# Characterizing Slavery in the Long Eighteenth Century

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## ABSTRACT

"Characterizing Slavery in the Long Eighteenth Century" focuses on the artificial characters that people eighteenth-century Anglophone fictions of enslavement—from master/slave romances set amongst fantasies of imperial exploration, to a blockbuster comic opera about enslaved resistance, to the abolitionist verse that first queered Caribbean sugar as flesh, blood, and feces. I show that eighteenth-century black characters are rarely individuals: instead, such figures collect enslaved bodies and categorize them as Domingos, Mungos, and Quashis. Together, the period's fictitious slaves highlight how selfhood and personhood became explicitly racialized and status delimited in an age when Britain and the United States dominated the slave trade in the North Atlantic; more broadly, such fictions offer a new approach to historians of race, colonialism, and slavery, and insist that literary scholars must come to terms with chattel slavery if we are to understand Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment literary character.

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# Introduction

## I. Characters of Difference

Character is that which distinguishes one object from another.
—John Donaldson, *The Elements of Beauty* (1780)

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, two British North Americans issued sallies in the growing textual skirmish over the morality of chattel slavery, a skirmish that would continue for more than 150 years. The first of these shots was Boston Judge Samuel Sewall's pamphlet *The Selling of Joseph* (1700), a three-page complaint against the refusal of fellow Bostonian John Saffin to end the term of indenture of one of Saffin's bondservants, an African-born man named Adam.[1] Saffin had first contracted to hold Adam for only ten years—but by 1700, Saffin was trying to renege on the contract and force Adam into perpetual slavery. Adam came to Sewall's court to have the earlier contract enforced, and the resulting trial dragged on until 1703, when he was finally declared a free man. Despite the length of the trial that he adjudicated, Sewall was an opponent of chattel slavery, and attacks the "atrocious Crime" of "Man Stealing" and enslaving of free-born Africans in his pamphlet (1). In defense of his own position, Saffin then attacked Sewall's condemnation in his own *Brief and Candid Answer* (1701), which defends chattel slavery by arguing that "God hath Ordained different degrees and orders of men … yea, some to be born Slaves, and so to remain during their lives" (252). In conclusion, Saffin's pamphlet ends with following verses, which are titled "The Negroes Character":

> Cowardly and cruel are those Blacks Innate,
>
> Prone to Revenge, Imp of inveterate hate.
>
> He that exasperates them, soon espies
>
> Mischief and Murder in their very eyes.
>
> Libidinous, Deceitful, False and Rude,

The spume Issue of Ingratitude.

The Premises consider'd, all may tell,

How near good Joseph they are parallel. (256)

Saffin's "Negroes Character" is at once plural and possessive, indicating the "Character" of a particular "Negro" as well as the collective character of each and every enslaved person of African descent.

Like most of the characters of slaves and other "Negroes" whose history this project traces, Saffin's "Character" is sketched from the perspective of an unenslaved white observer—one who, in this case, can easily be identified as "he that exasperates them." The racial distance between observer and object reverberates in Saffin's declaration that "those Blacks" are "Imp[s] of inveterate hate." Saffin's speaker claims that "exasperat[ion]" drives the "Blacks" to "Mischief" and even "Murder," but just what has the speaker been doing to provoke the "Negroes" in question? Although the poem declines to elaborate, it clearly describes the problematic relationship between enslaved persons and their owners, a relationship whose antagonisms generate the supposed "cowardliness" and "cruelty" of these "Negroes." As Deidre Lynch argues, eighteenth-century readers and writers "used characters to renegotiate social relations in their changed, commercialized world" (4). As a reflection on the relatively new phenomenon of racialized chattel slavery, the negotiations of "The Negroes Character" occur amidst a series of cultural, racial, and status differences.

Explicitly, the racialized "Character" in Saffin's poem depends on a rubric of class, on which account "Negroes" fail to offer the deference that Saffin's speaker expects. The "Blacks" are described as "Deceitful, Rude," and—most egregiously, the poem suggests—they show "Ingratitude" to those who exploit their labor. Implicitly, of course, the lack of gratitude that the

speaker diagnoses must expose his own fantasy of control, a fantasy whose disappointment bitterly turns to vituperation. That is, the embarrassed master laments how far all "Negroes" are from the enslaved Joseph of the Bible, because the speaker's own experience of owning people has failed to grant him the power and privilege enjoyed by Joseph's final master in Genesis, Pharaoh.[2] By refusing to participate in the speaker's fantasy, "those Blacks" have made the idealized roles of both slave and master impossible to play. In a sense, "The Negroes Character" is not merely a portrait of slaves' resistance. Instead, the dialectical relationship between their resistant agency and the speaker's fantasy produces this "Negroes Character," which offers up "Ingratitude" and the negative example of "Joseph" as twin characteristics of the otherwise ambiguous category of "Blacks."

But while the speaker/owner's frustrated expectations and the slaves' frustrated agency violently oppose each other, the movement of Saffin's enjambed heroic couplets seems to smooth over this fierce struggle. Although it is not necessary for rhyming couplets' carefully balanced oppositions to create any particular coherence, Saffin's couplets leave little room for the tense ambiguities that contemporary metropolitan poets like Dryden, Rochester, or Behn might have fostered.[3] Saffin's verse is not a tense collection of contradictions, nor is it polished and smooth like Pope's *Rape of the Lock*. Instead, the "Negroes" supposed character defects give way to an elaboration of their implicit desire to "Murder" their owners, and then to the final divorce of North American racialized chattel slavery from the Biblical example that Sewall's pamphlet cites. The poem's spurious conclusion that the "Negroes Character" is categorically very different from the long-suffering but finally triumphant Joseph seems to encapsulate the whole argument, and helps naturalize Saffin's assertion that chattel slavery is not only morally acceptable but even ordained by God.

As the poem demonstrates, different genres in the long eighteenth century could easily filter the discussion of slavery into distinct discourses. But its assumption of racial difference separates it from many other early eighteenth-century texts. Although the speaker cites the pigment of "those Blacks" as evidence that they are of a distinct type of person, early eighteenth-century Britons had only begun to formalize the racial categories of "black" and "white" that the nineteenth and twentieth centuries naturalized, and that the twenty-first century now pretends not to see. As literary historian Roxann Wheeler has shown, contemporary understandings of "human variety" were still a long way from the nineteenth century's formalization of biologically determined race, which would read the surface of the body as manifesting an internal racial essence (6). Especially in the early eighteenth century, the meaning of Saffin's "Negro" is highly delimited, referring not to African-descended persons in general, but principally to enslaved persons of African descent residing in the new world. (As I explore in Chapter 2, the relation between "Negroes" and slavery would be further refined by metropolitan speakers later in the century.) More specifically, given the occasion of Saffin's and Sewall's pamphlets, the "Character" of the particular "Negro" being described is implicitly the enslaved man Adam, whose attempts to move from bondage to freedom had spurred Saffin's dehumanizing verses, even as his Biblical namesake exemplified the most universal of human types.

Saffin's poem makes "The Negro" into a Theophrastan category that typecasts a range of individuals.[4] According to Chambers's *Cyclopaedia* (1728), characters "express ideas" by making individuals' or groups' "qualities" legible ("Character"); thus, the "Negroes Character" identifies color and status as the most legible qualities of the category it inaugurates. After all, Aaron Kunin defines literary character as "a formal device that collects every example of a type

of person" and enables these persons to be discussed by cataloging their attributes (291). So by naming and facilitating categorization, the device of character—like the concept of racial difference—helps propel certain kinds of discourse. In the words of eighteenth-century painter and poet John Donaldson, "Character is that which distinguishes one thing from another" (50). Here, Saffin's verse helps distinguish "Negroes" from resentful European or Amerindian subordinates, and serves as a reminder that character was a key technology of difference in the long eighteenth century, deployed to both describe and enforce the differences between persons. In this sense, characterization not only makes differences like "black" and "white," "slave" and "free" legible, but written characters also depend on these very differences for their legibility.

This dissertation catalogues the intersections between literary character, race, and enslavement in the Anglophone long eighteenth century. I focus on the years 1711–1807, the high-water mark of the British transatlantic slave trade, which oversaw the kidnapping, transportation, and sale of the majority of enslaved West Africans in the North Atlantic. Among other cultural uses, eighteenth-century characterizations of enslavement served as a popular philosophy for why enslaving people was complicated and often unpleasant. Why wouldn't enslaved persons embrace the roles allotted to them as social nonpersons, real-world masters asked? For the "Murder" that Saffin's "Negroes" offer in place of subordination is the quality that transforms them from legal and social nonpersons to "characters." They are slaves either way, of course—but the "character" of the resistant person leaves a much deeper impression than the supposedly pliant Joseph of Saffin's Biblical misreading. Figuratively, Saffin's "Mischief and Murder" encompasses legal as well as physical resistance: if the bondsman Adam had not sought to have his indenture contract enforced in Sewall's court, Saffin might never have had occasion to define "The Negroes Character" in the first place.

In the following chapters, I trace the literary successors of Saffin's racializing characterization: the fungible slave characters in novels from the 1720s that negotiate the domestic political implications of Britain's expanded slave trade; the invention of comic blackface in the 1760s that helped foment new forms of legal personhood for enslaved Afro-Britons in the 1770s; the deliberate flattening of enslaved characters in abolitionist verse from the years 1788–1807, whose representations of colonial chattel slavery borrow from traditions of Continental pornography to embody the moral character of Britain's First Empire; and the dangerous parody of these legacies in Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained* (2012). At each stage in this progression of character, I identify recurring enslaved characters—Domingos and Mungos, Loangos and Djangos—whose names multiply across the literary texts that use these figures as shorthand for enslavement and difference. In the eighteenth century, the character of slavery writ large is not about individuals but about institutions. It collects according to race, culture, class, status, and nation, and it considers psychology only insofar as it is structured by these broad categories. For example, the three different characters named Domingo (literally, "Lord") that I write about in Chapter 1 ("Slavery and the Rise of the Novel") all yearn for a kind of mastery that their pigment renders inaccessible.

But while the texts I examine represent enslaved characters from the outside in, they make unenslaved characters equally superficial. White slave owners are united by their sins and their vulnerability to the retribution of their enslaved property. Thus, as I show, eighteenth-century slavery offers a counternarrative to the dominant critical discourses of character in the period. If anything, the cementing of racial categories at the beginning of the Romantic era makes character *more* exterior and *less* individual than the racially flexible social persons of a century before. The racial binary that resulted from this formalization created "black" and "white"

as the two most important categories or characters into which human beings could be sorted. This project reveals how literature joined the law, politics, and commerce in creating these categories.

## II. A Brief History of Eighteenth-Century Characters

If I must speak the schoolmaster's language, I will confess that character comes of this infinitive mood, χαράζω [*sic*], which signifies to engrave, or make a deep impression. And for that cause a letter (as A, B) is called a character: those elements which we learn first, leaving a strong seal in our memories.
—Sir Thomas Overbury et al., *Characters* (1614)

Etymologically, a character is a written sign, engraved in wood or stone or stamped or outlined on paper. Jeffrey Rusten explains the legacy of Theophrastus's fourth-century B.C.E. *Characters*:

> The meanings of Ancient Greek χαρακτήρ are derived from an original sense of an *inscribing* onto a surface: The *imprint* on a coin, the form of a letter, often the *style* of an author for rhetorical analysis. "Character" in the modern sense is *not* one of its meanings—the Greek word for "character" is usually ήθος—and if it were not firmly established, Theophrastus's title might better be rendered "traits." (11-12)

The blending of χαρακτήρ with ήθος powers the legacy of false etymological equivalences that are interwoven in the modern history of "characteristic writing." This conflation of characteristics with characters produces "those elements which we learn first, leaving a strong seal in our memories," and which are on display in Overbury's *Characters* (1614) (238). Lynch reveals the influence of character's two meanings in the human-like coins and banknotes of the mid-eighteenth-century It-narrative. This personified money is also stamped with the legacy of the characters of chattel slaves that I explore in Chapter 1, who loudly protest being "bought and

sold" (Aubin, *Vinevil* 87). The conflation of letters and traits persists in Johnson's *Dictionary*, where a character is both "a stamp; a representation" and "a representative of any man," whether fictional or factual, "as to his personal qualities" ("Character," n). As a result of this dual heritage, the narration of persons from the seventeenth century onward is much more strongly associated with writing than with any other mode of reproducible representation.

Like slaves, characters can be at once objects and persons, and texts dealing with enslavement encourage an especial flourishing of extremely legible characters. As has been most fully explored by Orlando Patterson, slavery uprooted individuals from their communities, necessitating that a slave "had no social existence outside of his master," and spurring "the initial response in almost all slaveholding societies [of ] defin[ing] the slave as a socially dead person" (*Slavery* 38). Thus in John Marjoribanks's *Slavery: An Essay in Verse* (1792), which stages the social death of captives for sale in the Caribbean, the captives' enslavement is presented as a rewriting of their social roles:

> Soon as the trembling crew are landed *here*,
> Their quiv'ring flesh the burning pincers fear;
> Proudly imprinting your degrading brand
> On men, created by your Maker's hand!
> A dreadful specimen, we may suppose,
> This *warm* reception gives of future woes! (13)

Marjoribanks poses the production of slaves from "men" as a kind of fleshly printing process. Having been bought, the slaves are now impressed with marks that signify their new status as property. The "brand" that makes them is "degrading" because it signifies that they are only people as extensions of their owner's own person. The complicated nature of this transformation

is framed by the poem's emphasis on the legibility of the slaves' status. They enter the passage as already objects to be worked on. Affect is merely a physiological symptom, as "their quiv'ring flesh the burning pincers fears." Marjoribanks's speaker declines to ascribe feelings directly to the slaves' minds, instead deducing their horror from the evidence of their trembling bodies—a result of character's dual heritage as both psychological and forensic. But the branding also cuts the other way, as being burned with characters makes the slaves' whole affect legible.

The passage emphasizes that branding humans with their owners' marks is reprehensible because doing so seems to overwrite the signature of God, the common "Maker" of all humans. Marjoribanks's "impressing" also recalls John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), which imagines "the Mind to be, as we say, white Paper, void of all Characters without any *Ideas*; How comes it to be furnished?" (104). Here, the experience of being bought and sold "furnishes" the blank paper of the slaves' bodies with characters that indicate their new status. Could it be that the social character of slavery signified in these brands is what truly makes them "degrading"? In Marjoribanks's verse, the pain of burning flesh is dwarfed by the pain of social death. Having been printed on, the enslaved are sent onward through the system, where they serve as "specimens" of their printer/owners' power to turn people into animated certificates of property. (Among other things, a specimen is the name given by typefounders to the broadside or book that displays the different fonts available for printing. Eighteenth-century Anglophones called these fonts "printing types" or "letters," but to contemporary Francophones they were *caractères*.)

Observing the characters these *caractères* delineate on both page and stage, this project challenges the approach that continues to dominate critical engagements with eighteenth-century literary character, where the novel continues to take pride of place. The common ancestor of the

dominant approach is Ian Watt, who uses Defoe as a case study for the early novel's mode of characterization, claiming that "Robinson Crusoe's character," for example, "depends very largely on the psychological and social orientations of economic individualism, [so that] the appeal of his adventures to the readers seems mainly to derive from the effect of another important concomitant of modern capitalism, economic specialisation" (74). Like his valorization of the novel, Watt's adverbial phrases foreshorten his theory of character: Crusoe "depends very largely," and "seems mainly to derive." These phrases that search for origins gesture back to the limiting but helpful teleology of E. M. Forster, whose *Aspects of the Novel* (1927) polarizes characters as either "flat" or "round." According to Forster, "flat" characters "are sometimes called types, and sometimes caricatures," but "when there is more than one factor in them, we get the beginning of the curve towards the round" (103-04). Forster sketches out the basic progress of character that this project describes in greater detail, from the "flat" characters exemplified by both Defoe's Crusoe and his bondservant Friday, to the psychological complications and social interactions that produce, for example, the distinctive "roundness" of Jane Austen's characters.

In a sense, all of the critical investigations of character after Forster have been an attempt to define (or sometimes to reject) this elusive "roundness." Lynch argues that it is all *trompe l'oeil*, produced as much by readers' own interpretive interventions as by the words on the page. Alex Woloch, who attends as well to the disjunctions and conjunctions produced between a text's characters, explores "the implied person behind any character, [which] is never directly reflected in the literary text but only partially inflected" (13). In this project, I plot how the imaginative texts of the long eighteenth century sought to display the emergent British Empire, and how readers examined these texts' characters against the conjoined histories of the slave

trade and the invention of modern modes of racism.

## III. "Fictitious Blacks" in a Century of Novels, Drama, and Verse

> We need studies that analyze the strategic use of black characters to define the goals and enhance the qualities of white characters. Such studies will reveal the process of establishing others in order to know them, to display knowledge of the other so as to ease and to order external and internal chaos. Such studies will reveal the process by which it is made possible to explore and penetrate one's own body in the guise of the sexuality, vulnerability, and anarchy of the other—and to control projections of anarchy within the disciplinary apparatus of punishment and largess.
> —Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992)

Recognizing that the way imaginative texts still instrumentalize "black characters … to order external and internal chaos" is one of the Enlightenment's more complicated literary legacies, Toni Morrison enjoins us to undertake the sort of investigations that this dissertation pursues. In Chapter 1, "Slavery and the Rise of the Novel," I display the tension between character's interior and exterior registers, where characters function as bridges between text and world, even as their most important interactions are with each other, inside the space of the text. It is a commonplace to note the especial aesthetic freedom of the early novel, but this freedom is complemented by the geographic freedoms taken by the novels of Penelope Aubin and the pseudonymous Captain Samuel Brunt. The unenslaved, metropolitan British protagonists of these novels circumnavigate the globe (and, in Brunt's *Cacklogallinia*, even visit the moon). But no sooner do these protagonists leave Western Europe than they are taken captive, held in prisons and harems, and cast away on deserted islands. Newly confined, the protagonists converse with their fellow captives, who deliver speeches that juxtapose Britons' celebrated political liberty with the bondage effected by chattel slavery. These confined physical spaces mirror the aesthetic awkwardness of the characters' interpolated speeches, which drive home the fact that Britain's newly expanded participation in the transatlantic slave trade was facilitated by the ongoing liberalization of mercantilist economic policies.

Prolonging the juxtaposition of slave owners with slaves, these texts also express great fascination with the formation of race's categories, and incubate a proto-racialist discourse of interior and exterior. One of Aubin's narrators protests that an enslaved character in love with his white mistress "had a Soul fair as his Face was black" (*Noble Slaves* 7). Another Aubin novel displays an enslaved black character emerging from the skin of a bear, with which he has disguised himself. As these textual moments separate face from soul and skin from person, they rehearse a classical tradition that figured "the particulars of the physical body—complexion, physiognomy—[as] eradicable" (Wahrman 86-87). In this model of difference, a black face might easily be overridden/overwritten by a "fair" soul. The understanding of difference in Aubin's fiction seems to anticipate later Romantic modes of literary character, which privilege psychological interiority and de-emphasize the "flat" surfaces of the body. But in fact, the racial concepts that developed at the end of the eighteenth century would collide, head-on, with those newer modes of character. For as race was formalized as displaying people's internal essences on the racialized surfaces of their bodies, it increasingly contradicted the newer modes of reading literary character—and produced, as I show, enslaved characters who were self-consciously both internal and external.

What becomes of interiority for characters whose exteriors are figured so prominently? George Boulukos suggests that one such collision between character and racial category produces the eighteenth-century novel's increasing separation of the characterizations of black slaves from white indentured servants. As Boulukos shows, "the colonial practices of race produced by slavery got translated into a theory of difference, and into metropolitan beliefs and discourses" (13), which are recorded in the vast difference between Aubin's and Brunt's agentive enslaved characters, and the passive "poor negro girl" who briefly appears in Laurence Sterne's

*Tristram Shandy* (493). Yet by looking beyond the hypercanonical figures of Behn's Oroonoko and Defoe's Friday, I demonstrate that the representation of slaves before mid-century was not nearly as racially delimited as Boulukos and others make it seem.

Instead, difference is enforced much more strongly by later novels' retreat from Defoe's islands to the Richardsonian home counties. As Lynn Festa observes, novelists from Smollett onward "giv[e] shape and local habitation to the forces of empire," by diverting attention away from enslaved colonials and other evidence of this empire (2). Suvir Kaul concurs that enslavement disappears from the novel over the course of the eighteenth century, so that "felons, not the novels themselves, are now transported overseas—to that extent, the domestic resolutions of the bourgeois novel represent a withdrawal from the ethnographic curiosity and exploratory risks taken by" the earlier generation of Anglophone novelists (11). I submit the theory that this novelistic withdrawal is propelled by the overlaying of readers' new expectations that characters should possess psychologized interiors, with the broader expectation that the exterior surface of nonwhite enslaved persons was the most important part of their character. Together, these incompatible strictures pushed the dominant cultural representations of slaves into genres with more free approaches to characterization: the drama, and then verse.

Indeed, the inability of much of the eighteenth-century novel to account for characters whose race and status seemed to stand in the way of their interiority remained on display at the beginning of the twentieth century, when W. E. B. Du Bois's lament of "always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" echoed with the language of eighteenth-century literary character (3). As I outline in Chapter 2, "Saying 'Negro' in the 1760s and '70s," Du Bois's model of "double consciousness" borrows (however circuitously) from the last three decades of the eighteenth-century Anglo-French stage, which gloried in that aesthetic disjunction of inner and

outer that Du Bois finds so troubling. As theorized first by James Boswell and then only a few years later by Denis Diderot, a dramatic character was performed by the actor who "must assume in a strong degree the character which he represents, while he at the same time retains the consciousness of his own character" ("Profession" 469-70). Perhaps because enslaved black characters were usually played by white actors (whose race offered fewer impediments to the reception of their personal identities), dramatic audiences were perfectly happy to be entertained by the kinds of enslaved characters whose representations were becoming so scarce in the novel.

The character that best displays the racial implications of the dramatic splitting of exterior "representation" from interior "consciousness" is the enslaved black servant Mungo from Isaac Bickerstaff and Charles Dibdin's comic opera *The Padlock* (1768). Because the opera was commissioned for David Garrick's Drury Lane Theatre, the racializing performance of Mungo (enacted by Dibdin, who was also the opera's composer) could easily borrow from Garrick's celebrated "new ways of impersonating a character" (Lynch 75). This impersonation allowed the enslaved character to be approached as though it were a real person, without trouble from the wider culture's growing racist assumptions that "negroes" might not be capable of the same kinds of personhood as whites.

Indeed, Mungo's explicit performativity helped produce skin pigment and language as two very different signals of racial difference, in a process that availed itself of the Overburian model of character-as-language. Popular for nearly a hundred years on the Anglophone stage, Mungo was strongly associated with the caricatured Caribbean dialect that the opera had pioneered in dramatizing (Oldfield 10-11). Because Mungo spoke this distinct "dialect of the negroes" instead of Standard Southern English, his language could be deployed outside of (or even in opposition to) visual signals of difference like color or gender. White figures who spoke

like “negroes” could linguistically partake in the “Negroes Character.” Thus, in the first flush of the opera’s popularity, “Mungo” became an admiring cant term for young socialites who daringly obtruded on the masculine public sphere; “Mungo” was simultaneously the pejorative nickname of politician Jeremiah Dyson, who was widely mocked as the most slavish of former Prime Minister Lord Bute’s supporters. At the same time, Mungo’s separation of race from person was cross-fertilized by the contemporary incipience of metropolitan abolitionism, which flourished in the 1772 *Somerset* case, and which asked whether the owner of an enslaved man named James Somerset could forcibly deport him from England. Lord Chief Justice Mansfield’s ruling answered that “the black must be discharged” because Somerset was an English resident, even though his blackness would justify his local status as property in most other domains of the British Empire. By placing pressure on the seeming disjunction between English law and African ancestry that, according to popular views, might render “blacks” incapable of legal subjecthood, Mansfield’s decision thus highlighted the variability of the opposition between racialized character and unraced internal essence that Mungo’s character had so recently explored.

*Somerset* was an early victory of the nascent Anglophone abolition movement, which spawned the verse that I turn to in Chapter 3, “Unpardonably Indecent.” These poems from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries draw on another legacy of *Somerset* when they display colonial chattel slavery and the transatlantic trade as vital to, not anesthetically amputated from, the British metropolis. With titles like *The Sorrows of Slavery*, *The Wrongs of Africa*, and “The Sable Victims,” abolitionist verse offers up an image of chattel slavery writ large that is mostly absent from the earlier texts’ particularized relations between the enslaved and their captors. Written in sympathy with the enslaved, abolitionist poems nonetheless partake of Saffin’s unification of “Negroes” into a single type. Captive characters from different poems

bear remarkably similar names—Almanzo and Almoona, Zelma and Zemka—that evoke a type-case of reproducible characters. And, typecast, they all choose suicide over social death, stabbing themselves through the heart, jumping overboard, or throwing themselves off cliffs.

Abolitionist verse particularizes the violence of chattel slavery in the bleeding, burned, and broken bodies of its characters, which are offered less as individuals than as evidence for the crimes of the triangular trade's vast, cannibalistic institutions. The hybrid legacy of Behn's *Oroonoko*, Augustan mock-epic, and the mid-century long poem, these poems valorize the suicides of the West Africans whom Britons kidnap and sell. They exhibit their enslaved characters in a display of the horrors of the slave trade, whose reform the poems aim to catalyze. Critic Marcus Wood condemns this exhibition as disturbingly pornographic, declaring that "the dirtiest thing the Western imagination ever did, and it does it compulsively still, is to believe in the aesthetically healing powers of empathetic fiction" (36). But if these poems even aspire to "healing," I argue that they do so by radically distancing themselves from the events they describe. Enslaved characters in this verse are held at a distance inversely proportionate to the horror of their representation. This distanced horror is deeply indebted to pornography, so that the enslaved Jamaicans who are whipped, forced to consume human feces, and ravaged by ants in Marjoribanks's *Slavery* parallel incidents of torture in the Marquis Donatien Alphonse François de Sade's *Les 120 journées de Sodome ou l'école du libertinage* (*120 Days of Sodom*, written 1785). My reading of Anglophone abolitionist poetry parallels the critical reception of Sade's own pornographic text, and frames the broken bodies of abolitionist poetry as cautionary tales about the institution of slavery. Like the way that Sade's novel uses its victims' bodies to spell out a warning about the perversions of the pre-Revolutionary French state, cautionary abolitionist verse projects slaves' suicides and scars onto the Imperial body politic.

Despite the shame that underwrites its representations of this horror, abolitionist verse seeks to direct metropolitan eyes to the colonies by making the problems of slavery hyperlegible. Indeed, the way that contemporary racial discourses drained enslaved characters of interiority meant that abolitionist verse had no choice but to privilege the problems that slavery posed for the British Isles and its residents over and against slavery's more direct effects on the enslaved. In these poems, the evil of slavery is expressed as scars, not grief; burns, not despair. Yet while Forster might dismiss the characters who bear these marks as "flat," these enslaved figures stand at the center of the moral fault line that abolitionist verse traces through the national character. These poems invoke the self-consciously exteriorized figures of slaves to urge British metropolitan readers to Romantically appraise and reflect on their own participation in chattel slavery. But when abolitionist texts probe the racial distinctions between slaves with dark skin and light-skinned unenslaved persons, these categories of identity produce such bizarre artifacts as the fearful flesh of Marjoribanks's *Slavery*. Although, at the end of the period, the surfaces of slaves' bodies retain the negatively racialized characterization acquired in Saffin's poem, the character of the slave is now overlaid with a quasi-agentive layer that connects soul and flesh.

Why pursue the eighteenth-century characters of slaves around the world and back to London, through novels, drama, and verse? Because, as I show, the white metropolitan British and American readers who were these texts' primary audience acquainted themselves with the discourses of slavery precisely through this mixture of contexts and modes. Each genre makes its own contributions to the eighteenth-century character of enslavement that are coordinated with the changing character of race and of slavery's position within the economic, moral and political order of the British Empire. The racial differences that are of only secondary importance to the early novel's characters are first playfully dissected on the mid-century comic stage, and then

reanimated in the stark criticism of the abolitionists' poetry.

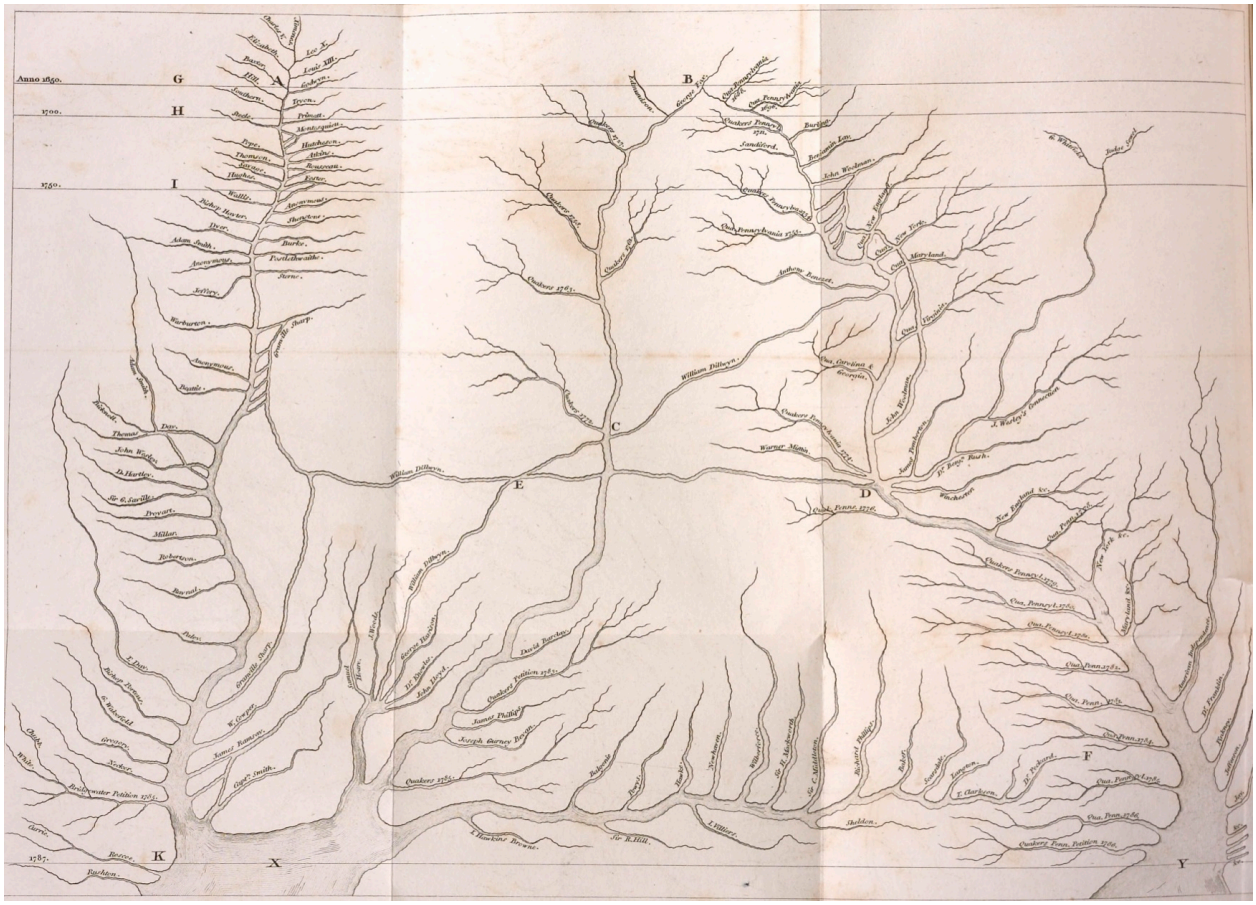


Figure 1. Thomas Clarkson, "Map of the Abolition," from *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1808), n.p.

In his 1808 *History* of British and American movements to abolish the transatlantic trade in slaves, Thomas Clarkson includes a "Map of the Abolition" (Fig. 1) that plots this watershed event as a confluence of streams and rivers, each one bearing the name of a poet or novelist as often as the title of a petition or a legal case (Fig. 2). As Clarkson demonstrates, eighteenth-century audiences assumed these texts had the power to change the world. By exploring the broad archive of these representations, this dissertation reveals how race, politics, and commerce all formed and transformed literary character in the eighteenth century.

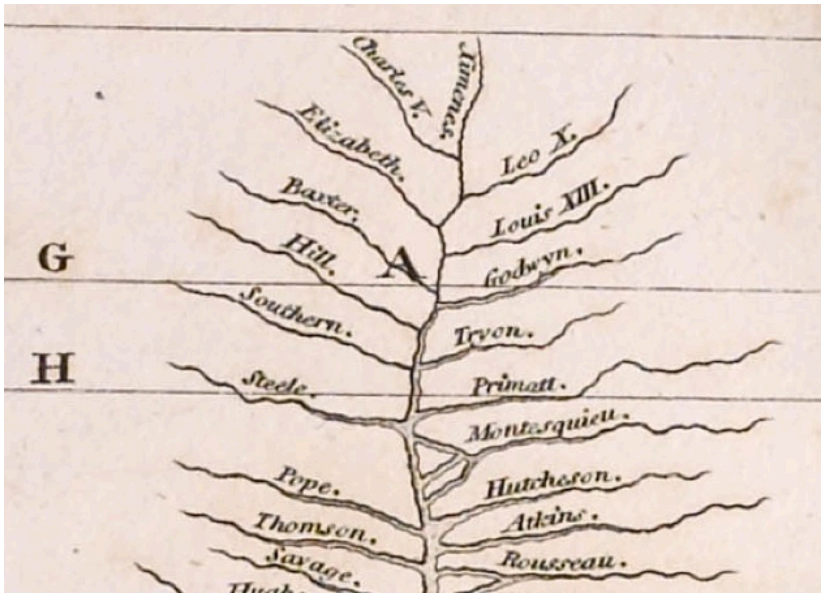


Figure 2. Clarkson, "Map" detail, including the contributions of dramatist [Thomas] Southern[e], journalist [Richard] Steele, and poets [Alexander] Pope and [James] Thomson to the period's antislavery discourses.

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[1] For more on Adam, and how Sewall and Saffin represented the issues at stake in his case, see Blight, "A Puritan Brief against Slavery."

[2] Like Joseph, however, Adam ended up relatively powerful.

[3] For a defense of the complexity of the couplet, see Hunter, "Formalism and History."

[4] See Smeed 1.

# Chapter 1

## Slavery and the Rise of the Novel

### I. Introduction

This chapter puts two phenomena of the Anglo-Atlantic 1720s in conversation: the rise of the novel and the rise of the transatlantic slave trade. As David Brion Davis notes, the eighteenth century was fascinated by liberty and its opposite, slavery, and as "the Western mind increasingly looked to history for moral guidance and self-understanding," it became "imperative to reconcile the revival of slavery in modern times with various theories of human progress" (Davis, *Western Culture* 12). In the early part of the eighteenth century, while "the Western mind" grew familiar with a greater range of "Western" spaces, the contexts for slavery and theories of the right to liberty grew as well. Fictitious travel narratives presented themselves as dispatches from these exotic new landscapes: Samuel Brunt's *Voyage to Cacklogallinia* (1727) transports the discourses of domestic liberty to the West Indies, where they are espoused by fictional slaves, pirates, and giant talking chickens; Penelope Aubin's *Adventures of the Count de Vinevil and his Family* (1721), *The Noble Slaves: Or the Lives and Adventures of two Lords and two Ladies* (1722), and *The Life of Charlotta Du Pont, an English Lady* (1723) place endorsements of liberty in the mouths of Europeans held captive in North African harems, while enslaved West Africans shipwrecked on desert islands both promise undying devotion to their European mistresses and threaten rape. Together, Aubin's and Brunt's fictions, sharing a common interest in the particularity of their characters' race, gender, class, religion, nation, and geographic location, explore many of the contradictions that the domestic ideology of liberty encountered in the early eighteenth century, as British merchants, slave traders, and planters helped to expand the reach

of commercial slavery in the colonial world. Such early eighteenth-century fictions, which form their own branch of the larger political discourse dominated in the period by Hobbes and Locke, present a space for readers and writers alike to define and then test out ideas of liberty and slavery.

It is no coincidence that the event Ian Watt characterized as "the Rise of the Novel" in Britain occurred almost simultaneously with the proliferation of political discourses about liberty and slavery. In the Anglophone tradition, one of the few traits uniting the diversity of texts now called "novels" is how they prize the idea of liberty. In what Laura Doyle calls the "Liberty Plot," eighteenth-century novelistic characters like Defoe's Robinson Crusoe start out subjugated and become independent—or, like Richardson's Clarissa, gradually learn that they never had any power to begin with; novels' "celebration of freedom in both theme and form, although not nationalized in political discourses, is a transatlantic phenomenon" (17). Doyle's investigation highlights the recurrent valorization of concepts like "freedom" and "individuality" in critical accounts of the early novel, suggesting how thoroughly these novels' plots translated the early eighteenth-century ideology of liberty into critical discourse surrounding the novel as a genre. Novels may have helped transmit and naturalize the wide application of the discourse of liberty, but the novelistic texts I examine in this chapter are equally drawn to exploring slavery; they probe the intersection between their characters' slavery and the other categories of their identities (race, gender, religion, etc.), problematizing the degree to which legal terms like "slave" and "free" are sufficient to describe their characters' relative authority and subjugation.

Together, the fictions of the early eighteenth century and the period's tensions between liberty and slavery enact a multivalent dialogue between the metropolis and the colonies. London was home to the majority of printing houses, and Parliament was in Westminster; merchant ships

leaving London, Bristol, and Liverpool brought commercialist-liberal ideas about personhood and property to the colonies; colonists' daily experiences with enslaved Africans reshaped their received ideas of liberty and slavery; and letters transmitting these reshaped ideas sailed back to Britain alongside cargoes of slave-produced sugar, rum, and tobacco. In one sense, like these more tangible commodities, the ideology of liberty and the novelistic writing in which it received one of its most lasting expressions, are transatlantic luxuries—the labor, suffering, and adventure of the new world, repackaged for pleasurable metropolitan consumption.

Although the Western tradition of liberty and slavery stretches back to ancient Greece, in eighteenth-century Britain, this legacy was tinged with the political upheavals of the previous century. As early as 1642, in *De Cive* (1642), Thomas Hobbes had acknowledged liberty and slavery's centrality to the nascent English Civil War; declaring that no "Writer hath fully declared what *liberty*, and what *slavery* is," he offers his own attempt:

> LIBERTY, that we may define it, is nothing else but an *absence of the lets, and hinderances of motion,* as water shut up in a vessell is therefore not at liberty, because the vessell hinders it from running out, which the vessell being broken, is *made free*. And every man hath more or lesse *liberty*, as he hath more or lesse space in which he employes himself: as he hath more *liberty*, who in a large, then he that is kept in a close prison. And a man may be *free* toward one part, and yet not toward another, as the traveller is bounded on this, and that side with hedges, or stone walls, lest he spoyle the vines, or corne, neighbouring on the high way. And these kinde of lets are externall, and absolute…. There are others which are arbitrary, which doe not absolutely hinder motion, but by accident; to wit, by our own choyce, as he that is in a ship is not so hindered, but he may cast himselfe

> into the Sea, if he will: and here also the more wayes a man may move himself, the more *liberty* he hath, and herein consists civill *liberty*. (125)

Like the novelists who follow him, Hobbes seems to find it easier to define liberty by describing its opposite, and so he approaches the topic through spaces fitted out with their own characterized inhabitants—water, prisoners, travelers, passengers on a ship. (Because the passage occurs in a larger justification of governmental authority, this reification as physical constraint is largely positive—like the hedges that protect crops, states must protect their subjects from the threat of their fellow subjects' otherwise absolute liberty.) Like other fiction writers, Hobbes constructs characters around which to frame the intellectual work of his investigation, mustering "he that is kept in a close prison" and "he that is in a ship" to act out some of the implications of liberty and its absence.

Yet even as he endorses the abridgment of liberty to a certain degree, Hobbes's characterizations seem to resist semantic authoritarianism, for not all kinds of liberty and constraint are equal. In emphasizing "our own choyce" as a key determinant of the difference between the two, the passage must acknowledge that people, like characters, behave in idiosyncratic ways, and a passenger on a ship "may cast himselfe into the Sea, if he will." Hobbes seems to mean this paradoxical example of liberty—the freedom to drown—as proof that there are no absolutes of liberty or constraint; in the next century, slave-ship captains would recognize the economic danger of this last remaining freedom, and string up netting along the sides of their ships to prevent their human cargo from jumping overboard.

[1]

Orlando Patterson observes that the idea of liberty cannot be approached on its own, but only in connection with slavery or other forms of constraint, since "freedom has never been

divorced from this, its primordial, servile source" (*Freedom* 9). Even Hobbes's negative definition of liberty ("an absence of lets, and hinderances") in the context of domestic rule must implicitly address colonial chattel slavery, because the definition of each condition depends on its opposite. Indeed, *De Cive* belongs to a tradition that deploys the specter of commercial slavery to theorize civil liberty in contractual government—a discourse in which, as Victoria Kahn observes, "wives, slaves, and feudal villeins emerge as the shadows of the contracting subject" (59). Consent, in this tradition, divides legitimate from illegitimate power, for without it hierarchical relations risk devolving into slavery, as kings, ministers, masters, and fathers could all be imagined as potential slave-masters. More broadly, slavery served as the most extreme version of the subjugation experienced by political subjects, wives, children, apprentices, servants, or sailors. As the diversity of these quasi-slaves suggests, the idea of slavery had many resonances in the period. Models from ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome, as well as travelers' accounts of Turkey, the contemporary circum-Mediterranean slave trade, and the transatlantic transport of African slaves and European indentured servants, all shaped what liberty and slavery meant in the long eighteenth century. What these models had in common, at bottom, was a dialectic of power: masters had it and slaves did not.

Thus Hobbes's literalizing definition of liberty and slavery in *De Cive* was not sufficient—it also needed to acknowledge the polymorphous nature of this dialectic of power. Earlier in that text, he writes that slaves

> serve indeed, but within prisons or bound within irons; and therefore they were called not by the common name of *servant* only, but by the peculiar name of *slave*, even as now at this day, *un serviteur*, and *un serf*, or *un esclave*, have diverse significations. (118)

The "prisons" and "irons" constraining Hobbes's slave contrast with a linguistic variety that seems to multiply rather than stabilize the meaning of slavery. Slavery may have "a peculiar name," but the "diverse significations" of "*un serviteur*, and *un serf*, or *un esclave*" are still encompassed in the term "slave," as though such Law French is required to unfold the capaciousness of the vernacular. Hobbes's switch out of ordinary English into (somewhat more) exotic legal terminology to explore slavery's meaning will be echoed, in the eighteenth century, by a series of fictional texts that go outside the British Isles to tease apart contradictions in the metropolitan rhetoric of liberty and slavery.

The multiplicity inhering in the idea of slavery helped make it fertile ground for narrative fiction in the early eighteenth century, and this proliferation of fictions with enslaved characters suggests a growing desire to understand something of what it might be like to be a slave in the new world.[2] Indeed, J. Paul Hunter suggests that early eighteenth-century readers were drawn to novels—whether about slaves or not— precisely for representations of the particularized experience of fictional characters:

> Unlike essentialist forms that promised universal solutions because human nature was constant across cultures and times, the novel offered varied, circumstantial, and individual outcomes, a freedom from formal determination that left texts open to tell whatever individual stories they chose by referring causes and effects to local choices and cultural particulars. This preoccupation with circumstance over pattern—or rather the interest in how individual circumstances modified, revised, or played variations, on the human patterns that literature had traditionally sought to describe—meant from the beginning that … the social and the adjustable had to

> be an important part of any narration however concerned it might be with human nature or permanence.("The Novel" 10)

In Hunter's model, the early eighteenth-century novel's engagement with liberty and slavery looks remarkably Hobbesian. With the technology of the novel formalized, "slavery" could be brought out of ancient Greece and Rome and presented on a pirate ship in the Caribbean or a harem in Algiers, where "local choices and cultural particulars" would be brought to bear in fleshing out the "essentialist" idea of slavery as merely a dialectic of power. Many of these fictions demonstrate an attention to "how individual circumstances modified, revised, or played variations on human patterns," including scenes in which slaves overpower their masters. In these fictional engagements with slavery, power is often unpredictable, and subjugation never absolute. Indeed, the new genre's emphasis on its "freedom from formal determination" suggests that this very freedom is a necessary reaction to the strictures in which such texts enmesh their characters; these enslaved characters, in turn, serve as stays against the formal "freedom" of their plots. Just as slavery and liberty seem to be only approachable through each other, the novel seems to have needed its representations of slavery to establish itself as a new genre.[3] Though texts in other genres also represented enslavement (we will soon examine representations of liberty and slavery in the early 1720s periodical essays *Cato's Letters*), novelistic particularity afforded a special fluidity in problematizing the dialectic of power between masters and slaves. At the same time, by representing liberty and slavery in exotic locales, novelists sought to surprise and delight their readers.

## II. Political Underpinnings

Eighteenth-century concepts of liberty and slavery, in both politics and novels, responded to seventeenth-century English history: the events of the Civil War and the Commonwealth, punctuated by the execution of Charles I in 1649, had asserted subjects' right to defend their own civil liberty by killing their king. The Restoration of the monarchy, the Exclusion Crisis, and the Act of Settlement had all cemented subjects' assertion of liberty as a stay against absolutism—resulting, by 1689, in a limited monarchy whose sovereigns ruled at their subjects' revocable pleasure. In the late seventeenth century, English subjects felt they had to assert their power, or risk being made slaves; in the early eighteenth century, this heritage would be embroidered upon by the economic and political changes of the 1710s and 1720s.

In 1714, the death of Queen Anne and the accession of the Hanoverian King George I, followed by a Jacobite uprising in 1715, seemed to recall the political instability of the previous century. During Anne's reign, Britain had joined other imperial hopefuls in the War of the Spanish Succession, an expensive conflict that had driven up the nation's debt.[4] But after the founding of the Bank of England in 1697, debt was shifted out of Parliamentary control and into the hands of private individuals who held the Bank's shares, forming the impetus of the "financial revolution" that forged a new relationship between finance and government. In response, seeking to reduce the Bank's influence over the state, Anne's minister Robert Harley helped establish the South Sea Company in 1711; the Company assumed part of the national debt in return for a monopoly of the *Asiento*, or exclusive right to trade slaves and other goods to the Spanish Americas, which England would gain from France in 1713 with the Treaty of Utrecht.[5] The resulting trade was imagined to be fantastically rich: not so rich, as economist Adam Anderson would suggest in 1764, for the *Asiento*'s yearly allotment of slaves and limited quantity of European goods, as from the idea that the *Asiento*, when "joined to the Feebleness of

the *Spanish* Government in those Parts," might clear the way "to make some permanent Settlements in the *South-Seas* of *America*, in Contemplation of the vast Plenty of *Gold*, *Silver*, and rich *Drugs*, *&c.* there to be found" (2: 254). When the Company assumed the whole of the national debt in 1719, investors believed all their imperial dreams would soon be realized—and the price of South Sea shares began to rise, from £128 a share in March of 1720, to £1,100 by early August (Kramnick 66). Wide investment in the Company seems to signal a mostly positive response to slavery's profits, at least among the investor classes. But in fact, Britain's assumption of a formerly French trading privilege with Spain, the country with the longest slave-trading presence in the New World—and investors' celebration of their new "freedom" to sell slaves—was fraught with conflict between different ideas of liberty. Indeed, a postcollapse sermon by Samuel Clifford figures the bursting of the bubble—"Credit is sunk, Trade is decay'd, Things are out of Course, and Poverty is come on upon Multitudes, like an armed Man"—as divine punishment for Britain's participation in the slave trade: "*England* hath sinned; there is an accursed Thing amongst you, and thence it is that Things go amiss with you" (9).[6] Although Clifford's references to the Bubble do not explicitly name the slave trade, in the sermon's wider context of plague and contagion, the "accursed Thing" evokes both the frenzy for the South Sea Company's shares, and the hopes for the expansion of the slave trade that had buoyed up their prices.

Commerce in the long eighteenth century was seen as an expression of privileged metropolitans' rights to liberty and property. When the Bubble burst, critics represented the whole "Scheme" as a near-criminal assault on civil liberty. On the origins of this view, Jonathan Lamb notes that the Company's "spectacular rise was engineered solely by means of publicity and the manipulation of the national debt, not in the least by trading profit," making it a fictitious

investment in a period that was increasingly coming to value narrative fictions (62). The end of the bubble prompted a reorganization of government in which the ascendant Whig Robert Walpole became both Lord of the Treasury and First Minister (a new position); in the following years, economic dissatisfaction and protests against Walpole's ever-consolidating power would become intertwined. The fictions of the 1720s, which all share an interest in personal autonomy, are written against the backdrop of Walpole's perceived tyranny; Michael McKeon has proposed that the story of the Anglophone novel's development be reimagined as a "dialectical theory of genre," in which the novel "attains its modern, 'institutional' stability and coherence" in the early eighteenth century "because of its unrivaled power both to formulate, and to explain, a set of problems that are central to early modern experience." Chief among these problems, McKeon suggests, is "categorical instability, which the novel, originating to resolve, also inevitably reflects" (20). In this case, British novelists of the 1720s seem to have seized on their cultural moment's slippage between liberty and slavery, and funneled it into the newly developing genre of the novel. In the terms that Hegel would introduce a century later with his master-slave dialectic, the novel and the transatlantic slave trade are twin iterations of the larger cultural problem of liberty and slavery (a problem they both produce and reflect)—and as such, the novel's valorization of personal liberty asserts itself against the whips and chains of popular images of slavery, even as the slave trade's commodification of unfreedom is a rebuke to the formal freedom of novels (which are themselves commodified objects). In this dialectical framework, the Anglophone novel's rise to prominence in the 1720s could not have occurred independent of the simultaneous commercialization of slavery.

One focal point of anti-Walpole and anti-bubble protest was John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon's *Cato's Letters*, serialized weekly from November 1720 to December 1723 in *The*

*London Journal* and *The British Journal* (McMahon 80). In his 'Preface' to the collected edition, Gordon writes that the *Letters* (a kind of homage to Joseph Addison's 1713 tragedy *Cato*, composed in the persona of the Roman statesman) had "an honest and humane intention, to call for publick justice upon the wicked managers of the late fatal South-Sea scheme" (1:11). According to Gordon, he and Trenchard meant that the *Letters*, "having fully opened the principles of liberty and power, and rendered them plain to every understanding, may perhaps have their share in preventing … such storms of zeal for nonsense and falshood, as have thrown the three kingdoms more than once into convulsions" (1: 12). The *Letters*'s educational project takes the form of a pacifying conservative enlightenment that aims to prevent civil war and other "storms of zeal for nonsense and falshood" by making liberty and slavery "plain to every understanding"; this process of making "plain" necessitates a less allegorical and more literal definition of liberty than Hobbes had given in the previous century.

> Liberty is, to live upon one's own terms; slavery is, to live at the mere mercy of another; and a life of slavery is, to those who can bear it, a continual state of uncertainty and wretchedness, often an apprehension of violence, often the lingering dread of a violent death: But by others, when no other remedy is to be had, death is reckoned a good one. (3: 135)

Cato's "liberty" is an absolute individualism; "slavery" is "wretched" for Cato, not just because it means "to live at the mere mercy of another," but because of the interpretive "uncertainty" and "apprehension" inherent in living on someone else's terms. Because it is impossible to be completely sure of "the mercy of another," this other is imagined as always threatening, so that the slave lives in a "lingering dread of a violent death." Thus dying in revolt against such slavery can be "reckoned a good" death because it at least has been self-willed. Abdul JanMohamed

joins with Cato in a traditional view of slavery as a suspended death sentence, and identifies a similar concept in nineteenth- and twentieth-century African American literature that characterizes slaves as "death-bound-subjects," whose masters use this very threat of unpredictable death to maintain their subjugation.[7] Unlike JanMohamed, however, Cato professes to mean slavery only as a political metaphor—and by figuring Walpole's handling of the bubble as making all Britons death-bound subjects, Cato's image of slavery registers somewhere between hyperbole and hysteria.

Cato's tendency to overstate matters presents the Turkish, Moorish, Roman, and Catholic "slaveries" that the *Letters* reference as cautionary examples: unless Britons heed Cato's warnings, Walpole's New Whig tyranny or the tyranny of the Jacobite conspiracy may prevail. But as Gordon and Trenchard came to realize, the *Letters*' fluid allegorizing proved *too* fluid when readers applied it to the wrong threats. The preface protests that the text became prey to deliberate misinterpretation, perpetrated "by some, who … were apt to wrest Cato's papers and principles to favour their own prejudices and base wishes" (1: 12), and Ian Higgins notes that this interpretive ambiguity still causes modern critics to "variously describe" Cato's politics (127). Yet Cato's multireferentiality also helped make the *Letters* a classic in the eighteenth century—going through at least six editions after their initial periodical publication, they were reprinted in the American colonies around the Revolutionary War, and helped shape the government of the new United States, where they have since served as a founding text of twentieth-century libertarianism.[8]

The *Letters*' interpretive fluidity becomes an advantage in exploring the contradictory multiplicity that Hobbes calls slavery's "diverse significations," but Cato's relentless championing of liberty also leads to unexpected conclusions. Letter 55, "The Lawfulness of

Killing Julius Caesar Considered, And Defended, Against Dr. Prideaux," finds Cato defending the justice of violent rebellion against its condemnation by Humphrey Prideaux—a surprising position for Cato, given that Marie McMahon describes the *Letters* as "evidence of the continuing dominance of religious orthodoxy and dynastic legitimism after 1714" (2). Yet in the debate about whether an act like killing Caesar can be legitimized, Cato decides that it can, as long as killing Caesar is the only way to secure liberty.[9] The letter moves from Brutus's patrician parricide to the question of whether a slave rebellion can be similarly justified. "There is an instance in the Roman history," Cato writes, "that will set this matter yet in a fuller light":

> It is the story of Spartacus, a Thracian slave and gladiator, who bid fair for being lord of the Roman world. He seems to me to have had personal qualifications and abilities as great as those of Caesar, without Caesar's birth and education, and without the measure of Caesar's guilt. For I hope all mankind will allow it a less crime in any man to attempt to recover his own liberty, than wantonly and cruelly to destroy the liberty of his country. (2: 96)

Cato's contrastive analysis of tyranny and liberatory violence is encoded in the difference between Caesar and Spartacus. The slave is presented as a sort of tragic Thracian version of Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, characterized as beginning in obscurity before rising to "bid fair for being lord of the Roman world" (or Brazilian plantation). But Cato's admiration for Spartacus's "personal qualifications and abilities" sounds even more like the heroine of another Defoe novel, *Moll Flanders*, which would be published just a month after Letter 55, at the end of January 1722.[10] As though anticipating Defoe's fictional rogue's biography, Cato emphasizes that Spartacus "seems to me" to have been a more worthy ruler than Caesar, "without Caesar's birth and education, and without the measure of Caesar's guilt." Cato notes that Spartacus, like Brutus,

led a violent rebellion in defense of liberty, admonishing his readers "I hope all mankind will allow it less a crime to attempt to recover liberty, than to destroy the liberty of his country" (2: 96). Violent revolution is to be avoided as much as possible—but when it becomes necessary, Cato suggests, it is better to be a Spartacus or a Brutus than a Caesar.

Defending Spartacus's rebellion against the kind of censure Prideaux levels at Brutus becomes a test case for Britons' moral and intellectual liberty:

> Tell me, O ye unlimited slaves, ye beasts of lawless power, ye loyal levellers of right and wrong! how came Caesar by a better title to dominion than Spartacus had, whose sword was as good, though not quite so prosperous and destructive, as Caesar's? Tell me where lay the difference between them, unless in their different success; and that Spartacus was as great a man, but Caesar a greater traitor and tyrant? (2: 97)

Recalling Locke, whose model of limited monarchy in his first *Treatise of Government* is written against Robert Filmer, Gordon and Trenchard shape Cato's defense of popular rebellion in opposition to Prideaux's apology for the monarchy, which renders its followers "loyal levellers of right and wrong." Cato suggests that his contrastive framework, on the other hand, will teach readers to tell "the difference between" Caesar and Spartacus, relying on a tool popularized by contemporary fiction—that of narrative characterization. Texts like *Pilgrim's Progress* or *Robinson Crusoe* oppose pairs of characters according to their relative power and subjugation—Giant Despair and Christian, Crusoe and Friday—and then use the events of their plots to sort out these relationships' legitimacy through their "different success" (Christian escapes while Friday remains Crusoe's loyal slave). Readers familiar with Addison's *Cato* would have quickly recognized the irony that this contrastive framework leads to—for while Spartacus and Caesar

died in the course of assaults on Roman political stability, Spartacus's revolt failed to end slavery and yet Caesar succeeded in destroying the Roman Republic. Yet for Cato, Caesar's success does not render his tyranny legitimate any more than Spartacus's failure condemns the pursuit of liberty.

Plot alone cannot differentiate Caesar from Spartacus—interpretation is necessary as well. Cato suggests that failing to valorize Spartacus over Caesar is to be, mentally, an "unlimited slave" and a "beast of lawless power." Cato's defense of Spartacus thus forms a complicated statement about the legitimacy of enslavement, and the justice of slaves' resistance. Letter 55 turns the metaphor of political slavery into literal slavery—made safe, perhaps, by the context of ancient Rome, but literal slavery nonetheless. Like many an eighteenth-century novel, *Cato's Letters* is at its most radical in, as Higgins notes, "what it occludes or does not say," and "African slavery and the British involvement in the slave trade … are largely neglected" (133). In fact, Cato mentions British involvement in the slave trade only obliquely, in Trenchard's praise of "our own colonies in the West Indies" for "employ[ing] ten times their own number in Old England, by sending them from hence provisions, manufactures, [and] utensils for themselves and their slaves" (4: 7). Trenchard and Gordon make no other mention of colonial slavery. They seem not to have connected their text's recurrent metaphor of slavery with the contemporary reality of the British slave trade's kidnapped Africans, but they may simply have found it expedient to keep Cato from making the connection between these two of slavery's "diverse significations."

*Cato's Letters* presents "slavery" in Turkey, ancient Rome, or Morocco—contexts which did not necessitate confronting the economic benefits Britain accrued in the 1720s from slave labor and increased participation in the slave trade. After all, absentee planters living in London

and West Indian merchants passing through town would undoubtedly have been among Cato's readers; once the profits of the slavery-based South Sea trade had been mobilized to pay off the national debt, the British economy had itself become staked on the slave trade—so that, in one sense, by the 1720s profits from slavery effectively bankrolled the nation. Cato's rhetoric of slavery and liberty is designed to polarize, to help organize George I's supporters against Jacobitism. The polarity of this treatment, along with the ease with which Cato aligns himself with a rebellious slave like Spartacus, would have made it extremely uncomfortable for both Trenchard and Gordon and for their readers to acknowledge that as Britons they were collectively guilty of tyranny and enslavement—but the narrative power (and powerful ambiguity) of the newly emerging novel would help make the opposition between domestic liberty and colonial slavery more explicit.

## III. Satirical Reality

Trenchard and Gordon's slaves are metaphors for metropolitan politics, but the *Letters* articulated ideas of liberty and slavery that helped launch a number of fictions in the 1720s—fictions whose plots carry their characters outside the metropolis and introduce them to literal slavery. One such fiction, the *Voyage to Cacklogallinia* by "Captain Samuel Brunt" (a pseudonym for an author or authors whose real name is still undiscovered), sets its first episode in captivity among runaway slaves in Jamaica, thus introducing to the textual discourses of liberty and slavery the contexts that Cato seems to have found easier to ignore. [11] Like the more explicitly political text, *Cacklogallinia* delights in unexpected interpretations of slavery; in the novel, liberty and slavery are explicitly racialized and geographically fixed in Jamaica's sugar-

colony culture. Sam Brunt's brief autobiography opens his narrative that will translate the metropolitan ideas of slavery and mastery into a new colonial framework of black and white. "At the Age of Thirteen," Brunt writes, "my Grandfather, who was a Citizen of some Note in *Bristol* … sent me to Sea Prentice to a Master of a Merchant-Man":[12]

> My two first Voyages were to *Jamaica*, in which nothing remarkable happen'd. Our third Voyage was to *Guinea* and *Jamaica*; we slaved, and arrived happily at that Island, but it being Time of War, and our Men fearing they should be press'd (for we were mann'd a-peak) Twelve, and myself, went on Shore a little to the Eastward of *Port Morante*, designing to foot it to *Port Royal*. We had taken no Arms, suspecting no Danger; but I soon found we wanted Precaution: For we were, in less than an Hour after our Landing, encompass'd by about Forty Run-away Negroes, well arm'd, who, without a Word speaking, pour'd in upon us a Volley of Shot, which laid Eight of our Company dead, and wounded the rest. I was shot thro' the right Arm. (2)

Sam's transformation from slave-ship sailor to captive is related with a dramatic irony that plays on the words "slave" and "arm." When Brunt writes that "our third Voyage was to *Guinea* and *Jamaica*; we slaved and arrived happily at that Island," contemporary usage would have taken "to slave" as both working very hard, and as transporting slaves, so that Sam and his fellow sailors slaved while they slaved ("slave," v.1 4a. and 5). His position as "Prentice to a Master of a Merchant-Man" intensifies his connection to enslavement—while ordinary sailors were absolute subjects to their captain's discipline, apprentices were doubly subjugated, not having reached adulthood (Turley 12). In addition, Britons searching for domestic analogues of slavery found parallels in impressed naval crews. Literary scholar Daniel Ennis notes that

*Cacklogallinia*'s early invocation of impressment "make[s] fast the connection between the sea and legal oppression," and between the feared press-gangs and the "Runaway Negroes," Sam and his companions are sandwiched between two particularly undesirable examples of slavery's "diverse significations" (Ennis 52). [13]

Although Sam's apprenticeship means he was never completely at liberty, in "less than an Hour after [their] landing," he and his companions are "encompass'd by about Forty Run-away Negroes, well arm'd," who complete Sam's transformation into a captive. If the difference between liberty and slavery is in whose "will" or "mercy" prevailed, the "Forty Run-away Negroes, well arm'd" seem to be at liberty, with the sailors as their slaves. "It being Time of War," Sam and the others had intended to come ashore quietly to avoid naval impressment—but on doing so they enter instead the "State of War" with which Locke defines slavery in the second *Treatise of Government*.[14] Having "taken no Arms, suspecting no Danger," they fall prey to the "well-arm'd" runaways; when Sam is "shot thro' the right Arm," his wound is a metonymy at once for the sailors' vulnerability and the runaways' superior power.

Sam alone is spared from slaughter by the leader of the group—whom he recognizes as "a Slave of a Planter's a distant Relation of mine." Sam met this former slave during a visit to his relative's plantation on a previous voyage to Jamaica—the slave's "Feet [were] ordered to be cut off to the Instep (a common Punishment inflicted on run-away slaves)," but was whipped instead at Sam's "Intercession" (3). Now Sam asks "if his Name was not *Cuffey*, Mr. *Tenant's* Negro? *My Name* Cuffey, said he, *me no* Baccararo *Negro now; me Freeman*. *You no let cutty my Foot, so me no let cutty your Head; no be sadd, you have bumby grande yam yam*" (4). Cuffey's response focuses on his history with Sam to cut through the impersonal rhetoric of slavery as a state of war. In that discourse, when Sam "no let cutty [Cuffey's] Foot," he was superior; now,

signaling his new power, Cuffey "no let cutty [Sam's] Head." But the text figures Cuffey's exchange of power as near-friendly reciprocity, and he finishes by telling Sam "no be sadd, you have bumby grande yam yam." The bottom of the page notes that "*Yam yam*, in Negroes Dialect, signifies Victuals," and "*Baccararo* [is] the Name Negroes give the Whites" (4). The gloss of Cuffey's words as "Negro" highlights the importance the text gives to Sam and Cuffey's racial difference, a difference that threatens to upend their reciprocal relationship.

As I will explore in Chapter 2, part of eighteenth-century racial categories' formalization occurred in the radical racialization of language that set "negro" and "British" dialects in opposition. Yet here, this racialization seems to instantiate human difference more than enforce it. An insight from Boulukos helps articulate how race's bodily difference interacts with the status differences of chattel slavery. (After all, if Cuffey's language can be so distinctly racialized as "Negro," might not the behavior that the text assigns his character be similarly made other?) Working from the representation of black slavery and white indentured servitude in Defoe's 1722 *Colonel Jack*, Boulukos writes that "in the eighteenth-century British Atlantic world, the central literary image of plantation slavery—one which came to have a profound impact on views of real slavery and, indeed, on imagining the possibility of racial difference—was of grateful slaves" (2). Enslaved Africans, Boulukos suggests, were imagined to be fundamentally different from whites, presented as so emotionally simple that their master's humane treatment was sufficient to keep them gratefully subservient; fictional white laborers, who would go free at the end of their term of indenture, expressed a more moderate and rationalized gratitude. Yet the relationship between Cuffey and Sam seems structured as an exchange of generosity, not a one-sided gratitude. *Cacklogallinia*'s difference from the racialized relationship between slaves and masters that Boulukos theorizes is thus partly one of setting, as Cuffey's generous/grateful

sparing of Sam's life happens not on a plantation, but on his own turf—the steep path to the escaped slaves' mountain village. Although Sam's earlier "Intercession" in Cuffey's punishment may well have been structured by a black gratitude cementing white authority, now Cuffey's generosity seems to propose a roughly equal personhood between them.

Boulukos's theory of the racialization of affect in fictional slavery may not hold true for Cuffey, but it seems to accurately describe Sam's character—for Sam, as Boulukos predicts, is not overcome with grateful loyalty at not being killed. Brunt is able to record Cuffey's attempts "to comfort me under my Afflictions," but recalls that, at the time, "I was so posssess'd with the Notion of my being reserv'd to be Murdered, that I received but little consolation" (4). This fear of "being reserv'd to be Murdered," which preempts any other affective response, stems in part from the racial inversion of Sam's character's new position as the white captive of black former slaves. *Cacklogallinia* presents Jamaica as a highly racialized space, divided between—in Cuffey's terms—the "Baccararo" world of the lowland plantations and the "Negro" world of mountain-dwelling escaped slaves. When, at "about Three in the Afternoon," Cuffey's band marches Brunt into a "village of run-away Negroes," they are "received by the inhabitants with … Demonstrations of Joy" that Sam's presence seems to upset:

> One of the Negro Men ask'd Cuffey, Why he did not bring my Head, instead of bringing me alive? He gave his Reason, at which he seem'd satisfied, but said it was dangerous to let a *Baccararo* know their Retreat; that he would tell Captain *Thomas* and he must expect his orders concerning me. (4-5)

As the village is inhabited exclusively by "run-away Negroes," characterizing Cuffey's interlocutor as "one of the Negro Men" is not very descriptive. Yet Brunt's racial epithet signals a discursive shift in which Sam's race is othered instead. By asking why Cuffey "did not bring

[Sam's] Head," the man indicates that living whites are not admitted in the village—although their severed heads may be brought back as evidence of military success; because Cuffey has let Sam keep his head, the man is concerned at the danger of letting "a *Baccararo* know their Retreat." As the text demonstrates, eighteenth-century Jamaica is what Mary Louise Pratt calls a "contact zone," a "social space where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism [or] slavery" (34). Surrounded entirely by "run-away Negroes," Brunt registers their blackness as more pronounced, and they in turn seem to perceive his whiteness as a portent of danger. The text seems to structure these mutually invoked frameworks of racial characterization, like Cuffey's sparing Sam's life, in terms of a reciprocity that works against the surrounding culture's "asymmetrical relations of power."

In some ways, the textual space of *Cacklogallinia*'s Jamaican episode presents a racial mirror world where authority is black and subjugation white. Eighteenth-century Jamaica was fertile ground for such a literary inversion, especially after the 1730s, when runaway slaves like Cuffey, who came to be known as "Maroons," fought and concluded a war against the colonial government. Although the text does not use this term, its "village of run-away Negroes" easily fits into a tradition of representations of Maroons that was given its fullest expression by late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century historians Edward Long and R. C. Dallas.[15] The Maroons date to the seventeenth century: when Jamaica was turned over to England, many of the island's Spanish planters emigrated to Cuba, leaving their slaves behind; other slaves who took advantage of the commotion to run away also headed for the mountains, where they learned survival and resistance skills from remaining indigenous Jamaicans (Craton 66-77). In a plantation colony structured around deeply racialized divisions of labor and status, Maroons

were heterotopic: black people who lived parallel to—but outside of—plantation culture. By the 1720s and 1730s, Maroon villages had become powerful enough to conduct raids against the lowland plantations, carrying off property and welcoming escaped slaves; in 1738, at the end of the First Maroon War, the Maroon leader Cudjoe would sign a treaty formalizing the Maroons' semi-autonomous status. Though published a decade before the war, *Cacklogallinia* seizes on this quasi-autonomy in presenting a counternarrative to the British Caribbean's prevailing system of race and power.

Black outsiders to the slave system, *Cacklogallinia*'s "run-away Negroes" form their own category in eighteenth-century Anglo-America.[16] As Roxann Wheeler explains, until the last third of the eighteenth century "*black* and *white* [were] simplifying, though powerful, cover stories for a dense matrix of ideas as closely associated with cultural differences as with the body's surface" (2). In Wheeler's paradigmatic example, *Capt. Stibb's voyage up the Gambia in 1723* contains a list of "19 White Men, including our Linguister, who is Black as Coal; tho' here, thro' Custom, (being Christians) they account themselves White Men" (4).[17] "Custom" designates the Christian translator as a "White M[a]n," although he "is as Black as Coal"; Wheeler writes, "Remarkably, the Englishman accepts the translator's construction of color identity" (2). Though race is encoded as black and white, the sign system by which this color binary functions is not actually *visual* color, but the "close association" between Europeans' Christianity and their white skin, so that each becomes a metonymy for the other. The cultural historian Dror Wahrman, building on Wheeler's analysis, emphasizes the malleability of race as a category of identity in Britain until about 1770, noting with Wheeler that race would become much less flexible by the century's end (93).[18] While race is determined by religion in the Gambian travel narrative, in Jamaica and other plantation colonies, race identified slaves and

kept them separate from free persons. Thus when *Cacklogallinia*'s Cuffey tells Brunt "me no *Baccararo* Negro now; me Freeman," he enacts a racial re-identification similar to Wheeler's cultural-constructivist example of the black/white Christian translator. For Cuffey, in becoming a "Freeman" his new identity escapes the "Baccararo" terms in which being a "Negro" means being a slave. Though he is still black, Cuffey suggests that his cultural and status transformations have changed his race.

As they invert plantation culture, *Cacklogallinia*'s Jamaican mountains are quietly indebted to Jonathan Swift's 1726 *Gulliver's Travels*. [19] (The rest of the novel wears its Swiftian satirical allegiance more openly: the second section is set in the Cacklogallinia of the title, a land of giant talking chickens; the third part relates Sam's journey with some of the chickens to the moon.) Yet the first episode in Jamaica, coming before the more obviously fantastic adventures, also invites a reading in the manner of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*—as a fictional travel narrative that nonetheless represents something like reality.[20] Read as Swiftian, the Jamaican episode positions Cuffey and Sam as a satire of domestic liberty/slavery metaphors where both Caesar-like rulers (who cut off feet) and Spartacus-like slaves (who cut off heads) are represented as frighteningly brutal. In this allegory, both liberty and slavery can be had to an extreme, for absolute power deprives its subjects even of the capacity to move, while absolute liberty disables the state by rendering its governors unable to rule. Read as Defoean, meanwhile, *Cacklogallinia*'s Jamaican episode testifies to the multiplicity of race and slavery's significations in the Anglo-Atlantic world—and more than any text since *Oroonoko*, it represents the rebellious violence of enslaved Africans as justifiable, even heroic. Yet because of the Swiftian satirical sections that follow, reading the text's Jamaica as Defoean mimesis necessarily means assuming a posture of readerly naïveté that might also believe in giant talking chickens. As a result, like

*Cato's Letters*, *Cacklogallinia* enshrouds its endorsement of revolutionary violence in a protective equivocality.

The text's divided allegiance to these two modes of travel fiction proves useful in Brunt's ethnographic description of Cuffey's audience with Captain Thomas, the chief of the village. Brunt notes that Thomas "was about Seventy Five Years old, a hale, strong, well-proportioned Man, about Six Foot Three Inches high," and "sat upon a little Platform rais'd about a Foot from the Ground, accompanied by Eight or Ten near his own Age, smoking Segars, which are Tobacco leaves roll'd up hollow" (5). Brunt's account seizes on the kind of specific detail ("about Six Foot Three Inches high") that Watt calls the "concrete particularity" of the realist novel, comparing it to the "literal truth and minute exactness in the detail of nature" of seventeenth-century Flemish realist painting (17). Like the pearl earring in Vermeer's painting, the realist detail Watt considers a hallmark of the novel is the production of a mercantilist-liberal culture rich in the very consumer goods its artistic representations fetishize. Now, observing Cuffey's audience with Thomas, Brunt must confront his own near-thinghood:

> *Cuffey* threw himself on his Face, and clapp'd his Hands over his Head; then rising, he, with a visible Awe in his Countenance, drew nearer, and address'd the Captain in the *Cholomantean* Language, in which he gave an Account, as I suppose, of his Expedition; for when he had done speaking, my Comrades Heads were brought in; and thrown at the Captain's Feet, who returned but a short Answer to *Cuffey*, tho' he presented him with a Segar, made him sit down, and drank to him in a Calabash of Rum. (5-6)

As Cuffey and Thomas speak in "the *Cholomantean* Language," Brunt can only interpret their exchange by signs and gestures. Cuffey falls on the ground and claps "his Hands over his Head"

until the severed "Heads" of Sam's fellow sailors are "brought in and thrown at the Captain's Feet"—which seems to suggest Thomas's authority is so great that Cuffey must offer the tribute of heads to the head of the village in order to keep his own head. That is, without language, Brunt relies on the exchange of *things*—the allegiance, authority, and tribute the heads seem to signify—to tell what is happening. Cynthia Wall writes of early British novels that, "In reading, one enters the spare visual space [of a novel's setting] immediately, through the door of a *thing*, a small vivid detail. One of the characteristics of early novels that most strikes modern readers is the vast heaps of *things* among their pages" (96). Here, Brunt behaves like Wall's novel reader, noting the "Segar" and "Calabash of Rum"—and transfixed at the sight of all those heads "thrown at the Captain's Feet." But these heads, for Sam, are not just things—he calls them "my Comrades Heads," and his description feels charged with the awareness that his own head is not among them. As we will also see in the novels of Brunt's contemporary Penelope Aubin, this novelistic pleasure in things interacts uneasily with characters who—like slaves—register uneasily somewhere between persons and things.

The text encodes the miracle of Sam's survival in this "small vivid detail" of his "Comrades Heads," filling the other cultural artifact exchanged between Cuffey and Thomas—"the *Cholomantean* Language"—with symbolic meaning as well. "Cholomantean," or "Coromantee," was a term eighteenth-century planters used to describe slaves shipped from the British slave fort at Coromantee, on the coast of present-day Ghana; Michael Craton notes that "slaves were commonly labeled" by such fictitious designations, "rather than by true ethnic origin, if they did not bear a quasi-ethnic label based on observed characteristics that ignored true origin altogether" (25). As Craton observes, Coromantees were regarded as a luxury commodity with higher prices than slaves from other regions. Edward Long would write fifty years after

Brunt that "the Jamaican planters are fond of purchasing Negroes who pass under this name," although "*Coromantin* [sic] Negroes are distinguished from their brethren by their aversion to husbandry, and the martial ferocity of their disposition" (2: 445-6). Although skeptical that Coromantees were desirable slaves, Long nevertheless seems to accept that "Coromantin" signified something real. But Long was right to recognize "Coromantin" as a commercial fiction that casually embroidered a few facts in order to fill a gap in New World nomenclature and could be imbued with the particularly self-flattering image of a fierce people subjugated by British commercial power. Coromantean slaves had a distinguished literary pedigree as well—Behn's Oroonoko, perhaps the most famous enslaved character in the long eighteenth century, is the grandson of a Coromantee chief. Yet, as Craton points out, one truth at the bottom of the Coromantee fiction was that many such slaves came from a number of ethnic Akan tribes from present-day Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire—although, as they spoke "several mutually unintelligible languages," any "Cholomantean Language" used by Maroons would have been a "syncretic form, purposely developed and handed down by the captains and obeahmen who led the band" (78). Thus at once the slave traders' commercial category and the secret creole invented by certain populations to communicate resistance to slavery, the "Cholomantean Language" that Cuffey and Thomas speak, like *Cacklogallinia* as a whole, emerges out of the liberty/slavery dialectic's collision with New World commerce.

Like the text he inhabits, Thomas demonstrates a facility at speaking in two registers. "After this ceremony" of the severed heads, Brunt writes, "Captain Thomas address'd himself to me in perfect good *English*," delivering a speech that is not hard to imagine spoken by Cato's Spartacus:[21]

> *Young Man*, said he, *I would have you banish all fear; you are not fallen into the Hands of barbarous Christians, whose Practice and Profession are as distant as the Country they came from, is from this Island, which they have usurp'd from the original Natives. Capt.* Cuffey*'s returning the Service you once did him, by saving your Life, which we shall not, after the Example of your Country, take in Cold Blood, may give you a Specimen of our Morals. We believe in, and fear a God, and whatever you may conclude from the Slaughter of your Companions, yet we are far from thirsting after the Blood of the Whites; and it's Necessity alone which obliges us to what bears the Face of Cruelty.* (6)

Thomas's critique of British colonial Christianity—often positioned as force of civilization and moral reform—hinges on its spatial simile in which "Practice and Profession are as far apart" as England and Jamaica. The geographic distance of the Atlantic Ocean is aligned with another religious and cultural void, that of "barbarousness." A century earlier, in Shakespeare's *Othello*—most of which takes place, we might remember, on Cypress, in the middle of the Mediterranean—Othello deploys the ostensible oxymoron of "barbarous Christians" while chiding his soldiers to stop fighting among themselves. "For Christian shame," Othello says, "put by this barbarous brawl," ironically drawing on his own racial and cultural otherness, as well as the irony that they are stationed in Cypress to defend it from the Muslim Turks, in encouraging his men not to surrender the behavioral superiority of their Venetian Christianity (2.3: 172). As Turkishness, through its metonymy with the Barbary Coast of North Africa, became closely aligned with slavery in the later seventeenth-century, so accusations of "barbarousness" took on a particularly antislavery charge; by the end of the eighteenth century, the barbarity of the slave trade as carried on by British Christian merchants would become a familiar rhetorical trope. But

even in 1727, Thomas's assertion clearly articulates that commercial slavery stands in opposition to Christianity. (This play of opposites reasserts itself at the end of the passage in Thomas's complicated assertion that "Necessity alone … obliges us to what bears the Face of Cruelty," where Thomas seems to reference and then refute a proslavery association of Africanness, metonymized through the implicitly black "Face," with uncivilized "Cruelty.")

The inversion Thomas's speech performs thus participates in a literary tradition that includes both Swift's elaborate satires of imperialism and what Madeline Dobie calls the "projected or 'displaced'" engagements with colonial slavery "onto adjacent cultural terrains" (9). Having been Othered himself by colonialist discourse, Thomas is authorized to disparage Christians for having "usurp'd [Jamaica] from the original Natives."[22] Yet although, as he suggests, the Britons' colonial behavior shows them to be immoral barbarians, Thomas emphasizes to Sam that "we shall not, after the Example of your Country, take [your life] in Cold Blood"—for to do so would mean being guilty of the same immorality as British Christians. That is, Sam's earlier personal kindness to Cuffey now spares him from the punishment Thomas suggests many Britons deserve. After Thomas has finished speaking, Sam will make "an Answer full of Acknowledgments" that the text will not quote, producing an affective gap that asks to be filled by the reader's own acceptance of the impossibility of constructing any defense of the immorality of colonial slavery or the slave trade. While *Cacklogallinia*'s Jamaican episode performs a much more explicit and incisive critique of colonial slavery than the safely historically displaced version offered by *Cato's Letters*, aspects of this critique appear still to be unrepresentable by the novel, as though the new genre's formal freedom is not yet freeing enough to fully "acknowledge" slavery's implications for the enslaved.

Thomas's speech closes with a peroration that—while composed in the style of Cato—exposes the exclusivity that Cato and others must impose on the metropolitan ideology of liberty in order for colonial slavery to endure. He declares:

> *Nothing is so dear to Man as Liberty, and we have no way of avoiding Slavery, of which our bodies wear the inhuman Marks, but by a War in which, if we give no Quarter, the* English *must blame themselves; since even, with a Shew of Justice, they put to the most cruel Deaths those among us, who have the Misfortune to fall into their Hands; and make that a Crime in us (the Desire of Liberty, I mean) which they look upon as the distinguishing Mark of a great Soul.* (6-7)

As eighteenth-century slavery-reform writing often does, the speech seeks to bridge a gap between universalist conceptions of humanity and the racially, religiously, and nationally exclusivist constructions that undergird colonial slavery. Thus the "Desire of Liberty" that Thomas says "the English" consider a crime in their slaves is interpreted as "the distinguishing Mark of a great Soul" in the metropolis, while the Maroons' bodies "wear the inhuman Marks" of their enslavement. The text suggests that these "Marks," while fundamentally the same (the escaped slaves' scars indicate their own greatness of soul), are read incorrectly within the "inhuman" (mis)interpretive frameworks of racism and profitable exploitation. While the tradition of Western humanism interprets enslavement as the result of a state of war (slaves are former combatants whose perpetual subjugation is necessary to maintain peace), war is for Thomas the result rather than the cause of slavery—and the British must now "blame themselves," not their slaves, for this war. (Thomas actually performs a double inversion of sign and cause, for these "Marks" also invoke the mark of Cain that some slavery supporters viewed as constituting not only racial blackness, but encoded God's permission for Europeans to enslave

Africans, as well—yet here the authorizing mark is produced *from* slavery.) Not only are colonial slaves as desirous of liberty as metropolitan subjects, Britons have made themselves as abusive of their slaves as the tyrants whose "Shew of Justice" *Cato's Letters* and other sites of national exceptionalism deplore. Thomas's universalist attack on this exceptionalism offers a rationale for the text's hybrid of the two modes of fictional travel narrative suggested earlier—on one level, Cuffey and Thomas's characters voice fictional representations of sentiments actual Maroons might be supposed to hold; while on another level, the supposed reality of their village functions as a pulpit from which to critique domestic ideology.

## IV. The Romance of Slavery

Most of the Anglophone novels of the 1720s are indebted to *Robinson Crusoe* in one way or another. As we saw above, *Cacklogallinia*'s tongue-in-cheek refashioning of *Crusoe*'s narrative patterns of adventure, disaster, and captivity, is expressed in alternately hyperrealist and antirealist frameworks. Sea voyages away from the metropolis followed by shipwreck and captivity on a tropical island made for compelling entertainment, as the proliferation of adventure narratives at this early moment in the novel's "rise" attests—but the use of these familiar narrative tropes also demanded an engagement with larger cultural anxieties over liberty and slavery. Hobbes had already embedded these two abstract concepts in micronarratives of travel and confinement in the mid-seventeenth century; now in the early eighteenth, emerging novelists employed the evolving technology of prose narrative to expand Hobbes's model of spatial allegory into full-blown fictions.

Peter Hulme, observing the cultural appeal of *Robinson Crusoe* (and by extension, its fellow adventure tales), notes that Defoe's novel "is useful to the colonial enterprise precisely because it *reduces* a potentially embarrassing cultural complexity to the simplicity of the essential romance terminology" (211). Hulme redeploys the term "romance" to describe the metropolitan fantasy of "colonial enterprise" that *Robinson Crusoe* embeds in its largely realist framework. But resituating *Robinson Crusoe* in the context of the fictional travel narratives that followed in the 1720s suggests that these "colonial romances" instead served to *complicate* the relationship between slave and master, colony and metropolis. As Dobie notes, "When we consider that the enslavement of Europeans is evoked in many literary texts, including such canonical works as *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gulliver's Travels*, and *Candide*, it seems necessary to entertain the idea that in literary narratives power is not always rendered as power" (56). And these paradoxes of power and dependence are perhaps nowhere more problematically expressed, in the fictions of the 1720s, than in the three Domingo novels of Penelope Aubin, each of which includes an enslaved black character named "Domingo." Like the more canonical novels of Defoe, Swift, and Voltaire that Dobie mentions, Aubin's Domingo novels bring metropolitan characters to the places Britain was trading with or colonizing in the long eighteenth century—a project that, as we have seen, made manifest the complications of metropolitan identity. Adams suggests one method by which this generic tendency to complicate colonizing ideology works: "In a period where tolerance, democracy, and relativity became important … the voyager taught that each nation had a distinctive, even appropriate way of life. They inspired studies in comparative religion, comparative natural history, and comparative government" (224). Travel narratives that seized on the figure of the slave found slavery a highly useful object for such a

study of comparative government, as the characters of colonial slaves externalized and made strange the metropolitan valorization of liberty.

Slaves were most visible in the colonies, but a number of formal forces also helped drive travel fictions to represent enslaved characters. The plots of these fictions seem ready-made to embody the contradiction between liberty and slavery—when Hobbes presented liberty as "an absence of the lets and hinderances of motion," being free to travel became a symbol of freedom itself, yet readers and writers in the long eighteenth century would have been equally aware of travel's threat to liberty. Sailing ships that emblematized seemingly limitless human-directed motion were also liable to be boarded by privateers, and sailors in Atlantic waters often risked enslavement by Barbary pirates. Londoners had a particularly stunning reminder of Barbary slavery on December 4, 1721, when "English Captives redeemed by the late Treaty made with the King of Fez and Morocco, to the Number of above 280 Persons, march'd in their Moorish Habits through a great Part of this City" (*Daily Post* 1).[23] Texts like the Hebrew Bible, which stress the connection between exile and enslavement, testified that travel could also produce slavery—and punitive transport to the colonies was perhaps the most domestically visible part of the transatlantic slave trade. Emerging from this cultural crucible, travel fictions made voyage as associable with slavery as liberty, situating liberty and slavery within the matrix of other identity categories whose different expressions characters encountered as they crossed and recrossed the Atlantic.

Between 1721 and 1727, Penelope Aubin published seven novels about voyaging metropolitans that critics have described as "shrewdly and effectively combin[ing] two major trends in the best-selling fiction of the time: the amatory novella as practiced most expertly by Eliza Haywood in the 1720s and the travel adventures exemplified in Defoe's phenomenally

popular *Robinson Crusoe*" (Richetti 113). Three of these novels, *Count Vinevil*, *The Noble Slaves*, and *Charlotta Du Pont*, are especially concerned with the conflict between liberty and slavery (a conflict especially highlighted by the paradox of those titular "Noble Slaves"), and tend to climax in dramatizing their prepubescent heroines' resistance to captivity—at the hands of rapist suitors, enslaving pirates, Muslims who lust after their slaves, or an evil stepmother who sells her daughter as an indentured servant to a Virginia-bound sea captain. The intensity with which Aubin's novels focus on captivity and escape creates a narrative sameness, and in a 1957 article that helped touch off Aubin's critical revival, W. H. McBurney hypothesizes that she "produce[d] lengthy novels rapidly, by slight variations on a basic pattern, [borrowing] from fictional and dramatic sources … a group of stereotyped characters, who differ from novel to novel only in nationality" (253).[24] *Vinevil*'s heroes and heroines are French, *Noble Slaves*'s are French and Spanish, and *Du Pont*'s are Spanish and English—in a sense, making the novels a three-part portrait of the nations controlling most of the transatlantic slave trade in the eighteenth century. Indeed, the theatrical resonances of the frameworks in which Aubin's novels present race and gender bear debts to plays like *Othello* and Thomas Southerne's adaptation of *Oroonoko*, whose heroes clearly provided models for the Domingos. Like these well-known black tragic heroes, two of Aubin's Domingos fall in love with white women, but Domingo in *The Noble Slaves* is accidentally poisoned before he can be loved in return, while Domingo in *Charlotta Du Pont* eventually marries and fathers several children (the oldest of whom is also named Domingo) with the woman he loves after they resettle in the interracial marriage–friendly Spanish colony of Santo Domingo, where they will preside over a large and successful plantation together.

As Debbie Welham's biographical research has recently uncovered, Aubin was *not,* as the past three centuries of criticism has assumed, the daughter of a French army officer, or descended from Hugenot refugees—instead she was the illegitimate daughter of Sir Richard Temple, third Baron Cobham, by his longtime mistress Anne Charleton (herself the daughter of Walter Charleton, one of Charles I's physicians), making her the half-sister of Sir Richard Temple, Viscount Cobham, who would become one of Alexander Pope's patrons.[25] Penelope Charleton-Temple was still a teenager when she married Abraham Aubin, who came from a family of Jersey merchants with connections in Virginia and the Caribbean; she would manage Abraham's business dealings during his occasional commercial and military absences, and only began her career as a novelist in her forties, claiming "I do not write for Bread, nor am I vain or fond of Applause; but I am very ambitious to gain the Esteem of those who honour Virtue" (*Charlotta Du Pont* vi). This ambition led her to publish, as McBurney notes, "over 3,000 pages of original and translated fiction" (245 n1); Welham points out that Aubin's familial and personal sympathies—High Church, Tory, and mercantilist—can all be traced through her prose output.

Writing the Domingos as "slight variations on a basic pattern" may work against the realist emphasis of Aubin's emulation of Defoe. But Deidre Lynch reminds us that eighteenth-century readers would have seen characteristics of characters like the Domingos—their name, their race, their gender, even the back story of their enslavement, as not unlike "'the passions' that were imprinted on the face of the player or the denomination stamped on the face of the coin" (7). Surfaces were key to understanding character—indeed, eighteenth-century critics were concerned that "a particular representation might be excessively particularized, or 'overcharged'" (10). While the novels examined here helped individuate the mass of meanings

that the eighteenth century assigned to the metaphor of slavery, it is important to remember that *too much* individuation could have been a weakness. Indeed, the texts make use of those vague details "stamped on the face of" Domingo's character—because "Domingo" means "lord" or "Sunday" (the Lord's day) in Spanish, naming an enslaved character "Domingo" is the onomastic version of making him a "noble slave" (or, in Wylie Sypher's terms, one of "Guinea's Captive Kings").[26] Thus the name signals that Aubin's Domingos will behave similarly to Brunt's Cuffey by problematizing the power relation between white masters and black slaves. In addition, "Domingo" assigns an essential Spanishness to enslavement—and as eighteenth-century Britons regarded the Inquisition in Spain as an example of tyranny and slavery, the Spanishness of the Domingos may signal an ambivalence about Britain's growing dominance of the transatlantic trade.

The first Domingo is mentioned, early in Aubin's *Strange Adventures of the Count de Vinevil and his Family*, when the heroine Ardelisa learns she must flee Constantinople—where she and her father the Count have lately moved—to avoid Mahomet, the local bashaw's son, who had her father murdered in his attempt to compel her to join his harem. Mme de Joyeuxe, Domingo's mistress and the Vinevils' neighbor, tells Ardelisa:

> We have a Country-house within thirty miles of this City, at a Village called *Domez-Dure*, thither I will this night send you and your Servants; you and *Nannetta* [Ardelisa's maid] shall be dress'd like Men, and *Joseph* [Ardelisa's servant] shall black his Face and Hands like *Domingo* our Slave: so you shall feign yourself very sick, and in our Horse-Litter shall be convey'd thither; there you may continue in Safety, till a fit Opportunity presents to get you off. (40-41)

Mme de Joyeuxe's speech conflates "Domingo our slave" with the other family property she offers as protective disguise: the "Country House," and the "Horse-Litter." Like these items, disguising Joseph as Domingo will make Ardelisa and her servants seem part of the Joyeuxe family, rather than the imperiled Vinevils. The dye that Joseph will use to "black his Face and Hands like Domingo" suggests, like the male drag in which Ardelisa "and Nannetta shall be dress'd," that identity categories like gender, race, or enslavement can be performed without threat to who the characters *really* are.

Surfaces are key to identity in the period—but Joseph remains only "*like* Domingo our slave" [my emphasis], not actually enslaved. The dye's failure to turn Joseph *into* Domingo instantiates the tension between what Lynch, Wheeler, and Wahrman all observe as the earlier and later structures of eighteenth-century character and identity—although, in Wahrman's terms, identity was usually fluid until 1770 and fixed thereafter, identity might sometimes be fixed in the early eighteenth century as well. Wahrman notes that throughout the eighteenth century, theater served as a site for the conflict between these two ways of imagining identity, perhaps because it staged the difference between a particular character's self-identification and how the other characters perceived him: it "was the arena most likely to foreground experimentation and fluidity, where identities were self-consciously constructed … and liberties could be … stretched to their permissible limits." But the theater was "presumably also the arena least likely to display unease [about] the limits of identity categories" (48). *Vinevil*'s Domingo functions not unlike the theater, as a site around which enslavement is "self-consciously constructed," but that also takes the enslaved identity's sometimes constricting limits for granted. The text's evocation of Domingo—the slave with the masterful name—also serves as a focal point for the exploration of the interactions between identity, liberty, and slavery.[27] Along with her servants' disguises,

pretending to be a "very sick" man allows Ardelisa to evade sexual slavery at the hands of the evil Mahomet—but it is a mark of the tension between fluidity and fixity that, soon after her pretended illness, Ardelisa actually "fell sick, and remained much longer than she expected" (43).

Identities may be performative in *Vinevil*, but only up to a point, as all identity play flirts with permanence. Thus in the next chapter, we learn that "many Spies were employ'd by Mahomet to get intelligence of Ardelisa; and … [M. de Joyeuxe's] House was search'd, under pretence of his Servants having conceal'd a Turkish Slave, whom the Basa of the Port pretended his Son had lost" (42-43). Ardelisa has already become a quasi-slave through Mahomet's pursuit of her, and her flight to Domez-Dure; now, his "pretence" of a runaway slave's concealment authorizes his search for Ardelisa, further emphasizing her similarity with this "conceal'd Turkish Slave." Political enslavement is contagious in *Vinevil*, echoing *Cato's Letters* in suggesting that arbitrary authority (Mahomet's power as the Bashaw's son authorizes his search of the Joyeuxes' house) makes slaves of all those subject to it. Yet Domingo's race and enslavement are emphatically not contagious—on the contrary, the text stresses the voluntary performativity of Joseph's disguise as "Domingo our slave."

*Vinevil* may refer to the theater as a model for characterization produced by disguise and performance—an actor may become a character by "feigning," "dressing," or "blacking his Face and Hands." But Ardelisa and her servants already are fictional characters, meaning that their disguises ask the text to confront its own metafictionality. The novel may try to forestall the antimimetic effect of seeing characters in a fiction turning themselves into other characters in the end when it emphasizes that their new identities are merely feigned. Thus, "whilst [Ardelisa] lay sick at *Domez-Dure*, *Joseph*, the fictitious Black, us'd frequently to go about the town for Provisions" (43). By insisting that Joseph is only a "fictitious Black," the text leaves itself free to

embrace the paradox that his feigned identity leaves him freer than Ardelisa, who remains confined to the house in her illness. "Fictitious" here seems to encompass not only Joseph's performance, but how others perceive him, and being perceived as "Domingo our slave" leaves him free "to go about the town for Provisions," suggesting that liberty and slavery themselves are inflected by identity performance. Like the following Domingo novels, this episode in *Vinevil* contrasts the relative power of what appears to be an enslaved black male character with the powerless of a upper-class white female character; although gender politics in Aubin's novels' are much more conservative than those of Manley or Haywood, her texts are especially interested in the implications gender and sexuality hold for liberty and slavery. By contrasting perceived powerlessness with actual power, *Vinevil*'s Domingo episode explores the "fictitious" nature of enslavement and race.

Like *Vinevil*, *The Noble Slaves*'s tale of "two lords and two ladies," who are captives on a desert island, aboard a pirate ship, and in several harems as they sail East to West and back again, presents slavery as a side effect of travel. The tongue-in-cheek preface contrasts slavery abroad with a domestic liberty that it suggests has become increasingly mythical. "In our Nation," Aubin announces,

> Where the Subjects are born free, where Liberty and Property is so prerserv'd to us by Laws, that no Prince can enslave us, the Notion of Slavery is a perfect Stranger. We cannot think without Horror, of the Miseries that attend those, who, in Countries where the Monarchs are absolute, and standing Armies awe the people, are made Slaves to others. The *Turks* and *Moors* have been ever famous for these Cruelties...there the Monarch gives a loose to his Passions, and thinks it no Crime to keep as many Women for his Use, as his lustful Appetite excites him

> to like; and his Favourites, Ministers of State, and Governors, who always follow their Master's Example, imitate his way of living…. The Grand Signior knowing that Money is able to procure all earthly things, uses his Grandees like the Cat's Paw, to beggar his People, and then Sacrifices them to appease the Populace's Fury, and fills his own Coffers with their Wealth. This is *Turkish* Policy, which makes the Prince great, and the People wretched, a Condition we are secur'd from ever falling into; our excellent Constitution will always keep us rich and free, and it must be our own Faults if we are enslav'd, or impoverish'd. (ix-x)

The preface claims the "Notion of Slavery is a perfect stranger" to Britons, but readers in 1722 would have heard the irony in the assertion that "our excellent Constitution will always keep us rich and free, and it must be our own Faults if we are enslav'd, or impoverish'd." The national economy was still recessed from the bubble, and in some circles George I and Walpole were discussed as "absolute Monarchs"— a perception that had multiplied after Walpole called up a "standing army" in the spring of 1722 in response to Francis Atterbury's newly discovered Jacobite plot, quartered the soldiers in Hyde Park, and financed the occupation by a fine on Catholics and nonjurors (including Aubin's friend Doctor Smithson, who would later care for her in her last illness) (Welham, *Delight and Instruction* 162). *Cato's Letters* was naturalizing the discussion of government and party politics as tyranny and slavery, and Aubin's preface echoes the language of Cato's Letter 67, which declares that "It is a reigning Maxim in the *Turkish* Policy, to lay a great Part of their Empire waste," by which "the dreadful Spirit of their Government creates Desolation fast enough in all Conscience" (2: 146-7).[28] What Cato calls "Turkish Policy" would have been easily deciphered as Walpole's perceived mismanagement of

the bubble, and Aubin's preface presumes its readers will correctly interpret her merely ironic opposition of "*Turkish* policy" against domestic liberty.

*The Noble Slaves* thus establishes itself as a didactic yet ambiguous text. It is deeply concerned with moral behavior but close-lipped on how readers should take the lessons it claims to illustrate. The lurid metaphor of sexual slavery that the preface deploys to describe rather mundane (though pressing) political problems under Walpole parallels another Aubinian interpretive conflict first identified by Chris Mounsey: because Aubin's texts profess to advocate chastity, critics have long considered her a pious near-prude, failing to account for the bizarre erotic scenes and "bone-crunching and cartoon violence" that dot her novels. Mounsey, on the contrary, reads the eroticized rapes and eating of raw goat as evidence that Aubin may have been "writing for an audience" of teenage girls, observing that "the moral machinery might … appear to educate young people in proper behaviour, but [may] be more likely a mechanism for getting around inquisitive mothers at the moment of purchase of an explicitly erotic juvenile novel" (59). In Mounsey's account, the "moral machinery" of Aubin's novels are in conflict with their carnivalesque depiction of improper behavior; like the ambivalence about chastity that *The Noble Slaves*'s delight in titillation suggests, its political allegory hints that it is in two minds about enslavement. After all, if metropolitan Britons were already experiencing slavery at the hands of Walpole's government, how bad could it really be for slaves?

Even more ambiguously, the condemnation of "Turkish" slavery in the preface is followed by an episode in which Domingo's relationship with his owners seems—at least initially—to be largely positive. Unlike the "Noble Slaves" of the title, Domingo was neither noble nor wealthy before he became a slave. He appears in the narrative as part of the household of "Don *Sancho de Avila*, a Gentleman of *Castile*; who … went for Mexico" (2). Don Avila's

daughter Teresa is an incredibly attractive twelve-year-old, who enjoys taking "the Air in a Pleasure-Boat, with her Servants"—until one afternoon, a hurricane blows up, driving the boat out to sea and overturning it. All the servants drown except Domingo, her "*Blackmore* Slave,"

> who leaping into the Sea, cry'd *My dear Lady, throw your self upon me, and I will bear you up till I die*. It was Dusk, and no Land appear'd: But as she held him round the Neck, he (swimming) cry'd, *Land, Land; hold fast, I tread on Land*. Then getting nearer to the Shore, he found his hopes answer'd; for they were cast on a desolate Island, where no Signs of any Inhabitants appear'd. Here the half dead *Teresa* fainted, and the poor *Black* laying her upon the Grass, sat down weeping by her, having nothing to give her, to comfort her or himself. She at length recover'd, and with that weak Voice she had left, return'd God Thanks for her Safety. (3-4)

This passage perfectly characterizes Aubin's hybrid of Defoe and amatory fiction.[29] *The Noble Slaves*'s Domingo, characterized as part loyal "man Friday," and yet recalling the suitor of an epistolary romance who signs his letters as his mistress's "Slave," blends two of the "diverse significations" of novelistic slavery to produce a subjugation fueled by erotic devotion. His promise to "bear you up till I die" echoes a lover's pledge, and the narrator emphasizes his deception in crying "Land" while still swimming as evidence of his devotion to Teresa. Thus readers are unsurprised when he declares his love later in the chapter (although Teresa will be shocked).

Yet the representation of Domingo's slavery as agentive devotion seems to sit uneasily with the sense in which, as a slave, he is an object for his mistress's use.[30] In the *Politics*, Aristotle describes slaves as a midpoint between persons and things:

> The manager of a household must have his tools, and of tools some are lifeless and others living (for example, for a helmsman the rudder is a lifeless tool and the look-out man a live tool), so also an article of property is a tool for the purpose of life, and property generally is a collection of tools, and a slave is a live article of property. (Book I, sec. 1253b)

Objectification, for Aristotle, is not necessarily a result of enslavement (a "look-out man [is] a live tool"), but a slave is not just a "tool" but "a live article of property," whose agency is either nonexistent or unimportant—from the helmsman's perspective, more like the rudder than the look-out man. But *Noble Slaves*'s Domingo behaves strangely by seeming to make *himself* into a tool, for when the boat capsizes, he chooses to become a substitute boat, "leaping into the Sea," and crying "throw yourself upon me." In exhibiting this agency, he is both helmsman *and* rudder. His agency is underscored by the narrator, who recounts the landfall from Domingo's perspective, not Teresa's: "he found his hopes answer'd." (Having fainted, meanwhile, Teresa has no agency at all, meaning she has ceded the role of helmsman that Aristotle suggests she should fulfill.) Thus both Teresa and Domingo's roles problematize the expected dialectic of power between mistress and slave. As in *Vinevil*, Domingo is a strangely masterful slave.

To cement the paradox of this inverted power dynamic, *Noble Slaves* adds submission to God's will as yet another meaning in the already crowded catalog of slavery's diverse significations. Once they have been delivered from the sea, Teresa "return'd God Thanks for her Safety," leaving unacknowledged Domingo's labor in swimming her to shore. His heroic efforts do not seem to be discounted because he is enslaved—Teresa merely views their survival as proof of divine grace.[31] God's power, for Teresa, is so immense that she and Domingo are equally rendered quasi-things by comparison. This final layer of slavery—slavery as Christians'

renunciation of purely personal agency—further destabilizes the text's already complicated power relations. Yet Christians' subjugation to God's will preserves some basis for social hierarchy in a world where cultural divisions have become increasingly ambiguous. They wash up on an island in the East Indies inhabited by "an old *Indian* man … drest in Beasts Skins" à la *Robinson Crusoe*. But this islander proves even more culturally mixed than Defoe's English-Brazilian planter, for "the *Indian* proved a *Japanese*," who speaks to Domingo "in the *Chinese* Language," which "the Moor understood"—and soon Teresa and Domingo learn "The poor Indian was a Christian, converted with his Family by the Missionaries in *Japan*, and shipwrecked here as he was going with Goods for the Merchants to *China*, with a small Bark which he was then Owner of" (5).[32] Fantastical though they may seem, these Chinese-speaking, Japanese-Christian "Indian" characters reflect an early eighteenth-century world that evangelism and trading alliances were increasingly turning into a global contact zone.[33] "Missionaries in *Japan*" challenged the traditional division of East from Christian West; expanded commercial traffic meant more traders could be shipwrecked on desert islands that would make "Indians" of them. Unlike Crusoe, who washes up on an island innocent of Christianity and capitalism, Teresa and Domingo cross an ocean to become hut-guests of a Christian merchant. Far from deserted, Aubin's island participates in a globalized continuity where a Spanish-Creole aristocrat and her Chinese-speaking black slave have no monopoly on civilization.

Perhaps as a result of this globalization, some social distinctions are hard to preserve on the island. Is Domingo still Teresa's slave? He seems not to think so, soon taking on the new colonial role of capitalist explorer. After Teresa finds some grapes and juices them, making "a pleasant Drink of it," her discovery "raise[s] a Curiosity in the *Black* to range about the Island, hoping to discover something worth his Labor" (5). Readers recognizing the parallel with Adam

and Eve will not be surprised when the fruit leads to trouble. In recasting commercial exploration in the framework of the Genesis story, the text constructs a parable that will warn of the social and moral dangers of global trade. Though Aubin is a mercantilist at heart, the frequently blurred line between persons and things in *Noble Slaves* suggests an unease with the capitalist voyages that drive its plot—especially the slave trade's commodification of humans—even as this person/thing distinction underscores the status difference between mistress and slave. In this case, Domingo's capitalist "search for something worth his Labor" threatens to place his own desires ahead of his submission to social order. Walking with Teresa one day, Domingo sees "a Tree with Fruit he had never seen before, not unlike a *European* Pear," which he eats it, "tho *Teresa* warn'd him to forbear tasting it till they had shewn it to the *Indian*." Domingo soon finding "himself sick,"

> They hasten'd to return home; but before they could reach half way, he fell down, and embracing his Lady's Knees, cry'd, 'Farewel my dear Mistress; may God, to the Knowledge of whom your dear Father brought me, keep you, and deliver you hence; comfort you when I am gone, and have Mercy upon the Soul of your poor Slave. Remember me, charming *Teresa*; my Soul ador'd you, but Christianity restrain'd me from asking what my amorous Soul languished to possess. I brought you to the Wood with Thoughts my Soul now sinks at. I was born free as you, and thought I might with Honour ask your Love, since Heaven had singled me out to save your Life, and live your only Companion and Defender; but God has thought fit to disappoint me. May no other rob you of that Treasure which I no longer can protect. Angels guard you. Give me one Kiss, and send my Soul to rest.' Here he grasp'd her Hand, and strove to rise, but fell back and expir'd. (6-7)

As in the Bible, unauthorized desire ("Teresa warn'd him to forbear") leads to death. Yet Domingo enacts not only Adam and Eve's fall, but his death at Teresa's feet also seems to reify what the text suggests is his proper place as a slave. In this reading, his sin was not eating fruit, but thinking he was equal to Teresa. Emboldened by the seclusion of the "Woods" to transgress the gulf in status between himself and "what my amorous Soul languished to possess," Domingo now concludes that "God has thought fit to disappoint me" of gaining Teresa.

Domingo speaks as though God, not the fruit, were wholly responsible for his death, and Teresa accepts his interpretation, leaving her

> so afflicted and surprized, that she was not able to stand; her tender Soul was so shock'd, she was even ready to follow him; the Generosity and Love he had Shewn, the desolate Condition she was left in, distracted her: Yet she could not but applaud the Goodness of God, who had so wonderfully prevented her Ruin; for tho he had a Soul fair as his Face was black, yet *Domingo*, her Father's Slave was not fit to enter her Bed. (7)

Even as she concludes that "*Domingo*, her Father's Slave was not fit to enter her Bed," Teresa mimics his dying posture and is "not able to stand." Her prostration is accompanied by "applaud[ing] the Goodness of God, who had so wonderfully prevented her Ruin," which suggests that she reciprocated Domingo's passion and may have consented to sex had not his death impeded her socially disastrous desires. Thus by having Teresa fall over too, the text establishes a divine social hierarchy—Teresa must either reign over Domingo, or risk toppling God's authority in parallel. (As in the Bible's Eden, the consequences of temptation on this island are so terrible that it must be punished with death.) The text insists that this inviolable distinction is founded neither in color nor in morality, as Domingo "had a Soul fair as his Face

was black." Indeed, difference seems nearly arbitrary—when Domingo tells Teresa, "I was born free as you," the text hints that the problem with slavery is that it subjugates free-born people to each other without the more obvious hierarchical frameworks of status or family, introducing social distinctions so difficult to police that God himself must step in to preserve them. In killing Domingo, Aubin's God emphasizes to the slave that he has taken the "mastery" of his name too literally, and to Teresa that she has forgotten that he was only "her father's slave." Even on an island, Teresa must submit to patriarchal authority and refrain losing her virginity with Domingo.

All three of Aubin's Domingo novels depict rape at some point, using nonconsensual sexuality to problematize the issues of power that elsewhere are focused on the Domingos. Slavery, as Cato makes clear, elides the consent of the enslaved, who live "at the mere mercy of another"; in a similar manner, rapists elide their victims' sexual consent. In *Charlotta Du Pont*, when the Domingo character kidnaps his mistress Isabinda, rapes her, and holds her captive on an island for two years, the text seems to compare the sexual violence of rape with slavery's racial inequality. This time, the Domingo character's "mastery" is literalized in his control over Isabinda. The background of their relationship parallels that of Domingo and Teresa, but *Du Pont*'s Domingo is more malevolent and more successful than his predecessor, deliberately secreting Isabinda off to an island. But after he rapes her, Isabinda falls back in love with him, bears his child (which they name Domingo), and wants to marry him—and the text valorizes their relationship, as they end up the parents of many children, and the master and mistress of a grand plantation on Santo Domingo. This proliferation of Domingos (father, son, country) hints that Aubin may have been running out of steam for this particular vein—but they also focus *Du Pont* more sharply than the other Domingo novels on the tension between slavery and mastery,

and the Domingo chapter will conclude with the only explicit denunciation of the slave trade in any of Aubin's novels.

The main characters have been shipwrecked on a seemingly deserted island off the Bermudas when one of them, Don Medenta, first spots Domingo. Climbing a "high Rock," he sees "a Boat fasten'd in a little Cliff of the Rock, out of which Cliff a Blackmoor Man came, and launching out of the Boat, put off to the Sea, making towards another Island" (78). The forensic details of "Cliff," "Blackmoor Man," and "Boat" ask to be arranged into a conjectural narrative, and the attempt at interpretation continues when Medenta brings Charlotta back later to see

> The black Man standing at the entrance of his Cave, with a white Woman who seem'd to be very young and very handsom; she had a *Molotta* Child in her Arms about a year old, her Gown and Petticoat was made of a fine Silk. Don *Medenta* call'd to them in *French*, at which the Man look'd up; and *Charlotta* spoke in *English* to the Woman, desiring her to come up and speak to her; on which the Blackamoor push'd the Woman in, and returning no answer, shut the door upon himself and her. (79-80)

Medenta correctly interprets the "Blackmoor Man" and boat as a promise that he and Charlotta will be able to leave the island, but the text's carefully racialized staging of the sight of the "black Man," "white Woman," and "*Molotta* Child" may have a more symbolic layer as well—as Catherine Gallagher observes in Aphra Behn's fictional practice, black skin can serve as "an allegory of textuality," an emblem of the blackness of ink, and at the same time, of the ambiguity latent in writing that denies that anything can be entirely either black *or* white (70). Here, the black man's furtive presence is pregnant with a narrative possibility only partly fulfilled by the presence of the "white woman" with "a *Molotta* Child in her Arms about a year old." The sign of

the mixed-race child immediately identifies the black man and white woman as its parents, but the woman's "Gown and Petticoat made of a fine Silk" now raise the question why a white, wealthy, "handsom" woman lives in such a rough place—and how she came to have a child with a black man.[34] Medenta and Charlotta want help as well as biographical information when they call to the couple, but the man "push[es] the Woman" into the Cave, denying the social interaction that could fulfill interpretive desire.

Hoping to make contact, Medenta and Charlotta break down the door to the cave, finding "strange Rooms fashion'd by Nature, tho cleans'd of Moss and loose Stones by labour"; in one room, there is "a lamp burning" and "a Pot, wherein something was boiling," but there are no people (80). As Wall notes, eighteenth-century fiction does not usually describe interior space—descriptions only appear "when called on by the plot," where "they operate with all the revelatory power of an epic catalog" (123-24). The lamp burns and the pot boils seemingly in the man and woman's places, establishing that, despite appearances, they *are* at home. But like the surface characteristics of dress and race, these interior signs only produce more ambiguity about the characters they have been marshaled to describe. What woman who wears a silk dress lives in a cave whose walls have been "cleans'd of Moss and loose Stones by labour"? Not revelatory enough, the description of these interior objects instead marks the absence of the characters whose names and stories are growing increasingly desired. The text makes clear that things are no substitute for people; we will soon learn that the man is an escaped slave (and the woman his former master's daughter), and after this revelation, the text's resistance to illuminating its characters with their things will come to seem aligned with its opposition to slavery's making people *into* things.[35]

When Medenta and Charlotta finally make contact, the man agrees to help them and Charlotta presses the woman for her story, as "they were all impatient to know how this beautiful Woman and black Man came to this place." At last the woman speaks: her "Name is *Isabinda*," she is "the Daughter of a Planter in *Virginia*, who has a great Plantation there, is extremely rich; and having no more Daughters than my self, bred me up in the best manner." Isabinda relates that no sooner did she return to Virginia at thirteen, hoping to be wed, than "it was my unhappy Fate to be miserably disappointed of all my hopes":

> Amongst a great many Negro-Slaves whom my Father had to work in our Plantation, he you saw was one, who appearing to be bred above the rest, and more capable of being serviceable in the House, was taken into it. He was about twenty Years old, handsom and witty, could read and write, having (as he pretends) been a Prince in his own Country, and taught several Languages and Arts by a *Romish* Priest, who was cast ashore at *Angola*, from whence he came. He behav'd himself so well, that he gain'd my Father's Favour, and us'd often to wait on me when I walk'd out in an Evening, or rid out, running by my Horse's side; in short, he was ever ready to do me service. We had a Pleasure-boat, having a City-house at *James*-Town; and when I was there, I us'd often, with my Companions, to go on the Water in the Evenings for pleasure, and then he us'd to steer the Boat. He made himself the little Boat you saw here, on pretence to go out a fishing for me, which much pleas'd my Father, the fashion and usefulness of it being extraordinary; for it sails swift, and bears a rough Sea beyond any thing we had ever seen. He us'd to catch Fish very dexterously, as he did every thing he went about: He could paint, understood Navigation, the Mathematicks; and in

> short, was so beloved by my Father, that he would have freed him, had he not fear'd losing of him. And now *Domingo*, for that is his Name, became enamour'd with me, and lift up his aspiring Eyes to my unhappy Face. (83-84)

Although Isabinda is the tragic heroine of her "sad Story," and Domingo ostensibly the villain, she presents them as curiously parallel: both have been "bred" well, she having been sent "to England for Education," and he having been taught "several Languages and Arts by a *Romish* Priest, who was cast ashore at *Angola*." For both, these imported educations enhance the value of their attractive and clever characters. Though one of "a great many Negro-Slaves," Domingo—like a "Coromantee" in Jamaica—is a particularly desirable slave for Isabinda's "extremely rich" father to own, "appearing to be bred above the rest, and more capable of being serviceable in the House." Like the objects inside the cave, Isabinda's presentation of herself and Domingo exhibits an uneasy tension between person and thing. Her father's investment in her expensive education was to have yielded a good return on the marriage market—until, as she says, "it was my unhappy Fate to be miserably disappointed of all my hopes." Isabinda calls them "my hopes" (not her "father's"), suggesting that she has incorporated her father's financial interests into her emotional life, internalizing her position as a kind of high-class chattel. Isabinda's thinghood doesn't mean she doesn't love her father, but the parallel she constructs between herself and Domingo suggests that, in a sense, it is always dehumanizing to be loved as a thing. Domingo, too, "was so beloved by my Father, that he would have freed him, had he not fear'd losing of him." Freeing Domingo would mean losing him twice—once in his value as a thing, and again in his presence as a person. Later, Charlotta and Isabinda will discuss how Domingo will be able to "safely and lawfully possess" her—but already the text demonstrates an interest in what real-world colonial laws would allow, and Isabinda's mention of her father's fear of "losing"

Domingo suggests he is cognizant of the 1691 Virginia statute that forced freed slaves to leave the colony within six months of their emancipation (Hening 3:86). Ironically, being "beloved" dooms Domingo to enslavement.

Domingo's plan to reclaim his own personhood also involves kidnapping Isabinda, thus confirming her status as wholly a thing. She reports that

> His Passion increas'd with time, and at last he resolv'd to possess me, or die in the attempt. Had he but once given me the least Intimation of his Passion, I should have acquainted my Father with his Insolence, and his Death would have prevented my Ruin: but this he knew, and therefore so well kept the Secret to himself, that no body suspected it. (86)

Even as Domingo's "Passion … to possess" Isabinda cements her objectification, he is careful to keep "the Secret to himself, that nobody suspected it," creating a split between his public and private selves that recalls the duality of his own part-person, part-thing status as a slave. W. E. B. Du Bois would write in 1903 that, like Domingo, a black American "feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts; two warring ideals in one dark body" (3). For Du Bois, the conflict between oppression and freedom produces a kind of "two-ness" not unlike the split that novels presume between their characters' "ideals" (or "Passions") and how others perceive them—Du Bois's "dark body." According to Lisa Zunshine, this split drives narrative fiction, allowing novels to ask their readers to "invest the flimsy verbal constructions we call characters with a potential for a variety of thoughts, feelings, and desires, and look for the 'cues' that would allow us to guess at their feelings and predict their actions" (10). Du Bois's deciphering of what he characterizes as a black American duality may be novelistic, but Isabinda's description of Domingo shows that novelistic character itself is formed around a

similar disjunction between identity, power, and subjugation. That is, if Du Bois's early twentieth-century characterization of race looks like how some novels represent the "two-ness" of character, characterization in the early eighteenth-century novel, in turn, may owe something to the duality of race and racialized slavery.[36]

Domingo's villainy is confirmed in the kidnapping, and Isabinda relates how he tricked her into his boat, pretended to lose control, and sailed for two days, until

> He brought me hither half dead with the fright…. When we were landed, he seem'd mighty sollicitous [sp] where to find a Place for me to lie down, and Food for me…. After we had eat he told me his Design. 'My dear Lady, said he, I love you to madness, and was resolv'd to possess you or die: Tho my Out-side is black, and distasteful, I fear, to your Eyes, yet my Soul is as noble and lovely as your own. I was born a prince, and free; and tho Chance made me a Slave, and the barbarous Christians bought and sold me, yet my Mind they never could subdue. I adore you, and have long design'd what I have now effected. No human Creature dwells here besides our selves, and from this place you never must expect to return.' Here he proceeded to kiss me, my Distraction was such, that I swooned; he took the advantage of those unhappy Minutes, when I was unable to resist, and, in fine, has kept me here two whole Years. (85-87)

Domingo's escape resembles Crusoe's from Sallee—like Crusoe, he liberates not only his master's boat and his master's property in himself, but also Isabinda as a parallel to Crusoe's fellow slave Xury. Like Aubin's and Defoe's novels, colonial Virginia also imagined slaves' escape as a kind of theft of self associated with theft of the master's other chattels: a 1691 "Act for suppressing outlying slaves" expresses concern that runaway slaves may "lie hid and lurk in

obscure places killing hoggs" (Hening 3:86). Yet *Charlotta Du Pont* figures the kidnapping of Isabinda, a highly marriageable and expensively educated daughter, as an even more serious property crime than "killing hoggs." This kidnap, culminating when Domingo "took the advantage of those unhappy Minutes, when I was unable to resist," fulfills the two conditions of rape, in English Common Law—as Sir Matthew Hale explains, "the essential words in an indictment of rape are *rapuit* [kidnap] *& carnaliter cognovit* [know carnally]" (Hale 1:628). Frances Ferguson notes that, in deciphering rape (whether in court or in novels), "the mental states of two persons are crucial—the intention of the accused and the consent or nonconsent of the victim" (Ferguson, "Rape" 88). Ferguson's point is that, in "focusing attention on mental states and their apprehension," rape trials and novels (as in Zunshine's analysis of reading character) privilege similar issues. What is true of rape is also true of slavery, and paralleling slavery, Susan Brownmiller theorizes that "rape entered the law through the back door, as it were, as a property crime of man against man. Woman, of course, was viewed as the property" (18). *Charlotta Du Pont* seems to corroborate both Ferguson's insight about "the nonconsent of the victim" and Brownmiller's insight that rape cements women's status as patriarchal property, fusing both in Isabinda's nonresponse to Domingo's rape. When, as she says, "he proceeded to kiss me, [and] my Distraction was such, that I … was unable to resist," Domingo is able to dominate her, collapsing her inability to "resist" *or* give consent into complete objectified subjugation—in which he "has kept me here these two whole Years."

Rape, in *Du Pont*, seems to gender subjection as female, and so Domingo's character enhances his own virility when he relates to Isabinda his own resistance to slavery. Though, as he says, "Chance made me a Slave, and the barbarous Christians bought and sold me," his response to this arbitrary enslavement is active resistance—"my Mind they never could subdue."

On the other hand, Isabinda makes no reference to her own mind in relating her kidnapping, mentioning her feelings ("half dead with fear"), but never her thoughts. In fact, the rape itself produces a kind of anti-mind, where her "Distraction [is] such" that she loses consciousness altogether. The racial and legal hierarchy of mistress over slave is now overridden by the gendering of power as male and subjugation as female—Aubin's men are almost always presumed to have the upper hand.

Although Domingo's actions vilify him in Isabinda's story, the character seemed benign earlier when he agreed to help Don Medenta—and will be fairly sympathetic again when the text makes him the launching point for its antislavery sentiments. To reconcile Domingo's multiple characters, the text needs to rehabilitate him, which it does by having Isabinda tell Charlotta she has fallen in love with him. Since her story has already associated love with tensions between personhood and thinghood—and since Isabinda is falling in love with her rapist—it is unsettling when she says

> I would now willingly consent to be his Wife, having Treasure sufficient to purchase us a good settlement in any Place. If he be ever found by any body from *Virginia*, my Father will surely put him to death, but *Domingo* will kill me first; and to live thus is worse than Death. (88-89)

While love earlier made Isabinda her father's property and kept Domingo his slave, now the text reorients love, using it to reconcile readers to the rape; in place of love's earlier role turning people into property, property now solves love's potential problems (including, seemingly, the huge problem that Domingo will kill Isabinda if her father finds them). From a legal perspective, Isabinda's assertion that she "would willingly consent to be his Wife" presents complications, as a "woman [who] consented not at the time of the rape committed, but consented after"—that is,

by marrying her rapist—would be "disabled to have any dower, inheritance or jointure" (Hale 1: 631). In this case, Isabinda's marrying Domingo means losing any claim to a future inheritance from her father's "very rich" plantation.[37] So in marrying, Domingo and Isabinda would share a double dispossession—Domingo's of his lost princedom, and Isabinda's of her lost plantation. This loss paradoxically establishes them as equals, seeming to further authorize their union.

Yet none of this—rape or not, dispossession or not—ultimately matters, since Isabinda has "Treasure sufficient to purchase us a good settlement in any Place." Her "Treasure" buys her and Domingo out of the problem of their unorthodox relationship, making moot even Domingo's status as a slave. They can go to "any Place," escaping both the threat of her Father and the possibility that Domingo "will kill [her] first."[38] This "Treasure" even buys Isabinda's agency back, freeing her from the Catonian quasi-slavery in which "liv[ing] thus is worse than Death." In the episode's avowal of mercantilist ideology, Isabinda's property buys liberty—and love!—for herself and Domingo.

Despite how the text instrumentalizes property to facilitate love, Isabinda's desire to marry Domingo is still so surprising that Charlotta acknowledges it twice: once literally, and again by helping Domingo and Isabinda get married—something they cannot legally do in Virginia or Bermuda. Her response also implicitly addresses the commodification that the text has implicitly suggested is a threat to wealthy white women (Isabinda's thinghood)—so that Domingo's rape of Isabinda, rather than standing to justify violence against enslaved black men, is instead mobilized as the impetus for antislavery sentiment. "No, my dear Isabinda," Charlotta says,

> We will part no more; *Domingo* shall be carry'd hence to the Place we are bound to, where he may safely and lawfully possess you; since you now love, as I

> perceive, and have forgiven him his Crime, in getting you, we will assist him to be happy. The selling human Creatures, is a Crime my Soul abhors; and Wealth so got, ne'er thrives. Tho he is black, yet the Almighty made him as well as us, and Christianity ne'er taught us Cruelty: We ought to visit those Countrys to convert, not buy our Fellow-creatures, to enslave and use them as if we were Devils, or they not Men.' Don Medenta join'd with her in opinion; and the Captain and all agreed to have them marry'd, and take them along with 'em. (89)

Charlotta's speech is remarkable against the cultural background of the South Sea bubble, which it denounces in an unusually explicit manner. Charlotta condemns slavery's "selling human Creatures" as a perversion of travel and exchange that ought to be Christianized instead. "We ought to visit those Countrys to convert our Fellow-creatures," she says, instead of converting them into currency. Speaking to the economic climate of the bubble's aftermath in 1720s London, she asserts that "wealth so got, ne'er thrives." The "we" of her assertion "we ought … to convert, not buy" suggests the subtext of her speech is precisely the national investment in slavery that the South Sea Company enacted, and that the bubble seemed to punish. Capitalism is good, but it should complement Christianity instead of contradicting it. Even so, her jeremiad against the slave trade ("as if we were Devils") is still in discord with the commodified language in which she discusses Domingo and Isabinda's impending marriage. Charlotta promises to help transport them "where he may safely and lawfully possess you," since, as she tells Isabinda, "You have forgiven him his Crime, in getting you." "Getting" and "possess[ing]" are common expressions for securing a woman's affections and marrying her, but in this context, the echo of slavery's parallel discourse of objectification still seems to align marriage uncomfortably with slavery—

uncomfortable because, while the text clearly protests slavery, it does not seem to regard the patriarchal marriage market's objectification of women as a particular problem.

Even though Charlotta acknowledges Isabinda's emotive agency ("you now love, as I perceive, and have forgiven him"), the text seems to view this agency, in part, as the freedom to choose to be a thing. In a sense, the protest against how slave trading "enslaves and uses [Africans] as if they [were] not Men" specifies that "Men" be read as explicitly gendered—only the "use" of "Men" (and not women) as objects can be condemned so unequivocally. The text's gendering of liberty and slavery (Domingo's masculine rebellion versus Isabinda's passive objectification) seems to hark back to the masculinist valorization of liberty in *Cato's Letters*, and *Charlotta Du Pont* seems to take literally Cato's assertion that "to many *men*, the love of liberty is beyond the love of life." *Charlotta Du Pont* is both the most explicitly antislavery of Aubin's Domingo novels, and the most ambiguous about the morality of human objectification. Slavery's universal objectification is bad, the text suggests—but the commodification of wealthy young women on the marriage market is not necessarily a problem. Slavery differs from marriage only in degree, as an objectification that goes too far, leaving slaves bereft of the agency needed to participate in stable social relations. (Isabinda's willing consent to be subjected to her husband may be the last quasi-political agency she will assert in her married life, but it is nevertheless necessary that Domingo receive her consent before asserting his near-absolute authority.) As *Vinevil*, *Noble Slaves*, and *Du Pont* demonstrate, Aubin's novels endorse a very conservative gender politics—a conservatism that has helped enshrine her reputation as a pietist, and that, as Welham suggests, has also ensured her critical neglect amidst the past quarter-century's revival of more sexually liberal female novelists like Behn or Haywood. But these gender politics are paralleled by a surprising antislavery radicalism that undermines some of the

very assumptions that underscored the mercantilist livelihood of Aubin and her family. Aubin's Domingo novels have helped to demonstrate that interest in the slave trade, antislavery sentiment, and correspondences with the political use of liberty and slavery can all be found in early eighteenth-century travel fiction. Conservative though they may be in some ways, Aubin's texts are in another sense quite radical for their embedding of anti-Walpolean political protest in what Munsey calls "explicitly erotic juvenile novels." With these travel novels, issues of slavery and liberty have turned up in strange contexts indeed.

## V. Conclusion

Together, Aubin, Brunt, and Gordon and Trenchard's texts suggest how much travel novels had in common with political journalism. *Cato's Letters* demonstrates how multivalent metropolitan Britain's fascination with liberty and slavery was in the 1720s; it also served as a distribution network through which some of the contradictions between liberty and slavery could be communicated to the wider textual world. By the end of 1720, many metropolitan Britons had gained and then lost significant amounts of money in the slave-trading South Sea Company; the culture of the resulting bubble resonated with tensions between commerce and authority, metropolitan ideology, and colonial practice—all of which were encompassed in the contemporary ideas of liberty and slavery. Novels like Aubin's and Brunt's that engage with Cato's and other representations of slavery show that *Robinson Crusoe* is only the beginning of the fascination with slavery in early eighteenth-century fiction.

In the analytical framework this chapter has offered, such novels ask to be read as evidence of metropolitans' desire to imaginatively engage with the tensions around the slave

trade and the idea of slavery—sometimes resolving these tensions by endorsing slavery's role in stabilizing religious and social hierarchies, while at other times using a nearly identical framework to denounce colonial British slavery and its economic influence on the metropolis. While early eighteenth-century novels with enslaved characters provide evidence of metropolitan anxiety about slavery, they also served as literary public sphere in which readers and writers asked each other if this cultural anxiety was really justified. Beyond the realm of discourse, entertainment, and imagination, the results of this fictional engagement with slavery were fairly limited—in one sense, novels served as a useful site of criticism of slavery because their status as fiction could safely distance their jeremiads from their real-life targets: a Jamaican planter could conceivably take pleasure in the ironizing presentation of colonial brutality against slaves in a novel like *Cacklogallinia*. Ambiguous and polymorphous as it is, the legacy of the early English novel's fascination with liberty and slavery can be seen in the omnipresent drive toward personal and aesthetic freedom that helps characterize the Anglophone novel as a whole.

# Chapter 2

## Saying "Negro" in the 1760s and '70s

### I. Introduction: Beholding Chattel Slavery in the Metropolis

In the summer of 1766, the formerly enslaved Londoner Ignatius Sancho sent a letter to the novelist and minister Laurence Sterne, asking him to write more about slaves. "Reverend Sir," Sancho begins, interlarding humility with irony, "It would be an insult on your humanity (or perhaps look like it) to apologize for the liberty I am taking.—I am one of those people whom the vulgar and illiberal call '*Negurs*'" (2:95). Contrasting (or pretending to contrast) his racial identity with its expected social reception, Sancho flirts with presenting his blackness as a potential impediment "to the liberty" he takes in writing to Sterne. Yet despite this playful tone, Sancho is emphatic that he is not a "negur"[39]— a word with layers of meaning that he will not apply to himself, and which is only used by "vulgar and illiberal" speakers.

Sancho's "negur," a variant spelling retained in his printed *Letters*, may or may not be identical to the now almost-universally offensive "nigger," which is either its dialectical variant, or differently derived synonym.[40] Yet this print retention seems to underscore that the nonstandard "negur" has a special importance—since eighteenth-century writers could regularly "expect their manuscripts to be altered to fit a publisher's sense of correct English" (37). Since the mid-nineteenth century, "correct English" has separated "negro"—a comparatively neutral word for a dark-skinned person—from "nigger," but it is likely that eighteenth-century speakers would have been mystified by the vast differences that have come to be encoded in these otherwise similar words. Indeed, in his reply, Sterne (who was born in Ireland but spent most of

his life in Yorkshire) would replace "negur" with "negro," suggesting that he either regarded the words as semantically interchangeable, or that he chose to heed only Sancho's opprobrium on "vulgar" speakers, not the vulgarity of "negur"/"negro" itself. Yet whether rejecting "negur" or "negro," Sancho's letter insists that his being black is a part of his rhetorical persona.

Indeed, while trying to dictate the terms that define his race, Sancho describes his biography (first "unluck[il]y placed in a family who judged ignorance the best and only security for obedience," but then "in the service of one of the best and greatest families in the kingdom" [95-96]), before asking Sterne to think directly about chattel slavery—the condition that metropolitan Britons in the later eighteenth century associated with the term "negro." "I am sure you will applaud me for beseeching you," he tells the novelist, "to give one half hour's attention to slavery, as it is at this day practiced in our West Indies," and requests again, "Dear Sir, think in me you behold the uplifted hands of thousands of my brother Moors" (97). Evoking his body when he insists that he is a brother to "thousands of Moors," Sancho requests that Sterne also see, in this reference to his racialized embodiment, the oppression of the many enslaved Africans and Afro-Caribbeans in Britain's colonies. Even as Sancho denounces the name that metropolitan Britons were beginning to use to refer to the enslaved status of specifically black people, he insists that his own black person is a synecdoche for untold numbers of slaves.

Sancho does not resist "negro" because it indicates blackness, nor even because it indicates enslavement—rather, it is the linking of the two in a single term while implicitly naturalizing the racial basis of chattel slavery that he calls "vulgar and illiberal." At the same time, by using a spelling that some readers would regard merely as a dialectical variant of a more standard word, Sancho flavors the discussion with his own chauvinism. The years surrounding Sancho's letter to Sterne were a period of great linguistic and intra-British cultural nationalism,

one in which "what it meant to be an English-using person changed" (Elfenbein 19). Pressure was placed on the Irish, the Scots, and the Welsh, as well as the rural English, to conform their speech to a centralized and increasingly class-conscious London dialect that was known as "Pure English"—and it was precisely these speakers who, by their shared tendency to retain the early modern long *e*, were more likely to have said "negur" than "negro."[41] Thus the vulgarity Sancho associates with "negur" may indicate his chauvinism toward the British Isles' own linguistic and cultural Others as much as it indicates these speakers' "illiberal" attitudes toward racial difference. Yet regardless of how they said it, metropolitan English speakers in the 1760s and '70s had given the familiar word "negro" a new meaning that could separate black chattel slaves from whites who had been enslaved by transportation, indenture, or kidnap by pirates. By conjoining race and enslaved status—and through its implicit designation of blackness as colonial, rather than metropolitan—"negro" began to suggest that black people and the condition of chattel slavery were especially suited to each other.

While Sancho's letter strenuously resists naturalizing the link between blackness and slavery, Sterne's response suggests that he missed part of the point of his fan's letter. "There is a strange coincidence, Sancho," he writes,

> in the little events (as well as in the great ones) of this world: for I had been writing a tender tale of the sorrows of a friendless poor negro-girl, and my eyes had scarse done smarting with it, when your letter of recommendation in behalf of so many of her brethren and sisters, came to me—but why *her brethren?*—or yours, Sancho! any more than mine? (195)

Sterne ignores the opprobrium Sancho pours on those who call black people "negroes," but he is nonetheless alert to his correspondent's suggestion that such a word threatens to mark black and

white personhood as indelibly different—and he is alert, as well, to combatting the term's seeming power to make enslaved black people disappear from culture's gaze. Although eighteenth-century London has been described as "visually black," inhabited by black people as well as "littered with signboards" that used images of black men and boys as advertisements, Sancho's letter and Sterne's response hint at the degree to which enslaved black people were also culturally *in*visible to metropolitans (Dabydeen 17). After all, Sterne notes, describing colonial slaves as black "brethren," their oppression should be of concern to white as well as black metropolitans. The primacy of racial difference in characterizations of black people—like the black figures who would appear on the business card for the grocery store Sancho would eventually own (Fig. 1)—threatened to deflect, rather than attract, close attention. And as a result, these black figures paradoxically excused metropolitans from thinking about colonial chattel slavery. If the enslaved were primarily "negroes," so that their being "slaves" did not have to be specified, the near excision of the mention of slavery might make its existence easier to ignore.

Sterne seems to recognize that racial difference can authorize cultural invisibility, and seems to try to foreclose this possibility as he describes the scene of the "friendless poor negro-girl" that would appear in the story that Corporal Trim tells Uncle Toby about his brother in the final volume of *Tristram Shandy*. Summoning up this girl, Sterne asks "Why *her brethren?*—or yours, Sancho! any more than mine?" The marks of Sterne's pen that his printer represents as italics and em dashes underscore the arbitrariness of the difference that his use of "negro" highlights—and in this sense, Sterne is heeding Sancho's "recommendation" to make racialized chattel slavery less invisible. Indeed, although the episode Sterne refers to is only three pages long in the 1767 edition of *Tristram Shandy*, it is interwoven into surrounding concerns, occurring in the midst of Trim and Toby's thoughts about marriage, the importance of sympathy,

and the importance of not killing flies. Although this scene may "voyeuristically depict the powerless reconciled to their powerlessness," the girl is nonetheless a visible presence in the world of Sterne's white characters (Ellis 69).


Figure 3. Ignatius Sancho's business card shows the empire in miniature: black slaves harvesting sugar cane, an Indian (?) smoking a pipe and drinking ale, with a barrel of rum in the background. On view in Brycchan Carey comp., "Ignatius Sancho (1729-1780) African Man of Letters."

At the moment that Sancho was asking Sterne to help direct novel readers' attention to colonial slavery, most novels and plays "seem[ed] to look homeward" rather than out at the colonies (Kaul 15)—but the two men's brief exchange occurred at the beginning of a much larger shift in later eighteenth-century metropolitan culture that changed how enslavement and physical and cultural difference were represented. While the full public unfolding of the abolition movement would not occur until the 1780s and '90s, its eventual arrival would not have been possible without the increasing cultural awareness of racial and status difference occurring in the 1760s and '70s—even though much of this awareness tended to increase the overt racism of public culture. As evidence of this growing racialization, then, the number of cultural representations of black people in poems in the 1760s and '70s "shoots up" to almost twice that of the previous thirty years (Basker xxxix). The new proliferation of these poems, along with cultural representations of blackness in newspaper articles, prints, plays, and myriad other forms, enabled and reflected "the increasing essentializing of race and of identity" (Wahrman 115),

which would become a "defensive ideology" of racism—"the weapon of a class whose wealth, way of life, and power were under mounting attack" (Fryer 134). But at the same time, the emergence of race as an increasingly fixed category in these newly omnipresent representations of black people would also prove foundational to this "attack" itself—so that this "attack" would eventually be seen as the beginning of the abolition and emancipation movements.

Up until the last third of the eighteenth century, the metropolitan concept of "slavery" did not necessitate mentioning race at all. More so than in the colonies, metropolitan "slavery" was extremely capacious, comprehending multiple and only sometimes interrelated conditions of dependence, exploitation, or oppression; as we have seen in Chapter 1, "slavery" could describe the government of monarchical France, the political marginalization of British colonists, or a lover's attachment to the object of his or her affection. In the colonies across the Atlantic, on the other hand, racial status (which was still being defined in the long eighteenth century) had already served as a shorthand for legal enslavement for nearly a hundred years: seventeenth-century statutes from Virginia, Jamaica, and Bermuda invoke race to legislate the social control of "negroes, mulattoes, and other slaves" (Hening 3: 86). Yet it was only in the later decades of the century, just around the time of Sancho's and Sterne's letters, that colonial chattel slavery became differentiated in the metropolitan imagination from other "slaveries"—and as it did so, the concept of slavery began to incorporate the idea of blackness.

By the 1760s, for the first time, there were significant numbers of enslaved (or formerly enslaved) black people in the British Isles. In the discussion of servitude in his *Extracts from the Penal Laws* (1762), Sir John Fielding fretted over the "immense Confusion" occasioned by "the great Number of Negro Slaves" brought as servants by their colonial masters to the metropolis (142). By 1772, Lord Chief Justice Mansfield would estimate that there were "14,000 or 15,000

men" who were enslaved in the British Isles, most of whom were concentrated in London ("Somerset *against* Stewart" 17). (In 1770, the total population of England was estimated as perhaps "amounting to nine million" (Young 4:419).) No one knows the additional number of black people who, like Sancho, were free, although they included "sailors, students sent to study in Britain, musicians who had become *de rigueur* in English military and domestic orchestras and bands, [and] later in the century, refugees from America who had fought on the loyalist side" (Gerzina 5).

Yet while this black presence in the largely homogenous island metropolis was an unanticipated consequence of the profitability of colonial trade and the expansion of the empire, Sancho's letter to Sterne suggests that many metropolitans were hesitant to acknowledge the relatively new black presence—and refused to recognize the new inhabitants as truly British, preferring instead to Other them as "negroes." In a sense, the relative invisibility of this small black population may have aided metropolitans' attempts to avoid the discomfort of being reminded of colonial chattel slavery—for as Sancho notes, a single black body had the power to evoke "the uplifted hands of thousands" of black slaves.

In the 1760s and '70s, the cultural status of race and enslavement was beginning to change, and where change met stasis, they produced "ideology in transition": "a discomfort about color difference" that fixated on cementing cultural, national, and racial categories and was accompanied by a simultaneous desire to "erase the significance of nonwhite color" by attempting to dissolve the differences that accompanied it (Wheeler 139). Thus the presence of these black metropolitans increasingly pressed the cultural imagination to settle the status of black slaves in the metropolis—either by freeing them, or by forbidding their entry altogether. If the "air of England [was] too pure for a slave to breathe in," as an Elizabethan judge may have

declared in a trial over the captivity of a Russian serf (suggesting that this pure air would dissolve the bonds of slavery), what *was* the official status of slaves from the colonies who found themselves in the metropolis ("Somerset *against* Stewart" 17)? In the colonies, the legal status of enslaved persons, who were overwhelmingly dark skinned, was socially legible, immediately readable in the pigment of their skin. But in the metropolis, the absence of an official sanction of chattel slavery rendered both enslaved status and racial blackness socially ambiguous.

Metropolitan Britain in the 1760s and '70s, as Fielding and Sancho suggest in different ways, was in desperate need of definitions for the gradations of national, cultural, racial, and status difference that were increasingly obtruding in its midst. Although in 1706, the Chief Justice of England, John Powell had announced that "the Law takes no Notice of a Negro" as a meaningful legal category ("Smith *versus* Brown and Cooper"), in the semantic vacuum of the 1760s, language was mobilized to provide new gradations. In precisely the period when Sancho wrote to Sterne, "negro" shifted from a metonymy for "slave" to a synecdoche of enslavement; by using "negro," metropolitans allowed the older "slave" to be reserved for more metaphorical uses, while the newly narrower "negro" could acknowledge that status was increasingly being defined by race across the British colonial world.[42] And as the metropolis's "negro" became a synecdoche for slavery, it also served as a synecdoche of a much larger shift in how the concepts of race, status, and nation were conjoined. This transformation of black slaves into "negroes," in turn, spurred a flood of other figurations and representations of the "negro." And as a result, the advent of "negro" hailed a pair of symbiotic developments: both an integration of racialist thinking that seemed to legitimate Anglo-American chattel slavery, and a new focusing of metropolitan attention on the injustice of colonial chattel slavery—a focusing that would at once

prove foundational to the antislavery movement and help make a new nation out of the North American colonies.

Since the British colonies did recognize chattel slavery, the legal status of slaves and those who owned them differed according to which side of the Atlantic they were on: in the colonies, to be black meant that one was or could be enslaved, but when slave owners and their human property sailed back to the metropolis, this geographic translation necessitated that the legal force of "negro" as an automatic synonym for "slave" would lose its power. Thus the semantic relation between "slave" and "negro" also made an implicit argument about the interplay between metropolis and colonies. As the range of territories that comprised the King's dominions expanded in the wake of the Seven Years' War (1757-63), increasing pressure was placed on trade, language, and law as the cultural institutions that could hold together this burgeoning empire; in one sense, by saying "negro" rather than "slave," some metropolitans may have signaled their keystone position in the networks of trans-Atlantic trade that linked the emerging empire. Like the metropolitan consumption of sugar and tobacco grown by colonial slaves, the metropolitan adoption of the term "negro" was a product of the increasingly slave-based imperial project.

Metropolitan speakers were able to start using "negro" to represent physical difference as a condition of enslavement (as colonials had already done for at least a century) in part because of the new attention paid to the regional varieties of the English language. Speakers of different dialects began to be stratified socially, with speakers of the centralized London dialect at the top of the linguistic hierarchy. Newly elevated, centralized speech needed to be protected from regional influences, so that Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* had tried to standardize use in the 1750s, and by the 1760s elocutionists like Thomas Sheridan were trying to standardize

pronunciation as well. In fact, given this linguistic policing, is somewhat surprising that the colonial use of "negro" could so firmly establish itself in metropolitan speech—but this semantic shift highlights how slavery's economic power in the later eighteenth century was transformed into cultural power as well.

As the meanings of "negro" came to represent a range of cultural conflicts and frictions—between race and status, colonies and metropole—metropolitans simultaneously found themselves being shown a number of aesthetic and political representations of "negroes." That is, a word that was so pregnant with figurative possibility was now starting to spawn its own cultural figures. Thus, just two years after Sancho wrote to Sterne, audiences at London's Drury Lane Theatre would encounter a characterization that is crucial to my argument here: Mungo, the "negro slave" in Isaac Bickerstaff's comic opera *The Padlock*. Together, Mungo and *The Padlock* helped direct attention toward enslaved black people in the metropolis, helping transform complacence about racial and status difference into a protopolitical consciousness. *The Padlock* was performed not only in London but also in the North American colonies, in Jamaica, and in India; among nearly all its audiences it proved quite durable, appearing as late as 1820 in Bombay and 1857 in Vienna.[43] This popularity helped Mungo's character spawn a number of extratheatrical afterlives, including as a slang term for upper-class socialites (from a joke on one of Mungo's lines in the opera), and provided a template for caricaturing the unpopular politician Jeremiah Dyson, who for the rest of his career would appear in blackface in visual satires. Mungo enjoyed this cultural purchase in part because the character was markedly different from other theatrical representations of black people, enslaved or not, and was played as slapstick comedy rather than the elevated tragedy that characterized theatrical characters like Othello or Oroonoko. And the association of Mungo—*the* iconic comic slave of the later eighteenth-

century—with music would prove extremely durable as well, so that nineteenth-century critics would confer on Mungo the dubious distinction of originating the tradition of minstrelsy. Of course, *The Padlock*'s Mungo was not all of these things at once: the operatic character that was in some ways a metonymy for enslaved black people in the metropolis became itself a synecdoche for a much larger constellation of visibilities, mockeries, and political protests. In another context, Aaron Kunin defines "character as a formal device that collects every example of a kind of person" (291)—and here, Mungo's character "collects" examples of *different* kinds of people, hinting at points of overlap between otherwise unconnected types. (Similarly, the word "negro" would also prove a collector of disparate types, being used to describe slaves from both West Africa and the East Indies—and as a result, articulating gradations of skin color and enslaved status in the face of vast geographic and cultural difference.[44])

Mungo's character was ripe for such representational repurposing, in part, because the very notion of theatrical character itself was in transition in the 1760s and '70s. Simultaneously formulated in Britain by James Boswell and in France by Denis Diderot, new theories of performance began to assert that good acting was done not by actors who imagined they were the characters they played—but that, instead, good actors remained fully conscious during their performances of the difference between their own identities and those of their theatrical personae. This external similarity and internal difference provided a useful explanatory paradigm for the racial performance of actors who enacted Mungo's character—and, at the end of the nineteenth century, would also offer an essential building block to W. E. B. Du Bois's concept of the "double consciousness" produced by friction between individuals' racial and national identities. (As I have already mentioned in Chapter 1, the idea of double consciousness has very, very deep roots.) In a very broad sense, the aggregation of these developments in later eighteenth-century

race and character inaugurated a new system of representing identity, a system that was newly insistent that racialized bodies should signify their social identity; the differentiation of "negro" from "slave" that depends so much on the particular synecdochical embodiment of chattel slavery as black can be seen as itself a synecdoche of the period's changing understanding of race, status, and nation.

In its collecting function, the character of Mungo performed a role that would be overtaken, in the coming decades, by the full formalization, of the cultural concept of race. As an overarching category of primarily biological difference, race would eventually collect vastly different kinds of people. As John Locke had explained about categories at the end of the seventeenth century, using a single word "to mark a multitude of existences" avoided an "inconvenience" to the linguistic corpus, since giving "a distinct name" to "every particular thing" would have resulted in a "multiplication of Words [that] would have perplexed their Use" (402). By the late eighteenth century, then, the cultural construction of black and white races was preventing just such a "multiplication," constructing in its place "a special rhetoric associated with a language of nationality and national belonging" (Gilroy 2). By using biological rather than cultural difference to delineate categories, race would begin to decouple again the newly forged link between status and difference in "negro," although the term's pejorative dimensions, especially in its similarity to "nigger," would continue to carry echoes of enslavement; meanwhile, with the advent of biological racism, the new category of "whites" could be spoken of without having to specify whether they were metropolitans or colonials, slave owners or servants.

Later, more formalized categories of "race" would bring their own conceptual problems, but in the 1760s and '70s, when race-as-biology was still inchoate, English speakers with an

interest in maintaining the racialized status quo were still only in the process of defining the interface between racial difference and slavery contained in "negro." In constructing these definitions, they drew inspiration from contemporary aesthetic representations of "negroes" to fill the gaps in the cultural imaginary. When Justice Powell had declared "negro" a legally meaningless term in England, he highlighted the metropolitan exceptionalism that would continue to inform eighteenth-century discussions of colonial slavery: while the laws of Britain's colonies might "take notice of a negro" as enslaved, *English* law attached no special meaning to race. And Englishness would remain a contested category in both pro- and antislavery discourses throughout the eighteenth century, even though antislavery sentiment may have been colonial before it was metropolitan (Swaminathan 16). While the laws of England were understood to apply in all of the King's dominions, the discussion of these laws was conducted in an overwhelmingly metropolitan frame of reference, so that "the laws of England" most commonly describe England, Ireland, and Wales. (Scotland settled the question of slavery for itself in 1778, when Lord Kames ruled in *Knight v. Wedderburn* that no claim of slavery—either as property or as perpetual service—was valid under Scottish law.)

Having represented the Caribbean slave newly arrived in the metropolis, Mungo's character in *The Padlock* served as a rehearsal for the 1772 case before the Court of King's Bench that the English hoped would offer clear definitions of race, status, and nation—*Rex v. Knowles, ex parte Somerset*, known today as the *Somerset* Case.[45] Contemporary discussions of *Somerset*, along with its nineteenth-century reception and its investigations by present-day critics, all seem to argue for an implicit homology between Mansfield's courtroom in Westminster Hall and the theaters in which *The Padlock* had been acted—as though the representation of a "negro"

in *The Padlock* had swum lazily up the Thames from Drury Lane to crawl ashore, three and half years later, at King's Bench.

But although Mansfield ruled that Charles Stuart, the owner of the enslaved James Somerset, could not exercise in England the same powers over his human property that he had held in the colonies—and thus that Somerset's detention on a Jamaica-bound ship captained by John Knowles was illegal, the Chief Justice would decline to offer the clear legal definition of slavery that Britons had hoped to hear from *Somerset*. Instead, as George Van Cleve explains, "Mansfield conceived of a slave primarily as a person whose legal status was slavery, not as a form of property"—and "because slavery was a status, its character could change as a slave moved from one jurisdiction to another, depending on the new jurisdiction's laws" (31). Thus Mansfield's ruling disappointed both the abolitionists, who hoped to hear that slavery was entirely invalid in the metropolis, and the planters, whose wealth would be threatened if slaves were not universally recognized as objects of exchange. (In reporting Mansfield's decision, the *Gentleman's Magazine* describes the financial panic *Somerset* occasioned, noting that "no event for 50 years past has been remembered to have given so fatal a blow both to trade and public credit," and that "an universal bankruptcy was expected" (42 (1772): 293).) In fact, the competing definitions of slavery offered by Stuart's and Knowles's two advocates and Somerset's five seem to have had little influence on Mansfield's ruling—for Mansfield felt that Parliament, instead, should make a new law remedying the lack of clear legal precedent. Having given the tautological and ambiguous ruling that a slave was, in fact, a person who had been enslaved, Mansfield unwittingly helped assure that *Somerset*—like *The Padlock*—would become the focus of further competing interpretive and representational strategies. And because the trial (unlike the opera) was authored by representatives of the English state, the definitions of "negro"

that were spawned by *Somerset* would focalize even more clearly the importance of nation to the interactions between race and status.

*Somerset*, like *The Padlock,* did "not merely concern the unfortunate person, who is the subject of it" (Hargrave 11), but functioned as a synecdoche of much larger conditions of racialized chattel slavery—so that a spectator could see in both James Somerset and Mungo the "uplifted hands of thousands of [their] brother Moors." This representation was facilitated, in part, by metropolitan observers' sense of their own racial, cultural, and status differences from these black figures—so that the cultural mechanism that made a synecdoche of "negro" meant that the operatic character and the man, both conspicuously black, were themselves easily synecdochized. Yet despite the name under which it is now known, *Somerset* was only ever loosely focused on James Somerset. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century audiences knew *Somerset* as the "Negro Case" or the "Negro Cause," surrounding its central figure in a gauze of racialized abstraction so thick that Somerset disappears from the historical record after writing a letter (which no longer exists) to an enslaved friend in which he is said to "acquaint him that Lord Mansfield had given them their freedom" (qtd. Oldham 65-66).

Like much abolitionist discourse, as I will show in Chapter 3, *Somerset*'s focus was necessarily impersonal, surveying the entire transatlantic institution of racialized chattel slavery in Anglophone territories. Indeed, when the running titles of Thomas Howell's *Complete Collection of State Trials* (1816) summarize *Somerset* as "The Negro Case" (20: 3-81), they figure Somerset as a generic "negro," allowing the trial over his detention to stand for the much broader "Negro Question" of the justice or injustice of slavery across the empire. Yet the political resonance of "negro" was ambiguous. Both proslavery and ameliorationist voices called for the exclusion of enslaved black people from the British metropolis, with even Somerset's

chief counsel Serjeant-at-law William Davy worrying that, if black emigration were to increase, "I do not know what our Progeny may be, I mean of what Colour" ("Case Involving James Sommersett" 5). But the politics of racialism in this period were as likely to be antislavery as proslavery, with "a number of abolitionist writers as well as Black British writers" seeming to agree that race was a meaningful sign of fundamental difference (Kitson 12). And the racial exclusivism that helped proslavery forces justify their position resembled the geographical and national prejudice with which many reformist voices argued for the end of metropolitan slavery but saw no inconsistency in agreeing to its continuance in the colonies.

Indeed, *Somerset* spurred a multivoiced host of representations of race, status, and nation. Correspondents to London newspapers in the spring of 1772 worried that a decision in *Somerset* that favored the slavery interest would mean introducing the violence of colonial inhumanity into metropolitan Britain. Without a strong denunciation of chattel slavery, *Somerset* might authorize treating "a man like a pack-horse, or a dog" even in London, where enslaved persons might then "be considered as oxen, to be knocked down, killed, and eat" (*Middlesex Journal* 1-3 Sept. 1772).[46] (It is amazing how frequently cannibalism is invoked in discussions of slavery.) Indeed, the discourses surrounding the trial inspired figurations that were progressively more fanciful. While seeking to construct a useful vocabulary for discussing the issues at hand, the pamphlets, satires, and newspaper articles that address *Somerset* trope antislavery sentiment as a quack remedy for syphilis that would only make "dear mother country and her children" sicker (Long, *Candid Reflections* iv); claim that racial mixing would transform the English into the Portuguese; claim, on the contrary, that racial difference as a justification of slavery should legalize enslaving the French and "the brown-complexioned English" (*Public Advertiser* 18 May 1772); present chattel slavery as barbaric; present antislavery discourse as barbaric; and entirely ignore that

enslaved persons were, in fact, human, to insist on the propriety of "rest[ing the debate] on the land of Property" instead (Estwick 10). These competing, contradictory figurations nevertheless shared a common flexibility with which they reworked the meanings of race, status, and nation—a flexibility that sprang, in part, from the original instability of the term "negro."

Mansfield's indefinite decision helped insure that *Somerset* would come to "illustrate a legal world where things are not what they seem, a world of deceptive appearances and unforseen consequences" (Wiecek 87). And though *Somerset* would not completely settle the ambiguous status of metropolitan slavery, it remained the focus of hotly contested interpretations by both pro- and antislavery forces, so that "the importance of the *Somerset* decision lay not in the decision itself, but in what abolitionist publicity and propaganda could *make* the decision mean" (Paley 183). These overtly interpretive responses cemented *Somerset*'s reception as a quasi-aesthetic event, highlighting that the discourses around the case were as indebted to the trial's own factual rhetoric as to the strategies of spectacular representation that had been on display in *The Padlock* four years earlier. *Somerset* and *The Padlock* may have been distinct events, but the Anglo-Atlantic cultures that received them were quick to imaginatively combine the two into a larger performance whose representations shaped the linking of race to status. In the 1760s and '70s, cultural representations of enslavement fueled definitions of nation, status, and difference that were both informed by dramatic characterization, and gave shape to the character of the period as a whole.

## II. Sounding like a "Negro" Onstage—*The Padlock* of 1768

On the evening of October 3, 1768, the audience that had come to Drury Lane to see Thomas Francklin's *Earl of Warwick* (1766) was treated to an aural spectacle after the main performance—a brand new comic opera called *The Padlock*. Fairly short performances, comic operas like *The Padlock* were popular in Britain in the 1760s, and although inspired by Italian models, they were both spoken and sung in English. *The Padlock*'s librettist, Irish-born Isaac Bickerstaff, was the author of a number of other popular comedies, musical and spoken, in which a memorable character or two punctuates an otherwise fairly generic romantic plot.[47] *The Padlock* is set in Spain, where it focuses on the elderly miser Don Diego, who seems to have grown wealthy in the colonies before returning to Spain, where he hopes to marry the young, beautiful Leonora and produce a child to whom to leave his fortune.[48] Concerned, however, that she will not be faithful to him, Don Diego borrows Leonora from her parents for a trial period and leaves them a hefty sum of gold in return, promising that, if she does not want to be his wife by the end of the trial, he will either return her to her parents untouched or forfeit the money. Pathologically jealous, Diego keeps Leonora cloistered in his house, guarded by an old woman named Ursula who serves as Leonora's governess and by an enslaved black servant named Mungo. Despite this careful guarding, however, Leonora is spotted by the young Leander, a university student who schemes to marry her before Diego can. The plot follows Leander's insinuation into the cloistered household and into Leonora's affections while Diego is gone for several days; when he returns, he agrees to let Leander marry Leonora and even offers to pay her dowry, vowing that he has been wrong to try to coerce the young woman to marry him by effectively imprisoning and commodifying her.

When the libretto was published in the summer of 1768, Bickerstaff noted in his preface that his inspiration had been Miguel de Cervantes's novella *The Jealous Husband* (*El celoso*

*extremeño*).[49] In fact, Bickerstaff's preface presents his opera primarily as a translation of Cervantes's novella: "Some little variation has been necessary in the groundwork, in order to render it dramatic; but the characters are untouched from the inimitable pencil of the first designer; unless the dialogue with which the English writer supplies them, has done them an injury" ([i]). Yet this "translation" was not merely the verbal one from Spanish to English, as the process of turning an early seventeenth-century novella into a later eighteenth-century opera meant that *The Padlock*'s characters would necessarily differ from those of "the inimitable pencil of the first designer." Cervantes's old man is named Carrizales, and he has actually married Leonora, rather than keeping her on loan—so that Loyasa, the Leander character, is plotting adultery instead of elopement. Carrizales has a much larger household than Diego, with half a dozen female slaves, some black and some white, in addition to the Mungo character, named Luys, whom Cervantes notes is a eunuch (Mungo's gender identity, in *The Padlock*, is less clearly delineated). When, at the end of the novella, Carrizales falls ill, he writes a will freeing all his slaves and leaving Leonora his fortune as well as permission to marry Loyasa—so that, as a result, her married state is recast in cognate terms to the captive women's enslavement.

But, unlike Cervantes, Bickerstaff leaves Diego alive and Mungo still his slave at the end of the opera. Bickerstaff's libretto fits much better with later eighteenth-century British notions of slavery than the model he took from Cervantes—while blackness is a metonymy for slavery in Cervantes, blackness becomes slavery's synecdoche in Bickerstaff. As a result of this translation, *The Padlock* provided an invaluable site for both metropolitan and colonial audiences in the 1760s and '70s to refine their understanding of chattel slavery and national identity, providing a sounding board against which race, status, and nation could be discussed. Bickerstaff has been described as having "had reservations about negro slavery," but whether or not his libretto was a

deliberate intervention in the emerging debates over slavery, he is unquestionably "a writer of consequence in the anti-slavery tradition" as the librettist of an opera that became an invaluable catalyst for the period's interrogations of race, status, and nation (Sypher 237-38). Among its afterlives, *The Padlock*'s presentation of a singing slave may have offered Thomas Jefferson inspiration for his racializing of musical talent in the *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1784), and also served as one of the foundations of the tradition of blackface minstrelsy that would emerge in nineteenth-century America.

Bickerstaff admits that his "chief addition to the fable, is the circumstance of the padlock" ([i])—but although he is being far too modest about his adaptation, this "circumstance of the padlock" indeed stands as an emblem of the opera's difference from Cervantes's novella. Diego uses this "padlock" to lock up the household during his absence; by taking this "circumstance" for its title, *The Padlock* becomes a romantic farce in the guise of a captivity drama—but one that takes pains to emphasize the social and cultural differences between chattel slavery and other forms of captivity. In keeping with its period, *The Padlock* strives to present the condition of "slaves" (Leander, Leonora, and Ursula are all presented as quasi-enslaved) and "negroes" (Mungo) as distinct. And while the broader metropolitan culture drove these two terms apart to make room for the racialization of chattel slavery, *The Padlock* carefully deploys dialect to represent the interaction of racial difference, culture, and status in "negro" slavery.

The opera abounds with alternate versions of slavery, which Leonora introduces by singing of her captivity in Diego's house. She laments that, although the walls of Diego's house are high, "Spite of all away I'd fly" (1.3; 6). Leander, for his part, animates his disguise as a crippled musician by pretending that his legs were originally injured during his (fictive) captivity as a slave in Morocco. Hoping to gain Ursula and Mungo's sympathy, he tells them that he "was

taken by a Barbary corsair, and carried into Sallee," where "an infidel bought me for a slave, he gave me the strappado on my shoulders, and the bastinado on the soles of my feet: this infidel Turk had fifty-three wives, and one hundred and twelve concubines" (1.8; 13). By bringing up his pretended former master's harem, Leander forges a link between the specter of those captive wives and Diego's own cloistered household. Earlier he has described the house to his friends as "like another monastery, or rather prison" (1.4; 7)—but Leonora's captivity can also be read as a prologue to the paradoxically monogamous Christian harem that Diego intends to institute when they finally marry.[50]

While Mungo's captivity will be explicitly identified with Caribbean colonial slavery, his presence provides a further link with Middle Eastern slavery—as readers of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Letters* (1763) from Turkey would have been familiar with the "black Eunuchs" who conduct Lady Mary as a guest from her coaches to her hostess's inner rooms on visits, where the hostess's "she Slaves, finely dres'd, were rang'd on each side" (Montagu 2:78). (Diego will hint that Mungo may also be a eunuch when he explains that he has "banished all that had the shadow of man, or male kind" from his house to try and ensure Leonora's chastity [2.8; 29].)[51] Leander, too, discusses slavery alongside sexuality when he tropes himself as a slave to his love for Leonora, singing to her, "In vain you bid your captive live, / While you the means of life deny; / Give me your smiles, your wishes give / To him who must without you die" (2.3; 22). Leander's song signals the oversaturation of *The Padlock* with metaphors of captivity. In this figurative fecundity, the padlock to Diego's house that locks in Leonora is also a metonymy for Leander's affective captivity to her, a captivity that may be made less cruel if she grants him her "smiles" and "wishes." Together, these two forms of erotic captivity that carry over from the amatory novel and other courtship genres suggest that "slavery" can be benign as well as exploitative—or,

as Boswell would suggest in his tongue-in-cheek poem *No Abolition of Slavery* (1791), "Slavery there must ever be, / While we have Mistresses like thee!" (*No Abolition* 297-98).

While in some cases "analogizing" slavery "with other forms oppression" could suggest that slavery is universal (Cox x), here the implicit juxtaposition of Mungo's captivity with Leander's love for Leonora contains in miniature the seeds of the period's larger project of making black chattel slavery into a separate category. After all, if lovers were also "slaves," no one could conceivably advocate for the end of chattel slavery *under that name*. In fact, Ursula will yearn for just this sort of affective captivity, lamenting that a woman's "lovers fall away" when her "front is wrinkled / And her hairs are sprinkled / With grey" (2.1; 19).[52] In contexts that assumed that slavery was bad—in discussions of Caribbean sugar plantations, for example—calling black chattel slaves "negroes" would argue that "negro" slavery was less reprehensible than other "slaveries" because it was economically necessary, less repressive than it appeared, or aimed at ultimate Christian conversion; but where slavery appeared to be good—or at worst ethically ambiguous, as in *The Padlock*—"negro slavery" could be shown to be emphatically different and unambiguously reprehensible.

Indeed, this proliferation of categories of slavery in *The Padlock* offers one motivation for its annexing of Mungo's enslavement into its own category. It signals that Mungo is a different kind of slave by the way he speaks. While earlier texts (as in Chapter 1) occasionally assert that "negroes" and pale-skinned Britons may speak differently, here this signal is inextricable from its era's attention to language as both indicator and enforcer of difference. In particular, Mungo is the only character to call Diego "Massa"— a word that "occur[s] only in black dialects" like West African Pidgin, Plantation Creole, and Black English Vernacular

(Mahar 266), and may have been new to *The Padlock*'s metropolitan audiences, seeming to have first appeared in print in the 1760s.[53]

As an opera, *The Padlock* is of course alert to sound's role in characterization, which it uses to both construct and deconstruct the identities it presents. In 1768, *The Padlock*'s composer, Charles Dibdin, who had no formal musical training, was at the beginning of a long career as performer, composer, and author. Not long before the opera's first performance, Dibdin fortuitously stepped into the role of Mungo. In his 1804 memoir, Dibdin noted that Bickerstaff had originally "promised [the actor John] Moody that he should perform the part; and, indeed, the part would never have been written as it is but for Moody's suggestion, who had been in the West-Indies, and knew, of course, the dialect of the negroes" (1:70). Dibdin gives Mungo's "dialect" a double attribution—a geographic one, to "the West-Indies," where Moody had become familiar with it, and racially and culturally, to "the negroes," among whom Moody had heard it spoken. Indeed, as Dibdin seems to mean it, "the dialect of the negroes" is specifically the manner of speech practiced by slaves in Britain's Caribbean colonies. (Because "the stage dialect of Negro impersonators was taken from one of the three major" interrelated "varieties of black English" (Mahar 262), a slave from North America might have been represented by a slightly different "negro" dialect; however, sociolinguist John Rickford emphasizes that most Anglophone enslaved blacks in the eighteenth century would have spoken one of a continuum of creolized dialects that all had roots in the Caribbean.[54]) As it pertains to speech in *The Padlock*, then, "negro" not only links race with status, but explicitly joins them with geography as well. Indeed, as a performance, Mungo and *The Padlock* mark a kind of turning point in the theatrical representation of blackness and slavery, and of their increasing definition in terms of each other. Although both black characters—like Othello or Juba—and enslaved characters—like Oroonoko

and Yarico—had been familiarly presented by white actors in blackface on the British stage for several generations, the dialect that *The Padlock* joined with blackface to signal Mungo's identity was a new development. By exceeding the purely visual, language made "negro" characters' race and status a matter of technique, able to be done better and worse by actors of varying skill.

At the same time, Mungo's linguistic characterization as a slave from Jamaica, Barbados, Antigua, or some other British island positions *The Padlock* in two distinct geographic registers. Officially, it is set in Salamanca, and the names of Don Diego, Ursula, and Leonora seem to underscore the Spanish setting. Yet although Mungo's name sounds plausibly Spanish, it is also the familiar Scottish name for St. Kentigern, the sixth-century founder of Glasgow. And characters in the opera are as likely to refer to specifically English concepts as Spanish ones, as when Ursula speaks of the Anglo-Saxon "Lammas" day (1.2; 2) and requests that Leander play the English folk song "The Forsaken Maid's Delight" and the (slightly Hispanified) "Black Bess of Castile" (1.8; 13). As a result, then, *The Padlock* seems to follow a convention of Renaissance drama: it indicates that, while it *pretends* to be set abroad, its *real* setting is actually within the British metropolis, in much the way that the geographic reality of *Romeo and Juliet*'s Verona or *Hamlet*'s Elsinore are only intermittently insisted upon. (This intermittent geography is anathema to both the early novels I have already discussed, and to verses set in the tropics that I will analyze in Chapter 3, both genres which foreground the cultural and visual details of their exotic settings.) And, as at these plays that were still appearing on the stage in the later eighteenth century, *The Padlock*'s audiences were made to understand that what they were watching took place not so much in Salamanca, as a version of London in Spanish dress.[55]

Mungo enters in 1.6, when nearly a third of *The Padlock* has passed, and the other characters' states of quasi-slavery have already been established, so that his status as a chattel slave seems to top off a list of other, lesser captivities. But despite his relatively late entrance, Mungo is both the opera's most popular character and its most enduring invention, and the novelty that made him popular is signaled from the moment when he appears, as the stage directions say, "with a Hamper of Provisions on his Back, which he throws down and sits upon." Immediately inverting the load, he addresses the groceries he has been carrying: "Go, get you down, you damn hamper, you carry me now. Curse my old Massa, sending me always here and dere for one something to make me tire like a mule—curse him imperance—and him damn insurance" (1.6; 10). Mungo's language figuratively turns the world upside down, changing how enslaved characters would speak on the Anglophone stage—and, by calling the hamper "you" while himself being a part of Diego's property, simultaneously troubling the familiar dividing line between things and persons.

Mungo's language is additionally revolutionary because it so clearly signifies his race. Earlier black theatrical characters like Oroonoko and Othello—or Aubin's Domingos—had spoken a standard, elite literary English; Mungo's pidginized dialect, characterized by its disregard for standard Southern English usage in the use of "dere" for "there," "tire" for "tired," and "him" for "his," would immediately have registered to a metropolitan ear as unlike that of London, or indeed of earlier literary black people. After complaining that his master works him too hard, Mungo says "curse him imperance—and him damn insurance." As Mungo seems to use them, "imperance" and "insurance" are half-nonsense words, gesturing toward Diego's power and wealth, but not signifying any specific conditions or objects. (No one else mentions "insurance," for example, in the rest of the opera; there is no insurance policy at stake.) At the

same time, though, the words' similar sound may serve as another reminder that Mungo's position, as a slave, is of powerlessness, since he is someone else's property. The audience is thus primed to hear Mungo's speech as associative, rather than semantically precise—a quality of signification that allows him certain freedoms of expression. Mungo is able to swiftly switch from cursing the hamper he has been carrying—"you damn hamper"—to cursing his master, subtly associating Diego with the burden he has been carrying on Diego's behalf. Meanwhile, the literal burden of the hamper, in this musical comedy, may harbor implicit puns on the antiquated terms "bourdon," the harmonic bass part in a piece of music, and "burthen," the repeated chorus to a song ("Bourdon, n.2 1," "Burden, n 10"). Moments after this speech, Mungo will begin his first aria, the recurring burthen of which is "Me wish to de lord me was dead" (1.6; 11). Cursing the hamper while he sits *on* it, meanwhile, Mungo indicates that he will invert or resist Diego's mastery whenever possible.

Mungo stands at the confluence of several theatrical traditions of blackness and of slavery; the small act of slapstick rebellion with which he enters the stage classifies him in the tradition of the "tricky slave" of antiquity. A familiar character in Roman comedy, a tricky slave "pretends loyalty but plots to undo a father, the head of his household, or a pimp, usually to help his young master get what he wants" (Joshel 221). Translated into servants on the Renaissance stage, the tricky slave type (often marked, like Mungo, with recognizably low-status speech) often serves as an agent of the plot, ensuring that the promised heterosexual romance can be achieved despite other characters that work as blocking agents. By the later eighteenth century, when the term "negro" was starting to sort out the cultural ambiguity between slavery and servitude, the enslavement of the "tricky slave" / servant could again be emphasized, so that after *The Padlock* "blacks or blackface characters were usually cast as roles often given to Irish

[servants] in earlier English comedies" (Mahar 265). Thus as soon as Mungo has damned his master, Diego enters and Mungo greets him with a blessing. Indeed, in the rest of the text, Mungo's casual and contextual attitude towards Diego's authority will help facilitate Leander and Leonora's escape.

Mungo's dialect is presented semicensoriously, as befits a period when "public concern with correctness in language as a social qualification takes a firm foothold in English, Scottish, and Irish society" (Hickey 385). As Herbert Schendl notes of a nineteenth-century Austrian adaptation of *The Padlock*, Mungo's speech "not only make[s] him funny, but also mark[s] him as an outsider, a representative of 'the Other'" (35). The power of censoriousness to Other was on display in the Anglo-Irish actor and theater manager Thomas Sheridan's *Course of Lectures on Elocution* (1761), where he expressed concern over "a general inability to read, or speak, with propriety and grace in public, [that] runs thro' the natives of the British dominions; it shews itself in our senates and churches, on the bench and at the bar" (17). As Sheridan emphasizes, Britain's political, religious, and legal institutions were all held together by spoken voices—so that, in a sense, the most powerful force holding the emergent British Empire together was to be its common English language. As Sheridan saw it, his theater in Dublin had a duty to uphold the "pure English" that was beginning to give voice to the idea of the empire as a whole, and his *Lectures* attempted to extend the dominion of "pure English" from the stage into the mouths of theater audiences as well. At the same time, though, the stage's parade of accents, in which the "dialect of the negroes" joined representations of Scottish, Welsh, and Irish characters, helped make Britain's dominions culturally present in a single medium. (And *The Padlock*'s ostensible setting in Spain permits an association between British colonial slavery and what the twentieth century would call the "black legend" of slavery in Spain's colonies; many eighteenth-century

texts that considered slavery had strenuously resisted such comparisons, insisting instead that Britain's slaves were treated much better than Spain's.[56]) And by marking his difference from centralized metropolitan speech, Mungo's dialect provides an aural version of that which Sancho asked of Sterne two years earlier: "one half hour's attention to slavery, as it is at this day practiced in our west Indies." Indeed, by making this "West Indian" "negro" dialect heard onstage, Mungo's character makes a case for the Britishness of Britain's slaves, whether in the colonies or the metropolis. These slaves may have been Othered, but in *The Padlock*, Mungo is represented as a specifically *British* Other.

Thus, a paradox: by aurally highlighting Mungo's difference, *The Padlock* incorporates his character into the metropolitan body public. Until the later eighteenth century, Britain had not really thought of itself as having a particular racial color. Being overwhelmingly white, this whiteness was not something to notice, and so Johnson's *Dictionary* makes no mention of "white" as a racial term, although it does include entries for "blackamoor" and "negro."[57] But Mungo's presence was a synecdoche of the British metropolis's own growing hybridization, its transformation into a place where increasing numbers of "Africans and their descendants [were] working and living alongside the English" (Gerzina 2). Mungo was himself hybrid, not only as an Afro-Caribbean, but also as a result of his having been transplanted again into the metropolis, and so he encapsulates *The Padlock*'s overall investigation of cultural hybridity and mixed attitudes toward power—attitudes that are further encoded for the ear by the opera's celebration of music.

In *The Padlock*, music enlarges the cloistered community onstage. Don Diego's house, and Leonora within it, is closed off from the world by a wall so high that only sound can easily

travel over it. Early in the opera, Leander describes having first made contact with the household by playing songs for Mungo through a grate in the wall:

> I observ'd that when the family was gone to bed, he often came to air himself at yonder grade; you know I am no bad chanter, nor a very scurvy minstrel, so taking a guittar, clapping a black patch on my eye, and a swathe upon one of my legs, I soon scraped acquaintance with my friend Mungo. He adores my songs and sarabands. (1.4; 7)

Mungo is a liminal character in Leander's description, not quite a member of "the family," but living in its midst. Because he is not able to leave the compound, he "air[s] himself at yonder grate," making him the only member of the household (besides Diego) with access to the sounds of the outside world. In a sense, Diego's house is a microcosm of the British Isles' own imaginative cloistering of itself from the contexts of New World slavery. Just as Sancho suggests that the sight of black people was could provide a potentially destabilizing reminder of colonial slavery, so too the sonic interplay between the metropolis and the outside world is possessed of an inherent political power.

And indeed Mungo's liminality is key to Leander's entry into Diego's cloistered household, which sets off the main action of *The Padlock*. It is Mungo's appetite for music and his position on the boundary of the household, where he negotiates the other characters' entry and exit, that allows Leander to insinuate himself inside the high walls. In the second act of the opera, however, music's disruptive potential is claimed wholly by Mungo, an association that resituates the presentation of Mungo's character and, indeed, begins to racialize musical entertainment as a whole. By this point, Leander has dropped his disguise as a crippled singer in order better to seduce Leonora—and until the final scene, the remaining songs are sung solo or in

duets rather than by the entire ensemble. Mungo has already had one solo, in 1.6, where he complains that Diego is an abusive master who treats him worse than an animal—since even "a dog has a better [life] that's shelter'd and fed"; in the refrain to this first aria, Mungo laments "me wish to de Lord me was dead" (1.6; 11).

In 2.2, then, Mungo presents a more ambiguous portrait of his slavery than he had in the first act, now suggesting that music may actually provide enough pleasure to outweigh the oppression of his enslavement. He claims that, whenever his "heart a sinking," he only wants to hear "de sweet guittar a clinking," with the "toot, toot, toot, / Of a merry flute, / And cymbalo, / And tymbalo, to boot," claiming that with such music, "Me soon am cur'd of tinking" (2.2; 20). In the commercial publication of Dibdin's score, this aria is written for voice and keyboard—so that, apart from their names, the "flute," "cymbalo" (a kind of dulcimer), and "tymbalo" (kettledrum) are all absent (Dibdin, *Padlock* 26). While this score's simplification of the theatrical arrangement may have been necessary for home performances, the opera's enthusiasts who wanted to sing *The Padlock*'s songs in their upper-middle-class homes would have been participating in an entertainment with very different racial and cultural resonances than the performance they saw onstage. Indeed, because the opera so insistently uses music to construct race and status, renditions of this second aria as accompanied by a parlor harpsichord, may have emphasized the wealth and whiteness of most of these singers, rather than deconstructing the signifiers of Mungo's supposed difference.

Mungo's second solo constitutes *The Padlock*'s final musical representation of a "negro," but the opera's engagement with race and slavery may have been too easily condemned by a critical tradition that sees the Mungo character as too quick to forgive slavery of its sins. In 1921, Benjamin Brawley touched off this dismissal of *The Padlock* when he described Mungo as "a

very prominent character … who got drunk in the second act and was profane throughout the performance" (213). Presenting Mungo as the foundation of the largely American tradition of comic blackface minstrelsy, Brawley describes how this tradition of "burlesque on the stage [is] one of the greatest misfortunes that have befallen the Negro race in its entire history in America" (214); interpretations of Mungo as "a profane clown" and of *The Padlock* as a precursor to the theatrical reinforcement of African Americans' social degradation in minstrelsy has been endorsed by later critics, including Henry Louis Gates, Jr .[58] Indeed, the opera's focalization of song and speech around Mungo—its association of orality with blackness—has provoked much critical outrage in the twentieth century. Gates is the most dismissive of the opera's engagement with difference, writing that, after *The Padlock* purported to represent Mungo's "essence" by his "caricatured" language, "blacks could not achieve any true presence by speaking, since their 'African'-informed English seems to have only underscored their status as sui generis, as distinct in spoken language use as in their peculiarly 'black' color" (6). For Gates, this denigration of black orality would prove so severe that "if blacks were to signify as full members of the Western human community, they would have to do so in their writings"(6). Music, for Gates, becomes actively dehumanizing with Mungo. And while *The Padlock* indeed "had a profound influence on the minstrel tradition" (Hornback 217), it has not yet benefitted from the critical reconsideration in the last thirty years of how minstrelsy constructs or questions race. So a further investigation of how Mungo's song, with its separation of "moosic" from "tinking," imagines the category of race is in order—along with how it prefigures the use to which Thomas Jefferson would put music in constructing racial difference in his *Notes*.

In seeking to describe chattel slavery in newly republican Virginia to an Anglo-French audience, Jefferson's *Notes* attempt to define blackness as a series of innate differences from

what he calls "the white race." Although Jefferson's *Notes* is generally regarded as one of the earliest texts to formulate what coming generations would think of as "biological" racism—a vision of human difference that privileges anatomy and considers culture (which had been central to seventeenth- and earlier eighteenth-century notions of racial difference) only secondarily—Jefferson's analysis blends anatomical with cultural observations. In fact, he suggests that culture is itself biologically produced, writing that "in music," the enslaved African Americans of his acquaintance "are more generally gifted than the whites with accurate ears for tune and time, and they have been found capable of imagining a small catch. Whether they will be equal to the composition of a more extensive run of melody, or of complicated harmony, is yet to be proved" (257). In asserting that having an "accurate ear for tune and time" is not the mark of human intelligence that the potential "composition of a more extensive run of melody" would be, Jefferson's racial hierarchy proves an important intertext for Gates's distrust of orality and performance.[59] For Jefferson, as well as for Gates, writing is much more important than performing.

But *The Padlock*, in turn, seems to have been an important intertext for Jefferson's own racializing of musical talent. In addition to its frequent metropolitan performances, *The Padlock* enjoyed a successful first run along the eastern seaboard of North America from 1769 until at least 1774, when the theaters were closed. The American Company, a traveling theater troupe headed by the English actors David Douglass and Sarah Hallam Douglass and their American-born son Lewis Hallam, Jr., was the first to perform *The Padlock* in colonial America, on May 29, 1769, at the John Street Theatre in New York City; the opera became a staple of the Company's repertory in the following years as it toured colonial centers including New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore.[60] Jefferson was a frequent attendee at the American Company's

Williamsburg, Virginia, performances in the summer and fall of 1770—he saw them nine times in June and thirteen times in October and November of that year—and although he only noted the price of tickets (not the titles he saw), it's very likely that *The Padlock* was among these entertainments.[61]

*The Padlock* may have made itself such a useful intellectual tool for Jefferson's construction of race by "bombarding" him, and all its audiences, "with all kinds of conflicting, detachable messages" (Carlson 144). This "conflict" echoed slavery's conflicted institution in the metropolis in the 1760s—and correspondingly increased the legal and moral ambiguity surrounding institutions of slavery across the empire. In turn, the opera's interpretive flexibility meant that performances among American colonial audiences in explicitly slave-owning cities like Philadelphia or Baltimore might be expected to address the opera's presentation of Mungo's enslavement and personhood in quite different ways than the London performances. In London, Dibdin's Mungo was a fairly isolated enslaved black character in front of a metropolitan audience that was only awakening to the presence of black slaves; by depicting a slave with a colonial dialect who lives in the metropolis, *The Padlock* thus goes a distance toward intervening in the metropolitan ideology of exceptionalist freedom.

But colonial American audiences, faced with their own set of geographic and nationalist scruples about race and slavery, seem to have seen Hallam performing a different version of Mungo's character than Dibdin's. An October 31, 1772, review in the *Pennsylvania Chronicle* uses *The Padlock* to assert the Britishness of late-colonial North America, announcing that "We now, upon the judgment of gentlemen of undoubted knowledge and taste in theatrical performances, pronounce [Hallam] to be the best *Mungo* upon the British stage" (qtd. Seilhamer 300 n1). For the *Pennsylvania Chronicle*'s reviewer, Hallam's appearance in Philadelphia is not

only as "British" a performance as Dibdin's in London, at the very geographic heart of the British Empire—but seems to exceed it in quality. The *Pennsylvania Chronicle* may reference the "British stage" to argue for the legitimacy of Philadelphia's only intermittent theatrical performances—since most colonial theater was performed by traveling companies, "British" promises to tie together *The Padlock*'s mid-Atlantic audiences, creating in this imagined continuity a virtual group of theater patrons who could judge the difference between a good performance and "the best" performance.

But when it calls Hallam "the best *Mungo*," it also seems to identify as metropolitan a conception of racialized slavery that metropolitan audiences, in turn, would have seen as always already colonial. Indeed, American critics responding to *The Padlock* in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would recognize its representation of racialized slavery as excessively English (not British). Sixty years after the *Pennsylvania Chronicle*'s review, William Dunlap notes that "Mr. Hallam was unrivalled to his death, giving the Mungo with a truth derived from study of the Negro slave character, which Dibdin the writer could not have conceived" (31). For Dunlap, Hallam's performance as Mungo was realistic because informed by "a truth" of which the character's Anglo-Irish librettist and an English interpreter "could not have conceived." A century later, S. Foster Damon would go even further than Dunlap in setting up national boundaries to blackface performance, writing that "probably every negro lyric in this country before the War of 1812 was English," and pointing out that songs "in negro dialect" performed on American stages had been imported from the British Isles—where they sprang, in turn, from "interest in the West Indies" (Damon 133). Thus coming generations would remember the theatrical representation of slavery as an exchange commodity, trafficked on some of the same routes as the transatlantic trade itself.

So when Mungo extolled the pleasure of "hear[ing] de sweet guittar a clinking," his enthusiasm was open to different interpretations by audiences on the eastern and western shores of the Atlantic. For colonists like Hallam, who frequently encountered enslaved black people, Mungo's speech and songs may have seemed less novel. Perhaps some members of these colonial audiences, like Jefferson, already viewed black people as "generally gifted" at music—and, being entertained by a white actor pretending to be such a naturally "gifted" black musician, they would have already been familiar with the theater as a space for white people to indulge their appetites for the performance of blackness. Indeed, theaters were the rare venue in eighteenth-century America that allowed for the social mixing of black and white: at least in Norfolk, Virginia, free black sailors as well as urban slaves frequently attended the theater, where "it is possible that blacks sat where they could afford rather than be[ing] restricted to a particular section," since there are no "public statements about racially divided seating until 1805" (Richards 270). For the heterogeneous audience in Norfolk, at least (the town where Somerset had been Stuart's slave from 1749 until about 1765), the stage was a space for whites and blacks to encounter spectacles like Hallam's Mungo's "toot, toot, toot" in each other's company. Hallam's blackface performance, in a sense, could have provided a microcosm of this racially heterogenous space, offering a paradoxical image of racial identity as simultaneously fixed and plastic. (This paradox, as we will see, inhabits the later eighteenth-century revolution in acting styles that also pit the illusion of naturalness against self-conscious performance.) Mungo's celebration of musical pleasure, then, linked two experiences that were already familiar to colonists.

But Dibdin's London Mungo would have needed to offer a different kind of appeal to its metropolitan audience. These metropolitans were not only less habituated to racial mixing, they

were also more acutely aware that the operatic form was itself already foreign, being originally Italian. In fact, Dibdin would be accused of having plagiarized his score from Italian composers.[62] Thus Mungo's character, as performed in London, asked metropolitan audiences to conceive of their race and nation in ways that were always already moot for the character's colonial audiences, for whom no formal introduction to racialized slavery—or slaves themselves—was needed.

## III. From *The Padlock* Outward: Popular "Mungoisms"

If *The Padlock* had begun to change metropolitans' relation to the chattel slaves that were already in their midst, the opera's popular reception only intensified this unsettling. True to his identity as a colonial slave in metropolitan Europe, Mungo's place in this opera full of "detachable messages" could be abstracted into an emblem of transportability—and references to the theatrical slave proliferated in the months following the opera's London premiere. Indeed, London newspapers of 1768-69 paint a picture of the minor sensation that had attached itself to Mungo. By proliferating, the character "came to seem more socially canonical and desirable as [it] came to seem more common and used by all, which in turn enhanced [its] value and publicity that much more" (Brewer 14)—so that Mungo's afterlives helped naturalize the conception of slavery as insistently black and colonial that *The Padlock* had made popular.

At the beginning of this feedback loop, a correspondent to the *Public Advertiser* noted that, at an October 9 "Masquerade at the Opera-House"—less than a week after the opera's first performance—a "Mr. Mendez, in the Character of Mungo, in The Padlock, exceedingly diverted the Company" (*Public Advertiser* 13 Oct. 1768). Two weeks later, when Dibdin's first son was

born to his mistress Harriet Pitt, they named him Charles Isaac Mungo Dibdin, a name that indicates what might otherwise be overlooked: that Dibdin took great pride in his low-comic role ("Dibdin, Charles Isaac Mungo"). By the spring of 1769, "Mungo" had become a slang term for socially prominent young women who frequented the taverns and coffee shops of London, sites in the public sphere that had traditionally been gendered as masculine; the ubiquity of such a woman led her to be described as, echoing one of Mungo's songs, "a *Lady here, Lady there, Lady everywhere*, one who is to be seen in all Public Places; who, in the French Phrase, multiplies herself," according to a correspondent to the *St. James's Chronicle*.[63] These female Mungos do not seem to have taken their name as a rebellious gesture—instead, they instantiate just how "canonical and desirable" Mungo's character had become, a desirability that freed the character to be abstracted to a wide variety of cultural and social purposes.

And while female Mungos "multiplied themselves" across the social sphere, the London audiences who had seen and enjoyed *The Padlock* now multiplied Mungo's character even further by appropriating it into political culture. The most lasting of Mungo's afterlives was in the long-lived parodying of Jeremiah Dyson, an unpopular member of Parliament, after Dyson had helped opposed the seating of John Wilkes in the House of Commons. Wilkes had been prosecuted by Parliament for libel over a pornographic satire, and although Parliament very rarely invoked its privilege to prosecute libel, Wilkes had made the mistake of insulting many members in his political newspaper *The North Briton*, which had railed against Scottish influence in the United Kingdom's politics; Wilkite protests over Scottish Lord Bute's having become Prime Minister in 1762 were a major cause of the uneasiness about Otherness that haunted the metropolis in that decade. [64] Wilkes's political agitation had earned him great popularity with the voters of the County of Middlesex (which included much of London as well as the surrounding

area), who elected him three times in a row in the spring of 1768—although Parliament refused to recognize the results of these elections, and seated the losing candidate instead. Thus *The Padlock*'s small-scale celebration of disobedience took place against a much larger backdrop of discontent with political authority.

Dyson made himself unpopular by opposing Wilkes, but the political rebel-hero further influenced the caricature of Dyson as Mungo, by providing a pattern for the satires of Dyson. Wilkes had a big chin and crossed eyes, and images of him were used by his supporters as an emblem of liberty, and by his enemies as an image of the ugliness that popular representation could impart to the political process (Fig. 2). Such caricatures marked a new development in eighteenth-century satire: although the earlier eighteenth century had represented First Minister Sir Robert Walpole as a giant talking rooster, or as the villain of Gay's *Beggar's Opera* (1728), the satire of these earlier caricatures had seemed to "lash the Vice but spar[e] the name" (Swift, 529: 459-62). By comparison, satire in the 1760s would seem to be more specific—and thus more cruel. (Samuel Johnson would complain that "all in turn feel the lash of censure in a country where every baby is allowed to carry a whip" (Piozzi 185-86).) The physical particularity of the caricatures of Wilkes emphasized his extremely recognizable face, and directed attention to "the Vice" only secondarily. Yet, as Johnson emphasizes, large groups of people still felt "the lash of censure" through these particularized representations, and the "Vice"—the advocacy of popular representation—that Wilkes's crossed eyes represented was on display across the empire. Thus this highly individualized caricature still exceeded the bounds of the individual—and in many cases, the period's representations of "negroes" worked in a similar fashion, where dark skin color became a synecdoche of whole populations of dark-skinned people.


Figure 2. John Wilkes—the caricature that popularized political caricature.

But the caricatures as Mungo of the white Parliamentarian Jeremiah Dyson specifically indicated his subservience to the political goals of his more powerful friend, Lord Sandwich; Dyson could be represented as a black character because dark skin was fast becoming a shorthand for slavery. Dyson had initially been called "Mungo" by Colonel Barré, one of Wilkes's allies, in a debate on January 26, 1769, an epithet that placed him on the virtual stage of popular derision. As Horace Walpole explains, the epithet's layered referents gained such broad acceptance because Dyson, like Mungo, was seen as "employed by everybody in all jobs and servile offices" (3:315).

Subsequent visual satires of Dyson as Mungo, sometimes quoting the opera's "Dear Heart! what a terrible life am I led!" persisted until his death in 1776. As Mungo, Dibdin had worn a red-and-white-striped doublet and pantaloons and had darkened his face and hands; Dyson was depicted in matching blackface and wearing a similarly striped suit (see Fig. 3 and 4). Newspaper references to Dyson quickly presented him in the guise of the theatrical Mungo: a letter to the *Public Advertiser* less than two weeks after Barré nicknamed Dyson is signed by a "Mungo" who pokes fun at Parliament, claiming to belong to "a Company of *Strollers* down about Westminster [who] Play Tragedies and Comedies, and Tragi-Comedies, and very often

Farces," where "Every Man *pays* for his *Seat*, and the Boxes or Benches, as we call them, *come* very high" ("To the Printer"). By that summer, the *London Chronicle* was still trafficking in this theatricalized satire, and a piece titled "Mungo's Soliloquy" lamented that "Mungo must do all the dirty work, and be d—d for it into the bargain" in carrying out the Prime Minister's business (1-4 July 1769). Though the *Public Advertiser*'s correspondent constructs this metaphor to complain of political corruption, we will see that performances of metropolitan state power could easily resemble theater. When they turned Dyson into Mungo, such satires responded to the effective disenfranchisement of London's voters by altering the cultural representation of a politician whose efforts had helped to discount their own choice of a political representative. As the metropolitan public sphere was increasingly represented as a theatrical stage, what happened on the actual stage, in turn, could stand as a synecdoche for the public sphere as a whole.

Figure 3. Charles Dibdin in the role of Mungo.


Figure 4. Jeremiah Dyson depicted as Dibdin's Mungo

These political satires highlight the multiple significations with which Mungo's character was invested. As we have seen, Bickerstaff's libretto characterizes Mungo's difference both through the color of his skin (indicated, by white actors, through blackface) and through his dialect; but caricaturists seem to have felt free to choose either dialect *or* blackface to satirize Dyson as

Mungo. Indeed, in a December 1771 cartoon about the loss of his Irish pension that shows Dyson as a white man, he still utters "Alas: Poor Mungo" (Fig. 5). Now three years after Dyson had been nicknamed, only three words from *The Padlock* were necessary to identify him as Mungo. The metonymy of Mungo for Dyson had benefitted from the character's highly flexible cultural reception—so that when Dyson was represented as Mungo in newspapers, the connection would remain firm even if dialect contradicted color.


Figure 5. Dyson in whiteface but speaking as Mungo, depicted with an unnamed mistress in 1771. And as though these signals of identity are not ambiguous enough, Dyson may also have been homosexual, rather than primarily attracted to women.[65]

As Mungo's character multiplied itself across seemingly fixed boundaries of identity, its afterlives cast doubt on the inflexibility that had been built into racial and status identity in the first place. Thus a letter to the *Oxford Magazine* in 1770, citing "the frequent mention that is made of MUNGO in all our political essays," pretends to surmise "that a Gentleman of a *black* complexion had got into the House of Commons" (4 (1770): 279-80). This letter's faux-naïve assumption that Dyson "must be a person of the *negro* race, and if not an African born, at least a *black* by father or mother, from one of our West-Indian colonies" is funny precisely because readers were of course already quite aware of the disjunction between the racial identities of Dyson and Mungo. And yet, the letter writer muses, there is at least "one advantage, which must accrue to the public, by seeing a Gentleman of complexion at the head of affairs": that such an enslaved or formerly enslaved Member would be unable to fill political positions by nepotism,

"for I suppose him stolen young from his own country." That is, the letter suggests, having a Parliament full of "negroes" would be much preferable to one full of Scots.

Altogether, Mungo's various cultural afterlives help illuminate for a twenty-first-century audience what may already have been more obvious to eighteenth-century ones: that Mungo's character is a chimera composed from many different elements, including race, racism, status, song, language, striped costume, omnipresence, servility, and performative success. As a result, each afterlife necessarily privileges these elements in a different combination. Mungo's character onstage may be heavily associated with his blackness—and, as we have seen with Jefferson, there's a degree to which blackness is recursively metonymized as Mungo's character. But even while *The Padlock* seems to insist that "negro" is the totality of Mungo's identity, Mungo's social afterlives demonstrate that blackness and enslavement do not comprehend all of his character—indeed, blackness may not even always rank among its primary aspects.

And as the character was marshaled to represent a diversity of social conditions, metropolitans were forced to confront the degree to which the representation of race was an unreliable sign of identity. In this case, to echo Judith Butler, they would have to "read [Dyson's] body," or the bodies of any of the other Mungos, "as a sign of an irresolvable ambivalence produced by the discourse on" the conjunction of racial difference with status (99). If one could be represented as black and enslaved without being either, then the link between race and slavery itself would become strange, and "only from a self-consciously denaturalized position," Butler writes, "can we see how the appearance of naturalness is itself constituted" (110). Indeed, *The Padlock* took nearly a hundred years to fall out of popularity, at the point that new concepts of race and slavery had been fully formalized.

From the 1820s to the 1850s, Mungo was a favorite role of the African American actor Ira Aldridge, who had emigrated to Britain to pursue a stage career that eventually took him all over continental Europe; Aldridge frequently performed Mungo or other slapstick roles on the same night as Othello, so that his audience, "having already witnessed his polished performance in a serious role," would know "that he was *playing* the fool—in short, that he was acting a part, not manifesting his own innate racial peculiarities" (Lindfors 7). For *The Padlock*'s earliest audiences in the later eighteenth century, however, notions of "innate racial peculiarities" were still being constructed; and as we will see below, the dynamics of identity that *The Padlock* and its extratheatrical afterlives helped its audiences to think through would be more coherently formulated within the decade by the separate efforts of the Scottish lawyer, diarist, and biographer James Boswell—and across the Channel, by the French *philosophe* Denis Diderot.

## IV. Still Outward from *The Padlock*: Performing Identity in the Metropolis

Diderot's and Boswell's discussions of acting perhaps provided the later eighteenth century's best paradigm for understanding the relation between representation and the production of race and status—the relation that we have already observed in *The Padlock*. Audiences who expected a literally mimetic relationship between actor and character were apt to assume that the actors playing Mungo were themselves also black: thus a 1921 item in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* mistakenly asserts that "Lewis Hallam, a negro, played Mungo in the United States and invested the role with a pathos that foreshadowed the famous Uncle Tom characterizations, which even now, after half a century may be seen in small town stock companies" ("Colored Actor Full of Ambition"). (The *Inquirer* may be doubly wrong about racial performance, as these "famous

Uncle Tom characterizations" seem also to have been performed almost exclusively by white actors.[66]) While nineteenth-century references to Mungo had stressed ethnographic accuracy, and Dunlap had even claimed that Hallam's Mungo was drawn from "study of the Negro character," the *Inquirer*'s early twentieth-century journalist offers an even more direct relationship between actor and character by asserting that Hallam had been so able to "invest the role with pathos" because he was himself "a negro."

Although biographically mistaken, the *Inquirer* neatly fits Mungo into the place Uncle Tom had occupied in the nineteenth-century American imagination, conflating the two enslaved male characters who shaped their respective centuries' understanding of and resistance (or lack of resistance) to chattel slavery. Eighteenth-century theatrical audiences were just as susceptible to mistaking theatrical illusion for reality as the *Inquirer* would be, but—as Boswell and Diderot both make clear—they were more likely to be aware of the illusions that took them in. Until the middle of the eighteenth century, acting styles had been highly conventional, founded on "a coherent physiological system designed to regulate the great natural forces of the body for artistic and hygenic effect" (Roach 55). But later in the eighteenth century, with the "revolution in acting" that has been associated with David Garrick (Roach 12), actors started to embrace new kinds of artifice to produce a new hyperrealism—a reality effect that audiences were already well trained to recognize as the product of technique and talent. (Conventional on one hand, and artificial on the other, both styles of eighteenth-century performance were polar opposites of twentieth-century "method" acting.) By recognizing a gap between the actor's identity and the performance of character, the revolutionary new style offered a framework for understanding race as performance—an idea that would become unimaginable again to the 1920s journalist. Yet, encased in Diderot's articulation, the influence of the later eighteenth century's revolutionary

performances would prove extremely long-lived, eventually providing W. E. B. Du Bois with one of the foundations of his concept of racial "double consciousness."

As Boswell suggests at multiple points in his writing life, eighteenth-century theaters could serve as a sort of camera obscura that brought national identity and subjectivity into sharp focus, at least for Britain's internal Others. Having newly arrived in London in 1762, Boswell's *London Journal* describes his attendance at the opening of Bickerstaff's *Love in a Village* (another comic opera) at Covent-Garden, where "two Highland officers … just come from the Havana" are hissed at and "pelted with apples" by "the mob in the upper gallery." Boswell writes, "I hated the English; I wished from my soul that the Union was broke," and approaches one of the officers to offer his apologies. The officer tells Boswell that even the French would not have behaved so poorly as this English crowd—and adds, switching into broad Scots, "if I had a *grup o yin or twa o the tamd rascals I sud let them ken what they're about*" (*London Journal* 72). Boswell had taken lessons in English pronunciation before he left Edinburgh, but he now seems to recognize the officer's dialect as a site of resistance to nationalist hatred—and in doing so, seems to anticipate what Diderot would write a decade later: that, like "the actor in the street and the actor on the stage," the spectator inside and outside the theater are also "two people" (112).

Eight years later (and two years after *The Padlock*'s first performance), Boswell would more fully articulate the relation between social character and personal identity in three treatises titled "On the Profession of a Player," published in the *London Magazine* (1770); around the same time, Denis Diderot was formulating his full-length study *Le Paradox du Comedien* (*The Paradox of the Actor*), although it would not appear in print until the nineteenth century. A common question motivates both Boswell and Diderot: how could an actor convincingly portray a dramatic character (whose emotions and speech had little to do with the actor's own

psychology) to a theatrical audience so skillfully that the audience would be touched, convinced, or otherwise moved by the performance? How could this performance that was so manifestly inauthentic feel so real? Both authors offer David Garrick as an example of this paradox—Garrick was a friend to both Boswell and Diderot—and contrast anecdotes of Garrick at dinner parties with Garrick onstage. (Garrick and his wife Eva Marie Veigel had visited France in 1763 and had dinner with Diderot; Bickerstaff would throw a dinner party that included Garrick and Isaac Bickerstaff in 1769.[67]) After 1768, Garrick was also Bickerstaff's employer, having secured *The Padlock* for Drury-Lane, which he managed (Tasch 153)—and so as the impetus for many of his period's considerations of theatrical representation, Garrick stands at the center of later eighteenth-century understandings of performativity, identity, and self-consciousness. Because *The Padlock* springs from a period where the interaction between race and status was still being defined, Mungo's character could not avoid spurring incompatible interpretations—but the opera's simultaneous emergence from the crucible of subjectivity that was Garrick's Drury-Lane only increased Mungo's interpretive fecundity.

Although Boswell's essays were read in London and Diderot's treatise in Paris, both authors occupy the complicated trajectory of mid-century Anglo-French acting treatises, which mutually responded to and plagiarized each other. Like antislavery discourse, which was emerging in the same period, this acting discourse was a transnational phenomenon—but instead of British colonies against British metropolis, it pitted French celebrations of comic acting against British valorizations of tragedy. The exchange had been initiated in Rémond de Sainte-Albine's *Le Comédien* (1747), which would serve, uncredited, as the basis of John Hill's *The Actor* (1750), except that Hill swapped out discussions of the French comic tradition for the British tragic one. Hill's plagiarism of Sainte-Albine was then retranslated for a Francophone

audience by the Italian Fabio Antonio Sticotti, whose *Garrick ou les acteurs anglais* (1769) was the pamphlet with which Diderot takes issue in his *Paradoxe*.[68]

Those who followed the tradition of Sainte-Albine had argued that successful performances were achieved by actors who experienced the same feelings their characters did. Recycling Sainte-Albine, Hill wrote that an actor "who does not himself feel the several emotions he is to express to the audience … will never make otherse feel what he does not feel himself;" as a result, Hill cautions, an unfeeling performer "will always be as different from the thing he is to represent, as a mask from a face" (Hill 16). In this tradition, accuracy of *feeling* is the most important component of theatrical representation—and it may be an implicit sign of this dedication to representing feeling that white actors playing Mungo tinted their faces with pigment, instead of wearing masks. Blackface is a sort of compromise between the mask and the face (it disguises the actor's skin, but permits the facial gestures that are necessary to communicate feeling), and so seems to reify the process in which, "underwritten by repulsion, sympathetic identification, [and] fear," white actors who represented themselves as black characters "continually transgressed the color line" (Lott 8-9).

Yet by 1770, Boswell and Diderot had grown dissatisfied with affect's dominance in performance theory, arguing instead that the most convincingly mimetic representation is not really mimesis at all, since the actor's private feelings are a separate phenomenon that does not correspond to the representation of the character's feelings. Instead, both authors construct a theory of subjectivity as itself a construction, using the theater to dismantle the supposed stability and wholeness of personal identity. In his second treatise, Boswell describes Johnson explaining that Garrick is a good actor because he does not make the mistake of sharing his characters' feelings:

> If Garrick believes himself to be every character that he represents, he is a madman and ought to be confined. Nay, sir, he is a villain, and ought to be hanged. If, for instance, he believes himself to be Macbeth, he has committed murder, he is a vile assassin; who, in violation of the laws of hospitality, as well as of other principles, has imbrued his hands in the blood of his king while he was sleeping under his roof. If, sir, he has really been that person in his own mind, he has in his own mind been as guilty as Macbeth. (Sept. 1770, 2: 469)

Boswell's Johnson pushes the doctrine of mimetic feeling to its most ludicrous extent, explaining that, if Garrick "believes himself to be Macbeth" he should be "confined" in a mental institution, since "he is a madman"—or if not confined, imprisoned instead: since if Garrick really believes himself to be Macbeth, then he should also believe himself to be "as guilty as Macbeth," and "ought to be hanged." (Although Johnson makes fun of empathy with fictional characters in this passage, the abolitionist verse I will explore in Chapter 3 thrive on precisely this kind of empathy, insisting that readers must adopt the disgust at slavery that their texts dwell on.) In Johnson's vision, a member of Garrick's audience may enjoy the temporary illusion of having become Macbeth while empathizing with the character Garrick represents, but the members of this audience are still grounded enough in reality to remember that none of them is actually a fictional-historical murderous medieval Scottish king.

For the actors on stage, though, the sameness required between character and self should be even more partial. As Boswell explains, the actor

> must have a kind of double feeling. He must assume in a strong degree the character which he represents, while he at the same time retains the consciousness of his own character. The feeling and passions of the character which he

> represents, must take full possession as it were of the antichamber of his mind, while his own character remains in the innermost recess. (Sept. 1770 469-70)

In Boswell's day, the stage was only beginning to develop its "imaginary fourth wall," whose conceptual construction "was made possible only by [a] final break with the ancient rhetorical theory of acting," which had held that actors moved their audiences by breathing emotion-causing vapors out at them (Roach 155). For Boswell, then, the theater's newly divided space seems to authorize him to imagine the corresponding architecture of the mind as divided between a semipublic "antichamber" and a deeply private "innermost recess," in which the actor's "own character remains" while the fictive self is entertaining audiences from the outer part. The metonymic relation between actor and character might more precisely be described as a synecdoche, since the character represents only a small subset of what the actor's mind is concerned with during the performance.

Indeed, Boswell seems unconsciously to echo *The Padlock*'s concerns with similarity and difference and parts and wholes when he writes that this "double feeling" is also "experienced in some measure" by an attorney pleading for a client: "during the time of his pleading, the genuine colour of his mind is laid over with a temporary glaring varnish, which flies off instantaneously when he has finished his harangue" (470). This "colour of mind," which "is laid over with a temporary glaring varnish" seems to recall the blackface makeup in which Dibdin was still performing Mungo—so that between 1768 and 1770, the false coloring with which the white actor used to impersonate a black character seems to have worked its way into a broader cultural sense of the performance of social identity.

As we will see later, Boswell's "colour of mind" has additional interpretive and legal overtones (Boswell had qualified to practice Scottish law in 1766) but Diderot's text goes even

further than Boswell's, and ends up questioning the basic reliability of social signifiers themselves. In particular, Diderot emphasizes that language itself is potentially meaningless—a potential that, for him, requires actors to bring otherwise nonsignifying dramatic texts to life. The medium of language is so crucial in the *Paradoxe*, in part, because it was responding to Sticotti's translation of Hill's translation of Sainte-Albine's original treatise—but translation itself, according to Diderot, is at the heart of what an actor does because language necessarily translates meaning between speaker and hearer. Diderot writes that, "even with the most clear, precise and positive writer the words are never, can never be, anything but signs approximating to a thought, a feeling, or an idea, signs whose value is completed by movement, gesture, tone, the eyes and the particular situation" (101). Language's insufficiency—words are only "signs approximating a thought"—means that, for drama to actually have meaning, it must be acted and the text's "value completed" by the "movement, gesture, tone, the eyes" of the actors who bring it to life. Rather than decoration, these embodied inflections finalize the meaning of the text's words. (The interdependence of embodiment and signification would have been perfectly clear to a hypothetical British reader who had seen, in Mungo's character, the new concept of the "negro.") After all, as Diderot admonishes his readers, "consider how frequent and easy it is for two speakers to use the same expressions and to have thought and said completely different things" (102). We have already seen how the afterlives of Mungo's character became a sort of cultural shorthand that "two speakers" could refer to while their meanings diverged.

Meanwhile, in describing the paradox of theatrical representation, whose discourse had been inflected by recursively Anglo-French translations, Diderot explains that language's transportation of meaning between speakers and audience is highly dependent on both parties' sharing a cultural background. His point would have been obvious to Anglophones in the early

1760s who had witnessed the emergence of the colonial sense of "negro" in metropolitan vocabulary, although metropolitans had until then used "slave" (or "black slave") to indicate status. Because words are culturally dependent, Diderot explains, when speaker and audience come from different cultures, it is possible that what seems to be a mutually intelligible language may still signify radically different meanings. As a result of this cultural and linguistic gap, the British and French voices in the discourses of performance theory would always be mutually unintelligible:

> As there's hardly anything in common between the English way of writing comedy and tragedy and the way it's done in France, it follows clearly that the French actor and the English actor, who fully agree on the truth of your author's principles, don't understand each other, and that there is in the technical language of the theatre such looseness, such vagueness, that sensible men with diametrically opposed views can both think they're seeing the light of truth in it. (102)

A less cynical view than Diderot's might emphasize that language can create social concord, but—at least in the context of theatrical discourses—Diderot sees this concord as false, and describes language as masking the fact that speaker and listener are both ingorant of the other's meaning. (In the political sphere, a degree of harmony between colonial and metropolitan conceptions of slavery would be necessary to build antislavery efforts.) Instead of rendering meaning more precise, the "the technical language of the theatre" so impedes understanding that those who discuss the theater are almost guaranteed to radically disagree when it seems that they most agree. As a result, Diderot cautions, "Don't explain yourselves if you want to remain in agreement" (102).

Diderot's caveat is disingenuous as the beginning of a longer treatise that will both include "explanation" and aim at "agreement" between readers and text, but it still goes some way toward introducing the paradox his text revolves around, a paradox that, as we have seen, would have been familiar to *The Padlock*'s audiences: the disjunction between an audience's perception of a theatrical character and the actor's experience of performing it. Diderot introduces this paradox by way of the same instability of language discussed above, when the First Speaker of the dialogue asks the Second to

> Think for a moment about what on the stage is called *truth*. Does it mean showing things as they are in nature? Not at all. Truth in this sense would simply be the ordinary. What then is the truth of the stage? it's the conformity of the actions, the speeches, the face, the voice, the movement, the gesture, with an ideal model imagined by the poet and often exaggerated by the actor. That's the wonder of it. this model doesn't just influence the tone; it even alters the way a man walks, the way he looks. Which is why the actor in the street and the actor on the stage are two people so different that it's hard to recognize them. The first time I saw Mademoiselle Clairon at home I couldn't help saying: "Oh! I thought you were taller by a head." (111-12)

Theatrical truth is different from truth outside the theater, partly because theatrical terms themselves are imprecise and ambivalent. In the theater, truth is not what *is* true—it is not purely mimetic, not merely "showing things as they are in nature"—but instead shows what *feels* true. As a result, then, "what on the stage is called *truth*" can exceed that of real life, enacting "an ideal model imagined by the poet and often exaggerated by the actor." In this formulation, the dramatic language "invented by the poet" is the driving force behind actors who produce the

illusion of truth, so that the falsity of language allows the production of the much greater, culturally celebrated falsehood of the stage. And as we have seen, the agent who passes off this falsity, the person of the actor, is split in two. However, here Diderot makes the point literal: when he visits the actress Clair Josèphe Hippolyte Leris, known professionally as "La Clairon," at home, he finds that she is much shorter than she seemed to be onstage. The First Speaker refers to her as "Mademoiselle Clairon," an epithet that seems to blend the performing identity of La Clairon that he expected to see, with actress's real-world identity as Mlle Leris, and this epithet is a reminder that it is not the actresses's actual height that shocks the speaker so much as it is the fact that, onstage, her characters always appear to be "taller by a head." The virtual reality of the stage seems to exceed the reality of daily life.

Yet the reality of daily life would remain indebted to the virtual reality of the stage, as in one of its many afterlives Diderot's text would help construct one of the twentieth century's most enduring models of subjectivity, and especially racialized subjectivity—Du Bois's concept of "double consciousness." Du Bois wrote, as one of a tiny number of black intellectuals in late nineteenth-century America, that he felt his identity to be always facing the "unasked question": "How does it feel to be a problem?" His answer, formulated in the article, is a latter-day borrowing of the paradox of identity that Diderot and Boswell had offered a century before. For Du Bois, being "a problem" meant living out the paradox of "a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (3). Critics have traced the "long history" of and "background of meaning[s] evoked" by Du Bois's term "double consciousness"—which include contemporary psychological theories, vernacular religion, and the latter-day American Romanticism of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Dickson 299). But in pitting

individual "sensation" against "a world that looks on," Du Bois simultaneously borrows his metaphor from the stage, a borrowing that is just as explicit as that of Boswell's lawyer—and indeed, Du Bois helps illuminate that, for Boswell and Diderot as well, "the performative effects of slavery and race hatred that produced such contradictions as double consciousness did not confine themselves to the plantations" (Roach 83).

In fact, the English translation of Diderot's *Paradoxe* in 1883 by Walter Herries Pollock, fourteen years before Du Bois's article, had reintroduced late eighteenth-century issues of identity and subjectivity into Anglo-American cultural life. Pollock's friend, the London actor Henry Irving, wrote a preface to *The Paradox of Acting* that used precisely this term, claiming that the actor's "mind should have, as it were, a double consciousness, in which all the emotions proper to the occasion may have full sway, while the actor is all the time on alert for every detail of his method" (xv-xvi). Irving and Pollock, in turn, provoked a response from the Scottish journalist William Archer, who claimed that Diderot knew perfectly well that actors *did*, in fact, feel the emotions their characters portrayed onstage—and that in suggesting otherwise, Diderot was merely "laughing in his sleeve" (21-22). And Archer provided a convenient vocabulary to Du Bois's mentor at Harvard, William James, in his 1890 description of "double consciousness" as a "deeper alteration of the personality" revealed during hypnosis (2: 600). Thus late nineteenth-century America, as obsessed with defining race and status as Britain had been more than a century before, found similar appeal in the Diderot/Boswell conceptions of identity, and put them to parallel—if more fully psychologized—use.

Indeed, eighteenth-century theatrical audiences, confronted with the illusion of performance, would have had room to reflect on the theatricality of their own performance of social identity—recognizing how, like the Highland officers in Boswell's journal, or the

semiautobiographical lawyer in his essays, they manipulated their own performance of social signs in hopes that others would see them as the people whom they wanted to seem to be. Indeed, although the later eighteenth-century use of "negro" is very different from Du Bois's "negro," both resound with echoes of the stage, which has for so long been a valuable site for Anglophone constructions of racial identity. In this context, the character of Mungo could provide not only a caricature for a hated politicial or a slang term for a fashionable social type, but fitted easily inside a framework where it could help provide a pattern for later conceptions of subjectivity as both self and other.

## V. Mungo's Juridical Reincarnations and the *Somerset* Trial of 1772

Although it is impossible to say whether or not "Bickerstaff had reservations about Negro slavery" (Sypher 238). *The Padlock* is much less explicitly political than either earlier or later eighteenth-century texts dealing with slavery. Instead of offering its own interpretations, the opera seems to have provided its audiences with a site to which they could attach and expand on more political examinations of slavery. In 1787, readers of *The Gentleman's Magazine* would have been confronted with one of *The Padlock*'s antislavery descendants—an epilogue, which is said to have been written by the late Anglican minister Samuel Disney "soon after the first representation of that opera," but which was "never adopted at any of the theatres."[69]

Had Disney's verses ever been performed, their audience would have heard a rehearsal of many of the rhetorical strategies that would characterize both pro- and antislavery discourse in the decades to come. Just four years later, expanding on the problem Disney's epilogue evokes—the contradiction between Mungo's captivity and the "liberty" of British identity—the *Somerset*

trial would ask whether the status of a colonial "negro" changed on coming to the metropolis. In trying to settle this question, the counsels for Somerset and Stuart would each offer conflicting definitions of "slaves" and "negroes," and come to contradictory interpretations of how colony and metropole intersected in "negroes." Yet Chief Justice Mansfield's decision would ultimately prove dissatisfying to both sides, leaving the status of "negroes" still undefined. And, recognizing that *Somserset* had opened up cultural space for even further discussions of slavery and blackness, writers like Samuel Estwick and Edward Long would offer proslavery arguments that addressed and contradicted the ways that slavery and race had been represented by Somerset's lawyers. Taking place in newspapers and pamphlets as much as in court, the aggregated discourses surrounding *Somerset* cemented the "negro" as a trope for figuration itself—a word whose meanings were so protean that any attempt to define must be as dependent on aesthetic representation as on fact.

In Disney's epilogue, Mungo describes his captivity as a matter of national significance, lamenting that "whilst I tread the free-born British land /… / Vain, vain that glorious privilege to me, / I am a slave, where all things else are free" (7-10). Metrically, this final line should admit Mungo saying "all *men* else are free" as easily as "all *things* else are free"—but in speaking of "things," the character's afterlife continues to draw out the ambiguity between persons and objects that runs through all of the texts in my project, and that had been introduced in the opera when Mungo started speaking to the hamper. Going on to describe how he was "snar'd, and seiz'd, and sold" a slave in Africa (38), Mungo will make it clear that his status in Britain is as a "thing." Yet as would soon be emphasized by those arguing for the reformation of slavery, national mythology in the eighteenth century had constructed Britishness as a kind of reification of liberty. As a result, not only Britain itself, but "the Temper, Disposition, and Spirit of the

People of this Country, it's Climate, the Genius of the People and the Soil" all embodied the liberty of "the English Constitution" (Davy 27). In this sense, then, the "free-born British land" is not only "free" because it is home to "free-born" peoples—indeed, even the very dirt itself possesses a freedom that Mungo cannot claim.

Having meditated on the conjunction of nation with race and status, Mungo finishes the epilogue by calling for political action, thus appending a resoundingly abolitionist appeal to an only occasionally antislavery opera. "I speak to Britons," Mungo says, instructing his audience to "behold" him as a victim of Britain's "murderous" slave trade and colonial policy (37-40), and seeming to echo Sancho as he says it. Like Sancho with Sterne, he tries to spur these Britons to action, begging,

> O sons of freedom! equalise your laws;
>
> Be all consistent—plead the negro's cause;
>
> That all the nations in your code may see,
>
> The British negro, like the Briton, free.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> At least, let gentle usage so abate
>
> The galling terrors of this passing state,
>
> That he may share the great creator's social plan;
>
> For though no Briton,—Mungo is a man! (37-50)

The audience of *The Padlock* was implicitly composed of metropolitan Britons—and although the opera would be perfomed in the Caribbean colonies, its audience would remain exclusively British at least until 1783, when theaters in the new United States opened again.[70] In any case, it is to metropolitans—who, unlike colonials, had even the faintest hope of seeing their concerns

addressed by Parliament—that Mungo appeals. Asking *The Padlock*'s audiences to "plead the negro's cause"— as Granville Sharp had (unsuccessfully) done on behalf of Jonathan Strong in 1767, and as would form the pattern for *Somerset* in 1772—Mungo suggests that it will be necessary to free all of the slaves throughout the British dominions in order to make British liberty "all consistent." Yet although Disney's epilogue allows that the courts themselves may not "break for ever this disgraceful chain" (46), Mungo is adamant that the construction of racial difference undergirding enslavement should not be allowed to dictate rights, since "though no Briton,—Mungo is a man!"

In this careful separation of "Briton" from ordinary "man," Disney's Mungo provides a succinct articulation of the troubled cultural conjunctions of race, status, and nation that animated the British 1760s and '70s. Although Mungo has spoken of the need to emancipate "the British negro," he now paradoxically asserts that he is "no Briton." As Mungo seems to mean it, "Briton" is a racial category that combines multiple categories, and signifies that "freedom and whiteness [a]re metropolitan attributes while slavery and blackness [a]re colonial" (Rabin 23). Thus as a "negro," even one who lives in the British metropolis (as Disney's epilogue imagines), Mungo can never be a "Briton." The epilogue uses "negro" twice (42, 44) as it describes how British laws have recognized a state of personal inequality organized around race. Of course, readers who encountered this epilogue in *The Gentleman's Magazine* would already have known that Mungo was black—and many of them would probably have felt comfortable calling him a "negro." But although this word was useful elsewhere in discussing the status difference between slaves and free-born Britons, "negro" is absent from Disney's text, appearing only when it is called on to describe the manifestly unjust legal foundation of enslavement. Disney thus

demonstrates that *The Padlock* had begun to draw its metropolitan audience's attention to how "negro" encoded status with race.

In asking Britons to "plead the negro's cause," Disney's Mungo links the *The Padlock*'s concerns to those of the *Somerset* trial, and thus bridges the two most durable manifestations of what "negro" signified in the metropolitan 1760s and '70s. *The Padlock* had used Mungo's dialect to characterize chattel slavery as black and colonial; *Somerset*, too, would search for its own language to describe race, status, and nation—and, like *The Padlock*, would end up offering its audiences a site on which to construct their own definitions. Even the physical spaces of the theater and the courtroom resembled each other, and when spectators arrived early at Westminster Hall hoping for a "good view" of British legal power on display in the *Somerset* trial (Shyllon 107),they were as excited to see the barristers in black silk and the judges in "scarlet robes lined with ermine and full-bottomed wigs" as *The Padlock*'s audiences had been enthralled by the spectacle of costumes and moving sets (Hay, Linebaugh, et al. 27).But while *The Padlock* had implicitly questioned the status of metropolitan slaves, *Somerset* made these questions explicit, framing them so that "the wider political implications of *Somerset* were even broader and more important than its direct legal effects" (Van Cleve 33).

*Somerset*'s audiences, in the early summer of 1772, tended to misinterpret the case as having outlawed slavery in the metropolis—and, as a result, having also made black slaves into virtual white Britons. But an item in the June 24, 1772, *Morning Chronicle* demonstrates just how much these misinterpretations drew inspiration from the stage—and specifically, from the representations of racial transformation and racialized slavery that were on view in *The Padlock*. Seeking to report *Somerset*'s reception among London's black community, the *Chronicle* describes:

> Yesterday two Blacks, discoursing on the subject of their rigth [sic] to liberty, by the determination of the long depending cause in favour of Somerset, one of their fraternity, one cried out in great extasy, "Ah ah, we be no more mungo here, mungo dere, mungo everywhere, we be made white by de gentleman in de black gown, and we go here, and dere, and every where dat is if we like it." (*Morning Chronicle* 24 June 1772)

To the *Chronicle*'s "two Blacks," blackness not only links Mungo to *Somerset*—*Somerset* has now reversed the blackface performance of Mungo, for metropolitan black people have been "made white by de gentleman in de black gown," racially transformed by a kind of legal whiteface. Indeed, along with the stage, that other site of the figurative expansion of "negro" in the metropolitan imagination, *Somerset* played a crucial role in transforming the aesthetic and rhetorical strategies with which race, status, and nation would be represented. To the "two Blacks" of the *Chronicle*, Mansfield has not made freedom independent of race—rather, according to them, black metropolitans have been "made white," and it is this virtual transformation of color, rather than the discounting of race as a basis for rights, that affords their freedom.[71]

As we will see, this virtual whitening would be troped again in the discourses around *Somerset*. But while the case was seen by pro- and antislavery forces alike as a synecdoche for the legality of chattel slavery in the British Empire as a whole, *Somerset* actually investigated the much more precise question of "whether Mr. Stuart is intitled to the detention of" James Somerset ("Case Involving James Sommersett" 94). Somerset was born in Africa, but enslaved and transported across the Atlantic probably in early adolescence, reaching Virginia in the summer of 1749, where he was bought by the Scottish-born Charles Stuart, who ran a store in the

port city of Norfolk ("Case Involving James Sommersett" 3). Stuart would later become Surveyor-General for Customs for much of the North American colonies, bringing Somerset with him to Boston, and then in 1769 to London—where Somerset seems to have started thinking about having himself freed. He was baptized in February 1771, perhaps because baptism was popularly supposed to emancipate slaves, and in October 1771 ran away from Stuart entirely (Wise 3, 9-10).[72] When Stuart located Somerset on November 26, 1771, he had already decided to sell his slave of twenty years, having him confined on John Knowles's ship, the *Ann and Mary*, which was bound for Jamaica.[73] Stuart's decision was probably one of economic convenience (a slave who would run away was unreliable, and should be gotten rid of)—but from Somerset's perspective, it would have been a potentially devastating punishment, since slaves in Jamaica were exposed to more violence, disease, and malnutrition than in London. Before the ship sailed, however, Somerset was able to contact the three Londoners who had stood as his godparents in February, and they brought a writ of habeas corpus to have Somerset transferred into the custody of King's Bench (although he would be released on his godparents' bond) until the court could determine whether his detention were legal.[74]

Habeas corpus—literally, "handing over the body," although formalized in 1679, had existed since the Middle Ages, and was "an instrument of judicial power more concerned with the wrongs of jailers than with the rights of prisoners" (Halliday 14). In *Somerset*, this writ summoned Somerset's body until evidence could be produced by Knowles and Somerset that their detention of him was legal. Having been extracted from the *Ann and Mary* as a kind of juridical token that could be returned again if sufficient basis for the legality of his captivity should be produced (and thus not unlike the money that Diego hands over to Leonora's parents in *The Padlock*), the petition that promised to free Somerset also emphasized the degree to which,

as a slave, he was legally more thing than person. And the case's official title, *Rex* v. *Knowles, ex parte Somerset*,[75] also emphasizes Somerset's depersonalization: it was argued in the King's name against Knowles, and only "on behalf of" Somerset, leaving the slave's name syntactically subordinated both to the British king, whose nation dominated the transatlantic slave trade in the later eighteenth-century, and to the captain of the ship on which Somerset had been confined. Neither Stuart nor Somerset was named as a direct party to the trial of the one's mastery and the other's slavery. Instead, other people—not merely their legal representatives, but also the captain of the merchant ship, Somerset's godparents and even, virtually, the King—would speak for them. Although the absence of Somerset's and Stuart's voices may seem strange, the case's ventriloquism, in which a multitude of others spoke on their behalf, also recalls what literary critic Lynn Festa describes as the "redundant humanizing of the already human" that marks much of the later eighteenth century's sentimental investigations of slavery (8). (Think of Thomas Day's "Dying Negro" whose title page declares it "Supposed to have been written by a black.") As Festa explains, this "humanizing" works in two ways: the "tropes of personification not only confer a human face and form upon the victims of empire, but also give shape to the abstract forms and collective entities that execute policies and actions in an emerging global system" (ibid.). And by giving human voice to just these "collective entities"—trade, the law, the metropolis, the King—*Somerset* emphasized that the question of Somerset's captivity on the *Ann and Mary* was inextricable from the "contradiction between the Common Law of England and its whole legislation and policy towards its colonies" (Fiddes 499).

So when each side tried to answer "the question now before your Lordship" (96), they represented slavery in different ways, each representation offering a different definition or interpretation of the British past and the interface between race and status. Some of these

representations were quite fanciful, as when Davy instructed the court to "suppose a Bashaw came into this Country with half a Score [of] Circassian Women-slaves for his Amusement," and suggested that the Bashaw "would make but a miserable figure at the Bar of the old Bailey upon an Indictment for a rape" (Granville Sharp, "MS Notes from the Somerset Trial"). And as though recognizing just how central representative strategies were to the debate over slavery, both sides accused each other of distorting reality by overemphasizing the aesthetic. Hargrave—a young lawyer who "flourished away on the side of liberty and acquired great honour" in *Somerset*, which was his first case (Charles Stuart to James Murray, 15 June 1772)—brags in the published version of his argument that it "want[s] no aid from the colours of art, or the embellishments of language," and rests instead on the "solid foundations" of "inferences from facts and rules of law, which do not admit of contradiction" (Hargrave 48). Hargrave dismisses "colours of art" and "embellishments of language" as the hallmarks of inaccurate—or even dishonest—representation. But such a standard threatens to make *all* of the arguments in *Somerset* suspect, since the interpretations in court and the case's paratexts are all quite figuratively promiscuous, depending on precisely the "colours of art" that Hargrave claims not to indulge in to try and settle the status of metropolitan slavery. Indeed, in one sense, *Somerset* was not so much a trial over the legality of slavery as a contest over the terms in which slavery should be described.

Of course, Hargrave's audience would have recognized, in his "colours of art," a pun on the legal sense of "colour": a speaker who relies on "colour of law" or "colour of argument" asserts the legal authority of a right or plea that, in reality, does not actually exist ("Colour n.1" II.7). Color, in this sense, was as artificial as it was in Boswell's description of a performer's or lawyer's "colour of mind." Attorney John Glynn used the artificiality embedded in the idea of "legal colour" to cast doubts on the significance of racial "colour" in his opening argument on

February 7. He asserted that Knowles's return (that Somerset could be held captive because Virginia recognized "negroes" as slaves) should be rejected since "there can be no Colour of Argument drawn from those Virginia Laws," and goes on to specify what particular "colour of argument" he means: "that this being the Colour of the Men, Slavery must be their Condition" (Sharp, "MS Notes from the Somerset Trial" 117-18). As Glynn's pun makes clear, it was only by "colour of argument" that the "colour" of slaves' dark skin indicated that "slavery *must* be their Condition." Slavery could be justified only by such suspect visual coincidences, not actual, valid argumentation, and only under "colour of" metropolitan law, not actual law as interpreted by the English High Court. By conflating these two senses of "color," racialized slavery could be made to seem already invalid from the beginning, a legally spurious institution built on an equally shaky foundation. Thus by drawing attention to this figuration itself, Glynn suggested that the figurative potential of the synecdochic "negro" could just as easily deligitimize chattel slavery.

Indeed, although it would be known as "the Negro Case," Mansfield's ruling in *Somerset* that metropolitan slaves are not property may actually have had little to say about race. As was usual at the time, there is no official record of the *Somerset* trial, although four transcripts of Mansfield's verdict have generally been considered canonical.[76] Of these versions, Lofft's *Reports*, not published until 1776, is the only one where Mansfield specifically mentions Somerset's race, calling him "the negro" and "the black" (Lofft 114). In contrast, in the three remaining versions—a transcript that Granville Sharp may have had made of the proceedings and contemporary articles in the *Gentleman's Magazine* and the *Scots Magazine*—Mansfield speaks not of Somerset's race but his status, calling him "the slave" and "the man." Having been published just shortly after the verdict—and potentially read by some who had been in court to

hear Mansfield speak, these less insistently racialist transcripts may more accurately reflect how Mansfield framed the relation between "negro" and "slave." Perhaps Mansfield was concerned that a ruling about a "negro" would be too narrow, failing to apply to a "slave" who was not black. Yet Lofft, by recording Mansfield's verdict as about the synecdochic "negro," seems to indicate just how firmly interwoven blackness and slavery had become in the metropolitan imagination.

Indeed, as Samuel Estwick's pamphlet *Considerations on the Negroe Cause* (published in the summer of 1772) emphasizes, *Somerset*'s spectators were acutely aware that the act of representing slavery was central to determining whether and how it was legal in England. Estwick was a lawyer who had spent part of his life in Barbados—and, "probably" having been "among the audience when the case of *Somerset* was argued," he addresses his pamphlet to Chief Justice Mansfield, offering his arguments as an amendment to those made by Stuart's counsel (Long, *Candid Reflections* 76). And in the process, writes George Boulukos, Eswtick would "develop a vision of slavery" that was fundamentally fictive: on the one hand, bearing a strong resemblance to plantation slavery as represented in novels by Sarah Scott and Edward Kimber—and, on the other, imaginatively reframing the terms with which *Somerset* had defined the institution itself (116). According to Estwick, Stuart's lawyers had made a mistake in discussing the relation between slaves and those who held them captive. Instead, Estwick announces, addressing Chief Justice Mansfield,

> I must now then apprize your Lordship, that from this instant it is my intention to drop the term slavery. It is an odious word, that engendered this law-suit, and now feeds and supports it with the fuel of heated passions and imaginations. I shall take the liberty to remove it's situation, to change it's [sic] point of view, and to

> rest it on the land of *Property*; from whence, perhaps, it will be seen, not only in a less offfensive light, but where also it may find a foundation more solid and substantial for it's [sic] support. (9-10)

Estwick recognizes that "slavery … is an odious word," and that it "feeds and supports" *Somerset* "with the fuel of heated passions and imaginations." But Estwick seems to believe that, although the "word" is hateful, the relation it signifies is not—so that, if he may linguistically and conceptually "remove" the trial's "situation," he can "change it's [sic] point of view," and so produce a more favorable outcome. Instead of primarily concerning enslaved persons, Estwick suggests, slavery should have been discussed in the trial as concerning the slave masters whose "*Property*" they are. Thus having excluded the personhood of the slave entirely from the terms of the debate, Estwick argues, the proslavery interest may be able to "find a foundation more solid and substantial for it's [sic] support."

Continuing to discuss *Somerset* primarily in terms of its representations, Edward Long's pamphlet *Candid Reflections…on What is Commonly Called the Negroe-Cause* (published slightly after Estwick's and "arriving independently at many similar conclusions" (Shyllon 148)) would present the trial as a re-figuration of the "negro" gone awry. Long—like Estwick, both a lawyer and a planter (although an Anglo-Jamaican one)—wrote that, in denying slave-owners of their human property, *Somerset* had made "negroes" figuratively white:

> The art of *washing the Black-a-moor white* [has been] happily reserved for a *lawyer*: the thing that *Solomon* thought impossible when he said, "Can the *Æthiop* change his skin?" What the *wise Æsop* esteemed a prodigy in nature; has, in the present wonder-working age, ceased any longer to be miraculous. (iii)

Long's "art of *Washing the Black-a-moor white*" is a familiar trope of unchangeability, one that Chambers's *Cyclopaedia* (1728) cites to explain the semantic transformation executed by a trope, "whereby a Word or Diction is changed from its proper and natural Signification into another, with some Advantage" ("Trope")—and facilitated by this double meanining, Srinivas Aravamudan suggests that "the tropological blackamoor" in the eighteenth century came to "embody [the] tension between representational surplus and referential lack" (4, 5).

True to this tradition—and as concerned with figuration as Estwick, Long collapses the reality of racialized slavery into its representations, seeming to argue that blackness had properly signified slavery since time immemorial, and was only now losing its "proper and natural Signification" "in the present wonder-working age" thanks to Somerset's lawyers. In the margins of his own copy of *Candid Reflections*, Sharp would call Long's "Rhetorical trope" "impertinent," and take him to task for being "so ignorant as to suppose that a Man's Freedom depended *upon his Complexion*; or that Negroes are *Slaves* because they are *black*" (Sharp, Autograph MS Notes iv). But as Long seems to have recognized, if representation was central to legitimizing slavery, then slavery was vulnerable to being delegitimized by abolitionist representations. Long would attempt to remedy the instability *Somerset* had brought to racialized slavery in his three-volume *History of Jamaica* (1774), whose second volume offers one of the earliest Anglophone discussions of race as a category that exceeds national and cultural differences.

Long has been described as "the father of English racism" (Shyllon 98) for his quasi-biological meditations on what he calls "different classes and races of human creatures" (Long, *History of Jamaica* 2:371) categorized according to their "different casts of complexion" (2: 49-50). That is, for Long, racial difference can be used to separate "classes" of humans (a category so broad that it includes the nonhuman). Long presents the category of "human creatures" as vast

and multiply differentiated, comprehending among its "classes" not only Europeans and Africans, but great apes as well—thus, Long suggests, "an oran-outang husband would [not] be any dishonour to a Hottentot female" (364). Having constructed this hierarchy of human differences, Long suggests they correspond to what Stuart's counsel John Dunning had suggested were "natural" differences in the "ranks" of human society ("Somerset *against* Stewart" 13). As a result, Long is able to argue, the status difference between black slaves and white masters is as "natural" as the difference in the color of their skin. Indeed, for Long, biology promises to settle the instability that *Somerset* had introduced into racialized slavery by having operated on the level of representations instead of actuality. The "natural" differences of race are more significant than the words "slave" or "free," Long suggests, because "it is not a mere sound, importing slavery, that makes men slaves; the Negroes here [in Jamaica] are not the more so for the title" (2.402). Even free Jamaican "Negroes" are still naturally slavish, Long argues—and even if an English judge were to free all of the Empire's slaves, this "freedom" would be a purely linguistic matter, since "slavery" is actually the natural essence of all "negroes."

## VI. Conclusion.

Long's biological separation thus offers one solution to the problem of how to describe the relation between blackness and slavery that occupied post-mid-century metropolitan Britain. And although Long would not solve the problem, his proposed solution is a strong example of the degree to which verbal representation was at the center of the strategies that metropolitans used to come to terms with the emerging categories of difference in their expanding world. When white metropolitans began to notice more and more enslaved black people, their response to

these newcomers was somewhere between guilt and denial, since black people—enslaved or not—served as powerful reminders of colonial chattel slavery.

But the aesthetic and cultural representations that were marshalled to deal with this increasing black presence began to define "negro" as not so much an empirical reality as the product of and catalyst for other representations. When an enslaved black character sang and danced, in *The Padlock*, "negro" took on performative aspects that, in turn, left their impress on the shape of contemporary acting theories, which went on to influence later generations' conceptions of race and identity. And when the relation between character and audience was analogized, in *Somerset*, to the relation between colony and observing metropole, "negro" inspired figurations even further afield. Thus as "negro" began to emerge as a more specialized subset of the much larger category of slave, its figurative translation signalled a transformation not only in how slavery and race were represented, but also in the relation between colonies and metropolis—a paradigm shift that errupted in the post-*Somerset* anxieties over slavery, and which helped motivated the fledgling United States' separation from Britain in 1776.[77] In this sense, the figurations surrounding the synecdochic "negro" in the 1760s and '70s stand as a synecdoche for the period as a whole.

# Chapter 3
# "Unpardonably Indecent"

That pain should promote and be the actual concomitant of pleasure, is a kind of physical solicism [sic] which the vulgar and ignorant cannot account for; but to those of a more refined and enlightened nature, there can nothing be more explanatory.
—Anon., *Modern Propensities: Or, An Essay on the Art of Strangling* (1792)

I like the blemishes, scars, emotions of the skin, of the flesh, of movement, everything that is human.
—Jean Paul Gaultier, *The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier* (2011)

## I. Introduction

The long title of Ottobah Cugoano's *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Commerce and Slavery of the Human Species* (1787) is typical of many Anglophone abolitionist texts from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Like contemporary works by James Ramsay, Thomas Clarkson and others, Cugoano's treatise against the slave trade attempts to represent the complex systems that overlapped to produce chattel slavery: the capture of West Africans in pastoral plains and burning villages; their sale to European merchants along the African coast; their transport across the Atlantic; the auctions in Caribbean and North American ports where they are sold to white slave owners; their systematic abuse in domestic settings and suffering on plantations; their labor producing metropolitan luxuries like sugar and tobacco; and their deaths through suicide, torture, disease, and violent rebellion. Cugoano's title situates these vast systems inside a single consciousness, where the paired "thoughts and sentiments" try to unite rationality and feeling, and redouble the description of the "evil and wicked" nature of commerce and captivity. These repetitions produce a kind of verbal excess that anticipates the text's own project of directing metropolitan attention to the excesses of colonial slavery—of asking readers to form their own "thoughts and sentiments" about the topics it describes. And as one of the cultural catalysts for the popular abolitionist verse

and sentimental modes of characterization I will spend the bulk of this chapter discussing, the reflective repetition and connection that Cugoano's text displays are of chief interest to me here.

*Thoughts and Sentiments* directs comparatively little attention to the details of the slave trade. Cugoano's compressed description of the Middle Passage relates:

> The stowing them in the holds of the ships like goods of burden, with closeness and stench, is deplorable; and, what makes addition to this deplorable situation, they are often treated in the most barbarous and inhuman manner by the unfeeling monsters of the Captains. And when they arrive at the destined port in the colonies, they are again stripped naked for the brutal examination of their purchasers to view, which, to many, must add shame and grief to their other woe, as may be evidently seen with sorrow, melancholy and despair marked upon their countenances. (290)

The simile in the passage's first clause anticipates the full transformation of persons into property that will be complete by the captives' "arriv[al] at the destined port in the colonies." This simile that compares the captives to "goods of burden," in turn, enables the representation of the slave ships' captains as "unfeeling monsters." The dehumanized "goods" register as the inverse of the "wicked" captains, whose description as "barbarous," "inhuman," and "unfeeling" perversely mirrors the "shame," "grief," and "other woe" felt by the newly enslaved upon whom they have exercised their brutality. The end of the passage makes this circuit of affective production recursive, as the suffering that "unfeeling" slave traders extract from the enslaved is now made manifest in the "sorrow, melancholy, and despair marked upon [slaves'] countenances." In this circuit, the captains and purchasers are powerful agents who are incapable of feeling, so that even their gazes are "brutal." The verbs with which these monsters torture

slaves make them the direct objects of violence: they are "stowed," "treated" barbarously, and "stripped naked." The slaves' vulnerability is emphasized in their explicit affective objectification: as their bodies are examined by the customers, the expressions "marked upon their countenances" make their shame visible, along with everything else.

What characterizes abolitionist poetry from, roughly, the years 1788 to 1807, is its emphasis on the bodies of the enslaved: the physical and affective experience of captivity and how it transforms and deforms the slaves who are transported across the Atlantic. The highly structured verses of this body of poems describe the vast institutions of the triangular trade—the exchange of things for persons in West Africa, the production of labor-intensive cash crops in the Caribbean and North America, and their consumption in the metropolis—institutions that James Ramsay's *Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (1784) describes as "something like a system." But unlike Ramsay, abolitionist poets emphatically embody this "system," making it visible in the scars, blood, and excrement it produces.

Indeed this verse so emphasizes visualizing the physical horrors of enslavement that some abolitionist poems prove unable to fully represent this pain and shame in their highly structured verses. Instead, prose footnotes provide a space to reflect and substantiate, as I will show with Thomas Nicholls's "Zury: Or the Sable Victims" (1789) and Hannah More's *Slavery: A Poem* (1788). These footnotes that frequent abolitionist poetry's textual margins draw attention to the peripheral nature of colonial chattel slavery as viewed by the metropolitan center. Metropolitans attempt not to view slavery; abolitionist poetry underscores its verse language with flat prose that enjoins its readers to behold this colonial horror. Indeed, this verse suggests, slavery and empire can only be represented as full "systems" via the figures of the humans that

populate it. These figures are mobilized to offer this critique by being represented as so emphatically exterior. In these texts, slave and master alike are primarily flesh. After all, the slave trader, the slave, the plantation owner, and the drinker of sugar-sweetened tea all share the fact of being embodied. They produce, they consume, and they excrete—and as they form nodes in a circuit of production and consumption, they are represented in a mode that partakes liberally of contemporary pornographic tropes.

Reading abolitionist poetry's highly legible figures has posed problems for critics for more than two hundred years. Because these enslaved figures embody the slave trade, they qualify as instances of the "personification of abstract ideas" that William Wordsworth condemns in the 1800 preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, where he complains that such personifications overpopulate the contemporary "deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse," and contrasts them with characters made of "flesh and blood" (1: xx). Wordsworth's hierarchy that prefers "flesh" to "persons" offers a more explicit articulation of his abolitionist contemporaries' valorization of broken bodies over social personhoods. But what the Wordsworthian position refuses to acknowledge is that, in the case of chattel slavery, personhood is already largely an "abstract idea." Colonial laws and the transatlantic slave trade rendered human beings in slavery as more laboring body than self, as more "flesh" than "person." For the enslaved, that is, being primarily "flesh" meant being a living machine, a deformation of self as artificial as the mechanical characters that Wordsworth dismisses.

This paradoxical overlaying of flesh with artificiality that I have just outlined persists, in the twentieth century, in second-wave feminist condemnations of pornography. Andrea Dworkin's *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (1979), for example, opens by comparing twentieth-century antipornography activists to abolitionist and former slave Frederick Douglass.

Like Douglass, Dworkin writes, women must stand up to "say, and mean, that a man who expected to succeed in whipping, must also succeed in killing" them (xiv). Dworkin's text conflates personhood with the struggle against being viewed as merely flesh. According to Dworkin, pornography's fleshly bodies are, in fact, merely personifications of patriarchal society's systematic abuse of women that have been packaged to produce maximum masturbatory pleasure.

For Dworkin, Catharine MacKinnon, and others, pornography is a spectacle of dehumanization that is meant to be enjoyed.

As Marcus Wood, Lynn Festa, and other literary critics have noticed, Dworkin's and MacKinnon's critique closely follows the contours of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century abolitionist rhetoric. In opposition to Wordsworth, abolitionism and antipornography activism both insist on putting the person back into the flesh to such a degree that the representation of bodies qua bodies becomes enough in itself to provoke disgust. Yet, I argue, Wood and Festa misread the abolitionist bodies they examine, mistaking what Festa calls later eighteenth-century texts' "redundant humanizing of the already human" for a naïve mimesis of the dehumanization of the slave trade (8). In the readings they present, abolitionist media merely offer eroticized depictions of racialized, commercial, and imperial abuse. Indeed, Wood goes so far as to argue that these representations exceed even the dangers that Dworkin associates with pornography, for abolitionism pretends it can dismantle the structures it represents: "the dirtiest thing the Western imagination ever did, and it does it compulsively still, is to believe in the aesthetically healing powers of empathetic fiction" (36). Thus for the interpretive camp whose contours I have just outlined abolitionist verse is reprehensible because, at best, it can only perpetuate the dehumanization it depicts.

But even as critics of abolitionist rhetoric continue to endorse Wordsworth's rejection of "personifications of abstract ideas," this position continues to pose an impediment to reading abolitionist verse. The agentive empathy that Wood seeks and the meaningful sentimentality whose lack Festa laments are both unavailable. As Andrea Henderson argues, there is no reason to reject surfaces, since "the depth model, which criticism has canonized as *the* Romantic view of [character], was, during the Romantic period itself, only one available model among many" (3). And, like Cugoano's description of slaves being "stripped naked for brutal examination," abolitionist poetry delights in surfaces. I argue that this is not because nonelite poetry of the period was necessarily shallow, or because abolitionist poetry was deluded about its ethical aims or prevented by metropolitan racism from engaging with the subjectivity of the enslaved. But its verses did provide a staging ground for the conflict between two of the "models" of subjectivity and character that circulated in the period, models whose permutations this dissertation has tracked from the earlier, exterior mode of characterization, and which it now confronts in Romanticism's supposedly more interior instantiations. These models can be dichotomized as characterization (which migrates inward), and personification (which remains exterior). Although Wordsworth and other Romantics would dismiss the conventionally artificial "poetic diction" and couplet structure that characterizes most abolitionist verse, these formal features facilitate its representation of slavery's vast and disgusting systems. The capaciousness of its conventional language and familiar forms allow it to rhyme pleasure with pain, and represent characters as both interior and exterior. Thus when abolitionist poetry deploys enslaved characters to personify slavery more broadly, it does so with a twist, characterizing the enslaved in such fleshly terms that it summons up an imagined body for the broad "system" of chattel

slavery. Its couplet structures balance inside with outside, meditating on this split as much when it renders legible the bodies of the enslaved as when it splits prose footnotes from verse text.

Although the texts themselves remain ambivalent about whether white and black characters have access to the same degree of interior depth, the larger work of enfolding these enslaved characters into the wider imperial project inaugurates them as "Britons," and thus works against this ambivalence. And, as I will show, the printed pages of abolitionist verse parallel this mix of distance and incorporation as poets work to connect their individual productions to larger antislavery and ameliorationist discourses. But read in the affective frame that Cugoano offers, as two nodes in the circulation of shame and its absence, the roles of the enslaved and of the slave traders are mutually reinforcing.[78] The captains' and sailors' abuse of their cargo produces "closeness and stench," and the "deplorable" odor of the holds then infects the nostrils of crew and cargo alike. Even a surface reading of the "close" smell of these "thoughts and sentiments" reveals lurid scenes of humiliation and torture. In fact, abolitionist poetry draws on the wider culture's racist division of black enslaved thinghood from white personhood that it then attempts to destroy. This division prompts the formation of the broader category of Briton, the category to which abolitionist poetry appeals, again and again, for its moral force.[79] Dehumanizing racism catalyzes the shame whose provocation, manifestation, and mimetic production are on display in the naked bodies and lascivious purchasers at the auction. Readers are interpellated as voyeurs precisely in order to further this relation, and are implicated in the national shame that is Britain's colonial slave trade as they are asked to recognize themselves in both the cruelty of the traders and the shame of the enslaved.

## II. Shitty Poetry and the Problem of Value

The emphasis that Cugoano's display of colonial slavery places on embodied affect guides much of the popular abolitionist verse that this chapter will discuss, verse that exploded onto the scene almost immediately after the publication of *Thoughts and Sentiments*. In particular, abolitionist verse insistently embodies the unenslaved as well as the enslaved. It displays white creoles inflicting pain on the bodies of the enslaved and consuming the spectacles of this pain. They eat the cash crops that slaves have raised—and as they eat, these poems suggest, metropolitan readers implicitly assert that "Sweet is humanity, all own it good, / But sweeter far is sugar, press'd with blood!" (Beck 44: 248). Thus, John Marjoribanks asks in *Slavery: An Essay in Verse* (1792), opposing the surface with the interior, "Can all Lucinda's outward charms inspire / A tender feeling, or a soft desire? / When ev'ry gem the cruel creature wears, / Was bought by streams of blood, and floods of tears" (27). These texts reframe colonial slavery as a sadomasochistic system, in which the "outward" sweetness of sugar is connected back to the "blood, and tears" of the slaves who have produced it. Sugar is literalized as torture. Thus Robert Merry's "The Slaves: An Elegy" (1788) asks, "Are drops of blood the horrible manure / That fills with luscious juice the teeming cane? / And must our fellow-creatures thus endure, / For traffick vile, the indignity of pain?" (72). In Merry's poem, "drops of blood" take over for the drops of sweat that might more conventionally be evoked in a poem about hard labor in a hot climate. Blood enriches the soil that has been depleted of iron by extractive monoculture.

Yet while the waste product of the slaves' blood signals that they are themselves being turned into fertilizing waste, this blood is a necessary "manure" that registers both that the bodies and lives of the enslaved must be consumed in order to fuel the system, and that metropolitans are ingesting these waste products along with their sugar. The carefully balanced couplets of late

eighteenth-century abolitionist verse are perfectly poised to reveal the connections that underscore seeming contradictions, which they use to sketch out broad systems that tie together enslaved and unenslaved, colony and metropole, outside and inside. As the emblem of these systems, Merry's sugar manifests this "indignity of pain." As Elaine Scarry explains, representations of individual pain must always confront the separation of exterior from interior. Pain, after all, exists within an "invisible geography": it is an "event happening within the interior of [a] person's body … that has no reality because it has not yet manifested itself" (3). But abolitionist poets use sugar to make pain legible. It transubstantiates imperial power into a consumable product, turning colonial suffering into metropolitan "deserts [*sic*], coffee, and tea" (Cowper, "Pity" *Poems* I:334). What this verse makes impossible to ignore is that saccharine pleasure contains not only blood and tears but also shit. Molasses and rum are rhymed with shit and synthesize waste that is meant to be consumed.

Indeed, as they draw attention to the human figures of slaves, traders, owners, and consumers, abolitionist poems reveals the power and vastness of the British Atlantic. Slavery views people as merely bodies, but abolitionist representations of slavery emphasize the bodily appetites and excretions of metropolitans as well. These poems multiply the tropes that Cugoano and other prose writers deploy, amplifying them for greater effect. For example, Marjoribanks's *Slavery* and Nicholls's "Zury" make whole scenes of the slave auctions that Cugoano's text so deftly compresses, while Merry's *Slaves* luxuriates in tropes of slaves' readable faces. This verse—overwhelmingly written by and for unenslaved white metropolitans—obsessively depicts the shameful scene of the slave trade that is largely elided in antislavery prose by Cugoano or his fellow former slave, Olaudah Equiano/Gustavus Vasa. But unlike the prose by these formerly enslaved writers, the poetry that black Atlantic writers helped inspire has been widely dismissed

by literary historians. Most abolitionist verse not only exists outside the canon, but continues to be excluded for what have been widely dismissed as its aesthetic failures, which Alan Richardson summarizes as its "vapid sentiment, stock description, stereotyped characters and situations, and patently false portrayals of Africa and of Afro-Caribbean slaves," which "frequently [presents] slaves, in the mode of the Wedgwood emblem, as helpless and supplicating, passively placing their fate in British hands" (x). Richardson parrots the characterological prejudices of Wordsworth, valorizing verbal originality over the representation of persons to such a degree that it almost seems he would prefer these "stereotyped characters and situations" to go away and take the filth and muck of slavery with them. It is true that abolitionist verse often characterizes slaves "as helpless and supplicating." But as Cugoano's description of slaves' objectification emphasizes, abolitionist verse often deploys this trope to highlight slaves' real-world commodification. Besides, these enslaved figures are rarely "helpless and supplicating"—instead, they self-destruct in a variety of agentive and disgusting ways. They are not Oroonokos, but they are also not Toussaint Louverture, who lead the 1791 slave rebellion in Saint Domingue that terrified Europe and launched the Haitian Revolution. As a class of poems written to direct attention to Britain's dominance of the slave trade in the North Atlantic and to agitate for ending this trade (but not to forecast apocalyptic rebellion), abolitionist poems are fundamentally concerned with problematizing the market-driven dehumanization they depict.

While there is plenty of violence in the verse I will be discussing, the enslaved figures of abolitionist verse end up inflicting upon themselves the violence that they intended to direct at their oppressors. They commit suicide in order to assault their owners' wealth. Such verse's emphatically mimetic objectification has been reproached by Festa and Wood, but I argue

instead that these texts are entirely conscious of their failure. Indeed, abolitionist poetry is structured around the absence of empathy, and it stages and restages spectacles of torture and unrepentance to implicate its own guilt and the guilt of its readers in the sins of colonial slavery that it depicts.[80]

Affect is central to abolitionist texts, so we would be wrong to read it as only secondary, as something that gets in the way of reading people. Instead, I insist, these texts formalize a new mode of literary subjectivity as they appeal to an affective personhood that their representations always already dismiss, focusing on the movements of the body to highlight the dehumanization of the unenslaved by their participation in slave systems. In appealing to humanity while proclaiming its foreclosure, abolitionist verse adopts the shocking rhetoric of contemporary pornography—which, as Lynn Hunt points out, emerged contemporaneously with abolition as a distinct "category of thinking, representation and regulation" (Hunt 19). In France, "politically motivated pornography helped to bring about the Revolution by undermining the legitimacy of the ancien régime as a social and political system" (301). Like French political pornography, Anglophone abolitionist verse seeks to provoke readerly affect by representing extreme physical spectacles among figures who embody institutions—in French pornography, the monarchy and the church; in Anglophone abolitionism, the plantation and the tea table.

Recognizing the correspondence between pornography and abolitionism, contemporary spokesmen for proslavery causes who attacked abolitionist writers did so in the language of earlier moralistic attacks on erotica. In 1784, Caribbean sugar planters described Ramsay's *Essay* in the *St. Christopher Gazette* as "cruel," "brutish," and "unpardonably indecent," and asserted that "Mr. Ramsay ought to be ashamed" of his representations (*An Answer to the Reverend James Ramsay* i-ii). The sugar planters recognized the genre to which contemporary abolitionist

texts belonged, and their response registers the discomfort such texts could provoke, even if they only spoke from wounded pride. Abolitionist verse *is* fundamentally indecent. It makes visible things we flinch at, and reveals the sugar colonies and the British metropolis as two ends of a digestive tract, a vast imperial body that painfully excretes what it had consumed with pleasure. The movements through this digestive system—from eating to digesting to excreting and re-ingesting—give form to larger conceptions of person, of nation, and of race that were circulating in the period. Just as the invisible system of digestion is manifested only as the mouth and the rectum, these texts use black and white, enslaved and free, colonial and metropolitan to sketch out the vast "system" of slavery.

Abolitionist verse, that is, digests the spectacle of slavery in order to reveal imperial digestion. Underscoring the waste of enslavement made it possible to view the "system of slavery"—for, as Sophie Gee notes, "waste matter" in the eighteenth century was "a sign that something important had happened, leaving a residue behind" (4). In this process that mingles procedure with product, waste with digestion, character becomes intermixed with personification. Like the characters of the Anglophone communities participating in these slave trades and consuming these texts, character extends itself to comprehend both sides of the inner/outer binary. For the first time, the category of the slave is initially and explicitly sketched as uncomfortably subhuman, only to present the category of the master as subhuman as well. In these texts, human figures are always suspended uncomfortably between abstraction and flesh. These poems insist that the figures within them are all things—and then insist that readers who want to re-personify the dehumanized must start with themselves. The planters of St. Christopher recognized the potential power of these abolitionist texts that dwelt on the indecency of slavery. As I argue, Anglophone abolitionist poetry's pornographic rhetoric turned the strategies of

literary representation to the task of helping to bring about the outlawing of the British and American slave trades in 1807 and 1808.

## III. Humoral Transformations

The digestive system of slavery partakes of contemporary figures of economic circulation that, in turn, draw on humoral models of the human body. Indeed, Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* is quite explicit about anatomizing the circulation of goods, currency, and persons between metropolis and its colonies on the model of the human body. In this economic cardiovascular system, writes Smith, Great Britain's monopoly on the trade of its North American and Caribbean colonies "resembles one of those unwholesome bodies … which, upon that account, are liable to many dangerous disorders":

> A small stop in that great blood-vessel, which has been artificially swelled beyond its natural dimensions, and through which an unnatural proportion of the industry and commerce of the country has been forced to circulate, is very likely to bring on the most dangerous disorders upon the whole body politic. (654)

Smith's 1776 worries about a "rupture with the colonies" (ibid.) would prove to be perfectly well founded within the year, his figure of the tightly drawn circuits of power and profit forecasting a bloody explosion of the kind that the abolitionist verse of a generation later would remain entranced by. Elsewhere, Smith describes the very labor of these colonial economies as a kind of infernal juicer: "whatever work [a slave] does beyond what is sufficient to purchase his own maintenance, can be squeezed out of him by violence only, and not by any interest of his own" (418). Extractive labor is "squeezed by violence" from the enslaved worker in a process that

resembles the pressing of cane in one of the intermediate steps between plant and sugar. In fact, as James Grainger's *Sugar-Cane* (1764) reminds, an "impruden[t] or sleep[y]" slave who left an "incautious" hand too long on the "steel-cas'd cylinders" of the press might be drawn into the works and ground to death, "if a hatchet do not immediately strike off the entangled member, or the mill be not instantly put out of the wind" (95-6: 3.168-7 and n).[81] (Crucially, Granger levies this caution in a prose footnote—as though anticipating Wordsworth's anxieties about overblown poetic diction, which cannot countenance "flesh and blood.") Read through Grainger, Smith's "squeezed" plantation labor threatens to maim or even kill the enslaved worker.

The circulatory system whose image Smith conjures is indebted, in turn, to Galenic medical theories of the circulation of humors that helped explain the movement of minds and bodies as much as Smith's blood helped explain the movement of markets. Such theories began to lose their popularity among Britons by the Restoration, but their echoes persisted in figurative use well into the eighteenth century. In Smith's metaphor of commercial and political power as blood, for instance, the blood's figurative potential allows it to carry multiple elements through its systems, just as Galenic blood had served as the medium for the sanguine, choleric, melancholic, and phlegmatic spirits.[82] Human bodies were thought to produce humors in accordance with diet, age, climate, and time of day; although physicians aimed at keeping patients' humors in quadripartite balance, imbalances could occur and were to be treated by various ingestions and purgings.

In this insistently anatomical framework, the hero of Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* melancholically reflects on the probability that the Surinam slave system will kill him: "For the most part, his time was passed in melancholy thoughts and black designs. He considered, if he should do this deed, and die either in the attempt or after it, he left his lovely Imoinda a prey, or

at best a slave to the enraged multitude; his great heart could not endure that thought" (67). Here, the explanatory power of humors theory propels the omniscience of Behn's narrator, which possesses mastery over even the "melancholy thoughts and black designs" revolving in Oroonoko's brain. In this situation, a Restoration reader would understand, the thoughts of revenge and suicide are not merely the results of Oroonoko's situation, but also the products of his liver, his blood, and his spleen. Melancholy bile produces "black designs," and tantalizingly seems to suggest that Oroonoko's dark skin may be yet another manifestation of this melancholy.[83] Yet by the end of the novella, Oroonoko has stopped being described as "melancholy," as though the bodily torture of his execution has drawn off this excess humor, and transferred it to the narrator instead: "his discourse was sad; and the earthy smell about him was so strong that I was persuaded to leave the place for some time (being myself very sickly, and very apt to fall into fits of dangerous illness upon any extraordinary melancholy)" (72). Even as he is dying, Oroonoko's "sad[ness]" is now dwarfed by the narrator's "extraordinary melancholy," contracted from the "earthy smell" of the slave's decaying body. [84] The humors discourse here helps sketch out an affective circuit between sympathy's object and subject.

The medical treatment of humoral imbalances performed a kind of affective arithmetic. Because "spirits were produced in the liver by the 'concoction of food,'" a quantity of melancholy could be nullified, for example, by the ingestion of a sufficiently sanguine-producing food (Bamborough 54). Furthermore, as anthropologist Sidney Mintz explains, early modern medical theory was heavily indebted to ninth-century Arabic practice, in which sugar took the therapeutic forms of *shurbas*, *rubbs*, and *julābs*, as well as "lohochs, decoctions, infusions, fomentations, powders, concoctions, electuaries, hieras, trypheras (aromatic electuaries), theriacs, etc" (60). Sugar, in particular, was considered an effective treatment for the "coldness" of

melancholy, and an acceptable one for melancholic "dryness." Thus although Behn's Oroonoko purges his melancholy by dying, a Renaissance-era physician might have elicited a comparable effect by feeding Oroonoko a quantity of sugar.

The fact that sugar (the product of enslaved labor) could cure melancholy (one of the products of enslavement) instances one of the many strange affective links and circuitous bodily ironies that abolitionist verse so eloquently communicates. But sugar was rhymed with pain in contemporary medical treatments as well, long after the decline of humors theory. William Forster's *Treatise on the Various Kinds and Qualities of Foods* (1738) explains that brown sugar's "oily Nature … makes it more adhesive to, and abide longer upon the Palate; it is also more opening, and therefore best to use in Purging Syrups, and in Clysters" (Foster 66). The applications Forster enumerates perpetuate the humors language, even if the theory itself is no longer entirely taken seriously. "Clysters," in particular, were an important part of the complicated eighteenth-century management of feces. For instance, the molasses from which brown sugar is derived takes a star turn in a report of "A Case of Obstinate Constipation of the Bowels" from 1795, in which a "costive" patient was treated with "enemas of warm water, sweet oil [i.e., olive oil], and molasses, to be administered every two hours, until his bowels should be emptied" (Duncan and Duncan 316-17).[85] As they injected these global commodities into their bodies and expelled them again, eighteenth-century patients inscribed themselves into the commercial circuits of consumption and disposal that were best emblematized by colonial chattel slavery.

Indeed, abolitionist rhetoric frequently depicted the transubstantiation of slaves into sugar and molasses. As Grainger suggests, the notion that sugar might be made not merely by but *from* humans was an invaluable tool in the abolitionist's rhetorical arsenal. James Gillray's engraving

"Barbarities in the West-Indias" (Fig. 1) depicts a slave being boiled to death in a vat of sugar. Gillray the satirist delights in images of monstrosity, figuring the white plantation owner or employee using the handle end of a whip to force a slave into a vat of boiling cane juice. Only four heavily crosshatched limbs remain above the surface, with fingers and toes extended as though to provide visual exclamation points for the scene.


Figure 1. James Gillray. "Barbarities in the West-Indias."

The digits signify the slave's dying agony—but read from the perspective of a metropolitan audience that had already been addressed by several years of abolitionist poetry and political agitation, the fingers and toes evoke the perception that such representations of colonial slavery were exaggerations. They also evoke the typographical index figure (☜) that eighteenth-century typographers still occasionally used to introduce annotations, and that readers scribbled in margins (Parkes 61). The enslaved figure's fingers and toes really point at nothing at

all, but their presence nonetheless accentuates the caption at the bottom of the frame. Although the gaze of the creole remains fixed on the slave's black digits, a reader accustomed to the tropes of abolitionist poetry knows to look to the footnote instead. It reproduces a description of slave torture related in William Wilberforce's 1791 petition to Parliament: "Among numberless other acts of Cruelty daily practised, an English Negro Driver, because a young Negro thro' Sickness was unable to work, threw him into a Copper of Boiling-Sugar-Juice, & after keeping him steeped over head & Ears for above Three Quarters of an hour in the boiling liquid, whipt him with such severity, that it was near Six Months before he recoverd [*sic*] of his Wounds & Scalding." As with Nicholls's reference to Sparrman, Gillray singles out this text as a footnote to the larger image, providing a more fully realized narrative to flesh out the static scene presented above. It answers questions about the events depicted that the image cannot—although it does not explain how this "young Negro" remained alive after having been "steeped head & Ears" in boiling liquid. Meanwhile, the sun-burnt creole (as colored in this copy of the engraving, at least) who forces the black body down is pictured growling through barely opened lips: "'What you can't work because you're not well.'—but I'll give you a warm bath to cure your Ague, &c, a Curry-coming afterwards to put Spunk into you." The speaker's threats figure the slave as a horse, to be "curry-comb[ed]" in restorative punishment. Like a horse, the slave is not afforded speech, and it is impossible to distinguish whether the slave driver's interjection ("What you can't work because you're not well") is a rhetorical question or a mocking repetition of the slave's own point.

Indeed, the horrifying image of sugar's production is imbricated with the racialization that gives form to the body parts hanging along the back wall on the right side of the frame. This wall seems to display the remains of other such treatments—small mammals, a bird, and a black-

skinned human hand and pair of ears. To whom did the hand belong? Whose were the ears? Gillray's print offers no explanation, merely offering up the bodily fragments as evidence for what white slave-driving cruelty may do. Depending on the viewer's perspective, the limbs Gillray exhibits are either a mockery of the exaggerated claims of abolitionists—or an illustration of real-world ills, a representation whose shocking content is in keeping with the vast majority of abolitionist discourse.

Both readings—acquiescent to slavery and flamboyantly abolitionist—are equally indifferent to the perspective of the slave whose body is only partially contained in the sugar vat. The slave's body has no face, no gender. His or her dark-skinned limbs primarily focalize their former labor power from when the slave could still work. The image readily admits what Wood asserts—that "for each slave the experience [of slavery] was unrepeatable, irreducible and unreproduceable: all human suffering exists beyond the vulgarity of simulacrum" (8). Indeed, the dying slave's experience seems to be deliberately foreclosed, and attention diverted to the red face of the torturer instead. This face, and the blue and white trousers in this hand-tinted engraving, evoke the colors of the British, American, and French flags all at once, even as the bubbling brown liquid of the cane juice evokes the future enemas and clysters in which some of this molasses and sugar may be employed. The brute thus shamefully personifies the French and Anglophone sugar plantations whose horrors contemporary abolitionists sought to expose. Together, the dying slave and slave driver are identified as coproducers of the sugar whose refinement fills the frame. According to the abolitionists, sugar's production not only necessitated that the enslaved be rendered refuse, but that the very products extracted from their death were best used by metropolitans seeking to expel shit from their bodies.

## IV. Externalizations: Race, Pornography, Footnotes

Phillis Wheatley's "On Being Brought from Africa to America" anticipates Gillray's deflation of the "refinement" of sugar. Reflecting that her own conversion to Christianity mirrors the conversion of sugarcane into sucrose, Wheatley's speaker declares that "Negroes, black as Cain / May be refin'd, and join th'angelick train" (18). Deploying the same structural attention to ambiguity that would later flower in abolitionist verse, the poem's final couplet has been described as her rejection of "the racist attitudes of her white contemporaries," which "propriety kept a black female slave from openly making" (Levernier 25). As cane is refined into sucrose, its refuse is burned to heat the boiling cane juice. Enslaved laborers, too, are consumed in the conversion of plants to edible energy. In the frame that abolitionist poetry constructs, Wheatley's poem retrospectively speaks to the notion that slaves' body parts, blood, and shit, are cooked into this sugar. Thus, the abolitionists suggest, when British metropolitans take refined sugar in their tea, they commit cannibalism and coprophagia.

This ingestion and excretion is not pornographic in Wheatley's poem, but elsewhere in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries pornography and antislavery go hand in hand. Set against Marjoribanks's poem, for instance, Wheatley's "Cain" seems to be about to be transformed into one of the "canes" of a flagellation pamphlet. Of course, Wheatley's "black as Cain" evokes the mark of Cain that was sometimes thought of as encapsulated in dark skin, and was sometimes also regarded as proof that chattel slavery was divinely sanctioned (see my discussion in Chapter 1). But by unexpectedly privileging the body's "black" surface as proof of its "refined" inner state, Wheatley's poem parallels the complex interplay between interior and exterior that was on display in the emergent discourse of pornography. Indeed, I argue that, as

the discursive fields of pornography and abolitionist poetry drew closer together, shit—as a substance that moves so easily from inner to outer—became one of the central tropes animating literature's pornographic discussions of the transatlantic trade and the plantation system.

Sometimes, as in Cugoano's "closeness and stench," this shit is implicit, but at other times it is very explicit. Its stench infests Marjoribanks's *Slavery*, which describes a plantation mistress punishing one of her enslaved servants by forcing the slave to drink a glass of rum mixed with feces. Whether smelled or smothered, these scenes of coprophilia and coprophagia participate in tropes outlined in the Marquis Donatien Alphonse François de Sade's *120 Days of Sodom* (written 1785), whose characters delight in the ingestion of excrement. Surface and interior get all mixed up when Sade's Duclos narrates her experience with clients and abusers who like to eat her shit, which they discuss as though she is a chicken and her shit eggs. One, a pedophile priest whom she encounters as a girl, sticks his fingers up her ass and then declares, "the chicken is about to lay" (377). Later, she becomes the mistress to a man named d'Aucourt, who sets her up on a diet of so "immense [a] quantity of breast of chicken, of boned fowl presented in every imaginable fashion" that she has "two bowel movements per day, and the stools were very soft, very sweet, somewhat small but, so d'Aucourt maintained, of so exquisite a taste which could not be obtained by ordinary nourishment" (394). Later, Duclos relates how she relieved herself on a plate "of white porcelain" for d'Aucourt's friend, the banker d'Erville, who "picked up the plate, ecstatically inhaled the voluptuous product it contained, handled, kissed, sniffed the turd," and finally stuck "the pretty little egg, all bright and new, which I had just laid for him," into his mouth (397). Duclos has consumed so much chicken that now she is a chicken herself, laying the "eggs" that d'Aucourt and d'Erville then eat with such pleasure. As

though by magic, her shit doesn't smell or taste like chicken shit—instead, it is "very sweet," as though she excretes sugar in place of feces.

A parallel relation, I suggest, controls the ways that abolitionist verse figures metropolitans' ingestion of the excrement and other bodily effluvia contained in sucrose. By eating the sweetened bodies of slaves, unenslaved metropolitans began to embody slavery, and started to produce excrement that recalled the slave system's own transformation of people into waste. For Dworkin, pornography, too, makes abstract "systems" sensible, and reveals the inherent violence of misogynist society. Frances Ferguson addresses Sade's late eighteenth-century pornography and concludes, like Dworkin, that Sadean pornography gives form to shapelessly omnipresent cultural forces. It is utilitarian, "presenting the organization and hierarchization that a rationalized account of society involves" (Ferguson, *Pornography* 31). In particular, Ferguson argues, Sadean pornography dwells on thinghood, representing persons as remarkably animate objects. Thus, "Sadean pornography does not merely consist in treating persons as though they were things, mere objects to be subordinated by the Sadean 'sovereign individuals,' in Bataille's phrase. Or rather, it involves treating persons as though they were things—and as though things were especially volatile entities, the materialism of a relentlessly idealist world in which things ceased to exist when people left the room" (85-86). Presence becomes a matter of attention, and things return to "existence when people" return once more. Described by Ferguson as "objects of infinite politeness [that] speak only when spoken to," Sadean objects evoke the idealized and dehumanized slaves that for which John Saffin yearns, as discussed in my introduction. But these Sadean objectified people are nevertheless "especially volatile entities," their existence always open to scrutiny. These metaphysical and epistemological anxieties persist in abolitionist poetry's attempts to reveal colonial chattel

slavery's transatlantic dehumanization to metropolitan readers. It was as though only the revelation that sugar was shit had the power to make the condition of slavery intelligible.

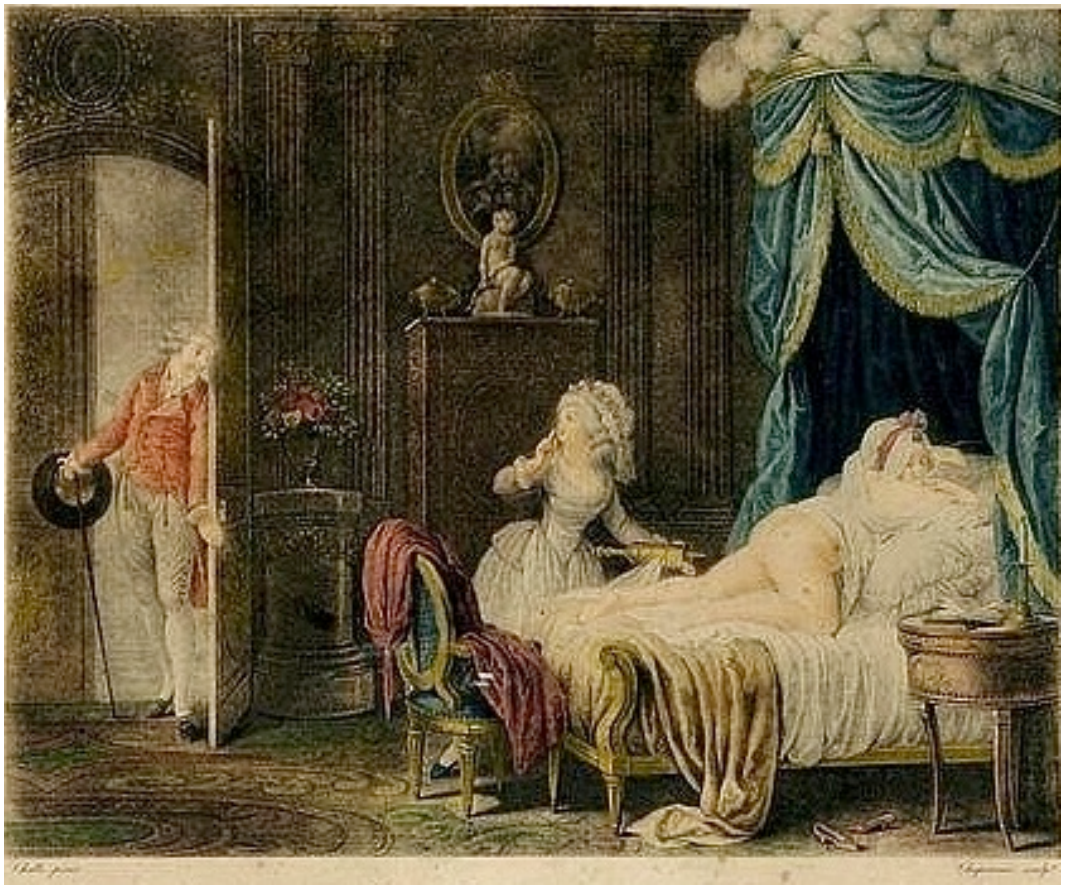

Figure 2. Alexandre Chaponnier (probably a pseudonym), "La Soubrette officieuse,"

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, ingestion and confinement were two ways of figuring colonial slavery; Michel Foucault suggests confinement and slavery offered an especially exciting charge in contemporary erotic representation. Thus, sadism "is a massive cultural fact which appeared precisely at the end of the eighteenth century, and which constitutes one of the greatest conversions of Western imagination: unreason transformed into delirium of the heart, madness of desire, the insane dialogue of love and death in the limitless presumption of appetite" (210). According to Foucault, sadism joins insanity on the Enlightenment's underbelly, offering "madness" and "delirium" in place of the period's relentless focus on rationality. By

highlighting these ironic undercurrents to dominant discourses, Foucault's description of sadism joins abolitionist verse in making the repressed visible. Thus,

> Sadism appears at the very moment that unreason, confined for over a century and reduced to silence, reappears, no longer as an image of the world, no longer as a *figura*, but as language and desire. And it is no accident that sadism, as an individual phenomenon bearing the name of a man, was born of confinement and, within confinement, that Sade's entire *oeuvre* is dominated by the images of the Fortress, the Cell, the Cellar, the Convent, the inaccessible Island which thus form, as it were, the natural habitat of unreason. It is no accident, either, that all the fantastic literature of madness and horror, which is contemporary with Sade's *oeuvre*, takes place, preferentially, in the strongholds of confinement. (210)

Resisting the language of direct causation, Foucault nonetheless sketches a connection between captivity—"the Fortress, the Cell, the Cellar, the Convent," and, I might add, the slave ship and the colonial plantation—and the identification of a specific form of pleasure derived from others' pain. There is unfortunately no evidence that Sade read abolitionist Anglophone verse, nor that these poets read Sade; but as Foucault's observation emphasizes, the relative powerlessness of those held captive "in the strongholds of confinement" seems to catalyze the perverse joy of the noncaptives who behold them. In this poetry and in pornography alike, gross inequalities of power produce pain for one party, and pleasure for the other, thus affectively and even erotically connecting torturer to tortured.

Thus in an anatomical manifestation of confinement, there is a wealth of late eighteenth-century enema erotica. Enemas and clysters provoke feces to explode, orgasmically, from the confinement of an impacted bowel; and rather like the way sugar could be put to use to produce

shit, shit was employed by contemporary pornographers to help display and provoke desire. Thus in an eighteenth-century French engraving, "La Soubrette officieuse" ("Sauciness Unawares," Fig. 2), a servant beckons to her mistress's suitor to come through the door and into the bedroom, the better to witness the mistress's bared bottom as the enema is prepared. The voyeuristic suitor's pleasure in looking is paramount in this scene, where the naked woman's vulva that verges on visibility (just barely hidden by her right thigh and buttock) mirrors the yet-unseen shit that the maid's clyster syringe will soon extract. Because they externalized the secret contents of the body, feces were perfectly eligible for eroticization in at least some eighteenth-century circles.

While feces make a quasi-erotic appearance in at least one antislavery poem (as I will discuss below), the externalization of the body's interior in abolitionist poetry provokes horror more often than desire. Poems from before the 1780s that had mentioned the slave trade did so in an imperial frame that the newer abolitionist poetry repudiated by focusing on slavery almost exclusively.[86] Thomson's *Seasons* visualizes how a shark, trailing a slave ship across the Atlantic, "dyes the purple seas / With gore, and riots in the vengeful meal" of a slave's carcass that has been thrown overboard ("Summer" 97: 10013-14). The speaker of William Cowper's "Task" declares "I would not have a slave to till my ground" and "I had much rather be myself the slave / And wear the bonds, than fasten them on him" (2: 46). In such long poems, the representation of slavery is episodic, part of a larger story of self or empire, but not the subject itself. By contrast, the titles of these newer antislavery long poems—like *The Sable Victims* or *Slavery, An Essay in Verse*—announced a much more particular focus. These texts didn't merely contain enslaved figures, like the earlier material I've talked about did. Instead, "slavery" and its "victims" were the whole show.

One of these animating poems, Nicholls's "Zury: Or the Sable Victims," describes the arrival in Barbados of a family of Angolan captives, whose patriarch is Zury.[87] The poem's title emphasizes its antislavery position, but the scene at the slave market in Barbados affords the speaker two specific offenses to catalogue: there is too much nudity, and branding people is bad. The episode is framed as a lewd spectacle for those who have come to buy slaves. But the customers are described only secondarily, refracted through the shame of the enslaved people on the auction block:

> Bare as my palm, upon the mart they stood,
> Chaste as our Britons, modest, and as good,
> Trembling they stood, and oft would turn aside
> To hide from sight what modesty must hide,
> For such a state was dreadful to abide.
> The daughter murm'ring to the mother's sighs
> In all the agony that fear supplies. (35-36)

Forging a connection between British subjects and Angolan slaves, the speaker declares that Zury and his family are as "modest" "as our Britons." But the revelation of this modesty in their naked bodies takes a peculiar form. They are "bare as my palm," a phrase that describes their relatively hairless bodies, but also seems to accentuate their vulnerability.[88] Like a raised hand, their bodies seem to ask for mercy—or in this case, for relief from the gaze of the purchasers. But unlike hands, which are socially acceptable to display unclothed in public, the lines contrast with the slaves' naked bodies, naming their exposed genitals indirectly. They "turn aside / To hide from sight what modesty would hide." That is, the verse refuses to catalogue their bodies

explicitly, rejecting the tropes of erotic prints (such as Fig. 2), and registering instead the captives' shame-faced attempts to divert the gazes of those who stare at them.

Were the exposed figures not compared to "our Britons," their nakedness might register as savagery, but the comparison renders the captive's nudity a manifestation of their modesty, chastity, and vulnerability. This vulnerability is especially gendered and sexualized, as the mother's and daughter's "fear" seems to demonstrate. In a sense, the poem represents the slaves' exposure to public view in order to display their "modesty." This comparatively mild psychological torture (that is, humiliation) must be effected so that their "goodness" (and the European creoles' corresponding sin) can be viewed. In the representational logic of the poem, torture produces not only proof of humanity, but humanity itself.

Nicholl's footnote clarifies that African women endorse the same codes of chastity and dislike of being ogled by strangers as British women: "Dr. Sparman [*sic*], in his voyage to the Cape, gives a particular instance of modesty in a very young Hottentot virgin: the Doctor taking a liberty with her, which she thought more serious of than was expected, she drew a knife, and by her looks and actions seemed determined to be hostile, if he presumed beyond the rules prescribed by modesty" (35n). Here, "Daughter" and "mother" are naked, but the text weaves in references to another African woman, a "Hottentot virgin," to emphasize just how strange these exposed bodies are. The naked women on display—the view of the slave auction has been foreshortened to only its female members—make visible the savagery of the supposedly civilized European creoles who buy them.

Such footnotes to *Zury* bring in other sources that attest to the truth of Nicholls's descriptions, but they also summon an imaginary Africa, an orientalized realm whose inhabitants generally welcome the "liberties" of strange, clothed European men. The footnote's "Doctor"

registers surprise that the fantasy is just a fantasy when by her "looks and actions" the young woman declines his advances. There are social rules "prescribed by modesty" in Africa after all, even if these rules are enforced paradoxically: at knife point, by near-naked women.[89] By bringing in this example, the poem seems determined to bolster its realism by the enfolding of another text. In this moment where Zury and his family are devoid of textiles, the text cloaks itself in references to other texts. Far from the naked truth, it patches together its spurious mimesis from other sources. At times, these footnotes offer their authors a rhetorical persona that seems not to fit inside the versified main text. For example, Hannah More's *Slavery: A Poem* (1788) follows up a reference to "sharp iron wound[ing a captive's] inmost soul" with a footnote that insists, "This is not said figuratively" (13: 173n). The verse text cannot reject the metaphor that animates it; only the footnote can cultivate this counterdiscourse of literal meaning. The footnotes are like the contrasting interior facing of a garment, padding out to make it more wearable, even though their participation in the text is less visible from the outside.

But although Nicholls's verse emphasizes the particular sexual vulnerability of Zury's wife and their daughter, the text soon queers its exploration of weakness, showing Zury's penetration by the slave driver Fungus and slave owner Mundungus, who brand him:

> This man of terrors saw the purchase made,
> And, as is custom in this cruel trade,
> Pluck'd forth the branding tool from flames and spark,
> And Zury's shoulder bears his master's mark;
> The red-hot iron, when the wound was made,
> In blood came hissing from the shoulder-blade,
> Scatt'ring its sanguine tears, as if it felt

More than the wretch that the impression dealt.

With manly fortitude he bore the smart,

Nor seem'd to sigh, nor yet the least to start. (37)

The passage is set up as an archetype for how free-born people become chattels. We are told that branding "is custom in this cruel trade." The impression of the brand itself is described twice. Proleptically collapsed the first time, no sooner does Fungus grab the branding iron, than "Zury's shoulder bears his master's mark." Then the poem switches to the past tense to describe the moment of branding that it has already declared to have happened, so that the "red-hot iron … came hissing from the shoulder-blade." By not describing in the present tense the actual moment when the brand hits Zury's flesh, the lines echo the ambiguity of just when Zury and his family became slaves. Was it when they were kidnapped in Angola? When they were forced onboard Captain Redman's ship? When they arrived at the market in Barbados? Or only now, as they are sold? By describing the present retrospectively, the poem seems to assert that it does not matter as much *when* Zury was first enslaved, since he is *now and irrevocably* property.

Another transfer of meaning happens, this time partaking of pornographic tropes that help transfer agency from subject to object, when the branding iron seems to bleed. The "wound" and "blood" recall the overblown metaphors of penetration in John Cleland's explicitly pornographic *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1749), for example. But while winking at this language, Nicholls's poem maintains that the brand is just a brand, whose "sanguine tears" that recall the sweat-like blood of Merry's *Slaves* are the humoral opposite of the melancholy slave. These drops of blood express feelings that stoic Zury cannot, and which hard-hearted Fungus is actually incapable of feeling. Thus, as the poem asserts, Fungus's heart is actually harder than iron. Meanwhile, this weeping branding iron seems to lament having been turned into an emblem of

enslavement. Its "mark" that Zury's shoulder "bears" cuts in several directions at once. First, as we know, Zury's body is *bare*. Second, Zury "bears" his enslavement, a condition that makes him a chattel—etymologically, at least, akin to a beast of burden, bearing heavy loads like an ox.[90] Finally, carrying the mark of Mundungus's ownership makes Zury's enslavement legible, his flesh having been stamped with an inscription like a book is marked with its author's name. In this case, the authors of Zury's new identity (Zury-the-Slave) are Mundungus and Fungus, who have thus laid claim to his body.

Zury refuses to "sigh, nor yet the least to smart." As it describes him repressing his emotions, the poem implies that he has feelings on the inside—he feels his shoulder, but keeps his more figurative feelings locked up in his mind or soul or heart. This interiority is unrepresented, present only in its absence. But, the poem suggests, even though Zury's new identity has been printed on the surface of his body, his character has an invisible, interior value. Not so Fungus. Fungus is a "wretch" and a "man of terrors," his name a record of his decayed moral character. Zury becomes a slave as a result of being sold and branded. But this moment of Zury's enslavement also produces a split between two registers of identity—and, in the space of the literary text, two modes of character: the exterior, social person, and the interior of the psychologized individual. This split, moreover, is mapped onto a dichotomy between white and black, free and enslaved, metropolitan center and colonial periphery. But, as with the eating/shitting circuit I have already discussed, these binaries are more mixed up than they seem.

Reflecting on the same violent commodification that fascinated Nicholls, Marjoribanks wrote *Slavery* during his time in Jamaica. He explains that the poem began as a collection of "facts and observations" that were "meant only at the time to give vent to the painful feelings of my heart, excited by the distressful scenes which surrounded me" (5). Marjoribanks's claims to

verisimilitude were attacked by proslavery writers. For example, R. E. Holder execrates abolitionists in "Fragments of a Poem in Consequence of Reading Marjoribanks's *Slavery*," claiming that "no late posterity, nor distant age / will be thus shamefully deceiv'd" (20) about the tableaus of slavery that the poem claims to depict. Such an attack on the plantation system as Marjoribanks's probably could not have avoided the vitriol of those whose wealth and political power was built on this system. But *Slavery* invites charges of inaccuracy, not least through the luridness of its details, which include a torture device designed to break fingers, and an enslaved man's execution via being eaten alive by ants.

Indeed, as it lists horrors, Marjoribanks's *Slavery* seems unable to express its author's "painful feelings" except by describing "distressful scenes," so that its portrait of Jamaica, and of "slavery" is all the more unsettling for being so undigested. Its interpretation of slavery as horrible is bound up in its representations of horror. It locates these horrors, for example, in the fright of the newly enslaved on the West African coast, as they are brought on board the slave ship:

> What horrid fears must haunt th' untutor'd mind
> (Too *just*, alas!) of torments yet behind!
> On shocking feasts must savage fancy brood,
> Where pale Europeans prey on human food!
> His bloody limbs, yet quiv'ring on the board,
> Glut the keen stomach of his ruthless lord!
> Or on the shrine of vengeful gods he lies;
> And, in atonement for a Christian, dies!
> Yes! every slave must yield a master food,

Who slowly fattens on his vital blood!

Blest, if at once his cruel tortures ceas'd,

And gave white cannibals a short liv'd feast!

Yes! Afric's sons must stain the bloody shrine!

But all those victims, Avarice, are *thine!* (8)

The verse tilts into the subjunctive as it tries to imagine the inaccessible "fears" of the captives. Having gestured at the terror that West Africans "must" feel for Europeans, the passage goes on to describe one such hypothetical vision, in which slaves are fattened for slaughter, to "g[i]ve white cannibals a short-liv'd feast!" (The feast is as soon over as the life of the slave being consumed.) As I described in Chapter 1, Olaudah Equiano describes how, as a child on the Middle Passage, he experienced similar cannibal terrors. Equiano writes that he worried of being "eaten by those white men with horrible looks, red faces, and loose hair" (55). Approaching the slave ship's crew as monstrously Other, Equiano's description asserts the monstrosity of the slave trade without having to say so explicitly. It is merely his childish misapprehension, after all, that chattel slavery was carried out by cannibals—a vision that Equiano's authorial persona can conjure without having to make this luridly abolitionist accusation himself.

Marjoribanks seems to gesture towards Equiano's example in a footnote: "The general idea of the new Negroes seems to be, that they are to be devoured" (8n). The verse describes this "general idea" at a remove from the earlier hypothetical frame. The clauses detailing the slaves' "bloody limbs, yet quiv'ring on the board" are punctuated as an independent clause—although, ambiguously, their syntax parallels the earlier description of what "shocking feasts must savage fancy brood." Half real, half fanciful, this meal flirts on the border of accusing slavers of consuming the bodies of their captives. As a scene of consumption, the passage further mixes the

consumer and consumed, delivering a slave's "bloody limbs" to the "keen stomach of his ruthless lord /… /who slowly fattens on his vital blood." In a final transformation, the cannibal Europeans are declared to be "Avarice" incarnate, whose appetite sacrifices "Afric's sons" on its "bloody shrine." In the face of insinuations that chattel slavery might be justified by the supposed barbarity, paganism, or even cannibalism of West Africans, Marjoribanks insists that this institution displays, instead, the inhumanity of British merchants and their consumers who drive the demand for slave-grown sugar.

In what is perhaps the most horrifying revelation in *Slavery*: *An Essay in Verse*, an enslaved person is ordered by a plantation-owning woman to consume a glass of rum mixed with feces. This moment is disgusting not least because "rum" and "human excrement" are two of the symbols used in abolitionist verse to emblematize the enslaved, so that "swallow[ing]" this glass constitutes the slave's own forced act of cannibalism. In a description of the cruelties of slave mistresses, the speaker asserts "Nay, well I know a proud revengeful dame, / Who gave a dose too loathsome here to name" (17). The accompanying footnote then explains that "A lady of my acquaintance caused a slave, in presence of her family and strangers, to swallow a glass of rum mixed with human excrement" (ibid.).[91] But the incident is furthermore terrible for how precariously it is suspended between the verse and the prose footnotes, as though it cannot be fully categorized as either poem or explanatory fact. The speaker describes the offending slave mistress as a "lady," a polite term that is completely inadequate to describe the deviser of this particular torture, who then carried it out "in presence of her family and strangers." The "dose" is exiled to the footnote because it cannot be "name[d]" in the verse. Even so, the domestic audience of "family and strangers" alike accentuates the uncanniness of the scene, where that which is usually hidden from sight is made visible (and tasteable and smellable), before being

ingested again. Taking place amidst the "family," this punitive ingestion mixes up the familiar and the radically strange, even as it draws a dividing line between whites (who have the racialized power to "cause" torture) and blacks (who are compelled to drink shit).

Marjoribanks's "loathsome" note recalls parallel moments in abolitionist verse where the reality of chattel slavery exceeds the representational capacity of the poetic text and must be exiled to the margins of the page. As with Nicholls's exploration of Sparrman's incident of the relatively unclothed South African women, and the explanatory text bolstering Gillray's visual satire, these footnotes carve out a textual space for the emotional experience of horror and shame in abolitionist poetry. Certain subjects and feelings, these footnotes suggest, cannot be represented in verse, and so precipitate out as prose. A particularly striking example comes from Hannah More's *Slavery, A Poem* (1788), whose influence resonates within Marjoribanks's poem. More's *Slavery* sets out to expose some of the truths of the slave trade, thus tiptoes a line between abolitionism's familiar but moderately inflated figures and the speaker's harrowing, first-person investigation of the trade. The scene in question describes an unnamed captive on the Middle Passage:

> Where the fierce Sun darts vertical his beams,
> And thirst and hunger mix their wild extremes;
> When the sharp iron* wounds his inmost soul,
> And his strain'd eyes in burning anguish roll;
> Will the parch'd negro find, ere he expire,
> No pain in hunger, and no heat in fire?
>
> *This is not said figuratively. The writer of these lines has seen a complete set of chains, fitted to every separate limb of these unhappy, innocent men; together with instruments for wrenching

> open the jaws, contrived with such ingenious cruelty as would shock the humanity of an inquisitor. (13: 171-6 and n)

Such footnotes stage a debate over the terms of representation that mirrors the surface/interior conflict of characterization. The assertion that "this is not said figuratively" invokes the exterior "figure" that abolitionist representations of the enslaved continually press against. As deployed by the commentary upon the preceding couplets, this denial of the "figure" rebounds upon the "inmost soul" of the poem. This soul is doubly "not figurative"—it is invoked literally (i.e., the soul is represented as a real thing that can be injured by violence), and also etymologically (the soul is not an external "figure," but an internal essence). That is, the footnotes "figuratively" reject the possibility of reading the tortured slave's body as an abstract figure. Contemporary racial theory may focus on the surface to the exclusion of the "soul," but More's poem underscores that this soul is as tangible as the "complete set of chains, fitted to every separate limb" that "the writer of these lines has seen."

By disavowing the common figurative terms of representation, the authenticating detail provided by "the writer of these lines" sets out an epistemological problem that the poem can only partly solve. If the figures of a poem are "not figurative," then what are they? How can the metaphorical "wound" that the iron deals to a captive's soul be literal? As it prompts these questions, the footnote offers up the gaping image of the "instruments for wrenching open the jaws" that are among the slave trader's tools of violence. The poem itself seems to be "wrench[ed] open" here, exposing to view the necessary failure of empathy that colors its lines. By insisting that the slaves' pain is simply too enormous for the metropolitan imagination to fully appreciate, the footnote's "not figuratively" makes empathy an increasingly remote possibility. The invocation of reality makes fellow feeling nearly impossible. In turn, figuration is anatomized in order to assert that enslaved persons are as much possessed of interiority as the

poem's unenslaved and largely white readers. Everyone has a soul, souls are not figurative, and thus the character of the slave is as much animated by an interior soul as the unenslaved reader, whose subjectivity was never in doubt.

## V. Conclusion

As the footnotes interrupt More's text, they make space that readers can fill with the very shame and horror that More seeks to provoke.[92] With such notes, the poem and its author speak in dissonant voices that overlap to produce a third voice: the ghost of subjectivity. Like the figure of the slave's person, these footnotes are both inner and outer. Accompanying the verse's description of the slave's body with the author's testimony of the slave's chains, the poem juxtaposes metropolitan subjectivity with colonial enslaved embodiment, containing both in a single typographic form. Thus, the footnotes and text of More's *Slavery* complement and support each other. They form a sort of metacouplet, saying together what neither could say individually.

This interdependence of textual voices is a visual analogue of what the characters of slaves do in abolitionist poetry: they are composed of incompatible elements that authors, texts, and readers nonetheless command to hang together. Displaying the "system" in which shit becomes sugar, erotic pleasure is anatomized, and enslaved colonials are reinscribed as imperial quasi-subjects, abolitionist poetry "wrenches open" the character of racialized slavery to display its guts.

# Conclusion

## Breaking Character

At the beginning of the second act of Quentin Tarantino's parodic slave revenge drama *Django Unchained* (2012), we find the hero and his owner (and soon-to-be business partner) Dr. King Schultz in a Chattanooga haberdashery. Schultz, a bounty hunter (played by Christoph Waltz), instructs Django (played by Jamie Foxx) on the strategy of their next job. "When we gain access" to the plantation they will visit next, Schultz tells Django, "we'll be putting on an act. You'll be playing a character," that of Schultz's valet. "During the act, you can never break character… And now, Django, you may choose your character's costume" (26:56-27:50). Django's first appearance in the film was painfully underclothed: he wore only pants and a blanket against the cold as he and other enslaved men were marched in a coffle across the Texas wilderness. Now, he chooses a costume that registers his new relative prestige: a seventeenth-century-style blue doublet, white cravat, blue breeches, white hose, and brown slippers with blue bows (Fig. 1).

Figure 1. Django's valet costume, *Django Unchained.*

Although Django is not to "break character," the character of the blue-suited valet contains so many resonances that it seems almost impossible to break entirely. One of these

resonances, as Glenda Carpio notes, is to Thomas Gainsborough's painting *Blue Boy* (1770), which has become its own "highly prized commodity" (3). The suit also recalls pirate films, the singer Prince (circa "Raspberry Beret," 1985), and Mike Meyers's goofball spy character Austin Powers (1997-2002). Yet, recognizable in each of these representations, Gainsborough's eighteenth-century painting (Fig. 2) offers a specifically Enlightenment framework for the film's character play.

Figure 2. Thomas Gainsborough, *Jonathan Buttal: The Blue Boy* (c.1770, Huntington Library, San Marino, Web).

The subject of Gainsborough's painting wears a self-consciously period costume that references the seventeenth century; reinvoked by Django as even more antique, the blue suit now comes to shorthand chattel slavery. In place of Gainsborough's silks (acquired, presumably, in the East Indies), Django's blue cotton suit evokes two cash crops of the slave economy of the Americas: cotton, and the indigo used to dye it blue.

As the two men entered the haberdashery, we saw signs advertising "Hats and Caps," and "House Nigger and Servant Uniforms," which now help foreground the racialized resonances of Schultz's and Django's character play. To be described as part of the category of "Nigger," in Tarantino's film, is to be trapped within a highly circumscribed role of oppression and exploitation. Django must not break character, Schultz cautions, but he needn't worry: Django's whole life, to date, has been a brilliant (if violently enforced) performance of "Nigger." Director Spike Lee and others have attacked the gleeful or tic-like repetition of this word in Tarantino's films; Tarantino has repeatedly asserted that, at least in *Django*, the omnipresence of the racial epithet is period correct.[93] But here, the blue suit helps illuminate the roots of the word "nigger," roots that stretch from the seventeenth century to the present day. The blue suit is seventeenth-century period dress, from the era of the first Anglophone involvement with racialized chattel slavery; from 1865 to the present, the technically extinct character of enslavement has been invoked, revived, and repudiated for a variety of purposes. Django's blue-suited valet character thus stands on the boundary between two major definitions of the word "nigger." As I showed in Chapter 2, this word emerged in eighteenth-century slave societies as a verbal manifestation of the ideology that color and status were interchangeable; the present-day use of "nigger," which some speakers still use to evoke this legacy, is precisely what makes Tarantino's use of it so unstable and potentially dangerous.

In their false characters, Schultz and Django visit the plantation and kill three outlaws, who were employed as its overseers. Django confirms the men's identities, Schultz shoots, and we see blood splatter across the field's white cotton bolls. But these cotton bolls are themselves as performative as Django's vengeful, Gainsboroughian valet. When Tarantino and his crew were filming, there was no cotton growing at the Evergreen Plantation (outside Edgard,

Louisiana, and still a working sugar plantation); the plants that represent cotton in the film are fava beans—a quick-growing crop, to which cotton balls have been affixed, to simulate cotton plants (which would have taken much longer to grow and develop fiber) ("Film Locations"). In a sense, by foregrounding their materiality, the film makes it possible to see these bean plants as also "play[ing the] character" of the cotton plants whose cultivation and processing dominated the slave economy in the nineteenth-century United States. Specifically, the disguised plants draw attention to the labor necessary to harvesting and processing bolls. The labor of the film's set dressers in affixing processed cotton swabs to bean plants to simulate cotton plants inverts the labor of the plantation slaves who witness their overseer's death. Such enslaved laborers spent their lives growing, harvesting, and processing cotton fibers, and now the slavery film takes bleached cotton fibers and sticks them back on plants. Yet, spattered with blood, this simulacral cotton also evokes a present-day medical facility, where blood is blotted away with cotton balls. The pain of the overseer's fatal injury is thus recast as a sort of sanitizing operation that cauterizes the suppurating wound of American chattel slavery. Happily for the revenge plot, the stain of the dead overseer's blood also makes that cotton commercially worthless, helping to lower (if only slightly) the profit the plantation owner extracts from his slaves' labor.

The film's reference to Gainsborough emphasizes chattel slavery's eighteenth-century roots, even in this nineteenth-century setting. Like Penelope Aubin's "fictitious[ly] black" European servant in Chapter 1, who dons blackface in order to escape captivity, Django's costume recasts would-be servility and oppression as expressions of agency (*Vinevil* 43). It uses the body's always already racialized surface to display an interior resistance to commodification, blending these registers of character and marking the identity of the "character" Django is playing—the valet—as self-consciously performative. In fact, Django's blue suit demonstrates

that character's external registers hold as much or more signifying potential than Wordsworth's "flesh and blood" of interiorized characterization. Because it is so external, the suit can evoke social and economic contexts: the plantation economies, the planters' cultural aspirations, and the colonial aspirations of the British eighteenth-century that Django turns back upon them. By contrast, Django's own heroic character seems less exciting. He is a stoic cowboy—brave and agentive, but will never again be as surprising as he was in this first, loudly anachronistic costume.

However, when read with the texts that my dissertation has examined, Tarantino's invocation of Gainsborough seems not merely a curious anomaly (in the mode of, say, *Pulp Fiction*'s long discussion of the McDonalds' "Royale with Cheese"), but instead the invocation of the eighteenth-century's guiding spirit to inform its own representation of chattel slavery. For as I have shown, tropes for representing enslavement and resistance, tropes that endure today, saw their first flowering in the long eighteenth century. From the novel's celebration of aesthetic and personal freedom, to modes of theatrical blackface and tropes of cultural appropriation, to pornography's ambivalent celebration of exploitation and violence, twenty-first-century cultural consumers continue to partake of the figuration of enslavement as it was defined in heyday of Anglophone chattel slavery. Representing black slaves was often primarily a method of commenting on white freedom: unenslaved Anglophones gestured at chattel slavery in order to assert their own political or commercial liberty, and literary texts dwelt on captivity in order to leverage their own aesthetic freedoms.

Although, as a white director obsessively repeating the word "nigger," Tarantino probably deserves Lee's ire, Tarantino's fascination with racial grotesquerie seems less strange when read alongside the eighteenth century. Because that period's representations continue to

ground our present-day meditations on difference and status, Django does not choose the blue suit—the blue suit chooses *him*. And true to the unenslaved, white narcissism of so many of the period's representations of chattel slavery, *Django*'s characters become an opportunity for Tarantino to attack his own cinematic influences and forbearers. When Django uses dynamite to blow up a character played by Tarantino himself (with an unexplained, pseudo-Australian accent), he also explodes the influence of nineteenth- and twentieth-century American representations that distance the pain of slavery via sentimentality (Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 1852), nostalgia (D. W. Griffiths's *Birth of a Nation*, 1915), or piety (Steven Spielberg's *Amistad*, 1997, or *Lincoln*, 2012). The film attempts to replace this distance with glee instead, representing enslavement as a spectacle of both horror and pleasure.

In *Django*'s explosions, we also see the violent attack on the racial theories that the film parodies. As this project has demonstrated, eighteenth-century concepts of racial difference were different from nineteenth-century ones. Indeed, because the black/white binary was only cemented toward the end of the eighteenth century, the captive characters from early in the period are as often white as black. But by the era that Tarantino's film represents ("1858. Two Years Before the Civil War"), slavery's racial hierarchies have become fully formalized. The film displays the nineteenth-century naturalization of difference at every turn, such as in the advertisement of the "House Nigger Uniforms" for sale. These "Uniforms" differ from clothes for "Servants" not merely in status (enslaved/unenslaved), but by the skin of the people who wear them (black/white). While an enslaved black servant might wear the exact same clothes as an unenslaved white one, in the film's world, color and status produce such distinct categories that clothing for "House Niggers" and "Servants" must be given these two separate names.

*Django*'s villain, Calvin J. Candie, embraces this binary as tautological proof of enslaved African Americans' "subhuman" status.[94] But the prehistory of this binary is in Britain's first empire, which was as both more racially mixed than it is often given credit for, and more flexible about difference.[95] Present-day amnesia (which has been enforced, in part, by selective attention to some of the period's most anomalous white commentators, such as Edward Long and Thomas Jefferson) often risks overwriting the cosmopolitanism and racial ambiguity of the early British empire. The ideas of empire and power from which the period constructed its own image always already included racial and cultural difference. Blue-suited Django is a motley, and reading his character is as slippery as the eighteenth-century Domingos and Mungos that this project has examined. Indeed, part of this dissertation's project has been to reveal literary characterization's debts to difference, reestablishing this device as far less homogenously bourgeois and metropolitan than it has been remembered. Tarantino evokes these debts in the confusing costumes that he throws over racial and status difference. The character of slavery, in *Django* as in the eighteenth century, is always unstable.

As I have shown, the familiar Restoration comedies, Augustan Georgics, and sentimental domestic novels that now dominate the eighteenth-century literary canon were part of a marketplace whose texts and characters commented directly on the colonial plantation economy, racial violence, and commercial exploitation. Unenslaved eighteenth-century Anglophones consumed representations of enslavement both out of curiosity and for pleasure. Although present-day criticism sometimes overlooks this legacy, slavery was neither too offensive nor too embarrassing for eighteenth-century Anglophones to enjoy representing it. Indeed, early eighteenth-century texts sought to expand the kinds of captivities they represented, allowing white metropolitans to both imagine themselves as slaves, and claim their emergent

racial/imperial power. When Aubin's and Samuel Brunt's enslaved Africans exact revenge on their European captors, part of the episodes' originality comes from the ways that these exchanges newly assert white dominance by subverting it. That is, the violence of slaves against slavers serves to suggest that white slave masters should properly be in charge—and that whites' abrogation of these new racial duties will lead to the kinds of dishonor that Aubin's Isabinda and others suffer at the hands of their former slaves.

By mid-century, the master's dependence on the slave had become commonplace enough to provoke comedies that circled back to Plautus and Horace. When Mungo complains about Diego's abuse, *The Padlock*'s audience already recognizes the slave's potential power to destroy Diego's life, a power that Bickerstaff and Dibdin permit Diego to confront only at the very end of the opera. This inversion of expected racialized power in the black slave's actual subversion of a white master's pose of control plays perfectly into the later eighteenth-century restructuring of racial hierarchies, so that Mungo's proto-abolitionist metropolitan audiences embraced the character as evidence that slaves in the British Isles should be reclassified as Britons, while North Americans and Caribbeans could recast the opera as proof that racial subordination was right and necessary. (Another tricky slave, *Django*'s Stephen, played by Samuel L. Jackson, plays on this type while illuminating the psychological deformity that the experience of slavery could exact on a supposedly privileged slave.) In the proslavery view, even though Mungo facilitates Diego's defeat, his trickery demonstrates that blacks should serve, and only whites are possessed of the moral authority to command. More insistently than Aubin's and Brunt's characters, Mungo's varied afterlives thus instantiate the growing split between a character's interior and exterior, such that the character's color permits British North Americans and metropolitan Britons to interpret Mungo according to contradictory paradigms of race.

For British abolitionists from 1788-1807, the racial transformations that these earlier texts anticipate were already fait accompli. The first stages of chattel slavery's legal dismantling via Parliamentary regulations and eventual fiat were already underway; what remained, was to reincorporate the figures of the enslaved into a British national body, and thus justify the metropolis's moral and regulatory jurisdiction over the colonies' own peculiar/pecuniary institutions. That is, they were faced with the problem of making the characters of black slaves register with the same kind of ethical force as the characters of unenslaved whites already did, a project whose realization seemed precluded by the naturalization of both racial difference and racism. But instead, abolitionist verse embraces the reigning cultural stereotype of the enslaved as non-human (or not fully human), and deliberately makes this stereotype strange by focusing on the very surfaces of slaves' bodies that proslavery notions of difference had already singled out. In late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century abolitionist verse, the characters of the enslaved are self-consciously exterior. As though pressed into the page only deep enough to leave a readable impression, however, these characters/*caractères* proclaim their shallowness, and confront metropolitan readers' desire for increasingly interiorized representations with the knowledge that racialized exploitation has rendered such representations unavailable. While the verse that narrates the suicides of despondent Qua-shis, Quashis, and Quashys demonstrate that the enslaved do possess interiority, the poems only represent the "flesh and blood" of these characters when this flesh is endangered, as they slit their own throats, stab themselves in the heart, or inhale poisonous fumes.[96] As these poems insist, readers' desire for psychological comfort and social connection cannot be acceded to in a context where their desire for sugar and other tropical crops has reduced laborers to things.

Tarantino's *Django* partakes—loudly, colorfully, and explosively—of this aesthetically resistant exteriorized character. As the nearly three-hour movie wears on and the plot of Django's revenge becomes more complicated, even Dr. Schultz has trouble following the former slave's motivations: "Don't get so carried away with your retribution. You lose sight of why we're here… You're going to blow this whole charade, or more than likely get us both killed" (1:17:14-1:17:28). But in fact, "blow[ing] this whole charade"—remaking slavery's character as violently strange and Other—is exactly the point. For in suggesting that more distanced representations of slavery have been mere "charades," *Django* reclaims the Enlightenment legacy of intertwining representations of enslavement with innovative modes of characterization. The character of slavery, as I have shown, is always being "broken" apart and rewritten.

Notes

[1] Olaudah Equiano shows the absolute denial of liberty to which the Middle Passage subjected the newly enslaved when he describes his youthful reactions to the ocean when he is brought aboard the slave ship that will transport him from West Africa to Barbados: "not being used to the water, I naturally feared that element the first time I saw it; yet, nevertheless, could I have got over the nettings, I would have jumped over the side, but I could not" (56).

[2] Enslaved characters appear in many fictional texts that circulated in the period—not only those by Aphra Behn and Daniel Defoe, but fictions as diverse as reprintings of the medieval *History of Reynard the Fox, and Reynardine his Son*, Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1615), and Francisco de Quintana's *The History of Hipolito and Aminta* (1627); adventure tales like William Chetwood's *Voyages, Dangerous Adventures, and Imminent Escapes of Captain Richard Falconer* (1720); oriental fictions like Eliza Haywood's *Philidore and Placentia: Or, L'Amour trop Delicat* (1727) and Jean Paul Bignon's *The Adventures of Abdallah, Son of Hanif* (1713) ; or historical novels like Arthur Blackamore's *Heathen Priestcraft: Or the Female Bigot* (1720).

[3] George A. Starr posits that Barbary captivity narratives helped formalize the novel, by representing a character type of resourceful, Crusoe-like captives, whose escapes from slavery are narrated in a "constant sequence, whose separate elements might differ considerably without altering the fundamental pattern" (39).

[4] Of course, debt had its own resonance with the Civil War, Charles I having called the Parliament that would eventually behead him in order to raise taxes to cover debts contracted under his father's reign.

[5] The treaty granted "the Contract for introducing of Negroes into several Parts of the Dominions of his Catholic Majesty in *America* (Commonly called *El Pacto del Assiento de Negros*) at the

Rate of 4,800 Negroes yearly, for the Space of thirty Years successively, beginning from the 1st of *May* 1713, on the same Conditions on which the *French* Company had formerly enjoyed it" (Qtd. in Anderson 2: 262).

While the Spanish name "El Pacto del Assiento de Negros" made it clear that the British would be servicing the race-based slave trade, Britons often referred to the "Assiento" or the "South Sea trade" without specifically indicating that it was a contract for chattel slavery.

[6] There was a general fast on December 8, 1721, intended to prevent the plague (which was currently in France) from reaching England. Other published sermons of the same day caution against swearing, buying sex, etc.

[7] See Abdul R. JanMohamed*, The Death-Bound Subject* (2005).

[8] See especially Fliegelman 15-16.

[9] Cato's disagreement with Prideaux hinges on whether Caesar really *was* a tyrant (and thus eligible to be killed)—or was merely *called* one because he was unpopular. The question would have been especially charged in December 1721, when the letter was published: although the 1715 Jacobite rebellion had been unsuccessful, George I remained the object of enough criticism to enable Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, to collect domestic support for another uprising, as would be uncovered in the spring of 1722. In December 1721, however, Jacobite threats may have seemed removed enough that tyrannicide could be defended.

[10] Letter 55 was published 21 December 1721; *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders*, who "grew Rich, lived Honest, and died a Penitent," is first advertised for sale at William Chetwood's bookshop, in the 26 January 1721/2 *Daily Post*, which Defoe edited; the sign of Chetwood's shop was—appropriately enough—"Cato's-Head."

[11] See Nicholson v.

[12] I refer to the retrospective narrator as "Brunt" and his teenage character as "Sam," since the distance between action and narration is important in *Cacklogallinia*.

[13] Aravamudan notes that "the contingent attributes of colonialism [in *Cacklogallinia*] are found to be speculative commerce and slave trading, and piracy and marronage are related forms of resistance to this model. Commerce and colonialism raise problems for which there are no obvious solutions despite the attempt to generate wisdom through political platitudes of various persuasions, including Stoical ones. No obviously harmonious relationship between politics and economics preexists the attempt to impose civic humanism" (367 n53).

[14] Locke writes "This is the perfect condition of slavery, which is nothing else, but the state of war continued, between a lawful conqueror and a captive" (*Two Treatises of Government* Chapter IV, Section 23).

[15] See Long, *History*, and R. C. Dallas, *History of the Maroons.*

[16] "Free Negroes"—emancipated black slaves and their descendants—were also nonslaves, but the Maroons' geographic and cultural otherness meant that they wouldn't be easily confused with these free blacks, whose own identity was constructed in some sense in opposition to the slaves.

[17] This episode was first printed in Francis Moore's *Travels into the Inland Parts of Africa* (1738), which includes the following account of "the Number of Whites and Blacks that were to go on the Expedition, *viz.* 19 White Men, including our Linguister, who is as Black as Coal; tho' here, thro' Custom, (being Christians) they account themselves White Men" (243). That is, in some contexts, "custom" can be a more powerful signifier of race than color.

[18] Wahrman also handles the example of the white/black translator, though his analysis mostly recapitulates Wheeler (93).

[19] A tongue-in-cheek reviewer in *Mist's Weekly Journal* declares of Brunt's novel, "For my Part, I see nothing so extravagantly improbable in the Relations of this Gentleman, unless we lay it down as a Maxim, that no Creature possesses, in the least, the Use of Reason, except Man, which will be never allowed by those who are well read in natural Philosophy. It is known that every Bee-Hive is a Commonwealth, or, indeed, a Monarchy, governed with excellent Order and Policy" ([1]). James Sutherland similarly aligns Brunt with Swift, identifying a giant rooster named Brusqualio as "the Robert Walpole of Cacklogallinia" (476).

[20] See Percy G. Adams, *Travelers and Travel Liars* (1962).

[21] The Standard English of Thomas's speech to Brunt contrasts with Cuffey's earlier Jamaican creole, a distinction that is emphasized by their names—"Cuffey" is an anglicized spelling of "Kofi," the Akan name for a male born on Friday, which Thomas Russell's satirically named *The Etymology of Jamaica Grammar* describes as indicating that the bearer is "hot tempered" (7). In contrast, Captain Thomas's name sounds extremely British.

[22] Thomas's attack on planters' "Profession" of Christianity is part of a tradition in the long eighteenth-century linking religion and antislavery, and Thomas seems to echo Morgan Godwyn's *Negro's and Indians Advocate* (1680), which complained that planters knew "no other *God* but *Money*, nor *Religion* but *Profit*" (vi), and argued that a religious revival would make both slaves and masters more godly, thus reforming plantation culture.

[23] The redemption parade occurred two and a half weeks before the publication of Cato's Letter 55 asserting slaves' right to rebel, and three and a half months before Aubin's novel of Barbary captivity *The Noble Slaves*.

[24] Aubin's literary output in the 1720s was remarkable, even compared to her contemporary Defoe. By McBurney's count "Between 1721 and 1729," Aubin's novels and translations were

published in addition to two poems published under Queen Anne's reign, a play, "The Merry Masqueraders," performed in 1730, and her late-1720s career as a "Female Orator" in the vein of the public speechifying of John "Orator" Henley (245 n1).

[25] See Welham, "Particular Case."

[26] Wylie Sypher identifies enslaved black princes as a dominant trope in eighteenth-century literary representations of slavery in *Guinea's Captive Kings* (1969).

It's interesting to note that, like Defoe's Friday, Brunt's Cuffey (also "Friday") and Aubin's Domingos ("Sunday) are named for days of the week.

[27] That *Vinevil*'s Domingo is impersonated by a character named Joseph undergirds the episode with a reminder of the Biblical Joseph, whose brothers sold him into slavery in Egypt, where he became powerful and eventually used his position as a trusted advisor to Pharaoh to save their lives. See Genesis 37-44.

[28] *Cato's* Letter 67 was published 24 February 1722. *The Noble Slaves* is first advertised in *The Post Boy* 5095 (17-20 March 1722), giving Aubin just barely enough time to have read Cato and written her preface in response before sending her novel off for publication.

[29] "As the boldest and most productive imitator of Defoe's works, particularly of *Robinson Crusoe*, [Aubin] contributed to the first important cycle of eighteenth-century English fictional publication which reached its peak in 1727. Her original novels helped to fuse the native tradition of Defoe with continental fictional genres" (McBurney 246).

[30] That is, *The Noble Slaves*'s Domingo, as a "devoted slave" is close to Boulukos's "grateful slave."

[31] While recent criticism of Aubin has rightly begun to challenge her longstanding reputation as (in John Richetti's term) a "pious polemicist," Welham notes that "all her religious influences as

a child and young adult tend towards the Anglican or High Anglican"—and that this heritage can be traced through her fictions (Welham, "Particular Case" 94).

[32] The text doesn't explain why/when Domingo learned Chinese.

[33] Although the man is "a *Japanese*," the narrator persists in calling him "the Indian," perhaps because he wears the animal skins, or perhaps because he lives in the East Indies—either way, providing yet another example of the early-eighteenth-century reading of race and culture as a performance of easily interchangeable signs.

[34] As some of Aubin's readers might have known, Bermuda's General Assembly had made interracial marriage illegal in 1663, declaring "That if any of his Maiesties ffree borne subiects, hee or shee shall presume to marry with or haue *commerce* with any negroes molattoes or musteses, then after conuiction they are to bee subiected to the colony or be banished" (Lefroy 2: 90).

[35] There is a final person/thing confusion before Domingo, Isabinda, and young Domingo emerge. Don Medenta hears the baby crying from behind a door, "before which lay a terrible Bear." Medenta rushes "at the Bear, designing to kill it, if possible, before it could rise; but was stop'd by the sound of a human Voice which came from that Beast, saying, 'For Heaven's sake, spare my life, and I'll do all you'll have me.' At these words the Negro came out of the Bear's Skin," and opens the door, bringing "forth the young Woman and Child, whom *Charlotta* embrac'd, whilst the poor Creature wept for joy to see a Christian white Woman" (81-2). When Domingo puts on the bear's skin, he seems to become a thing—but then when Medenta is about to kill him, he must speak, making him a strange hybrid of person and thing. Once Medenta acquiesces to "spar[ing his] life," Domingo goes from speaking thing to full person again, and "they were all chearful." The transformation from person to thing to person again, like the

transformation of the enslaved from person to thing, seems to be prompted by power and the threat of danger—only when Domingo is unthreatened can he be a person.

[36] In addition to these other dualities, the text musters yet another image of doubleness. Isabinda's description has already made Domingo ambiguously heroic *and* evil—"having (as he pretends) been a Prince in his own Country," he would have been recognizable as an analogue of James Stuart, the Jacobite pretender to the English throne (and the Catholic grandson of James II), who had been nearly brought back to power in 1715 and again in 1722. As either a threat to political stability, or a welcome replacement to foreign corruption, Stuart functioned as both a threat and symbol of hope; in describing Domingo in Stuart-esque terms (former prince, educated by priests), the text sets up his character as an enigma to be interpreted by the events that follow.

[37] Yet common law would also hold their child, who may well have been conceived on that first night on the island, as evidence of Isabinda's consent, since "legal commentators in the formalist tradition claimed that conception was presumptive evidence of consent," and thus a child was proof of non-rape (Ferguson, "Rape" 103).

[38] It's still extremely strange that Isabinda wants to marry a man she acknowledges might kill her.

[39] Sancho's spelling may reflect an Americanized pronunciation of "negro" that seems to have been making itself heard in the metropolis in the 1760s; as reprinted in *The Works of Laurence Sterne*, Sancho's spelling is normalized to "negro" (9:195-197).

[40] *The Oxford English Dictionary* shows that "nigger" is derived from Latin, "neger" from French, and "negro" from Spanish, but suggests that eighteenth-century speakers would have chosen between the three words according to how their regional dialects made one or another word easier to pronounce, and may even have rederived "nigger" and "neger" from "negro" as a

result of dialectical differences ("Nigger," n. and adj., "Neger," n. and adj., "Negro," n. and adj."). *The Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang*, on the other hand, considers any origin of "nigger" in "negro" to be "phonologically unlikely," theorizing instead that "negro" replaced the other two pronunciations as "the retention of the outmoded forms in the freq[uently] opprobrious usages of uncultivated speakers must have hastened their decline into disrepute" (*RHHDAS*, "nigger *n.*"). Also see Jabari Asim, *The N Word* (2007), and Randall Kennedy, *Nigger* (2002).

[41] Exactly *how* Sterne, an Anglo-Irish Yorkshireman, would have pronounced "negro," and how much it would have sounded like "negur," is impossible to determine, but it seems safe to say that his "negro" would have sounded different from Sancho's thoroughly London pronunciation—while Sancho's linguistic chauvinism suggests that he heard a difference between "negro" and "negur" or "nigger," it may not have registered as clearly (or at all) in Sterne's dialectically nonstandard ears.

[42] English speakers had been using the word "negro" for at least two hundred years as a word for people with dark skin before metropolitans started using it to designate the specific *conjunction* of skin color with enslavement (and the implicit naturalness of this conjunction) in the 1760s and '70s. *OED* cites the first use of "negro" in a translation of Peter Martyr's *Decades of the Newe Worlde* (1555): "They are not accustomed to eate such meates as doo the Ethiopians or Negros" ("Negro," n. and adj.).

[43] See Tasch 158-59.

[44] See, for example, an advertisement in the *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (London, 13 April 1768) offering "Five Guineas Reward" for a runaway "East Indian Negro Boy, about sixteen years of age, and five feet four inches high."

[45] Actually, the case goes by several names. Steven Wise notes that *Somerset* has been known as *R.* v. *Knowles, ex parte Somerset* since J. H. Baker's *Introduction to English Legal History* (1979—*s.v.* Baker 127 n.34). Lofft (1790) records *Somerset* as *Somerset v. Stewart*, but Shyllon (1974) notes that "Lofft committed the unforgivable sin for a barrister" of incorrectly titling the trial, although he acknowledges that "thinking that Somerset was the plaintiff" is an easy mistake: "so [Somerset] should have been according to the justice of the case. For, after all, he was not a fugitive from justice but a fugitive from slavery in a land of liberty." Shyllon describes *Somerset* as *Stewart v. Somerset* instead, making Stewart the plaintiff and Stewart the defendant (114). In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Somerset was more commonly called "the Negro cause"—a title that makes moot the issue of who was actually prosecuting whom. For more on the case's name, see Wise 245n30.

[46] This is probably a reprint from the *Morning Chronicle*, but I can't locate the relevant item in that publication. Also in the *London Evening Post* May 21-23, 1772, Issue 6294.

[47] Bickerstaff was born in Dublin in 1733, the son of a public official, and as a teenager became an ensign in the Northumberland Fusiliers. At twenty-one, he quit the army and moved London to become a playwright, but, unsuccessful, joined the marines, before returning to London to write again, this time attracting attention with *Thomas and Sally* (1760). The next years were good to Bickerstaff; he had been writing for George Colman's Covent-Garden Theatre, and became so successful that David Garrick, the manager of the Theatre Royal, started competing for his texts instead; after the summer of 1768, when Garrick acquired *The Padlock*, Bickerstaff would be associated with Garrick for the next four years. In the spring of 1772, he fled Britain after a soldier he had apparently solicited for sex published an easily deciphered account in the newspapers of the trinkets Bickerstaff had tried to barter for his silence—a watch, a second-hand

mourning ring, a guinea; although Bickerstaff was never actually charged with sodomy, he never returned from the Continent. He was heard from in France, Italy, and Germany, but no one knows when or where he died. See "Bickerstaff, Isaac John"; Tasch; and alsoJudith Milhouse and Robert D. Hume.

[48] It's not clear where Diego's immense wealth is from, although this ambiguity may have encouraged contemporary audiences to assume that Diego, like many of London's nouveau riche, was a Caribbean planter who had returned to the metropolis; Mungo's presence could have made this Caribbean interpretation even more likely. In Cervantes, however, the Diego character has returned, instead, from Peru.

[49] Cervantes also wrote a play of this story, which, like *The Padlock*, has a much smaller cast than the novella. But if Bickerstaff was using the play as an exemplar, he doesn't say so. And none of the (fairly small) body of criticism on *The Padlock* seems to mention Cervantes's drama.

[50] *The Padlock*'s London audiences in 1768 may have heard echoes Frederick Calvert, Sixth Baron Baltimore, whom the milliner Sarah Woodcock had accused of rape, and who was tried (and acquitted) at the Kingston Assizes on March 26, 1768; in the same year, Calvert's mistress Sophia Watson would publish *Memoirs of the Seraglio of the Bashaw of Merryland, by a Discarded Sultana*. See "Calvert, Frederick."

[51] Diego seems comically unaware that he has just hinted that he is probably also impotent himself.

[52] Ursula's lament, of course, should be heard in the context of the elderly's Diego's seemingly successful courtship of the teenage Leonora—so that age's inaccessibility to the pleasures of erotic entrapment are gendered as a specifically female problem.

[53] *The Padlock* is *OED*'s second citation for "Massa"—the first is a 1766 item in the *South Carolina Gazette* ("Massa," n.).

[54] See John R. Rickford, "Prior Creolization."

[55] In fact, Robert Fahrner suggests that there was literally no "Spanish dress" at all in the opera—as Leonora and Leander seem to have worn "contemporary English clothes on stage" (64).

[56] Alexander Pope's "Windsor Forest," for example.

[57] However, Johnson makes no mention of any connection between race and slavery—lending support to my hypothesis that such a link, at least in the British Isles, would only begin to be forged in the coming decade.

[58] Thus, writes Mitchell, "The Negro as subject matter was introduced to the American theatre in 1769. This was in *The Padlock*, a comedy that had a West Indian slave named Mungo, who was a profane clown of little authenticity. Lewis Hallam, who supposedly sought realism in the American drama, played this role. In the words of that eminent author, Sterling Brown, 'Hallam fathered a long line of comic Negroes in the drama'" (16).

[59] Jefferson cites Ignatius Sancho's letters as an example of a black person who "has approached nearer to merit in [literary] composition" (258), but seems to have been unaware of Sancho's published musical compositions (ca. 1767, 1769, and 1779—see Wright, ed. *Ignatius Sancho.*

[60] The American Company had been known as "The London Company" until its name was changed in a fit of North American patriotic fervor provoked by the Stamp Act. See Odai Johnson and William J Burling (338, 348-49, 406).

[61] Jefferson noted his expenses, including the price of theater tickets, in his memorandum books; Johnson assembles a list of Jefferson's theater attendances from October 23–November 8, 1770, in *Absence and Memory in Colonial American Theatre: Fiorelli's Plaster* (New York: Palgrave,

2006), 70-71. Also see Johnson, "Thomas Jefferson and the Colonial American Stage," *Virginia Magazine of History & Biography* 108.2 (2000), 139-155.

[62] In the published score, Dibdin complains, "I am indeed told there are some who affect not only to doubt my having set the Musick of the Padlock, but even to name the Composer some Italian Master (God knows who) that I stole it from; but if any such Composer Exists my Enemies would do well to produce his Works for I declare I am not Conscious of having receiv'd any Assistance" (*Padlock* i).

[63] Other periodical references to female Mungos can be found in *The Oxford Magazine, or Universal Museum* 4 (1770), 229; *St. James's Chronicle* 15-17 August 1769; letter from "Mungonida" in *Public Advertiser*, 18 May 1769.

[64] For more on Wilkes's career, see Arthur H. Cash, *John Wilkes* (2006).

[65] George Rousseau concludes and William Ober suggests that Dyson was the lover of poet-physican Mark Akenside. See Rousseau's *Perilous Enlightenment: Pre- and Post-Modern Discourses, Sexual, Historical* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1991), 122-128; and Ober's "Mark Akenside, M.D. (1721-1770): Physician and Philosophic Poet," *New York State Journal of Medicine* 68 (1968), 3167-75.

[66] See Lott, *Love and Theft* (1993).

[67] 16 October 1769, as recounted in the *Life of Johnson*. Garrick talked about his coat.

[68] For more on this tradition, see Jonathan Holmes, "'Sometime a Paradox': Shakespeare, Diderot and the Problem of Character," *Shakespeare Survey* 59: Editing Shakespeare, ed. Peter Holland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 285-297.

[69] Disney's epilogue seems to have been submitted after his death by his cousin, the Unitarian Minister John Disney, to the October 1787 *Gentleman's Magazine* (913-914). JD would also

publish SD's epilogue in his preface to S.D.'s *Discourses on Various Subjects. To which are added, considerations on pluralities* (London: J. Johnson, and Cambridge: J. and J. Merrill, 1788) xxi-xxii.

[70] Some companies started performing before Congress lifted the theater ban—at least two performances by Thomas Wall's Company are recorded in Baltimore, on April 19, 1782, and May 10, 1782 (Brown, 182).

[71] The theatricality of this transformation, meanwhile, is underscored by the fact that it is made by "de gentleman in de black gown," as though Mansfield's authority is itself a sort of costume change into ironic blackface.

[72] For more on Somerset and Stuart, see Shyllon *Black Slaves* (1975).

[73] *Somerset* is full of names with competing Royalist, Parliamentarian, and Jacobite resonances that undoubtedly influenced the case's popular reception in this period of extreme anti-Scottish prejudice (Mansfield, whose given name was William Murray, and whose family was Scottish, had been attacked for his perceived Scottishness in the 1760s). Charles Stuart (variously spelled Steuart and Stewart) was of course the name of two successive kings of England and Scotland; Charles I had been deposed (and would eventually be executed) by the Parliamentarians in the Civil War, two major battles of which (Landsdowne in 1643 and Langport in 1645) had been fought in Somersetshire. Somerset was still regarded a site of resistance to Stuart authority, having been at the center of Monmouth's Rebellion against James II in 1685 (although James Somerset's name is also spelled Sommerset, Summersett, Summersett, and Sumerset); Ann and Mary, one a British and the other an Anglo-Scottish queen, were James II's daughters.

[74] For the full story of Somerset and Stuart, see Davis, *Age of Revolution;* Wise; and Shyllon.

[75] This has become the canonical name for *Somerset*, but may or may not be how it was recorded in 1772. See Note 29, above.

[76] These are: Lofft's *Reports* 18-20; *The Gentleman's Magazine* 42 (1772), 293-4; *The Scots Magazine* 34 (1772), 298-299; and a MS transcription from the New York Historical Society, "Trinity Term 1772. On Monday 22d June 1772. In Banco Regis" ('Summary of Lord Mansfield's judgment in the Sommersett case,' Web, 14 July 2012. For a discussion of these versions—and their treatment by Jerome Nadelhaft ("The Somersett Case and Slavery: Myth, Reality, and Repercussions." *The Journal of Negro History* 51.3 (1966), 193-208), Davis, Shyllon, Wiecek, and others, see James G. Oldham, "New Light."

[77] See Van Cleve, *Slaveholders' Union*.

[78] The historian Eugene Genovese describes nineteenth-century American plantation society as composed of a "white South[ern] guilt culture," and "the black South as the alternative—a shame culture," that results when an individual "'accuses himself of gaucheries that are in no way sins.'" Genovese insists on the mutual construction of shame and guilt to describe slave society as a creation of enslaved and enslavers alike, both independently and in their relations with each other (120-21).

[79] Thus, as Linda Colley writes, the British abolition movement constituted "an extraordinary revolution in sensibility and ideas, one that revealed as much if not more about how the British thought about themselves, as it did about how they saw black people on the other side of the world" (351).

[80] These tropes persist in Steve McQueen's film *12 Years a Slave* (2013). In the scene where Mrs. Epps compels Mr. Epps to force Solomon to whip Patsey until her skin peels off her back, the viewer is offered glimpses of the perspectives of Mrs. Epps, Mr. Epps, and Solomon, but not of

Patsey, whose pain is left inaccessible, and only intelligible to the very limited extent that it can be accessed through Solomon's accute shame at being compelled to carry out the beating. Thus, Roxane Gay concludes, "*12 Years a Slave* does not offer any new insight into the slavery narrative" ("Where Are the Serious Movies about Non-Suffering Black People?" *Vulture*, 6 November 2013, vulture.com).

[81] Despite this grisly image, Grainger suggests that reports of slaves being regularly pulverized on sugar plantations are highly exaggerated: "Pere Labat says, he was informed the English were wont, as a punishment, thus to grind their negroes to death. But one may venture to affirm this punishment never had the sanction of law; and if any Englishman ever did grind his negroes to death, I will take upon me to aver, he was universally detested by his countrymen. Indeed, the bare suspicion of such a piece of barbarity leaves a stain: and therefore authors cannot be too cautious of admitting into their writings, any insinuation that bears hard on the humanity of a people" (96).

[82] For a fairly clear explanation of humours theory as it meets Anglophone literature, see J. B. Bamborough, *The Little World of Man* (London: Longmans, Greene, and Col, 1952), 52-81.

[83] Because Anne Cheng's *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation, and Hidden Grief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) approaches melancholy through Freud and thus only accesses humors theory at a remove, her model offers melancholy as produced by the social imposition of frameworks of difference: "How a racially impugned person *Processes* the experience of denigration exposes a continuous interaction between sociality and privacy, history and presence, politics and ontology. These intersecting spheres hold debilitating and productive implications for the study of race…. Though a difficult topic and thus rarely discussed, the social

and subjective formations of the so-called racialized or minority subject are intimately tied to the psychical experience of grief" (x).

[84] Earth was the element most associated with melancholy. See Bamborough 58.

[85] In addition, to molasses, the patient's physician later added mercury chloride, soap, opium, castor oil, chicken broth, bloodletting, jalap (a purgative morning-glory root), colocynth, mangosteen, sodium sulfate, and tobacco, all applied at various orifices and organs over the course of three weeks, until "his injections came away covered with fœculent matter; in the evening, they were followed with moderate discharges of fœces, in small hard lumps, and extremely fœtid" (Duncan and Duncan 316-17).

[86] Epics (and, in the eighteenth century, other long poems) are often about empire. See, for instance, David Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[87] Although the bulk of captives on ships departing from Angola were sold in Brazil, there were some West-Central Africans sold in Barbados. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database lists 104 voyages beginning in West Central Africa and St. Helena and with Barbados as the principal port of landing between 1676 and 1808—with 31 of these in the last two legal decades of the trade, 1787-1808. (Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database)

[88] Speaking of hairless hands: eighteenth-century antimasturbation crusaders seem not to have been as interested as their nineteenth-, twentieth- and twenty-first-century successors in spuriously linking masturbation to hairy palms. The antimasturbatory *Onania; Or the Heinous Sin of Self-Pollution* does claim, however, that masturbation will result in short stature, gonorrhea, impotence, epilepsy, and infertility: "When we turn our Eyes upon licentious Masturbaters, we shall find them with meagre Jaws and pale Looks, with feeble Hams, and Legs

without Calves, their Generative Faculties weaken'd, if not destroy'd, in the Prime of their Years; a Jest to others, and a Torment to themselves" (20-21).

[89] Nicholls's footnote is a paraphrase of Sparrman's text, where the incident is even more bizarre: the explorer and his company get drunk with some teenage girls, who aren't naked, although they do wear less than the men. Sparrman thinks one of the girls is flirting with him and approaches her, but when he does, she pulls out her knife. His conclusion, at being rebuffed with threats of violence, is that South African women are generally uninterested in sex: "the natural consequence of the dull, inactive disposition, which is the leading characteristic of their minds; qualities which likewise are necessarily produced by the debilitating diet they use, and their extreme inactivity and sloth; which carried to a point, increase, but in extremes deaden and benumb both the physical and moral sensations" (Sparrman I: 214-16). For Sparrman, it seems, rejection must be explained by the "dull mind" of the woman who has rebuffed him with such vigor.

[90] Burdens are likewise punned on by Cugoano, who calls the human cargo of the slave ship "goods of burden" (290), a phrase that registers the slaves' objectification past even "beasts of burden," so that the emphasis is on how the ship itself carries the load of the enslaved captives' bodies.

[91] All of which raises the question: whose feces were they, the owner's or the slave's?

[92] For a retrospective of the footnote, see Chuck Zerby, *The Devil's Details: A History of Footnotes* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002). As Zerby explains, footnotes offer "Amusement, charm, a chance to rest: These gifts alone should make us grateful for the footnote. But the footnote is also educational. If it opens windows to bands and parades, it also lets us peer into the inner workshops of scholars. A few glimpses of what goes on there should convince

anyone that it is an entirely human activity, that the impersonal recitation of ideas or seamless narrative a text sometimes allows us is an illusion—as much of an illusion as a Fred Astaire dance across tables and chairs, up walls, and across ceilings. Footnotes let us hear the missteps of biases, and hear pathos, subtle decisions, scandal and anger" (5).

[93] See, for instance, Quentin Tarantino, interview with Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "'An Unfathomable Place:' A Conversation with Quentin Tarantino about *Django Unchained*," *Transition* 112 (2013): 47-66.

[94] Thus, Candie later uses a hacksaw to break open the skull of a Yorick-like "Old Ben," whom Candie insults for his decades of service: "If I was Old Ben, now, if I was Old Ben, I woulda cut my daddy's goddamn throat, and it wouldn't have taken me no fifty years to do it, neither. But he never did. Why not? You see, the science of phrenology is crucial to understanding the separation of our two species. In the skull of the African here, the area associated with submissiveness is larger than any human or any other subhuman species on planet Earth. If you examine this piece of skull here you will notice three distinct dimples. Here, here, and here. Now, if I was holding the skull of an Isaac Newton or Galileo, these three dimples would be found in the area of the skull most associated with creativity. But this is the skull of Old Ben. And in the skull of Old Ben, unburdened by genius, these three dimples exist in the area of the skull most associated with servility" (1:57:47- 1:59:32). Presiding over these pliers and saw, Candie betrays his own insanity as he expounds on how enslavement is supposedly written into slaves' very bones.

[95] Written in response to such misrepresentations, the first sentence of Fryer's *Staying Power* proclaims, "There were Africans in Britain before the English came here" (1).

[96] See Hannah More, *The Sorrows of Yamba* (London: Marshall, 1795); Elizabeth Sophia Tomlins, "The Slave," *Tributes of Affection: With The Slave, and Other Poems* (London: Longman, 1797); Captain Thomas Morris, *Quashy, Or the Coal-Black Maid. A Tale* (London: Ridgway, 1796).

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