning and debate.[124] In a politically conscious play such as this, the appeal to emotions rather than reason has an important ideological role to play.

The last few lines of the play spoken by Blanford in all the previous versions of *Oroonoko* are quite significant for the varying emphasis of the final message. In Ferriar's version, Blanford says:

> But you [to Stanmore, & etc.] who mutely eye this scene of horror,
> Curse not the erring arm – the guilt is ours;
> For deeds like these are slav'ry's fruit; the chain
> And bloody whip bring punishment upon us,
> For these the suff'rer in his tyrant's heart
> Fixes his steel --- The elements conspire
> To our undoing, Ocean overwhelms,
> Or hurricanes despoil the guilty lands. (Act 5.iii)[125]

Unlike the previous adaptations, Ferriar makes no appeal to Christian virtue; rather, the play evokes nature's curse upon the guilty nations that engage in the slave trade. The reference to guilt as slavery's fruit alludes to moral arguments against slavery as sinful, but more importantly, the direct second-person reference to the spectators assimilates them not in a sympathetic community of men of feeling, but in a community that is suffering from collective guilt. A similar gesture is made in Thelwall's play.

---

[123] Ferriar, *The Prince of Angola*, i.

[124] Ibid., viii.

[125] Ibid., 52.

John Thelwall, a political radical associated with the London Corresponding Society, wrote a farcical and anti-sentimental version of the *Inkle-and-Yarico* narrative. Although the manuscript was submitted to George Colman the Elder for consideration, Thelwall's play was rejected in favour of Colman the Younger's *Inkle and Yarico*. In contrast to the sentimental reconciliation between Inkle and Yarico in Colman's play, Thelwall's highly ironic "happy" ending, displaying "Ingratitude Rewarded," is situated not in a slave colony but in the native's homeland, where Incle surrenders to Yarico out of fear for his life from Yarico's family. According to Franca Dellarosa the play alludes "metacritically, to the strategy adopted of reworking worn-out sentiment into farce" that achieves the double aim of demystifying middle-class ethos and sentimental discourse.[126] Michael Scrivener observes how the "play is so much about class and middle-class anxieties! The malapropisms, the contempt for literary culture and knowledge, money-grubbing, social ambition, mercenary marriages, boarding-school misses – all the things John Thelwall hated about his own background."[127]

These observations are significant, especially when contrasted to Colman's treatment of the *Inkle-and-Yarico* narrative. For example, Thelwall's play presents Incle and Yarico, side by side, the latter sleeping and the former sitting beside her. The significant encounter scene between Inkle and Yarico, which conditioned the spectators' response in Weddell's and Colman's plays, is converted into a backstory for the drama onstage which takes place after a period of two years. Colman's "adventurous" hero is portrayed here, in Scrivener's words, as a bored and homesick husband in a stale marriage, pining for his "native soil."[128] Thelwall

---

[126] Dellarosa, *Slavery on Stage*, 83.

[127] Michael Scrivener, in a private communication reported by Felsenstein. See "Introduction," in John Thelwall, *Incle and Yarico; and, the Incas: Two Plays*, ed. Frank Felsenstein and Michael Henry Scrivener (Madison N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006), 35.

expunges the romantic sentimental plot from the narrative, presenting instead a farcical marriage in a displaced location (South American Coast) that highlights by contrast the sordid commercialism of Mr. and Mrs. Incle (Mr. Incle: "Oh! I shall never see my dear, dear money bags again;" Mrs. Incle: "Oh! I shall never shine the envy of all the ladies at Tallow Chandler's Hall again, nor be admir'd by all the smart linen drapers' shopmen at a city assembly").[129]

In the highly ironic "happy" ending, Incle is united with his family and consoles his mother about their predicament:

> Peace, good mother, let us bear with patience the calamities due to our crimes. And, should some accident discover the miserable catastrophy of this instructive tale, let the moralist publish it to the world with this observation: 'That they are unworthy to enjoy the blessings of Liberty, who would infamously dare to take it from others.'[130]

The farce functions as an "instructive tale" to illustrate the above "observation" on who is (un)worthy to enjoy the blessings of liberty. Inkle's concluding lines carry forward the idea of disseminating this story so that "fame may spread it with her brazen clarion, till astonish'd Europe hears, and blushing learns humanity from savages."[131] Humanity, that abstract innate substance of moral equivalence, is now externalized as something lost to Europeans, a strategy which works to disrupt the sense of privilege of the sentimental "white" subject. What these last lines signify is a reorientation of the sympathetic gaze, which like Ferriar's quotation from *Hamlet*, desired the same effect: to educe the emotion of shame that subverted the conventional power relation established in sympathetic exchange. It was not Oroonoko or Yarico who was the occasion for sympathy; rather they were the occasion for subverting

---

[128] Ibid., 45.

[129] Ibid., 49-50.

[130] Ibid., 69-70.

[131] Ibid., 70.

sympathetic identification by gazing back at the spectators and charging them for being complicit in permitting the horrors of slavery to take place. Entertaining the possibility of the savage as teacher is an important component of the radicalization of the concept of sympathy for it subverts the position of privilege of the sympathetic gaze.

A similar position is held by the representations of the black man in William Hogarth's prints, as noted by David Dabydeen in *Hogarth's Blacks*. Unlike the eighteenth-century paintings of aristocrats (where the black boy figured as an inferior doting upon the lady), the eighteenth-century prints figured the black man as a member of the urban poor, well assimilated in lower-class culture. However, Hogarth's Blacks functioned to subvert and reverse the gaze upon the ruling elite, exposing them to be "sexually deviant" and morally decadent. Hogarth uses the black man, "who was widely held as the embodiment of sexual and cultural savagery, to laugh at them, thereby reversing conventional roles and perceptions."[132]

Radical sympathy, as a possible alternative to liberal sympathy, verged on the limits of sympathetic identification. As a provisional description of radical sympathy, one can say that the question of identifying with the Other was inconsequential, as the Other occasions the inability to identify with your self. The sentiment of shame reconfigures the dramatic spectator's relation to the sentimental hero. John Mullan notes that, "it is the body which acts out the power of sentiment."[133] I would argue that the body also betrays, by acting involuntarily against our conscious desires. Blushing, fainting, and tears are the transgressions of a body beyond our control. In tracing the emergence of the dominant liberal spectatorial attitude to suffering through performative reconfigurations of the noble savage

---

[132] David Dabydeen, *Hogarth's Blacks: Images of Blacks in Eighteenth Century English Art* (Kingston-upon-Thames: Dangaroo Press, 1985), 79.

[133] John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 201.

paradigm, its negative, in the form of radical sympathy, also emerges as a transgressive performative possibility in the late eighteenth century, a possibility which will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: PRETENDED PIETY; OR, THE IDEOLOGY OF BENEVOLENT IMPERIALISM

One aspect of liberal humanitarianism that I considered in the previous chapter was how it negotiated inequality through moral equivalence. By looking at the works of Burke, Locke, Smith, and Montesquieu, I suggested that their philosophical projects were based on a particular type of social order that privileged the independent mind over the socially dependent body. In this distinction, the body was relegated to an inferior status, even as the mind of the degraded body was acknowledged by these writers to be morally equivalent. It is this separation of the socially dependent body from the universally independent mind through which liberal philosophies negotiated inequalities by adopting exclusionary strategies based on capabilities, education, and culture.[1] The association of abstract humanity with the mind, which considers the marks of racialisation and enslavement in terms of bodily particularities that need to be overcome, excludes the slave from the community of the free because the slave is principally, as Burke would put it, an *instrumentum vocale*, or a speaking tool.[2] But noble savage characters like Oroonoko and Yarico retained the residual nobility of a noble body even within the new configuration of the paradigm. It is for this reason that the black body as a noble savage has its limits. The noble savage paradigm can only be stretched so far as to suggest the configuration of a natural body; but it is limited in its scope because it is a product of a historical moment when the noble body dominated the theatrical repertoire.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the liberal form of sympathetic investment in dramatic characters had become the dominant spectatorial attitude towards unequal Others.

---

[1] For the various "strategies of exclusion" adopted within universalistic liberal frameworks, see Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 46-76.

[2] Edmund Burke, "Thoughts and Details on Scarcity (1795)," in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke, Vol. 9.1: The Revolutionary War 1794-1797*, ed. R. B. McDowell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 125.

During this time, a new formalization of the black body on stage, altogether different from the noble savage paradigm, soon took shape in the form of distinctly New Low characters, namely, the black comic servant and the grateful slave. The New Lows in the eighteenth century, as Julie Carlson describes them, are the "comic black characters that start and stay low" and ostensibly embody "those generic theatric lows, like pantomime, farce, music, spectacle, stage business, that are said to constitute and signify the generic social status of black as low, servile, comic."[3] In contrast to the noble savage, these characters were not configured around feudal notions of nobility; rather, the moral framework of common humanity articulated in terms of benevolence and gratitude structured many of the themes, plots, and circumstances in which they fulfilled their "low" dramatic function.

In this chapter, I offer an analysis of popular plays through which I identify three character types – the benevolent planters, the patriotic sailors, and the New Lows (black slave and servant characters) – which represent three distinct ideological positions – proslavery advocacy, moralistic imperialism, and abolitionism – that together form the field of diverse, but nonetheless "legitimate," dominant opinions concerning the slave trade. By legitimacy, I allude to its use in eighteenth-century theatrical culture to designate dramatic productions of licensed (hence legitimate) theatres that were permitted to perform the spoken word; but I also expand upon this idea of theatrical legitimacy as an expression of political legitimacy of what is permitted to be articulated, displayed, and debated in a highly fraught and contested political culture. The three distinct ideological positions, disseminated through popular culture, necessarily hinged upon the formalization of the black body as a New Low.

By the end of the chapter, I hope to substantiate in greater detail Wylie Sypher's description of these black characters as "pseudo-Africans," or, what Toni Morrison

---

[3] Julie A. Carlson, "New Lows in Eighteenth-Century Theater: The Rise of Mungo," *European Romantic Review* 18, no. 2 (2007): 142.

designates as "the fabrication of an Africanist persona" that offers "an extraordinary meditation on the [white] self; a powerful exploration of the fears and desires that reside in the writerly conscious."[4] The limits of the liberal form of spectatorial investment and the impasse of the formalization of the black body as a New Low (which is what ultimately renders it "legitimate") offer the possibility of a speculative critique: the three ideologically contrary positions – represented by the planters, the sailors, and the New Lows, which sometimes function as masks for abolitionist discourse – are considered as minimal variations within a shared space that uphold the same basic assumptions of ethnic superiority, national pride, and imperial legacy. I conclude this chapter with the possibility of a fourth position, that of the rebel slave, which I argue represents a position inconceivable in the present formalization of the black body as a New Low.

Liberty and Slavery: An Eighteenth-Century Paradox

Paul Youngquist and Frances Botkin's introduction to the *Romantic Circles Praxis Series*, which focuses on "Black Romanticism," highlights certain unquestioned imperatives imposed upon scholarly works dealing with British Romanticism. Cultural productions of the period are generally considered in terms of geographical specificity (national borders that determine metropole as centre and colonies as peripheral), linguistic dominance (the King's English, printed discourse, and imperial literacy), and the racial normative (maintaining ethnic diversity, yet asserting racial homogeneity) (6).[5] The project of Black Romanticism subverts these imperatives "by conjuring spirits they ignore, spectres of the Atlantic vortex that haunt the nation and its presumed unities" (7). It "conjures these ancestors by practising

---

[4] Sypher, *Guinea's Captive Kings*, 7; Morrison, *Playing the Dark*, 17.

[5] Paul Youngquist and Frances Botkin, "Introduction: Black Romanticism: Romantic Circulations," *Romantic Circles Praxis Series* (2011), https://romantic-circles.org/praxis/circulations/HTML/praxis.2011.youngquist.html. The paragraph number is mentioned in parenthesis.

counter-literacy, reading the works of nation, empire, and colony against themselves to liberate the common cultures they occlude" (10). My analysis of the black body in this chapter performs a similar displacement. I argue that it is precisely the absence of the black body as a rebel slave (illegitimate illegitimacy) which haunts the otherwise documented and performed formalizations of the black body as grateful slaves and comic servants (legitimate forms of legitimacy and illegitimacy).[6] In his manifesto on Black Romanticism, Youngquist notes that narratives of eighteenth-century humanitarian revolution stick "pretty close to British national borders," disavowing the blood, oppression, and exploitation that tainted the Enlightenment project and its Romantic intensification in the nineteenth century.[7] This otherwise triumphal narrative figures the birth pangs that signal the arrival of a more humane order as if felt only within the territorially defined national polity. However, this was not the difficult birthing of a new society within England, or even within racially homogenous Europe.

> Insurrection haunts the British Empire like a nightmare, punctuating Romanticism with blood. In 1791, rebellion exploded in Saint-Domingue, threatening to spread to British colonies. … In 1831-32, it erupted for the umpteenth time in Jamaica, threatening to engulf the whole island and hastening the advent of emancipation. In colonial terms, not the flowering of culture, not the triumphs of right, but the recurrence of racial violence defines the Romantic era. These were black rebellions, after all, planned and executed by transported Africans. They constitute an important counter-history to traditional accounts of cultural and social change among the British.[8]

The terrifying rebellious voices of insurrectionary slaves, of Africans resisting their oppression, of a people attempting to transform their world, are silenced in stage representations, in which the black is reconfigured as impotent, ineffective, and nonagential,

---

[6] For the difference between legitimate illegitimacy and illegitimate illegitimacy, refer to Introduction, p. 36.

[7] Paul Youngquist, "Black Romanticism: A Manifesto," *Studies in Romanticism* 56, no. 1 (2017): 6.

[8] Ibid.

precisely to confer agency as the prerogative of normative whites. But lurking just out of sight, haunting these representations as their unrepresentable negative, are the collective black bodies. For Youngquist, the "task of Black Romanticism seems clear: to acknowledge this insurgence against the genre of Man and rewrite history accordingly … crafting counter-histories of subhuman insurgence and use them as weapons in the struggle for human liberation."[9] It is in this context that the dramatic representation of the "racial" Other becomes an interesting object of analysis, not so much as an expression of a coherent intentional worldview of a white dramatist, but for the unintentional gaps between the intended meaning and its objective representations. The liberal narrative of history that celebrates the triumph of liberty over slavery elides the fact that it was countries that were transformed through some form of liberal revolution that witnessed an intensification of slave trading and an expansion of the institution of slavery across colonial territories.[10] Thus, although the notions of liberty and slavery in liberal discourse were assumed to be antonyms, the relationship between them was often more complementary than antagonistic. The reason, Losurdo suggests, is that the new social and political forces (primarily liberal in orientation) emphasized the absolute right of the individual over his property that could not be subverted or checked by power relations that were premodern in origin, namely those of the Church and the King.[11] For this reason, the liberal revolutions unleashed the emancipation of a select class of people, the property-owners who belonged to the community of the free, while simultaneously rendering all those that were excluded from this community vulnerable to exploitation. The eighteenth-century paradox is that racial chattel slavery was not in

---

[9] Ibid., 7.

[10] See Losurdo, *Liberalism: A Counter-History*, 21, 27; Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, 3.

[11] Losurdo, *Liberalism: A Counter-History*, 34.

contradiction with the new (liberal) social and political forces but with premodern power relations. Slavery as an institution "is not something that persisted despite the success of the three liberal revolutions," Losurdo asserts, rather it intensified because of them.[12] However, the ideological assumption held by abolitionists like Granville Sharp was that liberty and slavery are "so opposite to each other, that they cannot subsist in the same community."[13] Patterson questions this polarization of slavery and freedom, and argues that this "assumption is unfounded" and we "make it only because we reify ideas, because we fail to see the logic of contradiction, and because in our anachronistic arrogance we tend to read the history of ideas backwards."[14]

Nowhere else is this complementary association between liberty and slavery more clearly articulated than in Edmund Burke's *Speech on the Conciliation with America 22 March 1775*. Burke reminded the house that "the people of the colonies are descendants of Englishmen" and therefore they are "not only devoted to liberty, but liberty according to English ideas, and on English principles."[15] Without irony, Burke argues that it was in the southern colonies with their multitude of slaves that one finds a free people who are "the most proud and jealous of their freedom" for freedom to them "is not only an enjoyment, but a kind of rank and privilege" and so "these people of the southern colonies are much more strongly, and with an higher and more stubborn spirit, attached to liberty, than those to the

---

[12] Ibid., 35.

[13] Granville Sharp, *A Representation of the Injustice and Dangerous Tendency of Tolerating Slavery; or of Admitting the Least Claim of Private Property in the Persons of Men, in England* (London: Printed for Benjamin White, 1769), 82.

[14] Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*, ix.

[15] Edmund Burke, "Speech on Conciliation with America (22 March 1775)," in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke. Vol. 3: Party, Parliament, and the American War 1774-1780*, ed. W. M. Elofson and John A. Woods (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 120.

northward."[16] For Burke, the institution of slavery is not a hindrance or a contradiction to the profession of liberty but, if anything, a buttress to becoming a more staunch supporter of liberty.

This contradiction between the conceptual development of liberalism (in which liberty and slavery are antagonistic) and the political and social relations that express it (in which liberty and slavery are complementary) is accentuated in late eighteenth-century dramatizations of empire. As Felicity Nussbaum observes, late eighteenth-century drama can be read as a self-representation of Britain as a world power, engaged in a struggle "to reconcile its notions of a 'free and virtuous empire' with an emerging conviction about its national and racial supremacy."[17] Gibbs interprets theatrical representations of slavery in Britain as a transatlantic socio-aesthetic of race that attempts "to reinvent national and imperial notions of 'Britishness' in the face of imperial defeat in the American war" betraying a profound anxiety about empire-building.[18]

In my analysis, I show how this false polarity between early forms of liberalism and slavery were not so much an embedded contradiction but a complementary negotiation that found various legitimate expressions in both proslavery and antislavery discourse, which are but variations of the same underlying legitimate racialist premise. Rather than pitting abolitionists' arguments against those of slavery apologists, I see them both as minimally different representative positions that work to silence the more radically aggressive voice amongst them, namely, that of the rebel slaves themselves. Such a critical framework categorizes both abolitionists and slavery apologists as emancipated members of the

---

[16] Ibid., 122. A similar assertion was made by a Barbadian planter: "you will … find that no nations in the world have been more jealous of their liberties than those amongst whom the institution of slavery existed". Quoted in Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery*, 199-200.

[17] Nussbaum, "Theatre of Empire: Racial Counterfeit, Racial Realism," 71.

[18] Gibbs, *Performing the Temple of Liberty*, 53.

community of the free from which slaves, as well as women, and the lower classes are excluded. In other words, if abolitionism and slavery are reconfigured as an internal conflict between the members of the community of the free (whether planter, trader, or abolitionist), then what are their shared assumptions as evident in their collective representation of the slave or black Other? And how does this very representation expose the limitation of the arguments in favour of liberation, amelioration, or enslavement of the slaves?

This extra-theatrical context is the frame for analysing popular eighteenth-century dramas like George Lillo's *The London Merchant* (Drury Lane, 1731), George Colman the Elder's *The English Merchant* (Drury Lane, 1767), and Richard Cumberland's *The West Indian* (Drury Lane, 1771). Through these plays, I will historicize ubiquitous dramatic themes like benevolence and love as a means to negotiate metropolitan and colonial relations and identities.

Benevolent Imperialism: The Community of the Free

George Lillo's tragedy *The London Merchant* was first performed in 1731 at the Drury Lane theatre and went on to become a staple of the theatrical repertoire, being performed 96 times in its first decade. Although a tragedy of the fall of a merchant's apprentice (Barnwell), who is ruined by a wicked seductress (Millwood), the story presents a moral tale for apprentices, warning them of the dire consequences of deviating from the exemplary values represented by Thorowgood, the aptly named benevolent master. These new sentimental tragedies focused on ordinary people of middling rank as characters worthy of tragic treatment, anticipating Romantic-period domestic melodramas. The reconceptualised nature of suffering suitable for the dramatic stage was an acknowledgment of the shifting social and economic circumstances, which saw the rise of merchants like Thorowgood, as well as the fall of many others who suffered from crippling debt, as is the

case in Edward Moore's *The Gamester* (Drury Lane, 1753) and Richard Cumberland's *The Mysterious Husband* (Covent Garden, 1783).[19]

In Colman the Elder's *The English Merchant* (1767), a sentimental comedy also performed at the Drury Lane theatre, the eponymous English Merchant, Freeport, much like Thorowgood, represents, as described by one of the characters, "benevolence itself" (Act 1.i).[20] Colman's plot is similar to Richard Steele's *The Conscious Lovers* (Drury Lane, 1722), which centred on the rediscovery of identity, in which a poor girl discovers that she is actually of noble birth, and her hitherto problematic marriage to a nobleman becomes legitimate and socially acceptable. But, unlike Steele's title, which focuses on the "conscious lovers", Colman's title shifts the focus to the benevolent merchant, who becomes the focus of spectatorial sympathy, and the prime agent that makes possible the union of the lovers.

In Lillo's play, Thorowgood's character functions as a moral authority that admonishes Barnwell for his moral lapse, but also forgives him when he repents, thus salvaging his soul; but otherwise, Thorowgood is ineffective, as an agential character, in preventing Barnwell from committing robbery and murder and in mitigating the influence Millwood has upon the apprentice. The character of Freeport, on the other hand, marks a shift in the depiction of merchant characters after the Seven Years' War, in which the character has more agency in influencing the course of dramatic events, and what permits him to exercise such authority and perform benevolent acts is, of course, his money. The plot, in Colman's play, revolves around Amelia, a poor Scottish girl of noble origins, whose father, Sir Douglas, is a penitent rebel who hopes to receive a pardon for being involved in the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745. It is Freeport who arranges for Sir Douglas's pardon through his

---

[19] Felicity Nussbaum, "The Challenge of Tragedy," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre, 1737-1832*, ed. Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 375.

[20] George Colman, *The English Merchant* (London: Printed for T. Becket et al., 1767), 6.

friend, the English nobleman, Lord Falconbridge. Lord Falconbridge is in love with Amelia, but Amelia had snubbed his offer as inappropriate because of their class difference; eventually, she succumbs to his charms once her own fortunes are restored.

In a number of scenes, Freeport resolves the dramatic tension by doling out cash. At the end of Act 2, he discreetly helps out Amelia with two hundred pounds, which amounts to ten percent of his profits from Lisbon. It should be noted that in the original play, *L'Ecossaise* (1760), by Voltaire, the character of Freeport actually returned from Jamaica, establishing a clear connection with the character's West Indian investments. One can only conjecture that Colman, an astute theatre manager himself, shifted the location from Jamaica to Lisbon to avoid the social stigma associated with slavery in the metropole. In the third act, when Amelia is arrested for treason for her father's participation in the Jacobite Rebellion, Freeport once again comes to her rescue, offering to bail her out; and he attempts to do so again in Act 5, when both Sir Douglas and Amelia are apprehended by the authorities. From such eighteenth-century plays, Bridget Orr has accurately summarized the function of the benevolent merchant character:

> [He] serves as secular and humane Providence, a moral and material arbiter whose actions as *deus ex machina* are emotionally motivated but serve also to humanize and justify the cruelties of a globalizing market society. As was the case with Sealand in *The Conscious Lovers*, these avatars of patriotic mercantilism rescue the impoverished, admonish or expel the erring, and secure the social order by facilitating unifying marriages.[21]

The benevolent merchant, as the precursor to the figure of the benevolent planter, is significant because he represents the mercantile link between the metropole and the colony. The merchant signifies the colonial relations, just as his benevolence indicates the source of his fortunes, which grants him the power and authority to determine the action of the play. As

[21] Bridget Orr, "Empire, Sentiment, and Theatre," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre, 1737-1832*, ed. Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 634.

a moral character, the benevolent merchant crucially humanizes and sanctifies the cruelties of a globalizing market society, justifying the means for benevolent ends. The benevolent merchant in these dramas forms the vanguard of a liberal political community of the free.

A later play, *The West Indian* (Drury Lane, 1771) by Richard Cumberland, presents a character very similar to Freeport; but rather than being a merchant, the character is a Creole slaveholding planter. Cumberland, a popular playwright with Irish affiliations and a Secretary to the Board of Trade and Plantations from 1775 to 1782, sought originality in introducing "characters of persons, who had been usually exhibited on stage, as the butts for ridicule and abuse, and endeavoured to present them in such lights, as might tend to reconcile the world to them, and them to the world."[22] He wrote in his *Memoirs* (1806):

> I thereupon looked into society for the purpose of discovering such as were the victims of its national, professional or religious prejudices; in short, for those suffering characters, which stood in need of an advocate … of which I would study to make such favourable and reconciliatory delineations, as might incline the spectators to look upon them with pity, and receive them into their good opinion and esteem.[23]

Belcour, the West Indian planter, was one such "suffering" character that Cumberland tried to save from prejudice. Having the character of a benevolent planter strutting about on a metropolitan stage in a London setting was clearly unprecedented. Cumberland noted the agitation of his theatre manager, David Garrick, who thought that the spectators that evening, "particularly in the pit" seemed "more hostile than he had ever seen it."[24] Garrick's anxiety reveals the extent to which Creoles and their association with slavery were looked down upon even in theatrical representations of slavery, which could arouse an impetuous crowd to riot. Although Cumberland "did not at that moment feel the danger, which [Garrick] seemed to

---

[22] Cumberland, *Memoirs of Richard Cumberland*, 1: 274.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., 1: 295.

apprehend," he consoled the theatre manager "that the very first word, which discovered Belcour's character to be friendly, would turn the clamour for us."[25] William Mudford, a contemporary of Cumberland's, noted that, in Belcour, Cumberland "concentrated his chief efforts to please, and he attained what he wished." Mudford describes the character as:

> [a] man whose passions are sometimes too strong for his virtue, but whose virtue is not wholly destroyed. Benevolent and impetuous, he forgets that justice is paramount to generosity, and gives away the property of another with the same indifference and with greater culpability than he would squander his own. … Such is Belcour, and such as he is, he never fails to command the good-will both of the spectator and the reader. Why he is made a West Indian, however, I am unable to conjecture. No quality is given to him which might not belong to a European, and those qualities which would have distinguished him, in conformity with his appellation, are withheld.[26]

Thus, although Cumberland wanted to break stereotypes, it seems his efforts rendered the character implausible. Another contemporary critic made a similar observation, writing that Belcour could have been "any young man educated in a foreign country who has great propensities to do right, accompanied at the same time by some over-ruling passions."[27] However, for our purposes, what is crucial is that Cumberland's Belcour is a precursor to the benevolent planter characters that would soon emerge during the abolitionist debate. Belcour is a transitional character, in between the benevolent merchants (Thorowgood and Freeport) and the benevolent planters.

Like Colman's *The English Merchant*, the plot of *The West Indian* also revolves around the rediscovery of lost relations. In this case, the worthy merchant, Stockwell, who had married the daughter of a wealthy Jamaican Planter, albeit clandestinely, knowing that his inferior social status "made it hopeless to expect her father's consent," wants now, after

---

[25] Ibid.

[26] William Mudford, *A Critical Examination of the Writings of Richard Cumberland, Esq*, 2 vols. (London: Printed by Charles Squire, 1812), 1: 209-10.

[27] *The Critical Review, Annals of Literature*, vol. 31 (London: A. Hamilton, 1771), 113. Quoted in Orr, "Empire, Sentiment, and Theatre," 633.

all these years, to re-establish relations with his son (Belcour), who has just arrived in London (Act 1.i).[28] Now that he is a merchant of eminence and a member of British parliament, he can "aspire, without offence, to the daughter of a planter."[29] But Stockwell wants to "discover much more of [Belcour's] real character" and he can only do so more effectively as Belcour's merchant than as his father.

The play, under the guise of comedy and deploying the conventional tropes of mistaken identities and rediscovery of lost relations, is a scrutiny of the West-Indian character, observed from the point of view of a worthy English merchant. In other words, the character of the Jamaican planter is under surveillance by an authority figure that happens to be not just a father, but also an inhabitant of the metropole, a merchant by trade, and a political representative. Belcour would be scrutinized from all these various vantage points, i.e., the familial, the socio-cultural, and the political. And as the spectators are invited to identify with the well-intentioned Stockwell, the entire play can be read as a collective scrutiny involving the spectators in dissecting the character of the eponymous protagonist. In fact, this aspect was so central to the dramatization of the play, that Cumberland reflects upon it in his memoirs. It was Garrick, "the admirable judge of stage-effect," as Cumberland recalls, who suggested the addition of "the preparatory scene in the house of Stockwell, before the arrival of Belcour."[30] Garrick said to Cumberland: "I want something more to be announced of your West Indian before you bring him on stage to give éclat to his entrance, and rouse the curiosity of the audience," further suggesting that "if neither your Merchant nor his clerk can do it, why, send in the servants, and let them talk about him."[31] As this was the

[28] Richard Cumberland, *The West Indian* (London: Printed for John Bell, 1792), 8.

[29] Ibid., 9.

[30] Cumberland, *Memoirs of Richard Cumberland*, 1: 292.

[31] Ibid.

only alteration that Cumberland made to the manuscript for its stage presentation, the purpose of the scene in the dramatization of the character becomes all the more significant, especially in the context of mediating the perception of character through multiple vantage points. In this particular scene, the servant stresses that all this fuss about this foreigner is because of his wealth: "he's very rich, and that's sufficient. They say he has rum and sugar enough belonging to him, to make all the water in the Thames into punch" (Act 1.iii).[32] The servants thus stress the financial power of the West Indian, and by referring to the Thames, an obvious connection between the metropole and the colony is established, emphasizing the connection of West-Indian wealth to the sinews of British trade through its mercantile and naval monopoly. Colonial wealth is part of, not separate from, the imperial centre of power, that is, the British government.

But before the economic significance of the West Indian could be stressed, the character needed to be given moral legitimacy as a good person. Thus, the first perspective that mediates the character of Belcour is a sailor in charge of bringing his cargo. On being asked what the cargo is, the sailor informs Stockwell, that if it could be possible, his master would have brought over the whole island along with him, for upon his departure he did not leave anyone on the island "with a dry eye in it" (Act 1.ii).[33] The scene ends with Stockwell affirming that "'tis not a bad prognostic of a man's heart, when his shipmates give him a good word" (Act 1.ii).[34] Upon receiving a letter in a later scene, Stockwell, speaking to himself, says: "All the reports I ever received give me favourable impressions of his

[32] Cumberland, *The West Indian*, 11.

[33] Ibid., 10.

[34] Ibid., 11.

character; wild, perhaps, as the manner of his country, but, I trust, not frantic or unprincipled" (Act 1.iv).[35]

The most significant aspect of Belcour is that he affirms that he is a member of the community of the free, for "as a fellow subject, and a sharer in their freedom, I applaud their spirit" (Act 1.v).[36] England, after all, as the West Indian acknowledges, "is the fountain-head of pleasure, in the land of beauty, of arts, and elegancies" (Act 1.v).[37] But to be a member of the community of the free requires discipline. In this regard, Stockwell corrects Belcour's frivolity concerning his estates, and implores him "to treat it… not as a vassal, over whom you have a wanton and a despotic power; but as a subject, which you are bound to govern with a temperate and restrained authority."[38] In the end, Stockwell passes his judgment on Belcour, declaring that "I have watched you with a patient but enquiring eye, and I have discovered, through the veil of some irregularities, a heart beaming with benevolence, an animated nature, fallible, indeed, but not incorrigible" (Act 5.viii).[39] Stockwell's judgment thus accepts the slaveholding Creole as a legitimate member of the community of the free.

However, to be a member of the community of the free requires the sentimental recognition of the moral equivalence of unequal others. In Cumberland's play, the unequal others are the numerous low-class characters that are unable to love each other because their class difference poses an obstacle to their matrimonial union. The play opens with Stockwell narrating how he could not openly love Belcour's mother because of his lowly station as a small merchant. This motif is repeated again, forming the main dramatic conflict in the play.

---

[35] Ibid., 12.

[36] Ibid., 14.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., 100-01.

Charles Dudley and his sister, Louisa Dudley, are unable to form a matrimonial alliance with Charlotte Rusport and Belcour, respectively, because of their class difference. The dramatic conflict is resolved by the reallocation of wealth from the morally unworthy characters (Lady Rusport, the Fulmers) to the morally worthy (the Dudleys).

Similar to other benevolent characters like Freeport, Belcour is also generous with his wealth, and dispenses with it in order to help others in need without a second thought. Upon meeting an impoverished sailor (Captain Dudley), who is in need of money, Belcour, like Freeport, grants him a bill of two hundred pounds. Belcour is sentimentally naïve and passionate, who, through his simplicity, exposes the affectations of metropolitan London, the guile, treachery, and deceit of the Fulmers, the hypocrisy of the puritanical Lady Rusport, and the false delicacy of the Dudleys.

In Lillo's play, Thorowgood, the benevolent merchant, incessantly proclaims mercantilist platitudes on the morality of "honest merchants" not just as a moral lesson for his apprentices, but also as a means of highlighting the grandiose role of merchants within an imperial economy. Merchants, he states, "contribute to the Safety of their Country, as they do at all Times to its Happiness" (Act 1.i).[40] The art of trading, Thorowgood tells his apprentice, should be studied as a science,

> to see how it is founded in Reason, and the Nature of Things; how it promotes Humanity, as it has open'd, and yet keeps up an Intercourse between Nations, far remote from one another in Situation, Customs, and Religion; promoting Arts, Industry, Peace and Plenty; by mutual Benefits diffusing mutual Love from Pole to Pole.

A little later, Thorowgood observes:

> The populous East, luxuriant, abounds with glittering Gems, bright Pearls, aromatick Spices, and Health restoring Drugs: the late found Western World's rich Earth glows with unnumber'd Veins of Gold and Silver Ore. On every Climate, and on every Country, Heaven has bestowed some Good peculiar to itself. It is the industrious Merchant's business to collect the various Blessings

[40] George Lillo, *The London Merchant; or the History of George Barnwell* (Worcester: London, 1783), 5.

> of each Soil and Climate; and, with the Product of the Whole, to enrich his native Country (Act 3.i).[41]

Both these passages, taken together, offer the most articulate expression of benevolent imperialism: the "science" of mercantilism involves the plundering of global resources to enrich the "native Country," and the act of plunder is reconfigured as a global peace campaign of spreading "mutual Love." Truegood, Thorowgood's other apprentice, further explicates the benefits of "love":

> by Love and Friendship to tame the Fierce, and polish the most Savage; to teach them the Advantage of honest Traffick, by taking from them, with their own Consent, their useless superfluities; and giving them, in Return, what, from Ignorance in manual Arts, their Situation, or some other Accident, they stand in need of. (Act 3.i)[42]

The honest merchant contributes to the wealth and health of the mother country, bolstering her treasures and consequently her power, but, in doing so, he must also be other than he is; although a man in pursuit of riches and lusting for power, he must acknowledge that he has neither a love of riches nor a lust for power, for how else can he claim moral equivalence with those who have neither riches nor power? That the Lord is contemptuous of the "Love of Riches, and the Lust of Power" is the spiritual truth that Thorowgood acknowledges was discovered in "Sacred Volumes" (Act 5.ii).[43]

Lillo's play is interesting for another reason as well. Unlike Cumberland's play which features a West-Indian plantation owner but no slaves, Lillo's play features a character that is both the domestic counterpart to the "haughty and revengeful Spaniard" (Act 1.i), whom Thorowgood so fears, as well as a self-identifying slave.[44] The female character of Millwood

---

[41] Ibid., 27.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid., 50.

[44] Ibid., 5.

declares that she desires complete conquest, “like those of the Spaniards in the New World, who first plundered the Natives of all the Wealth they had, and then condemn’d the Wretches to the Mines for Life, to work for more” (Act 1.ii).[45] For Millwood, sexual conquest over men is analogous to imperial conquest over the New World. She is the villainous seductress of the narrative, who corrupts Thorowgood’s young and innocent apprentice, Barnwell, into stealing from his master and later from his uncle who he also murders. But, in an interesting twist, Millwood also identifies herself as a slave (“We are but Slaves to Men”) and chastises men for treating women as their property (“Men, however generous and sincere to one another, are all selfish Hypocrites in their Affairs with us”)(Act 1.ii).[46] Once again, what is expressed here is that the community of the free is an exclusive community, even more so within their national territorial borders. In contrast to Linda Colley, for whom “Britishness was superimposed over an array of internal differences in response to contact with the Other,” for Kathleen Wilson, “national identities are not unitary entities to be discovered or superimposed but dense ideological constructions that are fissured, contested, and exclusionary of those *within* as well as, and more than, those *without.*”[47] In other words, by citing Edward Said, for whom the “other” was “a surrogate and even underground self,” Wilson internalizes the territorial frontier within constructions of self, thus presenting Britishness itself as a fissured identity.[48]

This fissured identity is represented by the composite union of the Spaniard and the slave within society in the figure of Millwood. The disenfranchised, in this case, women like

---

[45] Ibid., 9-10.

[46] Ibid., 9.

[47] Colley, *Britons*, 6; also see "Britishness and Otherness: An Argument," 316; Wilson, “The Good, the Bad, and the Impotent,” 257, n.6.

[48] “The Good, the Bad, and the Impotent,” 257, n.6; Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 3.

Millwood, are excluded from the community of the free. Thus, while the play construes her as a villain, her identification as a slave turns the tragic narrative of a fallen apprentice into a tragic narrative of a slave's failed rebellion. But in this case, there is no evil governor or overseer as in the *Oroonoko* narratives; the ultimate villain is the patriarchal institution at large that fosters gendered slave-relations.

Millwood, in her defence, highlights the systemic violence against women, which gives them no other option but to submit or to commit crimes. She is unrepentant of her own crimes and justifies her actions on grounds that she was punished of a crime otherwise indulged freely by those in power, further challenging the right of those who judge her for denying the freedom they themselves enjoy. Millwood, on the verge of being hanged for her crimes, delivers in forceful prose a scathing critique of the establishment:

> What are your Laws of which you make your Boast, but the Fool's Wisdom, and the Coward's Valour, the Instrument and Screen of all your Villainies? By them you punish in others what you act yourselves, or wou'd have acted had you been in their Circumstances. The Judge who condemns the poor man for being a Thief, had been a Thief himself, had he been poor. Thus you go on deceiving and being deceived, harassing, plaguing, and destroying one another. But women are your Universal Prey.
>
> *Women, by whom you are, the Source of Joy,*
> *With cruel Arts you labour to destroy:*
> *A thousand Ways our Ruin you pursue,*
> *Yet blame in us those Arts first taught by you.*
> *Oh! May from hence each violated Maid,*
> *... To right their Sex's Wrongs devote their Mind,*
> *And future* Millwoods *prove to plague Mankind.* (Act 4.ii)[49]

The liberal paradigm finds its clearest exposition in these lines, illuminating the hypocrisy, the façade of nobility, the screen of modesty and morality used to deceive the countless "Others" that stand outside the community of the free. The "Others" are recognized under the veneer of equivalence in which the very act of recognition is declared a benevolent,

[49] Lillo, *The London Merchant*, 47-48.

paternalistic act for which the only appropriate response from those thus recognized is gratitude and not rebellion.

The exchange between Thorowgood and Millwood can be read as an exchange between a benevolent master and a rebel slave who is unrepentant and unwilling to accept her actions as wrongful. When Thorowgood attempts to bring her into the fold of his benevolence by granting her a chance to be repentant and worthy of pity, Millwood lashes out at his ruse arguing that "War, Plague, and Famine, have not destroyed so many of the human Race, as this pretended Piety has done" (Act 4.ii). Within the framework of benevolent imperialism, Millwood's rebellion can only be construed as villainous and immoral with no legitimate basis. It is for this reason that the final scenes, which stage the imparting of justice, is particularly significant. Millwood, in her statement, questions this justice as a mere semblance of justice, behind which work the obscene mechanisms of power. The powerful jealously guard their prerogative by normalizing social and gendered relations within ethical parameters of repentance, forgiveness, and pity. In the last scene, in the place of execution, surrounded by spectators, it is Barnwell who has the last word. He counsels the spectators:

> From our Example may all be taught to fly the first
> Approach of Vice; but if o'ertaken
> By strong Temptation, Weakness, or Surprize,
> Lament their Guilt, and by Repentance rise,
> The Impenitent alone die unforgiv'n:
> To sin like Man, and to forgive like Heav'n. (Act 5.iii)[50]

Indeed, the fact that Barnwell is repentant and subsequently forgiven by Thorowgood for his crimes renders Millwood's defiance as something beyond redemption. By being executed as an unrepentant criminal, Millwood and her criticism of the social system is desiccated of all moral legitimacy.

[50] Ibid., 59.

In the above plays, the ubiquitous framework of benevolent imperialism functions as a condition for tying together places, characters, and situations into a knot that unravels in dramatic time. Like onstage expressions of benevolence, onstage love also becomes all the more pronounced as an affirmative nod to the status quo such that there is a blurring between the private, domestic state of affairs, and the public, political state of affairs. In other words, theatrical love, like theatrical benevolence, is by no means only a personal, domesticated matter, for it works as an exposition of a state of affairs, which is historical, topical, and political in nature.

In the framework of benevolent imperialism, sentimental love plots do not emphasize the defiance usually associated with narratives like *Romeo and Juliet* in which the lovers are the agents and their determination to love is presented as a challenge to the established status quo; rather, benevolent imperialism conditions the love plot such that the act of union of lovers is in the hands of their benevolent facilitators and not in the decision of the lovers. The union of lovers in this context reaffirms the status quo best expressed in the declaration of gratitude towards their benevolent benefactors.

In Colman's play, Freeport's final act of benevolence is the sacrifice of his own love for Amelia, facilitating the matrimonial alliance between her and Lord Falconbridge. Freeport, the merchant, does not obstruct the union of the two lovers. The play makes an important allegorical point enacting the reunion of the Hanoverian and the Jacobite houses (the English and the Scots), thus overcoming past political tensions, made possible only through the agency of the representative of the mercantile class, who not only facilitates the union with his monetary benevolence, but also sacrifices his own desires for the greater good. Similarly, in Cumberland's *The West Indian*, the alliance between the English and the Creole is affirmed in matrimonial union, further strengthening the metropole-colonial relations necessary to sustain the consolidation of imperial power.

Many of these tropes – agential benevolent masters, impotent grateful lovers, sentimental expressions of common humanity, and moral equivalence of unequal Others, along with the moral de-legitimization of rebellious intent – form the thematic constellation for the following set of plays dealing with benevolent planters and grateful slaves in a colonial setting. Through these plays, I will explore the paradox of common humanity and argue that the recognition of common humanity maintains and justifies inequality in the form of social hierarchy in which the Other is given a fixed but legitimate place.

Benevolent Imperialism: Paradox of Common Humanity

The paradox of common humanity is dramatized by the asymmetry of benevolent actions and grateful reactions: the one who performs the benevolent act is assumed to be in a position of privilege, power, and moral superiority, whereas the one who expresses gratitude is already in a position of submissiveness and inferiority, and his action is but a reaction to the act of benevolence. This benevolent-gratitude structure informs the narrative of James Cobb's two-act play, *Paul and Virginia* (Covent Garden, 1800). In the first act, the white characters (Paul and Virginia) act benevolently towards a runaway slave, Alambra; in the second act, the slave responds through an obligatory grateful reaction to the mercy and benevolence shown to him in the previous act. Alambra jumps over a cliff to save the drowning Virginia from the depths of the sea, conscious of the debt he owes her: "What, tho' I risk my ransom'd life,/ the debt I to Virginia owe."[51] For every benevolent action there is an equivalent grateful reaction, but equivalence here by no means assumes equality between the one who acts and the one who reacts.

One such flexible social relationship that conveniently appears to overlook hierarchies while maintaining the status quo is friendship. Benevolence towards others is a friendly

[51] James Cobb, *Paul and Virginia: A Musical Drama* (Dublin: Printed by Thomas Burnside, 1801), 32.

gesture that attempts to welcome, co-opt, and assimilate the Other within the subjectivity of the benevolent being. This co-option of the Other is in itself the benevolent imperial gesture *par excellence*: the Other is thought to be liberated from their own limited, skewed worldview, but now inhabit a defined, safely localizable, and disciplined subject-position within the more inclusive, benevolent worldview of the imperial subject.[52]

In the context of benevolent imperialism, friendship affirms the power of the planters as members of the community of the free, just as it reconciles the masters to the slaves, facilitating the bond between them through the act of benevolence and the response of gratitude. This link between benevolence and friendship is credible, for, as it turns out, the original title of Thomas Bellamy's *The Benevolent Planters*, when it was first performed at the Haymarket theatre on 5th August 1789, was *The Friends*. After just two performances, the title was changed to *The Benevolent Planters* (10th August, 1789), with five additional performances.[53]

Although the play was not popular with the spectators, and hence never revived subsequently, it still did not receive negative criticism from the reviewers. Performed soon after the fall of the Bastille, the play's conservative sentiments were more appreciated than denounced. The *European Magazine* commended the play as "one of those performances which, from the subject as well as the occasion of its performance, requires every indulgence" and so "[w]hat is intended to serve the cause of humanity should be exempted

---

[52] As Kathleen Wilson notes, nationalistic attitudes in theatre "defined the 'other' as barbarous, ignorant, effeminate, or obscene (and hence defined Englishness as their opposites: civilized, cosmopolitan, manly, and virtuous)" and these attitudes "were deeply entrenched in the entire imperial effort". Wilson, "The Good, the Bad, and the Impotent," 243.

[53] All further citations are from the printed edition of *The Benevolent Planters* in Cox's anthology, unless a comparison is made with the original Larpent manuscript. Thomas Bellamy, *The Benevolent Planters* (London: Printed for J Debrett, 1789). Reprinted in Cox, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 5: 109-28.

from criticism."[54] Later, in September 1789, the same publication printed the evidently abolitionist prologue, later reprinted in the *Monthly Magazine*, a theatrical journal owned by Bellamy.[55]

Far from a radical demand for emancipation of the slaves, Bellamy's *The Benevolent Planters* is a loyalist appeal for amelioration of the slave's hardships, which opposed slavery as an un-Christian institution rather than on the pretext of natural rights, a form of discourse more in vogue amongst the Jacobins. Like William Wilberforce, Bellamy avoided the potentially revolutionary rhetoric of "rights," and presented amelioration in terms of Christian benevolence. Unlike Bellamy, the anonymous English translator of Kotzebue's *The Negro Slaves* (1796), who also dedicated the published play to Wilberforce ("Friend of Negroes!"), drew on the discourse of rights inspired by the French Revolution, and commended Wilberforce's "active zeal for the abolishment of slavery, and establishing so large a portion of mankind in the natural rights of humanity."[56] Kotzebue's unperformed play was reworked by Archibald Maclaren into a more sentimental, allegorical tale of paternalistic benevolent planters who boast of British philanthropy. *The Negro Slaves, or the Blackman and Blackbird* (Edinburgh, 1799) was performed at the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh and at the Amphitheatre on Westminster Bridge. Maclaren's play, read in the context of the revolutionary wars, incorporated much of Kotzebue's sentimentalism but expunged the rights-based discourse, and extolled the virtuous characteristics of British imperialism.

With the growing popularity of hybrid genres, the strict regulation of theatres on grounds of spoken and unspoken drama became even more difficult to enforce. And with this

---

[54] "Theatrical Journal," *European Magazine* (Aug. 1789): 135.

[55] "Theatrical Journal," *European Magazine* (Sept. 1789): 218. In the published version, the prologue is credited to a Codrington, Esq. of Exeter.

[56] August von Kotzebue, *The Negro Slaves* (London: Printed for T. Cadell, Jr., and W. Davies etc., 1796), iii.

hybridization of theatrical spectacles, dialogues became more common in illegitimate theatres. Licensed by the magistrates, as per the Act of 1755 that introduced regulation for places of public entertainment, the minor theatres, where illegitimate drama was performed, were exempt from submitting manuscripts to the Examiner of Plays.[57] Examining the illegitimate culture that cultivated these hybrid genres, and the venues in which they originated, Moody points out that what was implicit in the 1737 legislation was "the complacent illusion that a theatre without spoken dialogue was a theatre without power; since such theatres had no speech, censorship must be superfluous."[58] Although not altogether devoid of speech, minor theatres were adept at incorporating dramatic narrative in their *legitimised* illegitimate performances of burlettas and pantomimes: "A few chords placed quietly in the background sufficed for managers to claim that they were presenting a burletta and not a comedy or tragedy."[59] What makes illegitimate performances of minor theatres still legitimate is that although managers of minor theatres challenged the duopoly of Drury Lane and Covent Garden over the right to perform legitimate narrative drama, they did not challenge the imposition of theatrical censorship.[60] Although legitimate drama never directly referred to momentous political events, skirting the representation of the loss of American colonies, the French Revolution, and even the dire economic situation in England at the time of the Napoleonic Wars, the minor theatres, however, "were given significant leeway to make reference to contemporary events, as long as their productions were visual and, preferably,

[57] Such licensed establishments include the Olympic, the St. James's, the Strand, Sadler's Wells, Royalty Theatre, Astley's Amphitheatre, the Royal Circus (later Surrey Theatre), and the Royal Coburg.

[58] Moody, ""Fine Word, Legitimate!": Toward a Theatrical History of Romanticism," 225.

[59] Thomas, "The 1737 Licensing Act and Its Impact," 104.

[60] Ibid., 105.

patriotic extravaganzas."[61] Despite this opportunity, Maclaren's play is devoid of any radical critique or sentiments; rather it appeals to the dominant ameliorationist stance of alleviating the hardships of slavery from above with the agency completely residing in the benevolent acts of the community of the free, and only cursorily entertaining the distant possibility of emancipation. Situated as a legitimate expression of illegitimate theatricality, these plays about benevolent imperialism reveal how successful theatrical censorship was in forbidding the second-level illegitimate performances in both major and minor theatres, thus establishing the legitimacy of their productions. In fact, the shift in rights discourse from Bellamy to Kotzebue to Maclaren is closely associated with the changes in how one such momentous political event, namely the French Revolution, marked its presence on the London stage, not through direct representation, but as an obviously registered absence.

In its early years, the French Revolution had its supporters in England with the likes of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Wollstonecraft celebrating the clarion call of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Whig MPs like Charles James Fox and Richard Brinsley Sheridan (who was also a playwright) along with abolitionists, like Thomas Clarkson, hailed the fall of the *ancien régime*. Another playwright, Frederick Reynolds, recounts the public sentiment evoked by the revolution across the Channel:

> The French Revolution … had for some time excited the public attention in a considerable degree; but it did not cause a general sensation until the memorable fourteenth of July, 1789, when the Bastile [sic] was destroyed. Then… every man began to consider how the consequences might affect himself … the loyalist saw the revolution in one light, the democrat in another, and even the theatrical managers had also his view of the subject.[62]

Bellamy, too, offered his perspective on the French Revolution in a prologue included in the *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse*, a work dedicated to the actor, Charles Dibdin. Surprisingly,

---

[61] Ibid.

[62] Frederick Reynolds, *The Life and Times of Frederick Reynolds, Written by Himself* (London: Henry Colburn, 1827), 2: 54.

Bellamy celebrated the revolution taking place in the "neighb'ring shore, / Where swelling Tyranny shall reign no more."[63] This prologue was spoken by Mr. Palmer, the manager of the Royal Circus. Palmer's own sympathies are clear enough, for the Royal Circus had performed John Dent's popular and very topical play *The Triumph of Liberty* which had a successful run for seventy-nine consecutive nights in 1789. However, *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse* was published in 1794, when Robespierre's Reign of Terror disillusioned many erstwhile sympathizers of the revolution. Bellamy notes in a footnote that this prologue was written "[a]t the time this horrid prison was torn from its foundation by an indignant people" whose "conduct… was as much the subject of praise, as it is now of detestation."[64] Thus, although the French revolution is the political context for Bellamy's *The Benevolent Planters*, it is most conspicuous by its deliberate absence in the language of the play. Rather than a rights-based anti-slavery rhetoric, Bellamy presents a conservative ameliorationist idealism propagating the patriotic image of a liberal British empire in which the benevolent planter and the metropolitan abolitionist together constitute the community of the free.

While the context of the French Revolution is conspicuous by its absence, the parliamentary debates on slavery, instigated by Wilberforce's proposed bills for the abolition of the slave trade in 1789, are prominently rehearsed in the prologue and the main text of the play. The prologue of the play, written "by a Friend," and "spoken by Mr. Kemble in the character of an African sailor," presented the antislavery side of the debate, while the main text offered the counter-argument to abolitionism, framed in terms of benevolent imperialism.

The scholarly interpretations of Bellamy's play depend largely on how the relationship between prologue and play is read and interpreted. If, like Wylie Sypher, you stress the significance of the prologue, then the play "sweeps back into the main current of

---

[63] Thomas Bellamy, *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse* (London: Sold by W. Brown, 1794), 76.

[64] Ibid.

antislavery literature" and "employs every idyllic device known to abolitionist verse."[65] On the other hand, Anne Mellor and Richard Matlak look at the main text of the play as part of West-Indian apologia for slavery.[66] For Jeffrey Cox, the prologue and play together "seems to re-enact the debate over slavery in its very form."[67] The main text presents "benevolent planters" devoted to the welfare of their slaves, while the prologue attacks the "white savage" and praises the efforts of a "hallow'd band" (the abolitionists) who take up with "fervent zeal the Negro's cause."[68]

The main text affirms, in its idyllic depiction, that plantation slavery is in every way preferable to life in violent Africa, a staple argument in the Planter's discourse. Heartfree, one of the planters, narrates the tale of the slave, Oran:

> By the fate of war, Oran had been torn from his beloved Selima. The conquerors were on the point of setting fire to the consuming pile to which he was bound, while the partner of his heart, who was devoted to the arms of the chief of the adverse party, was rending the air with her cries; at this instant a troop of Europeans broke in upon them, and bore away a considerable party to their ships; among the rest was the rescued Oran, who was happily brought to our mart, where I had the good fortune to become his master.[69]

In the words of the benevolent planter, it was war-torn Africa which was responsible for the dreadful separation of the slave lovers (Oran and Selima), and were it not for the timely intervention of "a troop of Europeans," the "rescued Oran" would never have been brought "happily" to the slave market, eventually to be united with his beloved. In contrast to this version of events, the forthrightly abolitionist prologue engages in its own polemical

---

[65] Sypher, *Guinea's Captive Kings*, 241.

[66] Anne K. Mellor and Richard E. Matlak, eds., *British Literature, 1780-1830* (Orlando: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1996), 64.

[67] "Introduction" in Cox, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 5: xii.

[68] Ibid., 5: 112.

[69] Ibid., 5: 118.

construction of idyllic life in Africa ("pleasure free from every care"; "fond endearments of parental love"), in which the African sailor narrates his tale of love set within a pastoral retreat, an ideal life ruined by rapacious slavers:

> Oft on the banks where golden rivers flow,
> And aromatic woods enchanting grow,
> With my lov'd Adela I passed the day,
> While suns on suns roll'd unperceived away.
> But ah! This happiness was not to last,
> Clouds now the brightness of my face o'ercast;
> For the white savage fierce upon me sprung,
> Wrath in his eye, and fury on his tongue,
> And dragg'd me to a loathsome vessel near,
> Dragg'd me from ever thing I held most dear,
> And plung'd me in the horrors of despair.
> Insensible to all that pass'd around,
> Till, in a foreign clime, myself I found,
> And sold to slavery![70]

The slaver is not the rescuer, but a "savage," who is "fierce", wrathful, and full of fury, and who violently drags away the African from his home and his family. Cox reconciles the prologue and the main text, by arguing that:

> [p]erhaps, taken as a whole, play and prologue endorse the abolition of slavery while arguing that those already enslaved are in fact profiting from their condition. This position makes little sense to us, but it would have resonated in an England that abolished the slave trade in 1807 but did not emancipate slaves in its colonies until 1838.[71]

The *Biographia Dramatica* (1812) also suggests a similar reading of the play as "intended to serve the cause of humanity, by ameliorating the condition of slaves."[72] In addition to this, David Worrall's analysis of this play supplements Cox's reconciliation of formal contradictions by projecting the politics of the play outwards as an expression of the politics of theatricality:

> The venue of *The Benevolent Planters* at the Haymarket's Theatre Royal

[70] Ibid., 5: 111-12.

[71] "Introduction" in ibid., 5: xiii.

[72] Quoted in ibid., 5: 110.

> summer season was largely the determinant of the unprogressive social attitudes to slavery represented in their play … In other words, the social stratification of London attitudes to slavery, as represented in the theatres, was a function of their venue and location as much as it was a function of the attitudes of an individual author."[73]

In other words, what was construed as a formal contradiction between prologue and play, is either dismissed by subsuming the abolitionist perspective within the ameliorationist perspective, or reconfigured as determined by the unprogressive social attitudes to slavery as a function of venue and location. In my reading of the play, the apparent contradiction between the pro-abolition prologue and the planter-lobby play sublimates the real contradiction within eighteenth-century liberal discourse that informs the benevolent imperialism of both abolitionists and planters, in which both groups are recognized as legitimate members of the community of the free.

The key argument made by planters was the liberal demand for self-government of civil society under the aegis of the community of the free.[74] As the master-slave relation was understood as a private-property issue by jurists such as Blackstone, the colonists argued that the metropole had no legitimate authority concerning itself with the welfare of the slaves. The treatment of the slaves could only be broached under the more appropriate language of benevolence, rather than rights.

Benevolence functioned as a matter of private significance, not of political significance. It was exercised as part of the personalized power of the planter; as a moral solution to an institutional problem. Captain Tropick, the benevolent English planter in Cobb's *Paul and Virginia* (Covent Garden, 1800), proudly asserts his authority and absolute

---

[73] Worrall, *The Politics of Romantic Theatricality*, 105-06.

[74] Losurdo, *Liberalism: A Counter-History*, 39.: "First with the Glorious Revolution and then later, more completely with the American Revolution, the assertion of self-government by civil society hegemonized by slaveholders involved the definitive liquidation of traditional forms of 'interference' by political and religious authority."

power over his plantation and over his slaves, and it is a matter of personal choice that he chooses to exercise "that power by rendering them [the slaves] as happy as I can."[75] In Tropick's worldview, it is apparently no contradiction to speak of humanity and slavery in one sentence: "for the credit of mankind, whether black or white, I have seldom found a heart so perverse, as to be insensible to the treatment of humanity and kindness."[76] In this way, benevolent imperialism stages one of the standard internal contradictions in liberal discourse: between the rights of the individual and the rights of the collective (the liberal state) constituted by these individuals.

The title of Bellamy's play is significant for this reason: *Friends* or *Benevolent Planters* refers not just to the personalized domination exercised by the master over the slaves; rather, it emphasizes the community that both confirms and supports the personalized relations of domination. The three "friends" in the play (Goodwin, Steady, Heartfree) reaffirm their homo-social bond in a "union strengthened by corresponding sentiments," which makes "brothers of us all."[77] This opportunity to "exhibit… the happy effects of humanity" is possible only "in the treatment of those who, in the course of human chance, are destined to the bonds of slavery."[78] In fact, the title is an overture to the representatives in the House of Commons; the planters claim recognition as "friends," as being one amongst the liberal community of the free, in the same manner that Belcour, Cumberland's West Indian, claimed to be "a fellow subject, and a sharer in [England's] freedom" (Act 1.v).[79] The extended community of the free, Orlando Patterson observes, was necessary "to both confirm

---

[75] Cobb, *Paul and Virginia*, 12.

[76] Ibid., 13.

[77] Cox, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 5: 116-17.

[78] Ibid., 5: 115.

[79] Cumberland, *The West Indian*, 14.

and support [the planter's] power… to safeguard the interests of its members."[80] What was at stake in the abolitionist debates, of which Bellamy's prologue and main text form two sides of the argument, was the master-community relationship, in which "[t]he master wanted to influence public attitudes and deflect attempts to interfere with his proprietary claims on his slaves."[81] In other words, what is usually presented as two conflicting positions between the abolitionists and the planters can be understood as a conflict amongst the members of the liberal community of the free, in which both abolitionists and planters were ultimately masters in relation to the slave.

In the prologue, the African sailor, like the slaves in the play, is without agency, and can only acknowledge those who have genuine agency, namely the "hallow'd band" of abolitionists, who, "Impell'd by soft humanity's kind laws,/ Take up with fervent zeal the Negroe's cause."[82] Although the prologue appears to contest the position espoused by the play, on a closer examination it becomes evident that the sailor is merely mouthing the virtues extolled in the play. Firstly, the villain in the prologue, the "white savage," is not the planter but the slave trader. The planters dissociated themselves from the merchants, as is the case in the *Oroonoko* and *Inkle and Yarico* theatrical adaptations, where, as I argued in the previous chapter, the moral censure is not against the institution of slavery, but the individual acts of cruelty on the part of slavers for breaking the relation of trust. Secondly, the language of the African sailor is the adopted language of Christian paternalism:

> All children of one gracious Parent are.
> And thus united by paternal love,
> To all mankind, of all the friend you prove.[83]

---

[80] Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*, 172.

[81] Ibid., 172-73.

[82] Cox, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 5: 112.

[83] Ibid.

The repetition of the word "friend" further endorses the community of friendly reconciliation between the master and slave, and the establishment of the "brotherhood of humanity" that the play advocates. The supplication to Kannoah, the god of the "sable race," in the ending couplet, is merely made to "Prosper the great design" (not to enact or effect it in actuality).[84] The plea to Kannoah does not outpace "the policy of amelioration by proposing unequivocal emancipation," as Worrall would have it;[85] rather it is merely to support the abolitionists, those "sons of mercy," whose "extensive mind" and "fervent zeal" pursues the "godlike plan" to deliver man "from the tyrant man!"[86]

The formal contradiction of the prologue and the play presents only an apparent contradiction, which, as I have shown, illustrates compatibility, best exemplified in terms of friendship. The friendship, espoused in the main text, and particularly in the song of liberty at the end of the play (in the tune of "Rule Britannia!"), does not aim at equality. It promotes equivalence of unequal others through "universal love," for the sake of "joy and peace," reaffirming the hierarchy of the merciful British nation over all other nations. Master and slave can be friends after all, as is shown, time and again, in various plays depicting benevolent masters and grateful slaves. However, to describe the master-slave relationship as a bond of friendship, assumes a shared sense of commonality and belonging. The various colonial texts, which depict the African slave as a natural aspect of the plantation, attempt to omit the physical coercion of procuring slaves, and efface the brutality of slavery, to create a community of masters and slaves based on this very notion of commonality and belonging.

This construction of the idyllic plantation, peopled by benevolent planters and pseudo-slaves, however, is built upon a necessary exclusion: both, the prologue and the play,

---

[84] Ibid., 5: 113.

[85] Worrall, *Politics of Romantic Theatricality,* 93.

[86] Cox, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 5: 112.

exclude the non-friend, the slave who cannot be befriended, the rebel slave, for whom the benevolent-gratitude framework does not apply, because the rebel slave stands outside that framework, as an instance either relegated to the past, somewhere offstage, cursorily referred to as being responsible for "last years' disorder."[87]

The point here is clear: emancipation of the slaves is first and foremost a decision that comes from above, whether that authority resides in the individual planters or the abolitionists is a matter of contention between liberalized civil society and the liberal state. However, both agree that agency by no means belongs to the slaves, who are merely the recipients of benevolent acts for which the only legitimate and justifiable response is gratitude, not rebellion. Once it is recognized that the power of abolition and emancipation is beyond the purview of the slaves themselves and resides solely in the masters of the slaves, the point of contention then becomes who can claim to be the real masters, the colonial plantation owners or the metropolitan imperial state?

The title of Bellamy's play thus orients the viewers to expect action not from the slaves but the planters. But this emphasis on the impotence of the slave is true even for Kotzebue's *The Negro Slaves* and Maclaren's *Blackman and Blackbird*. There is no longer the possibility for an Oroonoko-like character to act in *The Benevolent Planters* and *The Negro Slaves*. Such a character is beyond the narrative space of benevolent imperialism. This point is made evident, once more, by the dramatic thrust of the plays, which hinges on the reunion of the slave lovers, not as an agential act on the part of the slaves, but as an expression and consequence of the master's benevolent act. However, in Kotzebue's play, the possibility of revenge is still entertained by the characters, even if there is no character to embody these sentiments. The exchange between William, the philanthropic abolitionist, and Ada and Truro, the slaves suffering on William's brother's plantation, hints at the possibility

[87] Ibid., 5: 116.

of rebellion:

> Ada: And our blood too is warm and red.
>
> William: I should not wonder if it was boiling hot! Or if despair should make it flame, and you were to murder your executioner.
>
> Truro: And indeed despair has already occasioned many shocking instances of revenge. There are certain Negroes who amongst their own people pass for sorcerers, because they know how to prepare a subtle poison from particular insects, with which they satisfy their thirst for revenge.[88]

This possibility, however, is merely latent, for Ada and Zameo, the slave lovers, are both in need of sympathy and protection. Ada pleads to William, "Protect me, good white man!"[89] It is William, the benevolent agent, who brings about the lovers' union by offering his brother, John, half his inheritance as compensation. The slave lovers are merely the objects upon which benevolence is enacted.

Significantly, Bellamy's play, unlike Kotzebue's, does not depict slaves at work; rather, the focus of the drama is an archery contest, for those selected slaves, "whose honest industry and attachment have rendered them deserving of reward."[90] The play conveniently justifies the necessity of authority for maintaining order, not just in the games, but also, by extension, in the colonies ("humanity confers dignity upon authority").[91] By circumventing the depiction of slave labour, Bellamy completely effaces the cruelties associated with slavery, eliding the depiction of tyrannical planters, like Kotzebue's John, and disgruntled slaves, thereby omitting the possibility of rebellion. The planters vaguely hint at a rebellion that occurred a year ago ("It is our wish to prevent a repetition of disorders, that last year

---

[88] Kotzebue, *The Negro Slaves*, 43.

[89] Ibid., 39.

[90] Cox, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 5: 117.

[91] Ibid.

disturbed the general happiness"), only to dismiss it as being occasioned by the vanity of the participants.[92] In fact, the slaves seem to need authority as an incentive to work with "honest industry"; otherwise, they are prone to passions that would disrupt the "general happiness" of all. The artificial civility of the language in the play attempts to cover up what is stated, more bluntly by the Scottish Jamaican planter, Hector MacNeill, who dismissed the very idea of liberty for the slave: "The nature of this creature, like that of all animals in a savage state, is averse to industry, particularly to that uniform and steady action which diurnal labour requires."[93] This particular image of the slave who needs to be supervised is the necessary counterpart to the image of the benevolent planter as paternalistic patriarch. The grateful slave is an extension of the benevolent master, a necessary object for the master to exercise his benevolence, so that the bond between master and slave is more firmly entrenched in the sentimental chains of gratitude:

> *Oran*. Lost in admiration, gratitude, and love, Oran has no words, but can only in silence own the hand of Heaven; … And O my masters! For such, though free, suffer me still to call you; let my restored partner and myself bend to such exalted worth; while for ourselves, and for our surrounding brethren, we declare, that you have proven yourselves *The Benevolent Planters*, and that under subjection like yours,
>
> SLAVERY IS BUT A NAME.[94]

It seems as if the entire thrust of the play was a strategy to attain this proof, that "slavery is but a name." The reward conferred onto Oran, was merely a means to grant the greater reward of fidelity and willing bondage to the master. The transition from the prologue to the end of the play can be reread as a progression from coercion into slavery to "willing bondage" in which the lines between slavery and servitude are effectively blurred to render

---

[92] Ibid., 5: 116.

[93] Hector MacNeill, *Observations on the Treatment of the Negroes, in the Island of Jamaica* (London: Printed for J. Robinson, 1788), 11.

[94] Cox, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 5: 127.

palatable the moral compunction against slavery. Chris Jones argues that the natural benevolence, which forms the basis for society through mutual sympathy, "was also a social construction which translated prevailing power-based relationships into loyalties upheld by 'natural' feelings."[95] The notion of gratitude and sympathy allowed abolitionists and anti-abolitionists a common ideological platform that made possible the reconciliation of what seemed to be two opposing camps. This notion of gratitude runs through all the other plays based on benevolent imperialism, of which Kotzebue's *The Negro Slaves* (1796), Archibald Maclaren's *The Negro Slaves; or, The Blackman and Blackbird* (Edinburgh, 1799), and James Cobb's *Paul and Virginia* (Covent Garden, 1800) are representative examples.

One of the sentimental subplots of Kotzebue's play concerns Zameo, the young African who had voluntarily become a slave in lieu of his father; but now, his father wants to reclaim his son's liberty by selling himself into slavery. John, the ruthless planter, claims both, the father and son, as his slaves. The slaves, of course, have no authority to denounce this unlawful claim. It is William who comes to their rescue by paying a hundred guineas to John for both the slaves. Granting the old slave, Ayos, his freedom, William gifts the young slave, Zameo, to him to take care of him in his old age. This benevolent action marks the transformation of William into a benevolent planter. The slaves respond with stereotypical gratitude. Zameo, upon becoming the property of William, exclaims, "Joyfully your slave!", while Ayos asks Zameo to "help me to the feet of the good white man!" before whom he prostrates himself on his knees.[96] Zameo, too, embraces William's knees, and says:

> Fetters are needless where the affections are riveted by beneficent actions. Thou hast left me free, and I am thy slave for ever; with my arms in bonds, I could have escaped, but thou fetterest my heart – I will never forsake thee![97]

---

[95] C. B. Jones, *Radical Sensibility: Literature and Ideas in the 1790s* (London: Routledge, 1993), 7.

[96] Kotzebue, *The Negro Slaves*, 86.

[97] Ibid., 87.

Gratitude, within a representative regime of benevolent imperialism, is offered as the ideological means of enslaving freed ex-slaves, chaining them to their masters without recourse to the physical coercion and brutality of slavery. In Maclaren's play, M'Sympathy, the benevolent planter, is quite candid when he advises Raccoon, the tyrannical planter, "to use a little of my false humanity" for it is a better method to make slaves "obedient and work" as "kindness will excite them to love and gratitude," whereas severity would "prompt them to hatred and revenge."[98] But more than a means to discipline the slaves, I would argue that benevolent imperialism was a strategy of reconciling the community of masters (the liberal community of the free) to safeguard individual rights of private property under the new liberal regime of power.

When Raccoon bemoans the fact that his deeds and misdemeanours are not going to lessen the reports in London of the planters' "bad usage of their negros," M'Sympathy replies as an apologist for planters: "Planters are like other men, some good and some bad, like a barrel of herring – but I believe you're amongst the worst of them – Yes, yes, there are roses and dockins in all countries."[99] The final act in the play is the redemption of the evil planter Raccoon, a possibility not even entertained in Kotzebue's play, in which John remains recalcitrant and unmoved by William's benevolent acts. In a minor subplot in Maclaren's play, two white indentured labourers, Clumps and Hobby, are brought to Jamaica under contract. They try to escape their horrid conditions of servitude, but are reproached by M'Sympathy, who believes that contracts must be honoured: "You entered voluntarily into the contract, and ought to have fulfilled every article of it."[100] It is at this point that Raccoon

---

[98] Archibald Maclaren, *The Negro Slaves or, the Blackman and Blackbird* (London: Printed by A. Macpherson, 1799), 6-7.

[99] Ibid., 22.

[100] Ibid., 23.

comes forward to rescue these poor white labourers by offering to pay off the planter they were sold to so that "the poor fellows" have an opportunity to "push their fortune."[101] The play ends with Raccoon's redemption as one amongst the community of the free, who declares, "from this moment I'm resolv'd to catch every opportunity, to atone for my past errors."[102]

The debate between members of the community of the free concerning slavery is rehearsed in Kotzebue's play as the difference of opinion held by the two brothers, John, the tyrannical planter, and William, the sentimental abolitionist. The argument is not presented as a generational conflict, but a conflict of position, in which William, just returned from Europe, represents the metropole, while John represents the colony. John remarks on this spatial distinction when he says to William that, "You are mistaken in imagining that I have no taste for what you are pleased to call tender sentiment. Only it is not so finely sharpened with European air as yours."[103] But despite this spatial distinction, the metropole-colony relationship is reconciled, in Burkean fashion, as both characters are brothers and part of the same family, or community of the free. The unsentimental, cruel, ruthless John, who revels in torture and barbarity, is never disowned or excluded from the community of the free. William begrudgingly acknowledges that they are bound by "brotherly affection."[104] John is a member of the community of the free, and it is only a matter of debate whether these members should recognize the humanity of those excluded from this community. But this recognition of the other does not necessarily mean that those excluded should be given membership within the community; only that they should be included as non-members or non-participants, who are

---

[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Kotzebue, *The Negro Slaves*, 12.

[104] Ibid., 11.

present without representation as they can only be represented by the members who are free.

Even though Maclaren's *Blackman and Blackbird* (Edinburgh, 1799) purged Kotzebue's play of the eighteenth-century philosophical debates on rights, and thus is more closely associated with Bellamy's *The Benevolent Planters*, yet, I would argue that both plays rework the dichotomy of philanthropic abolitionism and benevolent imperialism (like Bellamy's prologue and play) as variations of legitimate discourse built upon the shared assumption of the ineffectual and impotent agency of the slave who can only adopt the more passive reactionary attitude of being grateful rather than a willing agent of his emancipation. The true power, whether it resides in the philanthropic abolitionism of William or the benevolent imperialism of M'Sympathy, is shared by the community of the free which excludes the slaves as agents but includes them as recognized non-members whose place is fixed, relegated to the inferior, passive position within the established social hierarchy.

The Planter and The Sailor

As is clear from the above discussion, the community of the free was by no means a homogeneous entity. There were conflicts of interest between Creole planters and the metropolitans. Various proslavery tracts invested greatly in depicting the plantation system as, what the Scotsman Hector MacNeill believed it to be, a "source of those comforts and indulgences which meliorate and sweeten the cup of slavery."[105] William Beckford's *Descriptive Account of Jamaica* (1790), "chiefly considered in a Picturesque Point of View," served to "gentrify" slave-owning Creole planters by presenting "negro village[s]" as "picturesque beauties in which the Dutch painters have so much excelled."[106] By contrast, such descriptions, as given in MacNeill's and Beckford's account, are styled as "delusive

[105] MacNeill, *Observations on the Treatment of the Negroes, in the Island of Jamaica*, 5.

[106] William Beckford, *A Descriptive Account of the Island of Jamaica*, 2 vols. (London: Printed for T. and J. Egerton, 1790), 1: 227-28.

felicity" in Captain John Stedman's *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition* (1796). Stedman, a British-Dutch colonial soldier, criticized the management of Surinam by the Dutch, and wrote that the "planter, too earnest to become immediately opulent, never once considered the wretchedness of the slave."[107]

Apart from the "delusive felicity" of the picturesque accounts, the georgic form also served a similar purpose, reconstructing the plantation order as an aesthetic object for contemplation, in which the labour of the slaves (in fact the very presence of black bodies) was depicted as natural to the landscape. James Grainger's West-Indian georgic, *The Sugar Cane* (1764), spoke of cultivation practices, plantation management, and treatment of various diseases suffered by the slaves, amongst grand, eloquent descriptions of sugar cane and the commodity sugar.[108] Grainger described the slaves as full of "willing ardour" (III. 100) engaged in "cheerful toil" (III. 101), and offered guidance to planters to be benevolent masters, to "let humanity prevail" (IV. 211), and to pity these "uninstructed swains" with "mercy [to] soften decrees/ Of rigid justice, with her lenient hand" (IV. 229-31).

Such idyllic representations of plantation life were deployed to counter the "prostituted theme [of liberty for the slave]" espoused by the abolitionists.[109] In the plays on benevolent planters and in texts that work as colonizing apologetics (MacNeill, Grainger, and Beckford), the idyllic plantation setting was used as a form of revisionist aesthetics, that, according to Keith Sandiford, "naturalizes the slaves to the landscape of labour and low

---

[107] John Gabriel Stedman, *Narrative, of a Five Years' Expedition; against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam in Guiana, on the Wild Coast of South America; from the Year 1772 to 1777*, 2 vols. (London: Printed for J. Johnson & J. Edwards, 1796), 1: 76.

[108] James Grainger, *The Sugar-Cane: A Poem. In Four Books. With Notes.* (London: printed for R. and J. Dodsley, 1764). See John Gilmore's book-length study of the poem for the significance of the georgic in West-Indian representation of plantation society. John Gilmore, *The Poetics of Empire: A Study of James Grainger's the Sugar Cane* (London: Athlone Press, 2000).

[109] MacNeill, *Observations on the Treatment of the Negroes, in the Island of Jamaica*, 11.

social privilege while also suppressing and effacing any semblance of particularity or protest on their part."[110] Through the character of the grateful slave, the planters collectively promoted the significance of Creole culture, endorsing a latent colonial nationalism and cultural identity while at the same time making overtures to the metropolitan elite to consider them as legitimate members of the community of the free. The associated cultural fantasy within planter's discourse was the planters' self-image as hard-working provincial farmers, living a simple rural life, devoid of the corruptions of the urban metropolis.[111]

To ground this imaginary self-perception, the planters, much like the rebel colonists during the American War of Independence, strategically fostered a sympathetic alliance with the impoverished farmers, miners, and labourers in the metropole. Beckford wrote that "[t]he manufacturer, the artisan, and the mechanic, cannot be said to enjoy their leisure; for these must work to ward off famine; … whereas the occupations of the Negro are not so unremitting."[112] Gordon Turnbull, a planter in Grenada, quoted Grainger's poem to compare the condition of miners with slaves:

> Nor, Negroe, at thy destiny repine,
> Tho' doom'd to toil from dawn to setting sun.
> How far more pleasant is thy rural task,
> Than theirs who sweat, sequester'd from the day,
> In dark Tartarean caves, sunk far beneath
> The earth's dark surface; where sulphureous flames,
> Oft from their vapoury prisons bursting wild,
> To dire explosion give the cavern'd deep,
> And in dread ruin all its inmates whelm?[113]

---

[110] Keith A. Sandiford, *The Cultural Politics of Sugar: Caribbean Slavery and Narratives of Colonialism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 20.

[111] Recall the character of Belcour, the eponymous hero of Cumberland's *The West Indian* (1771), as representative of this fantasy.

[112] Beckford, *A Descriptive Account of the Island of Jamaica*, 2: 136-37, 384-85. Also see MacNeill, *Observations on the Treatment of the Negroes, in the Island of Jamaica*, 6, 20-21.

[113] Gordon Turnbull, *An Apology for Negro Slavery* (London: Printed by Stuart and Stevenson, 1786), 62; Grainger, *The Sugar-Cane*, L.165-73.

The planters made these striking comparisons between their form of benevolent slavery and the metropolitan form of wage slavery to expose the veneer of "free labour" in the metropole. Orlando Patterson notes:

> The [slave] relation, even while promoting capitalism, undermined its major ideological rationalization: the indirect idiomatic mode expressed in the notion of a free wage labour force. The use of personally dominated individuals for the production and reproduction of wealth exposed the reality behind the so-called free labour.[114]

It is no surprise that in 1796, Coleridge responded to those arguments in favour of the slave trade, which asserted that, "the plantation slaves are at least as well off as the peasantry in England," as "seditious" and "treasonable." He wrote:

> Now I appeal to common sense, whether to affirm that the slaves are as well off as our peasantry, be not the same as to assert that our peasantry are as bad off as negro-slaves? And whether if our peasantry believed it, they would not be inclined to rebel?[115]

The presence of slavery, for Coleridge, had the potential to radicalize workers and peasants.[116] To counter the sympathetic alliance between the planter and the metropolitan labouring class, a sympathetic alliance was forged between the bourgeois intellectual and the British sailor, representing a metropolitan assault against the planter lobby.[117]

The character of the British sailor in many dramatic texts is quite consistent and

---

[114] Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 33-34.

[115] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "On the Slave Trade," in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Vol. 2: The Watchmen*, ed. Lewis Patton, Bollingen Series (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 140.

[116] Linda Colley observes that the "[g]rowing awareness of the sufferings of enslaved blacks in Britain's colonies worked to illumine as well the plight of its own white multitudes, and not least the plight of its common soldiers and sailors." Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600-1850* (London: Pimlico, 2003), 626-27.

[117] Thomas Clarkson gathered vast amounts of evidence in Bristol and Liverpool concerning the slave trade in 1787, and much of it dealt with the harsh treatment of seamen involved in the slave trade. See Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament*, 1: 297ff.

represents an ideological position that is somewhat different from that of the benevolent planter and the grateful slave, although, in Cobb's *Paul and Virginia* (Covent Garden, 1800), we do find an example of an ideologically composite character, Captain Tropick, who is both a benevolent planter and a patriotic sailor. When the overseer, Diego, falsely charges Alambra of indolence, Captain Tropick is quick to moralize in naval metaphors:

> That is bad; everyone who eats his allowance, ought to work for it. I am an old seaman, and hate a skulker. Mankind are brother sailors, thro' the voyage of life. – 'Tis our duty to assist each other. – 'Tis true we have different stations; some on the quarter-deck, and others before the mast, or else, how could the vessel sail. But the cause of society is a common cause; and he that won't lend a hand to keep the vessel in sailing trim; heave him overboard to the sharks.[118]

The naval metaphor is extended from society to nation, once again conjoining imperialism, commerce, and nationhood, reminding the viewers of the significance of the metropole-colony relation: "Yes, my native country is my ship, and I am proud to call her Great Britain. Long may she ride like a peerless first-rate, the queen of the ocean; with a gallant crew, and beloved commander."[119] In the song that follows, Tropick depicts the internal conflicting factions in English society, which unite against a common enemy, defending a common cause:

> Our country is our ship d'ye see,
> A gallant vessel too.
> And of his fortune proud is he,
> Who's of the Albion's crew.
> Each man, whate'er his station be,
> When duty's call commands,
> Should take his stand,
> And lend a hand,
> As the common cause demands.
>
> Among ourselves in peace 'tis true,
> We quarrel, make a rout;
> And having nothing else to do,
> We fairly scold it out;
> But once the enemy in view

[118] Cobb, *Paul and Virginia*, 14.

[119] Ibid.

> Shake hands – we soon are friends.
> On the deck,
> - Till a wreck;
> Each the common cause defends.[120]

Tropick reasserts the unity of the metropole and the colony as a "common cause," and his clarion call to defend this cause does not conceal the brutal violence this entails. He not only justifies the use of force against the external enemy, but also against the vagrants and idlers ("who won't lend a hand to keep the vessel in sailing"), who should be thrown "overboard to the sharks."

However, in many other dramatic texts, the patriotic sailor stands in opposition to tyrannical planters and ruthless traders. The character of Captain Campley, in Colman's *Inkle and Yarico* (Haymarket, 1787), declares: "I am a soldier, Sir Christopher. Love and War is the soldier's motto" (Act 3.iii).[121] Campley, the poor, honourable soldier, who would die for love and for country, acts as a foil to Inkle's character. Inkle is an ambiguous figure because, as I argued in Chapter One, he is presented as a heroic merchant adventurer displaying qualities which are extolled by benevolent merchant characters like Thorowgood, Freeport, and Stockwell; but he is also chastised for his avarice and ingratitude, for whom personal gain trumps patriotic sacrifice. It is because Colman's Inkle embodies both these qualities (positive and negative) that redemption becomes a narrative possibility. The character of Captain Campley, on the other hand, was the unwavering standard of morality against whom Inkle's ingratitude was measured. Campley's marriage to Sir Christopher's daughter represents the matrimonial alliance between the agent of colonial conquest and the agent of colonial administration. The character of the sailor or naval officer was ideologically deployed to facilitate British conquest and imperialism in the name of defending a common

---

[120] Ibid.

[121] Colman, "Inkle and Yarico," 63.

cause: Liberty!

In her analysis of cultural representations of empire, Kathleen Wilson notes that the British sailor acts "as the defender of British liberty and property (including property in women), against foreign aggression that ultimately valorises and excuses their libertinism."[122] The role of the sailor is particularly relevant in dramatic love plots that are woven into a narrative of imperial conquest, both marshalled into an ideological defence of British liberty. In many plays of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the figure of the loyal British sailor served as the repository of British moral values and patriotism.

John Cartwright Cross's play *The Surrender of Trinidad*, first performed at Covent Garden on May 11, 1797, extolled the triumph of the English navy over the cruel Spanish forces stationed in Trinidad. In this play, the imperial conquest of Trinidad is reworked as a narrative of reclamation of British liberty. The character that expresses British virtue most vocally is the sailor, Jack Rattling, the one who facilitates the union of the lovers:

> Jack's always the same. I'd fight for Old England till I hadn't a rag of canvass left or a splinter to hang it on, till Death shattered my Hull, and then – why then let 'em say as I'm sowed up in my Hammock, there goes a true shipmate, - who never swerved from his Duty, or affection from his Girl, whose last gasp was his Country, and sink or swim is determined to live and die in her defence.[123]

Here, the ship is a metaphor for the sailor's body which is itself a symbol of the imperial nation. The metaphor of the ship symbolically equates imperial conquest with national sovereignty, once again bringing together the triumvirate of nationalism, imperialism, and commerce. The conquest of Spanish-controlled Trinidad is reconfigured as a rightful reclamation of the honour of British captives, which is further reconfigured as a love plot, in

---

[122] Wilson, "The Good, the Bad, and the Impotent," 246.

[123] All citations refer to the page numbers marked on the manuscript of the play, from the Larpent Collection, kept at the Huntington Library. J. C. Cross, "The Surrender of Trinidad," in *John Larpent Plays* (The Huntington Library, 1797), 1, 2.

which a sentimental lover struggles to reunite with his beloved. This reunion is facilitated by two characters, the British sailor, Jack Rattling, and the grateful slave, Cymbalo.

The slave character Cymbalo embodies the virtue of common humanity in contrast to the villainous Gasper, who scorns compassion; despite his pet refrain "I'm too humane by half." After his futile attempts to woo Susan, Gasper resolves that "she's in my power, I'll shake off this childish humanity and force her to my wishes" to which Cymbalo replies in defiance, "Not if I can help it – shake off Humanity – me sooner shake off life. No, no. I have feel de lash of severity too bitterly myself, not to pity de sufferings of others."[124] The virtuous Cymbalo assists in the liberation of the captive white woman but does not seek his own liberation. In fact, through the character of Cymbalo, the contrast between British liberty and Spanish tyranny is made in terms of British benevolent imperialism as opposed to Spanish tyrannical imperialism. Unlike Spanish tyranny, the liberal form of benevolent love recognizes the moral equivalence of unequal beings, which even the villainous Gasper acknowledges: "Were I born an Englishman I should love 'em too," referring to his slaves.[125] In this narrative of triumphal militarism over a West-Indian colony, Cross's depiction of a nonthreatening grateful slave effectively evades the moral issue of slavery altogether, and, of course, Britain's own involvement in the slave trade and in plantation slavery.

In summary, the character of the British sailor stands in ideological opposition to the benevolent planter. The planter belongs to the class of colonial landed gentry; the sailor belongs to the landless poor in service of the nation. The planter espouses a colonial nationalism, promoting Creole identity, culture, and colonial interests; the sailor espouses metropolitan nationalism, promoting king and country, and its imperial interests. The planter is morally tainted by association with slavery; the sailor is a repository of populist moral

---

[124] Ibid., 3.

[125] Ibid., 9.

values professing love and liberty. In the dramatic universe, the planter and the sailor seem to occupy opposing values, but the opposition is only apparent, as both characters require the presence of grateful slaves to bolster their notion of British liberty as a paternalistic, benevolent institution that strengthens metropole-colony relations. There is, however, yet another ideological position that differs from the perspectives held by the planter and the sailor, and that is of the metropolitan intellectual.

The Abolitionist Mask of the Metropolitan

As has been demonstrated above, under a representative regime of benevolent imperialism, certain types of voices of the Other were recognized as authentic, acceptable, and thus legitimate. All other "dangerous" voices were silenced and repressed as non-representable, inauthentic, and hence illegitimate. The homogenization of slave experience in New Low characters, distinct from the "royal slave" characterization of the noble savage, necessarily excludes rebellious black characters from the discourse of benevolent imperialism. Whether it is Oran in *The Benevolent Planters* (Haymarket, 1789), Zameo in *The Negro Slaves* (1796), Quako in *Blackman and Blackbird* (Edinburgh, 1799), or Alambra in *Paul and Virginia* (Covent Garden, 1800), all these grateful slaves serve as legitimate dramatic personas, conforming to a particular formalization of the black body. This formalization also extends to plays that are loosely set in the metropole. Here, by metropole I mean dramatic settings which are distinct from the colonial world. Whether these plays are set in an exotic Spanish village (Salamanca), or a rural English countryside (Primrose Green), or a properly metropolitan London backdrop, what is common to all these settings is that slavery is not the predominant context; yet, all these plays include a comical black character in a slave-like position: from Mungo in *The Padlock* (Drury Lane, 1768), to Amoroso in *Blackamoor Wash'd White* (Drury Lane, 1776), Scipio in *Primrose Green* (Covent Garden,

1791), Cubba in *The Irishman in London, or, The Happy African* (Covent Garden, 1792), Juba in *The Prize* (Haymarket, 1793), and Sambo in *Laugh When You Can* (Covent Garden, 1798). What, then, is the function of this deliberately blackfaced New Low in a context devoid of slavery?

Recent scholarly works, many of which focus on the immensely popular Mungo as the first blackface comic on the London stage, offer us a variety of insights, not only on the theatrical conventions of blacking up, but also on the varied generic stipulations that determine the politics of representation and performance in the context of empire.[126] Kathleen Wilson, for example, examines the cultural representations of empire following the Seven Years' War in which representations of impotent others goes hand in hand with representations of "valorised", "aggressive masculinity" of Englishness.[127] In light of this, it is no coincidence that all the blackface comics in these plays have their more masculine white counterparts, usually poor soldiers just returned from war, like Captain Seymour (*Irishman in London*), Heartwell (*The Prize*), and Frederic (*Blackamoor Wash'd White*). All these young white characters are part of similar dominant narratives, which are, unsurprisingly, a variation of the standard comic love plot that focuses on the union of young lovers, obstructed by old

---

[126] Isaac Bickerstaffe's Mungo, first performed by debutant actor Charles Dibdin at Drury Lane on 3rd October 1768, became a prototype for the numerous blackface comic servants in later dramas and, according to some scholars, prefigured the development of mid-nineteenth century blackface minstrelsy. Bickerstaffe served as house playwright and assistant stage manager at Covent Garden from 1765. His career was cut short by rumours of his homosexuality in 1771, and he absconded to France. For details of the history of the conditions in which *The Padlock* was performed, see Peter A. Tasch, *The Dramatic Cobbler: The Life and Works of Isaac Bickerstaff* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1972), 153-54. For scholarly discussions of the play, see Gibbs, *Performing the Temple of Liberty*, 59; Nussbaum, "Theatre of Empire: Racial Counterfeit, Racial Realism," 78; Worrall, *The Politics of Romantic Theatricality*, 68-106; *Harlequin Empire*, 23-55; Felicity Nussbaum, "'Mungo Here, Mungo There': Charles Dibdin and Racial Performance," in *Charles Dibdin and Late Georgian Culture*, ed. Oskar Cox Jensen, David Kennerley, and Ian Newman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 23-42.

[127] Wilson, "The Good, the Bad, and the Impotent," 238.

fathers, who wish to impose their choice of suitors on their daughters, or by old dotards, who wish to marry the young women themselves. This inter-generational conflict between the old and the young is given a farcical treatment in a potentially subversive critique of a form of patriarchy that entertains notions of domestic security in either locking up its women in a tower, as in Isaac Bickerstaffe's *The Padlock*, or, building a moat and replacing white servants "with a suite of Blacks," in the more ludicrous plot of Henry Bate's *Blackamoor Wash'd White*.[128] I say "potentially subversive" because the ultimate union of the lovers is not configured as a transgression; the sentimental lovers are virtuous but passive, and require the older generation to legitimize their union. Whether it is Don Diego (*The Padlock)*, or Frost (*Irishman in London*), or Caddy (*The Prize*), or Sir Oliver (*Blackamoor Wash'd White*), all these tyrannical old villains eventually realize the error of their ways and facilitate the happy union of the young lovers. This affirmative ending is rehearsed in many of the farces, comic operas, and even pantomimes. The reconciliation between the old and the new, affirming the stability of the social order, after a temporary disruption of sexual gratification, is configured within a highly sexualized love plot, in which both the young and the old are sexual competitors. The one desexualized character that, according to Franca Dellarosa, played an unwitting role in the denouement of the main (mostly romantic) plot was none other than the blackface comic servant.[129]

Felicity Nussbaum argues that these plays, "in spite of being produced as the abolition movement gathers force and succeeds, are not really anti-slavery plays," for their main concern is neither abolitionism nor slavery.[130] The plays only have black parts, acted by

---

[128] Henry Bate Dudley, "The Black-a-Moor Wash'd White," in *John Larpent Plays* (The Huntington Library, 1776), [9a].

[129] Dellarosa, *Slavery on Stage*, 15.

[130] Nussbaum, "Theatre of Empire: Racial Counterfeit, Racial Realism," 74.

white men, which "may occasionally serve the goals of abolition but more often… heighten the instabilities and contradictions surrounding race in eighteenth-century culture."[131] In the context of these metropolitan "racial counterfeits," as Nussbaum calls them, the racial markers that have been decontextualized from the slave-context, are relocated in a new context, i.e. the body. The performative body has to be more significantly racialised through established theatrical conventions like blackface and innovations like mimicry of West-Indian dialect, as well as through non-linguistic components like music and dance, which developed alternatively within illegitimate theatrical practices and hybrid dramatic forms.

As pointed out earlier, Julie Carlson further expands upon this connection between dramatic form and New Low characterization. She reads Mungo as a character that "foregrounds the popularity of 'low' forms on stage (pantomimes, farce, comic operas, rage for spectacles) and their association with 'low' characters – marginalized figures with low cultural capital."[132] This reading signifies a "New Low" that referred not just to the new hybrid low forms (farce and pantomime) that successfully displaced high forms like tragedy and comedy in legitimate theatres, but also referred to the socially low black characters of slave-servants that rivalled high characters like Othello as dominant representations of black masculinity. By controverting erstwhile dominant representations of the other, Carlson speculates that the rise of Mungo makes available a reading strategy for theatre that makes visible the alliance of oppressed characters with illegitimate aspects of legitimate theatre.[133] As speech was the domain of legitimate theatres under the Licensing Act 1737, unlicensed minor theatres developed an illegitimate theatrical culture, offering a variety of entertainments that could not be easily defined and categorized, involving a shift from verbal

---

[131] Ibid.

[132] Carlson, "New Lows in Eighteenth-Century Theater: The Rise of Mungo," 139.

[133] Ibid., 143.

dramaturgy to a "corporeal dramaturgy which highlighted the expressive body of the performer."[134] In other words, non-linguistic dramatic components, like song and dance, buffoonery, trickery, and lewd comic gestures, which are more difficult to read, suggest moral equivocation that would otherwise be clearly demarcated by speech. But "by bombarding [spectators] with all kinds of conflicting, detachable, and mixed-media messages," Carlson suggests, these low-class characters signal towards a more radical subversive potential of the comic mode that turns the world and its established power relations on its head.[135] The example often cited to make this argument is William Bates' *Harlequin Mungo; or, A Peep into the Tower* (Royalty Theatre, 1787).

Harlequin Mungo was staged at the Royalty Theatre with at least 37 performances, and was the predecessor to the later popular Christmas harlequinade on a similar theme, *Furibond; or, Harlequin Negro* (Drury Lane, 1807).[136] The harlequinades were pantomimical performances which, according to John O'Brien, were the "most characteristic form" of Georgian theatre.[137] Emerging as a distinct genre in the 1720s, the harlequinade combined song, dance, and acrobatics with slapstick humour associated with characters of the *commedia dell'arte*, particularly Harlequin, Columbine, Pantaloon, and the Clown. Known for its elaborate sceneries, fantastical stories, and magical transformations, the harlequinade

---

[134] Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre*, 232. On the Licensing Act, 1737, see L. W. Conolly, *The Censorship of English Drama, 1737-1824* (San Marino, Calif: Huntington Library, 1976), 13-14.

[135] Carlson, "New Lows in Eighteenth-Century Theater: The Rise of Mungo," 144.

[136] William Bates, *Harlequin Mungo; or, a Peep into the Tower* (London: Printed by J. Skirven, 1788); Anon., *A Description of Furibond; or, Harlequin Negro: A Grand Comic Pantomime, Performing with Applause at Drury Lane, Theatre* (London: Printed for J. Scales, 1807).

[137] John O'Brien, "Pantomimic Politics," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre, 1737-1832*, ed. Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 390.

was rigidly structured around a basic plot in which Harlequin falls in love with Columbine, and their union is blocked by Pantaloon, often assisted by the Clown. The ultimate union of Harlequin and Columbine followed a comical chase sequence full of physical humour, accompanied by rapid changes in scenery. Amongst the various pantomimical gestures deployed in a conventional harlequinade, perhaps the most extravagant and entertaining, deploying the full creative potential of Georgian stagecraft, was some form of magical transformation that resolved dramatic conflict. In *Furibond*, Harlequin's transformation of a stagecoach into a circus caravan and then into a mountain must have been quite a spectacle to pull off. What is of particular significance for our study is that in both, *Harlequin Mungo* and *Furibond*, the two part structure of the harlequinade stages a transition in location from a West-Indian plantation setting to a metropolitan London setting, which at the same time marks a transformation in the main character from that of a blackface slave to a more liberated rebellious black-masked Harlequin, who elopes with Columbine, the planter's daughter, defying authority and racial conventions. The two plays make explicit, through the slave-context, the miscegenation otherwise implicit in the conventional ending of every harlequinade, in which a black-masked Harlequin is united with a white Columbine. In John O'Brien's account, Harlequin's conventional black-mask signifies an implicit alliance with blackness as with society's counter-cultural outlaws, like the rural gangs in Waltham and Windsor Forests.[138]

The distinction between *Harlequin Mungo* and *Furibond*, made by Worrall and Carlson, to stress the potential radicalism of the former and the corresponding conservatism of the latter, is premised upon a number of textual, extra-textual, and performative factors.

---

[138] John O'Brien, *Harlequin Britain: Pantomime and Entertainment, 1690-1760* (Baltimore, MD.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 117-37. For the Blacks of Waltham and Windsor, see E. P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act* (London: Penguin, 1990), 27-80.

For Worrall, *Harlequin Mungo* "was more easily able to accommodate [Royalty Theatre's] racially diverse audience and celebrate an interracial marriage between Harlequin (the West-Indian ex-slave, Mungo) and the plantation owner's daughter, Columbine."[139] The success of this play, according to Carlson, was in part due to the fact that *Harlequin Mungo* exploited the non-linguistic, illegitimate aspects of theatre that would have catered more to the lower-class East-End audience that frequented the Royalty Theatre.[140]

Furibond, on the other hand, stages the same union of lovers, but white-washes the issue of slavery with a self-congratulatory un-ironic celebration of British liberty enacted by the "figure of Britannia with her lion descend[ed] from the Skies" carrying a writ of law abolishing the slave trade.[141] Performed in commemoration of the 1807 Bill abolishing British slave trade, *Furibond* proved that a Harlequin pantomime could be an appropriate vehicle for abolitionist liberalism. In place of the character of the benevolent planter, we have a triumvirate of benevolent figures, from Fairy Benigna, and the Genius of Britain, to Britannia, the Goddess of Liberty. Fairy Benigna sings to the supplicating slave:

> Son of humanity, thy shelt'ring care
> To one was dealt whom gratitude inspires,
> A Friendly Genius of the upper air,
> By these reliev'd would favour thy desires.[142]

Although this play is a celebration of the abolition of slave trade, one finds the same basic components of benevolent imperialism that were found in proslavery discourse, in which the slave is rendered powerless, but is recognized as a friend, a morally equivalent son of humanity, who can only be righteously grateful for the benign benevolence of liberty granted

---

[139] Worrall, *The Politics of Romantic Theatricality*, 69.

[140] Carlson, "New Lows in Eighteenth-Century Theater: The Rise of Mungo," 145.

[141] Anon., *Furibond; or Harlequin Negro*, 9.

[142] Ibid., 7.

by an authority that literally descends from the skies. From high up, the Genius of Britain sings:

> She heard the toil-bled father's shrieks,
> While tears roll'd down their sable cheeks;
> Saw mothers from their children torn,
> Beneath the whip to waste and mourn.
> ……
> Kindling with a sacred ire,
> Her voice broke forth in words of fire;
> England shall stamp the blest decree,
> That gives the Negro *Liberty*.[143]

This spectacle of the descending Genius, with all the requisite pomp and glory, celebrating the power of the liberal state was appropriate for the largely Whig-sympathizing middling-class spectators that frequented the West-End Drury Lane theatre royal.[144] Worrall surmises from these extra-textual and performative factors the political orientation of the respective plays, arguing that *Furibond* appealed to a more elitist, bourgeois sensibility, while *Harlequin Mungo* "reflected many of the liberal or radical characteristics perhaps expected of an audience cut off from the West End royal theatre and otherwise intensely connected to a gradually modernizing world of manufacture, commodity import, and dockyard employment."[145] Similar arguments are made, by Dellarosa and Carlson, in relation to Bickerstaffe's Mungo, whose sentimental antislavery appeal and subversive drunken repartees evoke sympathy for him as a representative of the oppressed.[146]

The blackface comic in a metropolitan setting is thus variously interpreted as a comic relief, a degraded, de-eroticized representation of black masculinity, as well as a rebel or, at

---

[143] Ibid., 9.

[144] For the general speculation on audience composition see *The London Stage, 1660-1800. Part 5: 1776-1800*, ed. Charles Beecher Hogan (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968), 1568-69.

[145] Worrall, *The Politics of Romantic Theatricality*, 105.

[146] Dellarosa, *Slavery on Stage*, 53.

least, a sympathetic representation of the oppressed, that works sufficiently as an abolitionist mask for expressing metropolitan concerns with slavery. This theatrical pseudo-African position is not one in which a black person attempts to articulate an authentic self, but what Morrison designates as, an "Africanist persona," through which a white actor counterfeits a black "Other" in order to articulate a colonized subject, rendered impotent, harmless, and subjugated by bonds of gratitude under a regime of benevolent imperialism. It is only in the context of benevolent imperialism that Sypher's "pseudo-Africans," Morrison's "Africanist persona," Nussbaum's "racial counterfeits," and Carlson's "New Lows" make sense within the generic conventions that formalize the black body as either grateful slaves or comic servants. Neither of the plays under consideration depicts a genuine rebel slave character. This absence, I argue, is what renders these representations as legitimate expressions within the liberal paradigm of benevolent imperialism, even if the black character is potentially subversive.

In these plays one can find a Cubba, who declares her love for her mistress ("Missa be every ting to poor Cubba"), even though the master (Frost) exasperatedly declares "I tell her every hour that she is in a blessed land of liberty, that she's her own mistress, free as air, in hopes I shall get rid of her; but she won't stir – no, she sticks like birdlime";[147] and one can find a Sambo, an enlightened black servant, who is witty enough to foil his master's plans to corrupt an innocent married lady, but he only does so in the name of devotion to the master:

> Sambo: I am your slave.
>
> Delville: No- not my slave – I gave you liberty.
>
> Sambo: You did, sir; and that made me your slave – Gratitude has bound me faster to you than all the chains of Africa! 'Tis now fifteen years since you brought me to England; during which time you have fostered me, educated me, and treated me more as a brother, than a servant! – and now when I warn

[147] William Macready, *The Irishman in London; or, the Happy African* (London: Printed by W. Woodfall, 1793), 19, 21.

> you of your danger, you call it impertinence! … my fate is so involved with yours, that if your heart bleeds, Sambo's will break, I'm sure.[148]

In this context, then, even Mungo's famously abolitionist Epilogue can be read as a legitimate expression within the representative regime of benevolent imperialism.

The Epilogue is a significant cultural text within the history of the abolition of slave trade, published thrice in 1787, 1793, and 1808, tracing the abolitionist movement's twenty years of struggle from the formation of the Society (1787) to the Abolition Bill (1807).[149] The representation of Mungo serves as a meditation on the metropolitan abolitionists, for whom Mungo acts as a mouthpiece and appeals to the audience to advocate the abolition of slavery.

The Epilogue begins thus: "Thank you my Massas! Have you laugh your fill?/ Then let me speak, nor take that freedom ill."[150] After the "illegitimate" form of entertainment is over (where Mungo finds legitimacy as a New Low), Mungo demands the freedom to "speak," that which was not permitted in an illegitimate dramatic form like farce. Mungo's opening lines are thus a challenge to theatrical laws in print form. But freedom to speak what? – "heart-felt truths" from the "tongue" of a blackface comic, encroaching the realm of tragic pathos, the domain of legitimate theatres. The next few lines have strong indexical markers of here-and-now: "But calls for stronger, deeper feelings here; … Whilst now before me crowded Britons stand." Mungo is here, in the "free-born British land" standing before "Britons," fully cognizant of the "glorious privilege" of which he is deprived, i.e. his

---

[148] Frederick Reynolds, *Laugh When You Can* (London: Printed for T.N. Longman and O. Rees, 1799), 5.

[149] Clarkson wrote that, "few theatrical pieces had a greater run than the *Padlock*; and that this epilogue, which was attached to it soon after it came out, procured a good deal of feeling for the unfortunate sufferers, whose cause it was intended to serve." Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament*, 1: 81-82.

[150] I refer to the Epilogue quoted with minor alterations by Clarkson in his *History* (1808). See ibid., 1: 80-81.

freedom. The first stanza ends with: "I am a slave, where all things else are free." This last line makes the opening lines all the more ironic, for this is the space where an illegitimate form is encroaching upon legitimate terrain; where a unfree person is claiming the freedom to speak; where a "Briton," blacked up, is professing himself a slave, different from the white Britons of the "free-born British land." In the last instance, although the Briton (Charles Dibdin in this case) is speaking on stage as a slave, the irony is that the "slave" can only speak as a white Briton blacked up.[151] The character of Mungo, in the Epilogue, is able to relate the laughter associated with the comic clown (farce) and the deeper tears (tragedy) associated with slavery. But this pro-abolitionist slave on stage, I argue, is just another construction, minimally different from the grateful slave characters. What is denied to the pseudo-slaves of *The Benevolent Planters* is also denied to the slave speaking freely on stage – the will to act:

> No arm to guard me from oppression's rod,
> My will subservient to a tyrant's nod.
> No gentle hand, when life is in decay,
> To smooth my pains, and charm my cares away;
> But, helpless, left to quit the horrid stage;
> Harrass'd in youth, and desolate in age.

Mungo is "helpless," "harassed" and "desolate", who needs an "arm to guard," and a "gentle hand" to "smooth" and "charm." He is denied not just freedom, but also agency. Even within abolitionist appropriation of the slave's discourse, the slave can only be imagined as a helpless victim (not a rebellious agent), demanding action from the "free-born Britons." It is thus appropriate that the image chosen by the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade as their seal was a kneeling supplicant slave in chains, looking up at an absent benevolent master (a position that could be occupied by both, the benevolent planter or the liberal state),

---

[151] There were no black actors on the British stage in the eighteenth century until the arrival of Ira Aldridge in 1825, who took up the role of Mungo in 1827 while touring the provinces. See Herbert Marshall and Mildred Stock, *Ira Aldridge: The Negro Tragedian* (London: Rockliff, 1958), 70-75.

imploring with clasped hands, “Am I not a man and a brother?” (Figure 2)



Figure 2: Anti-Slavery Seal for the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, Josiah Wedgewood, 1797.

In Stanza 4, Mungo explicitly accuses his audience of collective guilt and national accountability:

> Blush with shame,
> And let strong Nature’s crimson mark your blame.
> I speak to Britons – Britons, then, behold
> A man by Britons snar’d and seiz’d, and sold.
> And yet no British statute damns the deed,
> Nor do the more than murd’rous villains bleed.

Even in this instant, Mungo becomes a means to transpose agency onto another, in this case, a nation-state, which has the authority to pass a parliamentary decree. In other words, the farcical treatment of slavery, while opening up the tension within the comic mode and its various interpretive investments, ultimately succumbs to the same ideological fantasy of benevolence and gratitude, which regulates the relationship between its contradictory poles. Benevolence and gratitude, thus, define the ultimate ideological relationship that grants the

planters, the sailors, and the bourgeois intellectuals a common legitimate platform that advocated nationalism, patriotism and a populist moral agenda without necessarily disrupting the status quo. And yet there was a fourth position that questioned the ideological assumptions of benevolent imperialism.

The Absent Rebel

Each position elaborated above seems to erect a fantasy to conceal its obscene reality, which results in the formation of surprising sympathetic alliances. In summary, the unthreatening image of the black slave-servant, reassuringly comical and sentimental, was the dominant representation of the black body during the late eighteenth century. In commenting on such pseudo-black characters, J. R. Oldfield affirms that "[w]hile accepting the black's humanity, dramatists of the second half of the eighteenth century stopped short of recognizing them as equals."[152] What you are left with when you subtract that humanity from the slave is the frightening terror of the inhuman slave-rebel that makes its presence felt more palpably after the onset of the French and Haitian Revolution. What all three ideological positions – planters, sailors, and metropolitan abolitionists – refuse to acknowledge is the slave that stands outside the purview of sentimentalism as an instance of illegitimate illegitimacy. That slave perspective is difficult to ascertain, as it has no substance in terms of written texts, or testimonies, by slaves occupying the position of slaves.[153] The slaves, I argue, register their resistance not just in texts written by them, but also in the very gap between the multiple perspectives of the planters, the sailors and the metropolitan elite; gaps

---

[152] J. R. Oldfield, "The "Ties of Soft Humanity": Slavery and Race in British Drama, 1760-1800," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (1993): 12.

[153] Dwight McBride's work on slave narratives is an important contribution to this perspective, as he analyses the subject-position of slave testimonies as impossible witnesses. See Dwight A. McBride, *Impossible Witnesses: Truth, Abolitionism, and Slave Testimony* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

which gesture towards the second level of illegitimate illegitimacy. That gap functions as the limiting factor, which neither of these perspectives is willing to fully acknowledge, and so is present as a negation. That negative position (or a properly illegitimate illegitimacy) is the ultimate threat of slave rebellion, which stands as the negative of a representative regime of benevolent imperialism. Adorno once wrote in *Minima Moralia* that the bourgeois is "tolerant" and his "love of people as they are stems from his hatred of what they might be."[154] Similarly, the stance of benevolent imperialism is one such "tolerant" perspective that attempts to assuage the condition of slaves in representation. The benevolent imperialists are keenly aware of the rebel slave as a subject-position which remains a possibility within every slave in the colony. This awareness is registered in their representations as an absence, as both, planters and abolitionists, feared to acknowledge the rebel slave in their discourse. In other words, it is the very presence of New-Low characters like grateful slaves and black comical servants (legitimate illegitimacy) that gesture towards the absent rebel (illegitimate illegitimacy).

The alternative position, which can be designated as a radical position, needs to be understood as a counter to the proslavery lobby that sought to justify slavery with arguments based on spatial delimitation of the practice of slavery within colonies and racial delimitation justifying the enslavement of Africans and other subjugated people. But just as clearly, the radical position would also need to counter the antislavery position of Hume, Blackstone, Smith, Burke, and the abolitionists, which clothed emancipation as a benevolent gesture from above rather than a demand from below. Despite their condemnation of slavery, these advocates of abolitionism continued to regard England (the dominant slave-trading nation) as a beacon of liberty and include within the community of the free the very members it

---

[154] Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 2005), 25.

chastised for practicing slavery, that is, the planter class (noted in Burke's proposal for conciliation with rebel colonists); and by doing so, excluded those that it sought to represent, namely, the slaves. In other words, benevolent imperialism that sought to abolish the relations of personalized domination of enslavement imposed a new form of domination masked as grateful servitude.

The radical position would thus not only negate the justification of slavery based on spatial delimitation as well as racial delimitation, but also negate the abolitionist position of benevolent imperialism that guarded the community of the free within its liberal stronghold from which were still excluded the many subjugated masses inhabiting its empire. The extension of formal equivalence, not equality, was part of the liberal politics of recognition in which sympathy for the other was another means to bolster one's image as a liberal, enlightened nation composed of the community of the free, granting "Liberty" as a benevolent gift for which the only proper recompense was for the subjugated masses to offer grateful servitude as subjects of a benevolent empire. The empire only recognized the status of grateful subjects, a position that necessarily excluded them from the community of the free.

Both the proslavery and antislavery positions, together, constitute the early liberal response to slavery. In contrast, the radical position required a form of sympathy that dismantled the hierarchical relation which granted the other merely a subjugated position to reinforce and consolidate the liberal subject's sense of self; it required a questioning of the very privilege that constituted this liberated self as benevolent, and thereby recognizing the very apparatus, the social-economic foundation, upon which the power invested in such acts of benevolence rested. Such a position was expressed by the English abolitionist, Percival Stockdale:

> *We* are the savages; the Africans act like *men*; like beings endowed with rational and immortal minds; with warm and generous sentiments … [Their]

> cries … against the tyrants, is the *Voice* – their revenge, is the *Act* – of NATURE and of GOD![155]

Stockdale inverts the benevolent-gratitude framework: it is the Africans who have a rational "mind," who have a "voice," and, most importantly, who "act," thus recognizing the Africans' agency. Unlike the liberal response, the more radical approach recognizes the Africans as interlocutors who, as opposed to being passive objects of benevolent action, return the gaze back to the master shaming him for his complicity. Along with this recognition of the other as agent came the realization that these victims of slavery could take it upon themselves to achieve emancipation, a scenario unfolding before their eyes in Haiti. Even before the Haitian Revolution, Abbé Raynal criticized such efforts as were made by benevolent abolitionists as "ineffectual calls of humanity" to pander to the whims of the masters. In contrast to this approach, he evoked the image of a black Spartacus rising from amongst the slaves, terrorizing the slaveholders for the injustices they had committed:

> Your slaves stand in no need either of your generosity or your counsels, in order to break the sacrilegious yoke of their oppression. Nature speaks a more powerful language than philosophy, or interest. … There are so many indications of the impending storm; and the negroes only want a chief, sufficiently courageous, to lead them on to vengeance and slaughter.
>
> Where is this great man to be found, whom nature owes to her afflicted, oppressed and tormented children? Where is he? He will undoubtedly appear, he will show himself, he will lift up the sacred standard of liberty.[156]

The slaves are agents in themselves who are not to be patronized by generosity or benevolent actions. Slaves have always taken action against their oppressors, and, in a prophetic statement, Raynal envisages the emergence from amongst the slaves of a leader of a

---

[155] *A Letter from Percival Stockdale to Granville Sharp Esq., etc.* (Durham, n.d.), 20-26. Quoted in David Geggus, "British Opinion and the Emergence of Haiti," in James Walvin, ed. *Slavery and British Society 1776-1846* (London: Macmillan, 1982), 127.

[156] Abbé Raynal, *A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies*, trans. J. O. Justamond, 8 vols., vol. 5 (London: Printed for W. Strahan; and T. Cadell, 1783), 308-09.

revolution whom, just a few decades later, many would identify as Toussaint L'Ouverture, the black Jacobin. Such a revolution from below is inconceivable within a liberal paradigm. Adam Smith, too, evoked a form of dictatorship to abolish slavery, but it was a dictatorship from above, from amongst the members of the community of the free.[157]

Thus, in the liberal paradigm, within which I locate the proslavery planters, the metropolitan abolitionists, and the patriotic representatives of benevolent imperialism, one may find a criticism of slavery, underlying which was the assumption of ethnic, racial superiority that spatially configured the West as civilized and the rest as savage. The radical position, encapsulated within the conception of radical sympathy, was a dualistic perspective that took into account the political and social reality of the colonies and turned it inversely into a critical self-awareness. The other, on this occasion, is not merely a means to consolidate your sense of self, but a means to de-identify with yourself. In this returned gaze of the other, the savagery and barbarism of those responsible and complicit with the violation of rights and dignity of man are denounced; but this rebuke extended beyond the political and social realities of the colonies, taken as a point of departure to understand the "barbarism" within bourgeois society itself. The liberal rebuke was limited, both epistemologically and, by extension, politically, to envisage a way out of the conundrum, except, perhaps, in terms of benevolent imperialism that maintained the status quo under a new regime of servitude. The agency of the Other was subsumed as a mere extension of (by being a reaction to) the benevolent action of the master or member of the community of the free. Thus, the radical

[157] Adam Smith argued that in a monarchy, "In a despotic government slaves may be better treated than in a free government, where every law is made by their masters, who will never pass anything prejudicial to themselves". Adam Smith, "Lectures on Jurisprudence," in *The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith*, ed. R. L. Meek, D. D. Raphael, and Peter Stein (Glasgow: Glasgow University, 2014), 134-35.

position not only chastised the colonial institutions of slavery but also extended the critique to question metropolitan institutions.[158]

The radical position is, in this way, negative, for it brings together the negations and counter arguments of the seemingly contrary positions within the liberal spectrum. It latches onto the critique of metropolitans in planter's apologia for slavery (Beckford, Grainger, and MacNeill), and the critique of slavery in metropolitan abolitionist discourse (Clarkson, Wilberforce), as well as the critique of the patriotic attitude of the British sailor as a representative of the imperial navy which was the necessary condition for the militant expansion of British commercial enterprise. Early liberalism, in the guise of benevolent imperialism, becomes the self-celebration of the community of the free that, in practice as in representation, involves the repression of enslaved, exploited, and oppressed voices. Under the benign appearance of benevolence resides the despotism of absolute power; the former could not appear without the latter in the context of eighteenth-century benevolent imperialism.

[158] Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery 1776-1848* (London: Verso, 1996), 54.

CHAPTER THREE: NARRATIVE POSSIBILITIES; OR, THE MELODRAMATIZATION OF THE RACIAL BODY

In the previous chapter, I illustrated the limitation of the ideology of benevolent imperialism in its incapacity to envisage a rebel slave character. Advocates of benevolent imperialism – the metropolitan abolitionists, proslavery lobbyists, and patriotic moralists – all constructed their respective arguments based on the shared assumption of the lack of agency on the part of the slave. Such a slave could only be configured in political and theatrical discourse as either grateful or sentimentally comical. All three positions together represented the various legitimate opinions within classical liberal discourse. The possibility of the collective negation of these positions is what I called the radical position, which, in the writings of Abbé Raynal, acknowledged the repression of the oppressed but actively rebellious voices in the "ineffectual calls of humanity."[1]

In this chapter, I argue that it is in the shift from sentimental humanitarianism to melodramatic racialisation that the black body is reformulated as a rebel slave; but this rebel slave does not wholly represent the possibility of a radical negation of the ideology of benevolent imperialism. Rather it is another liberal strategy to provisionally resolve the representational crisis of empire after the 1790s, in which Britain struggled to maintain an imperial social order under the looming threat of revolutionary disorder during the Napoleonic Wars. I consider Jack Mansong, the fugitive leader of a banditti of escaped slaves, as a formalization of the black body as a rebel slave. I argue, in line with Lissette Szwydky, that the popular representation of slave rebellion fundamentally misrepresents real forms of black resistance in the Caribbean and the Americas. What Szwydky shows is how Maroon history is erased from the nineteenth-century textual and performative adaptations of

[1] Raynal, *A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies*, 5, 308.

Jack Mansong: "Collectively, the adaptations demonstrate how an instance of collective rebellion could be sensationalized to the point of being rendered politically insignificant" (40).[2] She suggests that the actual history of black resistance is denied and distorted by these representations. The historical Jack, a leader of sixty rebels, becomes in his dramatic avatar a lone rebel, destitute of followers, thus transforming collective resistance into a malicious isolated instance of personal vengeance.

In what follows, I examine the rebel slave character as but one possibility amongst a variety of competing representational possibilities that sustained the credibility of Britain's empire during a revolutionary age. I begin by specifying what I mean by racial melodrama in which rights, race, monstrosity, and melodrama are intimately connected. I then explore the melodramatic theatrical apparatus – stage apparatus and performance – in John Fawcett's *Obi; or, Three-Finger'd Jack* (Haymarket, 1800) which figures a black body as a rebel slave. This discussion of the melodramatic rebel slave has a precedent in the character of the vengeful Moor, the first dominant "black" rebel, who was still quite popular on the London stage. I sketch the process of melodramatization of the vengeful Moor through the long performative history of Zanga in Thomas Young's *The Revenge* (Drury Lane, 1721). Through Moorish characters like Othello and Alhadra, I discuss the representational problem of blacking up when these conventionally blackened characters become incommensurable because "blackness" has itself become racialised. In other words, I illustrate how the melodramatization of the Moor is coeval with the process of racialisation of "blackness." The convention of blacking up, however, is but one strategy through which subversive fantasies are managed in racial melodramas, which, finally, brings up the discussion of the narrative

[2] Lissette Lopez Szwydky, "Rewriting the History of Black Resistance: The Haitian Revolution, Jamaican Maroons and the 'History' of Three-Fingered Jack in English Popular Culture, 1799-1830.," *Romantic Circles Praxis Series* (2011). The paragraph number is mentioned in parenthesis.

possibilities offered by numerous black-bodied characters on the early nineteenth-century London stage. It is here that an allegorical analysis becomes particularly relevant to reveal how these multiple interpretations, based on evidence solicited from within the internal structure of the text, offer a variety of narrative possibilities, in which subversive fantasies are effectively managed to give the illusion of plurality and tolerance presupposed by classical liberalism. I try to map these various narrative possibilities of the black body to reveal what is excluded in the racial representations on the London stage even as the black body is formalized as a rebel slave.

Melodrama, Rights, Race, and Monstrosity

By the end of the eighteenth century, there were already a variety of plays featuring black characters on the London stage. Hawkesworth's *Oroonoko* (Drury Lane, 1759) and Colman's *Inkle and Yarico* (Haymarket, 1789) jostled for a place in the theatrical repertoire with Cobb's *Paul and Virginia* (Covent Garden, 1800) and Reynolds' *Laugh When You Can* (Covent Garden, 1799). Bickerstaffe's *The Padlock* (Drury Lane, 1768) performed alongside more traditional plays like Young's *The Revenge* (Drury Lane, 1721) and Shakespeare's *Othello* (1603). In addition to these established performances of blackness, a whole host of new characters like Three-fingered Jack, Mackandal, Hassan, Selico, and Gambia stepped onto the stage in all their melodramatic and pantomimic glory.[3]

Melodrama, referring to dramatic works that incorporated music (melody) to accompany action (drama), was known for its emotional excess, its spectacular action, and its charged narratives of vice, loss, and suffering. Frank Rahill offers a concise summary of its basic components:

> Melodrama is a form of dramatic composition in prose partaking of the nature of tragedy, comedy, pantomime, and spectacle, and intended for a popular

[3] *Obi; or Three-Fingered Jack* (1800), *King Caesar* (1801), *The Castle Spectre* (1796), *The Africans* (1808), and *The Slave* (1816), respectively.

> audience. Primarily concerned with situation and plot, it calls upon mimed action extensively and employs a more or less fixed complement of stock characters, the most import of which are a suffering heroine or hero, a persecuting villain, and a benevolent comic. It is conventionally moral and humanitarian in point of view and sentimental and optimistic in temper, concluding its fable happily with virtue rewarded after many trials and vice punished. Characteristically it offers elaborate scenic accessories and miscellaneous divertissements and introduces music freely, typically to underscore dramatic effect.[4]

Melodrama, as a hybrid composition, borrowed elements of spectacle from pantomime, while its atmospheric elements of suspense, mystery, and horror were borrowed from Gothic works. Its coupling of melody and drama evolved out of the practices of illegitimate theatricality that employed music as an accompaniment to action and dialogue; its Manichean moral frame of good versus evil and its extreme monopathic characterizations are generic developments in a revolutionary age that can be traced to eighteenth-century sentimental tragedy and comedy. Ultimately, the racial melodramas that followed these sentimental performances incorporated much of their sentimentality and offered spectators a means of reflecting on contemporary political events. For a dramatic form that began to emerge in the 1790s, much of melodrama's primary narrative elements were inspired by French drama of that period and the theatricality of the French Revolution.[5] Matthew Buckley notes:

> The Revolution's archetypal conflicts and struggles (between highborn villains and simple victims), its exemplary traumas and situations (loss of family, parents, hearth love, home), its characteristic figurations and emotions (the intrusion of villains, desperate flights, armed clashes, joyous triumphs and perilous uncertainty and distress) form the very bedrock of melodramatic plot.[6]

---

[4] Frank Rahill, *The World of Melodrama* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1967), xiv.

[5] For the trajectory of formal development of the melodramatic genre, see Matthew Buckley's useful analysis in Matthew S. Buckley, "The Formation of Melodrama," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre, 1737-1832*, ed. Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 462-63.

[6] Ibid., 466.

In other words, Buckley asserts that the apprehension of melodrama in the French Revolutionary context possesses explanatory power since "melodrama's basic narrative has ever since adhered to a structure that echoes, in recognizable if abstract and refracted form, a mode of historical consciousness created with the French Revolution."[7] The black body as a rebel slave thus needs to be situated properly within this historical revolutionary context.

Virginia Mason Vaughan writes that by this time the "theatre itself became a vehicle for abolitionist sentiment and the blackfaced actor – whether a villain like Zanga or a tragic hero like Oroonoko – was a sentimentalized site for resistance to the evils of slavery."[8] Although the discussion of slavery in the debates that followed the abolitionist petitions was undoubtedly an important context for the representation of black bodies on stage, it is, nonetheless, difficult to isolate a blackfaced character or characters that could bear the burden of becoming the dominant vehicle for abolitionist sentiment. If anything, the theatres were sites of contestation, as I have shown in the previous chapters, with not very well-defined political or even moral sentiments.

In this period of political and social turmoil, the black characters in racial melodramas were not doing any one thing but many. They offered a panoply of perspectives, educing a variety of responses from a generally mixed audience. A blackfaced actor on stage could evoke terror of absolute villainy (Aleazar from *Lust's Dominion)*, pity for tragic suffering (Othello), or sympathy for an act of justified vengeance (Zanga). In viewing different black characters, a spectator could feel the uneasiness of moral ambiguity associated with heroic villainy (Three-fingered Jack), or feel compassion for virtuous sacrificial acts (Gambia), or even approve the expressions of deferential servility (Quashee). The audience of these racial melodramas had to confront the republican ideals of liberty and equality advocated by a

---

[7] Ibid., 467.

[8] Vaughan, *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500-1800*, 17.

revolutionary France (with which Britain was at war), and morally justify or deride the spectacle that depicted a colonial order fuelled by the blood of slaves while simultaneously propagating a patriotic self-image of a virtuous, free Britannia.

Although it is difficult to distinguish racial melodramas as a distinctive body of texts like naval melodramas or domestic melodramas, I will nonetheless look at a particular set of plays through which I elaborate the specific connection between conventional melodrama, rights discourse, racial representation, and what is singled out as a constitutive element of the melodramatic form – its monstrosity. I analyse John Fawcett's pantomime version (Haymarket, 1800) and William Murray's melodramatic adaptation (Edinburgh, 1830) of *Obi; or, Three-Finger'd Jack*, George Colman's *The Africans; or, War, Love and Duty* (Haymarket, 1808), Matthew Lewis's *The Castle Spectre* (Drury Lane, 1797), John Cartwright Cross's *King Caesar* (Royal Circus, 1801), and Thomas Morton's *The Slave* (Covent Garden, 1816) as examples of racial melodramas. As the theatrical repertoire system encouraged the reprisal of old popular favourites, these racial melodramas had to compete with a variety of blackfaced roles already in circulation. Hence, I also look at the performative history of Edward Young's *The Revenge* (Drury Lane, 1721), in which the character of Zanga serves not just as a precursor to the rebel slave characters, but also as a contemporary representation competing for theatrical space (and time) with other melodramatic slave characters. The main point that I want to emphasize, however, is that none of these plays is exclusively about the moral dilemma of race, and so to identify them as racial melodramas is to make a case for the integration of racial discourse into rights discourse, melodramatic representations, and its formal and thematic constitution of monstrosity.

Ultimately, these racial melodramas offered spectators a means of reflecting on contemporary political events and the Empire, during a period in British history which Daniel

O'Quinn recognises as an "unprecedented moment … of self-scrutiny."[9] One of the primary difficulties posed by the colonial imagination was that geographical distance rendered the suffering of the colonized Other invisible. This was a problem of immediate concern for the abolitionists. Wilberforce acknowledged the difficulty in obtaining "positive proof" of the "existence of practices discreditable to the Slave Trade" as amongst the biggest hurdles faced by the abolitionists.[10] But apart from the difficulty of proving the existence of such discreditable practices, was the additional difficulty of representing in language the misery the slaves experienced. Thomas Clarkson expresses this very incapacity of language in his futile attempt to describe the experience of slaves in the Middle Passage:

> I am at a loss to describe it. Where shall I find words to express …? Where shall I find language to paint in appropriate colours the horror of mind brought on by thoughts of their future…? How shall I make known their situation…? How shall I describe their feelings… ? How shall I exhibit their sufferings …? How shall I give an idea of their agony…? Indeed every part of this subject defies my powers, and I must therefore satisfy myself and the reader with a general representation, or in the words of a celebrated member of Parliament, that "Never was so much suffering condensed in so small a space."[11]

"Words," "language," "paint," "make known," "describe," "exhibit", "idea" covers the range of media Clarkson evokes to emphasise the impossibility of such a task for someone who has not witnessed such suffering. In this context, then, a theatrical exhibition would be considered advantageous in depicting the suffering experienced by countless others in unseen situations. But it is here that we see how theatrical censorship was effectively exercised on two levels: first, unofficially by the theatre managers who not only had their theatrical license at stake, but also their livelihood; second, officially by the Lord Chamberlain, to ensure that

---

[9] O'Quinn, *Staging Governance*, 170.

[10] William Wilberforce, *A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1807), 11.

[11] Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament*, 1: 14-15.

theatrical expression was within “legitimate” bounds. Theatrical censorship was based on two clauses (III and IV) in the 1737 Licensing Act. In summary, Clause III stipulated the submission of all new play manuscripts to the Lord Chamberlain at least fourteen days in advance of its intended performance, undersigned by the managers of the licensed playhouses. Clause IV granted the Lord Chamberlain absolute power of censorship, which he could exercise without offering a reason for his decision, and with no hope for appeal.[12] The Lord Chamberlain appointed an Examiner of Plays, who would read the plays and make decisions pertaining to their appropriateness for stage performance. The Examiner of Plays thus exercised tremendous power and influence over the type of performances that made it to the stage, the decision often resting on his personal whim.[13] It is to avoid rejection by the theatrical censor that racial melodramas veered far from offering spectators gruesome depictions of tortured bodies that would incriminate and delegitimize the colonial enterprise. Rather, they offered exotic and alluring images of faraway spaces, and thrilling action that titillated spectators, thus rendering invisible the brutality of colonial conquest, even while evoking sympathy for the colonised other.[14]

Despite its overtly patriotic finale, the illegitimate melodramatic tactics did offer subversive possibilities within an essentially conservative frame. The dramatic representation

---

[12] The two clauses have been cited in Thomas, "The 1737 Licensing Act and Its Impact," 97.

[13] For a detailed explication of the role of the Examiner of Plays, particularly looking at the figure of John Larpent, see Worrall, *Theatric Revolution*, 103-32. Worrall likens the exercise of theatrical censorship during this period to “something of an unofficial cottage-industry conducted in the domestic setting of a Georgian living room” without any of the “checks and balances within the system, certainly nothing approaching the internal restraints on official conduct assured by a modern bureaucracy.” Ibid., 105.

[14] Dana Van Kooy notes that “melodrama rendered historical events (in)visible by subjecting specific moments in British imperial history to a theatrics that simultaneously demonstrated and occluded the events’ significance.” Dana Van Kooy, "Darkness Visible: The Early Melodrama of British Imperialism and the Commodification of History in Sheridan's "Pizarro"," *Theatre Journal* 64, no. 2 (2012): 179.

of the story of Jack provided a rebellious hero-villain, a grotesque obeah woman, and a gang of robbers, all three of which were emblems of real threats to colonial order in the West Indies. Alongside Jack were the names of notorious rebel slaves like Toussaint L'Ouverture, Dutty Boukman, Mackandal, and Tacky. Associated with many of these rebel slave figures, particularly Tacky, Mackandal, and Boukman was obeah and other forms of black magic which became an effective means for antislavery resistance, terrorizing the slave masters and their loyal slaves. The ultimate threat posed by these rebel slaves was their ability to organise collective resistance as bandits, outlaws, and rebels, challenging the power of colonial authorities. But it was precisely this power of the collective that had to be contained and remodelled within a more acceptable domestic framework, with a focus on individualistic motives, thus veering away from a political form of collective resistance to a more suitable form of moral outrage expressed in terms of revenge. The political collective resistance (illegitimate illegitimacy), although not directly representable in itself, nonetheless undergirds the legitimate dramatic representations (legitimate legitimacy and legitimate illegitimacy) of revenge, remorse, and sacrifice, as will be explicated below.

Through the deployment of melodramatic theatrics, the horrors of colonial slavery were both revealed and concealed. As melodrama was a hybrid composition of comedy, tragedy, pantomime, and sentimentalism, the playwrights had at their disposal a number of generic conventions that they could deploy in the scene-by-scene narrative. For Buckley, melodrama's basic narrative and theatrical conventions rely upon

> breathtaking opening tableaux of idealized community and initial actions of intrusive violence, to its soon-typical adherence to an accelerating rhythmic alternation between scenes of fracture and reconciliation, flight and refuge, horror and comedic relief, and exilic loss and restorative justice.[15]

[15] Matthew S. Buckley, "Refugee Theatre: Melodrama and Modernity's Loss," *Theatre Journal* 61, no. 2 (2009): 182.

Thus, an extravagant musical celebration could be followed by a sentimental domestic duet, following which could be a tragic speech, or a pantomimic procession, or a bathetic exchange between low-class characters. Even if the climactic ending claims to establish a harmonious order in the closing-curtain tableau, the juxtaposition of a variety of compositional strategies opens up the interpretation that cannot be limited to any one basic dominant narrative, as it highlights moments that potentially challenge the aesthetic and ideological whole. There are moments within the legitimate illegitimacy of melodrama that gesture towards the otherwise unrepresentable collective (illegitimate illegitimacy), that which is not a part of the liberal ideological worldview or the community of the free. Illegitimate illegitimacy is unrepresentable and forms the racial unconscious that undergirds legitimate forms of racial representations in major and minor theatres. Moments which break free from the strictures of legitimacy gesture towards this ultimate form of illegitimacy.

Stage apparatus and performance were two aspects of melodramatic theatricality that were deployed to recreate the colonial world. The use of scenography, music, and tableau added, in Jacky Bratton's words, to "the web of meaning generated by official documents, news, reportage, romantic adventure stories, military and economic argument, political debate and commercial exploitation whereby Empire was naturalised."[16] In addition to the theatrical apparatus that attempted to "naturalise" the empire, Joseph Roach emphasizes the significance of performance as a "medium of cultural definition and transmission," insisting that culture should be understood as an actual community and an imagined one.[17]

Taken together, the melodramatic theatrical apparatus and the performance of blackness became a critical means for representing the colonial world as a reflection on the

---

[16] Bratton et al., *Acts of Supremacy*, 3.

[17] Joseph R. Roach, "Slave Spectacles and Tragic Octoroons: A Cultural Genealogy of Antebellum Performance," *Theatre Survey* 33, no. 2 (2009): 167-68.

imagined community of the empire. However, rather than curtailing the meaning of the spectacle to express a coherent imperial ideology, both aspects of melodramatic theatricality – stage apparatus and performance – suggest a fascination with charismatic rebellious slave characters, even as the dramatization of their death was used as a cathartic celebration of triumphant imperialism. This is evident in John Fawcett's *Obi; or, Three-Fingered Jack* (1800), one of the most successful dramatizations of the rebel slave on the London stage.

Stage Apparatus and Performance in *Obi; or, Three-Fingered Jack*

Amongst the various manifestations of the rebel slave, *Obi; or, Three-Fingered Jack* is probably the most significant, not just for its popularity and cultural outreach, but also for the complexity of characterization and the significance of the historical moment in which it was performed. Fawcett's libretto was staged at the Haymarket Theatre for its summer season on 2nd July 1800, and successfully ran for 39 performances.[18] It was a pantomime performance on slave revolt, which depicted the notorious slave outlaw, Jack Mansong, who was known as the "terror of Jamaica" in the 1780s.[19] In 1830, a properly melodramatic version of Fawcett's tremendously successful pantomime was ascribed to the Edinburgh theatre manager, William Murray, featuring Ira Aldridge, the first black actor on the London stage, popularly known as the "African Roscius." Murray's melodrama presented a sentimental hero-villain, who provides a rationale behind his vindictive hatred towards the planter Ormond. By offering Jack's tragic story which recapitulated the horrors of the slave trade, Murray's melodrama gives the stage to Aldridge, a black actor, to denounce slavery and challenge racial stereotypes.

---

[18] Fawcett was popular as an actor-singer, known for his comic roles, earlier employed at Covent Garden from 1791, after which he shifted to Haymarket in 1794, eventually becoming its stage manager in 1799.

[19] Benjamin Moseley, *A Treatise on Sugar* (London: Printed for G.G. and J. Robinson, 1799), 173.

In the "Advertisement" of the published *Songs, Duets, & Choruses in the Pantomimical Drama of Obi* (1800), Dr. Benjamin Moseley's *A Treatise on Sugar* (1799) is acknowledged as the authentic historical source for the narrative. The playbill of 1st July 1800 claims further authenticity in its representation of Jamaica as the sceneries, designed by S. Whitmore, were described as "Views taken on the Spot." In addition to the scenery, the costumes are also claimed to be "made for the purpose by Persons acquainted with the spot where the Scene of Action lyes."[20] This claim to authenticity served to ground the theatrical spectacle that the audience experienced in a historical and geographical place. The use of melodramatic theatrics transformed this historical place into a staged colonial space.

A crucial theoretical insight, which is central to my argument on the theatrical representation of colonial space, is offered by Timothy Morton in *The Poetics of Spice*, a work that deals with how the representation of spice "operated within [capitalist] ideologies of consumption, including notions of trade, abstinence and luxury."[21] Morton suggests that "[c]apitalism liquidates the local meanings and values that make a certain territory into a 'place'; it functions better between more abstractly conceived 'spaces.'"[22] This figurative transformation of geographical "place" into more abstract "space" is critical to how the colonies were represented in colonial texts as well as on stage. As Dellarosa suggests, Moseley's *A Treatise on Sugar*, the source text for Fawcett's pantomime, performs just such a manoeuvre.[23]

---

[20] *The London Stage, 1660-1800. Part 5: 1776-1800*, 2290.

[21] Timothy Morton, *The Poetics of Spice: Romantic Consumerism and the Exotic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 10.

[22] Ibid., 182.

[23] Dellarosa, *Slavery on Stage*, 106.

Moseley was interested in sugar as a commodity which was "a subject of the first importance in commerce, and, more than that, a subject now influencing the dispositions to health or disease, of the greatest part of the inhabitants of the earth."[24] The agenda of his *A Treatise on Sugar* was to "discover a foundation, on which order and arrangement may rise."[25] The "order and arrangement" he speaks of was, of course, the establishment and maintenance of a colony of the British Empire, and thus the *Treatise* functions as "publicity" or an advertisement regarding prospective profits in the colonial enterprise.[26] For Moseley, the sugar cane was the "heart of the solar world," the talismanic philosopher's stone that bestows health and wealth to the British Empire, and the sugar plantation "represents the days of Saturn" where "every animal seems to be a member of the golden age."[27] Coleridge's "Lecture on the Slave Trade" delivered on 16th June 1795 in Bristol offers a counter-perspective to Moseley's paradisiacal image of the sugar plantation. Coleridge begins by asking, "Whence arise our miseries? Whence arise our vices?" to which he offers an answer, "From artificial Wants."[28] While Moseley emphasises the necessity and centrality of the enterprise around which global trade revolves, Coleridge underscores the "formation of

---

[24] Moseley, *A Treatise on Sugar*, 3. Before this, Moseley had published a considerable number of medical books including *A Treatise on Tropical Diseases* (1787) and *A Treatise Concerning the Properties and Effects of Coffee* (1785).

[25] Ibid.

[26] Keith Sandiford has argued how such colonial texts were "designed to stir the hunger of prospective new settlers for the promise of individual enterprise and prosperity that awaited their exploitation of this new economic frontier." Sandiford, *The Cultural Politics of Sugar*, 2.

[27] Moseley, *A Treatise on Sugar*, 191.

[28] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Lecture on the Slave Trade," in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Vol. 1: Lectures 1795 on Politics and Religion*, ed. Peter Mann and Lewis Patton, Bollingen Series (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 235.

imaginary wants" from which arose the "evils" exemplified in the slave trade and West Indian commerce:

> We receive from the West Indias Sugars, Rum, Cotton, log-wood, cocoa, coffee, pimento, ginger, indigo, mahogany, and conserves – not one of these are necessary – indeed with the exception of cotton and mahogany we cannot with truth call them even useful, and not one is at present attainable by the poor and labouring part of Society.[29]

Coleridge's comments on "imaginary wants" as the real drivers of colonial trade give a context to Moseley's representation of the trade as one that necessarily restructures the world for its purpose:

> At home, the merchant, from his transatlantic operation, supports legions of manufacturers. With pointed finger on the globe, he follows the car of Phoebus, with anxious care, through the heavenly signs propitious to his views; collect his rays from equatorial climes; diffuses their genial warmth over the frigid regions of the earth, and makes the industrious world one great family.[30]

Moseley's ideological task was to affirm the absolute significance of sugar in contrast to Coleridge's derisive disavowal of the commodity as a mere "imaginary want." For Moseley, sugar functions as a metonym for British commercial and imperial power. In his account, the merchants, the manufacturers, in fact, the "globe," revolves around sugar cultivation that brings together the varied social groupings as part of "one great family." Moseley elides the place-particularity of the "globe" in order to re-present it as an abstract colonial space, which is instrumental for colonial trade.[31] A similar transformation of the "real" place into theatrical space occurs in the representation of colonies on stage.

Fawcett used impressive stage theatrics to offer a spectacular visual treat that, like Moseley's appealing representation, also emblematized and exoticized the allure of imperial

---

[29] Ibid., 236-37.

[30] Moseley, *A Treatise on Sugar*, 191.

[31] Dellarosa, *Slavery on Stage*, 106.

power. He represented orientalised space to depict the plantation and the slaves, offering a romanticized image of colonial order.[32] Scenes involving troupes of dancers in extravagant costumes performing exotic slave dances and parading in spectacular processions would have served as theatrical highpoints of the drama, marking the opening and closing of both the acts. The first act concludes with the grand ball and Jonkanoo. Thomas Dutton, the reviewer in the *Dramatic Censor*, described Jonkanoo as a "grotesque character, equipped with a ludicrous and enormously large false head, and presides at the negro balls in Jamaica, in the capacity of the master of ceremonies."[33] Within the play, Jonkanoo is described as a "big funny man," who functions as the "master of all" but only at the pleasure of the "Good Massa."[34] These performances, like those extravagant slave dance scenes in Oroonoko, were the occasion for spectacular costumes, music, and dance; in other words, they fulfilled the theatrical extravaganza that was promised to the audience. On the one hand, this stunning display of illegitimate theatrics momentarily displaced the ordered world of the colonial plantation and showcased slaves dancing with subversive exuberance that could defy colonial authority; however, this exuberance is reduced to a harmless spectacle which, as Botkin notes, is "reminiscent of the traditional pantomime's stock clown character."[35] The extravagant masked performance of Jonkanoo and his merry band of slaves dancers, which

---

[32] Moseley seems aware of the theatrical potential of Jack's story, especially when he describes the "scene" of confrontation between Jack and his pursuers: "This was a scene: not where ordinary actors had a common part to play." Moseley, *A Treatise on Sugar*, 177.

[33] Thomas Dutton, *The Dramatic Censor*, vol. 3 (London, 1801), 20. In the present, Jonkanoo is the name given to the Caribbean street parade during Christmas, involving participants in elaborate masks and dresses. The cultural event now described as Jonkanoo is understood to be a fusion of West African and European cultural elements. See Frances R. Botkin, *Thieving Three-Fingered Jack: Transatlantic Tales of a Jamaican Outlaw, 1780-2015* (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2017), 74.

[34] John Fawcett, *Obi, or, Three-Finger'd Jack* (London: John Longman, Clementi's Compy, 1800), 17.

[35] Botkin, *Thieving Three-Fingered Jack*, 74.

mirror Jack and his band of robbers, supports Saidiya Hartman's thesis in which she argues that these performances of slave song and dance initiated a "transubstantiation of abjection into contentment [which] suggested that the traumas of slavery were easily redressed."[36] The celebration of Rosa's birthday, Jonkanoo, and sentimental scenes of domesticity and kinship depicting grateful slaves like Quashee and Sam at once fixed the dramatic performances of blackness in the nexus between exoticness and familiarity. These scenes, which involved non-rebellious slaves, expressed what Hartman describes as "the terror of pleasure – the violence that undergirded the comic moment in minstrelsy" or minstrel-like comic performances in melodramas.[37] But the thrust of melodramatic violence was the "pleasure of terror – the force of evil that propelled the plot of melodrama and fascinated the spectator."[38] These celebratory beginnings and endings are juxtaposed with the wild, threatening fringes of colonial power that remained unregulated and unassimilated. These spaces are depicted in the scenes taking place in caves, subterranean passages, and mountains; spaces inhabited by the rebel slaves and the obeah woman. The juxtaposition of these two spaces in Fawcett's *Obi* anticipates what Buckley identifies as the shift within melodramatic representations "from a conservative, primarily didactic genre of social restoration to a militant, primarily sensationalist genre of imperial power" enlisting "similar fears of a binary world of love, honour, and order surrounded and threatened by irrational hatred, cruelty, and chaos."[39] Both spaces within this binary world had visual appeal, as one titillated the patriot's demand for

---

[36] Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 23.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Buckley, "Refugee Theatre: Melodrama and Modernity's Loss," 186.

visual representations of British imperial might, and the other appealed to the spectator's desire to be thrilled and shocked.

Apart from these slave song-and-dance routines, the other songs in Murray's melodramatic version celebrate the craftiness of wily Mungo-like figures. Tuckey, Captain Orford's urbane servant, playfully flirts with the mixed-race housemaid Kitty, who bemoans the racial prejudice he experiences: "Ah, we poor blacks have a weary time of it, and are as much railed at as if the darkness of the skin were a sample of the colour of our hearts" (Act 1.ii). The song he sings, "Opossum up a Gum Tree," brings into play the character of the comical servant we analysed in Chapter Two, illustrating the exploitation and discrimination suffered by free blacks by comparing the black boy with the opossum being chased by a raccoon.

> Black boy him love Jill Jenkins,
> Tink he'll wed—tink he'll wed,
> His massa chide him thinking,
> Beat him head—beat him head,
> Black boy him love rum, too,
> Make him groggy—make him groggy,
> But massa make him come to
> When him floggy—when him floggy.
> Opossum up, &c. (Act 1.ii)

Apart from interracial desire that the song evokes between the black body and Jill Jenkins, it also evokes the subversion of authority through inebriation, and the threat of flogging. This song was popularised by Charles Mathews in his *Trip to America* (1824), picked up while he was on his tour when he had the occasion to visit the African Grove Theatre in New York. Describing a black tragedian, who was later alleged to be Aldridge (although the latter denies the entire incident as apocryphal), Mathews rendered absurd the situation in which Shakespeare and blackness could be regarded together on stage. Mathews describes the black tragedian mispronouncing the words "oppose them" in Hamlet's soliloquy as "opossum," which triggers the black audience to demand that the actor step out of his role as Hamlet, and

perform the popular song, "Opossum up a Gum Tree."[40] Cox notes how this song functions as a "metatheatrical intrusion" inserted into Murray's *Obi* to critique racial hierarchies (12).[41] I would add that this song also manages to subvert theatrical legitimacy as it emerges from a subversion of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. This intervention of what Mathews identifies as a "black anthem" in a performance of Shakespeare once again intrudes upon the melodramatic performance of black rebellion, featuring another black tragedian. Aldridge would often adopt the song in his own performative routines, profiting from Mathews' alleged impersonation of him. As Cox points out, the song celebrates various tricky characters, which "allows us to see Jack not as a villain but as a trickster, an avatar of the great African trickster divinity Esu-Elegbara" (12). The intrusion of the song as part of illegitimate theatrics in an illegitimate form like melodrama through a New-Low (illegitimate) character like Tuckey gestures once again towards subversive possibilities.

The opening verse, a duet sung by two female slaves (the wives of Quashee and Sam), contextualizes the play in terms of sympathy for the slaves, ending in the familiar motif in which grateful slaves request the master to be kind and benevolent to assuage the slave's predicament:

> The white man comes, and brings his gold –
> The Slaver meet him on the bay –
> And, oh, poor negro then be sold,
> From home poor negro sails away.
> Oh, it is very, very sad to see
> Poor negro child and father part –
> But if white man kind massa be,
> He heals the wound in negro's heart. (Act 1.i)[42]

---

[40] Charles Mathews, *Sketches of Mr. Mathews's Celebrated Trip to America* (London: Printed by J. Limbird, N.D.), 9-10.

[41] Jeffrey N. Cox, "Theatrical Forms, Ideological Conflicts, and the Staging of Obi," *Romantic Circles Praxis Series* (2002), https://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/obi/cox/cox.html. Paragraph number given in parenthesis.

[42] Cox, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 5: 204.

However, this sentimental opening is disrupted by the mention of Jack's name, which inspires terror amongst the slaves. In the first scene of the pantomime, the "Negro dance by the six Negro men and women" is interrupted by a gunshot fired offstage.[43] In the 1830 melodramatic version, the central visual spectacle of Jonkanoo is abruptly stopped because Jack has kidnapped Captain Orford:

> The sports continue for a time when suddenly the voice of Ormond is heard without, exclaiming, 'Hold, hold!' The music assumes a hurried character, and Ormond … rushes down the centre of the stage followed by the Overseer with drawn sword, and Tuckey. (Act 1.vii)[44]

These celebratory visual spectacles maintain the fantasy of imperial conquest, even as the presence of Jack disrupts that fantasy by intervening in the celebration, literally bringing it to a halt.

In the above scene in the melodramatic version, the musical progression corresponds to the action of the scene ("music assumes a hurried character"), but it also parallels the general plot progression. Each act begins on a celebratory high note, and ends with a dance procession and tableau. In his analysis of Samuel Arnold's score for Fawcett's *Obi*, Robert Hoskins comments:

> The idea of the plantation as Eden and of the wilderness as outside Eden is established in terms of the emotional and imaginative geography of the music. Within the borders of the plantation the music is associated with peaceful, safe, restorative nature while, conversely, music coming from without is linked to menace and spectacular acts of violence.[45]

---

[43] Ibid., 5: 206.

[44] William H. Murray, "Obi; or, Three-Fingered Jack. A Popular Melodrame, in Two Acts," *Romantic Circles* (2002), https://romantic-circles.org/praxis/obi/obi_melodrama_act1.html.

[45] Robert Hoskins, "Savage Boundaries: Reading Samuel Arnold's Score," *Romantic Circles Praxis Series* (2002), https://www.rc.umd.edu/print/praxis/obi/hoskins/hoskins.html.

In front of the grand static backdrops of mountains, caves, and plantations, designed by Whitmore, the stage abounded with activity and music. The spectators had to constantly shift between a visual register and an aural one.

The opening plantation scene, a jubilant celebration in which the slaves are told by the Overseer that a holiday has been declared to celebrate the planter's daughter's birthday, is followed by a sentimental romantic scene in the Planter's house where Rosa, the planter's daughter, declares her love for Captain Orford. The affectionate comfort of familial domesticity is substituted in the following scene, by gothic tropes depicting the Obi woman's cave, "cut in the heart of a large rock," in which "the whole of the walls are entirely covered with feathers, rags, bones, teeth, catskins, broken glass, parrots' beaks etc."[46]

In Dutton's review of the play, we witness how the deployment of illegitimate tactics (pantomime, ritualistic dance, music, and setting) in this particular scene was received on one occasion during its performance. The obi woman, the "ugly loathsome creature," is the other significant black character which resides outside the ordered space of the slave plantation. The pantomimical performance in the obi woman's cave, full of exaggerated gestures, magic, and ritual, evokes the unfamiliarity and exoticness associated with stereotypes about African savagery, just as the pantomimical score during this scene, according to Hoskins, highlights the "subversive moments" which provide a sense of "displacement meant to emphasize moral inversion and collapse."[47] In response to this scene, Dutton dramatizes the off-stage performance of his "judicious neighbours," an Irish gentleman and an elderly woman with two children sitting near him.[48] On stage, the "Negro banditti" perform a ritualistic dance which parallels the performance of Jonkanoo and the slave dance that takes place within the

---

[46] Cox, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 5: 208-09.

[47] Hoskins, "Savage Boundaries: Reading Samuel Arnold's Score".

[48] Thomas Dutton, *Dramatic Censor* III (1800): 22-23.

plantation at the end of the act. Viewing the dance performance of the rebel slaves, which Dutton describes as "warlike exercises," the Irish fellow sitting next to him exclaims, "Arrah! By Jasus! We shall have bloody work of it now! To it! My brave boys." But as the performers "throw themselves at full length on their faces, instead of sallying forth" to meet their enemies, the Irishman disparagingly comments, "What a parcel of chicken-hearted poltroons!" On seeing the obi woman advance towards the group of prostrate rebels with a long pole with feathers tied to its end, the son of the elderly woman watching the scene cries out, "La! Mamma, is that nasty woman going to give them a whipping?", to which the Irishman added, "By Jasus! And serve them right too." As the scene proceeds and Jack and the gang of robbers makes its way down the trap door, the little girl exclaims, "Look Mamma, the old woman's sending them all to bed without their supper, after flogging them!" The implications of these comments is that Fawcett's pantomimical representation of black rebellion with its use of Gothic tropes was apprehended as a domestic scene in which the rebel slaves were perceived as children being spanked for misbehaving.

The 1830 melodramatic version exploits the gothic potential of this scene even more. The cave is lit by a fire, on top of which is an iron pot "suspended by three sticks" (Act 1.iii) which makes the atmosphere much more menacing and reminiscent of dark magic and witchcraft.[49] In Murray's melodrama, the presence of Aldridge's black body transforms Jack from a silent pantomimical performance into a decisively subversive figure, in which Aldridge's voice could utter motives which the audience would understand and sympathise with. According to Botkin, "Aldridge fashioned himself into a figure as fragmented and ambiguous as the notorious bandit."[50] Aldridge used the name Karfa, linking the character to

[49] Murray, "Obi; or, Three-Fingered Jack," [n.p.]

[50] Botkin, *Thieving Three-Fingered Jack*, 90.

a pre-colonial, pre-slavery identity, which is under threat of being overshadowed by the notoriety gained by the moniker Three-Fingered Jack.

In the cave scene with the obeah woman, Karfa makes explicit his motivations: "Years have elapsed since I sacrificed the wife of the white man, a victim to the memory of my beloved Olinda, whom they tore lifeless from these arms as they dragged me from my native land; can I forget? Never."[51] Karfa is a product of the slave trade, its victim, and it is slavery that has made him into a rebel. His revenge is an act of desperation, and his grief positions him as one who is wronged, even as he is construed as a villainous outlaw. His villainy is accentuated by the benevolence exemplified by Rosa's father, the Caribbean planter Ormond. The obi woman, on the other hand, who has no backstory, is presented as unequivocally malevolent. Murray's melodrama locates the worse stereotypes about African culture in her character, from the ineffectual magic words she utters, to her malicious intent, and the savagery of the charms she presents to the robbers. Karfa is dismissive of her, calling her incantations "mummery." He puts his trust in his dagger more than in the power of his obi. Upon being reprimanded by her for his irreverence of obeah, Karfa responds: "Thy power is in the fear of thy votaries – and fear I know not."[52] As Botkin notes, the obi woman functions "as an obsolete symbol of African culture and resistance in the Caribbean."[53] While in Fawcett's drama, the illegitimate theatrics deployed in the onstage representation of obeah offer an alternative social order which is simultaneously contained by its pantomimical performance, in Murray's melodrama, the alien culture of obeah is rendered obsolescent and Jack's dismissal of it further conditions spectatorial sympathy for him on account of his heart-wrenching domestic backstory.

---

[51] Murray, "Obi; or, Three-Fingered Jack."

[52] Ibid.

[53] Botkin, *Thieving Three-Fingered Jack*, 98.

In Fawcett's pantomime, the claustrophobic cave scene transitions into the expansive outdoors, depicting Mount Lebanus with a view of the sea, followed by scenes at Montego Bay, before the grand ending of the first act with the Jonkanoo performance and the christening of Quashee. The second act begins with a scene in Quashee's hut, highlighting, once again, domestic tranquillity. The scene shifts to Mount Lebanus when the search for Jack begins, taking the spectators through subterranean passages before finally arriving inside Jack's cave. The climax retraces the path from the cave, through the subterranean passages, and culminates in the last combat scene amidst the mountains. The final scene takes place in a tent in the open country where the grand march and procession occurs.

The significance of this shifting physical geography is that it maps onto a moral ideological geography that defines the space of the sugar plantation as civilized, well-lit, ordered, and where work (slave labour) regulates routine signified by props like the practicable wheel and the sugarhouses; whereas, the dark, uneven terrain beyond it, is characterized as savage, wild, and threatening, resorting to the gothic apparatus involving cliffs, caves and an ominous atmosphere of mystery, magic, and the unnatural, as shown in the depiction of Jack's cave dwelling in the Sylvester Harrison/Edward Orme engraving (Figure 3).[54] This scene, according to Hoskins, is a moment of "transracial desire" (10).[55] It features Miss De Camp as Rosa and Charles Kemble as a blacked-up Jack.

What is most important about the image is the contradictory significations that it visually transmutes. Jack, in his white tunic is presented in the image of an eroticized Greek hero, while the cave in which he rests is redolent with Gothic aesthetics such as the dark lighting, the ominous atmosphere, and the skeletons of reptiles hanging on the cave

---

[54] The visual details of the engraving match quite accurately the description of the scene given by one reviewer in the *Weekly Museum,* May 1801.

[55] Hoskins, "Savage Boundaries: Reading Samuel Arnold's Score". Paragraph number given in parenthesis.



Figure 3: The Harrison Watercolour/ Orme engraving depicting the scene in Jack's cave. Courtesy of the Harvard Theatre Collection

wall, which evoke the same associations of African savagery and primitiveness as did the obi woman's cave. In stark contrast to the blacked-up Kemble, Rosa, wearing a blouse that accentuates her femininity, is figured playing a lyre. The drama of the scene is effectively evoked by Rosa's expression and movement, while Jack lounges in his chair, in a pose of rest. The obeah horn is prominently visible, a nod to the central mystical or magical trope that features in the title.

Fawcett's *Obi*, as a pantomimical performance representing a mute blackfaced rebel, disrupted conventions of absolute villainy because its "lack" of dialogue, as Cox points out, permits "a response to certain scenes not restricted by authorial pronouncements" (8).[56] Murray's melodramatic adaptation of *Obi*, on the other hand, challenged racial stereotypes through its own illegitimate tactic of providing space for the creative intervention of Ira

[56] Cox, "Theatrical Forms, Ideological Conflicts, and the Staging of Obi".

Aldridge, London's first black actor. For Botkin, "Fawcett's *Obi* permutated and transformed from a silent blackface spectacle to a liberatory bid for racial equality and legal representation."[57] What makes Aldridge's Three-Fingered Jack truly monstrous is that he eludes the categories of classification. As Botkin points out:

> [Jack] has been called Bristol, Karfa, Mansong, *Obi*, and Jack; his story is a cultural product at once of Britain, the United States, and Jamaica, but he is a citizen of nowhere. He exceeds Western systems of categorization, permitting him to occupy several at once: criminal and victim, hero and villain, brutal and brutalized. Though dismembered and dispossessed, he embodies countless possibilities for signification eluding colonial efforts to emasculate or erase him.[58]

In this manner, the illegitimacy of the hero mirrors, at once, the illegitimacy of the black actor as well as the dramatic form in which he finds space to articulate the ambiguity associated with racial melodramas. The ultimate illegitimate gesture of the black body is then to subvert or break down categories of classification that attempt to frame reality, bodies, spaces, characters, and people in accordance with a fabricated colonial racial order imposed by an imperial elite. In all the instances where such a moment or gesture occurs, the black body signals towards the properly illegitimate forms of illegitimacy. These illegitimate tactics expose are the ways in which colonies were intricately related to metropolitan sites where British political, economic, and cultural power was most manifest. As Elizabeth Dillon argues, "the colonial relation names the centrality of colonialism to metropolitan modernity and denominates the representational strategies that simultaneously conveyed and masked this fact."[59] Illegitimate tactics deployed in the figuration of the black body emblematizes the

---

[57] Botkin, *Thieving Three-Fingered Jack*, 70.

[58] Ibid., 8-9.

[59] Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, *New World Drama: The Performative Commons in the Atlantic World, 1649-1849* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 31.

resistance to such entwinement by defying the imposed order, and, in turn, gesturing towards the possibility of an alternative order.

In terms of structure, the first and last scenes of both acts evoke the colonial space of order, familiarity, and domesticity, affirming the triumph of Christian providence and monarchical grace that sanctifies the imperial project of control and management over such spaces. These scenes are contrasted with the central scenes in both acts which depict caves, subterranean passages, and mountains. Clearly, two different representational codes are at work here: the sentimental and the gothic. The juxtaposition of these two codes is evident in the manner in which the two different categories of black bodies (the grateful slave and the rebel slave) are depicted.

The stage directions for the scenes in Montego Bay show how Quashee and Sam, the grateful slaves, are portrayed in contrast to Jack, the rebel slave. The Governor issues a Proclamation against Jack, rewarding the slave who captures him freedom for his family. The other slaves merely look at the Proclamation, shake their heads, and move on.

> At length Quashee and Sam come and look at it on opposite sides – seem as if animated by the same feeling – point particularly to the word "Freedom," then to their Wives and Children. They each take up a little Black Child, and kiss it very affectionately, and swear to perform the great task.[60]

This scene offers the viewers a glimpse into the grateful slaves' desire for freedom for their families, and what they are willing to sacrifice for it. It ennobles Quashee and Sam, distinguishing them not just from the rebellious Jack but also from the other cowardly slaves, who scout away, unwilling to risk their lives. Quashee's and Sam's motivations are triggered by love for their families expressed in the poignant scene when they both take up a black child and kiss it affectionately.

---

[60] Cox, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 5: 211.

The incongruity between this scene and the cave scene suggests the irreconcilable differences between grateful slaves and rebel slaves, in which one is motivated by sacrifice, while the other is motivated by hatred and revenge. When Rosa pleads Jack for mercy in the 1830 version, Jack responds: "No more, no more! The vext spirits of my wife and child hover o'er me like a holy curse, and claim this due revenge" (Act 2.vi).[61] This dissonance between sacrifice and revenge was central to racial melodramas, made visible in the juxtaposition of different spaces in quick succession, which depicted celebratory colonial order, domestic tableaus featuring slave families, ominous gothic cave scenes that inspired terror and awe, and exotic subterranean passages and mountains that thrilled the audience. It is such "juxtaposition of parallel and contrasting scenes," which, according to Van Kooy (writing in the context of Sheridan's *Pizarro*), is representative of "melodramatic theatrics" that make the moral and ideological contradictions of empire "(in)visible."[62] While the sentimental depiction of the domestic scenes of slaves in the plantation render visible the colonial order as a benign expression of benevolent imperialism, the ominous, gothic cave, and mountain scenes challenge this sentimental naivety as a delusional attempt to make invisible the horrors of slavery which are unmasked by Jack when he claims his "due revenge."

The archetypal confrontation between Quashee and Jack, two black bodies invested with two different representational codes – sentimental and gothic – have come to define, in Peter Brooks' understanding, the moral polarity within melodrama in general.[63] In racial melodramas, however, this binary is blurred because the villain's villainy also appeals to the

---

[61] Murray, "Obi; or, Three-Fingered Jack. A Popular Melodrame, in Two Acts". [n.p].

[62] Van Kooy, "Darkness Visible: The Early Melodrama of British Imperialism and the Commodification of History in Sheridan's "Pizarro"," 186.

[63] For Brooks, melodrama is an "intense emotional and ethical drama based on the Manichaestic struggle of good and evil." Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 12.

spectator's sympathy in order to legitimise his actions against a social order – in this case, slave plantations – which were seen by the spectators as morally reprehensible. The reception of both the historical and theatrical Jack professed this moral ambiguity.

In the source text, Moseley's description of Jack betrays a degree of admiration for the daring antics of this "bravest, and strongest man in the world."[64] He notes that Jack "ascended above Spartacus."[65] Moseley's allusion to Spartacus, the Thracian slave and gladiator who led a slave rebellion against the Romans, relates to the prophetic comment made by Raynal in his *A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies* (first English translation appeared in 1776). Raynal invoked the arrival of "a chief, sufficiently courageous, to lead [the slaves] into vengeance and slaughter," which, for many, portended the rise of Toussaint L'Ouverture, the revolutionary leader of the slave rebellion in Haiti.[66] The first to make an explicit association between Toussaint and Three-Fingered Jack was Thomas Carlyle, in a chapter on "Laissez-Faire" in his 1840 essay on *Chartism*, while commenting on the purpose of "Society." For Carlyle, if society "exists for the protection of property," then there is a type of property, "my soul, breathed into me by God, my *Me* and what capability is there," that cannot be stolen by another, even if the body is subjected to a "life-rent."[67] Society cannot prevent the soul from fully expressing itself, and it is in this context that Carlyle invokes the example of Toussaint and Jack as if they embody a single soul:

---

[64] Moseley, *A Treatise on Sugar*, 178.

[65] Ibid., 174.

[66] Raynal, *A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies*, 5, 309.

[67] Thomas Carlyle, *Chartism* (London: James Fraser, 1840), 60.

> Society, it is understood, does not in any age, prevent a man from being what he *can be*. A sooty African *can* become Toussaint L'Ouverture, a murderous Three-fingered Jack, let the yellow West Indies say to it what they will.[68]

The interchangeability between Toussaint and Jack in Carlyle's example foregrounds both characters' heroic villainy. Carlyle's own ambiguous statement expresses admiration for what these figures made themselves to be against all odds, but also conveys fear of their "murderous" power. To understand the theatrical character of Jack as hero and as villain is to grasp the conflicted perception of a figure like Toussaint, who had a great cultural impact upon the British public.

The image of the rebel slave, as an enemy of the British in war, fed into the prevailing racial perceptions of the savage propensities of the African for the lust of blood. Newspapers like the *World* reported how the white victims were put to the "most unheard-of cruel tortures," pressing the victim between two boards, and then "sawing them into small pieces."[69] The years 1794-96 were not only marked by a shifting alliance (Toussaint joining the French revolutionaries against the British), but also the spread of the influence of "black Jacobinism" in the Caribbean colonies, which incited the Great Maroon Wars in Jamaica. As Raphael Hoerman points out, citing Leonora Sansay's *Secret History; or, The Horrors of St. Domingo* (1808), the Haitians were "cast as a cross between savages, cannibals, predators and Gothic vampiric 'monsters, thirsting for blood, and unsated with carnage.'"[70] During this time, Toussaint was demonized in the British press for his betrayal. But once Napoleon seized power, and the imminent threat of French invasion became an issue of graver concern,

---

[68] Ibid., 61.

[69] *World*, January 5, 1793.

[70] Raphael Hoermann, "'A Very Hell of Horrors'? The Haitian Revolution and the Early Transatlantic Haitian Gothic," *Slavery & Abolition* 37, no. 1 (2016): 185.

Toussaint was then hailed as an anti-Napoleon hero.[71] The radical press printed poems in favour of the slave revolt. *The Morning Chronicle*, which generally supported the impetus for slave revolt in St. Domingo as evidence in support for the abolition of slave trade, published an "Ode On the Insurrection of Slaves in St. Domingo," which explicitly voiced a call to arms ("Bathe thy sword in Christian blood") and rejoiced over the groans of the dying tyrants.[72]

By the time Fawcett's *Obi* was being performed at the Haymarket theatre, both images of Toussaint as a villain and a hero were in circulation.[73] This dual perspective on slave rebellion informed the representation of Three-Fingered Jack as a defender of his right to liberty, as well as an uncivilized wretch who instigates havoc and mischief disrupting the idyllic order of the plantation. Apart from Moseley, William Earle, a colonial resident of Jamaica, described Jack as "noble and great … for he stood alone a bold and daring defender of the Rights of Man."[74] At the end, Earle bemoans the death of Jack: "Thus died as great a man as ever graced the annals of history, basely murdered by the hirelings of Government."[75]

This dual image of the historical Jack was incorporated into the dramatic performance on stage. Thomas Dutton, a contemporary reviewer, writing in the *Dramatic Censor*, saw this

---

[71] Jenna M. Gibbs, "Performing the Temple of Liberty: Slavery, Rights, and Revolution in Transatlantic Theatricality (1760s-1830s)" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2008), 331.

[72] "Ode on the Insurrection of the Slaves at St. Domingo," *The Morning Chronicle*, 7 January 1796; The poem, though originally written in 1792, was reprinted in the *Courier* in 1797. See Anon., "Ode: The Insurrection of the Slaves at St. Domingo," in *The Spirit of the Public Journals for 1797* (London: Printed for James Ridgway, 1802).

[73] Cox, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 5: xxiii.

[74] William Earle, *Obi; or, the History of Three-Fingered Jack in a Series of Letters from a Resident in Jamaica to His Friend in England* (London: printed for Earle and Hemet, 1800), 4.

[75] Ibid., 231.

duality as presenting an uneasy moral dilemma: "It was evidently the author's intention to depict Jack as a savage ferocious monster; instead of which, he is the best fellow in the whole group, and actually falls victim of his own humanity."[76] While the *London Chronicler* described the character of Jack as a "ruffian" who committed "numberless outrages against persons and property," the *Star* described him as "a Negro remarkable for his strength, intrepidity, [and] cunning."[77]

In terms of dramatic genealogy, the character of Jack is situated between the early Gothic villain-hero and the later more romantically rebellious Byronic hero. The pre-Byronic Gothic villains such as Osmond (*The Castle Spectre*, 1797) and Ambrosio (*The Monk*, 1796) were rebels against society, and sometimes even against God. The earlier form of absolute villainy of the early Gothic drama transformed into the more ambiguous villain-hero, best exemplified in two character-types that became popular on the London stage: the noble outlaw and the Faustian overreacher. Schiller's Karl Moor in *The Robbers* (1796) popularised the figure of the noble outlaw, a hybrid figure "born of a merging of the popular ballad outlaw with the Gothic Villain," bearing the characteristics of "Satan, and later of Prometheus."[78] The Faustian overreacher gained more prominence later in the Romantic period with Byron's *Manfred* (1817) and *Cain* (1821) combining sensibility and Satanism, individualism and magnanimity.

Several examples abound in the Gothic melodramatic repertoire, namely Matthew Gregory Lewis' *Adelmorn, the Outlaw* (Drury Lane, 1801), Robert Williams Elliston's *The Venetian Outlaw* (Drury Lane, 1805), Charles Robert Maturin's *Bertram* (Drury Lane, 1816),

---

[76] Thomas Dutton, *Dramatic Censor* III (1800): 27-28.

[77] Anon., *London Chronicler* 1-3 July 1800.; *The Star* 7 July 1800.

[78] Peter Larsen Thorslev, *The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962), 67.

and James Robinson Planché's *The Brigand* (Drury Lane, 1829). The popularity of such explicit depiction of heroic banditry invited condemnation from several conservative critics of the Anti-Jacobin persuasion, who chastised the principle of "the natural and eternal warfare of the POOR and the RICH" that was being "devoutly entertained" and "sedulously disseminated" by such drama.[79] Coleridge's critique of Maturin's *Bertram* (Drury Lane, 1816) in the *Biographia Literaria* (1817), as Cox suggests, is "part of a reactionary cultural moment" after the fall of Napoleon that offered "a conservative reading of the French Revolution and the period's cultural revolutions as well."[80] It is part of a broader critique of illegitimate theatrical practices and its "bloated style," "figurative metaphysics," "loaded sensibility," "horrific incidents and mysterious villains," not to mention the "ruined castles, the dungeons, the trap-doors, the skeletons, [and] the flesh-and-blood ghosts."[81] In an attempt to redeem the British stage from "pernicious barbarisms and Kotzebuisms in morals and taste," Coleridge attacked Maturin's *Bertram* (1816) for being a "modern jacobinical drama" whose popularity "consists in the confusion and subversion of the natural order of things in their causes and effects" both on stage and in moral outlook by representing

> qualities of liberality, refined feeling, and a nice sense of honour … in persons and in classes where experience teaches us least to expect them; and, by rewarding with all the sympathies which are due to virtue, those criminals whom law, reason, and religion have excommunicated from our esteem.[82]

The duality that composes the Gothic villain-hero is, according to Coleridge, a product of a philosophy of "materialism, with the utter rejection of moral responsibility," a Godless materialism characteristic of a character like Don Juan, whose "gifts and desirable qualities"

---

[79] George Canning et al., *Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin* (London: Printed for J. Wright, 1801), 8.

[80] Jeffrey N. Cox, *Seven Gothic Dramas, 1789-1825* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992), 60.

[81] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. 2 (London1817), 258-59.

[82] Ibid., 255, 271-72.

co-exist "with entire wickedness in one and the same person."[83] The awe inspired by titanic individuals like Napoleon during the decades of the revolutionary war fuelled the double logic of chastisement and sympathy for subversive figures like the noble outlaw. Writing in the post-Napoleonic era, Coleridge deplored the fact that the "shocking spirit of Jacobinism seemed no longer confined to politics" and was being disseminated through "clumsy copies of … showy instrumental qualities" that "reconcile us to vice and want of principle."[84]

Both these character-types – the noble outlaw and the Faustian figure – are marked by satanic hubris that privilege individual liberty over societal norms, but what distinguishes them from absolute villainy of a Gothic villain like Osmond is the fact that there is a sense of sympathy evoked in the spectators for their justified rebellion, or at least for the characters themselves, because the plot acknowledges the cause of the villain-hero's displacement from society as morally illegitimate. Either the villain-hero was wrongly ousted from his legitimate claim to his inheritance, or he becomes a leader of a banditti in order to resist a corrupt regime. It is immediately obvious how Three-Fingered Jack is modelled on both of these character-types: he is presented as a leader of a banditti, a heroic outlaw, that stands far above Orford, the potential hero of the pantomime, who, by contrast, appears as a pathetic figure; like Faust, Jack is also the wielder of a mysterious supernatural power, his *obi*, which seals his pact with the devil (the obi woman). Moreover, Jack's rebellion against the social order has a strong, moral legitimacy as he fights for individual liberty against forces of oppression that wish to enslave him. What distinguishes Jack from these other rebel characters is his race. Jack's black body pits him against characters like Karl Moor and Faust because these characters embody the ideal of individual liberty against communal conformism, whereas Jack, insofar as he is an escaped slave, does not even embody individualism. His revolt is not

[83] Ibid., 263.

[84] Ibid., 285, 271.

so much for individual liberation within society as he stands outside the social institution of slavery, a society in which his black body is figured as a nonperson, devoid of individuality. It is this difference in characterisation that makes Jack sentimentally unreconcilable in the denouement of the play; he must be extirpated. Jack cannot be given a tragic end that recognises his grandiosity; rather the converse is the case, a grand tableau that establishes the grandiosity of the establishment in which Jack's black body is cut up and reduced to less than a whole, that is, less than an individual, thus reaffirming its true status as enslaved property in which the ideal of liberty has no place.

It is in this regard that a sympathetic spectator, inspired by Charles Kemble's performance in the role Jack, penned an abolitionist poem published in the *Monthly Mirror* on 24th July 1800, chastising the viewer's hypocrisy at sympathizing with Jack's predicament, yet being indifferent to the oppression of real slaves:

> My soul in its anguish, thus crying, -
> "Yes Britons that weep at this scene,
> "Ah! Why are ye steady denying,
> "A sigh, where these sorrows have been?
> "Ye weep o'er the mock'ry of grieving,
> "And mourn what the actor but feigns,
> "Yet refuse to the negro, relieving,
> "And repay with oppression, his pains![85]

Despite his villainous actions, and being a leader of a gang of outlaws, it seems the spectators were quite moved by Charles Kemble's performance. Sympathy for the character seems to be common enough for a member of the general public to write a poem chastising such sympathetic investment in a "mock'ry of grieving… what the actor but feigns" while being indifferent to the real sufferings of the slaves. Featuring the "heroic personage" of Charles Kemble, who according to the *Monthly Mirror* had the "serene dignity of a Greek sculpture,"

[85] Azuria, "Stanzas, Written on Seeing Mr. C. Kemble in the Pantomime of Obi," in *The Monthly Mirror: Reflecting Men and Manners* (London: J. Wright, July 1800), 45.

undoubtedly eased the effort to garner sympathy from the audience.[86] Significantly, it was also Jack's muteness which, according to Botkin, further "ambiguates his character" as his unexplained motives "opens up manifold possibilities for interpretation."[87] This ambiguity is a direct consequence of illegitimate theatrical elements such as music and mixed generic strategies which break down established and expected spectatorial reactions to otherwise formulaic theatrical gestures.

Jack's haunting presence throughout the drama is a reminder of the perpetual violence inherent in maintaining colonial order, which is marked by the triumphant finale in which his decapitated head and three-fingered hand is presented as the centre-piece around which the celebratory colonial procession assembles:

> As the procession comes down in the centre of the stage, they divide in the front; and march up R. and L. wings, range themselves up the sides in the order they came on, so as to admit the truck on which Tuckey, Quashee, and Sam are brought on to be placed in the centre of the stage – in front of which is placed Jack's head and hand. (Act 2.viii)[88]

In the end, just before the curtain falls and a resounding "God save the King" ends the drama, the Overseer asserts the ultimate imperial fantasy of the legitimacy of British law across the globe: "Here we see villainy brought by law to short duration – / And may all traitors fall by British Proclamation."[89] This ritualistic procession at the end of Act two was the visual avowal of Moseley's final statement asserting the significance of the "transatlantic operation" that "makes the industrious world one great family."[90] However, the visual juxtaposition of

---

[86] Quoted in Robert H. B. Hoskins and Eileen Southern, "Introduction," in *Obi, or, Three-Finger'd Jack* (London: Stainer & Bell, 1996), xxvi.

[87] Botkin, *Thieving Three-Fingered Jack*, 72.

[88] Cox, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 5: 219.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Moseley, *A Treatise on Sugar*, 191.

scenes, which present Jack as a heroic, courageous, and daring rebel, provided an opportunity for critical insight into Britain's colonial enterprise in the West Indies, which was tainted by its morally repugnant association with slavery. Apart from Thomas Dutton, another reviewer, writing for the *Monthly Magazine*, commented on Charles Kemble's performance:

> *Obi* is a hero under unfortunate circumstances; and would have interested us deeply, notwithstanding the vices of his situation, if all his soul had been developed. Mr. Charles Kemble has done much more towards this than the contriver of the fable; by the grandeur of his actions, he displays infinitely much more fury and other wild passions of the slave's breast, than is to be found in the deeds themselves performed by the unfortunate man. … He gives us a beautiful and noble picture, although for want of scope he could not a perfect one, of the character and fortunes of the wretched fugitive.[91]

The "wretched fugitive" that displayed "fury and other wild passions of the slave's breast" was nonetheless a "hero" who withstood in all the "grandeur of his actions" the "unfortunate circumstances" of slavery. Matthew Buckley notes that even as melodrama's "moral structure appears to offer a consoling vision," which in the case of *Obi* would be the patriotic sentiments evoked by spectacles celebrating British imperialism, "its affective structure fosters instead quite the opposite perspective … strengthening and legitimating feelings of alienation and victimization," which punctures the consoling moral structure by evoking sympathy for the rebel slave and his praiseworthy audacity to resist such might.[92] This, Buckley points out, effectively substitutes "the passive consumption of sensational fantasy for the more complex and demanding performance of collective identification and communal action and identity."[93]

A similar treatment of black rebellion is offered in John Cartwright Cross's two-part pantomime, *King Caesar* (1801), which is based, like Fawcett's *Obi*, on a historical figure,

---

[91] Anon., "Theatric Retrospect," *Monthly Magazine, or, British Register* September 1800, 169.

[92] Ibid., 187-88.

[93] Ibid.

the St. Dominican rebel slave, Mackandal, who led a rebellion in the 1760s. In the first part of the pantomime, Mackandal is the hero who kills the evil Overseer for scheming to separate him from his beloved Ada. In the second part, after assuming the leadership of a banditti and naming himself Caesar, he is criminalized as a villain, corrupted by power and vengeance:

> Abandon'd by all, what's the world now to me?
> The sun-beams but torture and lights to disgrace:
> Oh, Vengeance! – and outcast consign'd is to thee
> Vowing hatred and death to the whole human race![94]

After bouts of jealousy, paranoia, and sheer madness, Caesar goes about poisoning and threatening all characters that he was sympathetically attached to, including Ada, his beloved, and Samba, his love-interest. He is finally brought to justice by his fellow slave and friend, Zami, who is Cross's counterpart for Fawcett's Quashee, the grateful slave. Zami succeeds in killing Caesar and is reunited with his beloved, Samba. This conjugal union of Zami and Samba is accompanied by general rejoicing within the colony, for Zami has used his reward, granted by the Governor, to free all the slaves. The general restoration of order and the granting of liberty to the slaves in the colony are the two fantasy resolutions, which are conjoined in the climactic celebration conditioned by the killing of the rebel slave.

In contrast to *King Caesar*, Cross's *Rinaldo Rinaldini* (Royal Circus, 1809) portrays another historical rebel leader, this time a white character, who suffers quite a different fate than Mackandal, or even Jack for that matter. The Italian Rinaldo Rinaldini, who fought against the French, is figured as a noble robber and leader of a banditti in the model of Schiller's Karl Moor. At the end of the play, Rinaldo is pardoned by the Duke of Tuscany, and is reunited in matrimony with his beloved (Part 2.vi).[95] The real Rinaldo preferred suicide. No such possibility, however, was conceived for Caesar. It seems that when it comes

---

[94] J. C. Cross, *King Cæsar; or, the Negro Slaves* (London: Printed by T. Burton, 1801), 17.

[95] *Rinaldo Rinaldini* (London: Lackington, Allen, and Co., 1809), 152.

to colonial slavery, Cross was unable to envisage a justified revolt against the colonial master. The noble Mackandal of the first part of the pantomime had to be criminalized and turned into a ruthless villain (much like Jack) the moment he became a bandit in the second part.

Admired for their courage and rebellious stance, the rebel slave characters had dramatic appeal but only as reified, exotic commodities displayed and visually consumed on stage. While on the one hand, the spectators' cathartic celebration of the rebels' expulsion entrenches their identification with British imperial ideology, which arouses collective feelings of patriotism as subjects of the British Empire, on the other hand, the visuals, the music, and the gestures that depict the colonial social order of a slave colony exposed the seedy underbelly of British imperial ventures that were otherwise believed to be spreading virtue, Christianity, and liberty to far off places. In this manner, melodramatic theatrics, which involved mixed generic codes and sympathetic performances, complicated the categorization of these plays as depicting the theatre of (colonial) order.

Melodramatization of the Vengeful Moor in the Nineteenth Century

In focusing on a character like Three-Fingered Jack, one recognizes that the rebel slave is a permutation within a tradition of rebellious black characters from older plays that are rejuvenated in contemporary performances of black rebellion. The vengeful Moor, the villain in popular revenge tragedies, is, perhaps, the first dominant category of black rebels, of which the most representative example is Zanga, a character with phenomenal performative longevity. The long performance history of Edward Young's *The Revenge*, first staged on 18th April 1721 at Drury Lane, makes it a significant cultural document, which

allows one to trace the varying, often contradictory, perceptions of race well into the nineteenth century.[96]

The Moor's changing social and ideological function throughout the Restoration and Georgian period shows how analogous motifs are called upon even in the Romantic period in Moorish characters like Alhadra in Coleridge's *Osorio* (1797) and *Remorse* (Drury Lane, 1813). Zanga thus serves as a critical link between the Elizabethan vengeful Moor (Aleazar in Thomas Dekker's *Lust's Dominion*, 1657), the sentimental noble savage (Oroonoko), and the melodramatic rebel slave (Three-Fingered Jack, and Hassan in Mathew Lewis's *The Castle Spectre*, Drury Lane, 1797). The most obvious distinction is that the later melodramatic rebel slaves are usually situated in a West Indian plantation setting, resisting New World slavery, vowing revenge against colonial masters; the Elizabethan vengeful Moor, on the other hand, is situated in a Mediterranean context as a victim (and sometimes as a perpetrator) of Old World slavery, vowing revenge against the Iberian imperial states (usually Spain).

The vengeful Moor, an economically non-productive slave character (Old World slavery) in revenge tragedies, had to resolve a specific narrative problem of how to end an otherwise endless cycle of revenge in a world of feudal rivalries that continued across generations. René Girard observes that revenge "professes to be an act of reprisal, and every reprisal calls for another reprisal" and thus it is "an interminable, infinitely repetitive process" that threatens to involve the whole social body.[97] For Girard, a play like Shakespeare's *Hamlet* dramatizes the continuing cycles of violence that result from the revenge code, but also expresses the prime character's revulsion towards these feudal ethics.

---

[96] *The London Stage, 1660-1800. Part 2: 1700-1729*, 624. As documented in the play listings in *The London Stage*, it was performed over ninety times in various London theatres between 1721 and 1800. See Ben Ross Schneider, *Index to the London Stage, 1600-1800*, ed. William Van Lennep, et al. (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979), 936.

[97] René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 14-15.

Revenge was, thus, sublimated into a narrative about Hamlet's anxious claim over sovereignty, which was threatened by an illegitimate usurper.[98] The narrative closure thus offered in later revenge tragedies was the legitimate removal of the usurper. Schiller popularized this solution in *The Robbers* (1781; English translation in 1792) featuring a noble outlaw as a legitimate figure of resistance against an illegitimate social order, a plot, which, according to Terence Hoagwood "became paradigmatic in the drama of the period."[99] Karl Moor becomes an egalitarian bandit, but, as John Kerrigan notes, what is neglected in an analysis that foregrounds his revolutionary rage is the motive of revenge that drives his egalitarianism.[100] Karl Moor proudly declares: "Tell them, my object is retaliation, my aim, revenge" (Act 2.xvi).[101] Revenge, argues Kerrigan, "creates violent equality, correcting A's oppression of B by striking back and levelling the odds," a form of "vengeful equivalence."[102] Revenge drama thus became a particularly apt form during the turbulence of revolutionary France, which "had from the outset a theatrical dimension, and the dynamics which drove events were often interpreted as vengeful."[103] Perhaps it is no coincidence that Schiller named his German hero "Moor." In contrast to the vengeful Moor, however, the rebel slave is an unwilling, economically productive slave character (New World slavery) in

---

[98] "Hamlet's Dull Revenge," *Stanford Literature Review* 1, no. 1 (1984): 172-73.

[99] Terence Hoagwood, "Prolegomenon for a Theory of Romantic Drama," *The Wordsworth Circle* 23, no. 2 (1992): 54.

[100] John Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy: Æschylus to Armageddon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 247.

[101] Friedrich Schiller, *The Robbers: A Tragedy*, trans. William Render (London: Printed by C. Whittingham, 1799), 89.

[102] Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy*, 249.

[103] Ibid., 244.

racial melodramas, which had to resolve the narrative problem of sympathetic rebellion against a "legitimate" imperial social order, even one as morally repugnant as a slave colony.

During the Restoration period, as historians of slavery attest, both Old and New World forms of slavery coexisted.[104] In Chapter One, I argued that Oroonoko's pre-racialised noble body made him more of a Moorish character, like Dryden's Almanzor, than a rebel slave character. Despite this distinction, Oroonoko's revenge against the slave order, motivated by love for his family, honour for his status, and the immorality of his circumstances, is still symbolically intelligible even in the later Romantic period. The point here is that although the motif of revenge performs distinct functions in different historical periods, the various motivations – whether fuelled by feudal rivalries (medieval romances), dishonour through usurpation (Hamlet, Karl Moor), or enslavement through trickery (Oroonoko) – only enrich the motivations of the melodramatic rebel slaves. One can say that the vengeful Moor of the Elizabethan period collapses into the vengeful slave of the Restoration period, which collapses into the rebel slave of the Romantic period, in which the previous ideological messages of the earlier social formations are still readable, even if decontextualized. This point can be illustrated through the performance history of Zanga.

Nineteenth-century melodramatic performances focused on immediately legible signs, identifiable emblems, visual cues, and gestural conventions to construct stereotypes in order to directly convey moral meaning to the audience.[105] In his examination of melodramatic acting, George Taylor writes that:

> Communicating to an audience the emotions of the moment was the essence of melodrama. Actors were not concerned with nuances of social behaviour,

---

[104] See Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, 31-93. Patterson, in his comparative overview of global slave institutions, also argues for the "extraordinary centrality of the Mediterranean" which has "consistently played a critical role in slave-trading systems." Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 170-71.

[105] Michael Booth, "The Acting of Melodrama," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (1964): 37-41.

> nor with the subtleties of unconscious motivation. Their virtuosity was to play each moment to the full, identifying the character by the emotions they felt in that moment.[106]

This focus on emotions and expressions necessarily brought the body to the fore, for the body was the prime instrument for conveying emotions. Aaron Hill's statement on the significance of the body is typical of the numerous treatises on acting in the period: "The muscles of the body… must, in their natural, and not to be avoided, consequence, by impelling or retarding the flow of the animal spirits, transmit their own conceived sensation to the sound of the voice, and disposition of the gesture."[107] Hill's use of organic and mechanical terms to understand the functioning of bodily emotion is central to the melodramatization of the theatrical body.

In his study on the science of acting, Joseph Roach examines the "conceptions of the human body drawn from physiology and psychology [which] have dominated theories of acting from antiquity to the present."[108] In the period of emergence of melodrama, Roach notes the confluence of theories of biological vitalism and mechanism in the philosophical and scientific discourse.[109] For Roach, Diderot's *Paradoxe sur le comédien* (originally published posthumously in 1830) was a culmination of this perspective, at the root of which was the question:

> Is the actor's bodily instrument to be interpreted as a spontaneously vital organism whose innate powers of feeling must somehow naturally predominate? Or is it best understood as a biological machine structured by

---

[106] George Taylor, "Melodramatic Acting," in *The Cambridge Companion to English Melodrama*, ed. Carolyn Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 119.

[107] Aaron Hill, *The Art of Acting* (London: Printed by J. Smeeton, 1801), 7-8.

[108] Joseph R. Roach, *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 11.

[109] See Chapter Five: "Second Nature: Mechanism and Organicism from Goethe to Lewes" in ibid., 160-94.

> and reducible to so many physical and chemical processes, whose receptivity to reflex conditioning determines its behaviour?[110]

The point here is that the body was not just of theatrical interest, but also of scientific interest, especially in the fields of anatomy, physiognomy, and phrenology. I will explore the influence of scientific theories of race and physiognomy on dramatic representation and performance in greater detail in the next chapter, where I look at the performance of the racial type. For now, what I want to emphasise is that two distinct historical processes – the theatrical melodramatization of the acting body and the scientific racialisation of the black body – come together in early nineteenth-century racial representations. When a pre-melodramatic character like Zanga becomes melodramatized, the character's body also becomes racialised such that its blackness becomes a representational problem.

Tracing the sources of influence for Young's play, David Baker writes in the *Biographia Dramatica* (1812):

> The design of [*The Revenge*] seems to have been borrowed partly from Shakespeare's *Othello*, and partly from Mrs. Behn's *Abdelazer*; the plot savouring greatly of the former, and the principal character, viz., Zanga, bearing a considerable resemblance to the latter. … [Young], in some respects, greatly improved on both. If we compare the Iago in one with the Zanga in the other tragedy, we shall find the motives of resentment greatly different, and those in the latter more justly as well as more nobly founded than in the former.[111]

As Behn's *Abdelazer* (1676) was itself an adaptation of Dekker's *Lust's Dominion* (1657), Zanga is thus related to both, the tradition that established the stereotype of the vengeful Moor and its counter in Shakespeare's *Othello*. The character is a curious hybrid of the absolute villainy of Dekker's Aleazar (and Aaron from Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, 1594) and the nobility of Othello. Although Baker specifically identifies Zanga as a black

---

[110] Ibid., 161.

[111] David Erskine Baker, *Biographia Dramatica*, 3 vols. (London: Printed for Longman et al., 1812), 3: 202.

Iago, he adds that in doing so, Young greatly improved Shakespeare's characterization by giving motives for Zanga's resentment that are more just and noble than Iago's, and so more conducive to sympathy. He is also more repentant for his actions by the end of the play. In other words, Zanga has the nobility of a tragic character, yet his actions betray a malicious, Machiavellian villainy, worthy of the most stereotypical evil Moors. So, although Young was reworking the colour dichotomy in Shakespeare's *Othello*, reinstating the black character as villain, in place of Iago, he was also re-inscribing nobility and tragic pathos onto his character by giving him a moral justification for revenge.

It is no surprise that in reviews and comments on the play, it is the character of Zanga that attracts the most interesting remarks. Thomas Wilkes, in *A General View of the Stage* (1759), wrote that there is "a great deal of difference between the malice of a slave and the vengeance of a prince justly provoked; and while we abhor Iago, and view his fall with pleasure, we find something in the character of Zanga that commands our pity."[112] Similar sentiments were expressed in the preface to the 1792 printed edition of the play: "To give Treachery the strong provocation of Zanga, is to divide the mind between pity for his high wrongs, and abhorrence of the mode by which he avenges them."[113]

However, Zanga did have his detractors. An 1815 review in *The Stage* found this moral ambiguity intolerable:

> The character is an anomaly; there is no connection between the respect we are seduced to pay to Zanga, and the detestation that we ought to feel for his conduct; the principle of revenge might influence the noblest minds, but it could never sway them to such malignant and unworthy means. His language bespeaks a lofty mind, his conduct betrays the meanest spirit; but we lose his moral guilt in his poetical elevation.[114]

---

[112] Thomas Wilkes, *A General View of the Stage* (London: Printed for J. Coote, 1759), 127.

[113] Edward Young, *The Revenge* (London: Printed for the proprietors, under the direction of John Bell, 1792), iii.

[114] *The Stage*, (London: Printed by D. Deans, 1815), 2: 169-70.

In an 1814 review in the same periodical, the reviewer scorns the corruption of "sound morality and good manners" which "demand that this Play should either be greatly altered, or banished from the Stage."[115] For the reviewer, the main problem with the play is Zanga:

> [He] is described as brave, heroic, and noble, yet forgiveness is not in his nature. He is more contemptibly mean – more desperately wicked than Iago. He is made more an object of esteem and pity than Othello. … Why did not the author make him the victim of his own contrivances? Why did he not exemplify in the disappointment of Zanga, the sure punishment of an indiscriminate revenge? … He is a fiend that gains our respect by forcing our admiration, and he does this while the real nature of his actions qualifies him rather for the gibbet than for the honourable termination of his life.[116]

Unlike Baker, for whom Zanga was an improvement upon the character of Iago, this review shows that Zanga veered far from the drive for poetic justice and moral absolutism, qualities that came to define conventional melodrama with its formulaic villainy and heroism. Thomas Gilliland, in the *Dramatic Mirror*, reiterates that it is "dangerous to decorate villainy with heroic qualities" as it redirects "a great portion of our sympathy from the proper object."[117]

Many of the essential characteristics of the melodramatic rebel slave are present in elemental form in Zanga. For one, Zanga traces his lineage from the likes of Aleazar and Abdelazer, both of whom were evil, lustful Moors that were akin to devils in religious iconography.[118] In the first Act, Zanga compares himself to a venomous snake, a "dark adder" (Act 1.i), and later describes his corruption of Alonzo in words reminiscent of Satan's corruption of Eve: "Can I not rouse the snake that's in his bosom / To sting our human

---

[115] Ibid., 1: 33.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Thomas Gilliland, *The Dramatic Mirror*, 2 vols. (London: Printed for C. Chapple, 1808), 1: 629-30.

[118] Vaughan, *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500-1800*, 19-31.

nature, and effect it" (Act 4.i).[119] But he is also rendered noble, when he proudly exults over the despairing body of Alonzo:

> Thou seest a prince, whose father thou hast slain,
> Whose native country thou hast laid in blood,
> Whose sacred person (Oh!) thou hast profan'd,
> Whose reign extinguish'd – what was left to me,
> So highly born? No kingdom, but revenge;
> No treasure, but thy tortures and thy groans. (Act 5.ii)[120]

His nobility, however, is tainted by his malicious, dogged pursuit of revenge:

> Ye subtle deamons …
> Teach me to look a lie; give me your maze
> Of gloomy thought and intricate design
> To catch the man I hate, and then devour. (Act 2.i)[121]

But this absolute villainy is tempered with a justified motive for vengeance, as remarked by the sympathetic prologue:

> Yet may his mighty wrongs, his just disdain,
> His bleeding country, his lov'd father slain,
> His martial pride, your admiration raise,
> And crown him with involuntary praise.[122]

Zanga turns out to be a more complicated character, for he is neither absolutely degraded into a villain, nor is he elevated into a tragic hero. He flitters between absolute villainy and nobility, tortured by his conscience – "Whither, my Soul! Ah! Whither art thou sunk?" (Act 3.i)[123] – but ultimately repentant of his crimes – "Oh, vengeance, I have followed thee too far" (Act 5.ii).[124] Absolute villainy, tragic nobility, malicious but justified revenge, and

---

[119] Young, *The Revenge*, 8, 56.

[120] Ibid., 74.

[121] Ibid., 24-25.

[122] Ibid., v.

[123] Ibid., 45.

[124] Ibid., 77.

sentimental remorse are the four characteristics that define Zanga's complexity and distinguish him from the stereotypical evil Moor of the seventeenth century. These four characteristics are transformed in the process of melodramatization of the black body, altering the significance associated with villainy, nobility, revenge, and remorse in the performance of nineteenth-century rebel slave characters like Three-fingered Jack, Hassan, and Mackandal.

First performed by a minor actor, John Mills, the role of Zanga eventually became the preferred role for lead actors like Henry Mossop, John Philip Kemble, George Frederick Cooke, and Edmund Kean.[125] Henry Mossop debuted as Zanga at the Smock Alley theatre on 28 November 1749. According to Thomas Gilliland:

> This actor is said to have excelled most in characters of ire, ambition, and regal tyranny. He had a strong and harmonious voice, which could rise from the lowest note to the highest pitch of sound; and was, indeed, one of the most comprehensive ever heard.[126]

Along with Zanga, Aboan too became a staple of his theatrical career. It has to be noted that actors who performed the role of Aboan, Oroonoko's more fiery and vengeful lieutenant, performed Zanga more often than the actors who portrayed Oroonoko, with notable exceptions like Edmund Kean and a few others.[127] Performative interchangeability between the roles of Aboan and Zanga establishes a direct link between Aboan, the more resentful rebel slave, and Zanga, the vengeful Moor, both of whom figure as the prototypical model for

---

[125] In the Remarks to her edition of *The Revenge*, Elizabeth Inchbald wrote: "[T]he actor who performs Zanga must be its sole support. – This character is of such magnitude, and so unprotected by those which surround him, that few performers will undertake to represent him." Elizabeth Inchbald, *The British Theatre*, 25 vols., vol. 12 (London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1808), 4.

[126] Gilliland, *The Dramatic Mirror*, 2: 857.

[127] Vaughan, *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500-1800*, 157.

the rebel slave, displacing the more romantically-inclined sentimental noble savage, Oroonoko.

In a poem in *The Mirror* (1790), Mossop's acting was praised for his ability to perform passionate feelings with an air of nobility: "The Turbulent passions he nobly expressed / And stormed the fierce feelings which live in the breast."[128] Wilkes singled out Mossop's expression of "gloom" and "solemnity" with a "spirit of revenge" conveyed emphatically, yet gracefully, commending his poignant pauses "that expresses his feeling the gratification of his enmity, in the overthrow of his conqueror" in "a tone that is deep, and not too high."[129] However, it seems that Mossop did experiment with how he wanted to pitch the character of Zanga. Wilkes recalls one such performance:

> But methinks I saw him once throw a new light on the speaking of the last hemistic [sic]: he pronounced it in a tone fraught with malice, fully expressive of gratified revenge; he clenched both his fists, threw himself forward, and, with a ghastly grin, delivered it full in the teeth of the distressed Alonzo: in short, he divested himself of the noble deportment "Of a prince whom kings had followed and a people lov'd" and displaying nothing but the malice of an injured slave: but though I thought him wrong, the acting was fine, and gave me pleasure. … I am sure he ought, if he remembers that Zanga is a prince, whose person has been disgraced by a vile blow, who had no way of restoring himself to himself but by revenge; that revenge was to him a kingdom, and as such he meant to enjoy it; however, let him speak it as he will, his voice is well calculated to have a fine effect.[130]

Wilkes's comment on Mossop's two performative interpretations of Zanga elucidates the two antagonistic qualities that become prominent in later commentaries on the character. Zanga is a malicious slave gratified by personal revenge conveyed by the clenched fists and ghastly grin that associate him with absolute villainy, divested of "noble deportment"; but he is also a prince "whom kings had followed and a people lov'd," who has been disgraced by a vile

---

[128] Cited in Highfill, Burnim, and Langhans, *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers and Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800*, 10: 343.

[129] Wilkes, *A General View of the Stage*, 267-68.

[130] Ibid., 268-69.

blow that justifies his vengeance. These two characteristics – the noble deportment of a prince and the passionate wilfulness of a slave – came to define the difference in acting styles between John Philip Kemble and George Frederick Cooke.

Zanga was among John Philip Kemble's principal roles, along with Cato, Othello, Macbeth, Hamlet, Rolla, and, above all, Coriolanus.[131] It was a role he cherished, but also one contested by Cooke. William Dunlap offered an extended comparison between the two actors in his *Memoirs of George Frederick Cooke* (1813). While Kemble was physically suited with a "commanding stature" and "a fine, oval face" to convey nobility, refinement, grace, and dignity, and express "a man of superior mind and judgment," Cooke, with a more expressive countenance and prominent features ("fiery, dark, and … terribly expressive" eyes and a "hooked nose of uncommon breadth"), was able to deliver a more passionate, "natural" expression, even if "less picturesque" and dignified than Kemble's.[132] Commenting on Cooke's 1802 performance of Zanga, Dunlap writes:

> Here was a field for his talents, and they were displayed to advantage, except in those passages which require the towering dignity which Kemble possesses above all actors. In those scenes with Alonzo … and in all the passages of marked passion, Mr. Cooke must of course excel; but a mask of soot should never conceal those features on whose minute, as well as powerful workings, so much of the perfection of the representation depends.[133]

Observing the same performance, a critic noted, "We hope … Mr. Cooke will … endeavour in his action and carriage, after he has avowed his princely birth, to render it in the last act less correspondent to Zanga the servile slave, and adapt it better to Zanga the son of

---

[131] John Ambrose Williams, *Memoirs of John Philip Kemble, Esq.* (London: T. Holt, 1823), 80.

[132] William Dunlap, *Memoirs of George Fred. Cooke*, 2 vols. (London: Printed for Henry Colburn, 1813), 1: 119-21.

[133] Ibid., 1: 163-64.

Abdallah, the Moorish King."[134] Once again the criticism of the performance of Zanga revolves around the tricky balance between the dignity of a prince and the passionate malice of a slave.

Where Dunlap and the critic in the *Theatrical Review* witnessed a lack of regal dignity in Cooke's Zanga, Walter Scott, in a letter to Joanna Baillie (13 March 1813), saw too much of the dignified artifice in Kemble's performance in general:

> It is a pity [Kemble] shows too much of his machinery. … He is, I think, very great in those parts especially where character is tinged by some acquired and systematic habits, like those of the Stoic philosophy in Cato and Brutus, or of the misanthropy in Penruddock; but sudden turns and natural bursts of passion are not his forte. I saw him play Sir Giles Overreach (the Richard III, of middling life) last night; but he came not within a hundred miles of Cooke, whose terrible visage, and short, abrupt, and savage utterance, gave a reality almost to that extraordinary scene in which he boasts of his own successful villainy to a nobleman of worth and honour, of whose alliance he is ambitious. Cooke contrived somehow to impress upon the audience the idea of such a monster of enormity as had learned to pique himself even upon his atrocious character. But Kemble was too handsome, too plausible, and too smooth, to admit its being probable that he should be blind to the unfavourable impression which these extraordinary vaunts are likely to make on the person whom he is so anxious to conciliate.[135]

The terms Scott uses to distinguish Cooke and Kemble are loaded with political and racial significance: "natural bursts of passion," "terrible visage," "savage utterance," "monster of enormity." Kemble, in Scott's assessment, falls short precisely because he seems too noble for the part.

However, with Kemble now as the principal lead actor performing the role of Zanga since 1789, a new critical quality gains valency in theatrical criticism, elevating the vengeful Moor beyond base criminality and vulgar demonization. "There is always something *sublime*

---

[134] *Theatrical Review*, January 4, 1802. Cited in Gerald D. Parker, "The Moor's Progress: A Study of Edward Young's Tragedy, the Revenge," *Theatre Research International* 6, no. 3 (2009): n.59, p.195.

[135] J. G. Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott*, 4 vols. (Paris: A. and W. Galignani and Co., 1838), 2: 27.

in the sudden completion of great objects," writes Leigh Hunt, "and perhaps there is not a sublimer action on the stage than the stride of MR. KEMBLE as Zanga, over the body of his victim, and his majestic exultation of revenge."[136] The sublime quality of Kemble's performance is recognized by James Boaden, Kemble's biographer, in his comment on Zanga: "Dr. Young, though not a secure model for tragic writers … is nevertheless, in the character of Zanga, always *poetical*, *impassioned*, and sometimes even *sublime*."[137] His comments on the scene described by Hunt evoke the grandeur of Kemble's gestures, in which the actor "towered above himself" with "the vast explosion upon the words ''Twas I!' however answered by the applause of the audience."[138] But the dominance of Kemble and his style of acting, and with it, his interpretation of Zanga as a dignified prince, would be challenged by the arrival on stage of Edmund Kean.

Kean's Zanga was perhaps the most flamboyant embodiment of the character since Cooke, and also the most definitive for someone like William Hazlitt. Hazlitt's interpretation of the character situates Zanga amidst the slave rebels of his times. He describes Kean's "wild impetuosity of barbarous revenge" that reflected the "glowing energy of the untamed children of the sun."[139] Here was a man, he wrote, "stung with rage, and bursting with stifled passions."[140] His hurried motions are described as the "restlessness of the panther's."[141] What

---

[136] Leigh Hunt, *Critical Essays on the Performers of the London Theatres* (London: Printed by and for John Hunt, 1807), 7.

[137] James Boaden, *Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq.*, 2 vols. (London: Longman et al., 1825), 2: 305.

[138] Ibid., 1: 424.

[139] "A View of the English Stage" (1818) in William Hazlitt, *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P. P. Howe, 21 vols., vol. 5 (London: J. M. Dent, 1930), 227.

[140] Ibid.

[141] Ibid.

is of particular significance is that Hazlitt makes no reference to Zanga's princely nobility, and neither does he see in Kean's performance any lack of noble deportment that was erstwhile noted as a limitation in Cooke's passionate portrayal of Zanga. For Hazlitt, Kean's "wily caution, his cruel eyes, his quivering visage, his violent gestures, his hollow pauses, his abrupt transitions were all in character."[142] More than any critic before him, Hazlitt emphasizes the pantomimic quality in the performance of Zanga: "The whole character [of Zanga] is violent; the whole expression is in action."[143]

Hazlitt describes the oft-commented fifth act scene in which Zanga discloses himself and exults over the prostrate body of Alonzo as "terrific," "dreadful," and "perfectly beautiful" followed by "the finest instances of natural expression."[144] Kean's biographer, F. W. Hawkins, describes the same scene as follows:

> His eye lit up with a preternatural brilliance; the long-smothered hate blazed forth with fearful intensity. … The effect was appalling; the fiery soul flashed out with a look and gesture which imparted a corresponding dignity to the body; … and as Barry Cornwall contemplated the dark and exulting Moor standing over his victim with his flashing eyes and arms thrown upwards … he thought that he had never beheld anything so like the "Archangel ruined" He was recalling to mind the line descriptive of "sail-broad vans" of the great spirit of Milton when, by an extraordinary coincidence of idea, he heard Southey exclaim to a companion, "By God! He looks like the devil."[145]

What was earlier identified as the absolute Satanic villainy of Zanga, a premodern religious coding that supplemented the racial stereotype of the black Moor, takes on the connotation of heroic sublimity in the context of the Romantic appraisal of Milton's Satan. Cornwall's and

---

[142] Ibid., 227-28.

[143] Ibid., 228.

[144] Ibid.

[145] Frederick William Hawkins, *The Life of Edmund Kean*, 2 vols. (London 1869), 1: 302; See Vaughan, *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500-1800*, 159: "Kean's Zanga recalled Milton's Lucifer, suggesting that in his Zanga, the actor imbued the resentful Moor with the titanic passion of romanticism's Satanic hero."

Southey's exclamation that associates Kean's Zanga with Milton's Satan might be more perceptive than it seems, for it is well known that Thomas Young and James Quin (the first significant performer of the role) greatly admired the poet. John Hill commented that if Milton was the height of sublimity in language, then James Quin "arriv'd at an equal perfection in speaking the sublime," going so far as to say that "the very language of Milton seems contriv'd on purpose for the voice of Mr. Quin, and the voice of Mr. Quin, while he is speaking it, seems form'd on purpose for the language of Milton."[146] Hill mentions Quin's reading of Milton's *Paradise Lost* and his performance of *Comus* as examples of sublimity in delivery. Hill observes that even when there is "no pomp of language to support the player, no dignity but what is in the sentiment; yet we hardly see an instance on the stage in which the player is more the Monarch than Mr. Quin is in this; and 'tis evident that he gives, by his manner of delivering the words, a majesty to the speech, which none but a very judicious reader will find in the closet."[147] It is fair to infer that Quin, in his performance of Zanga, might have spoken the more dignified dialogues in a manner verging on the Miltonic sublime, a quality that is particularly emphasized in the more melodramatic performances of both Kemble and Kean, in spite of their contrasting acting styles.

While Zanga has been interpreted in the tradition of the evil Moor, I place the evil Moor as a precursor to the rebel slave.[148] However, the collapsing of the vengeful Moor into the rebel slave does not entail absolute subsumption of the former character into the latter. What the long performative history of Zanga illustrates is that when this pre-melodramatic character was performed after the emergence of melodrama, its performance was melodramatized by actors like Cooke and Kean. Since melodramatic techniques focus on

---

[146] Hill, *The Actor: A Treatise on the Art of Playing*, 99-100.

[147] Ibid., 104.

[148] Parker, "The Moor's Progress," 191.

bodily stereotypes, the process of melodramatization brought the body to the fore. In racial representations like Zanga, the melodramatization of a pre-melodramatic character coincided with the racialisation of the body of that character, even though both processes were not one and the same. They coincided in racial representations because, in their own way, both processes acted upon the body.

By the time Edmund Kean comes on stage as Zanga, his "well-known physical intensity, excitability, violent effects, restless and agitated movements in scenes of feeling, and expressive 'face-making,'" did not just re-present a pre-melodramatic character in a melodramatic mode, but also problematically racialised that character, such that the question of blacking up of Moors became a representational issue for the likes of Coleridge.[149] This process of melodramatization foregrounded the theatricalized body, and it is precisely when the theatricalized body becomes predominant that issues of race and character become a problem. In the character of Zanga, what we observe is at once the melodramatization as well as the racialization of the body of the character, from which arises a particular representational problem relating to the theatrical convention of blacking up: whether theatrical Moors and "Negro" slaves should be treated as equivalent racial representations, or not?

The "Wilful Confusion of Moor and Negro"

By the early nineteenth century, pre-melodramatic Moorish characters, like Zanga and Othello, get caught up in discourses pertaining to the politics of blacking up and representations of "Negroes," as they are now situated as racialised characters within the context of Caribbean New World slavery, as opposed to merely Mediterranean Old World slavery. The confusion between Moors and "Negro" slaves specifically highlights this

[149] Booth, "The Acting of Melodrama," 45.

representational problem as a historical one. In Mathew Lewis's *The Castle Spectre* (Drury Lane, 1797), the presence of four black characters that served as bandits and henchmen for the main villain, Earl Osmond, was considered by one critic to be quite jarring and offensive, especially since the narrative context did not necessitate their presence: "The assigning of negro slaves to a Baron of feudal times is the grossest outrage upon time and probability we have seen committed upon the stage."[150] The names of the black characters (Saib, Hassan) also suggest affinity with Moorish characters, even though the characters identify themselves as New World slaves:

> Hassan: I have been dragged from my native land, from a wife who was everything to me, to whom I was everything! … In that moment, when the last point of Africa faded from my view, when as I stood on the vessel's deck, I felt that all I loved was to me lost forever, in that bitter moment did I banish humanity from my breast. (Act 1.ii)[151]

Lewis gave his own justification for this anachronism: "I thought it would give a pleasing variety to the characters and dresses, if I made my servants black; and could I have produced the same effect by making my heroine blue, blue I should have made her."[152] However, a mere appeal to exoticism is not reason enough. The fact that many contemporary critics considered Hassan, the main black character in the play, as a literary descendent of Zanga shows that Lewis was tapping into subconscious cultural influences that complicate the contingency of such authorial decisions. This complication informs the representational problem concerning Othello's visage in the late eighteenth century.

Earlier actors, like James Quin, David Garrick, and Spranger Barry, had all enacted Othello in blackface, and the issue of the character's blackness did not quite perturb audiences. On 29th October 1787, however, a critic for the *Public Advertiser* inquired of

---

[150] *Bell's Weekly Messenger,* December 17, 1797.

[151] M. G. Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* (London: Printed for J. Bell, 1798), 12-13.

[152] Ibid., 101-02.

Kemble's performance whether it is "necessary the Moor should be as *black* as a native of Guiney?"[153] As the abolitionist movement was gaining steam during this period, it seems the association of Othello with blackness pitted the beauty and nobility of the Shakespearean Moor, against the reality of slavery. There was an increasing reluctance to imagine Othello in association with the oppressed slaves. Charles Lamb wrote of the unsuitability of *Othello* for stage performance:

> But upon the stage, when the imagination is no longer the ruling faculty, but we are left to our poor unassisted senses, I appeal to everyone that has seen Othello played, whether he did not, on the contrary, sink Othello's mind in his colour; whether he did not find something extremely revolting in the courtship and wedded caresses of Othello and Desdemona; and whether the actual sight of the thing did not overweigh all that beautiful compromise which we make in reading; and the reason it should do so is obvious, because there is just so much reality presented to our senses as to give a perception of disagreement, with not enough belief in the internal motives – all that which is unseen – to overpower and reconcile the first and obvious prejudices. What we see on stage is the body and bodily action; what we are conscious of in reading is almost exclusively the mind.[154]

The "so much reality presented to our senses" was the institution of slavery. A play like *Othello*, written before the full-scale English involvement in the Atlantic slave trade in the 1640s, was now posing a challenge to the everyday perceptions of spectators. Where Lamb found it difficult to imagine Othello, a noble Moor, performed in blackface and thus represented as a common slave, Hazlitt, arguing from similar racial presumptions, thought Zanga's villainy justified his enactment in blackface, even though he was a Moor: "The giving of the dark, treacherous, fierce, and remorseless character to the Moor, is an alteration [of Shakespeare's Othello], which is in more conformity to our prejudices, as well as to historical truth."[155] Zanga, according to Hazlitt, is a more realistic character because he

---

[153] *Public Advertiser*, 29th October 1787.

[154] Charles Lamb, *The Works of Charles Lamb*, vol. 2 (London: Printed for C. and J. Ollier, 1818), 27-28.

[155] Hazlitt, *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, 5, 227.

conforms not just to our prejudices, but also to the "historical truth" of New World slavery. Although both Lamb and Hazlitt claim "historical truth" in their different assessment of the necessity of blackface, it is clear that blacking up served a symbolic function to designate servile and villainous slave characters, rather than a nod to historical realism.

In his performance of Othello in 1814, Edmund Kean adorned a lighter tone to play the character, rather than the conventional burnt-cork black, establishing a standard that became conventional practice for the next two decades.[156] Based on Kean's performance, Leman Thomas Rede offered advice, in his manual for actors, that Othello should be performed in a "tawny tinge," a "Spanish brown," rather than the sable hue of the degraded slave-servant character Mungo, thus making a firm distinction between the colour of the noble Moor and the burnt-cork black used for African slave characters.[157] It is perhaps no coincidence that Kean's erasure of Othello's blackness comes a year after Coleridge's lectures on Shakespeare. As Gabriel Sealey-Morris argues, Coleridge's "attending preoccupation with Othello's racial origin … was part of a wide-spread anxiety regarding the character's complexion throughout the nineteenth century."[158]

Coleridge's discomfort concerning Othello's blackness comes across when he questions the textual evidence which justifies a "Negro Othello":

> Roderigo – turns off to Othello – & here comes one, if not the only justification of the Blackamoor Othello, namely as a Negro – who is not a *Moor* at all –. Even if we supposed this an uninterrupted Tradition of the Theatre, and that Shakespeare himself from want of scenes & the experience that nothing could be made too *marked* for the sense of his *Audience* – would this prove aught concerning his own intentions as a Poet for all ages? – Can we suppose him so utterly ignorant as to make a barbarous *Negro* plead Royal

---

[156] Joyce Green MacDonald, "Acting Black: "Othello," "Othello" Burlesques, and the Performance of Blackness," *Theatre Journal* 46, no. 2 (1994): 231-32.

[157] Leman Thomas Rede, *The Road to the Stage; or, the Performer's Preceptor* (London: J. Onwhyn, 1827), 34.

[158] Sealey Sealey-Morris, "Coleridge's Moors: Osorio, Remorse, and the Swarthy Shadow of Othello," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 35, no. 3 (2013): 297.

> Birth – Were Negros then known but as Slaves – on the contrary were not the Moors the Warriors?[159]

He stresses that it was merely Roderigo's rivalry with Othello that is sufficient to account of his "wilful confusion of Moor and Negro."[160] The *Bristol Gazette* reported the lectures delivered in 1813 stating that "Mr. C ridiculed the idea of making Othello a Negro, he was gallant Moor, of royal blood, combining a high sense of Spanish and Italian feeling."[161]

Coincident with the lectures, notes Sealey-Morris, was Coleridge's own depiction of Moors in his revised play, *Remorse*, which presents the Moorish character, Alhadra, with all the dignity of a revolutionary leader. Alhadra was Coleridge's attempt to correct the perception of noble Moors, which had been tainted, literally, with the blackness of the burnt-cork paste used for rebel slave characters. The Moors, in Coleridge's play, are not the villains; they are persecuted by the Spanish under the reign Philip II, at the height of the inquisition, and it is the reassertion of the Mediterranean Old World slavery context that grants political legitimacy and moral significance to Alhadra's rebellion as well as to Coleridge's assessment of Shakespeare's *Othello*.

What the representational problem of blacking up suggests is the theatrical adoption of the centuries-old superimposition of morality upon the colour gradient. If white signifies good and black signifies evil, then the drama of the period played with this simple dichotomy in their depiction of racial characters, sometimes affirming the ideological convention as in the case of Coleridge's and Lamb's denunciation of a "Negro Othello," but sometimes challenging it as well. With the proliferation of racialised characters (Moors, Indians, Blacks)

---

[159] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Vol. 12.4: Marginalia*, ed. George Whalley and H. J. Jackson, Bollingen Series (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 861.

[160] Ibid.

[161] Ibid., 861, n.3.

on the nineteenth-century London stage, there was a complication of the moral politics of complexion. Blackfaced characters could represent servility, but also the noble virtues of gratitude and sacrifice as exemplified in Gambia in Thomas Morton's *The Slave* (1816). After realizing that Gambia has sold himself into slavery only to liberate him from imprisonment, the young Englishman, Clifton, tearfully beseeches the audience:

> Oh, I were unworthy the name of man, did I suffer this generous sacrifice! And is that the being with whom the proud European denies fellowship? If we are not brothers, let the white man blush that he is alien to the blood that mantles in that noble breast. (Act 2.iii)[162]

Blushing, which was earlier considered a sign of virtue, is now understood as a sign of shame, and what was earlier understood as the black man's inability to blush as a sign of moral depravity was now seen as a sign of prelapsarian innocence.

Sometimes, the moral politics of complexion was asserted to distinguish evil black characters from virtuous black characters. In George Colman's *The Africans* (1808), the victimized virtuous Foulahs are "ten shades lighter" than the deep "black" Mandingoes that plunder the village for slaves. Torribal, Selico's elder brother, proudly declares: "We Foulahs are the prettiest of Negroes; for the same sun that dyes our neighbours black (Feloops, Mandingoes, Jaloops, and the rest) has dipt us Foulahs lighter by ten shades" (Act 1.i).[163] The colour gradient plays a significant role in Colman's plot, as Selico who tries to sell himself into slavery in order to save his mother from famine, is unsuccessful because the European traders, who were conditioned by the same racialist theories of complexion, judged Selico as a poor quality slave. As he was of "a lighter breed," they reckoned he would not be "so hardy as the black Negroes" (Act 2.iv).[164] The Englishman Mug, who found himself in a precarious

---

[162] Cox, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 5: 353.

[163] Ibid., 5: 228.

[164] Ibid., 5: 263.

position of being sold on the slave market, was considered of lowest monetary value as a slave. Farulho, his master, commented that whites were unsuitable for hard labour (Act 1.ii).[165] When Demba, the Mandingo chief, acquired Mug, he was given the administrative duties of a "secretary of state" rather than physical work as a labourer (Act 2.ii).[166] What the theatrical deployment of the moral politics of complexion suggests is the acknowledgement of the colour dichotomy, which can then be exploited in a number of ways, either by observing or flouting the convention. But of significance is that the theatrical convention of blacking up was just one such strategy of managing fantasies of rebellion, resistance, and sacrifice, whereby a wide range of racial assumptions were exploited to justify the servility, indolence, or vengefulness of a black character. But there were other strategies of containment.

Management of Fantasies in Racial Melodramas

The management of fantasies in racial melodramas involved the channelling of dangerous desires to reaffirm theatrical order and bring about narrative closure. Returning to Fawcett's *Obi*, the final scenes present the ultimate triumph of Christianity over the threatening, demonic powers of obeah. As per the stage directions, when Quashee reveals to Jack his conversion to Christianity, "a stunned Jack is daunted, and lets his gun fall."[167] This description is quite close to Moseley's account of the scene:

> Reeder [Quashee], instead of shooting Jack, replied, that his OBI had no power to hurt him; for he was christianed; and that his name was no longer Quashee. Jack knew Reeder; and, as if paralysed, he let his two guns remain on the ground, and took up on his cutlass.[168]

---

[165] Ibid., 5: 237.

[166] Ibid., 5: 251.

[167] Ibid., 5: 218.

[168] Moseley, *A Treatise on Sugar*, 177.

Alan Richardson reads Fawcett's pantomime as depicting black resistance in all its criminality, which needs to be purged of the threat of the "Terror of Jamaica" and the "Horror" symbolically exorcised by the power of Christianity.[169] However, Jeffrey Cox disagrees with Richardson, pushing forth a reading that accounts for the embedded dualities within the text, which figure Jack as both a hero and a villain, and Fawcett's representation of slave resistance as simultaneously justified and vilified.[170] I read this specifically melodramatic duality in terms of fantasies and the management of fantasies which puts into context the usual comments made on melodrama as representing subversive ideas within a conservative form.[171]

Norman Holland's revised Freudian model of the function of a work of art in *The Dynamics of Literary Response* posits the notion of literature as "a total economy of drive and management of drive," "a balance of fantasy and management of fantasy."[172] Fredric Jameson reinterprets Holland's model in social terms as a kind of "psychic compromise" in mass culture, which "strategically arouses fantasy content within careful symbolic containment structures which defuse it, gratifying intolerable, unrealizable, properly

---

[169] Alan Richardson, "Romantic Voodoo: Obeah and British Culture, 1797-1807," *Studies in Romanticism* 32, no. 1 (1993): 19.

[170] Cox, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 5: xxiii; Cox, "Theatrical Forms, Ideological Conflicts, and the Staging of Obi". Also see Gibbs, "Performing the Temple of Liberty," 338.

[171] See Dana Van Kooy and Jeffrey N. Cox, "Melodramatic Slaves," *Modern Drama* 55, no. 4 (2012): 462; Jeffrey N. Cox, "English Gothic Theatre," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 137; Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 133; Elaine Hadley, *Melodramatic Tactics: Theatricalized Dissent in the English Marketplace, 1800-1885* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 75.

[172] Norman N. Holland, *The Dynamics of Literary Response* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 313.

imperishable desires, only to the degree to which they can be laid to rest."[173] In a similar vein, Matthew Buckley's interpretation of melodrama as "an industrially-produced vehicle of emotional intoxication" offers a justification for the formation of the genre during the revolutionary war that was the "traumatized condition of melodrama's first audiences."[174] It was the specific historical context of the revolutionary crisis which was experienced as a trauma that determined melodrama's "particular [narrative] patterns, typical events, exemplary situations," and "archetypal characters" that were both "figural and exemplary" of the "real dislocations" and "specific sorts of disillusionment and loss."[175] Melodrama, in other words, refigured the traumatic history that it rehearsed on stage into a palliative for experiencing and coming to terms with the trauma in a carefully-managed controlled environment.[176] This explains "melodrama's conservative moral vision" in which narratives of trauma are framed within "closing fantasies of redemptive justice and restored community."[177]

Additionally, Buckley's main argument attempts to offer a coherent frame for understanding the development of melodrama from gothic, supernatural, exotic spectacular plots to more realistic, sentimentally-driven, domestic plots. He does so by arguing that even though the French Revolution "may have offered melodrama its basic structured template and predominating motifs," it is rather on account of its "artificial mechanism of inducing and relieving trauma that underpins the genre's effect and distinguishes it as a new theatrical

---

[173] Fredric Jameson, "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," *Social Text*, no. 1 (1979): 141.

[174] Buckley, "Refugee Theatre: Melodrama and Modernity's Loss," 180.

[175] Ibid.

[176] Ibid.

[177] Ibid.

art."[178] It is in this context that he understands "melodrama as a spectacular drug, the vehicle for a specific kind of emotional intoxication."[179] The transformations of the melodramatic form map onto the "epidemiological pattern of growth and expansion" that is expected of an "industrially-produced, commercially distributed intoxicant."[180] As consumers of melodrama "expected the economical and reliable production and reproduction of a specific state of feeling," there was a necessity "for a continued increase in sensational and emotional power" because, "like all intoxicants, melodrama loses force through repeated consumption and habituation."[181]

The methods dramatists adapted to increase audience stimulation changed in the first three decades of the eighteenth century. The first method was the tightening and concentration of the movement of the plot to "reinforce its sensational mechanism, and focus its spectacular effects to achieve maximal force."[182] The second method involved an intensification of the emotional rather than the sensational appeal of melodrama, which gave rise to domestic melodramas, which, although less spectacular than oriental gothic melodramas, were all the more intensely emotional, evoking pathos to compensate for the terror of spectacular violence.[183] By the time Murray's melodramatic adaptation of *Obi* (Edinburgh, 1830) was staged, the melodramatic form had been redistilled, appropriating elements of exotic, romantic, and domestic melodrama, blending them into a composite structure of previous melodramatic narrative elements. In other words, Buckley argues, later

---

[178] Buckley, "The Formation of Melodrama," 468.

[179] Ibid.

[180] Ibid.

[181] Ibid., 469.

[182] Ibid.

[183] Ibid., 470.

melodrama engaged in a "sort of melodramatization of melodrama" by recombining its own elements through a process of redistillation, which led to a further extension of melodrama beyond drama, transforming it into a mode or formal structure, "an inter-medial poetics, a narrative pattern produced and reproduced both in the theatre and in external life."[184]

Although Buckley understands melodrama as a specific type of industrially-produced commodity, namely an emotional intoxicant, I understand melodrama, through the framework provided by Jameson and Holland, as a popular form that illustrates an exemplary case of the commodity form in general. The processes of concentration, intensification, redistillation, and extension, which Buckley identifies in the development of melodrama, are fundamental processes of capitalist expansion in the nineteenth century: concentration of resources, intensification of productivity, redistillation of old production processes or what Marx described as the transition from formal subsumption to real subsumption, and finally extension or expansion of the mode of production once domestic markets reach a point of saturation. I wholly agree with Buckley when he states that in melodrama "we find a genre that develops in accordance with a logic far removed from not only the realm of individual artistry but even the realm of what we take to be aesthetic reproduction" which is "best conceived as an anonymous, even impersonal form … an industrial commodity in the strictest sense of the term."[185] I thus read Buckley's understanding of melodrama as an "industrially-produced vehicle of emotional intoxication" in terms of Jameson's "imaginary resolution of a real contradiction."[186] The extirpation of the rebel slave in the closing curtain tableau is understood as an imaginary solution to this real contradiction (a liberal slaveholding empire). The melodramatization of the rebel slave is a symbolic answer to the

---

[184] Ibid., 473-74.

[185] Ibid., 474.

[186] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 62.

question of how to treat an enemy as evil, marked by an absolute "racial" difference, when the very conditions that characterise the enemy as such is quite simply also the reason that justifies the enemy's conduct. Interestingly, Buckley arrives at a similar conclusion:

> if we recognize in melodrama a genre responsive to the traumatic context of its production, … we might instead see in it a prophylactic or contemporary form, through which its consumers are inoculated against or given relief from the continual, unresolved crises of modernity, or even a meliorative form, through which … emotional sympathy is used to overcome ideologies of difference and elicit recognition of communality.[187]

This model of literary function offers an answer to the popular appeal of cultural forms like melodrama, even while acknowledging that the cumulative effect of the mixed generic codes deployed in melodramatic theatrics affirms the return to order.

As pointed out earlier, the *Obi* pantomime ends with a grand procession circling around Jack's butchered body parts, thus displaying both the patriotic spectacle of triumphant imperialism and its concomitant brutish violence. In a single frame, the spectator views a grand spectacle celebrating British imperial power, with its triumphant religiosity protecting and granting political liberties, at the centre of which lies the fragmented body of Jack, a reminder of the cost of empire building, which involved an African torn from his roots, separated from his family, dehumanized as an abject slave, and slaughtered as a criminal and a traitor for his resistance. As reviewers of the pantomime point out, it was not just the spectacle of power but also Jack's heroism that mesmerized the spectators. These spectators, argues Van Kooy,

> engaged in complex processes of apprehension and negation in order to negotiate seemingly oppositional constructs… that delineated the cognitive boundaries that separated then from now, us from them, and here from there. … Directed by sights and sounds to negotiate this contrasting synthesis, audiences invested themselves cognitively and emotionally in the oppositional constructs, including both radical and hegemonic positions that challenged,

[187] Buckley, "The Formation of Melodrama," 474.

> and yet too often sustained, British imperial power and its global domination.[188]

These cultural constructions of power and its romanticized resistance were performed again and again in a variety of racial melodramas.

Coleridge's unperformed *Osorio* (1797) and its revised performed version, *Remorse* (Drury Lane, 1813) stage another strategy of containment, by subordinating the narrative of legitimate resistance (Alhadra's rebellion) to the narrative of remorse and reconciliation. Amongst the various changes and omissions Coleridge made to *Osorio*, perhaps the most significant was that in the revised version, Coleridge affirms the personal ethics of remorse and reconciliation over and above Alhadra's more virulent call to action against tyranny that ended the earlier play.[189]

Alhadra's narrative is part of the subplot that intersects with the main plot at crucial junctures. She is the wife of a Moorish chief, who desires to exact revenge on Osorio (Ordonio in *Remorse*), the Spanish nobleman who has not only murdered her husband, but has also deprived his own brother, Albert (Alvar in *Remorse*), of his legitimate inheritance. Although Osorio/Ordonio is the character against whom both Albert/Alvar and Alhadra seek revenge, both characters represent very different approaches to how they desire retribution.

Alhadra's revenge is built up at the beginning of the narrative, with a background story that is designed to garner the spectator's sympathy. She tells Maria (Teresa in *Remorse*) that "Five years ago, the Holy Brethren seized me," her crime being nothing more than her "complexion":

> They cast me, then a young and nursing mother,

---

[188] Van Kooy, "Darkness Visible: The Early Melodrama of British Imperialism and the Commodification of History in Sheridan's "Pizarro"," 192.

[189] For Julie Carlson, *Remorse* is Coleridge's attempt to affirm his "legitimacy by privileging individual morality over collective action, remorse over revenge, at the same time that it plays to the crowd and reanimates the radicalism of his youth." See Julie A. Carlson, "Remorse for Jacobin Youth," *The Wordsworth Circle* 24, no. 3 (1993): 130.

> Into a dungeon of their prison house
> There was no bed, no fire, no ray of light,
> No touch, no sound of comfort! The black air,
> It was a toil to breathe it! …
> My infant quarrelling with the coarse hard bread
> Brought daily: for the little wretch was sickly –
> My rage had dry'd away its natural food! (Act 1.i)[190]

But her vengeance is not just for her imprisonment, her lost child, and her murdered husband; it is also a resistance against enslavement of her people. In a later scene, she addresses the Moorish rebels as a leader of a resistance movement:

> Warriors of Mahomet! faithful in the battle!
> My Countrymen! Come ye prepared to work
> An honourable deed? And would ye work it
> In the slave's Garb? Curse on those Christian Robes!
> They are spell-blasted: and whoever wears them,
> His arm shrinks wither'd, his heart melts away,
> And his bones soften! (Act 4.iii)[191]

Her vengeance, however, is distinguished from Albert's form of vengeance. Upon hearing the injustices Albert has suffered, Alhadra asks him, "But dream't you not that you return'd and kill'd him? / Dreamt you of no revenge?" (Act 1.i) To which Albert, in his trembling voice answers, "I pray'd for punishment that cleanses hearts."[192] Albert/Alvar, whose moral legitimacy undermines the significance and credibility of the racial Other, pacifies Alhadra's legitimate rebellion. Alhadra is, after all, a subplot subordinated to the main plot concerning two brothers, a story quite familiar since Schiller's *The Robbers* (1792). Right after Ordonio repents and prays to heaven "Let the eternal justice / Prepare my punishment in the obscure world," Alhadra enters the scene with her band of rebels. Ordonio wilfully surrenders to Alhadra ("Woman, my life is thine! To thee I give it!"), thus making ineffective her claim to

---

[190] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Osorio," in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Vol. 16: Poetical Works*, ed. J. C. C. Mays, Bollingen Series (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 72.

[191] Ibid., 128.

[192] Ibid., 77.

topple tyrants, because Ordonio, at that moment is no longer a tyrant. Her resistance is reduced to a personal vendetta, claiming revenge for the murder of her husband. After she stabs Ordonio, Alvar exclaims "Arm of avenging Heaven," thus reframing Alhadra's revenge as a providential act of justice. Throughout the play, it seems that the character of Alhadra has been presented in a number of frames: as a pitiful mother and wife seeking just vengeance, as a persecuted noble Moor inciting rebellion against unjust tyranny, but also as a Muslim rebel with a personal vendetta devoid of the Christian capacity for forgiveness and mercy, and, lastly, as a non-agential instrument of providence or formal poetic justice.

The earlier play had ended with Alhadra's grand speech against tyranny:

> I thank thee, Heaven! thou hast ordain'd it wisely,
> That still extremes bring their own cure. That point
> In misery which makes the oppressed man
> Regardless of his own life, makes him too
> Lord of the oppressor's! Knew I an hundred men
> Despairing, but not palsied by despair,
> This arm should shake the kingdoms of this world;
> The deep foundations of iniquity
> Should sink away, earth groaning from beneath them;
> The strongholds of the cruel men should fall,
> Their temples and their mountainous towers should fall;
> Till desolation seem'd a beautiful thing,
> And all that were and had the spirit of life
> Sang a new song to him who had gone forth
> Conquering and still to conquer! (Act 5.ii)[193]

In *Remorse*, this heroic challenge to tyrants is displaced from its prominent position as the final closing speech to an earlier moment in the play, where its grandiloquence is somewhat subdued. Instead, we have Alvar who informs the audience that, "Just Heaven instructs us with an awful voice," as "Our inward Monitress to guide or warn," and if scorned, returns as "dire REMORSE" (Act 5.i).[194] In the final analysis, Alhadra is presented as a conflicted character whose rebellious energy is contained within gender, ethnic, and religious frames, in

[193] Ibid., 148.

[194] Coleridge, "Remorse," 1324-25.

a manner similar to the convention of blacking up. The moral authority of the play ultimately rests upon the moderate masculinity of Alvar, rather than the temperamental proclamations of Alhadra.[195]

In this context of political turbulence, moral questioning, and the empire being threatened from within and without, the rebel slave characters in racial melodramas were not characterized in terms of absolute villainy. There was always a scene that would temper the rebel slave's villainous actions with a sympathetic motive or proclamation that would appeal to the audience's sentiments. In the 1830 melodrama, Jack says to Rosa: "It is not merely thirst of blood that fires me – a nobler passion nerves my arm – vengeance" (Act 2.iii). When Rosa pleads Jack for mercy, he responds:

> You whites are ever ready to enforce for one another that civilized, that Christian law of mercy which our dusky children never yet partook of… I had a daughter once; did they spare her harmless infancy? Where is my wife? Was she spared to me? No! with blood and rapine the white man swept like a hurricane o'er our native village, and blasted every hope! ... Our women knelt, our infants shrieked in vain, as the blood-stained murderer ranged from hut to hut, dragging the husband and the father from their homes, to sell them into bondage! No more, no more! The vext spirits of my wife and child hover o'er me like a holy curse, and claim this due revenge. (Act 2.vi)

What this passage illustrates is that the ultimate fantasy message of revenge and rebellion in racial melodramas is sentimentally legitimised only within the domain of the family.

In melodrama, the family institution functions as a moral repository of values, as a domestic sentimental collective, and, allegorically, as a basic unit of the social order (recall Moseley's "one great family"). Sentimental slaves like Quashee and Sam are, of course, willing to sacrifice themselves for their families. But so are rebel slaves, whose rebellion and revenge ultimately stem from being separated from their families. Cross's Mackandal challenges the Overseer, who has the temerity to threaten his love for Ada:

---

[195] Jane Moody discusses the "precarious character of feminine agency" in melodramas like Mathew Lewis's *Timour the Tartar* (1811), in which Zorilda "epitomizes heroic, maternal resistance" and an "insatiable desire for vengeance." Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre*, 99.

> Born, born to command, I've too long been a slave,
> But 'twas war's direful chance, and I cheerful obey'd;
> Yet think not that chains can e'er conquer the brave,
> Or threats awe the soul can meet death undismay'd.
> Approach not, proud white, 'tis a prince now commands,
> Who for love of sweet Ada the world would unhinge!
> I scorn thee, and singly thus dare thy hir'd bands;
> Oppression's the signal for death and revenge![196]

It is the ideological value imputed to the family that registers rebel slaves as sympathetic characters and simultaneously legitimizes and contains their revenge as a form of personal retaliation, evoking, with Girard, the age-old premise associated with tribal clannish blood feuds.

In Colman's *The Africans* (Haymarket, 1808), Selico tries to sell himself into slavery in order to provide for his destitute mother, but is saved from such a fate by the benevolence of the invading Mandingo king, who is emotionally moved by the story of a son sacrificing himself for his mother. The Mandingo king's motivation to pillage neighbouring villages was to profit from the trade in prisoners as slaves to European merchants. The ultimate irony is that those who are responsible for the destitution of Selico's family, the marauding Mandingoes and their King, are also, in the end, the saviours of his family.

The definitive symbolic strategy of containment is the popular cultural context of melodrama and its unique protocols in which social issues and social change are reformulated in terms of a highly emotional economy of personal relationships. The popular, in this context, is a unique space in which the private and the public collapse into a single discourse, a reciprocity between emotion and politics that makes them difficult to disentangle. In racial melodramas, slavery and abolitionism are reduced to a manageable form within a circumscribed, usually domestic space where resolutions emerge from filial acts of charity, sacrifice, revenge, and/or resilience.

---

[196] Cross, *King Cæsar; or, the Negro Slaves*, 14.

Narrative Possibilities

The various melodramatic black bodies illustrate a number of characteristics, which can be plotted as coordinates that determine divergent narrative possibilities. Depending on whether they are villains, or heroes, or sacrificial minor characters, or subordinates to main characters, these black bodies assume a range of contesting values, and it is the interaction between these black bodies and their competing values that offers a range of perspectives on the British Empire. For the sake of emphasizing these variations, I will reduce these black bodies to specific characteristics discussed above, of which I will identify eight: absolute villainy, heroic villainy, nobility, servility, resistance, revenge, remorse, and sacrifice. Each of these characteristics identifies a particular narrative possibility, which establishes the return to order, after a momentary disorder of entertaining subversive fantasies, which are carefully managed to reassert and reclaim the patriotic associations of British imperialism.

We can begin with absolute villainy as a defining characteristic of the first examples of rebellious black bodies in theatrical representations, namely the devils in morality plays and the Elizabethan evil Moors (Aleazar and Aaron). A figure like Othello, Shakespeare's counter to the evil Moor stereotype, occupies the contrary position to absolute villainy, characterized by tragic nobility. But if absolute villainy (Aleazar) and tragic nobility (Othello) are the two terms of a strong antagonism, there is also present a weaker antagonistic relationship to other black bodies, insofar as they occupy positions that are merely negations of the initial binary. The numerous servile slave characters, the properly designated black bodies that populate the stage as extras in Fawcett's *Obi* to give a sense of a plantation setting, function as the negation of absolute villainy of the larger-than-life evil Moor characters. They are neither of royal stock as the evil Moorish kings, nor are they part of the Mediterranean Old World slavery context. In fact, it is their presence that raises the representational problem of blacking up and the confusion between Moors and blacks that so

bothered Coleridge and Lamb. In a similar position of negation to tragic nobility is the rebel slave (Three-Fingered Jack), whose heroic villainy is far from the tragic nobility of an Othello. These four positions can be configured within a semiotic square to illustrate the elementary structure of signification of black bodies in the early nineteenth century.[197]

Originally proposed in the works of Greimas, the semiotic square is an expedient tool used in structural analysis to spatialize an argument. I use it here in the manner that Jameson suggests, as constituting the conditions of possibility within a particular historical, ideological moment.[198] In the context of the present study, the semiotic square proves useful in providing a logical structure to map the various black bodies in performance on the nineteenth-century London stage (Figure 4). The four initial terms and their combinations offer a summary of the various narrative possibilities, and display the variety of perspectives on British imperialism, challenging any simple notion of dominant ideological narratives.

So far, we have designated four positions on the semiotic square, with the primary antagonism between absolute villainy and tragic nobility representing the dichotomy between the vengeful Moor and the noble Moor, and the negations of this primary antagonism occupied by rebel slaves (heroic villainy) and servile slaves (servility). However, the four other characteristics – revenge, remorse, resistance, and sacrifice – result from a combination of these initial four characteristics. For example, a character like Zanga, as noted by many contemporary reviewers like David Baker, has the nobility of a tragic character insofar as his motivations are just (unlike Iago), and yet his actions betray an absolute villainy worthy of

---

[197] Briefly, a semiotic square is a basic structure of signification, which represents a binary opposition, and its simple negations, which opens up the interpretation of the four basic categories to various possible combinations and permutations. See Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 153, n.13.

[198] Jameson has developed the use of the Greimas square in a number of his works. However, he presents probably the most cogent explanation of its use for literary analysis in his most recent work, *Allegory and Ideology*, 349-60.

the most stereotypical evil Moors. We identified four characteristics that defined the complexity of Zanga, namely, absolute villainy, tragic nobility, malicious but justified revenge, and sentimental remorse. Zanga's remorse at the end of the play suggests the first step towards reconciliation within a new order. Remorse is a quality reserved for a villain coming to terms with his own villainy, as in the case of Lindenberg, the merciless planter in Morton's *The Slave*, or Ordonio, the evil brother in Coleridge's *Remorse*. Both of these plays end with the hope of reconciliation in a new order, attempting to rehabilitate the villain.

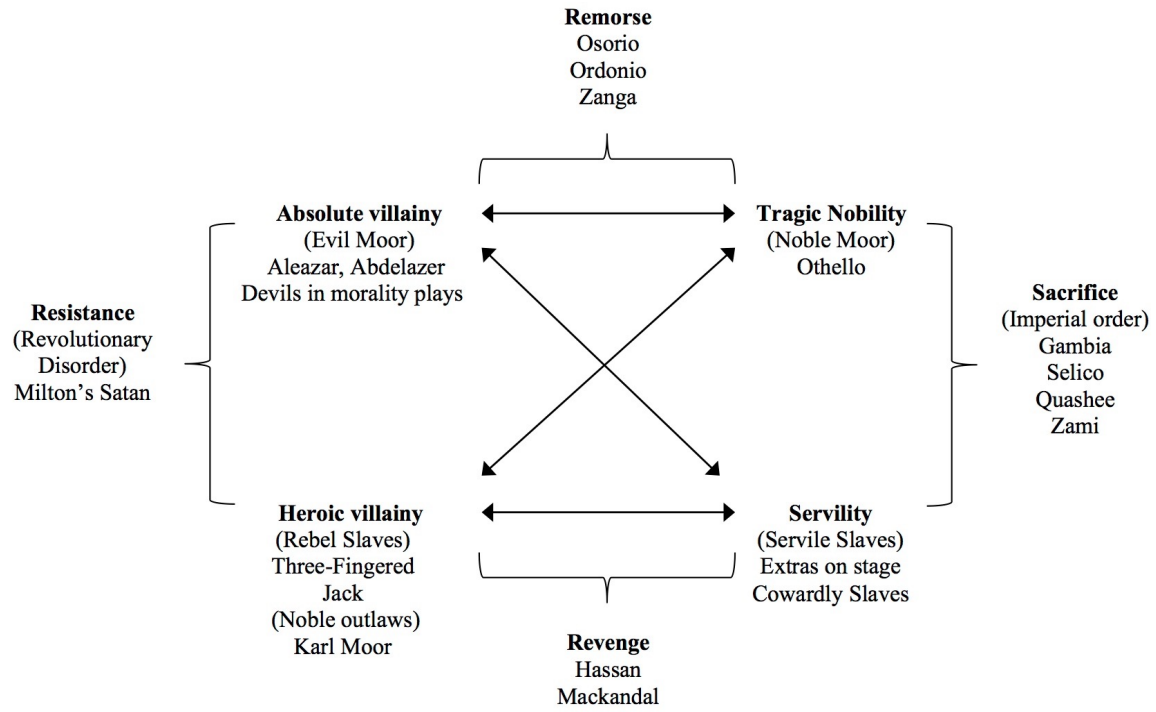


Figure 4: Representation of various narrative possibilities offered by black bodies

The opposite of remorse on the vertical axis of the semiotic square is another quality shared by Zanga – malicious but justified revenge. Cross's Mackandal and Lewis's Hassan are two instances of revenge that exemplify two variations on the relation between servility and heroic villainy. In the case of Mackandal, a good, servile slave in the first part of Cross's pantomime is pushed to rebellion and villainy in the second part by the atrocities committed

by the evil Overseer. Hassan, on the hand, can be distinguished from a character like Zanga, with which contemporary reviewers and Lewis himself offered comparisons. Unlike Zanga, Hassan does not wreak his revenge directly upon Osmond, his master, but insidiously and calculatingly, assists him in tormenting other white characters. His perverse logic is that his master has a unique propensity to cause maximum anguish amongst his fellows, and so the most effective means of revenge against the Europeans is actually to abet him in his evildoing. The nobility of character that justified, to some extent, the vengeful wrath of Zanga, is not granted to Hassan, who, according to the *Analytic Review*, has no hope of joining the "ranks among the heroes of the stage."[199] A depraved and corrupted reflection of his former self, Hassan does not evoke the spectator's sympathy, despite allusions to the evils of the slave trade:

> Oh Saib! My heart once was gentle, once was good! But sorrows have broken it, insults have made it hard! I have been dragged from my native land, from a wife who was everything to me, to whom I was everything! … In that moment, when the last point of Africa faded from my view, when as I stood on the vessel's deck, I felt that all I loved was to me lost forever, in that bitter moment did I banish humanity from my breast. I tore from my arm the bracelet of Samba's hair; I gave to the sea the precious token, and while the high waves swift bore it from me, vowed, aloud, endless hatred to mankind. (Act 1.ii)[200]

He is modelled as a villain, and his actions are deemed a consequence of his degenerate, vengeful nature. Hassan, as the critic in the *Analytical Review* pointed out, is not a character at all, but a bodily instrument, "a passive engine of a tyrant's crime."[201] Lewis, somewhat anachronistically, situated an enslaved black body on the London stage, in a feudal setting, to function as the bodily extension of the gothic villain, a feudal lord that threatens the virtue of

---

[199] "Art. Xv. The Castle Spectre: A Drama in Five Acts," *Analytical Review* 28, no. 2 (August 1798): 182.

[200] Lewis, *The Castle Spectre*, 12-13.

[201] "Art. Xv. The Castle Spectre: A Drama in Five Acts," 182.

an innocent lady. The rebel slave character, as an instrument of tyranny in this dramatic configuration, poses a challenge to the sentimentalized grateful slaves of comedies, by incorporating their servility (Hassan, after all, is "a passive engine of a tyrant's crime") with the villainy of the rebel slave. He is a servile rebel slave, a rebel in his motivations, but servile in his execution of revenge, as the strategy he adopts requires him to obey Osmond absolutely.

While the vertical axis maps the personal moral solutions from revenge to remorse, the transversal axes map a tension between two narrative possibilities: the performance of resistance that results in perpetual revolutionary disorder, or the affirmation of an imperial social order that requires continuous sacrifice. These two antagonistic narrative solutions are specific expressions of the historical conjuncture which witnessed the spectacular theatricalization of politics beyond the stage. In the first case, it is the French revolutionary disorder and its apotheosis of social resistance, which is, perhaps, best exemplified in the figure of the sublime rebel, the darling of the Romantics, Milton's Satan. Stage representations of this narrative solution were limited, primarily because of the strict licensing and censorship during this period of theatrical exhibitions which display even remotely radical political allusions to reform, republicanism, and revolution.[202] In the second case, it is the ceremonial celebration of an imperial order, exemplified in the numerous domestic melodramatic narratives of sacrifice. Sacrifice, usually of the personal for the sake of the community (family, nation, clan), is the defining quality of characters like Quashee and Sam (*Obi; or, Three-Fingered Jack*), Zami (*King Caesar)*, and most expressively of Gambia (*The Slave*) and Selico (*The Africans*).

In Colman's *The Africans*, the black characters embody complex codes of behaviour and propriety that display them as examples of citizenship and responsibility, characterized

---

[202] Conolly, *The Censorship of English Drama, 1737-1824*, 95.

by their hard work, sacrifice, filial love, and nobility. They are paragons of respectability and examples of non-threatening black figures presented as models for racial moral equivalence. Such representations are effective goodwill gestures that maintain the status quo, despite extending the recognition of moral equivalence, without disrupting racial hierarchy. One critic of Colman's *The Africans*, writing in 1826, uses the play as an example of British cultural superiority: "Colman … again put his axe to the root of the Upas Tree of Slavery, which, to the honour of British humanity, is now grubbed up and laid prostrate forever!"[203] This is an example of the blindness, or perhaps indifference, to the fact that slavery was still being practiced at this time in British West Indies.

What the semiotic square illustrates is a virtual map of a set of relationships between characteristics discovered within racial melodramas. It is but an economical way to reveal the rich variety of narrative possibilities and positions for the melodramatized black body within the dominant liberal mode of representation that effectively managed subversive fantasies of rebellion. The relationships I have sketched out are neither fixed nor immutable. Throughout this chapter I have stressed how the melodramatized black bodies are not defined by any one characteristic, but negotiate a set of characteristics in play with each other.

Racial melodramas mediated colonial interactions through the juxtaposition of mixed generic codes to present the colonial world as a mesmerizing spectacle, which transformed the historical "place" into ideologically constructed "space." Different genres are, according to Norman Holland, "a different way of managing the same core fantasy."[204] If so, the deployment of multiple generic conventions in racial melodramas thus served to manage dangerous drives of rebellion and resistance through symbolic strategies of containment of

---

[203] Cited in George Taylor, *The French Revolution and the London Stage, 1789-1805* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 218.

[204] Holland, *The Dynamics of Literary Response*, 315.

meaning to nullify the potentially subversive effects such performances might have on an audience. These strategies, which involved melodramatic theatrics and conventions like blacking up, juxtaposition, subordination, and familial ideology, were deployed to frame revenge, remorse, sacrifice, and resistance, to offer a carefully managed (if only to avoid the censors), multifaceted vision of Britain's empire.

The numerous representations of black bodies within this ambiguous ideological system offered multiple paradoxical narrative possibilities, which ultimately sustained the credibility of Britain's emerging empire. It is not surprising that melodrama was ineffective as a means of political and social change, for it circumscribed the rebel slave's heroic resistance and just rebuke in brilliant, gripping spectacles that successfully thrilled the audience. By avoiding any direct representation of the brutal realities of slavery and colonial enterprise, these spectacles effectively concealed the atrocities committed by the British Empire, and naturalized the slave experience in scenes of domestic sentimentalism. Even as the generic hybridity of melodrama assimilated conflicting ideologies of feudal rivalries, capitalist reconciliation, imperial intercontinental order, and revolutionary disorder, racial melodramas gave more representational significance to some ideologies at the expense of others, thus effectively sustaining the optical illusion of social harmony represented by the British Empire as "one great family."

CHAPTER FOUR: THE BLACK BODY; OR, THE PERFORMANCE OF MONSTROSITY

During the period covered in the previous chapters, the British perspective on slavery shifted from the assertion that slavery was useless among "us" (the community of the free) to the condemnation of the institution of slavery as such, with the rise of abolitionist humanitarianism in the late eighteenth century.[1] The community of the free in the metropolis (the liberal state) asserted its ideal of liberty by spatially delimiting slavery to the colonies, well outside its territorial borders. With the abolition of the slave trade in England in 1807 and the escalation of the issue of emancipation of the slaves in the colonies, the argument shifted from merely spatial delimitation to racial delimitation of slavery. The institution of slavery was increasingly racialised in an effort to justify the continued subjugation of black slaves in the West Indies as part of an evolving imperial ideology. In this shift in argumentation, the process of racialisation intensified, particularly in the natural sciences, in which the black body was reformulated as a racial type.

In this chapter, I look at how the performance of blackness is configured by the formalization of the black body as a racial type. With the influence of natural sciences, particularly physiognomy, upon dramatic representations of the period, the dramatists and theatre managers made an effort to theatricalise racial differences. In the following argument, I examine the scientific literature for the construction of the racial type and analyse two cases of its performativity: the Hottentot Venus exhibition and Charles Mathews' racial burlesque. In these two cases, I show that it is in the act of performing blackness that the body is racialised. Precisely because the body has to perform the racial type, the racial type is necessarily dissociated from the body. In both cases, the body is blackened so as to conform to an image of the racial type. I specifically use the word "blackened" here, with reference to

[1] Losurdo, *Liberalism: A Counter-History*, 61-65.

Christina Sharpe's work on post-slavery subjects, in which she offers a justification for the term:

> I use *blackened* to refer to those people (of recognizable African descent and not) who because of a proximity to blackness (specifically a proximity to the shame, violence, etc. that black bodies are made to wear) are covered by the shadow of blackness…. *Blackened* then allows for the overlap of self-identified and imposed; it is a marker of proximity that positions one as not properly white or nonblack. It acknowledges the movement of bodies, the myriad meanings attached to African populations, the residues of raced and class signifiers that locate one within or without (visually) African-descended communities. As well as indicating those whose material conditions and circumstances position them with blackness, *blackened* can also mean those African-descended people who have moved away visually from blackness.[2]

Blackened thus refers to a process by which bodies become racially black, and by "black," I mean the varied social, cultural, and psychological meanings associated with racial bodies in the context of slavery. It is with reference to this process of blackening, then, that I explore T. P. Cooke's theatrical representation of Frankenstein's monster as another instance of a blackened body that is racialised, despite not being recognised explicitly as a black-bodied character. In the final analysis, I examine the anagogic meaning of the black body which conjoins the condition of abstract slavery with the notion of universal humanity as an expression of collective struggle; this meaning of the black body, I claim, cannot be dismissed offhandedly as it indicates the efficacy of such representations to work at the most generalizable, as well as particular, level of interpretation.

The analysis comes full circle from where we began in Chapter One, as here I look at the processes of typification through which the racial type crystallises into a concept that becomes firmly established in the domain of scientific racism, from which emerges the myth of the noble savage. Rather than adopting the liberal stance which conveniently distinguishes between the core ideas of the Enlightenment project and its racist, imperialist context,

---

[2] Christina Sharpe, *Monstrous Intimacies: Making Post-Slavery Subjects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 190-91, n.9.

scholars like Robin D. G. Kelley, Hortense Spiller, and Sylvia Wynter focus on the philosophical underpinnings of modern racism that emerged from within the Enlightenment project in an age when science provided the rationale for racial hierarchies.[3] For Kelley,

> Enlightenment thought not only opened the door for future arguments about the inherent inferiority of different "races," but also sharply limited the definition of *humanity*. Thus, at the very moment when a discourse of universal humanism was finding voice in the bourgeois democratic revolutions of the era, coloured people and Europeans rendered marginal to civilization (such as Jews and Irish) were being written out of the family of "Man."[4]

Similarly, raciology or the scientific classification of humans into distinct racial and national categories was also a product of Enlightenment thought. Within raciology, Youngquist argues, black bodies were strategically measured "against the prevailing norm of proper embodiment, making it possible to apportion inalienable rights on a bodily basis."[5] Reading Kelley's and Youngquist's arguments in conjunction with one another, we can rehearse the argument made in Chapter One concerning Oroonoko's attempt to salvage his dignity despite his enslavement by holding on to the "nobler part" of himself. However, Oroonoko is made to confront the reality that the racialised body and its institutional and discursive enslavement is what determines entry into the noble family of "Man" and its related discourse of universal humanism. The universal abstract spirit of humanity is inseparable from the social context in which the body is racialised into types which determine the very state of independence of the mind that guarantee inalienable rights. What becomes more apparent by the early nineteenth century is the centrality of the body in such arguments. No longer is the recourse to religion necessary when the body itself is presented as material evidence to justify exclusion from the

---

[3] For a summary of Spiller and Wynter's theoretical argument concerning the Enlightenment discourse of "Man" in conjunction with racism, see Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 21-30.

[4] Robin D. G. Kelley, *Yo' Mama's Disfunktional!: Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 107.

[5] Youngquist, *Monstrosities*, 57.

community of the free. By considering the white body as the proper body, black bodies represent and embody deviation from this standard. Youngquist writes:

> The norm of the proper body enforces an ideal they [the black bodies] materially transgress, making it possible to affirm universal human rights while denying their applicability to deviant flesh. Bodies, and not rational minds alone, must first qualify for those rights, proper bodies that measure up to the standards of raciology.[6]

The racial type is thus the marked body that deviates from the standard; it is a materialization of race determined by "objective" measurements of its properties rendering it into a body suitable for possession rather than independence, or, as Youngquist puts it, "Bodies that acquire the property of race can become property themselves and as such are deprived of one possession liberalism attributes to any man: property in his own person. Being raced erases property in person only to refigure it in relation to another, as slave to master."[7] In other words, the raced body becomes the property of empire. What becomes evident from the vast scientific and political discourse of the period is that it is difficult to disentangle racism from the discourse of the empire. It is in the context of empire-building that I examine the performance of the Hottentot Venus as a theatrical expression of the "scientific" concept of the racial type to determine how the body is racially blackened and enslaved to a conceptual image of the Hottentot.

The Hottentot Venus: Performance of Nullity

In 1810, a Khoisan woman, known by the name of Sarah Baartman, was brought to London from South Africa by her employer, Henrik Caesar. She was exhibited in a London freak show under the sobriquet "Hottentot Venus," an ironic play upon her anti-erotic expanded posterior, which was a consequence of a genetic condition prevalent among the

---

[6] Ibid., 58.

[7] Ibid.

Khoikhoi community, known as steatopygia. She proved to be quite the sensation, later touring the provinces, and then heading to Paris in 1814 to be presented in a pseudo-educational ethnographic exhibition, which piqued the curiosity of the famed French anatomist, Georges Cuvier, who dissected her body after her death in 1815.

The Hottentot Venus represents a typical case in which an African is enslaved to a particular racial type, and shows the manner in which her body is racialised in order to conform to spectatorial expectations of that racial type. Even though Baartman can be recognised as a black person in the sense that she is not a white actor in blackface, yet her skin colour is not enough of a marker to be considered racially black. Her body needs to be further racialised with the help of props and overdetermining factors like sexuality and bestiality. What becomes evident in this performance of blackness is the dissociation between the body and the racial type, such that even the body of a black person needs to be theatrically blackened in order to conform to racial expectations which are conditioned within the empire-building context.

In 1806, Britain had occupied the Cape Colony in South Africa wresting it from Dutch control. Three years later, Lord Caledon, the first British civilian governor of Cape Colony, passed the "Caledon Code" or "Hottentot Proclamation" which was a carefully crafted legislation in the wake of the abolition of the slave trade concerning labour contracts and relations between the Khoikhoi natives and their colonial masters. The proclamation explicitly stated its purpose, clearly based on stereotypes of Khoikhoi indolence: "individuals of the Hottentot nation should find an encouragement for preferring entering the service of the inhabitants to leading an indolent life."[8] The British MP, Edward Hyde East, identified the British Governor of Cape Colony as a deputy "who extends his peculiar protection in

[8] Quoted in Wayne Dooling, "The Origins and Aftermath of the Cape Colony's 'Hottentot Code' of 1809," *Kronos*, no. 31 (2005): 50.

nature of a guardian over the *Hottentot* nation under his government, by reason of their general imbecile state."[9] The legislation was challenged by British missionaries who argued that even though it was styled as a "Magna Charta of the Hottentots," it actually consigned them and their posterity to "universal and hopeless slavery."[10] Within the span of a few decades, this imperial ideal was most explicitly articulated by Thomas Carlyle in his "Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question," first published in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1849: "This is the eternal law of nature for a man… that he shall be permitted, encouraged, and if need be compelled to do what work the Maker of him has intended by the making of him for this world!"[11] Carlyle claimed it to be "the Law of the World" that blacks "will have to be servants to those that are born wiser than you, that are born the lords of you," as the "[Eternal Maker] has written down, with intricate but ineffaceable record, legible to candid human insight, in the respective qualities, strengths, necessity and capabilities of each of the two [races]."[12] In the time between the Caledon Code of 1809 and Carlyle's proclamations on the "Nigger Question," scientific racism emerged not as a neutral system of classification of "racial" differences, but one ideologically directed towards the problem of ruling over racially-differentiated Others. In the Caledon Code, as in later imperialist ventures, political and economic domination was established under the rubric of the legislative protection over an "imbecile state." In this manner, the systematic knowledge offered by European racial theories had a direct influence on colonial policy, especially concerning the justification for territorial annexation, the imposition of imperial order, and the necessity to compel natives,

---

[9] Edward Hyde East, *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Court of King's Bench*, 16 vols., vol. XIII (London: Printed for J. Butterworth and Son, 1817), 194.

[10] John Philip, *Researches in South Africa*, 2 vols. (London: J. Duncan, 1828), 1: 148.

[11] Thomas Carlyle, "Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question," *Fraser's Magazine* XL (1849): 673.

[12] Ibid., 676-77.

indentured labour, and slaves to labour for their colonial masters. It was under this legislation that Sarah Baartman was employed as a maid for Henrick Caesar.[13]

The recent occupation of Khoisan territory probably served to satiate the curiosity of English spectators concerning the extravagant stories they had been told about the Hottentots of Africa. For one, in terms of classification of African races in the eighteenth century, the Hottentot was often categorized as the lowest race in the gradation of racial degeneracy, much below the Negro and just above the orangutan.[14] Bestiality, thus, was a vital component in the manner in which Baartman was exhibited, as noted in a report in *The Times*: "The Hottentot was produced like a wild beast, and ordered to move backwards and forwards, and come out and go into her cage, more like a bear in a chain than a human being."[15] In addition to bestiality, sexuality also played a key role in the construction of the Hottentot. The notorious Hottentot "apron" was, in the words of Charles White, a "natural veil which covers the sexual parts" in Hottentot women.[16] Similarly, Blumenbach, while discussing genitals, enquires into the "long and protruding *nympha*, which some say in Hottentot women come to be appendages like fingers."[17] Also, Charles White's description of the "flabby breasts" of Hottentot women exaggerates "that they can suckle their children upon their backs, by throwing the breast over their shoulders," and it is through such "natural" differences that he

---

[13] "Law Intelligence: Court of King's Bench, Wednesday, Nov. 28th. 'The Hottentot Venus'," *The Morning Post* 29 Nov. 1810.

[14] Phillip Sloan, "The Idea of Racial Degeneracy in Buffon's Histoire Naturelle," *Racism in the Eighteenth Century* (1973): 309.

[15] "The Hottentot Venus," *The Times* 26 Nov. 1810.

[16] White, *Account of the Regular Gradation in Man* (1799) in Peter J. Kitson, ed. *Slavery, Abolition, and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period*, vol. 8: Theories of Race (London: Pickering & Chatto 1999), 8: 238.

[17] Blumenbach, "On the Natural Variety of Mankind," in *The Anthropological Treatises of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach* (1865) in ibid., 8: 185.

arrives at the conclusion that the "African, therefore, in this particular approaches to the *simia* [genus of primates]."[18] In describing the racially sexualised body, the naturalists, anthropologists, and physicians made implicit and explicit references to the bestiality of racial types to account for the regular gradation in man.

Being at the bottom of the racial hierarchy, the representation of the Hottentot presented some challenges to the Hottentot Venus exhibitors because these differences had to be presented in a manner that signified the absence of human qualities like language, culture, religion, and even the ability to think. In fact, the word "Hottentot" might possibly be an onomatopoeic term to describe the clicking sounds that compose the Khoi languages, which were regarded as but poor specimens of a proper language, often compared to the "clucking of a turkey"; just another instance of how the Hottentot was distanced from "civilised" man.[19] These racial differences were the grounds for legislative control of Cape Colony, as laid out in the Hottentot Code of 1809. The problem of representation of the Hottentot, as pointed out by the art historian Z. S. Strother, was primarily a problem of representing lack, or nullity.[20] Christopher Miller elaborates on the significance of nullity in Africanist discourse as "a key to understanding European conceptions of Black Africa":

> This is because the burden of proving a nullity, and of maintaining it in a logical discourse, is crushing and the overextension of discourse in relation to this object of its own design is most typical of Africanist utterances. It is only the black African that Gobineau and other writers seek to depict as a pure "human machine" stripped of all reasoning faculties and moved only by a blind sensorial *desire*. The meaning and consequences of these terms are at the heart of the Africanist problem.[21]

---

[18] White, *Account of the Regular Gradation in Man* (1799) in ibid., 8: 239.

[19] Ibid., 243.

[20] Z. S. Strother, "Display of the Body Hottentot," in *Africans on Stage: Studies in Ethnological Show Business*, ed. Bernth Lindfors (Bloomington & Indianpolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), 4.

[21] Christopher L. Miller, *Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 17-18. Joseph de Gobineau, from whom Miller

If the Hottentot is considered a null being, how then does one represent nullity or lack of something?

In the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth century a number of tropes associated with the Hottentot developed to signal nullity. Strother enumerates in great detail the evolution of a number of these tropes.[22] I develop her insights in the context in which Baartman's body has to perform the racial type, which is configured around four primary tropes: wildness, savagery, indolence, and imbecility. Wildness and savagery were signified by nudity, which represented bestiality rather than prelapsarian innocence. The charge of indolence and imbecility was made by Dutch colonisers against the Khoikhoi's disinclination to work for them, which was exaggerated to imply a disinclination to think, as is evident in Peter Kolb's *The Present State of the Cape of Good Hope* (originally published in 1719):

> And the first Thing I shall remark in this View of the *Hottentots* is their Laziness. They are, without doubt, both in Body and Mind, the laziest People under the Sun. A monstrous Indisposition to Thought and Action runs through all the Nations of them: And their whole Earthly Happiness seems to lie in Indolence and Supinity.[23]

The claim of the native's "indisposition to thought and action" served two ideological functions. First, it dehumanized the natives who could not think for themselves and, therefore, had to be put under protection and care of the more responsible benevolent colonial administration. Second, it forfeited the natives' right to any claim over their land due to their indolence, as within the liberal tradition, best exemplified by Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, fructifying the land was what granted the right to property.[24] By the time

---

develops the concept of nullity, was a self-styled ethnologist of the mid-nineteenth century, and had been dubbed by Jean-Paul Sartre, as the "father of racism."

[22] Strother, "Display of the Body Hottentot," 1-22.

[23] Peter Kolb, *The Present State of the Cape of Good Hope*, trans. Medley, 2 vols. (London: printed for W. Innys and R. Manby, 1738), 1: 46.

Baartman came to England in 1810, these tropes (savagery, wildness, indolence, imbecility), along with images of racially sexualised black bodies, had amalgamated into a stable configuration defining the Hottentot type.

The "scientific" demonstration of racial difference, whether by cranial measurements, or evolutionary arguments, affirmed the racial ideology behind imperialism, which Philip Curtin defines as such:

> We Whites were made intelligent so that we could wisely direct the labour of others. Other races, and usually this meant the Africans, were given strong backs, weak minds, and a placid disposition so that they can labour effectively under our direction.[25]

In his book *On the Negro's Place in Nature* (1863), James Hunt, the President of the Anthropological Society of London, proposes a set of deductions which lays bare the imperialist agenda in the act of classifying racial types:

> 1. That there is as good reason for classifying the Negro as a distinct species from the European, as there is for making the ass a distinct species from the zebra: and if, in classification, we take intelligence into consideration, there is a far greater difference between the Negro and European than between the gorilla and chimpanzee. 2. That the analogies are far more numerous between the Negro and the ape, than between the European and the ape. 3. That the Negro is inferior intellectually to the European. 4. That the Negro becomes more humanised when in his natural subordination to the European than under any other circumstances. 5. That the Negro race can only be humanised and civilised by Europeans. 6. That European civilisation is not suited to the Negro's requirements or character.[26]

Hunt goes on to chastise the political establishment for "ignorance of anthropology," admonishing statesmen who "plead that race-subordination forms no part of nature's laws"; but this ignorance, he asserts, does not "alter the facts," as "there is one truth more clearly

---

[24] Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, 28.

[25] Philip D. Curtin, ""Scientific" Racism and the British Theory of Empire," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 2, no. 1 (1960): 43.

[26] James Hunt, *On the Negro's Place in Nature* (London: Trübner & Co., 1863), 51-52.

defined than another in anthropological science, [which] is the existence of well-marked psychological and moral distinctions in the different races of man."[27]

As early as 1810, raciology had established an abstract conception of the Hottentot and Baartman was expected to conform to this racial type. What I would like to emphasize is the performative aspect of the racial type. Baartman had to act out becoming a Hottentot. Certain props became an essential part of her performance, serving as necessary supplementary signs signifying lack itself. The *kaross* (sheepskin mantle), the cane, the apron, the face paint, the headdress, and the pipe, along with suggestions of her nudity despite wearing a full dress were significant signs deployed in the advertisement images given below (Figure 5 and 6), which were used by Baartman's exhibitor, Henrick Caesar, to attract spectators and offer a preview of the performance to come.

The *kaross*, or sheepskin mantle, according to Strother, was amongst the first "'efficient sign' of Hottentot identity" used in 1508 by Hans Burgkmair in six woodcuts illustrating the travels of German merchant Balthasar Springer.[28] Always coupled with nudity, the *kaross* functioned as a piece of clothing that had lost its functionality as clothing; rather than cover, it uncovered the body. It was a supplementary sign that in its very primitiveness denoted lack of culture and hence lack of civilization. One spectator of the Hottentot Venus exhibition remarked on the fact that Baartman was "cloathed in a dress resembling her complexion which is very dark and her dress was so tight that her shapes above and the enormous size of her posterior parts are as visible as if [she] were naked and the dress is evidently intended to give the appearance of her being undressed."[29] Nakedness, in this case, affirmed the belief that Hottentots were beings in a perpetually arrested state of

---

[27] "Address Delivered at the Third Anniversary Meeting of the Anthropological Society of London," *Journal of the Anthropological Society of London* 4 (1866): lxxviii.

[28] Z. S. Strother in Strother, "Display of the Body Hottentot," 5.



Figure 5: "Sartjee, The Hottentot Venus, Exhibiting at no. 225, Piccadilly. London. Published as the Act directs March 14th, 1811, by S. Baartman, 225 Piccadilly." From British Library, C.103.k.11, vol. 1, p. 102.

[29] Transcript of sworn affidavits filed during the trial of 1810. The deponent of this affidavit was Zachary Macauley, the Secretary of the African Institution. See "Appendix" in Strother, "Display of the Body Hottentot," 43.



Figure 6: “Sartjee, The Hottentot Venus.” 1810, Aquatint with etching. Courtesy the British Museum, 1917, 1208.3712, AN381820001.

development not having evolved with time. In both images, the *kaross*, the sandals, the headdress, and the cane together illustrated the savagery and nomadic pastoralism of Hottentot society as a community devoid of progress, development, and civilisation. To signify indolence and imbecility, or the lack of an active, thinking mind, the exhibitors resorted to another significant and excessive symbol of lack in the Hottentot iconography: the tobacco pipe, which is used only in the second image. As there is no extant eyewitness account that refers to Baartman smoking a pipe on stage, it seems that the exhibitors used it only for the advertisement. The pipe, according to Strother, is a later addition to the Hottentot iconography and is associated with the expansion of tobacco trading and the dispossession of the Khoikhoi from their lands only to be forced to work as wage labourers.[30] The pipe thus signified, from the perspective of the coloniser, the Hottentot's lack of engagement in any form of productive activity.

Each of these cultural signifiers (the *kaross*, the cane, the face paint, the pipe etc.) supplements the black body of the Hottentot to transform the particular (Sarah Baartman's body) into an allegorical racial type. This translation from the particular to the racial type is evident in the two images given above. The first image, with its naturalistic detail and representational authenticity, is the closest approximation to the outfit and manner in which Baartman was actually exhibited. For Strother, this image "informs the prospective viewers, more or less, of what they will actually see; the second is unique for advising them on *how to interpret what they see*."[31] In other words, the second image is an allegory which transmutes the particular Sarah Baartman into the typical Hottentot Venus. The allegorical nature of these images must be emphasized. For Susan Stewart:

---

[30] Strother, "Display of the Body Hottentot," 13.

[31] Ibid., 27.

> In this productive mapping of sign upon sign, world upon world, reality upon reality, the criterion of exactness emerges as a value. And, exactness, always a matter of a concealed slippage between media, is moved from the abstract, the true-for-all-times-and-places of allegory, to the material, the looking-just-like, that sleight of hand which is the basis for this new realism. … Exactness is a mirror, not of the world, but of the ideology of the world.[32]

To be an "exact" Hottentot, the Khoikhoi woman must give up her individuality and conform to the type signified by these props which transfigure her material body into the universal type of the Hottentot that conveniently fits in with the ideology of imperialism.

The exhibitors tried to present Baartman as "a most correct and perfect specimen of that race of people," and advertised that she would be "habited in the dress of her country, with all the rude ornaments usually worn by those people."[33] Their effort was to present her as a typical Hottentot, but it was precisely her typicality (in this case her physical "deformity") which was featured as an exceptional phenomenon that put her in the category of the freak. Even her exhibitor, Henrick Caesar, despite claiming to present a typical Hottentot, nonetheless thought of her as a freak. When confronted with accusations of enslavement in a post-abolitionist England, Caesar responded in a letter to the Editor of *The Morning Chronicle* asking "has she not as good a right to exhibit herself as an Irish Giant, or a Dwarf, &c. &c.?"[34]

The general public also saw her as one amongst the "freaks" that frequented London. Anne Mathews mentions in the memoirs of her husband, the comedian, Charles Mathews, that he was a "great sight-seer" who had developed an attachment with the Spotted Boy, and had great regard for the dwarf, Count Boruwlaski, and Miss Crackham, "a young lady of very

---

[32] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), 4.

[33] "The Hottentot Venus," *The Morning Post* 20 Sep. 1810.

[34] Hend. Cezar, "Letter to the Editor," *The Morning Chronicle* 23 Oct. 1810.

limited dimensions."[35] Baartman was listed next amongst these curiosities that "attracted this professed seeker of sights."[36]

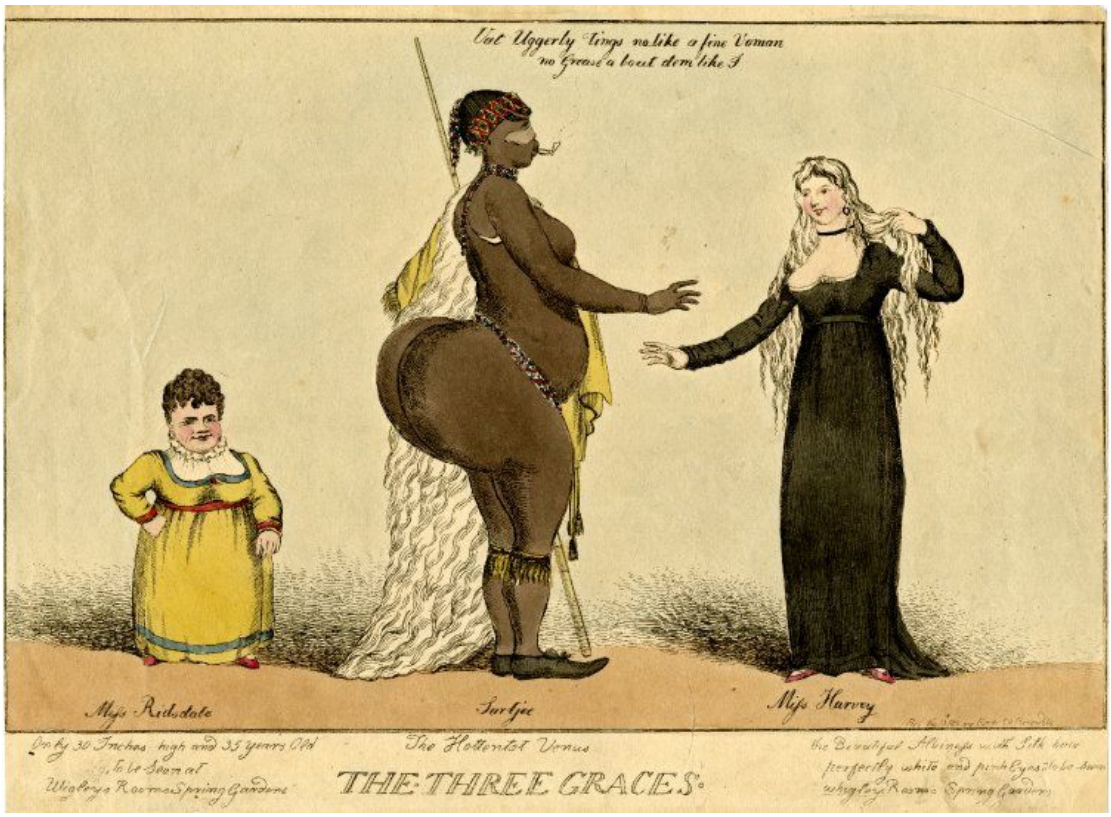


Figure 7: *The Three Graces*, Published 13th Nov. 1810 by Fores, 50, Piccadilly. British Museum, BM Satires 11602

While Baartman was represented in images as a typical Hottentot, in performance she was a "freak." This distinction is significant. A freak is an extraordinary individual (unlike any other) and hence by definition not typical. Baartman, in this case, was an exception even amongst freaks for she was also a type, as is evident in Figure 7. She was the only "grace" represented in a side profile, which not only disengages her from facing the viewer in the confident and defiant posture of Miss Ridsdale (the figure on the left), but makes her into an

[35] Anne Mathews, *Memoirs of Charles Mathews*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1839), 4: 93-94.

[36] Ibid., 4: 95.

object of observation for the curious spectator. Even if one were to make the more obvious observation that in this pose her "deformity" is more accentuated, one would not be able to account for the use of typical iconographic props like pipe, kaross, staff, and face paint, which was generally associated with the racial type of "Hottentot."

Baartman's typicality was the occasion for the spectator's curiosity. In Baartman's stage routine, the "typical" was evoked by her costume (a mix of Xhosa and other beadwork with fringed garters, skull cap, and bowed shoes), by various props, and by the choreographed activities like playing the instrument for the audience to experience the "rude" performance of Hottentot music and dance. But it was her live bodily presence that fascinated spectators, in which her body worked as a sign not just to affirm their expectations of alterity, but also, to disturb the processes of typification and evoke in the audience a sense of uncertainty as well as sympathy. Anne Mathews reports how both these spectatorial attitudes were part of the spectacle:

> One pinched her; another walked round her; one gentleman poked her with his cane; and one lady employed her parasol to ascertain that all was, as she called it, "nattral." This inhuman baiting the poor creature bore with sullen indifference, except upon some great provocation, when she seemed inclined to resent brutality, which even a Hottentot can understand. On these occasions it required all the authority of the keeper to subdue her resentment.[37]

Other reports also mention similar discomfort on viewing this "poor outcast of our species":

> I cannot help feeling myself considerably interested in behalf of a fellow creature in so helpless, friendless, and unpitied a condition.[38]

> Considerable interest has been excited by the situation of an unfortunate being who has been for some weeks publicly shewn in Piccadilly, like a prize ox or a rattlesnake … it seems to be more than insinuated that she has been brought by artifice or force from her own country for this abominable purpose, and is at the moment in a state of slavery in England.[39]

---

[37] Ibid.

[38] "The Hottentot Venus," *The Morning Post* 18 Oct. 1810.

[39] "Hottentot Venus," *The Morning Post* 29 Oct. 1810.

> This poor female is made to walk, to dance, to shew herself, not for her own advantage, but for the profit of her master, who, when she appeared tired, holds up a stick to her, like the wild beast keepers, to intimidate her into obedience.[40]

Two spectatorial attitudes can be distinguished from the above recorded responses to the Hottentot Venus exhibition: the disinterested, objective attitude which reduces Baartman to a racialised body of a typical Hottentot, and the interested, sympathetic spectator that recognises Baartman as an individual who is irreducible to the Hottentot type. The first advertisements of the Hottentot Venus catered to the disinterested spectator and offered "the Public… an opportunity of judging how far she exceeds any description given by historians of that tribe of the human species."[41] The spectators were encouraged to occupy the position of the disinterested naturalists or scientists in order to observe and judge, for themselves, the Hottentot Venus as a type of anomaly against the norm that they embodied as a group. In order for the spectators to occupy the position of the naturalist or scientist, Baartman's black body had to be configured as a scientific "specimen," as a matter of evidence rather than something evident in itself.

Mary Poovey, in *A History of the Modern Fact*, makes a clear distinction between evident and evidence:

> The singular experiences or observed particulars that natural philosophers began to value in the seventeenth century were not *evident*, because they were neither signifiers of anything nor self-evidently valuable; only when such particulars were interpreted as *evidence* [of some theory] did they seem valuable enough to collect, because only then did they acquire meaning or even, I contend, identity as facts.[42]

---

[40] "Letter to the Editor," *The Morning Chronicle* 12 Oct. 1810.

[41] "The Hottentot Venus." *The Morning Post* 20 Sep. 1810.

[42] Mary Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 9.

In this case, then, Baartman, was understood as an embodied material "fact" working in favour of the theory of polygenesis. When she was taken to Paris in 1814, she was advertised as an ethnographic curiosity. In Paris, Strother notes, "the reference to 'freak' shows is notably absent … [and] there is a much more assured presentation of Baartman as educational in appearance, dress, and musical performance."[43] Is it to be wondered, then, that she soon attracted the interest of Georges Cuvier, the most respected anatomist in France. Cuvier assumed the disinterested spectatorial position that was earlier occupied by the intended spectator of the Hottentot Venus exhibition in London. He examined her and observed her, and after her death on 29th December 1815, he dissected her. Soon, plaster casts of Baartman's dissected genitalia and buttocks would be displayed in the *Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle*, where the black body would assume the status of a museum artefact observed by curious but disinterested onlookers until 1982.

However, there were several other spectators who invested considerable interest in the spectacle of Baartman's body. Numerous letters to the editors expressed "compassion" for her (*The Morning Post*, 18 Oct. 1810), and deplored the "state of slavery in England" in which she was imagined to be kept (*The Morning Post*, 29 Oct. 1810), and aroused indignation as to why this "poor creature" has to live "under the most palpable and abject slavery in the very heart of the metropolis" (*The Morning Chronicle*, 12 Oct. 1810). Rather than adopting a disinterested gaze of observation, these interested spectators were moved by the spectacle. It was such interested spectators like Zachary Macauley, Thomas Gisborne Babington, and Peter Van Wageninge who became deponents signing a sworn affidavit to contest the exhibition of Baartman's body on the pretext of indecency and enslavement.

A couple of points need to be made about this affidavit. First, the affidavit gives detailed descriptions of the spectacle which, in this case, is necessary because the interested

[43] Strother, "Display of the Body Hottentot," 33.

spectators are witnesses in a legal investigation. Second, the follow-up evaluation supplements the "objective" description by analogy ("in the same manner that any animal of the brute creation would be exhibited"), and also, by describing the expressions on Baartman's face ("the expressive look of disapprobation", "frequent sighs", "by her looks gave evident signs of mortification and misery", "appeared very morose and sullen").[44] Rather than typifying her in the image of the Hottentot as was done in Figure 6, the interested witnesses focus on Baartman's face and expression because it is her face that individualises her. While the disinterested spectator in the role of the naturalist or ethnologist examines her posterior as "evidence" of an alternative racial type, the interested witness evokes sympathy at the more personal and intimate level. It is thus all the more significant that the deponents end the affidavit by acknowledging that "the said females' [sic] name is Saartgee and that the name of the person who has the possession of her is Henrich Cesar – ."[45] This act of reading Baartman's face by interested witnesses needs to be distinguished from both the physiognomical reading of faces and the diagrammatic representations in craniometry as in Pieter Camper's schematic drawings (Figure 8).

The science of physiognomy achieved popularity in England through the translations of the work of a Swiss pastor, Johann Kasper Lavater. By 1810, there were no fewer than twenty versions of Lavater's work in England alone, within less than forty years of its first publication.[46] Many dramatists were influenced by the science of physiognomy, and were responding to the general enthusiasm with either promotion or censure of the author. Thomas

---

[44] "Appendix" in Strother, "Display of the Body Hottentot," 43-45.

[45] Ibid., 45.

[46] Initially there were two English editions of Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy* (1775-78) published in the 1780s, which were soon followed by twelve different versions in five different translations in the 1790s. See John Graham, "Lavater's Physiognomy in England," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 22, no. 4 (1961): 562.

Holcroft, the politically radical dramatist had translated Lavater's work in 1789 with a later edition appearing in 1804.[47] This was to become the most popular translation of Lavater's work in English. For a melodramatist like Holcroft, appearances and propensities went hand in hand in a character.

Physiognomy etymologically refers to the judgment or assessment of character or personality from a person's outer appearance, especially the face. Facial features were understood as signs that could be interpreted to understand moral character. But as in phrenology, physiognomic individual traits unavoidably became physiognomic types, as the physical body turned into a tapestry of signs with fixed meanings. In the third volume in the 1804 edition, Lavater resorted to describing the facial angle in Camper's dissections of Europeans, Africans, and apes to determine "the degrees of animality" in the countenance of individuals.[48] The assumed rigidity of the gradation, not taking into account variations within racial types, relegates the "negro" type to a higher degree of animality than the Caucasian type: "What is below seventy degrees gives the countenance of the Negro of Angola and the Calmuc; and by a further diminution soon loses all trace of resemblance to humanity."[49]

While physiognomy imposes a supplementary identity, an imaginative face of a social type onto the individual face, craniometry offers "scientific" evidence by subtracting faces altogether by showcasing skulls as racial types. Pieter Camper measured skulls of monkeys, apes, and humans to determine variations based on facial angles, thus offering a hierarchical scale which was adopted by later racialists as "evidence" of the superiority of the European

---

[47] Another playwright, much influenced by Lavater's work, was Matthew "Monk" Lewis. Lewis was listed as a subscriber of the Henry Hunter edition. See Graham, "Lavater's Physiognomy in England," 567.

[48] *Essays on Physiognomy*, trans. Thomas Holcroft, vol. 3 (London: Printed by C. Whittingham, 1804), 398.

[49] Ibid., 394.

race.[50] Camper, as a natural scientist and an artist, exemplifies the connection between science and art in the dissemination and wide circulation of images of racial types that condition the performance and perception of Otherness as [stereo]typical characters. Both physiognomy and craniometry offered disinterested observations of character types which were assumed to be marked upon the surface of the fleshed or unfleshed body.

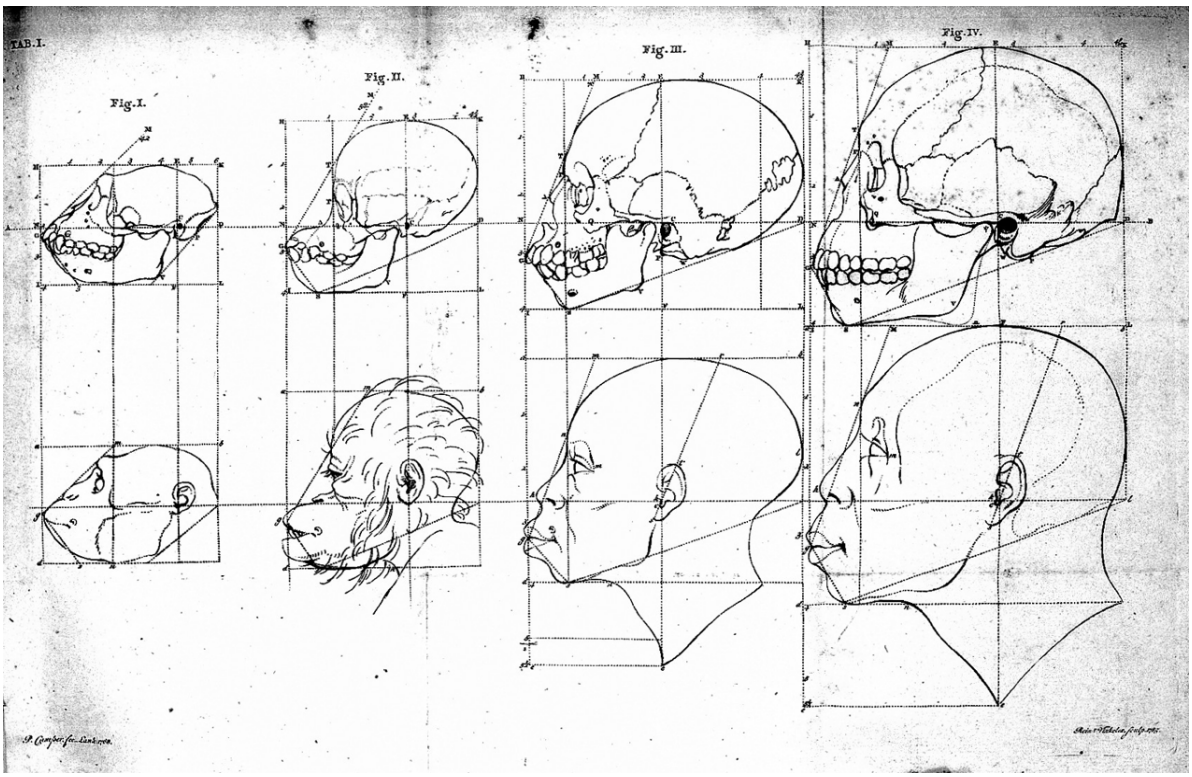


Figure 8: Camper's Lateral View of Skulls to depict Racial Types in Pieter Camper, *The Works of the Late Professor Camper, on the connexion between the Science of Anatomy and the Arts of Drawing, Painting, Statuary &C &C* (1794) in *Slavery, Abolition, and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period*, Volume 8: Theories of Race, p. 116-17

In contrast to both forms of "disinterested" observations, the interested witness is more attuned to feeling and sentiment. In the distinction between these two spectatorial attitudes, what can be inferred is that Baartman's performative body, despite conforming to

[50] Kitson, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 8: 98.

the racial type, resisted complete enslavement to the Hottentot image; in other words, it resisted being reduced to a supplemented (physiognomic) or a subtracted (craniometric) racial type by the disinterested gaze.

The Hottentot image was fraught with representational issues concerning the problem of representing lack (of civilization, language, religion, culture, and effectively, humanity). To represent lack, supplementary signs like the *kaross*, the headdress, the apron, and the pipe were added to the Hottentot image, which Baartman was obliged to embody and perform. But in the very act of performing a Hottentot, the necessary fabrications of race unravelled. What the exhibitors intended in the performance of the Hottentot exhibition was a theatricalization of the anti-erotic, racial Other as a bestial, sexually deviant, and indolent Hottentot savage, while concealing the artifice in manufacturing the racial type. What is exposed in the affidavit, the newspaper reports, and the advertising images is precisely this performative aspect of racialisation, which is not solely dependent upon natural phenotypes, like the colour of the skin or the features of the face; rather, these natural phenotypes had to be supplemented with signifiers and props to represent prejudices based on folkloric notions, erroneous theories, and ethnocentric chauvinism that racially blackened Sarah Baartman's "black" body. A similar process of theatricalization is at work in the performance of racial types by that "professed seeker of sights," Charles Mathews, a pioneer of the racial burlesque.[51]

Charles Mathews' "Black Fun"

In the 1820s, the comedian and mimic artist, Charles Mathews, pioneered a proto-vaudeville, one-man variety show, composed of burlesque and comic sketches that displayed his virtuosity as an actor and a comic genius. In his long dramatic career, Mathews performed

[51] Mathews, *Memoirs of Charles Mathews*, 4: 95.

some 665 different characters, a list which does not include the characters in his pantomimes, ballets, and his very popular *At Home* series.[52] For Jane Moody, Mathews brilliant "generic innovation" was to mix "satirical caricature and delicate pathos" in his *At Homes*, which became "one of the highlights of the theatrical season."[53] However, apart from impersonations of popular celebrities, brief comic sketches, and various caricatures of social types, Mathews' "real influence," according to Hazel Waters, was "in perpetuating various derogatory images of the black [which] lay nascent until the arrival of Jim Crow and Crow mania from America in 1836."[54] Supplementing Waters' analysis of Mathews' racism, Jenna Gibbs argues that Mathews' popularization of the trans-Atlantic racial burlesque was an example of British chauvinism that propagated racist, but sympathetic, depictions of blacks as a means to disparage American republican democracy.[55] My interest in Charles Mathews, however, lies in his comically effective construction of numerous racialised characters, prior to T. D. Rice's iconic Jim Crow representations, that reworked the racial burlesque into an immensely popular racial type that would become the template to judge pioneering black performers like Ira Aldridge.

During his career, Mathews performed a variety of black characters, like Dominique in Cobb's *Paul and Virginia* (Covent Garden, 1801) and the Obi woman in Fawcett's *Obi; or, Three-fingered Jack* (Haymarket, 1800), as well as Othello, which he first performed in New York during his tour of America in 1823.[56] He was also known to impersonate other

---

[52] *A Continuation of the Memoirs of Charles Mathews*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1839), 2: 319.

[53] Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre*, 191-92.

[54] Waters, *Racism on the Victorian Stage*, 89.

[55] Gibbs, *Performing the Temple of Liberty*, 164.

[56] For reference to Mathews' performance of Dominique, see Mathews, *Memoirs of Charles Mathews*, 1: 232; for reference to the Obi-woman performance, see ibid., 2: 16-17; for

actors who performed Othello.[57] But apart from these established roles, Mathews also created a number of distinctive black characters, like the black tragedian in the African theatre in New York, Maximilian the amusingly gullible waiter, and Agamemnon the unwieldy, fat runaway slave who gets stuck in a well, attempting to hide from his master. All three of these characters made their appearance in Mathews' *Trip to America* (English Opera House, 1824).[58] In his *Memoirs* (1839), Mathews parodied a black Methodist preacher, a fat fiddle-playing coachman, and a black dandy, Caesar Le Blond, who is a character in a diapolylogue, *No. 26 and 27, or Next Door Neighbours* (1831), co-written with Richard Brinsley Peake.[59] These characters became popular enough to indicate a new trend in the representation of blacks as pretentious or foolish dandies and buffoons, to be scorned and laughed at; they were no longer seen as dangerous, threatening, or even sentimentally sympathetic. This new degrading representation of blacks became the standard against which subsequent racial representations were judged. Mathews' influence in this regard can be assessed through a scathing review in *The Times* of Ira Aldridge's first performance in London in the character of Oroonoko.

On 11th October 1825, *The Times* reviewed a performance of *The Revolt of Surinam; or, A Slave's Revenge* (1825) at the Coburg Theatre the evening before. This performance was peculiar for one particular reason, which the playbill proudly boasted:

---

reference to Mathews' Othello performance, see Mathews, *A Continuation of the Memoirs of Charles Mathews*, 1: 250-51.

[57] The critical remarks on his performance of Othello in Liverpool indicate that Mathews impersonated other actors in the same role. See *A Continuation of the Memoirs of Charles Mathews*, 1: 255.

[58] Charles Mathews, *Sketches of Mr. Mathews's Celebrated Trip to America*, 9-10, 22, 23-24.

[59] For reference to the black Methodist preacher, see Mathews, *A Continuation of the Memoirs of Charles Mathews*, 1: 239-40; for reference to the fiddle-playing coachman, see ibid., 1: 237; for reference to the black dandy, see ibid., 2: 57-59.

> This piece… must receive an immense portion of additional interest from being supported in its principal character by a *Man of Colour*, and one of the very race whose wrongs it professes to record; being the first instance in which one of that Complexion has displayed a striking degree of Histrionic Talent, and which has secured him the rapturous Approbation of an enlightened Public on the other side of the Atlantic.[60]

Ira Aldridge, soon after arriving from New York, performed the role of Oroonoko in this altered version of the play, under the stage name, Keene. For the first time on the London stage, a black person performed the role of a black person. *The Times* reviewer uncouthly compared this "appetite for theatrical novelty" to "the man who plays the monkey [at the Surrey Theatre] in the most natural manner possible."[61] Apart from the obvious denigration of a performance by a black person to that of an actor playing a monkey, the reviewer describes Coburg's innovative manoeuvre with reference to a character popularised by Mathews: "they [the Coburg managers] have brought out what *Mr. Doubikins* calls 'a genuine nigger' to act *Oroonoko*."[62]

Jonathan W. Doubikins was a popular character sketch of a "real Yankee" invented by Charles Mathews as part of his *Trip to America* (English Opera House, 1824) to represent the comical oddities of Americans, from their manner of speaking ("I guess," "I reckon," "I calculate"), their boastful notions of liberty amidst slavery ("this is a land of liberty and freedom, and as every man has a right to buy a nigger"), and their disregard of decorum and class hierarchy (evident in the sketch of the landlord of an American inn which Mathews visited).[63] In the monopolylogue, *All Well at Natchitoches* (1824), a stage farce in which Mathews singularly enacts all the characters by means of quick changes of costume, the

---

[60] Quoted in Marshall and Stock, *Ira Aldridge: The Negro Tragedian*, 54.

[61] "The Coburg Theatre," *The Times* (11 October 1825).

[62] Ibid.

[63] Charles Mathews, *The London Mathews: Containing an Account of This Celebrated Comedian's Trip to America* (London: Printed by Hodgson and Co., N.D.), 6, 20, 7.

character of Jonathan is part of a comical narrative in which he is in search of his runaway slave, Agamemnon, whom he refers to as "a genuine nigger."[64] In Richard Brinsley Peake's *Jonathan in England* (English Opera House, 1824), Jonathan Doubikins becomes the central protagonist of a farcical play in which the Yankee visits England along with his slave, Agamemnon. Jonathan, who is played by Mathews, is "darn'd mad about that *Mathews*" who, he hears, has slanted him in a playhouse (Act 1.i).[65] In retaliation to Mathews' slander against his character, the Yankee wants to write a satirical book on English mannerism, "to make the whole kingdom smart for it."[66]

By alluding to Mathews' character of Mr. Doubikins, *The Times* reviewer frames Aldridge's performance of a rebellious royal slave as akin to Mathews' portrayal of Mr. Doubikins' "genuine nigger," Agamemnon, depicted as a fat, lazy, fiddle-playing buffoon (Figure 9), who makes an appearance in both Mathews' monopolylogue (Part III of *Trip to America*) and Peake's *Jonathan in England* (English Opera House, 1824). Agamemnon is presented as a character that is helpless, harmless, fearful, and comically slapstick. By juxtaposing Aldridge's Oroonoko with Mathews' Agamemnon, the reviewer underscores the absurdity of entertaining the possibility that a black man can escape his low racial profile and aspire to grandeur. Such an attempt can only induce laughter, which, according to the reviewer, was as expected during Aldridge's performance: "The audience wondered and laughed at him all through the play until he stabbed his wife, and then applauded him loudly; but it was not until he killed himself that their delight grew outrageous."[67] In *The Times*

---

[64] Ibid., 20-21.

[65] Richard Brinsley Peake and Charles Mathews, "Jonathan in England; or Americans Abroad," in *Lord Chamberlain's Plays Collection* (British Library, 1824), 21a.

[66] Ibid.

[67] "The Coburg Theatre." *The Times* (11 October 1825).

review, Mathews' Agamemnon sets the stage for the racial burlesque, a racial template in which even Aldridge's serious performance of Oroonoko becomes an occasion for derisive laughter.

The Times reviewer searches for precedents in which blacks proved their histrionic distinction, recalling a Prince Anamaboo, "who was engaged by the late Stephen Kemble to



Figure 9: Copper-Plate Engraving in *The London Mathews; Containing an Account of the Celebrated Comedian's Trip to America*, 1824.

exhibit the true method of eating raw beef-steaks."[68] However, even this performer turned out to be a fraud, as he was a Jew, "yet he nevertheless ate the undressed beef-steaks as well as a natural-born savage."[69] The reviewer thus supplements the stereotype of the "genuine nigger" with the stereotype of the boorish savage, and what confirms these stereotypes is of course Aldridge's presumed physiognomy and physicality, which figures him as a racial Other, and thus, constitutively incapable of performing on stage such dignified characters:

> This gentleman is in complexion of the colour of a new halfpenny, barring the brightness; his hair is woolly, and his features, although they possess much of the African character, are considerably humanized. His figure is unlucky for

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

> the stage; he is baker-knee'd and narrow chested; and owing to the shape of his lips, it is utterly impossible for him to pronounce English in such a manner as to satisfy even the unfastidious ears of the gallery.[70]

What is most telling in this review, however, is the significance of the racialisation of blackness. One complaint the reviewer has with regard to Aldridge's physical appearance is that he is not black enough: "[the managers] might, if they were bent upon having a blackamoor, have procured one whose complexion was more *foncé* [darker] – the man who sweeps the crossings at the end of Fleet market, for example."[71] In other words, Aldridge falls short of the reviewer's racialised image of a "blackamoor." As in Baartman's case, Aldridge's "black" body is insufficient in itself to represent racialised blackness. It is the racial type, in this case Mathews' racial burlesque, that overdetermines blackness with qualities like dullness, laziness, buffoonery, bombast, and affectation. This becomes the frame through which *The Times* reviewer ridicules Aldridge's performance of Oroonoko.

This frame of the racial burlesque can be determined by examining Mathews' characterisations of various black figures. As one commentator of his *Trip to America* put it, "to him every situation presented a new character – every character a new caricature – every new caricature something beyond our imagination, something burlesque, something laughable."[72] Indeed, it was during his trip to America that Mathews became acquainted with black people. But his prejudice against blacks was only affirmed by their social marginalisation in American society, in which "all menial situations are filled by negroes (niggers)."[73] In a letter to Mrs. Rolls, Mathews writes that, "The servants, waiters, porters &c.

---

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Charles Mathews, *A Sketch of Mr. Mathews's Entertainment, Entitled a Trip to America* (London: Printed by J. D. Bird, 1824), 135.

[73] Mathews, *A Continuation of the Memoirs of Charles Mathews*, 1: 235.

are nearly all 'niggers.'"[74] Nonetheless, it was the social marginalisation of blacks that sustained Mathews' comic sensibility and his satirical understanding of American notions of liberty, which, according to him, "is only productive of one apparent effect, which is, to render the rich and educated, slaves to their inferiors; at least to their absurd notions."[75] With the understanding that American liberty turns the social world upside down, Mathews was able to engage in descriptions of American society in which such absurd inversions occur, and the black American community and their social life in particular provided him with much material for his comic entertainments.

In a letter to his friend and collaborator, James Smith, Mathews wrote: "I shall be rich in black fun. I have studied their broken English carefully."[76] As a sample of "Negro" patois, Mathews relates the speech delivered by a black Methodist preacher asking his congregation for donations:

> My wordy bredren, it a no use to come to do meeum-house and to ear de most hellygunt orashions if a no put a de cent into de plate. … You dress a self up in de fine blue a cot, and a bandalore breechum, and tink a look like a gemman [gentleman], but no more like a gemman dan put a finger in de fire, and take him out again, widout you put a de money in a de plate. He lend a to de poor, lend to de Law (Lord), if you like a de secoority drop a de cents in to de box.[77]

In this speech, Mathews exploits the incongruity between the lofty, pompous content, and the ludicrous manner by which it is delivered. The preacher attempts to appeal to the crowd's spiritual fears and anxieties with references to the "debbil" so as to convince them to give donations to his church, but the manner by which he does so, with his heavy accent, and assumed gravity, was sure to arouse laughter amongst Mathews' prospective audience. In

---

[74] Ibid., 1: 219.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid., 1: 239.

[77] Ibid., 1: 239-40.

another letter to Mrs. Mathews, he describes the scene of this black congregation as "rather amusing": "The pranks that are played in the 'nigger meetings,' as they are called are beyond belief – yelling, screeching, and groaning, resembling a fox-chase much more than a place of worship."[78] Like the professed collector of freakish sights that he was, these occasions provided Mathews with much material for his acts. "I have several specimens of these black gentry," he wrote to James Smith, "that I can bring into play, particularly scraps of songs, and malaprops."[79]

In the case of the racial burlesque, Mathews effectively exploited the incongruity between high culture and low culture, particularly through speech and appearance, that exposed the affectations of the lowly classes in America. On one occasion, he visited the African theatre in New York and witnessed the performance of *Hamlet* by a black tragedian, reciting the soliloquy, "To be or not to be?"

> Whether it is nobler in the mind
> To suffer – or tak [sic] up arms against a sea of
> Troubles, and, by Opossum [oppose 'em], end 'em.
>
> No sooner was the word, Opossum, out of his mouth than the audience burst forth in one general cry – Opossum! Opossum! Opossum! And the tragedian came forward that he would sing their favourite melody – OPOSSUM UP A GUM TREE![80]

Once again, Mathews exaggerates the black actor's pronunciation for comic effect, what will later be described by *The Times* reviewer of Aldridge's performance as the African's inability to properly pronounce English words owing to the shape their lips. In Mathews' racial burlesque, the serious delivery of a Shakespearean tragic speech is rendered absurd as neither the black actor, nor the black spectators have the sensibility to appreciate Shakespeare's

---

[78] Ibid., 1: 217.

[79] Ibid., 1: 240.

[80] Mathews, *A Sketch of Mr. Mathews's Entertainment, Entitled a Trip to America*, 146-47.

tragedy. Rather than listen to Hamlet's soliloquy, the black spectators demand "Opossum up a Gum Tree," which, Mathews was told, "was the national air, or sort of 'God save the King' of the negroes, and that by being reminded of it by Hamlet's pronunciation of 'oppose'em,' there was no doubt but that they would have it sung."[81] It is precisely the incongruous association of Shakespeare with blackness that makes this scene ludicrous and comically effective for Mathews' spectators at the English Opera House.

Prior to his performance in England, Mathews probably perceived how comically effective this association between Shakespeare and blackness was for an American audience. In the first part of *Mathews in America*, the comedian plays the character of a first-time actor, who was assigned the role of Othello. The anxious actor, in order "to put as good a face upon the thing as possible," made his face "as black as cork and grease could make it."[82] However, as Mathews explains to his American audience, there were only three persons in the playhouse, and so the performance had to be cancelled. The young actor was asked to inform the audience that they "will be admitted another evening without paying."[83] When the blackfaced actor appears before the three spectators to inform them of the cancelled performance and ends with a gracious appeal to their "liberal patronage and support," the spectators burst out laughing, having heard such a banal message from the mouth of blackfaced Othello, which apparently pleased them as much "as if they had witnessed an excellent performance."[84]

---

[81] *Sketches of Mr. Mathews's Celebrated Trip to America*, 9.

[82] *Mathews in America; or, the Theatrical Wanderer* (London: Printed by Hodgson & Co., N.D.), 10.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid., 10-11.

The jokes on blackness that abound in Mathews' *Trip to America* and *No. 26 and 27, or Next Door Neighbours,* and Peake's *Jonathan in England* anchor the racial burlesque in the all-too-familiar racial stereotypes about black inferiority and their incapacity to speak properly, to think properly, and to behave properly. Mathews deployed the usual comic dialects in construction of absurdly pompous eccentric characters, and mixed his performance with doggerel verse, comical song and dance, and subtle realistic details described with vibrant comic prose, that brought his racial caricatures to life. Although we only have reports in printed texts of what was said during these performances, the actual performance was sure to be more engaging and also more physically comical than what mere words convey. It was Mathews' presence, gestures, bodily and facial contortions, and the manner of delivery that transformed him completely into different characters, which were comical but also strikingly believable. Anne Mathews states quite clearly the difficulty of describing the *At Homes*, because "they give no definite idea of the man who delivered them, or his capacities – the matter remains, but how was it animated and rendered interesting?"[85] What is left behind for posterity are merely words, and "they do not," writes Anne Mathews, "fully satisfy the reader that the reciter of them required any very superior genius, humour, or variety."[86] From this frank acknowledgement, we can only infer the influence of Mathews' racial burlesque and other effectively satirical characters. But as the case of *The Times* review makes evident, Mathews' characters were an influential frame for the early judgments passed on Aldridge's performance based on racist assumptions propagated, disseminated, and entrenched by popular racial burlesques.

[85] Mathews, *A Continuation of the Memoirs of Charles Mathews*, 1: 274-75.

[86] Ibid., 1: 275.

Frankenstein's Monster as a Black Body

Richard Brinsley Peake, a close friend and collaborator of Charles Mathews, can be acknowledged as amongst the theatrical luminaries that popularized the racial burlesque during this period. He wrote the farce, *Jonathan in England*, and collaborated with Mathews on the diapolylogue, *No. 26 and 27; or Next-Door Neighbours* (Adelphi, 1831). He also contributed extensively to the later *At Homes* and the *Comic Annuals*.[87] His most enduring legacy, however, was not the racial burlesque, but a particular racialised character, the monster, in the dramatic adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). Having analysed the Hottentot Venus exhibition and Mathews' racial burlesques as performances of blackness which are representationally racialised, in this section I examine Frankenstein's monster as a character that is racially blackened, in the sense implied by Christina Sharpe's use of the term.

There is sufficient evidence to consider the monster as a racialised black body, particularly in the tradition of the black rebel. Several interpretations of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) draw attention to its racial aspect. Anne K. Mellor inquires in her essay, "Frankenstein, Racial Science, and the Yellow Peril," whether the "creature's yellow skin—together with the animal as well as human parts from which he is constructed—indicate that he is by his very bodily nature a degenerate being, both racially and evolutionarily inferior to his Caucasian creator, and hence necessarily a monster?"[88] Perhaps the most thorough discussion of the relation between monstrosity and race is offered in H. L. Malchow's "Frankenstein's Monster and Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain."[89]

---

[87] Ibid., 1: 38-40, 56, 58-59, 74-76, 113.

[88] Anne K. Mellor, "Frankenstein, Racial Science, and the Yellow Peril," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 23, no. 1 (2001): 1; also see *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (London: Routledge, 1988), 136.

Malchow argues that Mary Shelley "drew upon contemporary attitudes towards non-whites, in particular on fears and hopes of the abolition of slavery in the West Indies, as well as middle-class apprehension of a Luddite proletariat."[90] For Malchow, the monster is most likely based on the representation of blacks, but he avers that Shelley may not have been creating a "specifically Negro monster" but a more ambiguous "threatening other."[91] Malchow justifies his racial reading of *Frankenstein* on the grounds of physiognomic parallels between Shelley's description of the monster and the various racial stereotypes of blacks that focused on size, agility, and the prejudiced sense of repulsiveness inspired by their presence.[92] However, a focus on the physiognomy of the monster, which might justify a racial reading of the novel, would also ground a performative reading of the monster. Physiognomy is not just an observation concerning the external physical features of a being but also its innate character, an aspect that comes across more forcefully in dramatic performance. The performative aspect of physiognomy is crucial to racial construction, as demonstrated above in the case of the Hottentot Venus and Charles Mathews' racial burlesque.

Mary Shelley's novel falls very much in line with the type of texts and performances that I have been looking at in the previous chapters. There is a direct parallel and lineage between Matthew Lewis's Hassan in *The Castle Spectre* (1798) and Shelley's monster, both characters who begin with a gentle heart and whose benevolence is rewarded with cruelty,

---

[89] H. L. Malchow, "Frankenstein's Monster and Images of Race in Nineteent-Century Britain," *Past & Present* 139, no. 1 (1993).

[90] Ibid., 90-92.

[91] Ibid., 103.

[92] Ibid., 104.

only to turn hard and swear vengeance and endless "hatred to mankind."[93] We know that Lewis visited Lord Byron at Villa Diodati in the summer of 1816 where he also met the Shelleys.[94] Mary Shelley was already acquainted with "Lewis's tales," having listed them in "Books read in 1815."[95] Lewis was among the many major Gothic writers like Horace Walpole and William Beckford that had West Indian connections and investments.[96] In fact, Lewis had just returned from his first tour of his plantations in Jamaica a little more than two months before meeting the Shelleys. No doubt he had many stories to relate to them, many of which he had noted in his journal. He might have spoken to them of the "remarkably tall athletic" runaway slave, Plato, who became the leader of a troop of banditti and established himself in the Moreland Mountains, and whose curse upon Jamaica, it was believed, caused the hurricane of 1780; or of the "rebel captain" who broke out of prison and hid in an Obeah-man's hut; or, he might have enchanted them with the stories about the *duppy*, "a kind of malicious spirit, who haunts burying grounds… and delights in playing tricks to those who may pass that way."[97] These stories might have influenced Mary Shelley directly or indirectly, but there is no doubt that she was aware of similar narratives of the enslaved other and the associated anxieties of those who dominated over them.

Shelley's reading during this period also gives us an indication of the possible inspiration for the monster. Shelley was an avid reader of the *Quarterly Review*, which

---

[93] Lewis, *The Castle Spectre*, 101.

[94] Julian Marshall, *The Life and Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, 2 vols. (London: R. Bentley and Son, 1889), 1: 156.

[95] Ibid., 124.

[96] Marie Mulvey-Roberts, Dangerous Bodies: Historicising the Gothic Corporeal, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016). 7.

[97] M. G. Lewis, *Journal of a West-India Proprietor: Kept During a Residence in the Island of Jamaica* (London: J. Murray, 1834), 90-94, 236. 291.

frequently discussed Arctic explorations and contact with indigenous Others.[98] In the years 1814 to 1816, Shelley had read the three volumes of Mungo Park's *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* (1799), along Bryan Edwards' *The History, Civil and Commercial, of British Colonies in the West Indies* (1793), which places her reading of these works in the period just before she began working on *Frankenstein* in June 1816.[99] Malchow draws several textual and thematic parallels between Shelley's portrayal of the monster and the description of Mandingoes in Mungo Park's *Travels*.[100] Apart from these texts, the Shelleys also read John Davis's travelogue which included details of American slavery and runaway slaves, although, it seems Mary had already handed the manuscript of *Frankenstein* to her publisher for consideration.[101] But this nonetheless shows that she had a sustained interest in issues pertaining to slavery in this period and support the hypothesis of considering the monster as a black body. However, as a novelistic creation, the case of the monster as a specifically racialised Other – an argument that depends on the blackening of the monster – remains underdeveloped. It is only in its theatrical adaptation that we can properly appreciate the monster as yet another formalization of the black body or a body that is racially blackened.

The stage adaptation of Shelley's novel, *Presumption; or, the Fate of Frankenstein* (1823), was first performed at the English Opera House and proved to be a great success.[102]

---

[98] Karen Piper, "Inuit Diasporas: Frankenstein and the Inuit in England," *Romanticism* 13, no. 1 (2007): 63.

[99] Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *The Journals of Mary Shelley, 1814-1844*, ed. Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 52, 58.

[100] Malchow, "Frankenstein's Monster and Images of Race in Nineteent-Century Britain," 102-03.

[101] Howard L. Malchow, *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 16.

Performing the monster was the actor Thomas Potter Cooke, who reprised the role some 365 times during his career.[103] In a review in *The Theatrical Observer*, Cooke was praised for representing "in dumb show with infinite accuracy, the varied feelings supposed to arise from the extraordinary condition of his nameless character."[104] One of the first reviews to comment on Cooke's performance as a disguise for racial Otherness appeared in *The Examiner*: "All the poetry in this eccentric flight is lost, and we merely witness a revengeful North American savage, painted blue, waiting about a house to kidnap a boy and murder a girl."[105] This critic further speculates upon the nature of monsters, even going so far as to consider the story as a satire on real social conditions, especially with concern to the "Irish system":

> We were half-disposed, on Monday night, to regard this drama as a satire on our Irish system, which creates monsters exactly like the overly-curious Frankenstein, and in the same manner runs about shooting them for being precisely what they have been made, and that with a persevering complacency – an immovable self-satisfaction, which could only be produced by the practice of successive generations, and the steadiness of nerve which is its consequence. The dramatic monster too was willing to work hard, to cut wood and bear heavy burthens, then; but the system stood in his way. His kindness was repulsed, his unavoidable prejudices treated roughly, and in revenge, he sets fire to a cottage! The disguise is too shallow; it is certainly a satire![106]

---

[102] See Douglas William Hoehn, "The First Season of Presumption!; or, the Fate of Frankenstein," *Theatre Studies* 26, no. 27 (1979-81): 80. Also, Donald Glut's *The Frankenstein Catalog* and Steven Forry's *Hideous Progenies* provide an extensive catalogue of the various kinds of resources that have been adapted from Mary Shelley's original novel. See Donald F. Glut, *The Frankenstein Catalog* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland, 1984) and Steven Earl Forry, *Hideous Progenies: Dramatizations of Frankenstein from Mary Shelley to the Present* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990).

[103] Allan Stuart Jackson, *The Standard Theatre of Victorian England* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1993), 142. Before his stint as Frankenstein's monster, Cooke gained prominence in the character of Lord Ruthven in J. R. Planché *The Vampire* (1820) and the mythical character of Vanderdecken in Edward Fitzball's *The Flying Dutchman* (1826).

[104] "English Opera House," *The Theatrical Observer*, no. 537 (13 August 1823). Also see "English Opera House," *The Theatrical Observer*, no. 524 (29 July 1823).

[105] "Theatrical Examiner," *The Examiner*, no. 810 (3 August 1823): 504.

[106] Ibid., 505.

While Shelley's novel was deliberately evasive in describing the unutterable monstrosity of the creature, thus rendering the image of the monster open to the reader's imagination, the dramatization of the creature, on the other hand, had to grapple with the problem of representation head on. The playwright had to, literally, bring the creature to life on stage.

For Steven Forry, the dramatic representation of the monster was necessarily "Calibanized," further entrenching the already apparent associations between Shelley's monster and Shakespeare's version of the monstrous New World slave.[107] Apart from literary precursors like Caliban, the monster was also directly referred to as an embodiment of a black slave during a legislative debate on emancipation in the House of Commons. The Tory politician George Canning alluded to Mary Shelley's monster to argue against the emancipation of slaves in a speech delivered on March 16th, 1824:

> In dealing with the negro, Sir, we must remember that we are dealing with a being possessing the form and strength of a man, but the intellect only of a child. To turn him loose in the manhood of his physical strength, in the maturity of his physical passions, but in the infancy of his uninstructed reason, would be to raise up a creature resembling the splendid fiction of a recent romance; the hero of which constructs a human form, with all the corporeal capabilities of man, and with the thews and sinews of a giant; but being unable to impart to the work of his hands a perception of right and wrong, he finds too late that he has only created a more than mortal power of doing mischief, and himself recoils from the monster which he has made. Such would be the effect of a sudden emancipation, before the negro was prepared for the enjoyment of well-regulated liberty.[108]

In constructing the rebel slave as an infantile man-child, with the strength of a brute, Canning was undoubtedly exploiting the popular dogmas of scientific racism of his age, but he did so by invoking Shelley's monster, most likely referring to Peake's dramatic adaptation of the novel, which had been staged a year before in July 1823, and thereafter repeatedly performed

---

[107] Forry, *Hideous Progenies*, 22. Also see Allan Lloyd Smith, "'This Thing of Darkness': Racial Discourse in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein," *Gothic Studies* 6, no. 2 (2004): 210.

[108] George Canning, *Select Speeches of the Right Honourable George Canning*, ed. Robert Walsh (Philadelphia: Published by Desilver, Thomas & Co., 1836), 421.

until 1850. By then, there were visual representations of the monster as an African tribesman as shown in the scene from Robert and William Brough's one-act burlesque, *Frankenstein; or, The Model Man* (Adelphi, 1850), in which Paul Bedford played a blackfaced monster (Figure 10). Even Ira Aldridge, according to his first biographers, is said to have performed the role of the monster in H. M. Milner's *Frankenstein, or, The Man and the Monster* (Royal Coburg, 1826) in 1832 at Hull, the hometown of William Wilberforce.[109] Although it must be noted that Bernth Lindfors in his four-volume biography of Aldridge does not include the monster in the actor's repertoire as he could not verify the source upon which Marshall and Stock had made this claim.[110] But from Aldridge's penchant for performing characters that challenged stereotypes, it would not be too far-fetched to consider that perhaps the black actor might well have performed the monster, especially as it was a morally ambiguous character which challenged the spectators' moral binaries of good and evil.



Figure 10: Robert and William Brough's *Frankenstein; or, The Model Man* (1850). From *The Illustrated London*, 12 January 1850.

[109] Marshall and Stock, *Ira Aldridge: The Negro Tragedian*, 94.

[110] Communicated through email correspondence.

However, returning to Canning's comment in the House of Commons, it seems that Shelley was aware of the politician's allusion to her monster in his speech, as she writes in a letter to her friend, Edward John Trelawny: "They are introducing some ammelioration [sic] in the state of the slaves in some parts of the West Indies – during the debate on that subject Canning paid a compliment to Frankenstein in a manner sufficiently pleasing to me."[111] In another letter, written in Italian to Teresa Guiccioli, Byron's former lover, Shelley writes: "Did you know that he [Canning] praised my Frankenstein in honourable terms in the House of Commons – extremely pleasing to me."[112] Mulvey-Roberts asserts that since Shelley did not balk at the manner in which Canning had appropriated her monster for his ameliorationist propaganda, she must have been sympathetic to such a position.[113] But more important, for our purposes, is the question of what prompted the association between the monster and the African slave, or, in our terms, between monstrosity and the black body?

From the comments given above, it seems clear that the monster was understood as a racial Other, whether that racial Other is a North American savage, an Irishman, a Caliban-like character, or even a black rebel slave. If we break down Canning's comment as the most obvious articulation of the blackening of the monster, we can identify the racial type which Canning deploys to make the comparison between an emancipated slave and the monster.

First, Canning makes the distinction between physical maturity of the bodily form of the "negro" and his infantile intellect. This is a common distinction in racist discourse, as examined earlier in this chapter, which has a number of significant implications for empire-building and imperialist ideology. As the "negro" is mentally a child, the mature slaveowner

---

[111] Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, ed. Betty T. Bennett, vol. 1 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 417.

[112] Ibid., 566. Translated by Ricki Herzfeld for Betty Bennett.

[113] Mulvey-Roberts, *Dangerous Bodies*, 57-58.

or liberal state becomes the benign parent and caretaker, giving direction to the "uninstructed" negro, just as Edward Long and Lord Caledon had proposed. The African slaves, for this reason, have to be encouraged and compelled to work, if they are not to waste their lives in indolence and unproductivity. Canning likens the monster to the "negro" because it also assumes the human form and has the corporeal capabilities of an adult man with the intellect of a child with no sense of right and wrong. In other words, both the monster and the "negro" are physically mature and mentally immature.

Second, for Canning, the act of emancipation of the slave is akin to the creation of the monster. The havoc and destruction in the "romance" was a consequence of the "sudden emancipation" of the monster, who like the "negro" had not yet been "prepared for the enjoyment of well-regulated liberty." As it is the act of emancipation, rather than enslavement, that Canning equates to the act of creating monsters, the implication is that prior to emancipation, the "negro" is not a monster. Rather, as many racists of the period argued, the "negro" is naturally adapted to his condition of slavery, by which he is taught to be disciplined, civilized, and instructed to the best of his capabilities, which permit him to be competent in various forms of servitude, and nothing more, a position later advocated by Carlyle in his "Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question" (1849). The "negro," in other words, is a natural slave. This synonymity between the "negro" and the slave is what makes the black body the most representative figure of the slave condition.

Canning's argument is largely dependent upon popular constructions of the racial ("negro") type, disseminated through the "scientific" discourse of race and empire. He deploys the monster merely as a rhetorical example to highlight the consequences of the erroneous policy of emancipation. But in doing so, he blackens the monster by its association with the racial type. This racialization of monstrosity opens up the possibility of a counter-reading of race. Rather than just allowing the racial comparison Canning makes to contain

and define monstrosity, I want to use the polysemantic associations of monstrosity to inflect the interpretation of race in order to tap into its anagogic meaning of representing the underclasses in their collective struggle against oppression.

In his analysis of Aldridge's performance, James O'Rourke makes an interesting point about the influence of monstrosity on racial representation:

> The closest link between [Fawcett's] *Obi* and Jacobinism is in the influence of stage melodrama adaptations of the Frankenstein legend on the melodrama revision of *Obi*. The political valence of the Frankenstein story, in which a primitivist figure represents the Jacobin mob, is reactivated when the figure who is both a universal victim and an indiscriminate terror becomes the black Ira Aldridge playing Jack Mansong.[114]

O'Rourke draws attention to how the political valence of the monster as a primitivist figure that represents the Jacobin mob is "reactivated" in Aldridge's performance of the black rebel, Jack Mansong. This link between monstrosity as politically valent and the black as a "universal victim" and an "indiscriminate terror" is significant because it presents us with a notion of universality distinct from the notion of common humanity espoused by sentimental humanitarianism. According to Cox, the opposition to slavery in the name of sentimental humanitarianism was "grounded in a sense of shared oppression and reaching towards a goal of common liberation," or "a sense of common humanity."[115] This, undoubtedly, was part of the liberal agenda of benevolent imperialism. However, there is a counter-universality, what Susan Buck-Morss calls "inhumanity in common," which cannot be equated to the notion of common humanity of sentimental humanitarianism.[116] The monstrosity of blackness is a crucial aspect of this "inhumanity in common" that in fact makes the representations of

---

[114] James O'Rourke, "The Revision of Obi; or, Three-Finger'd Jack and the Jacobin Repudiation of Sentimentality," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 28, no. 4 (2006): 287.

[115] Cox, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 5: xi.

[116] Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History*, Illuminations (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 138-43.

blacks defy their own classificatory racial categories, whereby they signify representations of universality in the negative. The taxonomist Linnaeus, in his *Systemae Naturae* (1758), divided the species *Homo Sapiens* into six diurnal varieties, the last of which was *homo monstrosus* which was a category that was defined by its indefinability, and so included "several deviant forms."[117] In this manner, when the racialised black becomes monstrous, he becomes more than just a particular representation of blacks but an indefinable collective of deviant forms. As a counter to Canning, I want to assert that the need to racialize the monster is not merely to constitute the black as monstrous, but to identify the collective intersectionality that the undefined form of monstrosity makes representable through the figure of the black.

Blackened Bodies: The Pre-Emergence of Universal Solidarity

The possibility of universal solidarity amongst the racially-degenerate underclasses, which I claim is the anagogic meaning of black representations, is not a fully emergent or articulated experience. The place of the emergent, as defined by Raymond Williams, is postulated within a cultural domain ruled by the dominant, in this case the liberal sentimental humanitarianism of common humanity, which is a fundamental part of the ideology of benevolent imperialism. As Williams suggests: "In authentic historical analysis it is necessary at every point to recognize the complex interrelations between movements and tendencies both within and beyond a specific and effective dominance."[118] Unlike the residual and the dominant, the emergent is more difficult to ascertain as "[w]hat matters… is that it is never only a matter of immediate practice; indeed it depends crucially on finding

[117] Kitson, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 8: x.

[118] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Marxist Introductions (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 121.

new forms or adaptations of form."[119] The elusive amorphous nature of emergent culture, by the fact that it is merely in a state of emergence against a dominant that effectively rules cultural production and reception, makes it difficult to observe and assess. Williams suggests that "what we have to observe is in effect a pre-emergence, active and pressing but not yet fully articulated, rather than the evident emergence which could be more confidently named."[120] It is precisely the difficulty of naming it, that monstrosity becomes the term for the as-yet-indefinable social grouping into which the black body transforms.

In making this point, I take heed of Cox's caution concerning the tendency to universalise the condition of slavery:

> However, this sense of the ubiquity of slavery and even the notion of universal humanity can be seen from another perspective as an evasion of the historical realities of the European enslavement of Africans. If we are all slaves, is the enslavement of Africa by Europe different from the oppression of women by men or any worse than the domination of all humankind by its unruly passions?[121]

The knowledge of the particularity of different struggles and different forms of exploitations, arising from particular historical facts, can be conceptually reconfigured to determine the universal significance of particular struggles. Such judgments in no way attempt to bypass the rhetoric of difference or presume some universal essential identity masked by difference. The differences are as much related to the particularity of historical facts as they are to conceptual frameworks that barricade these facts, segregating them, beforehand, into national, racial, class, and gender discourse. Cox is right insofar as he denounces the universality of content, but universality as an orientation that grounds concrete material in an alternative conceptual framework sheds a different perspective on the black body.[122] Cox is

---

[119] Ibid., 126.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Cox, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 5: xi.

sceptical of understanding the slave condition as a universal condition because it flattens the distinct particular human conditions into uniformity. He thus stresses the particularity of British involvement in Atlantic slavery. But if one were to emphasize the resistance to slave conditions then it is this resistance that is claimed as universal, which cannot be folded back into sentimental sympathy with passive victims of aggression.[123]

A few markers of pre-emergence of universal solidarity can be identified through racial representations in this period. Youngquist and Botkin, in their manifesto for "Black Romanticism," emphasize that the word "black" does not mean "a new and darker purity to counter British whiteness," which would only essentialise blackness in opposition to whiteness without questioning the essentialism at the root of identity politics; rather blackness "bespeaks the multiple and mixed identities that arise through the circulation of people, ideas, and things throughout the Atlantic."[124] In the constitution of Haiti, Youngquist and Botkin identify what is perhaps the first ideological use of "black," not so much as a racial category but as defining a radical negation of such essential racial identifications: "This constitution pronounced all Haitians 'black,' including Polish and German mercenaries who remained on the island." The "universal significance" of the black body, according to Hugh

---

[122] I assert, with John Guillory, the significance of the universal in aesthetic discourse even if that universal is constituted by particular forces of power. As Guillory argues: [t]he dismissal of aesthetics, as the discourse of 'universal' value believed to suppress differences, has thus had the paradoxical effect of removing the basis for apprehending the work of art as the objectification not of subjects or communities but of the relations between subjects, or the relations between groups." John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 282.

[123] For Buck-Morss, the critical strategy is to work "through the historical specificities of particular experiences, approaching the universal not by subsuming facts within overarching systems or homogenizing premises, but by attending to the edges of systems, the limits of premises, the boundaries of our historical imagination in order to trespass, trouble, and tear these boundaries down. The task is to reconfigure the enlightenment project of universal history in the context of our too-soon and not-yet global public sphere." Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History*, 79.

[124] Youngquist and Botkin, "Introduction: Black Romanticism: Romantic Circulations". 7.

Honour, can be determined from Gericault's *The Raft of Medusa* (1819).[125] In this grand painting, Honour writes, "Gericault made a claim for the human dignity of blacks by giving the key place in the composition to the signalling figure at the apex of the pyramid of misery."[126] According to Honour, Gericault "appears to have had a project for a picture of the slave trade of which he was to speak also in the last months of his short life."[127] Preoccupied with such themes, Gericault produced a history painting in which the "blacks figure as representations of the human condition."[128] This representation of the black body was a counter to the diminutive and derogatory representations of the black body in racial burlesques, as well as to Canning's denigration of the emancipated black slave as Frankenstein's monster.

In several dramatic texts analysed throughout these chapters, a number of instances that signal this pre-emergence of the solidarity of struggle can also be brought forth as evidence. In Southerne's *Oroonoko* (Drury Lane, 1695), the comic subplot, which was later excised by Hawkesworth in his alteration, juxtaposed women's struggle to best the patriarchal conventions of the marriage market with the slave's dehumanization in the slave market. In Lillo's *The London Merchant* (Drury Lane, 1731), Millwood lashes out at the systemic injustice against women in which she considers herself entrapped as a slave. At the end of the century, Mary Wollstonecraft would make a direct comparison between the condition of women and of slaves in her *Vindication to the Rights of Woman* (1792): "Is sugar always to be produced by vital blood? Is one half of the human species, like the poor

---

[125] Hugh Honour, *The Image of the Black in Western Art. Volume 4, Part 1: Slaves and Liberators* (Houston: Menil Foundation, 1989), 125.

[126] Ibid., 19.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Ibid., 164.

African slaves, to be subject to prejudices that brutalize them, when principles would be a surer guard, only to sweeten the cup of man?"[129] This reference to slavery and the condition of women is not just a metaphorical conflation of the two. It is rather a forceful juxtaposition of two oppressed groups who form a collective, not just by their marginalization from an official order, but also by their act of rebellion, which conjoins their respective struggles as part of a collective struggle.

In another instance, we can identify the pre-emergence of a solidarity between the Jacobin revolutionaries and slaves, in which the struggle of one is seen as reminiscent of the struggle of the other. Edmund Burke describes the French revolutionaries as "a gang of Maroon slaves, suddenly broke loose from the house of bondage," who abused the liberty for which they were "ill-fitted."[130] Although this comparison was made in order to denounce the French revolutionaries, it nonetheless suggests that there was a form of solidarity (beyond sympathy), no matter how conscious or unconscious, between French Jacobins and Black Jacobins in their respective struggles as marginalised groups.

In this association between Jacobins and slaves in Burke, and between women and slaves in Wollstonecraft, slavery defines the relation of groups who stand outside the bounds of order. It is by negation of enslavement and struggle against tyranny that solidarity between Jacobins, women, and slaves can be conceptualized; a universal solidarity that overcomes particularities like gender, race and nationality to form, what the conservative defenders of order describe as a monster. As Buck-Morss argues,

> rather than giving multiple, distinct cultures equal due, whereby people are recognized as part of humanity indirectly through the mediation of collective cultural identities, human universality emerges in the historical event at the point of rupture. It is in the discontinuities of history that people whose culture

[129] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men; a Vindication of the Rights of Woman; an Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 225-26.

[130] Burke, "Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790)," 87.

> has been strained to the breaking point give expression to a humanity that goes beyond cultural limits. And it is in our empathic identification with this raw, free, and vulnerable state, that we have a chance of understanding what they say. Common humanity exists in spite of culture and its differences. A person's non-identity with the collective allows for subterranean solidarities that have a chance of appealing to universal, moral sentiment, the source today of enthusiasm and hope. It is not through culture, but through the threat of culture's betrayal that consciousness of a common humanity comes to be.[131]

E. P. Thompson articulates similar sentiments but in the context of class formation. He asserts the precedence of struggle over and above class identity or consciousness:

> Indeed, class struggle is the prior, as well as the more universal concept. To put it bluntly: classes do not exist as separate entities, look around, find an enemy class, and then start to struggle. On the contrary, people find themselves in a society structured in determined ways, … they experience exploitation (or the need to maintain power over those whom they exploit), they identify points of antagonistic interest, they commence to struggle around these issues and in the process of struggling they discover themselves as classes, they come to know this discovery as class-consciousness. Class and class-consciousness are always last, not the first, stage in the real historical process.[132]

It is thus erroneous to assume that race, like class, exists independently of the historical relationship to struggle in general. It is the universality of struggle that connects and intersects identities, communities, and groups in forms of antagonistic solidarity, that is only named after the experience is repeated again and again, and thus, becomes generalizable enough to have a name.

Before such forms of solidarity can be given a proper name (or can identify themselves with a proper name), these subversive groups are usually described as monsters, the name for that which is otherwise nameless. The historian Christopher Hill notes how the mobs were designated by those in power as "the headless multitude, the many-headed monster."[133] David McNally reiterates Hill's point about the fears of the propertied class

---

[131] Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History*, 133.

[132] E. P. Thompson, "Eighteenth-Century English Society: Class Struggle without Class?," *Social History* 3, no. 2 (1978): 149.

expressing itself in such terms:

> Lurking within the interstices of polite society, the ruling class perceived "a new-created race of masterless men, of beggars and vagabonds wandering the roads, … poaching and fence breaking at will," a monstrous mob ever-ready to transgress boundaries and overturn order, property and civilisation.[134]

McNally's point is a crucial one: these monster narratives are not premodern superstitions; rather they are characteristic of the anxieties caused by the "systemic assaults on bodily and psychic integrity that define the economic infrastructure of modernity, the capitalist market-system."[135] The atomization of social relations, the normalization of buying and selling of the capacity to labour, which is effectively the commodification of the body-apparatus and the disciplining of the body politic as a whole, radically transformed late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century English society. The consequent rebellious eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century plebeian culture in England, according to E. P. Thompson, was struggling against these "economic innovations and rationalizations (as enclosures, work-discipline, free-market relations in grain) which the rulers or employers [sought] to impose."[136] In an effort to demonise the rebellious factions, they were categorised as degenerates. Such notions of degeneracy, according to Ann Laura Stoler, "were directed at multiple targets and had wide applications. They not only targeted colonized populations … but also the indigent, supposedly *décivilisé*, racially-hybrid members within the European community."[137]

---

[133] Christopher Hill, "The Many-Headed Monster," in *Change an Continuity in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), 181.

[134] David McNally, *Monsters of the Market* (Boston: Brill, 2011), 60.

[135] Ibid., 5.

[136] Thompson, "Eighteenth-Century English Society: Class Struggle without Class?," 154.

[137] Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995), 32.

In their book-length study, *The Multi-Headed Hydra*, Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker enumerate various instances, "[f]rom the beginning of English colonial expansion in the early seventeenth century through the metropolitan industrialization of the early nineteenth, [when] rulers referred to the Hercules-hydra myth to describe the difficulty of imposing order on increasingly global systems of labour."[138] While the labours of Hercules symbolized economic development, from "the clearing of land, the draining of swamps, and the development of agriculture, as well as the domestication of livestock, the establishment of commerce, and the introduction of technology," the many-headed hydra served as "an antithetical symbol of disorder and resistance, a powerful threat to the building of state, empire, and capitalism."[139] On the one hand, the Dutch ex-governor of Surinam, J. J. Mauricius described the rebellious runaway slaves as "a Hydra's growth which even Alcides [Hercules] would try to avoid";[140] on the other hand, Andrew Ure employed the myth in his *Philosophy of Manufactures* (1835) to portray the implementation of new technology as a "Herculean prodigy" that effectively strangled the striking industrial workers identified as "the Hydra of misrule."[141] Just as the word "Jacobin," according to Coleridge, became a "term of abuse" for those "who from whatever cause opposed the late war, and the late Ministry, and whom [the Anti-Jacobins] hate for this opposition with such mortal hatred, as is

---

[138] Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (London: Verso, 2000), 3.

[139] Ibid., 2. In the Greek myth, the task set for Hercules's second labour was to kill the hydra of Lerna, a creature born of Typhon (a tempest) and Echidna (a hybrid – half woman, half snake). The resilience of the hydra was represented by the fact that after lopping off one head, two grew in its place, an apt metaphor not just for the futility of quelling resistance, but also the necessity of perpetual violence to maintain order.

[140] Mauricius quoted in Richard Price, *To Slay the Hydra: Dutch Colonial Perspectives on the Saramaka Wars* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Karoma, 1983), 15.

[141] Andrew Ure, *The Philosophy of Manufactures: Or, an Exposition of the Scientific, Moral and Commercial Economy of the Factory System of Great Britain* (London 1835), 367.

usual with bigots alarmed, and detected culprits," similarly, the word "multi-headed monster" and "hydra" became part of the vocabulary of those in power to designate rebels of all sorts.[142] Linebaugh and Rediker trace the Hercules-hydra myth as an effective trope used by those in power to represent the justified violent imposition of order and the threat posed by an unruly and unwieldy multitude.

What is important to note about the deployment of the Hercules-hydra myth is that it is not merely ornamental rhetorical flourish, signalling the writers' classical education; rather, Linebaugh and Rediker argue, it was developed into "the intellectual basis for the biological doctrine of monstrosity" as set out by Francis Bacon in his *An Advertisement Touching an Holy War* (1623), which promoted nothing less than a project for genocide:

> [W]e should add the labours of Hercules; an example which, though it be flourished with much fabulous matter, yet so much it hath, that it doth notably set forth the consent of all nations and ages in the approbation of the extirpating and debellating of giants, monsters, and foreign tyrants, not only as lawful, but as meritorious, even divine honour.[143]

This, according to Linebaugh and Rediker, indicated the assumed national consensus on the extermination of monsters, which drove "the Herculean process of globalization."[144]

Bacon's genocidal agenda, however, was reformed into the more profitable project of administration of racial Others, rather than their extermination. As was clear from our discussion of the Hottentot Venus exhibition, the theatricalization of Baartman's black body was presented as a typical case in which the colonial project was normalised as a benign endeavour to bring order to a nation of "imbeciles." The creation of a British imperial

---

[142] Coleridge, "Once a Jacobin, Always a Jacobin" (Morning Post, 1802) in Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Coleridge's Writings: On Politics and Society*, ed. John Morrow, vol. 1 (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), 72.

[143] Francis Bacon, "An Advertisement Touching an Holy War," in *The Oxford Francis Bacon*, ed. Michael Kiernan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 8: 205. The passage was quoted in Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, 39-40.

[144] *The Many-Headed Hydra*, 327.

identity was predicated upon the glories of an ever-expanding colonial empire that annexed territories and subjugated populations abroad, but also, more crucially, at home. The threat of the black population within English territorial borders, as noted in William Davy's defence of James Somerset, created an interior frontier within the metropole, in which the blacks joined the ranks of idlers, vagrants, and highway robbers, or what would be termed as the floating landless populace, the multitude that was excommunicated from the commons through centuries of enclosures and expropriation. As quoted earlier, for Kathleen Wilson, "national identities are not unitary entities to be discovered or superimposed but dense ideological constructions that are fissured, contested, and exclusionary of those *within* as well as, and more than, those *without.*"[145] It is precisely this floating populace of disenfranchised, threatening underclasses that is collectively blackened by association with the act of struggle.

What were considered as external frontiers between metropole and colony were not so external after all, as the territorial boundaries of nation, class, and race were fluid and porous, open to cultural, sexual, political, and economic exchanges and intermingling. The spatial adjective, "interior," just as easily shifts into "interiorized" or "internal," defining a set of practices and affective attachments. This semantic shift from interior to internalized frontiers is particularly significant for the performance of race and monstrosity. For Fryer, "there was an organic connection in nineteenth-century Britain between the attitude the ruling class took to the 'natives' in its colonies and the attitude it took to the poor at home."[146] Drawing an analogy between the martial races abroad and at home, V. G. Kiernan similarly affirms that: "Discontented native in the colonies, labour agitator in the mills, were the same serpent in alternate disguises. Much of the talk about the barbarism or darkness of the outer world,

---

[145] Colley, *Britons*, 6. Also see "Britishness and Otherness: An Argument," 316; Wilson, "The Good, the Bad, and the Impotent," 257, n.6.

[146] Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 2018), 171-72.

which it was Europe's mission to rout, was a transmuted fear of the masses at home."[147] The enemy within spatial territorial borders is also internalized in the affective constitution of self as distinguishable from the Other, a process which Christina Sharpe recognises as "monstrous intimacies."

Sharpe's notion of "monstrous intimacies" attempts to account for the subjectivities that have been constituted after the experience and social memory of trans-Atlantic slavery. These subjectivities are "attentive to but not dependent upon nations and nationalisms."[148] As Sharpe explains:

> The legal captivity of Africans and their descendants was central to the codification of rights and freedoms for those legally constituted as white and their legally white descendants. That is, freedoms for those people constituted as white were and are produced through an other's body legally and otherwise being made to wear unfreedom and to serve as a placeholder for access to the freedoms that are denied the black subject.[149]

Monstrous intimacies are "defined as a set of known and unknown performances and inhabited horrors, desires and positions produced, reproduced, circulated, and transmitted, that are breathed in like air and often unacknowledged to be monstrous."[150]

What I want to assert is that the black body is something that is common to all of these formalizations but is not specific to them. It is not the actual African body but more of a conceptual body that can be subtracted from all these formalizations. The black body was always detached from the bodies that it was meant to be representative of. It is, in this sense, that black bodies are characteristically negative. They are the negation of bodies, emerging as a spectral presence instead, taking flight from real bodies that are repressed, silenced,

---

[147] V. G. Kiernan, *The Lords of Human Kind: European Attitudes Towards the Outside World in the Imperial Age* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969), 316.

[148] Sharpe, *Monstrous Intimacies*, 3.

[149] Ibid., 15.

[150] Ibid., 3.

abstracted, and dematerialised into types and caricatures. Black bodies function not just as determinations and designations of African bodies that are enslaved but also, more critically, as negative bodies put to work in a system that consumes their concrete labour (and their real bodies) in favour of the abstract value appropriated in the cycles of accumulation. Black bodies refer to bodies that are cancelled, bodies that are barred, bodies that are regarded as bodiless, in which the adjective "black" functions as absence, void, and negation. As Hugh Honour notes:

> The prime aim of thinkers of the Enlightenment was liberation from injustice, superstition, and all other forms of error. To them the slavery of Africans was but one instance of a much more widespread evil. But it was also the one most easily illustrated. The visual image of a black slave could thus typify all the victims of arbitrary power or *l'infâme*.[151]

In other words, the efficacy of the representation of black bodies was that it could typify all the victims of arbitrary power in visual representation. Similarly, in the case of subversive readings of the monster, all significant representations of struggles are unified in the singular performance of monstrosity. In this way, one can account for the numerous speculations on Mary Shelley's monster as an expression of maternal anxiety, or social anxiety, or imperial anxiety, or even racial anxiety.[152] The vocation of the symbol, argues Jameson, "lies less in

---

[151] Honour, *The Image of the Black in Western Art. Volume 4, Part 1: Slaves and Liberators*, 51.

[152] Shelley's novel has been read through various theoretical lenses offering credible insights from a feminist, biographical, structuralist, and poststructuralist perspective. Ellen Moers reads the novel as an expression of the author's anxieties vis-à-vis "the motif of revulsion against newborn life, and the drama of guilt, dread, and flight surrounding birth and its consequences." Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (London: Women's Press, 1978), 93. For Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *Frankenstein* is "the fearful tale of a female fall from a lost paradise of art, speech, and autonomy into a hell of sexuality, science, and filthy materiality." Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), 227. From a more broader perspective, Kari J. Winter argues that in *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley "attempts to give voice to those people in society who are traditionally removed from the centres of linguistic power, people who are defined as alien, inferior, or monstrous solely because of physical features (such as sex or race) or material conditions (such as poverty)." Kari J. Winter, *Subjects of Slavery, Agents of Change: Women and Power*

any single message or meaning than in its very capacity to absorb and organize all of these quite distinct anxieties together."[153] This monstrosity of blackness is reclaimed in its most radical sense as negative universality, establishing a figural subterranean solidarity between the myriad forms of repressed bodies. It is this meaning of universality that I suggest is the anagogic significance of the representation of the black body.

in Gothic Novels and Slave Narratives, 1790-1865 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 51.

[153] Fredric Jameson, *Signatures of the Visible* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 26.

EPILOGUE

I began with an enquiry concerning the form and function of the black body in theatrical representation and performance in British Georgian drama. I proposed a hypothesis that if the black body is a construct that is framed, then to determine its form and function would require an examination of the logic of framing that formalized the theatrical black body in popular concrete manifestations, namely the noble savage, the grateful slave, the comical servant, the rebel slave, and the racial type. I examined these shifting formalizations of the theatrical black body and dissected them into their component parts, analysed their historical context, and accounted for the periodic shift from the noble body to the sentimental body and from the sentimental body to the melodramatic body.

What I discovered was that the predominant formalizations of the black body were but provisional solutions to the representational crisis of a liberal, slave-holding empire during its different periods. At the earliest stage of Britain's emergence as a colonial power after the Seven Years' War, the black body was formalized within the noble savage paradigm. In this early formalization, characters like Oroonoko and Yarico, which figured as noble bodies (products of a prior historical moment), were performatively reconfigured as natural bodies in tune with the corresponding evolution of sentimentalism as a mode of perception that recognized the moral equivalence of unequal Others. Such a reformulation, however, still retained much of its old residual significance of nobility, privilege, and classical heroism. The hermeneutic flexibility afforded by the noble savage paradigm could only be stretched so far, and so, we see the emergence of a new formalization of the black body under the new representative regime of benevolent imperialism. Benevolent imperialism was the ideological context that effectively reimagined metropole-colonial relations in theatrical representations as an exchange between benevolent actions and grateful

reactions. The numerous examples of New-Low characters (grateful slaves and comical servants) that litter this period evolved within the new framework of benevolence and gratitude fulfilling distinctly "low" dramatic functions of moral appeasement and legitimation of liberal sentimentalism.

However, even the liberal form of spectatorial investment in New-Low characters arrived at a limit when historical circumstances shifted once again and Britain was confronted with the real threat of revolution at home and abroad during the 1790s. The rebel had no place in the sentimental representative regime of benevolent imperialism, and so emerged the necessity for a new formalization of the black body in a new generic form, melodrama. The reformulated black body as a melodramatic rebel was increasingly racialised as an effective strategy to provisionally resolve the representational impasse suffered by liberal sentimentalism, which failed to assimilate the voice of the rebel. The effective deployment of melodramatic theatrics, through stage apparatus and performance, sustained the credibility of Britain's empire by circumscribing the rebels' heroic resistance within narratives that delegitimised their claims, even as the spectators revelled in the rebels' marvellous theatric feats.

As the slave relations in the colonies were more firmly entrenched by the end of the eighteenth century, even as the abolitionist movement fought with more fervour in the legislative assemblies, the racialization of the black body intensified. Scientific racism, as the "handmaiden of the empire," conjured the racial type and affirmed its efficacy as a potent ideological weapon for the imperial intervention, legislation, and control of colonial territory. The theatricalization of race, as in the case of the Hottentot Venus and Charles Mathews' racial burlesque, served as yet another provisional solution to the representational crisis of a liberal empire in an era after the abolition of the slave trade. The spatial delimitation of

slavery within the colonies eventually gave way to the racial delimitation of slavery to justify the gradual annexation of African territory.

The central thematic concerns of this thesis dealt with problems of racial representation and performance, racial classification, slavery, and the ideological manipulations of classical liberalism, all of which converge in the analysis of theatrical black bodies. In tracing the transformation in the formalization of the black body in an era of slavery, I realised that the underlying critique of my analysis targeted several tenets of classical liberalism that informed the ideology of benevolent imperialism, particularly the complementarity of liberty and slavery (in spite of their conceptual antagonism) as expressed in the political and social relations of the period. This eighteenth-century paradox was the crux of the representational crisis of a virtuous, liberal, slaveholding empire that had to reformulate its own image again and again, ideologically affirming notions of common humanity, liberal sentimentalism, virtuous benevolence, and paternalistic imperialism. The various formalizations of the black body were but products of this representational struggle.

What, then, is the black body? In this analysis, I have resorted to understanding the black body as an allegory to account for the multiplicity of interpretations which do not necessarily crossover the different levels of mediation. The answer to this question, then, is fourfold, in accordance with the interpretive possibilities afforded by traditional biblical exegesis, which can be schematized as follows:

LITERAL OR HISTORICAL: the commodified materiality of “black” skin
MYSTICAL: the theological connotations of blackness as sinful and evil
MORAL: the humanist moral equivalence of sentimental black bodies
ANAGOGICAL: the “blackened” bodies of numerous underclasses

This schema becomes useful to demonstrate the efficacy of various interpretations that focus on one or more of the above levels. All of these levels represent distinct paradigms that demand interpretation in their own right. The allegorical levels navigated by the black body

can be historicized in periods in which certain levels become more dominant than others. While the mystical (theological) level ascribed the negative connotations of evil and sinfulness to black bodies in the form of blackfaced devils of morality plays and religious pageants, the humanist moralistic overtones (moral equivalence of unequal Others) of the black noble savage and the grateful slave dominated eighteenth-century sentimentalism. At the turn of the century, the representational significance of blackness as the literal designation of the skin colour of slaves (with the recognition of colonial Others as subjects of the Empire) dominated over its mystical and moralistic significance. The focus on literal blackness of the skin, which marks it out as a commodity to be bought and sold in the slave market, reduces the black body to a state of natural slavery, and its association with grotesqueness and monstrosity. The black body, in this instance, designates the basest condition of (in)humanity, ultimately dissociated from class, religion, and community. At the anagogic level of interpretation, however, this baseness of the black body represents the residual human spirit of resistance and resilience of the underclasses struggling against capitalist exploitation in the early nineteenth-century (inhumanity in common), exemplified in the polyvalent monstrosity of black bodies. In the last formulation, the anagogic significance of the black body reasserts the demands for collective struggle, an unrealized possibility of subterranean solidarity of a new, as-yet-unnamed, or unnameable, collective.

My argument has been about the unfolding of the historical process through an analysis of the shifting form and function of the black body. As historical processes are more structural and evasive, and mark their transitions subtly upon aesthetic forms, I have had to rely upon theoretical techniques that can interpret the evidence given in the context of these structural transformations. In this context then, the black body was used as a heuristic or analytic category to organise the literary, performative, and discursive material, in order to examine the historical process by which the concept of race informed the representation of

"racial" Others. By taking the black body as a heuristic concept and a representative paradigm in its own right, I could enquire into themes (moral equivalence of unequal Others, sentimental reconciliation, patriotic nationalism) that were predominant in such works, and interrogate the normative aesthetic principles (noble savage paradigm, ideology of benevolent imperialism, melodramatic theatrics, theatricalization of race) by which these themes were framed and formalized.

My contribution to the field is perhaps in the reorganization of the material at hand in order to reveal the social contradictions that condition literary and theatrical productions. Also, by focusing on the processes of racialisation, I have attempted to show how conceptual categories like "race" should be interrogated as specific historical constructs, rather than assuming these concepts as given. The ideological character of racism is historicised in its particular functionality as a discourse of empire, and such a perspective is critical if we are to understand race relations in our own current liberal societies which are grappling with issues pertaining to the influx of immigrants and refugees, who are treated with suspicion, in an era that launched a global war against terror. It is for this reason that there is, ultimately, no proper closure to this project.

In this project, I was interested in delineating the conditions of racialization in a period when race and class were still somewhat fluid categories. My primary focus was always on the "white" producers and consumers of racialised representations, and the concomitant process by which whiteness comes into being by defining and disciplining blackness. These racial categories are hypostasized in the social imagination even as they came into full force in the context of the larger project of empire-building.

For this reason, the Empire looms large in these representations and is a character in its own right. After the Seven Years' War, the Empire necessitated the reworking of the indispensable singularity of the kingly noble body in Southerne's *Oroonoko*, which still

retained some generic sediments of feudal aesthetics, into the sentimental, abstractly exchangeable natural body of the common man, more in line with the coeval development of liberal humanitarianism and an ever-expanding market society. After its rise to dominance, the Empire imposed its representative regime of benevolent imperialism, an ideological mask of benignity or "pretended piety" behind which resided the despotic power of absolute rule. The Empire tolerated the din of difference and plurality only insofar as the hubbub drowned into silence the voices it repressed. When the revolution broke out in France, the Empire reformulated its strategy, reworked its image, made concessions where necessary, only in order to sustain its credibility, all the while building its material and ideological arsenal for a full-scale assault to expand its borders, discipline its interiors, and legitimise its claims.

However, these confident representations of the Empire also revealed its vulnerability. As Marx polemically stated in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), capitalism creates its own grave-diggers. This is not so much an observation as an orientation. The very determinate social conditions that change society in one way, also bring about the necessary social conditions for it to change in another way. By bringing together a vast army of workers and concentrating them in spatially-delimited factory spaces, capitalism created the conditions in which a group of people identified themselves as a class collective with common needs and predicaments, thus giving rise to trade unions that could assert workers' power of collective bargaining. Capitalism thus created the agent of change (even if not the agent of revolutionary change) and provided the technological tools and organisational principles to bring about such change. I applied this orientation in my analysis of racial representations of black bodies, seeking the alternatives to the dominant espoused by the Empire. In the first chapter, alternative spectatorial possibilities were offered in Thelwall's *Incle and Yarico* (1787) and Ferriar's *Prince of Angola* (1788). I developed these alternative possibilities in the second chapter through the notion of radical sympathy, as expressed by

Stockdale and Raynal, as a counter to the dominant spectatorial attitude of liberal sentimentalism and sympathy. This radical alternative is more conspicuous by its absence as a narrative possibility in the third chapter, which looks at a variety of narratives in which the illusion of social harmony is maintained. While the drama of resistance and revolutionary disorder was being played on the stage of politics and war in the age of revolutions, the theatrical drama, either by government censure or political conservatism of the dramatists, shied away from representing such radical sentiments. However, in the last chapter, I bring forth the interested spectator, as distinct from the disinterested spectator, and explore the meaning of the black body at the anagogic level, with its insistence on connecting all forms of oppression as variations of the ultimate control over our body (personal and social) and over our nature (internal and external). This offers a possible, if tentative, interpretive strategy of change. In his *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845), Marx said that philosophers have hitherto interpreted the world, but the point is to change it; but he, as well as anyone, realized that interpretation and change are dialectically related strategies of transformation.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Adolphus, John. *Memoirs of John Bannister.* Vol. 1, London: Richard Bentley, New Burlington Street, 1839.

Anon. *London Chronicler*, 1-3 July 1800.

———. *The Star*, 7 July 1800.

———. *A Description of Furibond; or, Harlequin Negro: A Grand Comic Pantomime, Performing with Applause at Drury Lane, Theatre.* London: Printed for J. Scales, 1807.

———. "'Epilogue to the Padlock' from the Gentleman's Magazine (Oct. 1787)." http://brycchancarey.com/slavery/padlock1.htm.

———. "Ode: The Insurrection of the Slaves at St. Domingo." In *The Spirit of the Public Journals for 1797*. London: Printed for James Ridgway, 1802.

———. "Theatric Retrospect." *Monthly Magazine, or, British Register*, September 1800, 169-70.

"Art. Xv. The Castle Spectre: A Drama in Five Acts." *Analytical Review* 28, no. 2 (August 1798): 179-91.

Azuria. "Stanzas, Written on Seeing Mr. C. Kemble in the Pantomime of Obi." In *The Monthly Mirror: Reflecting Men and Manners*, 44-45. London: J. Wright, July 1800.

Bacon, Francis. "An Advertisement Touching an Holy War." In *The Oxford Francis Bacon*, edited by Michael Kiernan, 187-206. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000.

Baker, David Erskine. *Biographia Dramatica.* 3 vols. London: Printed for Longman et al., 1812.

Bate Dudley, Henry. "The Black-a-Moor Wash'd White." In *John Larpent Plays*: The Huntington Library, 1776.

Bates, William. *Harlequin Mungo; or, a Peep into the Tower.* London: Printed by J. Skirven, 1788.

Beckford, William. *A Descriptive Account of the Island of Jamaica.* 2 vols. London: Printed for T. and J. Egerton, 1790.

Behn, Aphra. *Oroonoko, or, the Royal Slave: A True History.* London: Printed for William Canning, 1688.

Bellamy, Thomas. *The Benevolent Planters.* London: Printed for J Debrett, 1789.

———. "The Benevolent Planters." In *John Larpent Plays*: The Huntington Library, 1789.

———. *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse.* London: Sold by W. Brown, 1794.

Boaden, James. *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons.* 2 vols. London: Henry Colburn, 1827.

———. *Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq.* 2 vols. London: Longman et al., 1825.

Burke, Edmund. "Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790)." In *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke, Vol. 8: The French Revolution 1790-1794*, edited by L. G. Mitchell, 53-293. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.

———. "Speech on Conciliation with America (22 March 1775)." In *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke. Vol. 3: Party, Parliament, and the American War 1774-1780*, edited by W. M. Elofson and John A. Woods, 102-69. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.

———. "Thoughts and Details on Scarcity (1795)." In *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke, Vol. 9.1: The Revolutionary War 1794-1797*, edited by R. B. McDowell, 119-45. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.

Canning, George, John Hookham Frere, George Ellis, and William Gifford. *Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin.* London: Printed for J. Wright, 1801.

Canning, George. *Select Speeches of the Right Honourable George Canning.* Edited by Robert Walsh. Philadelphia: Published by Desilver, Thomas & Co., 1836.

Carlyle, Thomas. *Chartism.* London: James Fraser, 1840.

———. "Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question." *Fraser's Magazine* XL (1849): 670-79.

Cezar, Hend. "Letter to the Editor." *The Morning Chronicle*, 23 Oct. 1810.

Clarkson, Thomas. *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament.* 2 vols. London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1808.

Cobb, James. *Paul and Virginia: A Musical Drama.* Dublin: Printed by Thomas Burnside, 1801.

"The Coburg Theatre." *The Times* (11 October 1825): 2.

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Biographia Literaria.* Vol. 2, London1817.

———. *Coleridge's Writings: On Politics and Society.* Edited by John Morrow. Vol. 1, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990.

———. *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Vol. 12.4: Marginalia.* Bollingen Series. Edited by George Whalley and H. J. Jackson. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.

———. "Lecture on the Slave Trade." In *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Vol. 1: Lectures 1795 on Politics and Religion*, edited by Peter Mann and Lewis Patton. Bollingen Series, 231-51. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971.

———. "On the Slave Trade." In *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Vol. 2: The Watchmen*, edited by Lewis Patton. Bollingen Series, 130-40. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970.

———. "Osorio." In *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Vol. 16: Poetical Works*, edited by J. C. C. Mays. Bollingen Series, 45-164. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

———. "Remorse." In *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Vol. 16: Poetical Works*, edited by J. C. C. Mays. Bollingen Series, 1019-325. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Colman, George. *The English Merchant.* London: Printed for T. Becket et al., 1767.

Colman, George. "Inkle and Yarico." In *The British Theatre, with Biographical and Critical Remarks by Mrs Inchbald*. London: Printed for Hurst, Robinson, and Co., 1824.

A Comparison between the Two Stages. London 1702.

Cox, Jeffrey N., ed. *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period* Vol. 5: Drama. London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999.

Cross, J. C. *King Cæsar; or, the Negro Slaves.* London: Printed by T. Burton, 1801.

———. *Rinaldo Rinaldini.* London: Lackington, Allen, and Co., 1809.

———. "The Surrender of Trinidad." In *John Larpent Plays*: The Huntington Library, 1797.

Cumberland, Richard. *Memoirs of Richard Cumberland.* 2 vols. London: Printed for Lackington, Allen, & Co., 1807.

———. *The West Indian.* London: Printed for John Bell, 1792.

"Debates in the Commons on the Bill to Restrain the East India Company from Appointing Supervisors in India." In *The Parliamentary History of England*, 646-74. London: Printed by T. C. Hansard, 1803.

Dryden, John. *The Conquest of Granada by the Spaniards.* London: Printed for J. Tonson and T. Bennet, 1704.

Dunlap, William. *Memoirs of George Fred. Cooke.* 2 vols. London: Printed for Henry Colburn, 1813.

Dutton, Thomas. *Dramatic Censor* III (1800): 27-28.

Earle, William. *Obi; or, the History of Three-Fingered Jack in a Series of Letters from a Resident in Jamaica to His Friend in England.* London: printed for Earle and Hemet, 1800.

East, Edward Hyde. *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Court of King's Bench.* 16 vols. Vol. XIII, London: Printed for J. Butterworth and Son, 1817.

"English Opera House." *The Theatrical Observer*, no. 524 (29 July 1823).

"English Opera House." *The Theatrical Observer*, no. 537 (13 August 1823).

Fawcett, John. *Obi, or, Three-Finger'd Jack.* London: John Longman, Clementi's Compy, 1800.

Ferriar, John. *The Prince of Angola: A Tragedy, Altered from the Play of Oroonoko. And Adapted to the Circumstances of the Present Times.* Manchester: Printed by J. Harrop, 1788.

Gentleman, Francis. *Oroonoko or the Royal Slave. A Tragedy. Altered from Southerne, by Francis Gentleman.* Glasgow: printed by Robert and Andrew Foulis, 1760.

Gilliland, Thomas. *The Dramatic Mirror.* 2 vols. London: Printed for C. Chapple, 1808.

Grainger, James. *The Sugar-Cane: A Poem. In Four Books. With Notes.* London: printed for R. and J. Dodsley, 1764.

Hawkesworth, John. *Oroonoko, a Tragedy, as It Is Now Acted at the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane. By His Majesty's Servants. By Thomas Southern. With Alterations.* London: printed for C. Bathurst; and the rest of the proprietors, 1759.

Hawkins, Frederick William. *The Life of Edmund Kean.* 2 vols. London 1869.

Hazlitt, William. *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt.* Edited by P. P. Howe. 21 vols. Vol. 5, London: J. M. Dent, 1930.

Hill, Aaron. *The Art of Acting.* London: Printed by J. Smeeton, 1801.

Hill, John. *The Actor: A Treatise on the Art of Playing.* London: printed for R. Griffiths, 1750.

"The Hottentot Venus." *The Times*, 26 Nov. 1810.

"The Hottentot Venus." *The Morning Post*, 20 Sep. 1810.

"The Hottentot Venus." *The Morning Post*, 18 Oct. 1810.

"Hottentot Venus." *The Morning Post*, 29 Oct. 1810.

Hunt, James. "Address Delivered at the Third Anniversary Meeting of the Anthropological Society of London." *Journal of the Anthropological Society of London* 4 (1866): lix-lxxxi.

———. *On the Negro's Place in Nature.* London: Trübner & Co., 1863.

———. "The President's Address." *Journal of the Anthropological Society of London* 5 (1867): xliv-lxxi.

Hunt, Leigh. *Critical Essays on the Performers of the London Theatres.* London: Printed by and for John Hunt, 1807.

Inchbald, Elizabeth. *The British Theatre.* 25 vols. Vol. 12, London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1808.

Johnson, Samuel, and David Garrick. *Prologue and Epilogue Spoken at the Opening of the Theatre in Drury Lane.* London: E. Cave, 1747.

Kitson, Peter J., ed. *Slavery, Abolition, and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period* Vol. 8: Theories of Race. London: Pickering & Chatto 1999.

Kolb, Peter. *The Present State of the Cape of Good Hope.* Translated by Medley. 2 vols. London: printed for W. Innys and R. Manby, 1738.

Kotzebue, August von. *The Negro Slaves.* London: Printed for T. Cadell, Jr., and W. Davies etc., 1796.

Lamb, Charles. *The Works of Charles Lamb.* Vol. 2, London: Printed for C. and J. Ollier, 1818.

Lavater, Johann Caspar. *Essays on Physiognomy.* Translated by Thomas Holcroft. Vol. 3, London: Printed by C. Whittingham, 1804.

"Law Intelligence: Court of King's Bench, Wednesday, Nov. 28th. 'The Hottentot Venus'." *The Morning Post*, 29 Nov. 1810.

Lee, Debbie, Peter J. Kitson, and Jeffrey N. Cox. *Slavery, Abolition, and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period.* 8 vols. London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999.

Lescarbot, Marc. *Nova Francia: A Description of Arcadia, 1606 (1609).* Translated by Pierre Erondelle. New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1928.

"Letter to the Editor." *The Morning Chronicle*, 12 Oct. 1810.

Lewis, M. G. *The Castle Spectre.* London: Printed for J. Bell, 1798.

———. *Journal of a West-India Proprietor: Kept During a Residence in the Island of Jamaica.* London: J. Murray, 1834.

Lillo, George. *The London Merchant; or the History of George Barnwell.* Worcester: London, 1783.

Locke, John. *Second Treatise of Government.* Edited by C. B. Macpherson. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980.

———. *Some Considerations of the Consequences of the Lowering of Interest, and Raising the Value of Money.* London: Printed for Awnsham and John Churchill, 1692.

Lockhart, J. G. *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott.* 4 vols. Paris: A. and W. Galignani and Co., 1838.

Mackenzie, Kenneth R. H. "Sproat's Studies of Savage Life." *The Anthropological Review* 6, no. 23 (1868): 366-78.

Maclaren, Archibald. *The Negro Slaves or, the Blackman and Blackbird.* London: Printed by A. Macpherson, 1799.

MacNeill, Hector. *Observations on the Treatment of the Negroes, in the Island of Jamaica.* London: Printed for G. G. J. and J. Robinson, no. 25, Pater-Noster-Row and J. Gore, Liverpool., 1788.

Macready, William. *The Irishman in London; or, the Happy African.* London: Printed by W. Woodfall, 1793.

Marshall, Julian. *The Life and Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley.* 2 vols. London: R. Bentley and Son, 1889.

Marx, Karl. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy.* Translated by Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin in Association with New left review, 1990.

Mathews, Anne. *A Continuation of the Memoirs of Charles Mathews.* 2 vols. Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1839.

———. *Memoirs of Charles Mathews.* 4 vols. Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1839.

Mathews, Charles. *The London Mathews: Containing an Account of This Celebrated Comedian's Trip to America.* London: Printed by Hodgson and Co., N.D.

———. *Mathews in America; or, the Theatrical Wanderer.* London: Printed by Hodgson & Co., N.D.

———. *A Sketch of Mr. Mathews's Entertainment, Entitled a Trip to America.* London: Printed by J. D. Bird, 1824.

———. *Sketches of Mr. Mathews's Celebrated Trip to America.* London: Printed by J. Limbird, N.D.

Montesquieu, Charles de Secondat. *The Spirit of Laws.* 4th ed. 2 vols. Edinburgh: Printed for A. Donaldson, 1768.

Moseley, Benjamin. *A Treatise on Sugar.* London: Printed for G.G. and J. Robinson, 1799.

Mudford, William. *A Critical Examination of the Writings of Richard Cumberland, Esq.* 2 vols. London: Printed by Charles Squire, 1812.

Murray, William H. "Obi; or, Three-Fingered Jack. A Popular Melodrame, in Two Acts." *Romantic Circles* (2002). https://romantic-circles.org/praxis/obi/obi_melodrama_act1.html.

Paine, Thomas. *Political Writings.* Edited by Bruce Kuklick. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Peake, Richard Brinsley, and Charles Mathews. "Jonathan in England; or Americans Abroad." In *Lord Chamberlain's Plays Collection*: British Library, 1824.

Philip, John. *Researches in South Africa.* 2 vols. London: J. Duncan, 1828.

Raynal, Abbé. *A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies.* Translated by J. O. Justamond. 8 vols. Vol. 5, London: Printed for W. Strahan; and T. Cadell, 1783.

Rede, Leman Thomas. *The Road to the Stage; or, the Performer's Preceptor.* London: J. Onwhyn, 1827.

Reynolds, Frederick. *Laugh When You Can.* London: printed for T.N. Longman and O. Rees, 1799.

———. *The Life and Times of Frederick Reynolds, Written by Himself.* London: Henry Colburn, 1827.

Schiller, Friedrich. *The Robbers: A Tragedy.* Translated by William Render. London: Printed by C. Whittingham, 1799.

Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper. *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times.* 3 vols. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2001.

Sharp, Granville. *A Representation of the Injustice and Dangerous Tendency of Tolerating Slavery; or of Admitting the Least Claim of Private Property in the Persons of Men, in England.* London: Printed for Benjamin White, 1769.

Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft. *The Journals of Mary Shelley, 1814-1844.* Edited by Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.

———. *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley.* Edited by Betty T. Bennett. Vol. 1, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.

Smith, Adam. *The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith. Vol. 2, an Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. Oxford: Oxford

University Press, 2014. http://oxfordscholarlyeditions.com/view/10.1093/actrade/9780199269570.book.1/actrade-9780199269570-book-1.

———. "Lectures on Jurisprudence." In *The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith*, edited by R. L. Meek, D. D. Raphael and Peter Stein. Glasgow: Glasgow University, 2014.

Southerne, Thomas. *Oroonoko, a Tragedy.* London: printed by J. Darby for Ben. and Sam. Tooke and M. P. and sold by A. Bettesworth, and F. Clay, 1722.

The Stage. London 1815.

Stedman, John Gabriel. *Narrative, of a Five Years' Expedition; against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam in Guiana, on the Wild Coast of South America; from the Year 1772 to 1777.* 2 vols. London: printed for J. Johnson, & J. Edwards, 1796.

"Theatrical Examiner." *The Examiner*, no. 810 (3 August 1823): 504-05.

"Theatrical Journal." *European Magazine* (Aug. 1789).

"Theatrical Journal." *European Magazine* (Sept. 1789).

Thelwall, John. *Incle and Yarico; and, the Incas: Two Plays.* Edited by Frank Felsenstein and Michael Henry Scrivener. Madison N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006.

Turnbull, Gordon. *An Apology for Negro Slavery.* London: Printed by Stuart and Stevenson, 1786.

"Untitled Item." *Newcastle General Magazine, 1748-1760*, February, 1749. (2), 96-97.

Ure, Andrew. *The Philosophy of Manufactures: Or, an Exposition of the Scientific, Moral and Commercial Economy of the Factory System of Great Britain.* London 1835.

Wilberforce, William. *A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade.* London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1807.

Wilkes, Thomas. *A General View of the Stage.* London: Printed for J. Coote, 1759.

Williams, John Ambrose. *Memoirs of John Philip Kemble, Esq.* London: T. Holt, 1823.

Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Men; a Vindication of the Rights of Woman; an Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Young, Edward. *The Revenge.* London: Printed for the proprietors, under the direction of John Bell, 1792.

Secondary Sources

Adorno, Theodor W. *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life.* Translated by E. F. N. Jephcott. London: Verso, 2005.

Althusser, Louis, and Étienne Balibar. *Reading Capital.* Translated by Ben Brewster. London: New Left Books, 1970.

Anderson, Misty G. "Genealogies of Comedy." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre, 1737-1832*, edited by Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor, 347-67. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Anstey, Roger. *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810.* London: Macmillan, 1975.

Avery, Emmett L. "Introduction." In *The London Stage, 1660-1800. Part 2: 1700-1729.*, edited by Emmett L. Avery. Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1960.

Balibar, Étienne, and Immanuel Wallerstein. *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities.* London: Verso, 1991.

Banton, Michael. "Race as Social Construct." In *Racial Theories*, 196-235. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Barthelemy, Anthony Gerard. *Black Face, Maligned Race: The Representation of Blacks in English Drama from Shakespeare to Southerne.* Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1987.

Barthes, Roland. *S/Z.* Translated by Richard Miller. Oxford: Blackwell, 2002.

Baucom, Ian. *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery and the Philosophy of History.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005.

Beach, Adam R. "Global Slavery, Old World Bondage, and Aphra Behn's "Abdelazer"." *The Eighteenth Century* 53, no. 4 (2012): 413-31.

Blackburn, Robin. *The Making of New World Slavery.* London and New York: Verso, 1997.

———. *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery 1776-1848.* London: Verso, 1996.

Booth, Michael. "The Acting of Melodrama." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (1964): 31-48.

Botkin, Frances R. *Thieving Three-Fingered Jack: Transatlantic Tales of a Jamaican Outlaw, 1780-2015.* New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2017.

Bratton, J. S., Richard Allen Cave, Breandan Gregory, Heidi J. Holder, and Michael Pickering. *Acts of Supremacy: The British Empire and the Stage, 1790-1930.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991.

Brooks, Peter. *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995.

Brown, Laura. *Ends of Empire: Women and Ideology in Early Eighteenth-Century English Literature.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.

———. "The Romance of Empire: Oroonoko and the Trade in Slaves." In *Ends of Empire: Women and Ideology in Early Eighteenth-Century English Literature*, 23-63. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.

Buck-Morss, Susan. *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History.* Illuminations. Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009.

Buckley, Matthew S. "The Formation of Melodrama." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre, 1737-1832*, edited by Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor, 457-74. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

———. "Refugee Theatre: Melodrama and Modernity's Loss." *Theatre Journal* 61, no. 2 (2009): 175-90.

Burden, Michael. "The Writing and Staging of Georgian Romantic Opera." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre, 1737-1832*, edited by Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor, 424-40. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Burling, William J. "Colman, George, the Younger (1762-1836)." In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* edited by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison Oxford: OUP, 2004. http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/5977.

Carey, Brycchan. *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment, and Slavery, 1760-1807.* Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005.

Carlson, Julie A. "New Lows in Eighteenth-Century Theater: The Rise of Mungo." *European Romantic Review* 18, no. 2 (2007/04/01 2007): 139-47.

———. "Remorse for Jacobin Youth." *The Wordsworth Circle* 24, no. 3 (1993): 130-33.

Clegg, John J. "Capitalism and Slavery." *Critical Historical Studies* 2, no. 2 (2015): 281-304.

Cobb, James. *Paul and Virginia: A Musical Drama.* Dublin: Printed by Thomas Burnside, 1801.

Colley, Linda. "Britishness and Otherness: An Argument." *Journal of British Studies* 31, no. 4 (1992): 309-29.

———. *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837.* London: Pimlico, 2003.

———. *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600-1850.* London: Pimlico, 2003.

Conolly, L. W. *The Censorship of English Drama, 1737-1824.* San Marino, Calif: Huntington Library, 1976.

Cox, Jeffrey N. "English Gothic Theatre." In *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, edited by Jerrold E. Hogle, 125-44. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

———. "'Illegitimate' Pantomime in the 'Legitimate' Theater: Context as Text." *Studies in Romanticism* 54, no. 2 (2015): 159-86.

———. *Seven Gothic Dramas, 1789-1825.* Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992.

———. ed. *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period* Vol. 5: Drama. London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999.

———. "Theatrical Forms, Ideological Conflicts, and the Staging of Obi." *Romantic Circles Praxis Series* (2002). https://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/obi/cox/cox.html.

Cox, Jeffrey N., and Michael Gamer, eds. *The Broadview Anthology of Romantic Drama*. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2003.

Curtin, Philip D. "'Scientific" Racism and the British Theory of Empire." *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 2, no. 1 (1960): 40-51.

Dabydeen, David. *Hogarth's Blacks: Images of Blacks in Eighteenth Century English Art.* Kingston-upon-Thames: Dangaroo Press, 1985.

Dalrymple, William. *The Anarchy: The Relentless Rise of the East India Company.* London: Bloomsbury, 2019.

Davis, David Brion. *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975.

———. *Slavery and Human Progress.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Dellarosa, Franca. *Slavery on Stage: Representations of Slavery in British Theatre 1760s-1830s.* Bari: Edizioni dal Sud, 2009.

Dillon, Elizabeth Maddock. *New World Drama: The Performative Commons in the Atlantic World, 1649-1849.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.

Dodds, John W. *Thomas Southerne, Dramatist.* New Haven: Yale University, 1933.

Dooling, Wayne. "The Origins and Aftermath of the Cape Colony's 'Hottentot Code' of 1809." *Kronos*, no. 31 (2005): 50-61.

Drescher, Seymour. *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986.

———. *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010.

Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk.* Edited by Brent Hayes Edwards. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Dykes, Eva Beatrice. *The Negro in English Romantic Thought; or, a Study of Sympathy for the Oppressed.* Washington, D. C.: The Associated Publishers Inc., 1942.

Eagleton, Terry. "The Ideology of the Aesthetic." *Poetics Today* 9, no. 2 (1988): 327-38.

Elias, Norbert. *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations.* Translated by Edmund Jephcott. Edited by Eric Dunning, Johan Goudsblom and Stephen Mennell. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000.

Ellingson, Ter. *The Myth of the Noble Savage.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

Ellison, Julie K. *Cato's Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth.* New York: Grove Press, 2004.

Ferguson, Moira. "Oroonoko: Birth of a Paradigm." *New Literary History* 23, no. 2 (1992): 339-59.

Forry, Steven Earl. *Hideous Progenies: Dramatizations of Frankenstein from Mary Shelley to the Present.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990.

Freeman, Lisa A. *Character's Theater: Genre and Identity on the Eighteenth-Century English Stage.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.

Fryer, Peter. *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain.* London: Pluto Press, 2018.

Gallagher, Catherine. *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

Gates, Henry Louis. "The Face and Voice of Blackness." In *Facing History: The Black Image in American Art, 1710-1940*, edited by Guy C. McElroy. Washington, D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1990.

Gibbs, Jenna M. "Performing the Temple of Liberty: Slavery, Rights, and Revolution in Transatlantic Theatricality (1760s-1830s)." PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2008.

———. *Performing the Temple of Liberty: Slavery, Theater, and Popular Culture in London and Philadelphia, 1760-1850.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014.

Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984.

Gilmore, John. *The Poetics of Empire: A Study of James Grainger's the Sugar Cane.* London: Athlone Press, 2000.

Gilroy, Paul. *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line.* Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000.

Girard, René. "Hamlet's Dull Revenge." *Stanford Literature Review* 1, no. 1 (1984): 159-200.

———. *Violence and the Sacred.* Translated by Patrick Gregory. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.

Glut, Donald F. *The Frankenstein Catalog.* Jefferson, N.C: McFarland, 1984.

Graham, John. "Lavater's Physiognomy in England." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 22, no. 4 (1961): 561-72.

Guillaumin, Colette. "The Idea of Race and Its Elevation to Autonomous Scientific and Legal Status (1980)." In *Racism, Sexism, Power and Ideology*, edited by Robert Miles, 60-98. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

———. "Specific Characteristics of Racist Ideology (1972)." In *Racism, Sexism, Power and Ideology*, edited by Robert Miles, 29-60. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

Guillory, John. *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Hadley, Elaine. *Melodramatic Tactics: Theatricalized Dissent in the English Marketplace, 1800-1885.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.

Hartman, Saidiya. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Harvey, David. "The Body as an Accumulation Strategy." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 16 (1998): 401-21.

Haskell, Thomas L. "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 1." *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 2 (1985): 339-61.

———. "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 2." *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 3 (1985): 547-66.

Highfill, Philip H., Kalman A. Burnim, and Edward A. Langhans. *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers and Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800.* 16 vols. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973-1984.

Hill, Christopher. "The Many-Headed Monster." In *Change an Continuity in Seventeenth-Century England*, 181-204. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974.

Hoagwood, Terence. "Prolegomenon for a Theory of Romantic Drama." *The Wordsworth Circle* 23, no. 2 (1992): 49-64.

Hoehn, Douglas William. "The First Season of Presumption!; or, the Fate of Frankenstein." *Theatre Studies* 26, no. 27 (1979-81): 79-88.

Hoermann, Raphael. "'A Very Hell of Horrors'? The Haitian Revolution and the Early Transatlantic Haitian Gothic." *Slavery & Abolition* 37, no. 1 (2016/01/02 2016): 183-205.

Hogan, Charles Beecher. *The London Stage, 1660-1800, Part 5: 1776-1800.* Vol. 3, Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968.

Holland, Norman N. *The Dynamics of Literary Response.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1968.

Honour, Hugh. *The Image of the Black in Western Art. Volume 4, Part 1: Slaves and Liberators.* Houston: Menil Foundation, 1989.

Hoskins, Robert. "Savage Boundaries: Reading Samuel Arnold's Score." *Romantic Circles Praxis Series* (2002). https://www.rc.umd.edu/print/praxis/obi/hoskins/hoskins.html.

Hoskins, Robert H. B., and Eileen Southern. "Introduction." In *Obi, or, Three-Finger'd Jack.* London: Stainer & Bell, 1996.

Jackson, Allan Stuart. *The Standard Theatre of Victorian England.* London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1993.

James, C. L. R. *The Black Jacobins.* London: Penguin, 2001.

Jameson, Fredric. *Allegory and Ideology.* London: Verso, 2019.

———. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act.* London: Routledge, 2002.

———. "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture." *Social Text*, no. 1 (1979): 130-48.

———. *Signatures of the Visible.* New York: Routledge, 1990.

Jones, C. B. *Radical Sensibility: Literature and Ideas in the 1790s.* London: Routledge, 1993.

Kelley, Robin D. G. *Yo' Mama's Disfunktional!: Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1997.

Kerrigan, John. *Revenge Tragedy: Æschylus to Armageddon.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.

Kiernan, V. G. *The Lords of Human Kind: European Attitudes Towards the Outside World in the Imperial Age.* London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969.

Kugler, Emily M. N. *Sway of the Ottoman Empire on English Identity in the Long Eighteenth Century.* Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012.

Lebowitz, Michael A. "The Politics of Assumption, the Assumption of Politics." *Historical Materialism* 14, no. 2 (2006): 29-47.

Lee, Debbie, Peter J. Kitson, and Jeffrey N. Cox. *Slavery, Abolition, and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period.* 8 vols. London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999.

Lhamon, W. T. *Raising Cain: Blackface Performance from Jim Crow to Hip Hop.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Linebaugh, Peter, and Marcus Rediker. *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic.* London: Verso, 2000.

The London Stage, 1660-1800. Part 2: 1700-1729. Edited by Emmett L. Avery. Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1960.

The London Stage, 1660-1800. Part 5: 1776-1800. Edited by Charles Beecher Hogan. Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968.

Losurdo, Domenico. *Hegel and the Freedom of Moderns.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

———. *Liberalism: A Counter-History.* Translated by Gregory Elliott. London; New York: Verso Books, 2011.

Lotman, Jurij. *The Structure of the Artistic Text.* Translated by Ronald Vroon. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1977.

Lott, Eric. *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Lynch, Deidre. *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

MacDonald, Joyce Green. "Acting Black: "Othello," "Othello" Burlesques, and the Performance of Blackness." *Theatre Journal* 46, no. 2 (1994): 231-49.

Macherey, Pierre, and Etienne Balibar. "Literature as an Ideological Form: Some Marxist Propositions." *Oxford Literary Review* 3, no. 1 (1978): 4-12.

Malchow, H. L. "Frankenstein's Monster and Images of Race in Nineteent-Century Britain." *Past & Present* 139, no. 1 (1993): 90-130.

———. *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.

Marshall, Herbert, and Mildred Stock. *Ira Aldridge: The Negro Tragedian.* London: Rockliff, 1958.

McBride, Dwight A. *Impossible Witnesses: Truth, Abolitionism, and Slave Testimony.* New York: New York University Press, 2001.

McNally, David. *Monsters of the Market.* Boston: Brill, 2011.

Mehta, Uday Singh. *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Mellor, Anne K. "Frankenstein, Racial Science, and the Yellow Peril." *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 23, no. 1 (2001): 1-28.

———. *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters.* London: Routledge, 1988.

Mellor, Anne K., and Richard E. Matlak, eds. *British Literature, 1780-1830*. Orlando: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1996.

Miles, Robert. "Beyond the 'Race' Concept: The Representation of Racism in England." *Sydney Studies in Society and Culture* 4: The Cultural Construction of Race (1988): 7-31.

Miles, Robert, and Malcolm Brown. *Racism.* London: Routledge, 2003.

Miller, Christopher L. *Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French.* Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985.

Moers, Ellen. *Literary Women.* London: Women's Press, 1978.

Moody, Jane. ""Fine Word, Legitimate!": Toward a Theatrical History of Romanticism." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 38, no. 3/4 (1996): 223-44.

———. *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770-1840.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992.

Morton, Timothy. *The Poetics of Spice: Romantic Consumerism and the Exotic.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Mullan, John. *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.

Mulvey-Roberts, Marie. *Dangerous Bodies: Historicising the Gothic Corporeal*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016.

Nussbaum, Felicity. "The Challenge of Tragedy." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre, 1737-1832*, edited by Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor, 368-89. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

———. "'Mungo Here, Mungo There': Charles Dibdin and Racial Performance." In *Charles Dibdin and Late Georgian Culture*, edited by Oskar Cox Jensen, David Kennerley and Ian Newman, 23-42. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

———. "Theatre of Empire: Racial Counterfeit, Racial Realism." In *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity, and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840*, edited by Kathleen Wilson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

O'Brien, John. *Harlequin Britain: Pantomime and Entertainment, 1690-1760.* Baltimore, MD.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004.

———. "Pantomimic Politics." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre, 1737-1832*, edited by Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor, 390-406. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

O'Quinn, Daniel. *Entertaining Crisis in the Atlantic Imperium, 1770-1790.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011.

———. *Staging Governance: Theatrical Imperialism in London, 1770-1800.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.

———. "Theatre and Empire." In *The Cambridge Companion to British Theatre, 1730–1830*, edited by Daniel O'Quinn and Jane Moody, 233-46. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

O'Rourke, James. "The Revision of Obi; or, Three-Finger'd Jack and the Jacobin Repudiation of Sentimentality." *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 28, no. 4 (2006/12/01 2006): 285-303.

Oldfield, J. R. "The "Ties of Soft Humanity": Slavery and Race in British Drama, 1760-1800." *Huntington Library Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (1993): 1-14.

Orr, Bridget. "Empire, Sentiment, and Theatre." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre, 1737-1832*, edited by Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor, 621-40. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Parker, Gerald D. "The Moor's Progress: A Study of Edward Young's Tragedy, the Revenge." *Theatre Research International* 6, no. 3 (2009): 172-95.

Patterson, Orlando. *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982.

Piper, Karen. "Inuit Diasporas: Frankenstein and the Inuit in England." *Romanticism* 13, no. 1 (2007): 63-75.

Pocock, J. G. A. *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Poovey, Mary. *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Price, Richard. *To Slay the Hydra: Dutch Colonial Perspectives on the Saramaka Wars.* Ann Arbor, Mich.: Karoma, 1983.

Ragussis, Michael. *Theatrical Nation: Jews and Other Outlandish Englishmen in Georgian Britain.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.

Rahill, Frank. *The World of Melodrama.* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1967.

Richardson, Alan. "Romantic Voodoo: Obeah and British Culture, 1797-1807." *Studies in Romanticism* 32, no. 1 (1993): 3-28.

Ritchie, Leslie. *David Garrick and the Mediation of Celebrity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Roach, Joseph R. *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

———. *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993.

———. "Slave Spectacles and Tragic Octoroons: A Cultural Genealogy of Antebellum Performance." *Theatre Survey* 33, no. 2 (2009): 167-87.

———. "Theatre History and the Ideology of the Aesthetic." *Theatre Journal* 41, no. 2 (1989): 155-68.

Roediger, David R. *Class, Race, and Marxism.* London: Verso, 2017.

Ross Schneider, Ben. *Index to the London Stage, 1600-1800.* Edited by William Van Lennep, Emmett L. Avery, Arthur H. Scouten and George Winchester Stone. Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism.* London: Penguin Books, 2003.

Sandiford, Keith A. *The Cultural Politics of Sugar: Caribbean Slavery and Narratives of Colonialism.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Scouten, Arthur H. "Introduction." In *The London Stage, 1660-1800. Part 3: 1729-1747*, edited by Arthur H. Scouten. Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961.

Scrivener, Michael. *Jewish Representation in British Literature 1780-1840: After Shylock.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Sealey-Morris, Sealey. "Coleridge's Moors: Osorio, Remorse, and the Swarthy Shadow of Othello." *Nineteenth-Century Contexts: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 35, no. 3 (2013): 297-308.

Sharpe, Christina. *Monstrous Intimacies: Making Post-Slavery Subjects.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

Singer, Ben. *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

Sivanandan, A. "Challenging Racism: Strategies for the 1980s." In *Communities of Resistance: Writings on Black Struggles for Socialism*, 63-76. London: Verso, 1990.

Sloan, Phillip. "The Idea of Racial Degeneracy in Buffon's Histoire Naturelle." *Racism in the Eighteenth Century* (1973): 293-321.

Smith, Allan Lloyd. "'This Thing of Darkness': Racial Discourse in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein." *Gothic Studies* 6, no. 2 (2004): 208-22.

Solow, Barbara L., and Stanley L. Engerman, eds. *British Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery: The Legacy of Eric Williams*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Stewart, Susan. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection.* Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993.

Stoler, Ann Laura. *Race and the Education of Desire.* Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995.

Stone, George Winchester. "Introduction." In *The London Stage, 1660-1800. Part 4: 1747-1776*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962.

Strother, Z. S. "Display of the Body Hottentot." In *Africans on Stage: Studies in Ethnological Show Business*, edited by Bernth Lindfors, 1-61. Bloomington & Indianpolis: Indiana University Press, 1999.

Sutcliffe, Barry, ed. *Plays by George Colman the Younger and Thomas Morton*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Swindells, Julia. "The Political Context of the 1737 Licensing Act." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre, 1737-1832*, edited by Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor, 107-22. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Swindells, Julia, and David Francis Taylor, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre, 1737-1832*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Sypher, Wylie. *Guinea's Captive Kings: British Anti-Slavery Literature of the 18th Century.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1942.

Szwydky, Lissette Lopez. "Rewriting the History of Black Resistance: The Haitian Revolution, Jamaican Maroons and the 'History' of Three-Fingered Jack in English Popular Culture, 1799-1830." *Romantic Circles Praxis Series* (2011).

Tasch, Peter A. *The Dramatic Cobbler: The Life and Works of Isaac Bickerstaff.* Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1972.

Taylor, George. *The French Revolution and the London Stage, 1789-1805.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

———. "Melodramatic Acting." In *The Cambridge Companion to English Melodrama*, edited by Carolyn Williams, 112-25. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Thomas, David. "The 1737 Licensing Act and Its Impact." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre, 1737-1832*, edited by Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor, 91-106. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Thompson, E. P. "Eighteenth-Century English Society: Class Struggle without Class?". *Social History* 3, no. 2 (1978): 133-65.

———. *Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act.* London: Penguin, 1990.

Thorslev, Peter Larsen. *The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962.

Van Kooy, Dana. "Darkness Visible: The Early Melodrama of British Imperialism and the Commodification of History in Sheridan's "Pizarro"." *Theatre Journal* 64, no. 2 (2012): 179-95.

Van Kooy, Dana, and Jeffrey N. Cox. "Melodramatic Slaves." *Modern Drama* 55, no. 4 (2012): 459-75.

Vaughan, Virginia Mason. *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500-1800.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Walvin, James, ed. *Slavery and British Society 1776-1846*. London: Macmillan, 1982.

Waters, Hazel. *Racism on the Victorian Stage: Representation of Slavery and the Black Character.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Weheliye, Alexander G. *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.

Weston, Peter J. "The Noble Primitive as Bourgeois Subject." *Literature and History* 10, no. 1 (1984): 59-71.

Wheeler, Roxann. *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.

Whitney, Lois. *Primitivism and the Idea of Progress in English Popular Literature of the Eighteenth Century.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1934.

Williams, Eric. *Capitalism & Slavery.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944.

Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature.* Marxist Introductions. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Wilson, Kathleen. "The Good, the Bad, and the Impotent: Imperialism and the Politics of Identity in Georgian England." In *The Consumption of Culture, 1600-1800*, edited by Ann Bermingham and John Brewer, 237-62. London: Routledge, 1997.

Winter, Kari J. *Subjects of Slavery, Agents of Change: Women and Power in Gothic Novels and Slave Narratives, 1790-1865.* Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992.

Worrall, David. *Harlequin Empire: Race, Ethnicity and the Drama of the Popular Enlightenment.* London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007.

———. *The Politics of Romantic Theatricality, 1787-1832: The Road to the Stage.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

———. *Theatric Revolution: Drama, Censorship and Romantic Period Subcultures 1773-1832.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Youngquist, Paul. "Black Romanticism: A Manifesto." *Studies in Romanticism* 56, no. 1 (2017): 3-14.

———. *Monstrosities: Bodies and British Romanticism.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

Youngquist, Paul, and Frances Botkin. "Introduction: Black Romanticism: Romantic Circulations." *Romantic Circles Praxis Series* (2011). https://romantic-circles.org/praxis/circulations/HTML/praxis.2011.youngquist.html.

Žižek, Slavoj. *The Sublime Object of Ideology.* London: Verso, 2008.


الحمد لله