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Images of Africa(ns):
Racism and Ethnocentricity in the British Abolition Debate:
1787-1834

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Images of Africa(ns): Racism and Ethnocentricity in the British Abolition Debate: 1787-1834

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Racism, "an ideology of racial domination based on (i) beliefs that a designated racial group is either biologically or culturally inferior and (ii) the use of such beliefs to rationalize or prescribe the racial group's treatment in society, as well as to explain its social position and accomplishment,"[1] and ethnocentrism, an "attitude of a group which consists of attributing to itself a central position compared to the other groups, valuing positively its achievements and particular characteristics, adopting a projective type of behaviour towards out-groups and interpreting the out-group through the in-group's mode of thinking,"[2] are still dominant in the twenty-first century. One only has to remember the catastrophe of Hurricane Katrina, the recent court case concerning the Jena Six, read the 2002 Report of the British Crime Survey concerning racial violence in Greater London,[3] or consider Europe's relations

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[1] Martin Bulmer and John Solomos, "General Introduction," *Racism*, eds. Martin Bulmer and John Solomos (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 4.
[2] A. Buluda Itandala cited in Ulrich Pallua, *Eurocentrism, Racism, Colonialism in the Victorian and Edwardian Age* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2006) 28.
[3] The report states that "about 1 in 6 of all incidents of criminal victimisation against Asians and African Caribbeans was believed by the victim to be racially motivated. Where incidents were perceived as racially motivated, 82% of the offenders were described as white; 75% male; 36% aged between 15-36." Metropolitan Police, "Understanding and

with Africa, which may make one suspect that – in contrast to official political discourse – not much has changed in European perception of Africans, who are still largely confined to playing the silent part in an updated version of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. The fact that racism and its associated concept of ethnocentricity still dominate current European-African relations requires one to investigate in more detail the emergence and hardening of images assigned to each party in the discourse of inter-cultural relations. The FWF-project "English Literature and Slavery 1772-1834: From the Beginning of the Abolitionist Movement to the Abolition of Slavery" – focussing on an analysis of argumentative patterns in key texts of the abolition debate – has revealed the centrality of the racist/ethnocentric parameter in the pro- and antislavery controversy. As the analysis has also uncovered a dominant pejorative outlook regarding Africa(ns) in British abolitionist discourse, which has largely remained undocumented up to now, the following paper summarises the basic argument of a new research project which concentrates on these diverse features of pro- and antiabolitionist discourse specifically exploring the image of Africa(ns) in literary texts of the period.

An analysis of racism and ethnocentricity – two pernicious social manifestations of interpersonal and intercultural communication – needs to concentrate on the period when stereotypification began to be both questioned[4] as well as founded on belief systems based on the scientific tenets of the time.[5] It is worth remembering that the social changes of this period either took place in Europe or they were strongly influenced by 'enlightened' European

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Responding to Hate Crime Factsheets: Racial Violence," 21 November 2007, online at: http://www.scotlandyard.police.uk/dcf/files/racial_fact.pdf.

[4] Cf. David Hume, "On National Characters," *Essays: Moral, Political and Literary* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1963).

[5] As Nicholas Hudson notes, in the eighteenth century "Linnaeus, Buffon, Blumenbach, and other scholars converted the scattered misconceptions and antagonisms of traders and travellers into coherent systems. Before these authors, 'racism' could exist as little more than a visceral distrust of physical difference, crudely expressed in degrading images and outbursts of disgust. Only with the rise of racial science could 'racism' take the form of an 'objective' and self-conscious conviction in the radical inferiority of certain visibly different groups." Nicholas Hudson, "From 'Nation' to 'Race': The Origin of Racial Classification in Eighteenth-Century Thought," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29.3 (1996) 252.

thought.[6] In this respect it should not come as a surprise that the period's "drastic changes and differentiations in European images of Africa were related mainly to changes which took place in Europe,"[7] as the social reordering of societies also resulted in a more general shift in outlook regarding people living outside one's circle of daily social contact. When the slavery system came under attack, one would assume that the traditional European assumptions about African inferiority were also challenged. Our present findings suggest, however, that abolitionists in counteracting the traditional racist stereotypification of Africans were also influenced by the predominant racist and ethnocentric thinking of the time.[8]

When in 1772 the famous Somerset Case focused attention on the rights of Africans outlawing the forced removal of African slaves from Great Britain, it seemed as if it was an auspicious start to what promised to result in the fight against the enslavement of other human beings. When William Blackstone commented upon the case in 1779, he stated that "[…] the law of England abhors, and will not endure the existence of, slavery within this nation […]. And now it is laid down, that a slave or negro, the instant he lands in England, becomes a freeman; that is, the law will protect him in the enjoyment of his person, and his property."[9] It is worth repeating, however, that the Mansfield judgment did not free African slaves, but only prohibited their forced removal from Britain; so in sum it was of no consequence in improving the generally perceived picture of innate African inferiority as it did not challenge the righteousness of African enslavement as such.

Considering European received knowledge of alleged African inferiority, it becomes evident that racial thinking was already firmly rooted in antiquity, as Aristotle's description of Africans, "whose principal excellence consists in affording bodily service [and who] are naturally slaves, because it is their in-

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[6] In this respect one only needs to mention the American, French, and Haitian revolutions as constituting dominant parameters in this turbulent period of social change.

[7] Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Culture* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992) 29.

[8] It is worth noting that the prospects of the emancipation of African slaves generated a general fear among Europeans which abolitionists were not able to allay.

[9] William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England in Four Books*, 4 vols. (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2006) vol. I, 424.

terest to be so,"[10] indicates. This tradition of assigning Africans to a lower order of human kind was also dominant among philosophers of the enlightenment. So although John Locke and Charles-Louis Montesquieu openly condemned slavery as being contrary to the rights of men, they at the same time also instilled a picture of African inferiority in their readers' minds. As Montesquieu points out, African slaves have a debasing effect on the slave owner "[…] because he contracts all manner of bad habits with the slaves, he accustoms himself insensibly to the want of all moral virtues [and] grows fierce, hasty, severe, choleric, voluptuous, and cruel,"[11] characteristics generally attributed to Africans. Despite the fact that Adam Smith in *Wealth of Nations* (1776) and John Millar in *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* (1771) addressed the unprofitability of the slave trade and slavery in general, they nevertheless propagated the idea of African inferiority, as "the debasement of servants had a direct influence upon the 'temper and disposition' of masters."[12] Arguing in a similar vein, more outspoken supporters of slavery like Edward Long justified the existence of the slave trade by reminding readers of the low level of African development. In *The History of Jamaica* (1774), which was often quoted by antiabolitionists in parliamentary debates, Long places Africans between Europeans and orang-utans, portraying them as "libidinous and shameless as monkeys, or baboons."[13] Long's description of Africans had a great influence on how Africans were perceived later in the century, as exemplified in Philip Thicknesse, who in 1788 took up Long's animal metaphor stating that "London abounds with […] a little race of mulattoes, mischievous as monkies and infinitely more dangerous."[14]

While philosophers in focussing on the negative effects of Africans on Europeans to a great extent reiterated and supported the more outright racist remarks of antiabolitionists, abolitionists concentrated on how Africans could

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[10] Aristotle qtd. in Hugo Grotius, *The Rights of War and Peace: Including the Law of Nature and of Nations* (Washington and London: Elibron Classics, 1901) 64.

[11] Charles Louis Montesquieu, *Spirit of Laws*, Trans. Thomas Nugent (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1987) 237, 236.

[12] qtd. in Helen Thomas, *Romanticism and Slave Narratives: Transatlantic Testimonies* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) 28.

[13] David Dabydeen, *Hogarth's Blacks: Images of Blacks in Eighteenth Century English Art* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1987) 30.

[14] Ibid. 18.

be raised to an equal status of humanity thus indirectly implying their natural inferiority. Put differently, antiabolitionists and abolitionists differed in their critique of slavery in so far as the former considered it to be of paramount importance in elevating Africans to European standards while the latter believed it to be a hindrance calling for its abolition and the installation of a more effective institution of 'incorporating' Africans into the benevolent big European family and culture. Morals and Christianity played a central role in this design. The West Indian planter Bryan Edwards is a case in point; defending West Indian slavery he claims that planters "[…] raised their African Slaves to a better condition, than was enjoyed by the Slaves of Greece and Rome. They gave them security in their lives [...] a security, which by degree is become so strengthened and extended, that I scruple not to pronounce, that many a free subject, in the freest state in the world, has no better."[15] William Knox also justifies the slave trade in respects of the grand design of civilising Africans: "I know not what should prevent our purchasing them upon the principle [...] that we do it with a view to better their condition."[16] He not only vindicates the slave trade by insisting that "[…] the first step to be taken towards the instruction of the Africans is, to transport them out of their country"[17] but also legitimates his claim by reminding others that "[…] we are bound as men and Christians, to assist them in removing [them to a place] where their present and future happiness will be better provided for."[18]

Similar to supporters of slavery, abolitionists also repeatedly affirmed that Africans were in desperate need of education and civilisation by the superior Christian religion, the only difference being that their beliefs were more readily voiced once the slave trade had been abolished. So in 1808 Thomas Clarkson, a central personality in the abolition debate, quite self-confidently

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[15] Bryan Edwards, "A Speech delivered at a Free Conference between the Honourable Council and Assembly of Jamaica…on the Subject of Mr Wilberforce's Proposition in the House of Commons concerning the Slave Trade (1790)," *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period*, ed. Peter J. Kitson, Vol. 2 (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999) 342.

[16] William Knox, "A Letter from W. K. Esq. to W. Wilberforce, Esq.," *The British Transatlantic Slave Trade*, ed. David Ryden, Vol. 4 (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003) 124.

[17] Ibid. 116.

[18] Ibid. 126.

stated that "Africa, now freed from the vicious and barbarous effects of this traffic, may be in a better state to comprehend and receive the sublime truths of the Christian religion."[19] This statement reflects the Eurocentric outlook defining African-European relations of abolitionists as only after doing away with the negative influence of the slave trade has it become possible to rescue Africans from their debased state by introducing them to Christianity and European morals. Nicholas Hudson argues that abolitionism was so successful because as a mass movement it "fueled […] a nationalist ideology [that] portrayed Britons as a 'chosen' people who had escaped 'bondage.'"[20] This highlights the clearly European outlook of a debate that focused on improving the condition of African slaves. As Wilberforce in *A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (1807) pointed out, "insanity alone would dictate [any] project"[21] that was designed to immediately emancipate African slaves, as they needed to be educated first in order to be turned into content and 'grateful peasants'.[22] Thomas Fowell Buxton also considered the civilising mission of Great Britain to be central in bringing happiness to the creatures inhabiting Africa "now steeped in wretchedness, in brutal ignorance, in devouring superstitions."[23]

The image of the British as bringing salvation to Africans cannot only be detected in political texts written by well-known abolitionists but also among many authors who commented on the issue of slavery by sketching Africans in their works. Poems like Robert Merry's "The Slaves. An Elegy" and William Roscoe and James Currie's "The African", both published in 1788, are a case in point, as both accentuate Britain's role of liberating African slaves

[19] Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament*, vol. ii (London: Longman & Co., 1808) 585-6.
[20] Hudson, "'Britons Never Will Be Slaves'" 570.
[21] James Walvin, *England, Slaves and Freedom, 1776-1838* (Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1986) 124.
[22] As Wilberforce in 1805 points out, "I own I look forward, and I hope do many others, to the time when the West Indies shall have the full enjoyment of a free, moral, industrious peasantry." Jack Gratus, *The Great White Lie: Slavery, Emancipation and Changing Racial Attitudes* (London: Hutchinson, 1973) 277.
[23] Thomas Fowell Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and its Remedy*, 2nd ed. (London: John Murray, 1839) 338-9.

from oppression, and by doing so hail and praise Britain as the nation who can pride herself on guaranteeing freedom to all the people around the world. It is ignored that this supportive imperial stance all too readily confirms the contention that Africa can only be rescued from its savagery by greatly superior and professedly disinterested British benevolence. Women were of no minor importance in giving assistance in the distribution of stereotyped images of Africans suppliantly calling to be rescued by British might. In this respect it is worth remembering that by the late eighteenth century nearly a quarter of the anti-slavery poems written were penned by women highlighting their central role in bringing the topic of slavery to public attention.[24] In the field of fiction – particularly in Sarah Scott's *The History of Sir George Ellison* (1766), Henry Mackenzie's *Julia de Robigné* (1777) and Charlotte Smith's *The Wanderings of Warwick* (1794) – even if "slavery is considered an abominable business enslaving poor Africans, […] special emphasis [is placed] on the fact that the[ir] position in society still separates the European from the African"[25] underlining their innate inferiority which only British morality is able to alleviate. Mary Sherwood's *Dazee, or the Re-Captured Negro* (1821) and John Jea's *The Life, History, and Unparalleled Sufferings of John Jea, The African Preacher* (1815) advance even a step further as they picture converted African heroes become 'missionaries' "'civilising' the old Africa according to newer evangelical imperatives."[26] In the field of drama, James Cobb's *Paul and Virginia*, for example, undoubtedly pays tribute to Britain's role in bringing freedom to enslaved human beings offering Africans a chance to receive religious education under the banner of Britain's moral code.

However, literary works were not alone in forwarding Eurocentric if not racist ideas concerning Africans. So despite the fact that proto-racist thinking only fully developed into a scientific theory of race after the abolition of sla-

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[24] cf. Midgley, *Women Against Slavery* 17, 29. We are very grateful to Annabell Marinell who has made us aware of this fact.

[25] Ulrich Pallua, "'Slavery was Agreeable, its Fortune Desirable'. The Acceptance of the Evils of Slavery as a Social Phenomenon: an Indicator of a Pro-Slavery Approach," *AAA*, Band 32.2 (2007) 217.

[26] Srinivas Aravamudan, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation: Writings in their British Romantic Period*, ed. Srinivas Aravamudan, Vol. 6 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999) 328.

very, abolitionists were nevertheless greatly influenced by theories of racial categorisation. As Anthony Barker points out, blacks "were regarded as inferior [...] on grounds of cultural traits, and the traditional association in Christian culture of blackness with evils," and this belief was reflected in many works published in the 1770s and 1780s forwarding theories of African "in-bred racial inferiority."[27] Abolitionists nevertheless added a new dimension to the debate by humanising the image of blacks when racial categorisation became en vogue.[28] What is more, one should remember that Josiah Wedgwood's anti-slavery medallion that was used as a seal by the Abolition Society to excite feelings of humanitarian sensibility also fostered "notions of [African] inferiority" as it depicted "an African in Chains in a Supplicating Posture."[29] The dominant image of the African as a slave emerging from the discussion of West Indian slavery furthermore strengthened the notion of European superiority and African inferiority. So as Edward Scobie states, "Africans were looked upon as harmless property. But when freed this same property [...] became not a fellow human but a raping monster."[30] Jan Pieterse sees things similarly pointing out that "[r]ace was the answer to the 'problem of freedom.'"[31] So in addition to identifying the dominant positive and negative notions in the image of Africans and Europeans, to understand their longevity in society it is vital to consider the racist and ethnocentric dimensions of the African image held and disseminated by British writers.

An analysis of these images can be assisted by "[a] number of concepts [that] have been used by social scientists to describe and understand intergroup relations and intergroup conflict," as John Duckitt notes, including concepts such as "ethnocentrism, tolerance, stereotype, social distance, racism, discrimination, and prejudice."[32] Thus, the concept of the stereotyped Other is crucial in identifying ethnocentric and racist representations in texts featur-

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[27] Pieterse, *White on Black* 41.

[28] Ibid. 41-57.

[29] Sarah Watson Parsons, "The Arts of Abolition: Race, Representation and British Colonialism, 1768-1807," *Interpreting Colonialism*, eds. Byron R. Wells and Philip Stewart (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2004) 367, 348.

[30] Edward Scobie, *Black Britannia: A History of Blacks in Britain* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1972) 37.

[31] Pieterse, *White on Black* 63.

[32] John Duckitt, *The Social Psychology of Prejudice* (Westport and London: Praeger, 1992) 8.

ing African-European relations. The connection between stereotyping and ethnocentric attitudes is highlighted by Elisabeth Young-Bruehl who claims that "[e]thnocentrists think stereotypically. Stereotypes are […] molds or patterns of evaluation set down upon the world regularly, invariably, monotonously."[33] Regarding texts presenting images of enslaved Africans one can make out fixed modes of thinking that only allow for a portrayal of Africans according to the dominant culture's "self-proclaimed realism."[34] In such texts "the black man, is [often] both despised and worshipped, reviled for being a nonentity, as slave, and feared as an alien and supernatural power."[35] Stereotypes can thus be considered to be "the fortress of our tradition"[36] as they function as a necessary device safeguarding the "metadiscourse of whiteness."[37]

For an analysis of stereotypes the study of texts is of central importance, since, as Michael Pickering points out, the "location of the Other is primarily in language. It is through language that selfs and others are mediated and represented. The symbolically constructed Other and the patterns of social exclusion and incorporation entailed by it are distributed in signs and language, discourse and representation."[38] Since "social relationships are encoded in language itself"[39] an analysis of texts depicting African-European relations needs to use discourse analysis as a tool to explain how "[i]ndividuals construct meaning through discourse and discourse constructs the individual."[40] The main focus should thus be on deconstructing the "arrested, fixated form[s] of representation"[41] inherent in stereotypes – "the

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[33] Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *The Anatomy of Prejudices* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1996) 191.

[34] Ibid. 192.

[35] W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2005) 34.

[36] Walter Lippman qt. in Young-Bruehl, *The Anatomy of Prejudices* 192.

[37] Michael Pickering, *Stereotyping: The Politics of Representation* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2001) 71.

[38] Ibid. 72.

[39] Perry R. Hinton, *Stereotypes, Cognition and Culture* (Hove: Psychology Press, 2000) 136.

[40] Ibid. 143.

[41] Homi Bhabha, *Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004) 107.

stripping down of the manifold characteristics of other people or cultures to such a limited range that any possibility of truth is negated"[42] – which by being perpetually reiterated acquire an ideological dimension negating forms of cognitive dissent.

Critical discourse analysis is specifically suited for such a study since it is "problem orientated, trans- and interdisciplinary, intertextual, incorporates the historical dimension, works multi-methodologically, and attempts to seize the correlation between discourse, text, and society theoretically."[43] This approach is conducive in revealing how some texts criticising slavery subliminally endorsed a paternal outlook on Africans by forwarding stereotypical images of African obsequiousness and inferiority, thus implicitly spreading the idea of Africans being in need of civilisation.[44] Critical discourse analysis is a useful tool for analysing linguistic interaction based on the context and the partners involved in the communicative process, namely the English authors and their audience. As social inclusion and exclusion is to some extent also based on language, critical discourse analysis is applied to the texts to foreground the hidden constitutive determinants of European-African cross-cultural exchange and to pin down the "reciprocity of notional and communicative exchange"[45] to the discourse of slavery and the images of Africans propagated in literary texts. As the discourse of slavery is socially determined, it is of vital importance to "construct, reproduce, preserve, transform, or deconstruct"[46] the social reality of that time. Critical Discourse Analysis "[…] tends to resort to historical sources and background information within the contextual embedding of 'discursive' events"[47] and visualises "po-

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[42] Pickering, *Stereotyping* 73.

[43] Ruth Wodak, "Diskurs, Politik, Identität," *Wissenschaft, Bildung, Politik. Band 5. Der Mensch und seine Sprache(n)*, eds. Oswald Panagl, Hans Goebl, and Emil Brix (Wien: Böhlau, 2001) 142. (translation U.P.)

[44] Authors such as Jonathan Potter, Norman Fairclough, Martin Reisigl, Ruth Wodak, T.A. Van Dijk, and Margaret Wetherell will be helpful in narrowing down and defining the term 'critical discourse analysis' as such.

[45] Martin Reisigl, "Diskurs=Diskurs=Diskurs: Eine kritische Bestandsaufnahme," Paper presented 29th October 2003 in the course of the 'Diskursforum' organised by the 'Internationale Forschungszentrum Kulturwissenschaften' (IFK) in Vienna, 2. (translation U.P.)

[46] cf. Reisigl, Paper 6. (translation U.P.)

[47] Wodak, Zur *diskursiven Konstruktion von nationaler Identität* 42. (translation U.P.)

litical control and manipulation as well as discriminating, for instance sexist or racist, strategies of oppression and exclusion within language use."[48]

Critical discourse analysis is very closely related to postcolonial criticism critically exploring terms like 'race,' 'racism,' 'superiority' and 'inferiority,' and 'the other' used to identify the division between Britons and Africans. The process of 'othering' implies "solidarisation and social exclusion and favours the discursive construction of identity and differences."[49] Moreover, it is closely connected with slavery as such since the postcolonial dimension implies the power relationship between the dominating and the dominated culture. Theories of selected postcolonial critics are therefore vital for the discussion of the intercultural contact zone. Frantz Fanon, for instance, argues that racial characteristics, in this case 'Blackness', are a vital ingredient in the relationship between coloniser and colonised in the process of colonisation. "Fanon's analysis," according to Ashcroft *et al.*, "revealed the racist stereotyping at the heart of colonial practice and asserted the need to recognize the economic and political realities which underlay these assertions of racial 'difference.'"[50] In *Key Concepts in Post-colonial Studies* Ashcroft *et al.* also maintain that many critics see slavery as being the result of a racism cultivated to justify the exploitation of human beings;[51] a claim which will be examined in our project. In this context it is worth noting Immanuel Wallerstein's study of the mutual influence of capitalism and racism, outlining racism as the 'magic formula' that allows one to "minimize the costs of production [...] and minimize the costs of political disruption" which is central in the capitalist design of maximising the accumulation of capital.[52]

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[48] Ibid. 43. (translation U.P.)

[49] Ruth Wodak, "Diskurs, Politik, Identität," *Wissenschaft, Bildung, Politik. Band 5. Der Mensch und seine Sprache(n)*, eds. Oswald Panagl, Hans Goebl, and Emil Brix (Wien: Böhlau, 2001) 134. (translation U.P.)

[50] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002) 123.

[51] Cf. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Key Concepts in Post-colonial Studies* (London: Routledge, 1998) 214.

[52] Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Ideological Tensions of Capitalism: Universalism versus Racism and Sexism," *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, Eds. Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (London and New York: Verso, 1991) 32-3.

In discussing literature dealing with slavery one has furthermore to be aware of what Gayatri C. Spivak discussing the state of subaltern women has called the "silencing of the muted native subject."[53] In this respect, it is significant to consider if Homi Bhabha's insistence that there is in fact a native voice, one that is often disguised as mimicry and parody,[54] can also be detected in literature discussing slavery and its implied African inferiority. What is also important with regard to slavery in colonialist literature is the establishment of what Abdul R. JanMohamed calls the 'Manichean allegory', in which a binary discursive opposition between races is established.[55] "Such oppositions," as Ania Loomba explains, "are crucial not only for creating images of the outsider but equally essential for constructing the insider, the (usually white European male) 'self'."[56] Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978) has shown how such images of non-Europeans were used to sustain power and control over them.[57]

In order to arrive at a better understanding of the period's prevalent attitudes regarding Africans we have defined six meta-images of Africanness, which will be of considerable help in exploring the diversity in the stereotyped image of Africans put forward in literary texts. An analysis according to these meta-images will highlight how it was possible for racism and ethnocentrism to outlast the period of abolition. The six meta-images of Africanness are:

(1)   the static negative image: Africans are pictured as inferior human beings throughout the text leaving no room for improvement

(2)   the dynamic negative image: Africans are considered to be inferior but there is hope for improvement

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[53] Ashcroft, *Empire* 175.

[54] cf. Homi K. Bhabha, "Of mimicry and man: the ambivalence of colonial discourse," *October* 28 (1984): 126-7.

[55] Abdul R. JanMohamed, "The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature," *Critical Inquiry* 12.1 (1985): 63.

[56] Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 1998) 104.

[57] cf. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978) 195-6.

(3)   the positive/negative image: Africans are characterised as equal human beings, but their characterisation is influenced by Eurocentric paternalism

(4)   the positive image: Africans are depicted as persons of equal value and humanity

(5)   the hyper-positive image: Africans are depicted as being superior to Europeans in their morals thus functioning as foils to European vice

(6)   the silenced image: Africans do not appear and are not mentioned in the text although they play a central part in sustaining the kind of living characters in the text enjoy.

Each one of these imagological categories will be further qualified, for example, according to what it says about the person depicted (e.g. the passionate, unruly, subservient, suffering African) as well as the person giving the depiction (e.g. the benevolent, paternal, hypocritical, barbarian European) and the motivations underlying each specific 'visual' creation in a certain text. This detailed cultural hermeneutic analysis of the stereotypes resting on these images and their development is of central importance for the deconstruction of negative African stereotypes that are still manifest in our present modern European cultures. In this context it is worth remembering that racism "[…] is transmitted largely through the printed word."[58] It is exactly this process of dissemination facilitating the establishment and permanence of ideologies that calls for an investigation of written texts from the period in question, examining their role in making and keeping received wisdom socially acceptable. As texts pertaining to philosophical, economic, social and political questions of the period and their function in implicitly disseminating the idea of British cultural superiority have already been examined to some extent,[59] fur-

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[58] Peter Freyer, *Staying Power. The History of Black People in Britain* (London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1984) 134.

[59] C.f. David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution 1770-1823* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1966); Howard Temperly, "The Ideology of Antislavery," *The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Origins and Effects in Europe, Africa, and the Americas*, eds. David Eltis and James Walvin (Madison, WI: U of Wisconsin P, 1981) 21-35; Howard

ther research is to be undertaken on analysing and deconstructing the stereotypical images of Africans that were overtly or subliminally disseminated in literary texts, and on examining the reasons given for the stereotypical depiction of Africans. An analysis of the hegemonic dimension of literary texts is worth being pursued as literary accounts of slavery helped to popularise "the image of blacks as victims."[60] What such an analysis might look like shall now briefly be outlined in one example.

Maria Edgeworth's moral tale *The Grateful Negro* written in 1802 tellingly illustrates the kind of images of African slaves created in the slavery discourse. It "[…] proceeds as many conservative abolitionist narratives do, expounding plantocratic paternalism and reciprocal gratitude by slaves as the preferred solution within a historical context of massive slave insurrections in the West Indies."[61] Edgeworth's achievement consists in successfully portraying virtue and vice by contrasting the generous planter Edwards with the tyrannical planter Jefferies, the good slaves Caesar and Clara with the rebellious slaves Hector and Esther. Published in *Popular Tales* in 1804, this didactic tale is written in a simple style moralizing about who is rewarded and who is punished in the contact zone between West Indian planters and African slaves. Edgeworth stages a battle between good and bad: While the good is personified in Mr Edwards, who defends the slaves' rights and proposes extending the ban on importing slaves into England to all English dominions, the bad appears in form of Mr Jefferies, who is convinced of the slaves' inferiority and their being predestined for enslavement – "'[…] they are slaves, and used to be treated as such; and they tell me the negroes are a thousand times happier here, with us, than they ever were in their own country…and,

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Temperly, "Anti-Slavery as a Form of Cultural Imperialism," *Anti-Slavery, Religion, and Reform: Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey*, eds. Christine Bolt and Seymour Drescher (Folkestone, UK: Dawson, 1980) 335-350; Howard Temperly, "Capitalism, Slavery and Ideology," *Past and Present* 75 (1977): 94-118; Nicholas Hudson, "'Britons Never Will Be Slaves': National Myth, Conservatism, and the Beginnings of British Antislavery," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 34.4 (2001) 559-576. Thomas Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 1," *The American Historical Review* 90.2 (1985) 339-61 and "Capitalism and the Origins…Part 2," *The American Historical Review* 90.3 (1985) 547-66, and many more.

[60] Pieterse, *White on Black* 45, 60.

[61] Aravamudan, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation* 294.

after all, slaves there must be; for indigo, and rum, and sugar, we must have.'"[62] Nevertheless, both are aware of the profitability of slave labour as Mr Jefferies reflects, "'[a]ll I know is that the West India planters would be ruined if they had no slaves, and I am a West India planter.'"[63] So the difference between Edwards and Jefferies is that Edwards, while not entirely convinced of the equality of Europeans and Africans, at least strives to make his slaves "'[…] as happy as possible,"[64] while Jefferies, considering Africans to be "'[…] a race of beings naturally inferior to us'" since "'God gives black men what white men forget,'"[65] has no scruples about exploiting them.

The two masters' different stance on slavery is mirrored in their respective overseers. While Edwards hires Abraham Bayley, "a man of a mild but steady temper, who was attached not only to his master's interests but to his virtues,"[66] Jefferies relies on Durant, who "did not scruple to use the most cruel and barbarous methods of forcing the slaves to exertions beyond their strength."[67] What is interesting about this juxtaposition is that it strongly mirrors the abolition debate in which cruel overseers were subjected to severest criticism while the planters themselves were partly excused for their disinterest in slave affairs. This fact is reflected in Jefferies who is forced by the economic requirements of slavery to drown his "momentary compassion [...] and painful reflections in wine."[68] As Jefferies innocently claims upon selling Caesar for debt, "[...] poor devil! I pity him from the bottom of my soul. But what can I do? I leave all those things to Durant."[69] So Edgeworth in a way excuses Mr. Jefferies' and other West Indian planters' behaviour as "selfish epicures," since they nevertheless "[…] passed for men of great feeling and generosity! The human mind, in certain situations, becomes so accus-

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[62] Maria Edgeworth, "The Grateful Negro," *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period*, ed. Srinivas Aravamudan, Vol. 6 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999) 300.

[63] Ibid. 301.

[64] Ibid. 302.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid. 297.

[67] Ibid. 295.

[68] Ibid. 296. Cf. George E. Boulukos, "The Politics of Science: *Mansfield Park* and the Amelioration of Slavery," *Novel* 39.3 (2006) 366-8.

[69] Ibid. 300.

tomed to ideas of tyranny and cruelty, that they no longer appear extraordinary or detestable."[70] The fact that she describes West Indian planters being used to violence and tyranny conjures up the image of West Indians corrupted by profit and blinded by materialistic tenets resulting from slavery. This moral degeneracy is exemplified by Mrs. Jefferies, who in a fury after one of her new gowns is torn when taken out of a box orders Hector's wife to be flagellated.

Apart from comparing opinions about the necessity of slavery by juxtaposing Edwards and Jefferies, Edgeworth in *The Grateful Negro* also contrasts popular views held about African slaves. In her descriptions she reverts to a large arsenal of negative stereotypical African character traits[71] characterising Clara since she is an Eboe to be "'[…] soft, languishing, and timid'" and Caesar as typical for Koromantyns to be "'[…] frank, fearless, martial, and heroic.'"[72] Edgeworth's Eurocentric stance is reflected in Mr. Edwards, who despite having previously conversed with Caesar upon showing him his cottage and provision ground is not sure whether Caesar understands him thus asking Bayley to explain to Caesar if need be. Analysing these various stereotypical African character traits it is important to note the kind of role Edgeworth forces upon the two slave women Clara and Esther. While Clara is fitted the passive role of an obedient wife to the extent that she is willing to give up her life unconditionally to save her husband Caesars', Esther, an obeah woman constituting the cultural backbone of the slave community and enjoying a "high reputation amongst her countrymen,"[73] is portrayed as the chief instigator of an intended rebellion. Representing the 'real' Africa she is depicted most negatively of all African characters, a sorceress who while stretching out her "shrivelled hands" over the "blue flame of a cauldron"

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[70] Ibid. 316.

[71] Later on Edgeworth in a footnote explains to the reader the practice of Obeah based on Brian Edward's *History of the West Indies*: even if this passage is intended to prove the effectiveness of this infatuation, it is the confrontation of "enlightened inhabitants of Europe" and the "superstitious credulity of the negroes" that contributes to her condescending attitude. 309. Moreover, the incorporation of magic spells and the old sorceress creates a negative atmosphere, characterising Africa and its customs as enigmatic, dark, threatening and dangerous.

[72] Ibid. 303.

[73] Ibid. 311.

waits with "infernal joy" and "savage impatience"[74] for the rebellion to commence. Her magic being of such power that she is able to use other Africans like Hector as puppets for her belligerent designs, stimulating "the revengeful temper of Hector almost to frenzy"[75] and blocking out his own reasoning which results in him stabbing Caesar as he is "incapable [...] of listening to anything but revenge."[76] So while Clara is portrayed in a positive/negative image, her character personifying the most obsequious kind of subservience, Esther, the diabolic source of strive and evil on Jamaica, is persistently sketched in a static negative image.

The male slaves Caesar and Hector are also pictured very stereotypically being assigned macho character traits. Both Koromantyns coming from the same region of Africa they are "accustomed to command; for they had signalled themselves by superior fortitude and courage. They respected each other for excelling in all which they had been taught to consider as virtuous; and with them revenge was a virtue."[77] Nevertheless, when Caesar disdains to support the planned rebellion to destroy Mr. Jefferies and his plantations, the great divide between the two black characters foreshadows the victory of the good over the bad slave, the defeat of African savagery by the Europeanised, de-Africanised Caesar. While the obstinate and brave Caesar through the influence of Edwards is turned into a subservient slave set to "die content"[78] for his new master, Hector, affected by Esther's magic powers, despite wishing to save his friend cannot escape the stirred up "desire of vengeance that overcame every other feelings."[79] So while Caesar is painted in a positive/negative image fully subjecting himself to European power and culture – "Do you remember the white man's coming to my cottage? Do you remember his look of benevolence – his voice of compassion? Do you remember his generosity? Oh, Clara, would you make me a murderer of this man?"[80] – Hector is assigned the dynamic negative image as he never gives in to European authority although clearly expressing a proneness of doing so – "I cannot [...]

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[74] Ibid. 322.
[75] Ibid. 311.
[76] Ibid. 323.
[77] Ibid. 305.
[78] Ibid. 323.
[79] Ibid. 319.
[80] Ibid. 313.

listen with patience to one [...] who by a few soft words can be so wrought upon as to forget all the insults, all the injuries he has received from this accursed race; and can even call a white man a friend."[81] So whereas Hector is consumed by animalistic passion, Caesar is portrayed as a more rational human being having greatly benefited from his friendship with the benevolent white planter Edwards who succeeded in re-educating Caesar and instilling new ideas of duty: "Revenge was the ruling passion of Hector: in Caesar's mind it was rather a principle instilled by education. The one considered it as duty, the other felt it as pleasure."[82]

It could also be argued that the moment the plan to murder Jefferies and Mr. Edwards is introduced a decisive quality is added to both characters: honour. Caesar and Hector defend their honour and are fiercely loyal to their commitment. The only difference consists in that it is being evaluated differently, that is, Hector is described as the savage slave who is seeking revenge for the misery inflicted upon his people and on Africa in general – the problem with Edgeworth's story being that she did not capitalize on the fact that African slaves were sacrificed to the planters' lust for profit, that slaves had to work under inhumane conditions and that they were punished not just for deeds they had not committed but just because their skin colour was different – and Caesar is classed as the slave who through 'education' – as short as that period of 'apprenticeship' might have lasted – has come to appreciate the white man's friendship and is thus loyal to him rather than to his own countrymen, "[…] he would stab himself to the heart sooner than betray his master!"[83] even if "[t]he loss of Hector's esteem and affection was deeply felt by Caesar."[84]

When the African slaves on Jefferies' plantation rise despite the rebellious slaves' previous confinement setting "fire to the overseer's house and to the canes,"[85] they are portrayed as a mob inflicting havoc not in need of a leader coordinating actions. Picturing the African slave community as a kind of extension of Hector's irrational animalistic passion makes them appear in a dy-

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[81] Ibid. 307.
[82] Ibid. 305.
[83] Ibid. 315.
[84] Ibid. 315.
[85] Ibid. 324.

namic negative image functioning as a means to instil fear in white people. In the end, the fight between good and bad sees Caesar and Mr. Edwards as winners, the insurgent slaves being 'defeated' not by force but by Mr. Edwards's eloquence: "The influence of his character, and the effect of his eloquence upon the minds of the people, were astonishing: nothing but his interference could have prevented the total destruction of Mr. Jefferies and his family."[86] In this respect it is worth noting that Caesar's "intrepidity and eloquence"[87] which Hector perceived as threatening to the success of the rebellion is at this central moment exchanged for Mr. Edwards's oratory talents, so as not to give slaves the impression that they had the powers to influence important events. However, in the end the evil Mr. Jefferies is punished for his cruel behaviour and indifference towards the slaves' fate and after losing "upwards of fifty thousand pounds"[88] in the night of the rebellion has "[…] no consolation […] but that of railing at the treachery of the whole race of slaves."[89]

Summing up, Maria Edgeworth's *The Grateful Negro* confronts two 'classes' of West Indians: the benevolent Mr. Edwards who seems to care about his slaves' fate and partly trusts Caesar as a fellow human being, seeing him as a slave that can be educated in order to become a faithful servant to his superior moral and cultural stance; and the barbarian Mr. Jefferies and his indifference towards his slaves, leaving their fate in the hands of the cruel overseer Durant. He and his wife are portrayed as degenerate *nouveau riches* who have no scruples about having their slaves suffer for their own pleasure not least since they are convinced about their slaves' inferiority. The story also juxtaposes three kinds of slaves: Hector is depicted in a dynamic negative image as the unruly African slave who in order to quench his thirst for revenge is ready to die, while Caesar is assigned the positive/negative image as he is shown to be capable of improvement even if only within the limits of Mr. Edwards benevolent paternalism. Similarly, Esther resembling the 'real' and threatening Africa full of superstitions and magic fills the static negative image, while Clara is fitted into the positive negative image, not only happily

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[86] Ibid. 324.
[87] Ibid. 309.
[88] Ibid. 324-5.
[89] Ibid. 325.

subjecting herself to Mr. Edwards authority but also to her husband Caesar's supplementing her cultural inferiority shared with other African slaves with a biological inferiority resting in her femininity. None the less, it is a "grateful negroe"[90] personified in Caesar that Edgeworth's and other stories in the slavery discourse attempt to direct attention to: if slaves can be educated to the extent that they side with the white masters, it is possible to do away with slavery since the slaves will then willingly become grateful servants content in their servitude.

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[90] Ibid. 325.

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