

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

“To rise by Enterprize”: Opportunism and Self-Interest  
in British Atlantic Literature, 1700-1854

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Literature

by

Amie Bess Filkow

Committee in charge:

Professor Sara Johnson, Chair  
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Professor Cynthia Truant  
Professor Daniel Vitkus

2014

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2014

## **DEDICATION**

For my mother, the reader  
and my father, the entrepreneur.

And for Paul,  
for everything.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Like any great adventure, writing this dissertation has been alternately thrilling, terrifying and rewarding. I may have steered the ship, but I owe my survival to the crew of mentors, family and friends who supported and encouraged me throughout this long and grueling journey.

My committee chair, Sara Johnson, championed this project from the beginning, even when its comparative and historical scope seemed over-ambitious. Her work on the Caribbean as part of an extended, revolutionary Americas kindled my interest in the region and taught me to complicate representations of slavery and read British literature in its Atlantic-world context. I am incredibly grateful for her honesty, advice and insightful feedback over the years, especially in the hectic final months of my dissertation. Kathryn Shevelow's contagious interest in eighteenth-century British literature and cultural history inspired me to approach the period from under-examined spaces and subjectivities. As a supervisor, Kathryn's ability to put things into perspective calmed my nerves and helped me see the bigger picture. Her kindness and enthusiasm often kept me going, and her experience kept me grounded. Both Sara and Kathryn maintained their commitment to my project and offered their encouragement, even when distance made it so difficult. The impact of their mentorship is tremendous, and I cannot thank them enough.

Lisa Lampert-Weissig's innovative research on Medieval cultural studies, race and monstrosity continues to fascinate me. In her graduate seminar I learned how to work with representations of difference in pre-modern periods. I also learned much from

her as a teacher, and her camaraderie and generosity have always been immensely appreciated. I am honored and humbled that Daniel Vitkus, whose work on early modern cross-cultural studies I was introduced to in Lisa's class, warmly agreed to join my committee in the eleventh hour. And I thank Cynthia Truant for her expertise in eighteenth-century European history, for her interest in my project, and for her continued support.

Three former committee members at UCSD were indispensable in the development of my project. Don Wayne was a caring early mentor who listened to my big ideas and read the very first paper I wrote that attempted to historicize representations of entrepreneurship. Daniel Vickers generously offered his time and gave incisive feedback that helped me to identify "the bee in my bonnet." He encouraged me to look at seafaring and piracy in terms of a complex lived reality, and positioned Atlantic historiography as an ongoing dialogue. I will always be grateful for Lisa Lowe's keen critical insight, good humor and commitment. I benefited enormously from our discussions on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century political philosophy, which informed my arguments about Enlightenment ideology, universalism and race. And while Stephanie Smallwood was not officially on my committee, her graduate seminar on early American historiography and her mentorship in Atlantic and slavery studies had a major influence on the direction of my study.

As an undergraduate in English at UCLA and the University of Winnipeg, I benefited from the guidance of Timothy S. Murphy and Robert Budde, who saw potential and encouraged me to pursue graduate school. My first adventure in eighteenth-century studies was in Max Novak's fiction class at UCLA, where I discovered that canonical

literature could not only be witty and provocative but subversive and even dangerous. Back then, I didn't fully appreciate what it meant to have Professor Novak teach me Defoe, but now that rare opportunity is one I will never forget.

Several staff members at UCSD deserve acknowledgment for making my time in graduate school such a positive one. Ana Minvielle and Thom Hill were not only organized and effective administrators, but always cared deeply about students' well-being. Dawn Blessman, Patricia Valiton, Kristin Carnohan and Patrick Mallon made sure that nothing fell through the cracks—a considerable challenge once I moved to Canada. Teaching in the Making of the Modern World program was an incredible opportunity for me to study comparative cultural history; my dissertation has undoubtedly benefited from this exposure. I am a better teacher thanks to Jackie Giordano and Doug McGetchin's brilliant pedagogical mentorship. Along with Matthew Herbst and Mollie Martinek, Jackie and Doug ran an excellent, well thought-out program that made teaching a genuine pleasure.

Far from home, the friends I made at school made school feel like home: Jamie Rosenthal, Paige Prindle, Emily Kugler, Leslie Hammer, Elle Weatherup, Mike Grattan, Gabriel Jones, Neel Ahuja, Aimee Bahng and John Higgins each made a difference, bigger than they might think. I want to thank my childhood best friends, Kristin Bingeman and Amanda Hayward Drake, for high tea, baby showers, trash disco and long-overdue reunions, and for their many years of friendship.

Although words are my trade, I cannot begin to find the right ones to convey the extent of my gratitude to my family. My parents, Ronna and Colin Filkow, have always been my biggest cheerleaders. They have supported my dreams not just with enthusiastic

encouragement but with steadfast dedication, most significantly in the months and years they helped me with childcare (sometimes 24/7) while I worked on my dissertation. Their pride in my achievement is perhaps more rewarding than the degree itself. I want to thank my father-in-law, Tom LaPointe, for being an astute copyeditor, historical consultant, and on-call handyman. And I am utterly, eternally grateful to my mother-in-law, Sandy LaPointe, for countless hours of childcare, unconditional support, and many, many delicious meals. I can honestly say that without the help of these four incredible people, this project would not have been possible.

Having three kids enroute to the PhD slowed the process down considerably, but I would not have done it any other way. One day I hope my children will understand how much more this accomplishment means because I can share it with them: Leo, who changed my life forever and for the better and who taught me what it feels like to have my heart walk around outside my body; Asher, who makes life interesting, makes me laugh, and has taught me more about individualism than any dissertation ever could; and Sylvie, whose brightness and joy make it all worthwhile.

My husband, Paul LaPointe, embarked on this adventure with me long before either of us knew our destination. He has been there for all of it: the good, the bad and the ugly, and has not once doubted my ability to “do this.” I thank him for his patience, his trust, his friendship, his humor, and his unwavering support. He is a brilliant scholar, a passionate citizen, a DIY genius, a kitchen-table comedian, and the world’s greatest dad. His love has kept me afloat.

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

“To rise by Enterprize”: Opportunism and Self-Interest  
in British Atlantic Literature, 1700-1854

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Literature

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Professor Sara Johnson, Chair

This dissertation examines representations of self-interested colonial agency in British, American and Anglo-Caribbean literature written between 1700 and 1854. The eighteenth-century Atlantic world was one of unprecedented mobility and exchange, where the trade between Europe, Africa and the Americas created a global enterprise in sugar and slaves, and gave rise to new industries, identities and insecurities. By analyzing the entrepreneurial activities of illegitimate, denigrated or disenfranchised Atlantic figures—pirates, planters, slaves and free men of color—I argue that capitalist

fantasies were widely invoked in the pursuit of freedom, and that this ambition enabled the self-making of the colonial other into *both* an economic producer and an agent of collective political resistance. Characterized by this duality, the Atlantic entrepreneur complicates and reworks the ideologies that cohere British national identity at a time of increasing imperial power. To demonstrate this, the three dissertation chapters consider different incarnations of the Atlantic entrepreneur alongside the emergence of nation-building narratives of legitimacy, sensibility and progress. Chapter one reads Daniel Defoe's novels *Colonel Jack* and *Captain Singleton*, and John Gay's ballad opera *Polly*, and argues that pirates were not only entrepreneurial in their profit-seeking plundering, but also in the strategies they employed to challenge legitimate forms and create themselves as useful subjects. Chapter two uses sentimental novels by Sarah Scott and Henry Mackenzie, as well as Richard Cumberland's stage comedy *The West Indian*, to argue that the planter's profitable self-interest enabled his charitable benevolence, which in turn constructs him as an "Atlantic" man of feeling. Chapter three examines Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*, Martin Delany's *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*, and Trinidadian writer Maxwell Philip's *Emmanuel Appadocca; or, Blighted Life. A Tale of the Boucaneers*, to reveal the opportunistic voice of a black Atlantic collective—an ambitious individualism that imagines racial emancipation. The dissertation seeks to demystify the liberal narratives of opportunism and self-made success by exploring how the violent, unstable and transformative Atlantic experiences of slavery, piracy, creolization and revolution inform economic individualism and enable the modern construction of the entrepreneurial "free" agent.

## INTRODUCTION

### Free Agents: Opportunism and Ideology

Self, darling self, was the idol he worshipped, and to that he would have sacrificed the interest and happiness of all mankind.

- Susanna Rowson, *Charlotte Temple*<sup>1</sup>

According to Austen we are to conclude that no matter how isolated and insulated the English place, it requires overseas sustenance.

- Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*<sup>2</sup>

At a fall 2001 meeting in Providence, organized to help the city become more of a Creative Class center, one young man stood up in front of the city's leadership and said: "You say you want us here so long as we don't cause 'trouble.' It's our very nature to ask tough questions; so by our very nature, we're trouble-makers."

- Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*<sup>3</sup>

There are many worlds and much of human history in that vast area between ideology and inertness.

- Jesse Lemisch, "Jack Tar in the Streets"<sup>4</sup>

In 1997 Apple, Inc., led by the visionary and egomaniacal entrepreneur Steve Jobs, launched the "Think Different" campaign in an effort to reposition the company as a competitor in the computer industry. "Think Different" proved to be one of the most successful advertising campaigns in history. Provocatively, neither the print nor the television ads made any reference to a product; instead, the ads show a series of black and white film clips of notable twentieth-century history-makers including Einstein,

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<sup>1</sup> Susanna Rowson, *Charlotte Temple* (1791) ed. Cathy Davidson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986) 37.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994) 89.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2002) 210.

<sup>4</sup> Jesse Lemisch "Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 25.3 (1968): 407.

Ghandi, and Martin Luther King, accompanied by the following spoken word

“manifesto”:

Here’s to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They’re not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can’t do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward. And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.<sup>5</sup>

In the final image of the television ad, a young Indian girl slowly opens her eyes as if to see, for the first time, the possibilities and opportunities within her reach. By removing any reference to the conditions of capitalist production, the campaign “encourage[d] people to define themselves as anticorporate, creative, innovative rebels” (Isaacson 332), and by ending with an inspiring image of an historically subaltern subject, the ads “touted [Apple computers] as devices of liberation”<sup>6</sup> for the global user. Moreover, the campaign’s message of counter-cultural resistance, while not exactly a novel approach in the world of advertising, was being broadcast by a multinational corporation with an obvious interest in dominating the global market—certainly not in inciting political rebellion, or in motivating much “difference,” for that matter. With such an implicitly constrained version of freedom, who was the nebulous Apple “user” and to what extent

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<sup>5</sup> The poem, called “Here’s to the Crazy Ones,” was written by Chiat/Day advertising executives Lee Clow, Ken Segall and Craig Tanimoto. See Walter Isaacson, *Steve Jobs* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011) 329.

<sup>6</sup> See Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1997) 4. Frank’s book examines how advertising in the 1960 sought to invoke youth and creativity and tap into the culture of “cool.” Throughout this dissertation I use the term capitalist to refer to individuals involved in competitive ‘free’ enterprise and the accumulation of capital, and dependent for profit on the production/labor of others. The eighteenth century witnessed the large (if “primitive”) accumulation of capital by the mercantile/middle class, who created industries (sugar and slaves) and institutions (banks), and quickly grew to have more economic control than the land-owning class. See Ralph Davies, *The Rise of the Atlantic Economies* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1973) and Jan De Vries, *Economy of Europe in an Age of Crisis, 1600-1750* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 1976).

could this romanticized “troublemaker” access the opportunities for creative invention that would ostensibly change the world?

In answer to the first part of this question and motivating the current study was an image, a symbol, a construct that I encountered everywhere in the early 2000s and seemed to represent the era of globalization and the burgeoning New Economy: that is, the creative capitalist as global citizen—a mythical “free agent” who blazes his own trail, mans his own ship, and makes a fortune doing what he loves. This figure is mobile, cosmopolitan, tolerant and ostensibly apolitical, at least in its application as a symbol of the market. As the commercialized voice of the late twentieth-century’s “new capitalist order” (Frank 5), the entrepreneurial global citizen vigorously insists that anyone can succeed and that everyone has the opportunity not only to “think different” but also to monetize their ideas. The figure and its associated rhetoric inspire, motivate and cultivate ambition, even if that implied success is economically, politically and ideologically out of reach for many, if not most, of the “citizens” of the world.

In its idealized form, however, the entrepreneurial free agent is a heroic, creative rebel; an inspiring, adventurous risk-taker whom all ‘ordinary’ workers dream of emulating. This characterization is evident from the free agent’s central role in the genre of management theory, which analyzes how policy makers and upper managers manipulate the human capital they employ; in other words, bigger profits await those who discover in others (and develop what is by extension their own) talent for innovation. Even management theory thus recognizes the impact of and uses a rhetoric of emancipation to describe these capitalist figures. For example, in his bestseller *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002), Richard Florida suggests that the ability of free agents “to

break free from the stranglehold of large organizations and take control of their lives” poses a significant threat to the traditional corporate hegemony (28). These said heroes are celebrated for having reclaimed their autonomy, usually in a struggle against a self-serving oppressor: “Advocates of free agency promote a post-industrial vision of economic individualism in which entrepreneurial workers regain independence and recapture a portion of the surplus value that employers formerly appropriated for themselves” (112). Even critics of neoliberalism buy into the association of capitalist success with political emancipation: “By becoming independent contractors . . . citizens are declaring their independence and drafting a new bill of rights.”<sup>7</sup> But these Apple-esque sound bites raise questions about the authenticity of that freedom. In the structures of economic globalization, the real “independent” agents are arguably the downsized, migrant, contingent, transnational laborers who are refused entry into the capitalist manifestation of the creative space their symbolic “freedom” helped to design.

Not by coincidence, this problematic postmodern figure of the global citizen or entrepreneurial free agent resonates with an earlier moment when opportunities for transnational, (not always) independent agents were similarly in question, at risk or unimaginable. The eighteenth-century Atlantic world was one of unprecedented mobility, contact and exchange, where the “triangular trade” between Europe, Africa and the Americas created a global enterprise in sugar and slaves, and gave rise to new industries, identities and insecurities. Nicholas Rogers describes the early eighteenth-century Atlantic as “a world of war, adventure capitalism, and racial inequities” where “little

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas Frank, *One Market Under God: Extreme Capitalism, Market Populism, and End of Economic Democracy* (New York: Doubleday, 2000) 205.

space opened up for amicable relations between people of different cultures, let alone the cultivation of wider solidarities.”<sup>8</sup> Subjectivity in this dissonant but interconnected world was often located at the indeterminate boundaries between metropole and colony, European and Creole, white and black, crime and state, cruelty and benevolence, and slavery and freedom. Many eighteenth-century Britons were invested both financially and ideologically in the Atlantic enterprise, for it embodied the values of (middle class) adventure, (enlightened) discovery, and (market) expansion. In this particular realm, even human contact was a form of enterprise, where cultural mixing was arguably *novel*, in its creation of new identities, and *productive*, in its establishment of slave labor and Creole settlements. And yet, while movement and mixing are the significant images of the Atlantic experience, both were often forced, prohibited, or disavowed. Amid this transoceanic excitement and flourishing “free” enterprise, what proved to be a brutal encounter between Europe and its “others” undermines the cult of middle class adventure and calls into question the ways that an ideological investment in the Atlantic commercial enterprise mediated human contact.

This dissertation examines representations of self-interested colonial agency in British, American and Anglo-Caribbean literature written between 1700 and 1854. Through careful readings of the entrepreneurial and inventive activities of illegitimate, denigrated or disenfranchised “Atlantic” figures—pirates, planters, slaves and free men of color—I argue that capitalist fantasies were widely invoked in the pursuit of independence and freedom, and that this ambition enabled the self-making of the colonial

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<sup>8</sup> Nicholas Rogers, “War, Race, and Labor in the American-Caribbean Waters.” *The Global Eighteenth Century*, ed. Felicity Nussbaum (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2003) 224.

other into *both* a self-interested economic producer and an agent of collective political resistance. Characterized by this duality, the Atlantic entrepreneur threatens, complicates and even reworks the master narratives that cohere British national identity at a time of increasing imperial power. To demonstrate this, the three dissertation chapters consider different incarnations of the Atlantic entrepreneur alongside the emergence of nation-building narratives of legitimacy, sensibility and progress. The ground-breaking scholarly work on liberalism and slavery as co-constitutive provided the critical foundation<sup>9</sup> for my study to explore how the violent, unstable and transformative Atlantic experiences of slavery, piracy, creolization and revolution inform the liberal individualism of economic man, and enable the postmodern construction of the entrepreneurial “free” agent.<sup>10</sup>

I began this project by asking if political resistance in the Atlantic world necessarily came from below; if slaves, sailors, pirates and criminals were, by nature of their economic condition, of an anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist mindset. I soon

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<sup>9</sup> See especially David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999); David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993); Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. (New York: Oxford UP, 1997); C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1938) (New York: Vintage, 1989); and Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944) (Chapel Hill: UNC P, 1994).

<sup>10</sup> These Atlantic experiences are encountered in some way by each of the illegitimate, denigrated or disenfranchised groups listed above and are woven throughout the texts I discuss. *Creolization* is the process by which a transplanted population becomes native to a location, rather than imported from elsewhere (i.e. Europe, Africa). The contact, mixing and resulting re-creation of cultural forms is an unintended but crucial component of creolization, and in this study I use the term to connote a particularly West Indian innovation of forms, figures or tropes that is informed by both the violence and intimacy that was endemic to the Atlantic slave system. I use the term *revolution* not necessarily in the sense of political uprising (although that is relevant to certain texts including *Polly*, Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* and *Emmanuel Appadocca*), but often as a social innovation or ideological revolution. Although the early eighteenth century, when my study begins, is not defined as the “Age of Revolution,” a pre-revolutionary impulse that extended across the Atlantic world can be traced at least as far back as the mid-seventeenth century and the English Civil War.

understood that more often, the opposite was true—from the middle-class merchant to the highwayman-turned-indentured servant, many people were motivated by the pursuit of profit and what C.B. Macpherson calls “possessive individualism.”<sup>11</sup> As I will show and as Felicity Nussbaum points out, this ideology was not limited to individuals but was endemic to the colonial enterprise: “Europe’s curiosity about the larger world erupted because of commercial and imperial self-interest.”<sup>12</sup> That all classes of people in the Atlantic world dreamed of economic independence is not surprising, but I was unsettled by the essentialist opposition of the two choices—surely some of the indentured servants who were motivated by capitalist self-interest managed, within the ideological confines of that pursuit, to complicate, destabilize, or resist aspects of the dominant power structure.<sup>13</sup> Following Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker’s innovative cultural history of labor relations and international collaboration in the early modern Atlantic economy, I

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<sup>11</sup> C.B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962). Several other political scientists, historians and literary critics have also shown this to be the case. See, for example, J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1975) and *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985); Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2002); and Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989).

<sup>12</sup> “Introduction.” *The Global Eighteenth Century*, ed. Nussbaum. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2003) 5.

<sup>13</sup> Anti-essentialism is the view that subjects and cultures cannot be defined universally, or reduced to fixed qualities, but rather that individual histories are local, specific and changing. The literature on anti-essentialism in cultural criticism is vast, but here I am specifically indebted to the work of Asian American studies scholars Rey Chow, Aiwa Ong, and Viet Thanh Nguyen, who have each proposed critiques of essentialist readings of labor and resistance. Chow argues against “idealizing otherness” (xxiii) and encourages us to recognize “coloniality” as “a basic economic condition . . . in which to live, think, and make changes” (185). Ong views transnational/global capitalism as enabling “flexible citizenship,” in which subjects self-identify based on economic interest rather than national origin. Echoing this emphasis on flexibility, Nguyen suggests that Asian American writers and characters use “flexible strategies that concern struggle, survival, and possible assimilation” (5) in order to “navigate their political and ethical situations” (4). Instead of disavowing these “panethnic entrepreneurs” for “selling out,” Nguyen argues, critics should acknowledge and reexamine the “ideological heterogeneity” (7) of Asian Americans (and other marginalized groups). Rey Chow, *Ethics After Idealism: Theory, Culture, Ethnicity, Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998); Aiwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham: Duke UP, 1999); and Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Race and Resistance: Literature and Politics in Asian America* (New York: Oxford UP, 2002).

wanted to examine the political and ideological resistance of various Atlantic groups; but, whereas Linebaugh and Rediker attribute resistance to a revolutionary impulse motivated by class struggle, I saw these revolutionaries to have more in common with the self-interested dominant culture than the authors lead us to believe.<sup>14</sup> In its political activism, what the authors call the Atlantic “proletariat” (20) was necessarily comprised of risk-taking, ambitious, inventive, and indeed, entrepreneurial individuals. While they did not always succeed, by dreaming, plotting and mounting mutinies, strikes, riots, insurrections and revolutions (4), these individual agents channeled their liberal self-interest into a connected, collective enterprise.<sup>15</sup>

From the alternate perspective, did Atlantic entrepreneurs unequivocally support the violence and inequality that accompanied free trade, the amassing of property, and the exploitation of labor? This is not to imply that they had an internal conflict (i.e. make money vs. make a difference—although surely some did), but rather is it possible that embedded in their capitalist ambition were the tools of anti-colonial struggle?<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000). See also Linebaugh, “All the Atlantic Mountains Shook,” *Labour/Le Travailleur* 10 (1982): 87-121. I cannot overstate the impact Linebaugh and Rediker’s historical study has had on my thinking. Criticism of the book points to the authors’ tendency to take liberties in linking the significance of the revolutionary Atlantic world to the problems of twenty-first century globalization, which runs the risk of anachronistically reading the mentality of late capitalism back into a very different, pre-industrial moment. I have tried to avoid this in my own work (perhaps unsuccessfully). However, the book’s transnational scope, cross-disciplinary archive, and effort to foreground a “hidden” cultural history that gives a voice and agency to the disenfranchised have provided a productive framework and significant inspiration for my own study.

<sup>15</sup> Resistance in the Atlantic world took many forms, several of which I consider in this study. The most poignant, of course, were the ways slaves resisted their captivity through escape, rebellion, damaging their master’s property, artistic expression, infanticide and suicide, for example. But resistance is also enacted by the Atlantic entrepreneur’s subversion of the dominant ideology and could include a criminalized pirate donning a disguise of legitimacy, or a sentimental planter implementing slave reforms.

<sup>16</sup> While I use the term “anti-colonial” to signify ideological and political resistance to oppressive colonial powers, I acknowledge that being anti-colonial was not necessarily a ‘good’ thing that would somehow end the violence and inequality of the Atlantic world. The planters and the Creole elite, for example, were

Importantly, I do not assume that to be an Atlantic agent invested in self-making meant that one entirely or necessarily subscribed to a laissez-faire philosophy of society. Rather my interest is in discovering agency in what Michel Foucault calls a *heterotopia*, or non-hegemonic space between/against the dominant ideology of rational choice on the one hand, and a revolutionary political radicalism on the other.<sup>17</sup> The tendency for Atlantic pirates, for example, to pursue their self-interest and subversive economic ambition confounds classification and ideological essentialism.<sup>18</sup> As Erin Mackie explains, poststructuralist attempts to make alterity or otherness a “pure” paradigm are not useful, as many colonial outsider groups like pirates or Maroons are more “interstitial” or *impure* in their status as others: “[T]he cultural-political use of [these groups] has more often been a matter of inclusion, sometimes exploitative, than dismissive exclusion.”<sup>19</sup>

As Jesse Lemisch has astutely noted and as this work seeks to illustrate, “[t]here are many worlds and much of human history in that vast area between ideology and inertness” (407). It is this “vast area” that my study points to, and in which I investigate the ideas of liberal self-interest and emancipative opportunism, and how they are mutually constitutive. Indeed, we cannot forget that before “Liberty” was an English “national virtue” it was itself a radical, capricious idea that sparked a civil war; Joseph Roach explains how this “‘Liberty’ transformed itself from a ludic space on the fringes of

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aggressively anti-colonial and sought freedom from the colonial regime (e.g. the American Revolution), but their freedom involved the brutal enslavement of others.

<sup>17</sup> Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” *Diacritics* 16 (1986): 24.

<sup>18</sup> Timothy G. Lynch, “Workers of the Waterfront, Rebel!” rev. of *Liberty on the Waterfront: American Maritime Culture in the Age of Revolution*, by Paul A. Gilje, H-Atlantic, H-Net Reviews (November, 2005). 10 April 2010 <<http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=10931>>

<sup>19</sup> Erin Mackie, “Welcome the Outlaw: Pirates, Maroons, and Caribbean Countercultures” *Cultural Critique* 59 (2005): 53.

English society into a recognized practice of privileged self-invention.”<sup>20</sup> Out of this transformation important, if distorting, questions emerge: If self-invention is the expression of liberty, what might the self-made man reveal about the anti-colonial revolutionary, and vice versa? While it may be “an uncomfortable contradiction” (Nguyen 6) to do this critical work, can we reconcile the shared self-interested ethos between the metropolitan businessman or colonial slave trader, and the entrepreneurial pirate or slave? That is to say, if eighteenth-century English national identity was constituted in large part by a freedom-seeking liberal entrepreneurialism, to what extent was Englishness also informed by a disenfranchised but opportunistic subjectivity that is most clearly represented by the figures of the criminalized pirate and the colonial slave?

### **The “Postcolonial” Eighteenth Century: Britain and the West Indies**

The interdependency implied by these questions points to the complicated relationship between Britain and its West Indian colonies in the eighteenth-century Atlantic economy. In the context of the triangular trade, the challenges of British North America—what would become the United States and Canada—were dwarfed by the massive investment and interest in the Caribbean sugar islands. The “sugar revolution” of the mid-seventeenth century created entire industries and provided multiple sources of revenue for England, establishing it as an economic powerhouse. Not only could West Indian sugar be sold for consumption in England, but also across Europe; furthermore, the English enjoyed an imposed monopoly on supplying provisions and manufactured

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<sup>20</sup> Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia UP, 1996) 105-6. Specifically Roach is referring to the contrast from the spatial marginalization of early Elizabethan theatre, to the eighteenth-century nationally-recognized practice of honoring stage performers by burying them in “hallowed ground” (106).

goods to its West Indian islands; and of course, sugar production supported and sustained the English slave trade, which brought enormous profit and steadily employed the country's merchant marine.<sup>21</sup> But Britain's commercial success in the Caribbean did little to ease its anxiety towards the colonial inhabitants, an anxiety born from multiple sources, including racist fears of blackness and Creole assimilation, as well as the threat of political resistance and slave revolt. Kathleen Wilson describes the push and pull that linked the two cultures even as it repelled them: "Incarnating the acquisitive possessiveness of empire and its licensed rapacity, the Caribbean was that "secret, underground Self" of English society, and the projected screen of an imagined West Indian "national character" was constantly disrupted with recognition as well as disavowal."<sup>22</sup>

As "[t]he morality and wisdom" of Caribbean slavery became a matter of public debate in the eighteenth century,<sup>23</sup> metropolitan Britons questioned their familial identification with the increasingly offensive colonials. This uncertainty was heightened with visibility, as (wealthy) West Indians arrived in London to pursue education and respectability. By 1766, West Indians appeared to be a fixture in English political and economic life, as the *Gentleman's Magazine* reported: "[T]here are now in Parliament upwards of forty Members who are either West Indian planters themselves, descended

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<sup>21</sup> Richard Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC P, 1972) 25. The English converted from tobacco crop to sugar in the 1640s, first in Barbados, a decision that "made the Barbados planters rich overnight" (19). Indeed, sugar was a vital ingredient in coffee, chocolate, and tea, and by 1700, every English man, woman and child ate about 4 pounds of sugar a year. In 1800 this had reached 18 pounds a year. It was cheap enough so that by 1750 the poorest English farm laborer's wife took sugar in her tea (251). See also Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1985).

<sup>22</sup> Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2003) 130.

<sup>23</sup> Susan Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges: Slavery and the Transformation of English Society, 1640-1700* (Chapel Hill: UNC P, 2007) 179.

from such, or have concerns there that entitle them to preeminence.”<sup>24</sup> In general, colonial success was both economically welcome and socially disdained in the metropole, which provoked complicated reactions: “Ambivalence about the ability of wealth to purchase social status could focus hostility on the sudden acquisition of fortunes derived from the opportunities of empire.”<sup>25</sup> The ‘opportunities of empire’ were thus a double-edged sword, as Roxanne Wheeler has keenly observed: “[T]here was a frightening proportion of Europeans who either ‘went native’ or who, like the [Caribbean] planters, abandoned the national virtues most prized by Britons in their pursuit of wealth: commerce could be dangerous . . . [and many] concluded that Englishness showed alarming evidence of degeneration and vulnerability.”<sup>26</sup>

In his groundbreaking studies of colonial criticism, *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Edward Said argues that the cultural production of European empires is structured by a basic binary social relation of “self” and “other,” and emerges from a discourse that implicitly recognizes but explicitly disavows the role of colonial others in constructing the imperial self.<sup>27</sup> In the past three decades, Said’s work, which attempts to “calibrate the signifying power of the [colonial] references” (*Culture and Imperialism* 89) in the hegemonic discourse of empire, has been developed and applied to interpretations of (among other eras) eighteenth-century British literature and culture, most significantly in the work of Nussbaum, Laura Brown, Peter Hulme, Srinivas

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<sup>24</sup> Derrick Knight, *Gentlemen of Fortune: The Men Who Made Their Fortunes in Britain’s Slave Colonies* (London: Frederick Muller, 1978) 49.

<sup>25</sup> Kirsten McKenzie, *A Swindler’s Progress: Nobles and Convicts in the Age of Liberty* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2009) 92.

<sup>26</sup> Roxanne Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia: U Penn P, 2000) 226.

<sup>27</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979); *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994).

Aravamudan, Roach, Wheeler, and Wilson.<sup>28</sup> These scholars engage in what Said terms “contrapuntal” analyses of (often) canonical British texts, “in which the colonial margin or subtext is revealed to be integral to the constitution of the centre or the whole.”<sup>29</sup> This “postcolonial” application to earlier periods is attended by both challenges and rewards, as Lynn Festa and Daniel Carey discuss in their important recent volume *The Postcolonial Enlightenment: Eighteenth-Century Colonialisms and Postcolonial Theory* (2009):

At times concepts drawn from postcolonial theory are parachuted into analyses of eighteenth-century texts without sufficient recognition of the perils of anachronism. Many of the concepts (ambiguity, hybridity, mimicry) and forms (nation, race, gender) that today anchor postcolonial theory rely on categories of difference that not only do not remain stable across time and space, but also do not exist in a recognizably ‘modern’ form during the Enlightenment. The myriad shapes assumed by early imperial enterprises challenge any attempt to make generalizations about the history of colonialism. (23)

So cautioned, students of the eighteenth-century should still pursue postcolonial analyses in order “to address how historical and cultural differences are structured”:

The need for sustained engagement between histories of eighteenth-century colonial activity, Enlightenment, and postcolonial theory arises from an imperative to think through how the relative value of these forms of difference is produced, not just what these forms of difference might be. . . . The point is not to reify what constitutes identities in order to compare them, but to address how they are made, examining processes of differentiation rather than celebrating difference. (25)

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<sup>28</sup> Nussbaum, *The Global Eighteenth Century; Limits of the Human: Fictions of Anomaly, Race, and Gender in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003); *Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995); Nussbaum and Brown, *The New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics, English Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1987); Brown, *Ends of Empire: Women and Ideology in Early Eighteenth-Century English Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1993); Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and Native Caribbean, 1492-1797* (London: Routledge, 1992); Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans: Colonialism and Agency 1688-1804* (Durham: Duke UP, 1999). This is just a sampling of some of the more influential studies in the field of the “postcolonial” eighteenth century.

<sup>29</sup> *The Postcolonial Enlightenment: Eighteenth-Century Colonialisms and Postcolonial Theory*, ed. Lynn Festa and Daniel Carey (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009) 28. See also Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 51.

Informed by these discerning approaches, one of the underlying narratives of my study is thus how colonial self-interest can reveal imperial vulnerability and work to deconstruct systems of power. Aravamudan's analysis of colonial agency in *Tropicopolitans* is particularly relevant here, in its argument that "[l]iminal presences such as slaves, pirates, prostitutes, and renegades interfere and collude in differing degrees with the colonial project" (76). Reading the eighteenth century through this postcolonial lens acknowledges the self-making of the historically subjected but relentlessly opportunistic and colluding, and illuminates the reality that "from the first moment, colonial dynamics involve practices of resistance."<sup>30</sup>

Whether the metropole liked it or not, by the end of the eighteenth century the British West Indies were, along with the rest of the revolutionary Atlantic world, immersed in the discourse of freedom and opportunity. As the Jamaican planter and historian Edward Long proclaimed, "in our islands, the word *liberty* is in every one's mouth; the assemblies resound with the clamour of, 'liberty and property,' and it is echoed back, by all ranks and degrees, in full chorus."<sup>31</sup> This "'radical' quest for 'popular liberties'" (Dunn 338)<sup>32</sup> pursued in the assemblies of Jamaica and elsewhere, points to the development of a proto-nationalist self-interest in the colonies. But the "popular" in this effort is problematic, since, in the assemblies, the planters were in fact speaking for "no one but themselves" (339). In an analysis of a society that was so

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<sup>30</sup> Barbara Fuchs and David J. Baker, "The Postcolonial Past," *MLQ: Modern Language Quarterly* 65.3 (2004): 331.

<sup>31</sup> Edward Long, "Of the Inhabitants," *The History of Jamaica: Reflections on its Situation, Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws, and Government* (London 1774), II:13, 431.

<sup>32</sup> Q. Frederick G. Spurdle, *Early West Indian Government: Showing the Progress of Government in Barbados, Jamaica, and the Leeward Islands, 1660-1783* (Palmerston North, New Zealand: Published by the Author, 1960) 10-11, 215.

stratified despite (or rather, because of) its cross-pollination, it is especially necessary to identify and examine differences between groups, even if those groups shared (at the very least) a subjected status in relation to the colonizing nation. Mackie explains that “[t]he tension-charged proximity of opposites in the Caribbean world, of black and white, slave and master, provokes an ever more aggressively asserted and categorically fixed insistence on their difference. Here, as in the American South, there is great intimacy between antagonists, one that breeds both familiarity and distance, attachment and division, affiliation and dissociation.”<sup>33</sup>

It is a considerable challenge to reconcile colonial Caribbean society’s at once impenetrable and porous boundaries. On the one hand, colonists “struggled to guard against claims they had degenerated into . . . the “brutish slave,”<sup>34</sup> but on the other, “the colonists were [ready], whenever they felt abused, to identify themselves as slaves” (Dunn 216). This practice echoes the tendency of the British to associate their political oppression with slavery, evident in James Thomson’s “Rule Britannia” (1740) whose lyrics insist that “Britons never will be slaves.”<sup>35</sup> At each level—metaphorically, at least—Britons (and British colonists) could both enslave and be slaves—they were metropole and colony, master and slave, self-made and an implement of another. This shared concern with slavery is more than an ironic connection between Britain and the West Indies; it also shrewdly illustrates how the colonial experience and the violent

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<sup>33</sup> Erin Skye Mackie, “Cultural Cross-Dressing: The Colorful Case of the Caribbean Creole,” *The Clothes that Wear Us: Essays on Dressing and Transgressing in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, eds. Jessica Munns and Penny Richards (Newark: U Delaware P, 1999) 265.

<sup>34</sup> Sarah Yeh, “In an Enemy’s Country: British Culture, Identity, and Allegiance in Ireland and the Caribbean, 1688-1763,” diss., Brown U, 2006, 22.

<sup>35</sup> See Nicholas Hudson, “Britons Never Will Be Slaves: National Myth, Conservatism, and the Beginnings of British Antislavery” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 34.4 (2001): 566.

exploitation of plantation slavery enabled and are constitutive of British imperial identity and national progress.

In *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective* (1996), Antonio Benitez-Rojo argues for the iconic plantation as a symbol for the role of the Caribbean in Atlantic and European history. The Caribbean, he posits, is like a “machine[,] whose flux, whose noise, whose presence covers the map of world history’s contingencies, through the great changes in economic discourse to the vast collisions of races and cultures that humankind has seen.”<sup>36</sup> Within this machine, the plantation functions like a cog that keeps things running, maintaining productivity, subjugation and profit. Olaudah Equiano, whose autobiographical narrative of slavery I discuss in chapter 3, implied this relationship and recognized the significance of the plantation as a symbol of West Indian power and influence. After cataloguing the excessive violence he witnesses while enslaved to a merchant on the island of Montserrat, Equiano laments that “[n]or was such usage as this confined to particular places or individuals; for, in all the different islands in which I have been . . . the treatment of slaves was nearly the same; so nearly, indeed, that the history of an island, or even a plantation, with a few such exceptions . . . might serve for a history of the whole.”<sup>37</sup> Here Equiano highlights the oppressive structures, power struggles, and violent exchanges that are endemic to the West Indian “machine” that symbolized and controlled the Atlantic world from the

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<sup>36</sup> Antonio Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective* (Durham: Duke UP, 1996) 5. “[E]ntrepreneurs . . . tried to construct machines of this family in the Canaries or on the Moroccan coast, but the venture was too big for any single man. It turned out that an entire kingdom, a mercantilist monarchy, would be needed to get the big machine going with its gears, its wheels, and its mills” (9).

<sup>37</sup> Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1999) 80. All subsequent references will be cited in the text as IN.

seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. The point to be emphasized is that while “in their practice of importing and exporting,” plantations—and by extension the West Indian machine—“are dependent, by nature, on someplace elsewhere,” they are also *constitutive* of that someplace elsewhere.<sup>38</sup> The Martinican theorist Edouard Glissant sums up this cross-fertilization: “Identity is no longer completely within the root but also in Relation” (18). Caribbean structures, forms, lives, stories, selves, and history are thus embedded in how we know and understand Britain, and how eighteenth-century Britons knew themselves. Catherine Hall takes this even further by insisting not only that colonized people have constituted modern English identity, but that “the English can *only* recognize themselves in relation to others.”<sup>39</sup>

### **Individualism and Self-making in the Atlantic World**

A brief survey of self-making and individualism in Western thought provides a background for my discussion of Atlantic entrepreneurialism and the self-interested colonial figure. Art historian Erwin Panofsky, in his examination of the transition of philosophical and artistic perspective from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, emphasizes the importance of the Italian Quattrocento, when the inventor, formerly only human, was increasingly perceived as divinely skilled and inspired.<sup>40</sup> Panofsky cites St. Augustine’s dictum “‘creatura non potest creare’—‘the creature cannot create’” (171) to argue that in the deeply religious medieval worldview human activity was considered

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<sup>38</sup> Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: U Michigan P, 1997) 67.

<sup>39</sup> Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 1992) 208, my emphasis. Also quoted in Elaine Jordan, “Jane Austen goes to the seaside,” *The Postcolonial Jane Austen*, ed. You-me Park and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (London: Routledge, 2000) 31.

<sup>40</sup> Erwin Panofsky, “Artist, Scientist, Genius: Notes on the ‘Renaissance-Dämmerung’” in *The Renaissance: A Symposium* (New York: Harper and Row, 1953).

imitative and merely productive, rather than creative: “[Creation] in the sense of calling into being something out of nothing, was a privilege of God alone” (171). But as a result of sociological changes including the concentration of wealth, the secularization of education, and the disintegration of the guild system (166), the inventor gained a “new prestige” as well as the “freedom to choose between his own, self-generated impulses” (168). The inventor, the engineer, and the artist were now creators who could mold themselves and the world without restriction. Imagination was valued as a “‘marvelous’ gift” (171) that placed the human creator in divine company, proudly above law and limitation.<sup>41</sup> The creative individual was thus deemed a powerful ‘maker’ with a divinely inspired, innate capacity for invention.

In the late seventeenth century John Locke articulated the “classical” doctrine of economic individualism by insisting that individuals were born free and with natural rights and therefore had the authority to govern themselves. But Locke also argued that any authority, whether invoked in the rule of a kingdom or the rule of one’s self, must be based in reason.<sup>42</sup> Later Enlightenment thinkers pursued this idea of the right to self-governance, with Rousseau liberating the “self-making”<sup>43</sup> human creature from socially-imposed rules and decorum, and Montesquieu presciently proclaiming that “self-interest is the strongest monarch in the world” (Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* 465). As an extension of this movement towards rational individualism, Adam Smith believed that a

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<sup>41</sup> See also George Bull’s editorial introduction, “Vasari and the Renaissance Artist,” to Vasari, *Lives of the Artists: Volume I* (New York: Penguin, 1987): “By the middle of the sixteenth century the artist had been largely freed from the restrictions of the guilds and the narrow requirements of ecclesiastical patronage. His prestige was immeasurably greater: Cellini boasted that artists were above the laws; the Pope invited Michelangelo to sit down when he came into his presence in case he did so without being asked; Raphael . . . was, in Vasari’s words, a ‘mortal God.’” (18)

<sup>42</sup> Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (1689), ed. Mark Goldie (London: Everyman, 2003).

<sup>43</sup> Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003) 8.

national economy based on individual freedom and self-interest or “self-love” would bring about prosperity for society at large: “It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages.”<sup>44</sup> By pursuing “only his own gain” (292), Smith argued, the self-interested individual inadvertently “promote[s] the public interest” (291). Though Smith’s notion of the invisible hand purported to serve both private and public interests, the complex relationship between liberal individualism and social/collective progress would become the central political debate of late eighteenth-century Western Europe and lead to transatlantic revolution. I discuss nineteenth-century liberalism in the context of black Atlantic collectivism at length in chapter 3, but for the overall purposes of this dissertation, I take individualism to mean the motivation and ambition of individuals to create or invent themselves and to pursue their uniquely-defined self-interest—however impossible or prohibited that attempt might be.

The eighteenth-century “hysteria” for the profitable individualism of economic man permeated many facets of society (Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce and History* 113). Entrepreneurs, demonstrating little ability to control their acquisitive impulses and so consumed by economic interests, began to identify themselves according to their commercial “personality” (108). This energetic capitalist self-making was obviously encouraged at the state level, as the state sought to harness the urges that led to economic

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<sup>44</sup> Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. Kathryn Sutherland, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993) 22.

growth.<sup>45</sup> Perhaps the best indicator of this cultural fervor was the immense popularity of Daniel Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), which celebrated the economic individual who seeks opportunity beyond his social limits. James Joyce famously perceived "[t]he whole Anglo-Saxon spirit" in the character of Crusoe, especially "the manly independence" with which he makes himself into a success.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, the castaway narrative in particular can be read as a metaphor for (among other things) the individual achieving greatness without the support of social institutions or dependencies. Serving as a foil for this intrepid new character, Crusoe's father not only represents the Puritan view of moderation but also, like the eighteenth-century moralists, rejects the avaricious mentality of uncontrollable acquisitiveness he believes has influenced his son:<sup>47</sup>

[My father] told me it was for Men of desperate Fortunes on one Hand, or of aspiring, superior Fortune on the other, who went abroad upon Adventures, to rise by Enterprize, and make themselves famous in Undertakings of a Nature out of the common Road; that these things were all either too far above me, or too far below me; that mine was the middle State, or what might be called the upper Station of *Low Life*. (*Robinson Crusoe* 48).

Crusoe's eventual decision to ignore his father's advice and attempt to "rise by Enterprize" is a symbolic moment in the development of capitalist ideology. All the forms of ambition that so offended the father—aspiration, adventure, fame, the pursuit of the uncommon road, and of course, fortune—combined to construct the ideology of enterprise that permanently transformed subjectivity and social relations in the eighteenth century.

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<sup>45</sup> Joyce Oldham Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978) 263. I will discuss the role of the state in nurturing (and manipulating) entrepreneurial ambition further in chapter 1.

<sup>46</sup> Evan R. Davis, "Introduction," *Robinson Crusoe*, ed. Evan R. Davis (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2010) 11. Qtd James Joyce, "Daniel Defoe," Trieste Lecture, trans. Joseph Prescott, *Buffalo Studies* 1 (1964) 25.

<sup>47</sup> The phrase "uncontrollable acquisitiveness" is Pocock's (*Virtue* 113).

But if the mentality was a kind of hysteria, the reality of entrepreneurial ambition was a rude awakening. As several critics have argued, the cultural emphasis on eighteenth-century individually-driven enterprise or self-made success was largely a fantasy. Despite the financial revolution and emergence of institutionalized credit systems at the end of the seventeenth century, banks generally were incapable of supporting the huge demand for capital lending until the end of the eighteenth.<sup>48</sup> This meant that individual traders and entrepreneurs “most often relied on inheritance, their wives’ dowries, loans from relatives and ‘friends,’ and credit extended by other traders” (23). As Margaret Hunt demonstrates, “[t]he shaky structure of trade and enterprise coupled with the lack of clear boundaries between the family and entrepreneurship lent a special precariousness to English middling life” (31). Crusoe’s relationship with his father is significant in the context of such intersecting family and economic ties: throughout the narrative Crusoe often laments his separation from home and family, perhaps because he yearns for both the emotional and financial support that he had become accustomed to as a middle class son. Furthermore, Crusoe’s father may be anxious not only about saying goodbye to his son, but also about the son’s decision to pursue a personally and financially dangerous Atlantic adventure. That is to say, in the realm of the Atlantic trade, enterprise was even less secure, dependent as it was on the smooth operation of so many natural and human variables. Peter Mathias explains that “[g]ood credit, access to credit and access to cash to meet the unexpected, unanticipatable emergency were keys to survival in this commercial world beset with risk and

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<sup>48</sup> Margaret R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (Berkeley: UC P, 1996) 23.

uncertainty.”<sup>49</sup> With so many challenges and limitations circumscribing the ambitions of economic man, the ideology of self-interested entrepreneurialism becomes much more complicated and problematic. In his examination of risk and failure in eighteenth-century business, historian Julian Hoppit convincingly upends the myth of entrepreneurial self-making:

To assume that during the eighteenth century the economic environment was generally favorable—that the expanding economy meant that anyone could succeed—is to perpetuate the myth of the self-made man popularized by [Samuel] Smiles. . . . [I]n the eighteenth century it was never true that [anyone] “who devotes himself to [money making], body and soul, can scarcely fail to become rich. Very little brains will do.” . . . Many people did devote themselves to business, but only a proportion of them would become rich.<sup>50</sup>

Thus opportunities were abundant but not necessarily accessible. Likewise, profits could be immense, but never guaranteed. In light of this problematic opportunism in Defoe’s England, Crusoe’s story of mobility seems all the more interesting. Despite Defoe’s encouragement and celebration of enterprise, Crusoe’s adventure is strictly a middle class fantasy; the novel does not consider the economic interests of the disenfranchised. Although, to some extent, as a “disempowered third son,”<sup>51</sup> Crusoe had limited options that forced him to ‘make’ himself creatively. Indeed, Maximillian Novak contends that “there is no doubt that Defoe sympathized with the success of any poor seaman who might be able to achieve wealth through his native abilities.”<sup>52</sup> Defoe was an Atlantic entrepreneur himself, and in several novels he figures the “America[s] as a land in which

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<sup>49</sup> Peter Mathias, “Credit and Kinship in Early Modern Enterprise,” in *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy*, eds. John J. McCusker and Kenneth Morgan (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2000) 23.

<sup>50</sup> Julian Hoppit, *Risk and Failure in English Business 1700-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987) 14. Hoppit is quoting Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help: With Illustrations of Character and Conduct* (London: John Murray, 1859) 234.

<sup>51</sup> Nussbaum, “Introduction: The Politics of Difference” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 23 (1990): 376.

<sup>52</sup> Maximillian E. Novak, *Economics and the Fiction of Daniel Defoe* (Berkeley: UC P, 1962) 112.

the poor might discover new opportunities and where convicts and servants could rise to become gentlemen” (147). In Defoe’s fiction, so representative of the eighteenth-century mentality of economic individualism, the Americas and the Atlantic enterprise provide an idealized outlet for ambition and self-making, and become a conduit for entrepreneurial transformation.

Richard Dunn’s thorough and compelling history of the West Indian planter class illustrates the extent to which a 180-degree transformation was possible: “It is seldom seene,” wrote a St. Kitts planter in 1678, “that the ingenious or industrious men fail of raising their fortunes in any part of the Indies . . . from little or nothing to vast estates” (Dunn 188). Without question, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the West Indian planters were the wealthiest individuals in the colonial world (Yeh “Enemy’s Country” 21). Yet despite such evidence, we would be mistaken to assume that everyone who ventured across the sea became wealthy; as in England, entrepreneurial success in the Americas depended on creating and seizing opportunities. The difference between metropolitan and colonial venture was scale: if the rewards of opportunism<sup>53</sup> were enormous in the West Indies, so were the risks. As Dunn illustrates, sugar planting was a “highly volatile business” in which “careless management, a tropical storm, an epidemic disease, a slave revolt, or a French invasion could ruin the most flourishing plantation overnight” (Dunn 189). Hence the men who pursued such a “boom and bust” industry

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<sup>53</sup> Throughout this dissertation I use “opportunism” in its original sense to mean “the practice . . . of exploiting circumstances or opportunities to gain immediate advantage.” However, while I do not want to apply the scientific definitions too literally [i.e. the abilities “to act as a pathogen in certain circumstances” and “to exploit newly formed . . . habitats or niches”], they are useful (and fascinating) for thinking about the opportunism of the disenfranchised as a kind of survival strategy in unstable environments. In their most dependent form, biological opportunists take advantage of change but cannot elicit that change themselves. “opportunism, n.”. OED Online. September 2013. Oxford UP. 24 October 2013

demonstrated an almost brazen willingness to take risks (189). The planter Long describes his cohort as fickle, impetuous and always balancing on the edge of financial ruin; the planters, he writes, have a tendency to “monopoliz[e] large tracts of land, buy[] up all around them, and attempt[] to settle new estates before the old one is cleared of debts” (266). Unintimidated as the planters were by debt (though clearly they had a lot of it), it is hardly a surprise that Long also reveals the planters to be compulsive gamblers: “Many gentlemen of rank . . . impaired their fortunes, and reduced their families to the brink of ruin. It was not at all unusual to see one of them, after losing all his money, proceed to stake his carriage and horses that were waiting to carry him home” (281). By undertaking a business shaped by enormous risk of profit and loss, these men were by definition entrepreneurs, made possible by the Atlantic world in which they operated.<sup>54</sup>

The audacious and often unscrupulous risk-taking of Atlantic entrepreneurs is suggestive of a kind of creative self-invention available to subjects moving within the colonial enterprise. If the West Indian planters were attempting to “make” themselves economically, they were also experimenting with the possibilities of individual identity.<sup>55</sup> As Gordon Lewis contends, the Caribbean “gave new opportunity and expression to all

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<sup>54</sup> “entrepreneur, n.”. From the Old French *entreprendre*: to undertake. OED Online. September 2013. Oxford UP. 24 October 2013.

<sup>55</sup> I use the terms “self-invention” and “self-making” somewhat interchangeably throughout this dissertation to describe the process by which individuals apply agency to differentiate and assert themselves within a social matrix. While these share with Stephen Greenblatt’s notion “self-fashioning” a necessary cultural-historical contingency, they are not quite the same thing. Self-making is a nineteenth-century ideology, but I employ it throughout my analysis of the long eighteenth century because it invokes the drive or ambition associated with (usually capitalist) self-interest. Critics use the related term self-invention to describe the creative imaginings of one’s experience for the purposes of expression, especially in art, literature, autobiography or story-telling. Here, however, I consider self-invention to mean not just a creative but also subversive or strategic assertion of agency. Thus both terms are useful for my analysis because they convey the crux of my argument—the mutually constituting drives of capitalist ambition and creative resistance. See Smiles, *Self-Help*; Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1980); and Jerome Bruner, “Self-Making and World-Making,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 25(1991): 67-78.

the passions that could no longer find an outlet in their native European soil. It provided room for an aggressive and violent individualism.”<sup>56</sup> Similarly, J. Michael Dash argues that the “dream of self-invention” was fundamental to the new world experience, to “establishing authority over the jungle, of achieving a heroic sovereignty.”<sup>57</sup> Invariably and importantly, asserting a “self-active [and] creative” agency in the Atlantic world is as much associated with revolution as it is with economic interest (Linebaugh and Rediker 333). Roach alludes to a kind of self-invention in the practice of performance, which “provide[s] the ways and means whereby a “Free-born people” can be *formed*” (76). In this sense, the fantasy of autonomous self-making involves the molding and wresting of oneself from the power of another (master/government/writer).<sup>58</sup> Indeed, an examination of colonial opportunism must acknowledge this alternate enterprise—a “collective self-invention” (Dash 42)<sup>59</sup> that asserts political ambition and pursues collaborative opportunities.<sup>60</sup> Lewis suggests that this shared interest, for good or ill, indicates “an embryonic . . . colonial nationalism” (122).<sup>61</sup> While my project does not engage directly with the development of a Caribbean proto-nationalism, I am very

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<sup>56</sup> Gordon K. Lewis, *Main Currents in Caribbean Thought: The Historical Evolution of Caribbean Society in its Ideological Aspects* (1983) (Lincoln: U Nebraska P, 2004) 79.

<sup>57</sup> *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context* (Charlottesville: UP Virginia, 1998) 159. Here Dash uses the plot of Gabriel García Márquez’s 1967 novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (New York: HarperCollins: 2004) to illustrate this notion of new world self-invention.

<sup>58</sup> Since the late 1960s, poststructuralist and Marxist critics have argued that no person can ever really free themselves from the network of ideological, economic and institutional “power” that informs, manipulates and controls all human subjects, communities and nations. See Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation),” *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, Trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971); and Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1995), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), “The Subject and Power,” *Critical Inquiry* 8.4 (1982): 777-795.

<sup>59</sup> This is the phrase Dash uses to describe the development of a nuanced Caribbean cultural and national identity in the face of colonial subjugation.

<sup>60</sup> For a discussion of collaboration among blacks in the Atlantic diaspora created from the exodus after the Haitian Revolution (1791), see Sara E. Johnson, *The Fear of French Negroes: Transcolonial Collaboration in the Revolutionary Americas* (Berkeley: U California P, 2012).

<sup>61</sup> ‘Ill’ meaning, for example, the case of planter unification against an increasingly abolitionist Britain.

invested in uncovering traces of that pre-formation in the cultural record of Atlantic enterprise. Examining the West Indies and the Atlantic world in the context of self-invention, opportunity and nascent nationalism allows us to consider, using an anti-essentialist approach,

the ways in which the planter societies were not dark, turbulent, violent, or restrictive worlds, but rather were vibrant, dynamic, fluid, and modernizing environments that appealed to a different set of Britons from those who shaped the cultural and moral standards of Britain proper. . . . [I]n the Caribbean, . . . traditional restraints on mobility could be broken down, and considerable wealth acquired. (Yeh, “Enemy’s Country” 21)

Yeh’s statement is important but needs qualification. In the ongoing dialectic of Atlantic self-making, entrepreneurialism cannot avoid slavery as its constituent other—that which makes and is made by it. Thus while the oceanic and economic Atlantic was indeed mobile and lucrative for some, the majority of inhabitants *were* restricted from any movement that did not serve the colonizers’ interest. The only movement—the only identity-forming “performance” allowed of the disenfranchised Africans—is the transformation by which they are turned into slaves (i.e. a literal and figurative [middle] passage). How, then, can we even begin to talk about opportunities for uplift and a self-active, creative agency in a society where most people were stuck at the bottom?

My analyses in the following chapters support the position that we *can* and *should* explore the self-interested individualism of the colonial other. Recent scholarship in political theory has attempted to renegotiate the predicament of individualism and postcolonialism by demystifying Enlightenment ideology.<sup>62</sup> Jennifer Pitts persuasively argues that the major political thinkers of the later eighteenth century, including Smith,

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<sup>62</sup> See Muthu; Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2005).

Edmund Burke and Jeremy Bentham, did not intend for their pluralist ideas of self-interest and progress to exclude or disavow colonial subjectivity.<sup>63</sup> Rather, Pitts shows that all of these writers, despite their differences, were in fact critical of colonial expansion and legitimately believed “that all human beings are naturally equal” (3). But this was not a monolithic vision: Sankar Muthu argues that there was a “multiplicity of universalisms” and varied “conceptions of human diversity” (266) among political thinkers. He demonstrates how influential Enlightenment philosophers such as Diderot and Kant believed in cultural difference (7) as well as individual “self-cultivation” for all humans, albeit in their own cultural contexts (175).<sup>64</sup> The characterization of the colonial ‘other’ as an uncivilized, irrational “backward subject” (Pitts 21) developed and took new forms with the nineteenth-century “liberal turn to empire” and imperialist discourse (2).<sup>65</sup> Muthu offers an explanation for this misappropriation of Enlightenment ideas: “It is perhaps by reading popular nineteenth-century political views of progress, nationality, and empire back into the eighteenth century that ‘the Enlightenment’ as a whole has been characterized as a project that ultimately attempted to efface or marginalize difference, a character that has hidden from view the anti-imperial strand of Enlightenment-era political thought” (6).

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<sup>63</sup> Also cited in Festa and Carey, 11.

<sup>64</sup> “Enlightenment anti-imperialism has been understudied most likely because of its failure to take root in both the broader political cultures in which it was presented and in the intellectual writings of later thinkers, including those who in some sense saw themselves as heirs to the tradition of progressive thinking of the eighteenth century” (Muthu 4).

<sup>65</sup> See also Uday Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1999).

Elucidating an anti-imperialist<sup>66</sup> Enlightenment epistemology enables us to fairly evaluate the individualism of the (disenfranchised) colonial subject, but we must be willing to apply as much specificity and critical rigor as we would to a critique of imperial oppressors. We must be prepared, Rey Chow explains, to “work negatively” on the colonial or non-European “other,” despite the difficulty and discomfort of this practice:

Why should we refrain from performing the work of negativity on the “other” that is the non-West as well? To be sure, this would be an arduous task, implying as it does the need to work negatively on those who are already bearers of various types of negation—of poverty, deprivation, abuse, distortion, discrimination, extermination. But this is also the reason their encounter with the well-established negativity of Western thought would prove poignant and provocative, providing as they will instructive antidotes to facile idealist and idealistic projections. (Chow xxi)

In my study, the “work of negativity” involves identifying in the colonial subject a capitalist self-interest and its associated sins of avarice and pride, and theorizing how that self-interest can develop into complicity with the colonialist regime.<sup>67</sup> In my analysis of Atlantic piracy, for example, I show how the pirate as colonial ‘other’ actively pursues opportunities that serve his economic self-interest as well as that of the state. The dialectic is not simply oppositional but involves willing inclusion and collusion. However, by examining this self-interest in an anti-essentialist way I reveal not only

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<sup>66</sup> I am following Muthu and Pitts’ use of “imperialist” here, but in the broader dissertation I use the term “anti-imperial” interchangeably with “anti-colonial.”

<sup>67</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak would disagree with my attempt to find traces of self-interest in the other, particularly regarding the subaltern slave: “No perspective critical of imperialism can turn the Other into a self, because the project of imperialism has always already historically refracted what might have been the absolutely Other into a domesticated Other that consolidates the imperial self.” However, as I argue in my discussion of the escaped (blackface) slave Morano in John Gay’s *Polly* (chapter 1), there is a trace of agency in the Other’s expression of ambition, even if the goals of that ambition are never actualized and the Other never escapes oppression. “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism” *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1985): 253. See also Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988) 271-313.

economic complicity, but also how self-interest created a tradition of anti-colonial dissent (Knight 74, Dash 15). Rather than choose an ideological side, I conclude that in the Atlantic world, complicity and dissent work together in a ‘creolized’ form of colonial struggle—that collective freedom is made possible by individual ambition.

### **The Atlantic Entrepreneur: Forms and Identities**

In this study I use the broadly conceived “Atlantic entrepreneur” to describe a variety of entrepreneurially-minded subjects who participated and moved within the Atlantic enterprise from the late seventeenth through mid-nineteenth centuries. I examine several forms of enterprise, including the illegitimate “business” of piracy, the ambitious “benevolence” of planting, and the ventures that transplanted Africans—both free and enslaved—undertook as sailors, merchants, writers and revolutionaries. I identify these individuals as entrepreneurs rather than businessmen in order to de-emphasize state-sanctioned legitimacy and draw attention to the attributes that actually define an entrepreneur: risk and initiative, vision, creativity, and (usually) limited capital. This is an important distinction because while pirates and slaves were not considered legitimate businessmen, their capitalist and revolutionary ambitions demonstrated the entrepreneurial characteristics of pursuing self-interest, taking risks and seizing opportunities.

In the long eighteenth century Atlantic entrepreneurs were identified by various labels with slightly different meanings that allowed their detractors to level a more nuanced critique. The oldest and perhaps most interesting of these labels, *upstart*, was employed quite regularly during the century to denote someone typically low-born “who

has newly or suddenly risen in position or importance; a new-comer in respect of rank or consequence.”<sup>68</sup> It was a particularly useful marker for Atlantic entrepreneurs whose success seemed to belie their humble origins, and I employ it throughout this dissertation. In Thomas Southerne’s 1694 stage version of *Oroonoko*, Captain Driver, a colonial trader, is described as an “Upstart to Prosperity, one that is but just come acquainted with Cleanliness.”<sup>69</sup> The upstart and its associated *parvenu* gradually became replaced with *nouveau riche*, which insinuated new wealth and influence.<sup>70</sup> All variations emphasize how strongly unsuited the Atlantic entrepreneur was deemed to be in relation to his new social position. Even by the late eighteenth century, when wealthy West Indian planters were highly visible in metropolitan upper crust social circles, “Englishmen . . . never quite accepted the glittering, decadent absentee magnates as proper gentry” (Dunn 335). Whether it was his lack of manners, his ostentatious behavior, or his illegitimate accomplishments, the *Atlantic* entrepreneur was a complicated “new character” in eighteenth-century society and fiction, and required an expanded lexicon to articulate his unsettling impact on British culture and imperial power.<sup>71</sup>

The instability wrought by the Atlantic entrepreneur required several attempts to describe (and contain) him, but to celebrate the colonizer as capitalist—that is, the ideological ideal of the Atlantic entrepreneur—only needed one word: hero. Throughout this study, I discuss how and why, in different circumstances, the entrepreneur is also

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<sup>68</sup> "upstart, n. and adj." OED Online. September 2013. Oxford University Press. 26 October 2013.

<sup>69</sup> Thomas Southerne, *Oroonoko: A Tragedy, The Works The Works of Thomas Southerne*, Vol. II. eds. Robert Jordan and Harold Love (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988.)

<sup>70</sup>"parvenu, n. and adj." and "nouveau riche, n. and adj." OED Online. September 2013. Oxford University Press. 26 October 2013.

<sup>71</sup> Sharon Harrow, *Adventures in Domesticity: Gender and Colonial Adulteration in Eighteenth-Century British Literature* (New York: AMS P, 2004) 107, nn 19.

figured heroically; in his various forms the Atlantic entrepreneur is reinterpreted as a sentimental hero, a rogue hero, an anti-hero, and the self-made man as hero. To some extent, the more the entrepreneur serves British economic and national interests, the more heroic he becomes. In the early eighteenth century, for example, Defoe created a Whig hero out of the merchant adventurer, and by 1769 Frances Brooke could idealize the North American colonies as a bountiful utopia and the colonizer as a heroic “benefactor” and creative life-force: “In my opinion, the man who conveys, and causes to grow, in any country, a grain, a fruit, or even a flower, it never possessed before, deserves more praise than a thousand heroes: he is a benefactor, he is in some degree a creator.”<sup>72</sup>

### **Atlantic Studies: Ocean as Trope and Territory**

This study examines the interdependency between Britain and its West Indian colonies, yet a standard postcolonial binary model of oppressor and oppressed may not adequately theorize the nuances and complex subject position of the colonized, self-interested individual who seeks profit and opportunity. Urmi Bhowmik argues that an alternative focus “on the networks of exchange, circulation and affiliation enabled by trade allows for a more flexible notion of identity-production[,]” one that considers subjectivity informed by “camouflage, ambivalence, and cross-identification.”<sup>73</sup> The Atlantic world provides both a productive metaphor of migration and mobility, and the social history to examine and theorize the ambivalence and multiplicity Bhowmik

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<sup>72</sup> Frances Brooke, *The History of Emily Montague*, ed. David Staines (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1995) 222.

<sup>73</sup> Urmi Bhowmik, “Globalizing the Eighteenth Century,” *Literature Compass* 1 (2004): 2.

describes. The possibilities and dilemmas of the Atlantic as trope echo the opportunities and evils of the Atlantic as economic territory and enterprise.

In the chapters that follow, I examine the idea of *flux* as a particularly eighteenth-century Atlantic way of being and experiencing the world. The physical ocean, its economic realm, and the subjects who are transported and connected by it are constantly changing, fluctuating and flowing. In her examination of the “transatlantic” as an analytical tool, Laura Stevens elaborates on this idea of

the ocean as source of both separation and connection. An ocean is a site of almost empty surfaces but richly populated depths, a place that must be passed through rather than settled on, and a vast territory whose edges change with the hours. For these reasons the ocean offers a pliable metaphor for a . . . world understood in terms of permeable boundaries, uncertainty, or flux.<sup>74</sup>

Like the ocean that enabled the exchange, the Atlantic enterprise was in flux, as were its agents, their identities, the nations from which they came, the ideologies on which their identities relied, political alliances, and the market in which it all converged. The popular eighteenth-century images of an English privateer (who often becomes a pirate) on board a ship moving across the open water, or an English adventurer (who often becomes a slave-owning planter) on an untethered Caribbean island, illustrate the presence of that Atlantic flux in metropolitan culture—an underlying (under-flowing) but always present sign of instability. The notion of a static ‘Englishness’ or undiluted national identity is complicated by the dynamic experience and movement of the entrepreneur who pursues ambition in the Atlantic economy, as well as the general fluidity of the ocean that provides his passage. In this dissertation I interpret the *Atlantic* in the Atlantic entrepreneur as imparting more than just a trade route. By reading motivation,

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<sup>74</sup> Laura Stevens, “Transatlanticism Now” *American Literary History* 16.1 (2004): 93.

determination and ambition as forms of movement, exploration and change, my analyses invoke a metaphorical entrepreneurialism in the Atlantic and, likewise, find traces of Atlanticism in the figure of the entrepreneur.

Similarly, in the study of race and slavery, the figurative possibilities of an Atlantic framework can elucidate the many unfathomable and inexpressible ‘waves’ of the black experience. Stevens acknowledges that we cannot understand the histories of colonialism and the slave trade “or their ongoing effects without considering that they took place across the expanse of an ocean” (“Transatlanticism” 94). Paul Gilroy’s influential 1993 study examines both aesthetically and metaphorically the complex journeys that black people have taken by way of the sea, in an attempt “to rethink modernity via the history of the black Atlantic and the African diaspora into the western hemisphere” (Gilroy 17).<sup>75</sup> His work is “concerned with the flows, exchanges, and in-between elements that call the very desire to be centered into question” (190). Gilroy emphasizes the black Atlantic significance of the sailing ship; indeed, ships “focus attention on the middle passage,” but they also recall transatlantic communication or circulation, as well as the collectivity of sailors and pirates (4). As I will demonstrate, the ship, along with the plantation and the island, is an important device of both the (black) Atlantic enterprise and the (black) Atlantic entrepreneur.

As several critics have cautioned since Gilroy’s study was published, however, a careful analytical balance is needed between the fluid meaning of the Atlantic experience and the strict racial and human categories implemented as tools of violence and

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<sup>75</sup> Gilroy defines the black Atlantic as a “transcultural, international formation” of identity that features a “rhizomorphic, fractal structure” that is antithetical to national models (4).

oppression. Brent Hayes Edwards argues that Gilroy, in following Linebaugh and Rediker's view of a "proletarian internationalism," creates an abstracted notion of "transnational circuits of culture" rather than "specific ground-level histories of culture in port cities and on ships around the world."<sup>76</sup> Similarly, Joanna Brooks warns that "declaring the 'hybridity' or 'fluidity' of eighteenth-century racial identities wrongly suggests the ephemerality, immateriality, or evanescence of race in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world. . . . The inconsistency of learned discourses about race in eighteenth-century Europe does not correlate with the instrumental power of race in eighteenth-century America" (Festa and Carey 24).<sup>77</sup> While I believe my study is grounded in what Edwards calls "a contextualized history of transnational cultures" (63), it is also driven by a desire to understand how the effects of transnational experience contribute to ideology and culture formation. In different ways, each of the three dissertation chapters explores this development, illustrating the circum-Atlantic world to be, as Roach perceives, "a vast behavioral vortex, the forces of which created certain characteristic patterns that continue to influence values and practices still extant today" (30).

While the goals of this project are pursued using literary exegesis, my research interests and the questions that guide this study are strongly historical. As Ann Laura Stoler shows, transnationalism itself is an historical concept, as "[c]olonialisms of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries drew on and animated circuits of

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<sup>76</sup> Brent Hayes Edwards, "The Uses of Diaspora" *Social Text* 66.19 (2001): 63. Edwards holds Gilroy's concept of a black Atlantic up to scrutiny as "a promiscuously capacious category" (45) that, in contrast with what he argues is a more useful notion of *diaspora*, does not sufficiently "allow[] for an account of black transnational formations that attends to their constitutive differences" (54).

<sup>77</sup> See Joanna Brooks, *American Lazarus: Religion and the Rise of African-American and Native American Literatures* (New York: Oxford UP, 2003) 16.

movement that crisscrossed metropolises and peripheries, that disregarded official histories and national borders.”<sup>78</sup> The field of Atlantic studies “privileges history without borders” and thus offers productive and challenging transnational approaches to literary and cultural analysis.<sup>79</sup> David Armitage discerns that “[l]ike the Atlantic itself, the field is fluid, in motion, and potentially boundless, depending on how it is defined; that is part of its appeal, but also one of its drawbacks.”<sup>80</sup> Important for my study, Atlantic history “assumes that explanations for events in one place might lie elsewhere” and therefore “challenge[s] a history of national exceptionalism” (Games 4).<sup>81</sup> In his effort to historicize the “idea” of Atlantic studies, Bernard Bailyn emphasizes the problematic genealogy of the field when he analogizes the scholar’s voyage to that of the European transoceanic explorer.<sup>82</sup> The earliest origins of Atlantic studies are somewhat contested between, on the one hand, World War II-era anti-isolationist interests that gave rise to NATO, and on the other, the much earlier, multi-ethnic historiography of W.E.B. Du

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<sup>78</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, “Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies,” in *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, ed. Stoler (Durham: Duke UP, 2006) 40. The Oxford English Dictionary defines “transnational” as “extending or having interests extending beyond national borders or frontiers; multinational.” OED Online. September 2013. Oxford University Press. 15 October 2013

<sup>79</sup> Alison Games, “Introduction, Definitions, and Historiography: What is Atlantic History?” *OAH Magazine of History*, 18:3 (2004): 4.

<sup>80</sup> David Armitage, “Three Concepts of Atlantic History,” *The British Atlantic World, 1500 – 1800*, eds. David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002) 29. Armitage offers three interpretive frameworks: Trans-Atlantic denotes a linear association between Europe and the Americas (usually between the metropole and its respective colonies). Circum-Atlantic suggests a more fluid, broader contact between several (coastal) points throughout the region. Cis-Atlantic history is defined as that “of any particular place – a nation, a state, a region, even a specific institution – in relation to the wider Atlantic world” (24).

<sup>81</sup> For example, “[s]et within the Atlantic World, the United States, in both its colonial and early national periods, shared more with other colonies and new nations in the Americas than it differed” (4).

<sup>82</sup> Bernard Bailyn, “The Idea of Atlantic History” *Itinerario* 20-1 (1996): 19-44. Cited from a reprint of Bailyn’s article for the International Seminar on the History of the Atlantic World, 1500-1825 (1996) 22. “Western affluence has allowed us to roam the globe as scholars[.] . . . [T]here comes a moment when historians . . . suddenly see within a mass of scattered information a new configuration that has a general meaning never grasped before, an emergent pattern that has some kind of enhanced explanatory power” (22).

Bois, C.L.R. James, and Eric Williams that examined the relationship between slavery, capitalism, and revolution (Armitage 15).<sup>83</sup> Both trajectories reveal how the ocean serves as a carrier of a rich history of trade and migration of humans and their culture, but the history of the slave trade, slavery, and race played no part in the first strain of Atlanticism. Armitage contends that the latter group's contribution is more genuinely international than scholars of the white Atlantic, who, incredibly, "had overlooked these inconvenient or uncongenial ancestors" (15).

In recent decades, Atlantic studies has emphasized critical approaches to colonialism and slavery, acknowledging the African slave trade as the most significant development of the Atlantic world. The astonishing slave population of this massive enterprise is truly what sustained and enabled the growth of the Atlantic world: Between 1600 and 1800, 289,900 Europeans migrated to the British West Indies, while 2,045,550 Africans were forced there (Games 5). Yet remarkably, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the British received only 15 percent of the 9.5 million total slaves imported to the Americas (Dunn 229).<sup>84</sup> The transnational approach of Atlantic studies provides the wide lens needed to grasp the enormous scale and multinational purview of slavery and the slave trade.

The Atlantic as an historical object emerges as a European invention or construct, as J.H. Elliot explains, "the end product of innumerable voyages whose point of departure

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<sup>83</sup> DuBois, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870* (1896); James, *The Black Jacobins*; Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*. The NATO-based genealogy of Atlantic history is the work of Bailyn, a major figure in the field and the founder of Harvard's International Seminar on the History of the Atlantic World, 1500-1825. According to Bailyn, the Cold War-era U.S. sought to join together with its ideological allies in an "Atlantic community" that represented western civilization, and stood in opposition to the threat of Communist expansion. See "The Idea of Atlantic History" 4. See also Armitage 14.

<sup>84</sup> "Brazil was the leading slave market, as it would continue to be until the 1840s" (Dunn 230). Citing Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: U Wisconsin P, 1969).

was the ports of northern and Iberian Europe. Here, unlike in the Indian Ocean, there were no pre-existing oceanic trading systems into which European ships and merchants irrupted. The Atlantic began its historical existence as a European lake.”<sup>85</sup> Motivating these voyages, of course, were "successive waves of navigation, exploration . . . and imagination” (Armitage 12). The Atlantic world as an historical phenomenon was also created by the profound impact of nearly two-hundred years of revolution: from England in 1642 to the United States in 1776, from France and Saint Domingue in the 1790s to Latin America in the 1820s, the ocean enabled communication networks and provided a passage for refugees seeking political emancipation. I want to emphasize the association of the Atlantic with the expanding historical opportunities for exploration, imagination, invention, oppression, and revolution as evidence for the central role of the ocean in this study.

Atlanticism gained a literary following in the early 1990s in the wake of Gilroy’s work on black diaspora studies. More recently Nussbaum, a literary critic, emphasized the importance of the Atlantic region to the related field of “Critical Global Studies,” whereby, “instead of imagining the globe in terms of centers and peripheries we might turn to diasporic areas of cultural mixture . . . or we may organize intellectual investigation around bodies of water rather than land masses” (*Global* 10). While this approach is useful for cultural studies in general, the aforementioned borderless purview that Atlantic studies enables is enormously helpful for rethinking the literature and culture of the long eighteenth century. Previously, eighteenth-century English literary studies has emphasized the sociological developments of a modernizing British nation

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<sup>85</sup> J.H. Elliot, “Afterword,” *The British Atlantic World, 1500 – 1800*, 234.

such as its burgeoning middle class, the birth of the novel, and the important role of women in sustaining the literary market as both readers and writers. Such major themes remain key to understanding the politics and culture of eighteenth-century Britain and Europe, but with an increasing interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration between history and literature (Stevens, “Transatlanticism” 95), critics such as Nussbaum, Aravamudan and Roach are borrowing from Atlantic studies methodology in order to examine cultural production and subjectivity as forms of exchange. Roach explains that “[t]he idea of circum-Atlantic cultural exchange does not deny Eurocolonial initiatives their place in this history—indeed, it must newly reconsider and interrogate them—but it regards the results of those initiatives as the insufficiently acknowledged cocreations of an oceanic interculture” (5). Throughout this study I employ a similar interdisciplinary approach in my reading of eighteenth-century literature in order to identify and examine the circum-Atlantic “cocreation” of the self-interested entrepreneur.

### **Literary Archive**

This study constructs a cultural history through literary analysis, specifically by tracing a particular figure or character type across multiple genres over the course of the long eighteenth century. Humanities scholars have considered the role of various risk-takers in the colonial Atlantic world—planters, pirates and slaves, for example—but few studies (especially few literary studies) have examined these groups together in terms of their Atlanticism, their entrepreneurial ambition, and the dynamic between self-interest and collectivism. I read the entrepreneurial Atlantic figure as both a legitimate representation of specific cultural attitudes and beliefs, and as an historical subject who

potentially influenced and informed those attitudes. As an analysis of representation, this study does not take the figure at face value, but carefully unpacks and complicates how writers judge, deconstruct and re-imagine his social role and cultural significance.

While all of the texts under study here were written by residents of Britain or the extended British Americas, these authors are in fact English, Scottish, Nigerian, African-American, and Afro-Caribbean men, and one woman, who encountered the Atlantic world in different ways.<sup>86</sup> They were colonial administrators, planters, and investors in the Atlantic trade; they were critics and sympathizers of slavery; they were Whigs and Tories; they were white, black and mixed-race; they were enslaved and free. They represent the diversity of the eighteenth-century Anglo-Atlantic world. More than anything, they share an interest in the complexity of the Atlantic experience and the self-interested entrepreneur. Due to this necessarily transcontinental and multi-ethnic archive, my study emphasizes what Nussbaum calls a “widened” or “global” approach to the traditional (London-centric) field of eighteenth-century British literature—one that makes sense of the period through its margins and its “diasporic areas of cultural mixture” (*Global 1*). I have culled my archive using this framework in order to explore the possibility of a dialogue between British and colonial subjectivities, and investigate how they read and speak through one another.

Like their authors, the texts I examine represent diverse genres and are collectively significant. I look at novels, plays, autobiographies, political treatises,

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<sup>86</sup> While the theme of family is an important concern in parts of each of the chapters that follow, I have chosen not to examine the role of gender in this study. There are, however, rich possibilities to do so in the future; some areas to consider include the homosociality of pirates and traders; the ways that female characters function as the capital/property of the Atlantic entrepreneur; the entrepreneurial conundrum of slave women hucksters; and women’s activities as business owners, traders and prostitutes.

historical accounts, and poetry, with some genres weighing more heavily than others. The transnational approach is also useful in considering the meaning of genre as a product of history; for example, it helps to “show that the novel was a multicultural and interregional genre of the eighteenth century, rather than a primarily English one” (Stevens, “Transatlanticism” 100). Popular English novels like *Captain Singleton* and *The History of Sir George Ellison* ‘travelled’ across the ocean, connecting readers, developing ideologies, and naturalizing Atlantic characters such as pirates and sentimental planters. Similarly, plays written in England and performed in the Americas to wide acclaim such as *The West Indian* linked Atlantic identities by bringing insecurities and prejudices to center stage. Finally, slave autobiographies and political treatises such as those by Equiano and Delany joined Atlantic abolitionists together in struggle and endorsed calls for black uplift beyond national borders. As I have discussed throughout this introduction, and as Stoler explains, “[a] strong current of scholarship now is bent on showing that innovations in political form, and social imaginary, and in what defined the modern itself, were not European exports but traveled as often the other way around” (41).

Nevertheless, working with a transnational archive has posed at least one challenge—that is, the vague representation of colonial economics in metropolitan literature. In seeking to uncover the ways eighteenth-century writers mythologize and critique the Atlantic enterprise and its entrepreneurial agents, I looked for characterizations of the Atlantic entrepreneur in British and Anglo-Atlantic literature, and also identified traces of Atlantic enterprise in stories of metropolitan lives. In general, fictional, dramatic and poetic depictions of economic self-interest exploded in eighteenth

century British literature. As John McVeagh writes, after 1700, “if trade was once an unpoetic subject, it is so no longer.”<sup>87</sup> While it portrayed the adventure and success of traders, the literature rarely draws attention to the exploitative elements of trade, or the source of colonial wealth. But slavery and sugar were necessarily the reasons for any white West Indian’s success, and after 1770, literature begins to depict the economy of the plantation, though typically in the context of an anti-slavery critique. A key strategy, as I have mentioned, has been to follow Said’s contrapuntal method of reading between the lines of canonical literature to identify colonial silences. His example of this practice using Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park*, and his outline of the questions one should ask when encountering these traces, have been tremendously useful for my own analysis:

[T]here needs to be a commensurate effort on the part of [Austen’s] readers to understand concretely the historical valences in the reference [to Antigua]; . . . we should try to understand what she referred to, why she gave it the importance that she did, and why indeed she made the choice, for she might have done something different to establish Sir Thomas’s wealth. Let us now calibrate the signifying power of the references to Antigua in *Mansfield Park*; how do they occupy the place they do, what are they doing there? (*Culture and Imperialism* 89)

By asking and working through the answers to questions like these, my study investigates significant traces of British economic (and ideological) investment in the Atlantic enterprise, and in the slavery, violence and self-interest that produced it.

## Chapter Outlines

Each of the three dissertation chapters explores a prevalent eighteenth-century British ideology or mentality—legitimacy, sensibility and progress—and demonstrates

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<sup>87</sup> John McVeagh, *Tradefull Merchants: The Portrayal of the Capitalist in Literature* (London: Routledge, 1981) 64.

how the entrepreneurial strategies of a disavowed other (colonial/Atlantic subjects who are antithetical to the ideology in question) contribute to the construction of that ideology, and therefore to both Anglo-Atlantic and British metropolitan identity. My first chapter examines satires on moral imperialism and heroic adventure that invoke the Atlantic pirate as a kind of “unlicensed” or illegitimate entrepreneur. I begin by examining the ideology of illegitimacy in early eighteenth century Britain, when saving the lives of abandoned and ‘bastard’ children who could one day become useful and productive citizens, was seen as a worthy investment for the national interest. This cultural insistence on legitimization through productivity extended to other disavowed subjects, including criminals and pirates, whose illegal practices could be overlooked if they contributed to legitimate profit. I argue that pirates are not only entrepreneurial in their profit-seeking plundering, but also in the strategies they employ to challenge legitimate forms and create themselves as useful subjects.

I first analyze Defoe’s picaresque novel *Colonel Jack* (1722) for its portrayal of the self-made man as Atlantic criminal or bastard, and reveal the entrepreneurial imperative of illegitimacy that emphasizes self-determination, honor and industry. Jack is a “charity-school boy” who aspires to gentility and social legitimacy, and is constantly reinventing himself and pursuing new opportunities on both sides of the Atlantic, but all roads seem to lead him back to a life of crime. Jack’s narrative depicts the alienation of the disenfranchised within a modern value system that manipulates illegitimacy for its own productive use. In my reading of *Captain Singleton* (1720), I offer a deeper investigation of the complicity between legitimate trade and crime, revealing the many ways Defoe blurs the lines between them. Examining Singleton and his crew, I argue

that the pirate can be read as an illegitimate bastard, and that this experience has informed his 'legitimate' identity as a self-interested, ambitious entrepreneur engaged in a business like (and unlike) any other. I show the pirates' complicity with the global trade network as both facilitator and beneficiary, and emphasize how economic rationalism legitimizes criminal activity, even that perpetrated by mercantile authorities.

I then examine John Gay's ballad opera *Polly* (1729), which applies the metaphor of illegitimacy to a critique of the West Indies and the colonial project, figuring the Creole as the bastard child of Britain. I argue that the self-interested anti-hero Macheath/Morano performs a complicated opportunism as he displays avarice like the planter class as well as resistance towards their colonizing project of ideological legitimization. By escaping his indenture, turning pirate, and ultimately choosing death over servitude, Morano refuses to be useful through colonial enterprise and yet still proves himself an ambitious upstart. He thus undermines the ideology of legitimacy in a radically entrepreneurial way.

The second chapter investigates the representation of the slave-owning colonial planter as the sentimental hero of the story. I look at mid-eighteenth century narratives of sensibility in which the Atlantic entrepreneur is both sentimentalized as a benevolent planter and stereotyped as an uncultivated Creole. I argue that despite the seeming disconnect, the planter's self-interest and profitable success provided the financial support to make him benevolent and charitable, which in turn define him as a man of feeling. I begin by tracing metropolitan contempt towards colonial planters from the late seventeenth through mid-eighteenth centuries. Although the plantation was the embodiment of British imperial power of the time, the planter is denigrated because of

his perceived moral corruption, his ostentatious conduct and his ‘uncivilized’ behavior—believed to be a result of his close proximity to African slaves. Indeed, the planter was seen as a self-interested upstart whose greed and callousness figured him as a villain in much of the literature of anti-slavery. Yet despite this accusation of a “false sensibility,”<sup>88</sup> I identify a handful of mid-century texts in which the planter figure is represented as a benevolent, sentimental hero who functions both within and against the stereotype to emerge as an entrepreneurial (Atlantic) man of feeling.

I first read two novels of sensibility, Sarah Scott’s *The History of Sir George Ellison* (1766) and Henry Mackenzie’s *Julia de Roubigné* (1777), each of which portrays the West Indian planter as a benevolent man of feeling, particularly in his amelioration of the slave conditions on his plantation. While George Ellison, a planter and philanthropist, is economically successful, he is uncomfortable with evidence of his self-interest and tries to ignore or suppress it. This dilemma is apparent in Ellison’s ambition to be benevolent, where ambition both undermines and enables his sensibility. In contrast, Mackenzie’s protagonist Savillon tries to reconcile his acquisitive and sentimental drives; he attempts to live inside the contradiction and create what Brycchan Carey calls a “sentimental economy” on his plantation (64). I argue that Savillon represents a particularly *Atlantic* man of feeling in his appropriation of planter benevolence, and in his experience of isolation that disconnects him from home and the relationships that define his identity.

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<sup>88</sup> Brycchan Carey, *British Abolition and the Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment, and Slavery, 1760-1807* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005) 57.

I conclude the chapter with an analysis of Richard Cumberland's popular stage comedy *The West Indian* (1771) and its depiction of the naïve planter Belcour, whom Cumberland invented as an experiment to test the Creole character's reception and assimilation by metropolitan culture. I argue that the play's attempts to mediate and reconstruct Belcour's sensibility displace his Atlantic self-interest and the violent conditions of his wealth in order to position the planter as a son of England and a sentimental hero. Despite the concerted effort to assimilate him, however, Belcour retains his West Indian alterity and emerges as a "new character"<sup>89</sup> on the stage and in British society—a *creolized* man of feeling. This chapter thus reads the planter as a self-determined counter-hero and an outsider whose difference confronts and informs metropolitan British identity.

Finally, my third chapter examines accounts of black and mixed-race self-made men from the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in order to read race, slavery and revolution into the narrative of liberal enterprise. In particular, I examine the function of liberalism and the problematic notion of 'uplift' or elevation in black Atlantic texts. I begin by outlining the tenets of early nineteenth-century liberalism, which was concerned with freedom for the working classes—economic freedom, that is, for laborers to 'uplift' themselves and participate in the free market. The liberating promise of economic progress is particularly evident in narratives of white uplift, but the individual opportunism upon which this ideology was based was seemingly at odds with a collective black uplift. However, as I have discussed in this Introduction, entrepreneurial

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<sup>89</sup> Richard Cumberland, "The West Indian," *Eighteenth Century Plays*, ed. John Hampden (London: Everyman's Library, 1970) V.iii.399. All subsequent references to the play will be cited in the text in the following format: ACT.SCENE.PG#.

achievement (especially in an Atlantic world context) is born from a struggle against oppressive or limiting forces. I argue that these apparent limitations can actually reveal the entrepreneurial spirit of a black Atlantic consciousness—a contradictory individualism that yet imagines collective racial emancipation. I frame my analysis using Paul Gilroy’s theory of modernity in which the double consciousness of the black experience positions the descendants of slavery “simultaneously both inside and outside the western culture which has been their peculiar step-parent” (48). I demonstrate that black Atlantic writers created a discourse that imagined an *opportunistic collectivism*—a reinvention of self-interested opportunism for the purposes of collective social progress.

I first analyze Olaudah Equiano’s *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself* (1789) to demonstrate the conundrum of black entrepreneurial invention in a revolutionary Atlantic context. As a slave and then as a free man, Equiano pursues opportunity and adventure; he is apprenticed to ship captains, learns key skills, and finds respect and even leadership at sea. However, each time he takes a risk and asserts his economic individuality, he is undermined by white masters, traders and sailors who either take credit for or disqualify Equiano’s achievement. His relentless disappointment at the hands of the planter class figures him as an “entrepreneurial slave.”<sup>90</sup> I then consider success stories of African American entrepreneurs profiled in Martin Delany’s political treatise *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (1852). Delany’s proposal for black uplift involved self-reliance, business education and an

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<sup>90</sup> Joseph Fichtelberg, “Word between Worlds: The Economy of Equiano’s Narrative,” *American Literary History* 5.3 (1993): 466.

insistence on material progress—characteristics that he identifies in the nation’s most successful black entrepreneurs of the time. However, by linking economic independence with “the general welfare of [the black] community at large,”<sup>91</sup> Delany’s program recalls the liberal ideology of an invisible hand that touts universal benefit but risks self-interest undermining the collective enterprise.

These issues of uplift and freedom, individual and community, and skill and success are key themes in the last text I discuss, Trinidadian writer and political leader Maxwell Philip’s *Emmanuel Appadocca; or, Blighted Life. A Tale of the Boucaneers* (1854). As the first Anglo-Caribbean novel, Philip’s narrative is important for its colonial perspective as well as its negotiation of economic liberalism. As a European educated, mixed-race Creole, the protagonist Appadocca’s ambition is complex; he seeks to scale the heights of liberal self-interest, but as a racialized other he constantly faces the limitations imposed by an ideological individualism. I argue that that these barriers provoke Appadocca to experiment with and reinvent what uplift, elevation and progress mean to him and to his collective of disenfranchised, racialized others. This chapter thus explores the (in)compatibility of individual and social progress, and how black Atlantic writers navigate the ostensibly foreclosed opportunities of ideological liberalism.

By looking at the development of the significant but marginalized figure of the Atlantic entrepreneur, my study complicates the power and influence of the economic man-of-the-world during an intensely dynamic, perilous and formative time in modern cultural history. The greater Atlantic world was multiracial, multilingual, transcultural,

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<sup>91</sup> Martin Robinson Delany, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (1852) (New York: Arno Press, 1968) 92.

and full of contradictions—indeed, at the heart of its economy lay the roots of a paradoxical liberal entrepreneurship underwritten by violence and racial slavery. In response to our own global-historical moment of empire-building, neoliberalism and transnational encounter, this study seeks to demystify the universalist modern narratives of individualism, opportunism and self-made success.



Figure 1. William Hogarth, *Captain Thomas Coram*, Foundling Hospital Museum, London.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Jack-Gentlemen and the Jolly Roger: Piracy, Illegitimacy and Ambition in Defoe and Gay**

So universally is Ambition seated in the Minds of Men, that not a Beggar-Boy but has his share of it.

- Daniel Defoe, *Colonel Jack*<sup>1</sup>

In 1740 William Hogarth painted a portrait of Captain Thomas Coram, the “eccentric seaman” (Langford 142) - turned-lobbyist whose concern for illegitimate and abandoned infants led him to create the London Foundling Hospital (figure 1). In her influential *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (1992), Linda Colley describes Hogarth’s painting of Coram as “one of his best . . . but also one of the most powerful evocations of the pretensions of commerce in [British] culture.”<sup>2</sup> Colley then offers a vividly detailed reading of the portrait:

Broad, downright and ruddy, [Coram] poses confidently, his back against a massive pillar, his hair a benignant white and his own, not covered by a looped or pig-tailed wig as it should have been for fashionable society. His clothes, too, are comfortable but plain, the coat cuffs turned well back so as to free his hands for business. . . . No country estate adorns the background of this picture; no sporting dog, or thoroughbred horse, or decorative agricultural implement. . . . Instead, to one side of Coram is the open sea and a sailing-ship, and by his stoutly buckled shoes is a globe—an emblem of dominion—turned to show the Atlantic Ocean which he had crossed and re-crossed as a young man plying his trade as a shipwright. Not inherited rank or broad acres, but commerce and enterprise are visibly the foundations of this man’s civic virtue. Coram, as Hogarth paints him, is the self-made man of trade as hero[.] (56-58)

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Defoe, *The History and Remarkable Life of the Truly Honourable Col. Jacques*, ed. Maurice Hindle, *The Novels of Daniel Defoe*, eds. W.R. Owens and P.N. Furbank, vol. 8 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009) 34. All subsequent references will be made to this edition and cited in the text as CJ.

<sup>2</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1992) 56.

As a founding Governor of the Hospital himself, Hogarth was invested in creating a virtuous portrayal of its Founder, but Coram was an upstart Atlantic tradesman and therefore an atypical portrait subject.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Coram's lack of inherited rank or "thoroughbred" legitimacy is visible in his turned cuffs and unbuttoned plainness, but upstaged by his confidence and by the foregrounded globe. This self-assurance was deserved: by 1740 the merchant class was considered an important sector of society as Britain's global power stemmed in large part from their profitable achievement in trade (Colley 60-61).<sup>4</sup> Still, for Coram, the challenges of his own self-making must have resonated poignantly with that other, bleaker display of illegitimacy as he wrote about "the daily sight of infant corpses thrown on the dust heaps of London."<sup>5</sup> In the spirit of the "public good-national benefit" rhetoric in which writers such as Addison, Mandeville and Swift argued that bastard children could become "useful Members of the Commonwealth" (Zunshine 56), Coram saw their potential to one day be productive citizens whose own "commerce and enterprise" would contribute to the national interest: "The [Foundling] hospital's avowed aim was mercantilist as well as humanitarian: to rescue young lives that would otherwise be wasted and render them useful to the state. Once grown, the girls were sent out as servants; the boys went to sea or worked in husbandry" (Colley 59).

Indeed, the hospital, founded and operated by self-made, commercial men, literally echoed the belief that trade was "the nursery of patriots" (59) as it assumed the

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<sup>3</sup> Coram's was a state portrait, but in general, British painters did not portray middle class subjects until the nineteenth-century realist movement.

<sup>4</sup> "[M]erchants' supremacy was not . . . contested until the nineteenth century. Until then, they remained dominant in wealth, status and importance among businessmen" (Hoppit 180).

<sup>5</sup> Lisa Zunshine, *Bastards and Foundlings: Illegitimacy in Eighteenth-Century England* (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2005) 4.

responsibility of raising both productive and loyal subjects. Coram's charity was therefore less a social program than it was an economic "venture of national importance" (59) that would rally public support (Zunshine 41) to invest in human capital and "preserve labouring lives of real value" (Langford 145). The continued ascension of Britain as an economic power depended on this commercial civilizing process which would create enterprising subjects out of even illegitimate ones. However, as this chapter explores, and as Hogarth's portrait demonstrates, constructing a legitimate and useful "self-made man" from a bastard, criminal, or Atlantic upstart like Coram, was an ironic exercise in representation in which a subject could be self-made only insofar as authorial vision allowed it. Hogarth's image of Coram in his heroic, self-made splendor was "[e]mpirically a state portrait" imagined and executed with the intention that it would "be viewed by an admiring public" (Colley 58). Once hung in the Foundling Hospital's chapel, the portrait conveyed the near-holy message that self-made men were the foundation of Britain's material wealth as well as its "moral worth" (58). From Hogarth's brush strokes to poetry, novels, and parliamentary speeches, cultural discourse sanctified self-creation and success but implicitly disavowed any individual enterprise that failed to contribute to the national interest of economic wealth and imperial might.

In this chapter, I read narratives of Atlantic crime and piracy in the context of the discourse of illegitimacy that was so topical in eighteenth-century England. In the early decades of the century, piracy was increasingly perceived as both a commercially and culturally illegitimate activity. I argue that the pirate is an ambitious, entrepreneurial upstart not only in his risk-taking involvement in illicit trade and his criminal identity, but also in his efforts to reinvent himself as a useful or legitimate subject. As historian Joyce

Appleby explains, the ideology of economic legitimacy can be traced to the 1690s, when influential writers such as Dalby Thomas, Dudley North, John Houghton and Nicholas Barbon reframed the public view of the poor as a potentially useful labor force, and set about “turning idleness to industry” (141).<sup>6</sup> Tapping into this promise of productivity proved to be constructive (157), as both rich and poor were seen as important members of “a kind of national joint stock trading company” that was “England’s collective enterprise” (277). These writers, all of whom came from the entrepreneurial class (they were merchants, bank promoters, stock jobbers, and projectors) were inspired by the metaphor of enterprise and attributed to everyone the behavior of a “naturally active, profit-seeking person”:

The sensibilities of the entrepreneur were projected onto the human race, and the characteristics of men active in trade and finance became the norm for society as a whole. The egocentricity so long stigmatized as selfishness appeared to [these writers] in a new and acceptable guise as legitimate self-interest in a society run by the pervasive pursuit of profit. (264)

These liberal thinkers concluded “that self-interest was a propelling force toward economic progress” (278), and as that progression was increasingly naturalized, the characteristics associated with self-interest—avarice, ambition and opportunism, for example—were deemed equally legitimate, if not necessary components of the new “acquisitive urge” (263). Though these “speculative ideas” were celebrated (265), putting them into action proved more complicated, as the designers did not take a moral

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<sup>6</sup> The ideological and national-political emphasis on improvement may have been a late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century development, but the idea of public support for giving illegitimate children another chance was not new. Regarding sixteenth-century Poor Law legislation, Jenny Teichman writes: “The theory in London and elsewhere in England under the Tudors was that destitute children, legitimate and illegitimate, should be looked after by the community—that is, fed, reared and trained for some kind of work—all at public expense. They were apprenticed, wherever possible, to a trade.” See Teichman, *Illegitimacy: An Examination of Bastardy* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1982) 61. The difference, I would offer, is that ‘improvement’ in the later ideological imagination anticipated the profit these children represented, rather than just the moral imperative to rescue them from destitution.

interest in the society they were addressing; they promoted “a freeing of the individual without apparently realizing that those men and women who had no capital must depend upon the capitalists for an opportunity to pursue their new ambitions” (263). Indeed, “[t]he economic freedom [these writers] endorsed held little promise of employing the poor,” and when these “men of new wealth” failed to commit such resources (263), the subjects who had been stirred by the message but disenfranchised by its empty promise exacted them through alternate, criminal means. The progressive, propelling force of self-interest was thus fraught with corruption as members of the underclass pursued their ambition in often illegitimate ways.

### **Spurious Enterprise: Pirates and Upstart Englishmen**

As Zunshine explains, the eighteenth century is often called the “century of illegitimacy” by scholars who agree that the “phenomenon must have touched everyone who lived at that time and played a crucial role in the economic, social, and cultural life of the Enlightenment” (1).<sup>7</sup> Zunshine’s analysis extends this classification to consider “the multiplicity of cultural meanings of bastardy” and redefines the era as the “century of illegitimacies” (2). From the popular narrative of bastardy, to the establishment of the Foundling Hospital (1739), to the frenzy over what would turn out to be an illegitimate investment scheme—the South Sea “Bubble”—and to the rise of literary piracy, illegitimacy was more than an urban problem, it was a national and imperial concern. It was also a contentious category, for who was a legitimate Briton in the eighteenth

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<sup>7</sup> The phrase “century of illegitimacy” is Ann Twinam’s, *Public Lives, Private Secrets: Gender, Honor, Sexuality, and Illegitimacy in Colonial Spanish America* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2001) 7.

century, an era in which the rise of capitalist enterprise and colonial expansion prompted a reorganization of class and racial identities? In his satirical poem “The True-Born Englishman” (1700), Daniel Defoe disavows this question by pointing to the historical record of England’s own mixed origins:

While ev’ry Nation that her Pow’rs reduc’d,  
 Their Languages and Manners soon Infus’d.  
 From whose mixt Relicks our compounded Breed,  
 By Spurious Generation does succeed;  
 Making a Race uncertain and unev’n,  
 Derived from all the Nations under Heav’n.<sup>8</sup>

Here Defoe demystifies the Anglo-Saxon myth of “Ancient Pedigree” (line 212) by showing how the English race “has not succeeded by legitimate descent, but by ‘spurious Generation’.”<sup>9</sup> He also critiques the “Upstart pride” (line 210) of William the Conqueror (who was known as William the Bastard because of his own illegitimate birth)<sup>10</sup> and his men—“Rascals, thus enriched” with land and power who suddenly became “Lords” (line 209). Defoe continues his attack by identifying the criminal and plundering origins of the English people: “derived/ From . . . / A horrid Crowd of Rambling Thieves and Drones,/ Who ransack’d Kingdoms, and dispeopl’d Towns” (lines 235-8). These references to illegitimacy, piracy and “upstart pride” invite a reading of Defoe’s poem in terms of mercantilism and the Atlantic trade network. British involvement in the slave trade and the looming threat of miscegenation are made especially apparent in the allusion to an

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<sup>8</sup> Daniel Defoe, “The True-Born Englishman. A Satyr” (1700), ed. W.R. Owens, *The works of Daniel Defoe*, eds. W.R. Owens and P.N. Furbank, vol. 1 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2003) 89: lines 169-174.

<sup>9</sup> Wolfram Schmidgen, “Illegitimacy and Social Observation: The Bastard in the Eighteenth-Century Novel” *ELH* 69 (2002): 136.

<sup>10</sup> “William the Conqueror,” *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*, 13 Nov. 2008, Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., 15 Jan. 2010.

“Undescended Dark Original” (line 224), as well as in the poem’s references to rape, forced labor, and racial hybridity:

Thus from a Mixture of all Kinds began,  
That het’ rogeneous Thing, An Englishman:  
In eager Rapes, and furious Lust begot,  
Betwixt a Painted Britton and a Scot:  
Whose gend’ring Offspring quickly learnt to bow,  
And yoke their Heifers to the Roman Plough:  
From whence a Mongrel half-bred Race there came,  
With neither Name nor Nation, Speech or Fame.  
In whose hot Veins newe Mixtures quickly ran,  
Infus’d betwixt a Saxon and Dane. (Lines 334-43)

Defoe’s poem reveals in graphic detail about England what Roach tells us in no uncertain terms about the Atlantic world: for both, “autochthony [is] a fiction of origin” (175). I want to emphasize the significance of Defoe’s term “spurious” for this chapter, primarily because it encapsulates not only the legal meaning of illegitimate origins, but also the suspicion and anxiety attending the self-made upstart and his entrepreneurial scheme or project, as well as the counterfeit nature of Atlantic (and literary) piracy. To be spurious is to be unauthorized, unassimilated, and unidentifiable, much like the literary protagonists in the works I will consider here.<sup>11</sup>

This chapter encourages such multivalence, particularly as the term “spurious” highlights the interdependence of crime and trade in the Atlantic world. Pirates were seen as illegitimate businessmen—criminals, that is, despite their crucial role in the function of the global trade network. In order to navigate the changing tides of legitimacy in the Atlantic world, pirates often employed the tools of disguise and reinvention to challenge or deconstruct legitimate forms, and to demonstrate complicity

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<sup>11</sup> “spurious, *a*” *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1989, *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, 12 Jan. 2009.

between licensed and illicit trade. Pirates are the subject here not only because they embody these complicated emerging ideologies about (il)legitimacy, but also because they serve as models of the opportunistic “upstart” identity and adventurous character of Atlantic enterprise in the earlier eighteenth century.<sup>12</sup> Defoe’s novels *Captain Singleton* (1720) and *Colonel Jack* (1722), as well as John Gay’s ballad opera *Polly* (1729), his sequel to *The Beggar’s Opera*, feature enterprising Atlantic pirates and criminals who assert and complicate the notion of upstart illegitimacy. *Colonel Jack* portrays the dilemma of underclass ambition and along with *Captain Singleton* reveals and interrogates the complicity between legitimate trade and crime. *Singleton* also examines criminal self-interest, achievement and the business of piracy. *Polly* employs the trope of piracy and the location of the West Indies to satirize English attitudes towards its illegitimate colonial “child”: the outlawed antihero who also happens to be a self-made man.

Rather than represent pirates as radical others, these narratives invoke and complicate piracy in terms of what Erin Mackie calls a “constitutive complicity between authorized and outlaw powers.” This theory of co-dependency resonates with Appleby’s account of the misleading message of opportunism in the 1690s and raises important questions about capitalist ambition and “illegitimate” selfhood:

[A]n examination of the place of [pirates] alongside authorized powers illuminates the ways in which official culture retains investments (military, political, cultural) in forms of power it disowns. At the same time, it reveals the dependence, even complicity, of “transgressive” and “resistant” outlaw powers on the institutions and discourses against which they define their own autonomy.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> And thus differentiate from the later, more “gentlemanly” capitalist ventures.

<sup>13</sup> Erin Mackie, *Rakes, Highwaymen and Pirates: The Making of the Modern English Gentleman in the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2009) 4.

Indeed, we see an example of such “investment” in Coram’s efforts with the Foundling Hospital: while London society continued to “disown” the poor and the criminal, in the Hospital it found multiple ways to profit from their productivity—in this case the commercial and patriotic uses of their abandoned offspring. Likewise, as I will show, those seaborne criminals the pirates, in all their illegitimate plundering, produced astonishing wealth for England. I therefore take this conundrum of “constitutive complicity” as a starting principle, that pirates were upstarts whose ambition served the interests of the economic empire that vilified and ultimately destroyed them—but not before facilitating their transgressions and criminal success.

Methodologically, this chapter presents a certain challenge. It runs the risk, as does Mackie’s argument, of entering into that murky territory where assertions about piracy as a cultural or historical category become distorted by “legend”:

Declaring war against all humankind, forging purely male communities outside any domestic or social restraints, remaining politically autonomous and mobile even as the nation-state takes shape around him, the pirate has become perhaps the best-known avatar of those principles of absolute individual will activated in the legends of all these types. But as with all such claims, the famed autonomy and independence of the pirate remain complicated both by the necessary interdependence of piracy with the very colonial powers it opposed and by the tenacious investment those colonial powers maintained in these maritime freebooters whose powers they would exploit. (*Rakes* 121)

Clearly Mackie recognizes and is suspicious of the stereotype of the pirate as “avatar of [the] principles of absolute individual will,” and she works to complicate pirates’ romanticized independence with the reality of colonial *interdependence*. But like most scholarship on piracy, Mackie’s study leans heavily on fictional and circumstantial

accounts because of the dearth of first-hand sources.<sup>14</sup> Aware of how this limitation has challenged his own work, Aravamudan cautions that “[p]iratical discourse should be treated with some caution, as its relation to piracy as a historical practice is still somewhat unclear” (*Tropicopolitans* 84). Recent work in United States and maritime history contests the idealized “paradigm of the isolated” and “transgressive” pirate that has led “historians to depict piracy as a challenge to social norms and hierarchies” and has “created the impression that pirates were ‘engag’d in a perpetual War with every Individual, with every State, Christian or Infidel” (14).<sup>15</sup> In opposition, this recent work approaches piracy as a career and treats pirates as merchant seamen pursuing an enterprise within the Atlantic trade network.

Put forward by leading historian of piracy Robert C. Ritchie and pursued vigorously by Mark Gillies Hanna, “this new way of thinking about global piracy . . . take[s] deep sea pirates and bring[s] them into colonial maritime communities and . . . take[s] maritime communities that have been studied as isolated units and connect[s] them to people, places, and events across a vast geographical space” (Hanna 15). Rather than marginalize these economic agents, Hanna and Ritchie show how the colonies traded with the pirates, who in turn “played a significant role, both real and perceived, in . . . maritime economies” of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (Hanna

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<sup>14</sup> Despite its generic complications and authorial manipulations, Defoe’s (a.k.a Captain Charles Johnson) *A General History of the Pyrates* (1724) has long been the major source text for pirate scholarship. Few first-hand accounts exist; without diaries, logs and letters, historians must rely on heavily mediated sources such as newspaper clippings, court transcripts and military records to reconstruct the pirates’ lives and histories.

<sup>15</sup> Mark Gillies Hanna, “The Pirate Nest: The Impact of Piracy on Newport, Rhode Island and Charles Town, South Carolina, 1670-1730,” diss., Harvard U, 2006, 12. Qtg. “the 1723 trial of Charles Harris and his crew in Newport when the community finally attempted to purge itself of global piracy.” *Tryals of Thirty-Six Persons for Piracy* (Boston: 1723).

6).<sup>16</sup> In order to function in and profit from such an “integral” role, argues Hanna, pirates were especially skilled and savvy businessmen who sought “successful career[s]” and a fortune (15, 13). Hanna takes issue with the prevailing critical view that pirates were “modern revolutionaries” (369). One of those critics is Rediker, who characterizes piracy as a “defiant” “floating mob” of “masterless men” which sought vengeance against authoritative merchant captains and their economic livelihood.<sup>17</sup> Hanna disputes the depiction of “piracy as a rebellion against oppressive social regimes” and shows how the pirates “openly worked with the offices of the highest colonial authorities” (120). Informed by evidence of such interdependence, Hanna maintains that Rediker misinterpreted a key passage in historian Eric Hobsbawm’s foundational work on banditry:

Hobsbawm himself admitted that a true “social bandit” in the Marxist sense was rare, because such an individual had to ‘avoid or reject the temptations of power and wealth’ that would require ‘a degree of political consciousness which is rarely to be found among such men.’ Second, and this is very important here, ‘because to do so implies the rejection of most of that support and protection from the local power-structure, which is so helpful to the bandit who wishes to pursue a successful career.’ (Hanna 13)<sup>18</sup>

This insistence on the temptations of wealth and the necessary “support and protection from the local power-structure” for a successful career is analogous to the impact, described by Appleby, of the universalist message of economic freedom in the face of the

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<sup>16</sup> See also Robert C. Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War Against the Pirates* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1986) 187. In his investigation of pirates’ economic motivation and contribution, Hanna discovered that “[m]ost of the recent historical work focused on the ‘Atlantic’ economy widely construed, fails to even mention piracy” (117). My chapter enters into the ongoing dialogue between Atlantic historians about the nature of maritime culture and the motivation of seamen and pirates.

<sup>17</sup> Marcus Rediker, “The Seaman as Pirate: Plunder and Social Banditry at Sea,” *Bandits at Sea: A Pirates Reader*, ed. C.R. Pennell (New York: NYU P, 2001) 146-147. Elsewhere Rediker argues that pirates “produced nothing and had no secure place in the economic order,” *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987) 285.

<sup>18</sup> Qtg. Eric Hobsbawm, “Social Bandits: Reply,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 14:4 (1972): 504.

shortage of legitimate opportunities to pursue such freedom. And to argue, as Rediker does, that “the chief causal dynamic” of Atlantic piracy was revolutionary politics rather than economics, claims maritime historian David Starkey, “is to ignore the essential truth that the motive which ‘spurs men on to undertaking of the most difficult Adventures is the sacred hunger of gold’—that pirates appropriated the vessels and properties of others to earn profits.”<sup>19</sup>

While mindful of the “ideological slipperiness” (Aravamudan 91) of pirate discourse and its associated fantasy, this chapter—like the larger dissertation—works to reveal a materialist link in which the economic mentalité of the Atlantic world impacted both the historical agents and cultural products constructed within it. Extending this analysis to popular texts from the 1720s, I read the pirate figure as a self-interested but circumscribed entrepreneur, and consider the implications and connotations of that position.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, Hobsbawm includes pirates as those from the lower or rural classes for whom banditry served as “a form of self-help” (in the face of labor shortages) and “a channel of upward social mobility” (“Social” 503-4).<sup>21</sup> Christopher Hill describes a similar reality for transported criminals in the New World, many of whom considered piracy: “At the end of their indentured servitude they were turned loose with no capital

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<sup>19</sup> Rediker is a widely-respected social historian with whom many scholars agree that the internal systems of piracy and life aboard the ship were egalitarian and perhaps even proto-democratic. Where they disagree, however, is about the motivation for these practices: pirates shared booty and emphasized the collective for reasons of recruitment, retention and survival, not out of some preoccupation with justice and equality. David J. Starkey, “Pirates and Markets,” *Bandits at Sea: A Pirates Reader*, ed. C.R. Pennell (New York: NYU P, 2001) 113. Qtg. *The Voyages and Adventures of Captain Bartholomew Sharp* (London: 1684).

<sup>20</sup> The narratives I consider here all take place in the closing decades of the seventeenth century, which was the height of the interdependence of pirates, merchants and colonial authorities. By the time Defoe and Gay were actually writing in the mid-to-late 1720s, pirates had become the manufactured enemy of a newly “legitimized” state. See my discussion on *Captain Singleton*, below.

<sup>21</sup> Hobsbawm is referencing his own work *Bandits* (1969; rev. ed., New York: Pantheon, 1981). See also Christopher Hill, “Radical Pirates?” *The Origins of Anglo-American Radicalism*, Margaret Jacob and James Jacob, eds. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984) 28.

and no opportunities” (26). Piracy was clearly an opportunity; a chance for the otherwise disenfranchised to pursue, however perilously, the dream of economic freedom and the agency that attends it. Instead of outlawing pirates to the margins, or, conversely, writing them off entirely as pawns of the global trade network, I suggest a reexamination of piratical resistance from within or because of pirates’ “legitimate” trade activities as they participate in the Atlantic enterprise. While it is easy to categorize pirates as anarchic and autonomous others, further examination, as we shall see, reveals considerable power and agency in their economic complicity and capitalist intent. Mackie elaborates:

[T]his failure of “pure” oppositionality, ideological or practical-strategic, does not invalidate the socio-cultural power of [the pirates as an historical] group[ ]; rather, if anything, it constitutes one feature central to their continuing currency in a postcolonial world where lines between law and outlaw, black and white, inside and outside, disappear almost as quickly as they are, often opportunistically, calculated and imposed. (“Welcome” 35)

Still, rather than disavow the radical potential of these figures, I argue that by reading the pirate as an upstart or entrepreneur, we rethink critically and productively the relationship between capitalism and self-making in the Atlantic world.

### **Illegitimacy and Ambition in Eighteenth-Century England: *Colonel Jack***

A brief survey of bastardy in early modern English and literary history begins to illustrate the politics of legitimacy and provides a basis from which to cross-examine the bastard, the upstart and the pirate. Despite a considerable record of heroic bastards in classical and Ancient history,<sup>22</sup> bastards in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature “figured . . . mostly as villains associated with treachery, promiscuity, atheism,

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<sup>22</sup> These include Hercules, Remus and Romulus, and Jesus. Less ancient examples include William the Conqueror and of course, Queen Elizabeth I. See Alison Findlay, *Illegitimate Power: Bastards in Renaissance Drama* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1994).

disintegration of community, and death” (Zunshine 18).<sup>23</sup> In her study of illegitimacy in Renaissance drama, Alison Findlay notes that

[i]n plays with a secular focus, [bastards] are shown acting ‘unnaturally’ in society’s eyes, involved in incest, adultery, parricide, fratricide, regicide and rebellion. . . . Bastard villains are disturbing; their ruthless destruction of family, community and State hierarchies exposes the fragility of the legitimate world order. (40)

I am particularly interested in the characterization of bastards as unnatural, rebellious, and threatening to a patriarchal and therefore “legitimate world order.” In their threat to the legal family’s property, bastards were often described as criminals or “robbers” (Zunshine 2). However, their “crime” assaulted not just the immediate family, but a much larger system of power that reverberated at the levels of state and society: “[T]he bastard’s challenge to proper descent readily symbolizes public crises involving national disorder, unstable rulers, and social unrest” (Schmidgen 133). Still, while the Renaissance bastard was a symbol of disruption, attitudes towards illegitimacy changed considerably in the following centuries, when the bastard figure becomes at once a state-sanctioned poster child and a thoroughly modern, at times even heroic, outlaw.

In 1689 the Settlement of the Glorious Revolution changed patriarchal power both in politics and in terms of aristocratic ideology, allowing dynastic inheritance to be overruled.<sup>24</sup> Responding to these political changes, as well as the Financial Revolution of

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<sup>23</sup> Two examples are Shakespeare’s Edmund and Caliban. Discussing the threat of transgressive female sexuality, Findlay notes that “the witch Sycorax in Shakespeare’s *Tempest* (1611) is described as a promulgator of ‘mischiefs manifold, and sorceries terrible’ against the human community (I.ii.264), transgressions which are linked with her pregnancy. She is banished from Algiers ‘with child’ *as though the bastard foetus is a sign of rebellions yet unborn that society wishes to expel*” (10, my emphasis). I will return to the question of illegitimacy, sexuality (miscegenation) and rebellion later in this chapter, in the discussion about piracy, Gay’s *Polly*, and the West Indies, which is, of course, the setting of *The Tempest*.

<sup>24</sup> Michael McKeon, “Historicizing Patriarchy: The Emergence of Gender Difference in England, 1660-1760,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 28.3 (1995): 297. McKeon defines aristocratic ideology “as the set of related beliefs that birth makes worth, that the interests of the family are identified with those of its head,

the 1690s and a booming mercantile economy, early eighteenth-century representations of bastardy emphasized a new construction of legitimacy based on a model of property rights (Schmidgen 137). Pocock theorizes this sea-change, whereby the eighteenth century “witnessed the rise . . . [of a] social personality as founded upon commerce: upon the exchange of forms of mobile property and upon modes of consciousness suited to a world of moving objects” (*Virtue* 108). Illegitimate children, who would have shared this consciousness, were denied all inherited property rights and therefore could not access or assert a social personality; their “attempts to acquire such personality—via inheriting property—were read with an uneasy mixture of opprobrium and compassion” (Zunshine 20). The bastard’s pursuit of an elusive “social personality” and the “opprobrium” and “compassion” that confront it are explored by Defoe in his 1722 novel *Colonel Jack*. A fictional “autobiography” of the life of an ostensible “Gentleman,” the story follows the title character’s negotiations with virtue and corruption as he moves from nameless bastard to successful criminal to man of commerce; a journey that Defoe, in his nationalist stance, perhaps envisioned for all of England’s illegitimate sons and daughters. Defoe is nonetheless suspicious of self-interest and created Jack to make the moral argument that the criminal impulse is not only the domain of thieves and street urchins, but also of successful “gentlemen” traders.<sup>25</sup> In *The Compleat English Gentleman*, Defoe condemns this “sanctioned criminal class” (Makie, *Rakes* 14): “Why shall not a gentleman forfeit his rank and be suppos’d degenerate when he dishonours his blood by . . . crime, such for example as a generall contempt of all moral virtue, a total

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and that among the gentry, honor and property are to be transmitted patrimonially and primogeniturally, through the male line” (297).

<sup>25</sup> See Katherine A. Armstrong, *Defoe: Writer as Agent* (Victoria, B.C.: ELS Monograph Series, 1996), and David Blewett, *Defoe’s Art of Fiction* (Toronto: U Toronto P, 1979) 94.

degeneracy of manners, and in a word an avowed practice of all degrees of scandal and crime?”<sup>26</sup> I want to consider *Colonel Jack* here because it highlights the relationship of illegitimacy and crime to entrepreneurial self-making in the early eighteenth century, and sets the stage for a discussion of the business of piracy and the vicissitudes of legitimacy in an Atlantic world context.

Born the bastard son of a Gentlewoman and a “Man of Quality,” Jack grows up eschewing the non-identity of illegitimacy for an imagined one of gentility. Raised by a woman he comes to call his Nurse, Jack is often reminded of his birth father’s parting words that the woman should never allow Jack to forget that he is a Gentleman, and “that sometime or other the very hint would inspire me with Thoughts suitable to my Birth, and that I would certainly act like a Gentleman, if I believed myself to be so” (CJ 33). The mythology of his high birth arouses in Jack a “strange rectitude of Principles” (31) that motivate him to make choices that set him apart from his young cohort of beggars and criminals: he restrains his passions, neither swears nor uses violence, and returns stolen goods (even those *he* steals) to their rightful owners. In response to the flagrant crimes committed by his “comrades” who call themselves “Honourable” gentlemen (62), Jack exclaims, “this was not the Life of a Gentleman!” (81). In his struggle to attain social personality, Jack is representative of the entrepreneurial imperative of illegitimacy, which emphasizes ambition, reinvention and self-making. In his quest to be something other than a disenfranchised “Black-Guard Boy” (CJ 36) who “know[s] little, or nothing of

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<sup>26</sup> Daniel Defoe, *The Compleat English Gentleman*, ed. Karl D. Bulbring (London: Ballantyne Press/David Nutt, 1890) 28. Qtd. in Mackie, *Rakes* 14.

myself, nor what my true Name is” (124), Jack is “irrepressibly self-inventing.”<sup>27</sup> He experiments with various applications of identity (each a musing on and exploration of gentility)—beggar, pick-pocket, thief, soldier, indentured servant, overseer, manager, planter, colonel, courtier, cuckold, rebel, and merchant—and yet, as some critics have noted, Jack does not end the novel with any kind of coherent persona.<sup>28</sup> Without property, lineage, or even a name to inherit (and thus be modeled or “made” by someone else), Jack is the quintessential self-made man.<sup>29</sup> As David Blewett points out, however, the fact that Defoe named his protagonist “Jack” offers insight into the author’s suspicion of the motives of self-made men: “[According to the OED,] in the eighteenth century the phrase a ‘Jack-gentleman’ means ‘a man of low birth or manners making pretensions to be a gentleman, an insolent fellow, *an upstart*’ (94, my emphasis). Such “pretensions” are thus a form of disguise, a ‘putting on airs’ that paradoxically reveals and distinguishes upstart behavior. In Jack’s quest for the mythical ideal of gentility, even as he amasses great wealth, the kind of social personality described by Pocock, with its dependence on inherited property and legitimate institutions, becomes ever more elusive.

Still, while the problems surrounding Jack’s pursuit of gentility may be a commentary on the “birth vs. worth” debate and the argument for meritocracy that Defoe championed throughout his life, the myth of Jack’s high birth inspires him to take entrepreneurial risks that make him rich and test his “true” as opposed to inherited honor

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<sup>27</sup> John Richetti, “The Novel and Society: The Case of Daniel Defoe,” in *Critical Essays on Daniel Defoe*, ed. Roger D. Lund (New York: G.K. Hall & Co, 1997) 129.

<sup>28</sup> “There is a variousness bordering on incoherence in the modes of gentlemanly conduct and character that Jack identifies and adopts. . . . [He] move[s] through a . . . various repertoire of models” (Mackie, *Rakes* 16).

<sup>29</sup> See Maximillian E. Novak, *Realism, Myth & History in Defoe’s Fiction* (Lincoln: U Nebraska P, 1983) 11, and Michael Shinagel, *Daniel Defoe and Middle-Class Gentility* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1968) 168. Both Novak and Shinagel call Jack a “self-made gentleman” but his gentility is complicated, as this section explores, and has been a point of contention among Defoe scholars.

and virtue. Jack successfully “rises” from his impoverished beginnings to become both a profitable businessman and an ostensibly honorable character, evidenced in his ‘benevolence’ toward his Virginia slaves and his devotion to his four wives.<sup>30</sup>

Eighteenth-century literature thus underwent a shift wherein “male and female bastards emerge as positive figures whose hardships we are invited to commiserate and whose social betterment we are assumed to desire” (Schmidgen 134). Indeed, as the dependency between honor and inherited rank increasingly eroded, the bastard became something of a hero with an astonishing capacity to acquire honor without any claim to ancestry.<sup>31</sup> If Jack is a hero, it is in his empowered, self-made role as “economic man” rather than aristocratic gentleman (Faller 187). Having proven his value as an effective overseer and “reformer” of slave management techniques, Jack finds himself overcome with economic promise and possibility as he earns the highest esteem of the “Great Master” Smith, who presents him with 300 acres, three slaves, a yearly wage, and an open line of credit to build up his own plantation. However, with his restless ambition again roused by the feeling that he “might still be born for greater things,” Jack now acknowledges that “it was Honesty, and Virtue alone that made Men Rich and Great, and gave them a Fame, as well as a Figure in the World” (CJ 150). It is no accident that Jack improves his lot and comes to terms with his self-worth while he is living in Virginia. Echoing the sentiments of his author, Jack is convinced that his American experience provides him the opportunity to rise and would do so for any downtrodden person willing

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<sup>30</sup> See my chapter 2 for an extended discussion of “benevolent” planters.

<sup>31</sup> According to Wolfram Schmidgen, there are several factors that contribute to this rise of the bastard as a hero, including “the revaluation of nature as a benign force (which opened the way for new connotations attaching themselves to the notion of the ‘natural child’), the rise of beliefs in the fundamental goodness and sociable nature of man, and the increasing emphasis on immediate sense perception and sensibility, articulated by a literature in which the socially unbiased outsider became a privileged focus” (134).

to commit to similarly hard work. As a heroic Atlantic merchant, Jack can be read as a fictional parallel to the success of Captain Thomas Coram, whose civic virtue and enterprise Hogarth captured in his famous portrait. Like Captain Coram, Colonel Jack is a self-made man of Atlantic trade with “irrepressible ingenuity”<sup>32</sup> despite no heritable rank.

The common link between Defoe and Coram goes beyond fiction; in his *Generous Projector, or a Friendly Proposal to Prevent Murder and Other Enormous Abuses, By Erecting an Hospital for Foundlings and Bastard-Children* (1731), Defoe laments the effect of infanticide on the future of the British nation: “Thus is the World [robbed] of an Inhabitant, who might have been of use; the King of a Subject; and future generations of an Issue not to be accounted for, had this Infant lived to have been a Parent” (Zunshine 48). In fact, Defoe was an active promoter of the campaign for an English foundling hospital (41), and in his Preface to *Colonel Jack* seems to request the type of charity for orphans that Coram would later provide. Though speaking specifically about charity schools, Defoe emphasizes “how much publick Schools, and Charities might be improv’d to prevent the Destruction of so many unhappy Children, as, in this Town, are every Year Bred up for the Gallows” (CJ 31).<sup>33</sup> With a newfound sympathy for the potential virtue of the illegitimate/criminal, British society looked to cultivate that virtue and apply it to the national progress. While Jack’s adoptive brother and foil, the

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<sup>32</sup> Maurice Hindle, “Introduction,” *The History and Remarkable Life of the Truly Honourable Col. Jacque*, ed. Hindle, *The Novels of Daniel Defoe*, eds. W.R. Owens and P.N. Furbank, vol. 8 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009) 9.

<sup>33</sup> There is a wonderful coda to Defoe’s engagement with the foundling issue: he died in 1731, but in 1870 Defoe’s gravesite was honored with a twenty-one-foot marble monument to the “author of Robinson Crusoe,” paid for by “the united contributions of seventeen hundred persons,” but signed as the “Boys and Girls of England” (Davis, Introduction, *Robinson Crusoe* 18).

roguish and unconscionable “Captain Jack,” is a model for those children who fall prey to the destruction Defoe describes, *Colonel Jack* in a sense models the goal of Coram’s charity: cared for by a nurse, and offered encouragement and education by a few responsible and honorable adults, Colonel Jack eventually escapes his criminal life (at least officially) and pursues a “labouring life of real value” (Langford 148) or, what Moll Flanders, lamenting the lack of it in her own seventeenth-century England, refers to as “an honest industrious Behaviour.”<sup>34</sup> Jack’s industriousness is most evident in his progressive role as an indentured servant, then overseer, then planter in Virginia, but diligence in general is Jack’s distinguishing feature, and in true picaresque fashion he is always venturing toward his aspirations. Through their respective industry and enterprise (again facilitated by their Atlantic experiences), Jack and Moll “add to England’s wealth and prosperity. In a sense this is the economic test of Defoe’s heroes and heroines” (Novak, *Economics* 154).<sup>35</sup> Blewett cites the “pragmatic argument” made by Reverend William Hendley in 1723 that “the charity schools discourage idleness and encourage industry, and from ‘Industry Wealth is increased’” (104). The emphasis on industriousness echoes the rhetoric of the campaign for the Foundling Hospital, made evident in Defoe’s pamphlet, in which illegitimate children embody the promise of a national future, both as laborers and propagators of labor. As Langford explains, hospitals “were not meant to be refuges for vagabonds and sturdy beggars. The

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<sup>34</sup>Defoe, *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1971) 8. While he provides a good model for Coram’s ideal, we should keep in mind that Jack was not in fact raised in a public hospital/charity (he managed to survive among a gang of beggar children), and is something of an anomaly, motivated by what he himself calls “a strange original Notion” (76) to pursue a better life. And as with all of Defoe’s protagonists, “providence” aids Jack greatly in this pursuit.

<sup>35</sup> In contrast to Jack and Moll, “[Captain] Singleton has the spirit of the colonizer, but his contribution to national wealth is to bring his treasure back to England. Crusoe is a successful planter in Brazil, but he does England a disservice by allowing his colony to waste away” (Novak 154).

Foundling Hospital stanches the nation's loss of blood at its critical point, the fearful waste of infants who in time would themselves produce children if preserved long enough to do so" (145). Thus the bastard's pursuit of honor and property—here evidenced by Jack's journey—is initially simply tolerated by public sympathy and appreciation for hard-earned honor, and then rhetorically encouraged, ultimately demonstrating how the productive enterprise of disenfranchised "others" can benefit the state.

For all the rhetoric of opportunism and the national hope pinned on illegitimate children, the "new feeling of empowerment by no means translated into the legally sponsored embrace of bastards as fully enfranchised members of the economic order" (Zunshine 19). This disenfranchisement or alienation constructs illegitimacy as a modern condition, and illegitimate characters like Jack, with his heroically "natural" virtue and his industrious, even patriotic self-making, as thoroughly modern. Defoe—himself an uncompromising modern who wrote "to defend the Junto Whigs, the Bank of England, and the standing army" (Pocock, *Machiavellian* 433)—knew about modernity's alienating powers all too well. Despite his insistence on the importance of the new economy, Defoe was a debt-ridden economic failure who began writing only in a desperate effort to make ends meet.<sup>36</sup> It is perhaps no coincidence that all of his fictional protagonists, despite their pursuit of economic freedom, fail in one way or another.

Susan Glover wonders whether Defoe was "unable to represent imaginatively the shift

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<sup>36</sup> Susan Paterson Glover, *Engendering Legitimacy: Law, Property, and Early Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2006) 105; Manuel Schonhorn, "Introduction," *A General History of the Pyrates*, by Daniel Defoe (Columbia: U South Carolina P, 1972) xxvi.

from the land to the new economy, unable to imagine a fully happy ending” (106).<sup>37</sup>

Perhaps we can see this disconnect in Jack’s discouragement and alienation despite his repeated attempts to succeed. The more ambitiously he attempts to make real the mythology of his gentility, the further he finds himself from fulfillment: upon returning to Europe from Virginia Jack becomes a prisoner of war, a cuckold, has three unhappy marriages, violent encounters with his wives’ lovers and debtors, and risks political danger as a Jacobite.

In some sense Jack pines for a simpler time, before the brave new economic order and before paper credit: “I knew not what Money was, or what to do with it; and never knew what it was not to sleep, till I had Money to keep, and was afraid of losing it” (CJ 61). Pocock theorizes the relationship between symbolic property and the false consciousness of modern individualism: “Once property was seen to have a symbolic value, expressed in coin or in credit, the foundations of personality themselves appeared imaginary or at best consensual: the individual could exist, even in his own sight, only at the fluctuating value imposed upon him by his fellows” (*Machiavellian* 464). Put another way, in a world of symbolic property, the selfhood provided by landed inheritance was at risk; everyone’s social personality was in flux, not just the so-called illegitimate members of society. Existing on the margins, mobile, and detached from the security of tradition, the bastard is a quintessentially modern figure. As a “rootless” and “opportunistic” upstart, Jack becomes the model for a new kind of person.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Crusoe abandons his island kingdom to wander the globe; Moll leaves her successful plantation to live in penitence; Roxana refuses to compromise her principles (or vanity) in order to live with her children in financial independence, and faces ruin; Singleton, as we will see, lives out his life in secrecy, disguise, and fear of capture; and Jack’s greed compels him to revert to his criminal origins.

<sup>38</sup>Paula R. Backscheider, *Daniel Defoe: Ambition and Innovation* (Lexington: UP Kentucky, 1986) 147.

Many individuals pursuing their ambition in the Atlantic world would have been faced with the ‘criminal’ realities of the new economy, which included the exploitative, violent practices of colonialism and slavery. Though still an indentured servant, Jack’s promotion to overseer on the Virginia plantation is the first major achievement of his successful career, and at the time represents the culmination of his determination: “I was elevated to the highest degree in my Thoughts at this Advancement” (CJ 127). But his victory is quickly undermined by the realization that a condition of his advancement is to whip the “[n]egligent” servants and slaves in order to make an example of them (130). Refusing to invoke corporal punishment as a necessary tool of his success, Jack spends the next year trying to detach this violent practice from the master’s business by cultivating the slaves’ mercy and gratitude. Though he succeeds within the parameters of Smith’s plantation, this episode registers Jack’s alienation at the hands of the new economic order as he is faced with a modern value system in which crime and violence operate ‘legitimately’ alongside virtue, merit and honor.

That system sees Jack progress from bastard to criminal to upstart, and back to outlaw; in addition to his political rebellion, at the end of the novel Jack is “denied a final legitimacy” and returns to crime via the black market (Faller 181). The description of Jack as an outlaw echoes Defoe’s “True-Born Englishman” and its illegitimate, piratical conquerors who would be the forefathers of Britain. As I have attempted to demonstrate, illegitimacy and ambition are linked by a concern with self-determination, honor and industry. In the next section I turn to Defoe’s novel *Captain Singleton* as an examination of the way an illegitimate subject can achieve status through a criminal career, and of

how the means of that achievement matter little when the ends see the industrious outlaw meeting the expectations of the complicit state.

**“To cruise for Purchase”: *Captain Singleton* and the Business of Piracy**

Pirates are perhaps the quintessential incarnation of this Atlantic modernity—they are emphatically rootless and opportunistic. The pirate ship, as several critics have observed, is an icon of that landless, fluid, mobile modern world, a striking example of Foucault’s *heretopia* or “counter-site” (24).<sup>39</sup> Exemplifying the relationship between crime and trade, pirates are typically disenfranchised seamen whose risk-taking is a form of self-making. Although pirates are not necessarily literal bastards, they are compelling bastard figures because of their social isolation and what we might call their ‘parentless’ extra-nationalism or lack of allegiance to any specific country. Detached from nation, family and landed property, yet as major players in the Atlantic trade network, pirates have a problematic social personality. They are at once ruthlessly greedy economic men and progressive heroes who embody “true” honor and (at least according to pirate legend) a romantic, democratic enlightenment.<sup>40</sup>

The so-called “Golden Age” of piracy spans more than sixty years from about 1660 to 1720. Whether in their state-sanctioned role as wartime privateers or as unauthorized sea-robbers, pirates practiced an unquestionably violent enterprise, but it was, in effect, an enterprise; as Atlantic commerce grew, pirates demonstrated

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<sup>39</sup> See also Gilroy, Linebaugh and Rediker, and Cesare Casarino, *Modernity at Sea: Melville, Marx, Conrad in Crisis* (Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 2002).

<sup>40</sup> Pirates themselves are fluid figures—particularly as they represent both a kind of “nostalgia” for the prestige of aristocratic ideals and the progressive individualism of modern economic man. See Mackie, *Rakes*.

entrepreneurial agency insofar as they took risks and succeeded in both threatening and facilitating mercantile exchange. Although his *General History of the Pyrates* (1724) indulges in their criminal stereotype, Defoe was fascinated (and disturbed) by the *legitimate* aspects of pirate enterprise, and purposely portrayed his merchants and pirates in often indistinguishable ways. In *Colonel Jack*, the wealthy merchant protagonist acts like a pirate when he engages in illicit trade in the West Indies, and though the pirates in *Captain Singleton* are shown to be outsiders, the novel emphasizes the economic banality of their livelihood, and, importantly, their facilitation of legitimate trade. As Joel Baer explains, Defoe's "fiction generally seeks to reconcile those stark contradictions we have traced in the popular and learned literature, the pirate as both cunning thief and generous lord of the sea, anarchist and nation builder, destructive demon and pioneer of commerce."<sup>41</sup> This effort might be linked to Defoe's optimism about social and individual improvement; that is, his "lifelong dream of a revitalized English economy and his faith in the potential conversion of the most hardened rogue" (Baer 73). The idea of pirates being "converted" into economically useful agents speaks to Defoe's genuine belief in the ambition, talent and expertise of those "bold [and] restless seamen" (74). His stated aim in the 1728 pamphlet *Some Considerations on the Reasonableness and Necessity of Encreasing and Encouraging the Seamen*, is to restore the pirates to "the Service and Interest of their Country" (Aravamudan 82). This emphasis on national interest echoes the convincing arguments of Coram and the supporters of the Foundling Hospital which were as political as they were humanitarian. The title character of

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<sup>41</sup> Joel H. Baer, "The Complicated Plot of Piracy": Aspects of English Criminal Law and the Image of the Pirate in Defoe" (1982); in *Critical Essays on Daniel Defoe*, ed. Roger Lund (New York: Twayne, 1997) 74.

*Captain Singleton*—like Jack and the bastard children whose entrepreneurial potential was a national treasure—is “a kind of Charity School-Boy.”<sup>42</sup> Kidnapped as a young child, Bob Singleton is “raised” by a succession of adults who are interested in him solely as a business opportunity, such as the beggar woman who “wanted a pretty little Child to set out her Case” (2) and the Portuguese Captain who, Singleton explains, “had taken me up as in Distress, and his Business was to keep me so, and make his Market of me as well as he could” (7). By invoking Singleton the child (who would become a pirate) as an economically useful subject, Defoe cleverly mirrors the treatment of English privateers/pirates who were used in the national interest and put to service in the building of the empire, and then vilified when their formerly legitimate enterprise was no longer useful to those interests.

But if Singleton serves the interest of the avaricious adults and the economic empire that use him, he also serves himself. My reading of *Captain Singleton* examines the idea of self-interest as it operates in both pirate-criminals and legitimate entrepreneurs. The least reflective or penitent of Defoe’s protagonists—that is, until the novel’s end—Singleton is a self-serving risk taker whose “sole purpose [is to] make money” (Novak, *Economics* 117). Finding his way free from his guardians, the young sailor takes part in two mutiny attempts and crosses Africa on foot where he mines for gold with a group of Portuguese seamen; later, he makes a wildly successful career as a pirate, repents at last, and retires immensely wealthy. Throughout the narrative, Singleton, like Jack, is ambitious and determined to succeed but characterized by piratical

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<sup>42</sup> Daniel Defoe, *The Life, Adventures, and Pyracies, of the Famous Captain Singleton* (1720), ed. P.N. Furbank, *The Novels of Daniel Defoe*, eds. W.R. Owens and P.N. Furbank, vol. 5 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2008) 209. All subsequent references will be made to this edition and cited in the text as CS.

illegitimacies, from his lack of kinship (in terms of parental/familial bonds and national allegiance), to the unlawful and often violent nature of his enterprise. Though treated like criminals, Singleton and the pirates are opportunistic businessmen—entrepreneurial upstarts—who take extreme risks for enormous reward. Much of their profitable transgression, however, is facilitated by the Quaker merchant William Walters, a significant and unique character in Defoe’s fiction, whose shrewd actions reveal the deceit and hypocrisy of legitimate trade, complicit as it is in the crime and violence of piracy. As a success-seeking criminal, Singleton the pirate embodies an Atlantic selfhood; that is to say, there is a kind of illegitimacy or piratical criminality at the heart of the image and the achievement of the Atlantic upstart that combines enterprising self-interest with the complicity of the state.

While Singleton is not literally a bastard, much of his experience can be characterized as ‘illegitimate’ in the context of my analysis; in particular his ambiguous (even lack of) identity as a result of being unattached to parents or nation or property. Stolen from his parents as a small child, Singleton finds himself in the position of a bastard, detached from his lineage or claim to legitimate selfhood. Although he is likely well-born (his parents could afford a governess), Singleton’s “origins, as far as he knows his pedigree, lie not with biological generation but in an act of purchase,”<sup>43</sup> when the gypsy woman whom he calls Mother “told me at last, she was not my Mother, but that she bought me for Twelve Shillings” (CS 20).<sup>44</sup> This lack of kinship and its heartless

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<sup>43</sup> Deirdre Shauna Lynch, “Money and Character in Defoe’s Fiction,” *The Cambridge Companion to Daniel Defoe*, ed. John Richetti (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008) 89.

<sup>44</sup> An interesting parallel occurs early on in Gay’s *Polly*, when the entrepreneurial slave trader Mrs. Trapeze offers to help the orphan/foundling Polly, vowing to “look upon [her] as [a] daughter” (I.v.82-3), only to turn around and sell her to Mr. Ducat for a hefty profit. Like Singleton, Polly becomes an object of

substitute of economic exchange create a kind of alienation for Singleton; like Jack he is “without social background” and “insufficiently rooted in the social order” (Faller 43-44). Not surprisingly, the rootless Singleton gets involved with “some Masters of Mischief” who are plotting a mutiny (CS 121): “[Harris] asked me if I had a Mind for an Adventure that might make amends for all past Misfortunes; I told him yes, with all my Heart; for I did not care where I went, having nothing to lose, and no Body to leave behind me” (121). This disconnection extends to Singleton’s lack of any national allegiance as he claims that “I had no home, and all the World was alike to me” (45). All the world including England, where he has “neither Friend, Relation, nor Acquaintance . . . tho’ it was my Native Country” (121). Instead of home, England becomes a place where Singleton is “cheated and imposed upon, and used so ill, that I care not if I never see it more” (209). His distance from England and his contact with other nationalities—here portrayed as counterfeit, criminal or illegitimate—emphasizes Singleton’s alienation; for example when he “learn[s] every thing that is wicked among the Portuguese” including how to be a thief (23), and is then enslaved by his Portuguese captain who claims that Bob is a Turk he captured on the Algerian ship. In the first instance he has lost his “Sense of [English] Virtue and Religion” (23) and in the second, nobody on the ship can vouch that he is English and therefore deserving of freedom (24).<sup>45</sup> Ultimately for Singleton, the only kind of seemingly legitimate kinship and national identity he comes to

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exchange: “If we can agree upon the price,” Ducat tells Trapes, “I’ll take her into the family” (I.i.117-18). John Gay, *Polly: An Opera. Being the Second Part of The Beggar’s Opera*, in *John Gay: Dramatic Works*, ed. John Fuller, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford UP, 1983). All subsequent references will be made to this edition.

<sup>45</sup> That is, not until a strip search determines that the uncircumcised Bob “is no Turk” (25).

know are actually counterfeit: at the end of the narrative, he and Quaker William return to live in England disguised as Armenian brothers, neither of which they actually are.

During his time in Portugal, Singleton considers that his wickedness might make him “exactly fitted for [that] Society” (23) but in time realizes that his criminal behavior is better suited to the life of a pirate. Juxtaposing Singleton’s alienation from kin and country with his pirate experience illustrates how pirates represent a kind of illegitimacy. The pirates’ geographical isolation detaches them from their origins, though they do come to view the pirate collective as their family. Abandoned on Madagascar for having conspired in the attempted mutiny, Singleton and a motley group of sailors (not yet fully-actualized pirates)<sup>46</sup> make a pact to not separate, to live and die together, to distribute food evenly, and to be guided by the majority (33).<sup>47</sup> But as in Singleton’s childhood, where economics replaces kinship, a similar substitution is at work in the pirate collective where group survival depends on often ruthless individual enterprise. Similarly, pirates’ unsanctioned behavior is not only illegitimate in the sense of being unlawful (Singleton often refers to himself shamefully as a criminal, despite being unrepentant), but it also estranges them from governments and disowns them, so to speak, from national identity.

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<sup>46</sup> Though Singleton et al. are not engaged in deep-sea piracy in the first half of the novel (during which they cross Africa on foot), Captain Bob later acknowledges that he was “an original Thief, and a Pyrate even by Inclination before” (CS 122). He might be referring to scenes like the one in Africa when Bob asks his comrades: “Are we not able to board almost any Vessel we shall meet with in those Seas; and instead of their taking us, we to take them? Well done, Pyrate, said the Gunner . . . Don’t tell me, says I, of being a Pyrate, we must be Pyrates, or any thing, to get fairly out of this cursed Place” (40).

<sup>47</sup> While this sentiment of collectivity resonates with Rediker’s views of proto-democracy among pirates, the ideal is complicated by their acquisitive urge. Gordon Lewis elaborates: “The pirate attitudes—anger against the wealthy and the powerful of the world, compassion for the outcasts, even recognition that there exists a war in society between the rich and the poor—do not in themselves constitute a Socialist position. At best, they reflect a social indignation against injustice; at worst, a response that takes the form of robbing the rich. . . . [The pirate commonwealth echoes] the classical frontier life: primitive institutional organization; a violent distrust of authority, especially any authority to do with government; a masterful grasp of material things combined with acuteness and acquisitive instinct; a great disdain for anything philosophical; and a genius for ready action” (81-82).

Singleton's pirates are extra-national within their motley collective as well as in their indiscriminating violence: for two years they sail around the West Indies plundering mostly Spanish vessels, but not having "any Difficulty of taking English Ships, or Dutch, or French, if they came in our Way" (124). If home does exist, the pirates find it aboard the ship, for, as Singleton remarks, "I never had any other [home] in my Life time" (209).<sup>48</sup> By "having nothing to lose" as a result of this alienation, Singleton is more willing to take risks; like Jack, his illegitimate identity motivates him to pursue success and to 'make himself' via enterprise.

Pirate enterprise, at least during times of peace, was indeed unlawful and illegitimate, but this does not preclude both fictional and historical pirates from sharing the acquisitive, adventurous and entrepreneurial mentalité of the early modern Atlantic world. Mark Hanna notes the presence of this mentalité in Defoe's novels, in which "nearly all his protagonists move through the increasingly complex global trade networks of the early eighteenth century" (375). Pirates may have been outlawed criminals, but as we have seen, that status did not necessarily make them anti-capitalist revolutionaries. On the contrary, if the pirate was "an economic parasite" (Mackie, *Rakes* 115), it was in the sense of entrepreneurial opportunism, of taking advantage or feeding off of a (suspecting) host. As I will show in the case of *Captain Singleton*, pirates displayed as much—if not more—business acumen as their legitimate mercantilist counterparts: "Defoe's pirates offer an image of acquisitiveness certainly, but the definition of 'criminal' they exemplify has less to do with villainy than with the ways in which a group

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<sup>48</sup> Taking things a step further, Hans Turley argues that pirates' homosociality constructs them as illegitimate masculine figures. See Turley, *Rum, Sodomy and the Lash* (New York: NYU P, 1999).

manages to operate commercially outside the bounds of normal trading society.”<sup>49</sup> The success of their enterprise reveals much about the relationship between empire and crime, and virtue and corruption in the expanding colonial trade.

Due in part to this risk-taking commercial success, the Golden Age pirate was “envisioned by some as an unbridled entrepreneur who dared to pursue what was taken to be everyone’s dream,”<sup>50</sup> and serves as a fascinating model of the ambitious Atlantic upstart. Indeed, piracy offered freedom and “opportunity for the common man” (Lewis 82), illustrated by the rags-to-riches accounts of Jack and Singleton. Richetti argues that the “key fantasy behind pirate narrative” is “the self-sufficient rise to incredible power and influence of the man who has only his talents as a patrimony” (72). Novak puts this “fantasy” into material terms: “The rise of young Singleton to the captaincy of his small group in Africa is not so much romance as a statement of his ability and talent in a society that put little stress on anything else” (*Economics* 111). That is to say, a society that emphasized profitable success regardless of its attendant morality; a society in which even (or especially) a pirate could be admired as an entrepreneur. In Africa, Singleton’s mentor, the Gunner, recognizes his “enterprising Temper” (155) but warns him of its risk: “[T]hou art born to do a World of Mischief; thou hast commenced Pyrate very young, but have a Care of the Gallows, young Man; have a Care, I say, for thou wilt be an eminent Thief” (37). The criminal nature of Bob’s enterprise does not quell his sense of purpose, but rather enlivens it: “I that was, as I have hinted before, an original Thief, and a Pyrate

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<sup>49</sup> Penelope Wilson, “Introduction,” *Captain Singleton*, by Daniel Defoe, ed. Shiv K. Kumar (New York: Oxford UP, 1990) xix

<sup>50</sup> Plamen Ivanov Arnaudov, “Elements of Mythmaking in Witness Accounts of Colonial Piracy,” diss., Louisiana State University, 2008, 88.

even by Inclination before, was now in my Element, and never undertook any Thing in my Life with more particular Satisfaction” (122).

Perhaps more than any other factor contributing to the analogy of pirates as upstarts is the evidence that pirates saw themselves engaged in a business. Not only is their work repeatedly described as such, but the process by which Bob and his crew first set up their pirate enterprise reads like a business plan: they acquire capital (“cruise for Purchase” [143]), followed by bricks and mortar (they steal two ships, one of which happens to be a merchant ship), obtain supplies (weapons), and finally seek labor to man their ships. Pirates were thus acquisitive businessmen who in *Captain Singleton* “behave and talk more like merchants than swash-buckling villains” (Wilson xvii). Furthermore, on more than one occasion the pirates avoid violence in favor of profit; for example, when Singleton’s crew takes a Japanese ship, he notes that they “eased [the ship] of his Gold, and did him no other Harm” (CS 164). As the resident voice of reason, Quaker William often shifts the pirate crew’s attention away from vengeful raids and reminds them that “[their] Business is Money” (181). In an era of money and finance, this preoccupation seems appropriate: “[D]espite some ignorant superstitions and bloodthirsty urges among the rest of the crew, the moral tone of Singleton’s pirate adventures is almost unswervingly rationalist” (Wilson xix). In the middle of Africa, far from coastal trading ports or Western symbols of commerce,<sup>51</sup> Singleton and his pirates establish a gold mining company with a stranded Englishman who convinces them to extend their

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<sup>51</sup> See Laura Brown, “Defoe’s Black Prince: Elitism, Capitalism, and Cultural Difference,” *Defoe’s Footprints: Essays in Honour of Maximilian E. Novak*, ed. Robert M. Maniquis and Carl Fisher (Toronto: UT P, 2009). Brown’s analysis explores the “relativity of the European economic system” (160) in *Captain Singleton*, where the African natives’ barter economy challenges the seamen/pirates’ preconceptions about exchange, and affirms the European association of “use value with folly and barbarism” (159).

stay in Africa in order to collect more gold and elephants' teeth: "For tho' it was true we were all eager to be gone, yet the evident Prospect of so much Advantage, could not well be resisted" (CS 119). Although the pirates disagree internally—Captains Avery and Wilmot do not like Singleton's plan—some of Avery's men end up engaged in a similar type of investment and prospective advantage as they "went up the Country, and settled themselves in an Inland Place, as a Colony; . . . they have got some Women among them . . . to live in their new Plantation" (154). Here we see pirates as nascent planters, the most modern of upstarts in the eighteenth century.<sup>52</sup> This also highlights the fact that many successful adventurers and settlers (Morgan and Drake, for example) were none other than pirates, a relationship that suggests complicity between licensed and illicit trade. As the case of these pirates-turned-planters illustrates, and as (we shall see) William the Quaker personifies, Atlantic upstarts pursued success on a kind of "ethical frontier where the boundary between the law and the outlaw was prone to slip and slide" (Mackie, "Welcome" 29).

While the metaphor of the pirate as economic parasite implies that these opportunistic seamen disabled the legitimate trade network, piracy—long considered an illegitimate enterprise—has always been linked to licensed trade as both facilitator and beneficiary. For centuries the "the line between piracy, privateering, and trading [has] seldom [been] easily discernible."<sup>53</sup> In his history of capitalism, the German sociologist Werner Sombart observed that by the end of the seventeenth century "the spirit of trade . . . was the same as the spirit of robbery. Rapacity and idleness belonged to the

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<sup>52</sup> See my chapter 2 for a discussion of colonial planters as upstarts.

<sup>53</sup> J.L. Anderson, "Piracy and World History: An Economic Perspective on Maritime Predation" *Journal of World History*, 6:2 (1995): 186.

entrepreneur and the robber alike. Dishonesty was the presumption among workers, businessmen and family members.”<sup>54</sup> Defoe himself had declared that “all trade is allegorized by piracy” (Aravamudan 93). In *The General History of the Pyrates*, he tells the story of Captain Henry Avery<sup>55</sup> who is surprised when the “friendly” Bristol merchants to whom he has entrusted his diamonds to sell, deliberately withhold his share of the sale, leaving him penniless. When Avery finally confronts the merchants, Defoe writes that “he met a most shocking Repulse; for when he desired them to come to an Account with him, they silenced him, by threatening to discover him”—that is, to expose his piracy. Avery is taken aback, and comes to the realization “that our Merchants were as good Pyrates at Land as he was at Sea” (*General History* 57).

The phrase “licensed piracy” is often used to critique this sort of mercantile corruption, but invoking piracy only figuratively obscures the fact that these so-called “legitimate” traders were actively collaborating with real pirates for profit. Ritchie gives the example of New York shipping merchants who “relied on pirates coming [there] to refit and reprovision their ships. The merchants sold them supplies [such as liquor and guns] and bought their loot—whether it was slaves, sugar, salt, logwood, or any other valuable commodity. These were usually sold cheaply, for the pirates had little overhead” (37).<sup>56</sup> The merchants, armed with these black market goods, would then go on to “suppl[y] the established, respectable communities of the Atlantic world” (Starkey

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<sup>54</sup> Linebaugh, *The London Hanged* (London: Verso, 2003) 3. Linebaugh is paraphrasing Sombart’s *Quintessence of Capitalism* (1913; trans 1915). Though this quote of Sombart’s is critical of capitalism, Michael Nerlich calls him an “apologist for the ‘capitalist spirit’ who later converted entirely to Facism” (*Ideology of Adventure* 79).

<sup>55</sup> This is the same Captain Avery that appears as a minor character in *Captain Singleton*.

<sup>56</sup> “[T]rade literally supplied the pirates—the very scourge of trade.” Barbara Fuchs, “Faithless Empires: Pirates, Renegadoes, and the English Nation,” *ELH* 67 (2000): 49.

114). Like the many mercantile and government sources who invested in pirate ventures, these New York merchants “quietly profited from piracy” (Ritchie 38).<sup>57</sup> Of course, such collusion was a sign of the times—of maritime warfare and brash expansion and competition. Throughout the dizzying series of European wars in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, pirates and merchants did more than work together—they had often walked in each other’s shoes. In times of peace “[s]hips lay idle, and merchants could find fewer profitable outlets for their capital” (Anderson 194). For these merchants, as well as for the mercenary privateers no longer sanctioned by warring governments and instead faced with the labor shortages of peacetime, piracy presented “an alternative to starvation or bankruptcy” (194).

As a journalist and government spy, Defoe “clearly understood that global piracy proliferated because of the active support from merchants and governors in colonial ports . . . [and he] struggled to illuminate colonial complicity” (Hanna 394). The relationship between Singleton the pirate and the Quaker surgeon/merchant William Walters provides considerable insight into Defoe’s views of such complicity. William is a colorful, memorable character who “despite his professed Christianity and pacifism, has no compunction about turning pirate. He manages to have it both ways” (Turley 204). William symbolizes this interdependence from his first appearance in the narrative as the pirates, desperately needing the resources of a doctor on their crew, spare his life. Fully aware of the potential profit to be made by joining the pirates, William submits to his

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<sup>57</sup> “[T]he depredations of Turkish corsairs were funded by the merchants of Algiers, Salé, and other Moorish ports, while Governor Modyforde and other colonial officials invested in the buccaneering campaigns of Morgan, Sharp, Coxon, and others. Likewise, William Kidd’s infamous cruise in the *Adventure Gally*, a privateering venture which degenerated into piracy, was funded by a consortium led by Lord Bellomont, Governor of New York” (Starkey 116). See also Ritchie 52-54.

captors on the condition “that it might be apparent he was taken away by Force . . . and against [his] will” (CS 125). Agreeing to William’s plea to conceal his interest, Singleton proceeds to both document (by drawing up a certificate) and perform William’s imprisonment: “Accordingly I fell a swearing at him, and called to my Men to tye his Hands behind him, and so we put him into our Boat, and carry’d him away” (125). William accompanies the pirates and agrees to offer his medical skills, but in true Quaker fashion claims to oppose their violence: “[I]t is not my Business to meddle when thou art to fight. No, No, says the Captain, but you may meddle a little when we share the Money” (125). Like the merchants who engage in illicit trade with the pirates, “William is anxious to enjoy the profits of piracy without undertaking the risks” (Novak, *Economics* 118). His enthusiasm is matched by his “Tranquility as to Danger” (CS 131) in the knowledge that, as Singleton explains, “he had the better of us in this Part, that, if we were taken, we were sure to be hang’d, and he was sure to escape” (126). William’s complicity in the pirates’ criminal activity does not compromise his morality because by all legitimate accounts (his own included) he is not a willing participant; the performance of captivity and façade of disinterest ensure this and Singleton’s role in the deception marks the pirates’ consent.

Given his position of relative invincibility, William becomes a sort of business advisor to the pirates, legitimizing their enterprise and “help[ing them] profit from their crimes” (Turley 204). He negotiates with merchants on behalf of the pirates, and uses deceit and disguise to find ways to fence their stolen goods (Hanna 396). William’s support and counsel justify and motivate the pirates’ ambition, and his “sensible, business-like mind—as well as his enthusiastic though passive assistance—enables the

gang to become richer and richer” (Turley 204). As Penelope Wilson notes, William demonstrates the savvy with which economic rationalism can legitimize criminal activity: “Piratical greed is transformed by William’s ‘good frugal Merchant-like Temper’ and wisdom into financial common sense” (xxi). That common sense often exposes the pirates’ romantic folly, for instance when William advises Singleton to reconsider the pirates’ plan to attack a second Portuguese Man-of-War off the coast of Brazil, in favor of a more lucrative and less dangerous target: “[W]hat is thy Business, and the Business of all the People thou hast with thee? Is it not to get Money? . . . And wouldst thou, says he, rather have Money without Fighting, or Fighting without Money?” (CS 133). Singleton and his Captain are so persuaded when William suggests that they “wouldst have had twice the Booty in a Merchant Ship, with not one Quarter of the Fighting,” that their venture is abruptly “laid aside” (133).

Ironically, while William may convince the pirates that he is “always for doing our Business without Fighting” (CS 162), by supporting their entrepreneurial ambition he necessarily supports their violence, and by extension is an accomplice to their crimes. Defoe illustrates this hypocrisy when, during the raid on the first Portuguese Man-of-War (the one they capture), to Singleton’s surprise William joins in and eggs the pirates on: “[E]very now and then he pulled a Bottle out of his Pocket and gave the Men a Dram to encourage them” (131). Hanna describes the apparently common practice of merchants in colonial Newport and Charles Town, “many of them Quaker,” who, like William, “encouraged pirate attacks, gave advice, fenced goods, or sold them a dram or two” (397). But William’s ability to manipulate the vicissitudes of illegitimacy and “have it both ways” gives him terrifying license to execute some of the most disturbingly violent

acts in the narrative. After landing on an island somewhere between New Guinea and Tasmania to restock their supplies, Singleton's crew find themselves the target of distrustful, arrow-wielding islanders, against whom the pirates proceed to retaliate. The islanders barricade themselves inside a large tree trunk which leads to a cavern, where they hide. William emerges from the sidelines and becomes a kind of sick military chief who, despite conceding "that there was nothing but our Curiosity to be gratified in this Attempt," decides that he "would [still] have this Satisfaction of them" (CS 176). When smoke bombs and hand grenades fail to force them out, William uses fire and gun powder to blow up the cave, killing all the islanders—effectively perpetrating a massacre. William's cold-blooded actions may reveal Defoe's cynicism about the "destruction" of licensed trade in the wake of dishonest merchants and unethical stockjobbers. However, Aravamudan wonders whether Defoe here is exploring "genocidal violence as . . . part and parcel of the *topoi* of adventure, commerce, and empire": "Adventure is not just about self-aggrandizement through financial motives, but the sadistic pleasure that can come from the wanton destruction of other people and places."<sup>58</sup> Indeed, William's vicious but detached behavior exposes the hyper-rationality of liberal enterprise: is economic man so piratically inclined that he out-murders the pirates?

If William's acquisitive rationality functions to numb him from violence, as a business advisor to the pirates he has an ulterior motive—he facilitates their criminal transgressions in order to profit from them. William operates according to self-interest, which functions as both the liberal ideal and the criminal impulse. He not only works to

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<sup>58</sup> Srinivas Aravamudan, "Defoe, commerce, and empire," *The Cambridge Companion to Daniel Defoe*, ed. John Richetti (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008) 62.

instill self-interest among the pirate crew, but also demonstrates the principle by using Singleton and the pirates as subjects for his own economic gain. Towards the end of the narrative Singleton painfully repents for his criminal sins, and struggles with what to do with his “ill-gotten wealth” (CS 217). While Bob has “very little Satisfaction in the Possession of [the money]” (214) and can only think to get rid of it, William argues that “to quit what we have . . . is to throw it away to those who have no Claim to it, and to divest our selves of it, but to do no Right with it; whereas we ought to keep it carefully together, with a Resolution to do what Right with it we are able” (217). While he supports and counsels Bob’s religious awakening, William’s economic self-interest prohibits him from sacrificing their profits, even as an act of repentance. On the contrary, he manages to persuade Singleton that keeping the money is in fact the righteous thing to do; that any criminal means are justified by their charitable ends “to do Right with it.” Throughout the narrative, William’s lessons are modeled in other merchants whose liberal ambition sanctions both their tolerance of the pirates and their own criminal behavior. For example, off the coast of China, Singleton’s pirates capture a Chinese ship with a few merchants on board who are en route to a series of Asian trading ports. After plundering the ship the pirates decide they would like to accompany the merchants on their business trip and trade the newly stolen goods. As swiftly as Singleton and crew “leave off being Pyrates, and turn Merchants” (166), the Chinese merchants, despite their fear of trusting the pirates, agree to the illicit trade. Such shape-shifting is easy for the self-interested merchants who will save at least “eight Months Voyage” and a “good Pennyworth” by trading with the pirates (166).<sup>59</sup> For these reasons, William surmises, it

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<sup>59</sup> Aravamudan notes the “parodic undercurrent in early sentimental discourse” in which “merchants are

is also in the merchants' interest to play fair with the pirates: "I would as soon trust a Man whose Interest binds him to be just to me, as a Man whose Principle binds himself" (166). William is pleased that the merchants are honest and agreeable, but he is not insulted that their morality is motivated by profit. For William and so many other piratical, economic adventurers found in picaresque fiction, morality must "coincide" with self-interest and self-preservation.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, after a wholly "frank" and "civil" mercantile exchange (CS 167), the merchants—"Recompence[d]" for their trouble with spices and cloth, and with their hostages returned—depart from the pirates considerably richer and "exceedingly well satisfy'd" (168).

If William's self-interest makes him a problematic advisor to the pirates, then Singleton's self-interest makes him a problematic poster child for the nation and empire. From the earliest age, Bob is exposed to a world of self-interest with guardians who use him and show little concern for his well-being. Bob is also privy to the way the nation uses him for gain, in the form of the woman who sells him for profit in the "Hellish Trade" of child abduction (CS 19)—the same trade in which slightly older children were sold as indentured servants to the plantations, thus serving the interests of the empire. As a teenager taken in by an abusive and unscrupulous Portuguese ship pilot, Bob participates in the attempted mutiny of the ship's captain and faces punishment by desertion on the island of Madagascar. When his Master, the pilot, tries (unsuccessfully) to save him from this fate, Bob realizes that his Master's charity is "not in Kindness to

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pirates in disguise and pirates are aspiring merchants" (*Tropicopolitans* 99). There is much more to say about piracy and disguise than I can fairly discuss here, but I will return to the theme of disguise as self-representation in the following section on Gay's *Polly*.

<sup>60</sup> See Northrop Frye, "Varieties of Eighteenth-Century Sensibility," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 24:2 (1990-91): 164-165.

me, so much as in Kindness to himself; I mean to preserve the Wages which he got for me” (27). Traded, abandoned and effectively disowned by his nation and then his Master, Bob becomes increasingly ruthless and greedy. When William insists that the pirates not harm the Dutch merchants whose ship they have taken, Singleton is unmoved: “My Pretence is to prevent doing me hurt, and that is as necessary a Piece of the Law of Self-Preservation as any you can name” (158). That this behavior represents the typical pirate attitude is significant, because Bob *does* in fact contribute to the national interest, at least in an ideological sense; he is not bucking the system, but rather bucking any concern for those other than himself. Indeed, the richer he gets through criminal activity, the more legitimately capitalist he becomes. Ironically, as Timothy Blackburn explains,

the criminal aspect of piracy highlights the legitimacy of Lockean political society. . . . [A]s a result of [Singleton’s] acquisition of wealth he progresses beyond his piratical state of reason. Defoe is not justifying the means by the end; rather, he is stressing the power of wealth once it is achieved. Thus even an immoral pirate waging war on civilization can become, through the political society he needs in order to use and protect his wealth, a repentant and mature citizen.<sup>61</sup>

To acknowledge Singleton as a self-interested capitalist is therefore to undermine the utopian vision of a socialist pirate collective: “Jack Tar’s penchant for pursuing his own self-interest (economic and otherwise)—a penchant that evades the standard ideological boxes so favored by many historians—was at the heart of his often fleeting commitment to the cause of the nation” (T. Lynch, H-Net).

Significantly, it is William the merchant whose influence “civilizes” and refines Singleton’s self-interest, molding him from a merciless pirate into an enterprising

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<sup>61</sup> Timothy C. Blackburn, “The Coherence of Defoe’s ‘Captain Singleton,’” *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 41:2 (1978): 129.

capitalist. The intimate friendship between William and Bob has been theorized in various capacities, but here I would argue that it symbolizes the relationship between the empire and its illegitimate/criminal/foundling children who, with the proper charity and spiritual guidance would ostensibly become valuable citizens.<sup>62</sup> After William convinces Bob to not abandon their riches, they devise a plan to smuggle away the money, escape their pirate comrades, and “vert our Treasure in Things proper to make us look like Merchants” (CS 214). After spending a few years in Italy, they return to England, despite Bob’s bitter memories of “home.” Even though his profit was made illegitimately, by bringing that wealth back to England, Singleton’s piratical ambition proves to have served the interest of the state—he first sends money to and then marries William’s sister, settling with her into domestic legitimacy: a life of “real value” (Langford 145) championed by figures like Coram and Defoe.<sup>63</sup> The conversion of stolen loot into mercantile profit and illicit pirates into landed patriarchs illustrates Defoe’s belief that even “the most hardened rogue” could be rehabilitated and proven economically useful (Baer 73).

In reality, however, Defoe’s brand of optimism was rare. As peace ensued in the early eighteenth century and imperial states became “established and more formidable” (Ritchie 128), the “increased volume of trade . . . meant that governors, as well as planters and merchants, could benefit more from legitimate activities than from corruptly

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<sup>62</sup> See Turley, *Rum, Sodomy and the Lash*; Turley, “Piracy, Identity and Desire in Captain Singleton,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 31.2 (1997-98): 199-214; and Stephen Gregg, “Male Friendship and Defoe’s Captain Singleton: ‘My every thing’,” *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 27 (2004): 203-218. My reading of their relationship is closest to Mark Hanna’s: “Based on what Defoe knew about the relationship between colonial maritime communities and global piracy, the personal interdependence of Bob the deep-sea pirate and William, representative of the colonial gentry, symbolized colonial complicity” (395).

<sup>63</sup> Turley claims this legitimate set-up functions as a screen for Bob and William’s “unnatural” relationship (3).

supporting or clandestinely supplying the pirates” (Anderson 185). Thus it became increasingly important in political and cultural discourse to distinguish the pirate figure from the legitimate colonial entrepreneur. Ritchie describes this sea-change:

As the merchant community expanded, it looked upon the world with different eyes: it prized order and regularity because they enhanced profits; disorder interrupted the regular flow of trade. . . . Like the merchant community, the members of government would also prize routine and discipline. From these twin streams would flow a potent movement that would turn on the forces of disorder, and on none more than the pirates. (128)

William’s actions evoke those of the economic state which first engaged in business with and then vilified the pirates. While he doesn’t destroy the pirates per se, he cripples them by disappearing with a large sum of their collective fortune as well as their captain, Singleton. Furthermore, by taking Bob away from his pirate livelihood William effectively disables him, too: once on land, the fearless pirate transforms into a man alienated from his former life, with limited communication and mobility—disguised as an Armenian merchant, Singleton will not speak English to anyone other than William and his sister, and once they return to England, they remain there indefinitely. Similarly, in the postwar economy after 1713, changes within the pirate community reflected their vilification: “Many crews refused to take married men, wanting only those without ties to home and hearth, ready to leave everything behind[.] . . . [As well, a] visible symbol of their alienation, the pirates changed from flying the “bloody flag” to using flags filled with symbols of passing time and death” (Ritchie 234). In successfully bringing Bob out of piracy and his wealth into England, William negotiates his own complicity and manages to reenter political society. However, in his promise to Singleton that he too will remain in disguise so not to be discovered as villainous pirates, William’s

relationship with Bob has cost him a certain amount of the freedom so key to his beloved liberalism. Like the father who refuses to acknowledge his illegitimate son, the state would stand to suffer for its own past illicit behavior—for its complicity in unlicensed trade. Ultimately, though, with enough emphasis placed on economic entrepreneurship, both the maligned family and the complicit state were sure to recover any loss from such illegitimate relationships (Zunshine 18).

In the characters of William and Singleton, Turley argues, Defoe “redefines the criminalized pirate”: “The figure of William suggests that, if stripped of his libertine aspects, the pirate differs little from other traders; he is constructed by a desire for profit” (“Piracy” 204). Indeed, William’s actions reveal the illegitimacy or piratical genealogy of the Atlantic entrepreneur as he negotiates both crime and trade for his self-interest. In fact, as a Quaker merchant, ostensible gentleman, and acquisitive pirate, William figures as a kind of composite of Captain Singleton and Colonel Jack as the new economic adventurer in the eighteenth century. That this adventurer was both encouraged and alienated in the new economic order suggests that these characters’ lives illustrate the modern, “illegitimate” condition of the colonial entrepreneur. Singleton is a self-made Atlantic figure—an illegitimate subject (bastard and criminal), on a groundless enterprise (pirate ship), armed only with, as Richetti puts it, “his talents as patrimony” (72). Singleton’s “career is a perfect example of the assertion of personality and the achievement of status by a totally disenfranchised character” (Richetti 84). In the final section of this chapter I will argue that there is a form of resistance in this achievement, in this ambitious opportunism. The colonial setting of John Gay’s *Polly* provides another

dimension to these efforts, for in the violent realm of the West Indian slave society, capitalist enterprise and freedom would seem to be an unlikely pairing.

**“The son of nobody”: Illegitimacy, Opportunism and Resistance in *Polly***

Both Defoe and Gay had been adversely affected by their lost investment in the South Sea Bubble, and in part as a result of this, both operated with the analogy of trade as crime and piracy.<sup>64</sup> And though, as we have seen, “in early eighteenth-century English society, equating the corrupt business practices of merchants with the nefarious activities of pirates did not require a great stretch of the imagination” (Dryden 542), Defoe and Gay engaged in a sort of literary disagreement about the role of pirates in a modernizing world. While Defoe aligns merchants with pirates as a warning and appeal to an honest enterprise in the spirit of Crusoe’s father, Gay doesn’t hesitate to throw them all in the same pot of condemnation. As Gay represents them, “Creole planters, English merchants, indentured servants, and pirates may be perceived as alike; all are fortune hunting, opportunistic scavengers” (541). Gay was also less optimistic and more cynical about the possibilities of self-making in the Atlantic enterprise: Defoe’s imperial vision of “the merchant as superman, as civilizing pioneer, as inheritor of the earth” (McVeagh 55) contrasts significantly with Gay’s ability to “see[ ] through the surface romance of colonial expansion to its true and sordid economic underpinnings.”<sup>65</sup> Gay “entertains the . . . radical notion that England’s relentless acts of colonial appropriation are acts of

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<sup>64</sup> Robert G. Dryden, “John Gay’s *Polly*: Unmasking Pirates and Fortune Hunters in the West Indies,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 34:4 (2001): 542. See also Novak, *Economics* 103.

<sup>65</sup> Albert Wertheim, “*Polly*: John Gay’s Image of the West,” *Theatre West: Image and Impact* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 1990) 203.

piracy. In other words, they are illegitimate acts of violence, which are legitimized through political and nationalistic propaganda” (Dryden 543). While Defoe’s pirates are counter-heroes whose ambition and independence he admires (Novak, *Economics* 103), Gay’s are more explicitly criminal antiheroes who indulge in avarice and villainy.

This chapter concludes with a discussion of Gay’s *Polly* because the play represents both a convergence of the issues and a critique of the Atlantic mentalité I have examined thus far. Gay wrote the ballad opera as a sequel to his hugely successful *The Beggar’s Opera* and until recently “this ambitious and little-understood work” was disregarded and relegated to a footnote in analyses of its popular predecessor.<sup>66</sup> *Polly* has suffered not only critically, but at its inception also commercially: in December 1728 the Lord Chamberlain banned the opera from being staged on the grounds that it was immoral and “fill’d with slander and calumny against particular great persons” (*Preface* lines 61-2). Though he denied it, Gay’s likely target was Walpole, who had been satirized as a highwayman in *The Beggar’s Opera*, and now a shape-shifting pirate captain in *Polly*.<sup>67</sup> While both plays indict criminals at all ranks of society, in *Polly* Gay

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<sup>66</sup> Diane Dugaw, *Warrior Women and Popular Balladry, 1650-1850* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1996) 194. Innovative readings of *Polly* that complicate the play on its own and in relation to *The Beggar’s Opera* include those aforementioned by Dugaw, Dryden, and Wertheim, as well as Rob Canfield, “Something’s Mizzen: Anne Bonny, Mary Read, “Polly”, and Female Counter-Roles on the Imperialist Stage,” *South Atlantic Review* 66:2 (2001) : 45-63; and Peter P. Reed, “Conquer or Die: Staging Circum-Atlantic Revolt in *Polly* and *Three-Finger’d Jack*,” *Theatre Journal* 59 (2007): 241-258. Often-cited earlier (and less favorable) scholarship on *Polly* includes Patricia Meyer Spacks, “The Beggar’s Triumph,” *John Gay’s The Beggar’s Opera*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1988) 57-9. As Reed notes, Spacks’ review “exemplifies scholarly dismissal of the play as simplistic and binary” (249, n.21).

<sup>67</sup> Despite this political suppression, Gay was determined to earn a profit from *Polly*, and, responding to “the public’s curiosity about the banning,” printed the play and had it ready for sale four months after the ban. Gay made a considerable profit which would have been much higher, as James Sutherland notes, “if the notoriety of the play had not tempted several booksellers to pirate it.” The play went unacted for fifty years, until George Colman produced a modified version at Haymarket in 1777. Thus Gay’s play was both censored (not authorized to be performed) and pirated (made into unauthorized copies). See Sutherland, “*Polly* among the Pirates,” *The Modern Language Review*, 37:3 (1942) 291.

transplants them to the colonial setting where the country gentleman becomes a plantation owner, and the antihero Macheath and his London gang of highwaymen become fearsome Caribbean pirates. Though Macheath is saved from the gallows at the end of *The Beggar's Opera*, in *Polly* we learn that he was subsequently arrested and transported to the West Indies, where, after a year and a half of indenture, he “robb'd his master, ran away from the Plantation and turn'd pyrate” (I.v.50-51). Macheath now operates under the disguise of Morano, a black pirate captain. Polly Peachum, the heroine of *The Beggar's Opera* and the daughter of Macheath's archrival, travels to the West Indies in search of her polygamous husband Macheath only to be betrayed by the madam-turned-slave trader Diana Trapes who sells her to the wealthy planter Ducat. Disguised as a boy, Polly escapes, and is taken captive by Macheath/Morano's gang of pirates who are preparing to attack and raid the planters.<sup>68</sup> In the end, the pirates are defeated, and Polly's virtue aligns her with the noble Indians (who are Gay's version of Swift's Houyhnhnms), while Macheath, still in blackface and unidentified, is apprehended and executed, his identity revealed too late for Polly to save him.

In keeping with the parodic movement of Augustan literature and the Scriblerus Club of which Gay was a member along with Swift and Pope, *Polly* is a send-up of British corruption, commercial avarice and self-interest that attacks the grand narrative that “virtue lies at the center, value on the margins” (Canfield 46). In Gay's critical view, the British Empire is “steeped in philosophies of acquisition, accumulation, and production of capital” (Dryden 545)—philosophies that authorize “robbers and

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<sup>68</sup> In a loaded arrangement, the planters partner with the Indians, while the pirates receive information and assistance from a group of escaped slaves.

plunderers [to] prescribe rules to right and equity” (*Polly* III.vii.25-6). The play emphasizes avarice as the root of corruption: greed “comprehends” all vices and is not only infectious but an infection that threatens to destroy moral humanity (II.xi.17-18). Gay wrote both *The Beggar’s Opera* and *Polly* at what John McVeagh calls “the transition to anti-commerce” which involved “a dislike of the commercial nature of English life, especially public life, which the Whig panegyrists equate with liberty, and the Tories with corruption” (72). As a Tory, Gay was disenchanted with what he perceived as the profit-driven, morally dissolute character of his age, and in both operas portrayed “a whole world ruled by money values, in which judgment, motive and feeling narrow down to mere market price” (72). That is, a world in which morality and human interaction are guided by greed and self-interest; a world where even anti-establishment, rebellious pirates “should never slip an opportunity” (II.v.8-9).

Ironically, however, while Gay saw such commercial avarice as the “the greed of a merchant financier, not of a miser” (McVeagh 78), his own constant miserliness—he hoarded money and lived with others even though he was sufficiently wealthy to support himself—seems to have been inspired by an entrepreneurial ambition not dissimilar to Defoe’s merchant adventurers: “The motive to my parsimony is independence,” he once wrote in a letter to friends.<sup>69</sup> As William Empson observes about *The Beggar’s Opera*, although Gay “hates [the corrupt thief-catcher] Peachum he makes him the parody of a real sort of dignity, that of the man making an independent income in his own line of business, and seems to have been puzzled between the two ideals in his own life” (219). Despite the author’s inner conflict, the overly-ambitious, self-interested upstarts that

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<sup>69</sup> William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (New York: New Directions, 1974) 205.

populate Gay's operas provide an opportunity to condemn the "cult of independence" (203) that he observed in the 1720s. For example, the pirate Laguerre ignores orders to guard a prisoner and instead releases him—not out of ethical concern for his captive but in the interest of reward and upward mobility: "Every man for himself, say I. There is no being equal with mankind, without that universal maxim" (II.xii.26-7). Gay is particularly critical of such sentiments of independence and individualism as evidence of (what he perceives to be) the undeserved middle class claim to a rational self. This claim, Rob Canfield argues, though couched in the discourses of trade, commerce and self-mastery, is just another version of legitimation, a fallacy of selfhood, like the aristocratic obsession with birthright (52). Indeed, like Colonel Jack's endeavor to assert his agency via a myth of gentility, independence or self-making in the inverted logic of *Polly's* burlesque means aspiring to a greatness defined by vice, power and corruption. For example, when Mrs. Trapes challenges Ducat to live as immorally and prodigiously as they do in England, the planter quickly convinces her that his commitment to greed and ostentation make him 'worthy' of being a British subject (I.i).

I argue here that the character of Macheath/Morano is the embodiment of this conflicted critique as he represents both an avarice similar to and resistance against the ruling planter class. On the one hand, like Captain Coram, the virtuous, self-made man of trade as hero, Morano is ambitious and remakes himself as a "noble captain" (II.iv.39). That remaking, however, is in a mask of blackness and piracy that subverts several ideologies of the Atlantic world, significantly its emphases on racial hierarchies and productivity as contribution. In other words, as a 'black' pirate, Morano is a threatening "bastard" figure who jeopardizes legitimate fortunes and national identities. Morano thus

“becomes the most problematic figure in the play” (Canfield 58) by demonstrating how the specifically non-elite upstart can be both a self-made man *and* an agent of resistance. Aravamudan links the capacity of pirates to show resistance against colonial powers with their participation in colonial trade networks alongside those very powers:

Though piracy is an expression of a conflict internal to the practices of colonialism rather than a direct instance of tropicopolitan resistance, the fact that pirates trafficked opportunistically on the margins of colonial venture makes their liminality into a transitional and contingent subculture and one that could, at least potentially, mediate between reified oppositions of colonizer and colonized. (*Tropicopolitans* 93)

That is to say, “piracy mirrors as much as it subverts the very economic and social institutions it opposes” (Mackie, “Welcome” 35). Morano, however, is not only a pirate but in his identity as Macheath/Morano also represents the spectrum of eighteenth-century illegitimacy—crime, poverty, indenture, slavery, miscegenation, bastardy, and colonial identity in general—“Gay designs Morano cosmetically and occupationally as a subversive figure” (Dryden 546). This notion of piracy “mirror[ing] as much as it subverts” might therefore be extended to any depiction of the underclass whose participation (and survival) in the Atlantic world, whether voluntary or forced, necessitates a certain opportunistic mentalité.

In the case of *Polly*, piracy also subverts *as* it mirrors; that is, Gay reveals his own suspicions of colonial ambition through Morano’s “illegitimate” self-making. A successful thief and rake who escapes his indenture and reinvents himself as a rebel leader, Morano is arguably an opportunist. His entrepreneurial reinvention from servant to fugitive to savvy pirate captain, and from white to ‘black,’ highlights “the ease with which one could reinvent oneself in the Caribbean,” that is, the way the upstart nature of

colonial life supported self-invention, even of ostensibly illegitimate subjects.<sup>70</sup> When Trapes explains Morano's story, she warns Polly not to harbor any attachment to her erstwhile husband: "Besides, he would disown you, for like an upstart he hates an old acquaintance" (I.v.57-8). Trapes is referring to the eager upward mobility of *parvenus* or the *nouveau riche* who are loathe to be faced with reminders of a less-successful past in a less-accommodating world. To follow the metaphor through, upstarts are by definition self-made men whose achievement does not come from family inheritance or succession.<sup>71</sup> By likening him to an upstart, the play emphasizes Morano's position as a bastard of sorts, that is, in terms of inheritance, "the son of nobody" (Zunshine 2)<sup>72</sup> who cannot rely on the support of legitimate parentage for success or self-identification. It is only in disavowing such legitimacy—of family or relationships (that "old acquaintance"), but also of a secure and sanctioned livelihood—that the upstart is effectively *remade*.

Gay further satirizes the "illegitimacy" of upstarts by having the pirates mimic the rhetoric of ambition. Morano's gang of pirates definitely live up to their reputation as the "enemy of all mankind": they instill fear in the colonists, provoke a slave rebellion, kidnap an Indian prince, and threaten to destroy the plantations. But they also engage in a kind of institutional piracy as they satirically assume or 'pirate' the language of capitalist adventure, romantic self-mastery and colonial expansion. In line with the

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<sup>70</sup> Sarah E. Yeh, "'A Sink of All Filthiness': Gender, Family, and Identity in the British Atlantic, 1688-1763," *The Historian* 68:1 (2006): 88. Yeh provides historical evidence of a Widow Owen of Berwick, England, who spent years searching for her husband, Dr. Owen, who had disappeared in Jamaica in the early eighteenth century. Records suggest that Dr. Owen changed certain details of his identity and went on to marry a series of other women in the colonies, not unlike the polygamous Macheath. Early on in the play, Trapes tells Polly that "As to captain Macheath, you may now safely look upon yourself as a widow" (I.v.98-101) for "there is no catching him" (I.v.73), particularly given his disguise.

<sup>71</sup> For a broader definition of "upstart" in relation to "entrepreneur" see my Introduction, p. 38.

<sup>72</sup> Qtg. William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England, in four books* (London, 1793-95) 1:434.

opera's mock-heroic form, they take turns relating hilarious stories of their "brilliant careers," recalling their individual "ambition" and discussing the various "steps a genius will [take to] push his fortune" (II.ii.29). For example, the pirate Hacker's "education" reads like a bildungsroman in satire:

After I had rubb'd through my youth with variety of adventures, I was prefer'd to be footman to an eminent gamester, where, after having improv'd my self by his manners and conversation, I left him, betook my self to his politer profession, and cheated him like a gentleman. For some time I kept a *Pharaon-Bank* with success, but unluckily in a drunken bout was stript by a more expert brother of the trade. I was now, as 'tis common with us upon these occasions, forc'd to have recourse to the highway for a recruit to set me up; but making the experiment once too often, I was try'd, and receiv'd sentence; but got off for transportation, Which hath made me the man I am. (II.ii.30-41)

Morano's own self-making is exaggerated just like the crew he leads: "Our chief," one of the pirates explains, "had a genius too above service, and, like us, ran into higher life. And, indeed, in manners and conversation, tho' he is black, no body has more the air of a great man" (II.ii.64-6).<sup>73</sup> From his cocky confidence that he "must have an empire" (II.viii.55), to his condescending treatment of the Indians who accuse him of being a "European" (II.viii.52), to the paean to his greatness in which are told that he "had never been the man he is, had he not been train'd up in England" (II.ii.61-2), Morano imagines himself as a properly ruthless British colonizer. Indeed, as Baer explains, "whatever their taste for low diversions and petty cruelties, pirates were tormented by great ambitions" (70). Morano's skill and leadership appear to have earned him the respect and admiration of his pirate crew, who call him "noble captain" and seem to appreciate the fact that he is less hasty to act than the other pirates: he collects intelligence and wants to strategize

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<sup>73</sup> Walpole was often called the "Great Man" by Whig and Tory writers alike—presumably sincerely as well as critically. See Stephen Taylor, "Robert Walpole: First Earl of Orford," *Biographical Dictionary of British Prime Ministers*, eds. Robert Eccleshall and Graham S. Walker (London: Routledge, 1998) 1.

before they make any decisions. Yet the self-interested pirates are resentful: “Why should we be such fools to be ambitious of satisfying another’s ambition?” (III.v.17-18).

Moreover, they use Morano’s blackness to call into question his legitimacy as a leader and hero: “But yet I don’t see . . . why we should be commanded by a Neger” (III.v.11-12). They finally reach a consensus to carry out a mutiny on Morano as soon as they get back to their ships. The pirates thus see corruption as a skill to be cultivated and are more than willing to betray their leader, sell-out their comrades, and even risk their own lives if it means individual gain.

In Gay’s pirates’ worldview, financial wealth and status are the only indicators of success and must be achieved, no matter how criminal the cost. Late in the play, the Indian chief Pohetohee confronts Morano about this distortion: “Would not your honest industry have been sufficient to have supported you?” To which Morano replies: “Honest industry! I have heard talk of it indeed among the common people, but all great genius’s are above it” (III.xi.37-40). And when the pirates prepare to engage in a risky war with the Indians and planters, Morano’s “pirate queen” Jenny Diver reminds them of their purpose and encourages them to escape with the riches they have already amassed: “You may talk of honour, as other great men do: But when interest comes your way, you should do as other great men do” (II.ix.50-52). Greatness, virtue and honor here are once again ironic, as when, a few scenes later, the pirate Capstern calls the Indian prince Cawwawkee a “great man” who therefore cannot be trusted (II.xii.12). Thus the pirates’ ambition mimics colonial avarice as they employ capitalist fantasies and fallacies in their pursuit of self-making. With this, Diane Dugaw observes, “Gay promptly subverts the

‘manly’ claims of these warring heroes, and exposes in their greed the politics of European colonialism” (200).

Morano’s convincing turn as an upstart and mock-heroic “great man” provides Gay the opportunity to subvert the ideology that emphasizes such corrupt ambition by highlighting Morano’s illegitimacies. As an outlawed, dangerous criminal and disguised as an escaped, vengeful slave, Morano represents many eighteenth-century anxieties about colonial expansion. He functions as a kind of threatening “bastard” figure who would jeopardize legitimate fortunes and national identities via his Creoleness and his questionable racial and national ‘parentage.’ Indeed, as an anxiety-producing social taboo, the issue of illegitimacy can be constructively applied to the perceived non-normative, disordered, “unnatural state of affairs” (Yeh, “Filthiness” 73) that contemporary observers described about the West Indies. Edward Long, for example, notoriously ridiculed Creole life as he saw it: polygamous marriages, hysterical wives, impudent, wild children, and miscegenation and its resulting illegitimate offspring.<sup>74</sup> Decades before Long published his observations, though, such stereotypes abounded. Upon meeting the strange youth (a.k.a. Polly in disguise) whom the pirates agree must be a local planter’s son, Jenny Diver exclaims that “he must have suck’d in impudence from his mother” (II.vii.8-9). In part due to such disparaging images but also due to planters’ lack of heritable English identity and coarse Creole mimicry of metropolitan behavior (dramatized by Mr. and Mrs. Ducat), the West Indian was imagined as the bastard child of Britain—the unsavory offspring of the white colonizer and the (usually) non-white,

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<sup>74</sup> For more on how eighteenth-century English writers both present and complicate such Creole stereotypes, see chapter 2 in this dissertation.

enslaved mother.<sup>75</sup> As a white Londoner disguised as a black Caribbean pirate, Morano's turning black signals metropolitan fears about racial mixing, untamed sexuality, and the contamination of whiteness—probably the most disturbing aspect of Caribbean society in the minds of eighteenth-century Britons.<sup>76</sup> As the illegitimate child threatened the purity and property of landed British families, colonial laws circumscribing the social participation of bastard (and usually mixed-race) children meant that liaisons between European men and their slaves threatened “legitimate male fortunes” (Wilson, *The Island Race* 145). In both cases, racial mixing presents a threat to the legitimacy of family, property, and by extension, national identity. The Europeanized Indian prince Cawwakee seems to scorn Morano for this menace: “As a man of injustice I know you, who covets and invades the properties of another” (II.viii.22-3). For an eighteenth-century culture familiar with the tropes of piracy, slavery and colonial miscegenation, West Indian illegitimacy threatened to plunder the “property” of English national identity—in all its financial, cultural and ideological forms.

Although Gay uses Morano's illegitimacies to subvert the fantasy of colonial ambition, the opera also reveals the power of the state to mold potentially useful citizens even out of illegitimate ones. We see an interesting parallel to this attitude in the censorship of Gay's work: the state prized his literary genius but his scathing critique was not productive for the national interest. Furthermore, the concern with usefulness is

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<sup>75</sup> Teasing out this analogy of the West Indies' European parentage a bit further, we might consider Trevor Burnard's observation about marriage patterns in Jamaica, that “a relative lack of parental influence . . . heightened already strong impulses towards anarchic individualism manifest in the early Caribbean.” See Burnard, “A Failed Settler Society: Marriage and Demographic Failure in Early Jamaica,” *Journal of Social History* 28.1 (1994): 72.

<sup>76</sup> Although the opera was not performed until 1777, Gay wrote Morano's character for the stage, presumably considering all the meta-theatrical significance that would entail. Morano would historically have been played by a white actor in blackface, making these threats visceral and immediate.

satirized in the pirates' banter about success, the irony being that crime was productive for the state on many levels. Macheath/Morano, for example, as a rakish criminal, indentured servant and presumed propagator of many more potential laborers, would have been valued for his productivity. In an ironic moment, Morano the pirate assumes the position of the greedy European colonizer who threatens the "illegitimate" colonial subject Cawwawkee unless he reveals the location of the Indians' hidden treasure of silver and gold: "[I]f I grant you your life, will you be useful to us? For you shall find mercy upon no other terms. I will have immediate compliance, or you shall undergo torture" (II.viii.114-17). When Morano's lieutenant Vanderbluff complains that "[w]e must beat civilizing into 'em, to make 'em capable of common society" (II.viii.38-9), the notion of economic usefulness or "capability" is revealed for what it is: a violent civilizing project of ideological legitimation.

Morano's accomplishments as a black(face) criminal do not adhere to the goals of such a project, but they do complicate the discourse about illegitimate subjecthood. That is, Morano's self-making exceeds Gay's critique of middle class legitimation and instead functions as a kind of liberation from that logic. Although he is ultimately killed for his transgressions, Morano illustrates the way in which entrepreneurial self-making (i.e. participation in the trade network) can become the tool of a different kind of opportunism (i.e. revolution/radicalism) in the Atlantic world. Rather than move away from a life of piracy and crime into (dubious) legitimacy like Singleton, the highwayman Macheath seems to embrace his illegitimacy and, when apprehended, reinvents himself in ways that subvert and rework the Atlantic model of productivity and enterprise. Instead of laboring (as a sailor or slave), he turns to piracy and leads a rebellion against the

plantocracy. Instead of escaping inevitable punishment and returning to England with his (illicitly-earned) contribution to the wealth of the nation, Morano faces death almost ambitiously. And finally, instead of revealing his (here useful) white skin in time to be recognized by Polly and pardoned by the Indians, Morano chooses a mask of blackness that proves to be the wrong ideological disguise, but a “radical social strategy” (Reed 241). In challenging this model of productivity, Morano paradoxically reveals the entrepreneurial, upstart character of Atlantic selfhood.

By escaping indenture and turning pirate, Morano resists participating in the foremost Atlantic mode of production, undermining the expectation embedded in the practice of criminal transportation that illegitimate subjects would become useful through labor and enterprise. And by leading an uprising against the men who would stand to profit from his labor, Morano challenges the ideology of such entrepreneurial expectation, redefining it for radical purposes. The very notion that laborers might be selfishly ambitious enough even to dream of rebelling makes the plantocracy cringe: “’Tis impertinent in a servant, to have scruples of any kind” (I.xi.79-80), an indignant Ducat tells Polly when she resists his corrupt advances. In the world of the play, however, the slaves who mount the rebellion alongside the pirates are decidedly self-interested and enterprising: “[T]he slaves who have deserted to us from the plantations are all brave determin’d fellows” (II.viii.6-8), Vanderbluff reports to his leader Morano as the battle begins. The evidence of agency in the slaves’ act of desertion, as well as the self-rule implied by their bravery and determination, is a rare description of people who were otherwise known as chattel in the early eighteenth century. Encouraged by

Morano's example, these "fellows" apply their productive capacity to very different ends.<sup>77</sup>

Morano resists another kind of 'useful' contribution when he refuses to steal from his crew and escape to England, where he could live concealed by disguise and protected by his wealth. In this regard he subverts the complicity of pirates in the Atlantic economy, the practice of which was to bring home their profits, one way or another, despite having earned them illegitimately. This was of course the choice of Captain Singleton and William Walker, who, like many other "fictional pirates[,] return to Europe in disguise" (Dryden 554, n.9). Jenny is anxious for Morano to follow suit (and be saved from inevitable capture and death), and encourages him to "[r]ob the crew, and steal off to England. Believe me, Captain, you will be rich enough to be respected by your neighbors" (II.iii.50-2). Such respect highlights how economic productivity and usefulness function as a kind of acceptable disguise and trump any concerns about criminality or piracy. Though Morano calls such a betrayal of his crew "treacherous," Jenny likens it to securing a fortune by "a judicious retreat" that is merely "the custom[ ] of the times" (II.iii.58-9). But unlike the warning in Jenny's aria about "too high aspiring," Morano doesn't want to "stint [his] will" and "retire" from the pursuit of "power and wealth" (II.iii.61-6). Here Morano plays the part of brazen entrepreneur

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<sup>77</sup> In the two Defoe novels discussed earlier, black slaves and African natives facilitate the business opportunities and entrepreneurial success of Jack and Singleton. The slaves on Master Smith's plantation provide Jack the chance to hone his management skills and 'encourage' his risk-taking reforms. When Singleton and crew cross the African continent on foot, the natives/slaves function as a kind of blueprint on which Singleton can experiment with novel solutions (he finds them particularly useful for baggage transport, and he employs the "Black Prince" to be a kind of overseer of the rest of the slaves). The significance of these minor characters to the larger achievement of Defoe's protagonists calls into question the notion of a self-created business acumen that in fact relies on the violent exploitation of others to provide innovative "solutions" to problems. For more on race and Atlantic entrepreneurship, see chapter 3 in this dissertation.

motivated by a self-interest that refuses to be underwritten by the expectation of the state. It is with this ever-ambitious attitude that Morano is captured and taken to his death; rather than retreat from the risk of capture, he continues to venture, facing off against the planters and the Indian chief Pohetohee who makes the final decision to have him killed: “Ambition must take its chance,” Morano declares. “If I die, I die in my vocation” (III.xi.14-15).

If Morano is a celebrated “great man” who pursues ambition even in the face of death, Gay’s decision to put him onstage in blackface is an important one. Instead of revealing his white skin to Polly, who would identify him as Macheath and stay his execution, Morano chooses to remain concealed and assert his self-made black piracy. But the disguise is problematic because it signifies enslavement and subservience alongside piratical, upstart avarice and opposition. If “[c]apitalism protects those who wear the right disguises” (Dryden 553), then Morano takes a considerable risk by wearing a mask that serves as an affront to the colonial state that has failed to keep him enslaved and, by extension, useful. The impact of Morano’s ‘wrong’ disguise—his illegitimacy—on colonial order is signified by the “radical anomaly” of his execution: “[A]lthough pirates were routinely hanged in the early eighteenth century, they are not executed in eighteenth-century pirate fiction” (Dryden 540). Despite his ultimate demise, Morano’s self-making is a powerful form of both agency and resistance; as Peter Reed observes, “[he] claims the privilege of creating and acting his own part. This act of self-representation—Macheath’s blackface—causes his downfall as much as his rebellion” (250). The irony presented by Morano’s character is that the illegitimate subject becomes the self-made man, exactly as the charitable donors of the Foundling Hospital had hoped

and planned, but must die because such an achievement reveals too much freedom from state circumscription.<sup>78</sup> This achievement also acknowledges the resistant, rebellious, piratical, mixed-race entrepreneurial risk-taking that makes possible the successes of the Atlantic world.

In *Polly* the process of self-making thus involves an assessment of legitimacy by the colonial state; Gay, suspicious of the notion of self-mastery, makes the critique that even the most rebellious cannot escape the state's interpellation of selfhood. Indeed, despite Morano's significant role, the play "concludes hastily with [his] execution—his true identity finally acknowledged though too late to make any difference to the plot" (Reed 246). While Polly goes on to a happy union with the Indian prince Cawwawkee, the pirates find themselves outnumbered and defeated, and the slaves "restor'd to their owners, and return[ed] to their slavery" (III.xv.23-4). That is to say, in both the "plot" of the opera and the broader "plot" of the colonial civilizing/legitimizing project, the enterprising victories of the underclass are ostensibly disavowed—order is resumed, legitimacy reaffirmed, and the "brave and determined" individual stripped of his potential self-rule. While the play's suggestive moments of subversion and resistance should not be discounted, this ending reveals Gay's anxiety about imagining the "heroic self-mastery" (Canfield 51) of underclass subjects such as pirates and slaves.

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<sup>78</sup> Morano's death would seem to send the message that no, "[t]he subaltern cannot speak." See Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 104.

## The Law and the Outlaw

Echoing the mixed message of those “civilizing pioneers” (McVeagh 55)—the mercantile, entrepreneurial writers of the 1690s—the discourse exemplified by the three works examined here could better imagine the “potential conversion to useful occupations” (Appleby, *Economic Thought* 156) of illegitimate subjects than it could allow for their agency and independence, or provide the opportunities for that potential to be realized. In pursuing their respective capitalist ambitions, Singleton must live out his life in secrecy and disguise, and Colonel Jack is “an arriviste who never arrives, left by the novel in transit where of course he forever remains” (Faller 197). Morano, of course, is killed for his ambition, for his excessive, subversive ‘productivity’ which challenges the colonial ideology and signifies the hypocrisy at work in its model of useful, legitimate selfhood.

Before he is taken to his death, Morano calls attention to this spurious model of legitimacy by declaring: “*Alexander* the great was more successful. That’s all” (III.xi.59). This allusion to St. Augustine’s famous story about the ambiguous distinction between crime and empire, pirates and colonizers, assumes a powerful critique when set in the chaotic, unregulated contact zone of the early Atlantic world.<sup>79</sup> The legacy of violence, from sanctioned warfare and pirate attacks, to criminal transportation and systemic

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<sup>79</sup> “Justice being taken away, then, what are kingdoms but great robberies? For what are robberies themselves, but little kingdoms? . . . Indeed, that was an apt and true reply which was given to Alexander the Great by a pirate who had been seized. For when that king had asked the man what he meant by keeping hostile possession of the sea, he answered with bold pride, “What thou meanest by seizing the whole earth; but because I do it with a petty ship, I am called a robber, whilst thou who dost it with a great fleet art styled emperor.” Saint Augustine, *The city of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: Random House/Modern Library, 2000) 113. See also Rediker, “Pirates and the Imperial State,” rev. of *Captain Kidd and the War Against the Pirates*, by Robert C. Ritchie, *Reviews in American History*, 16:3 (1988): 356. The phrase “contact zone” is Mary Louise Pratt’s, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

slavery, adds a complex dimension to the negotiation of 'legitimate' identity, evidenced by the ambitious yet vilified pirates who facilitated mercantile trade, and by the children born out of wedlock and miscegenation whose labor produced the value of that exchange. The literature by Defoe and Gay that I have discussed illustrates the effects of this complicitous dynamic on early eighteenth-century subjects, both colonial and metropolitan. Each text reveals, with a different degree of hesitation, the entrepreneurial, upstart, piratical and, indeed, illegitimate character of Atlantic selfhood, in which both opportunism and resistance can potentially operate. Informed as it is by (illegitimate) outlaws and (legitimate) profit, self-creation in the Atlantic world both 'pirates' and makes possible a "polite and commercial" British identity—a complication that hinders the consolidation of 'legitimate' fortunes and 'useful' national interests.

## CHAPTER TWO

### “An offending, generous man”: Benevolent Planters and Upstart Sensibility

I am talking only as a merchant; but as a man – Good heavens!

- Henry Mackenzie, *Julia de Roubigné*<sup>1</sup>

[H]e comes amongst you a new character, an inhabitant of a new world,  
and both hospitality as well as pity recommend him to our indulgence.

- Richard Cumberland, *The West Indian*<sup>2</sup>

In theory, economic rationalism justified the support of illegitimate subjects, but in reality it served to take advantage of productivity while limiting success. By the mid-eighteenth century, however, there was an alternative route to self-making. With the development of a culture of sentiment, the lower-class entrepreneur could participate and potentially rise in society by displaying his capacity as a man of feeling. Of course, the complicity between the disavowed upstart and the economic state had not disappeared, it had only become opaque. If sensibility signified social advancement, it did not erase the entrepreneur's self-interest. In this chapter I explore the complex interplay between sensibility and self-interest in the representation of an eighteenth-century literary anomaly: the benevolent planter and slave owner.

#### The Hero of the Story

In Sir Richard Steele's wildly popular 1711 rendering of the Inkle and Yarico tale published in his periodical *The Spectator*, Inkle, a young merchant adventurer, is

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Mackenzie, *Julia de Roubigné*, ed. Susan Manning (East Linton, UK: Tuckwell Press, 1999) 101. All subsequent references to the novel will be cited in the text as *Julia*.

<sup>2</sup> IV.II.384

identified by Steele as “the hero of my story,” and yet portrays the calculating villain who pursues his own self-interest at the expense of humanitarian sensibility:

Mr. *Thomas Inkle* of *London*, aged 20 years, embarked in the *Downs* on the good ship called the *Achilles*, bound for the *West-Indies*, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of *June* 1647, in order to improve his fortune by trade and merchandize. Our adventurer was the third son of an eminent citizen, who had taken particular care to instill into his mind an early love of gain, by making him a perfect master of numbers, and consequently giving him a quick view of loss and advantage, and preventing the natural impulses of his passions, by prepossession towards his interests.<sup>3</sup>

This hero, “our adventurer,” finds himself shipwrecked on the American mainland and about to be attacked by Native Americans when he escapes into the forest and meets a girl named Yarico. She protects him and they fall in love, with Inkle promising to bring Yarico back to England “where she should be clothed in such silks as his waistcoat was made of, and be carried in houses drawn by horses.” But once Yarico catches sight of a British ship that might provide their rescue, Inkle, “now coming into *English* territories,”

began seriously to reflect upon his loss of time, and to weigh with himself how many days interest of his money he had lost during his stay with *Yarico*. This thought made the young man very pensive, and careful what account he should be able to give his friends of his voyage. Upon which considerations, the prudent and frugal young man sold *Yarico* to a *Barbardian* merchant; notwithstanding that the poor girl, to incline him to commiserate her condition, told him that she was with child by him: But he only made use of that information, to rise in his demands upon the purchaser. (88)

Steele’s conscious use of economic language emphasizes the lost “interest” that Inkle carefully evaluates before determining his course of action.<sup>4</sup> The additional connotation

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<sup>3</sup> Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, *The Spectator*, no. 11 (13 March 1711), reprinted in Frank Felsenstein, *English Trader, Indian Maid: Representing Gender, Race, and Slavery in the New World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999) 86. Italics in Steele’s original.

<sup>4</sup> “Steele’s own knowledge of the British involvement in the Atlantic slave trade during the early eighteenth century may not have been extensive, but his interest in Barbados was certainly more than academic, for in 1706, on the death of his first wife, he had inherited the freehold of a considerable sugar plantation there. The property, which was let at £850 per annum, consisted of some seven hundred acres and included as

of *self*-interest speaks to the central problem explored in this chapter: Inkle's self-interested opportunism derives from his business sense and fits the image of an Atlantic businessman, but seems antithetical to virtue and sensibility. In the colonial value system represented in the story, Moira Ferguson explains, "Inkle is a fixed figure, irredeemable . . . [He] learns to unlearn and he loves for a while but rapidly reconverts to type."<sup>5</sup>

Though this behavior was tolerated in 1711, it was also viewed as a cautionary tale of vice that anticipates the debauched "progress" of Tom Rakewell; like Hogarth's aptly named antihero, "Inkle signifies the inseminating rake seducer who 'has his way' with the maiden and then gaily skips off, male entrepreneur to a tee" (Ferguson 88).

Over the next century and sixty adaptations, the question of Inkle's character became the subject of considerable debate (Felsenstein 1). Tracing the development of the story is not only interesting for the ways that Yarico, as colonial subject, gains increasing agency and humanity, but also for the ways that English literary history reflects both a growing cultural insistence on sensibility as well as changing attitudes towards the self-interested Atlantic entrepreneur. The accounts of Inkle and Yarico that followed Steele's tend to "commiserate with Yarico's agony and stress Inkle's callous opportunism" (Ferguson 77). For example, in Edward Jerningham's 1766 *Epistle*, Inkle is described as a "godlike Englishman ('form'd by nature in her choicest mould'), utterly irresistible in his seductive beauty and charm" but also criticized as a "low-born trader[ ]"

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chattels several white servants and two hundred Negro slaves" (Felsenstein 13). This experience probably led Steele's interest to Richard Ligon's *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados* (1673)—which contained the original story of Inkle and Yarico—and sparked his imagination (Felsenstein 14). See also Rae Blanchard, "Richard Steele's West Indian Plantation," *Modern Philology* 39:3 (1942): 281-285.

<sup>5</sup> Moira Ferguson, *Subject to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery, 1670-1834* (New York: Routledge, 1992) 83.

by whose hand Yarico refuses “to submit to future enslavement” (Felsenstein 16).<sup>6</sup> Despite the Inkle and Yarico story’s ostensible opposition to slavery, Susan Amussen observes that throughout these various adaptations “it was the individual greed of Inkle and not the system [of slavery] itself that was the clearest target” (Amussen 234). When the story was adapted for the stage, even its performers were troubled by Inkle’s self-interest, since his profit motive seemed to preclude any capacity for feeling. The actor Jack Bannister was “far from comfortable” playing the part of Inkle in George Colman the Younger’s 1787 comedic opera (Felsenstein 24).<sup>7</sup> Bannister’s nineteenth-century biographer John Adolphys explains that it was unnatural to see him play a character “in which his large eye never cast forth a beam of benevolence,—in which his countenance never expanded for a moment to express the impulse of a humane heart” (Felsenstein 24). Likely as a result of Bannister’s urging, Adolphys reveals, Colman revised the opera’s ending to have Inkle repent in a sentimentally charged way; in the new version, Inkle “forget[s] about commerce [and] renounce[s] his greed for profit, [all] in the interests of Yarico” (Nussbaum, *Limits* 250).

In line with Felsenstein’s contention that the Inkle and Yarico story is “an important source in colonial and postcolonial polemic” (42), I use the phenomenon here to demonstrate the mediating influence of literary representation on Atlantic identities, stereotypes and communities that resonate even today. Importantly, in Steele’s influential early rendition,<sup>8</sup> Inkle is callous, ambitious and self-interested; despite later

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<sup>6</sup> Describing Edward Jerningham’s “Yarico to Inkle: An Epistle” (1766).

<sup>7</sup> Colman’s was “the most popular version of the Spectator story. . . . It played constantly until 1800 and was performed in . . . Jamaica, Calcutta, and New York” (Nussbaum, *Limits* 247).

<sup>8</sup> Steele’s is of course not the original source of the Inkle and Yarico story, but its wide influence in the cultural imagination makes it more significant than Richard Ligon’s 1673 extract in this regard.

modifications of him as sentimental and repentant, the problematic “economic man” remains at the center of the story. Even after a century of attempts at reformation, the Inkle—and by extension, the Atlantic entrepreneur—who lives on in both the colonial and post-colonial cultural imagination remains “the traitor, the scoundrel, the villain” who appeared in 1711 (Felsenstein 40). What we might call Inkle’s “crisis of identity” in literary history illustrates the essential concern of this chapter: that is, the representation in mid-eighteenth-century British literature of the Atlantic entrepreneur, in particular the slave-owning colonial planter, as the sentimental hero of the story. In this chapter I argue that despite the offensive “upstart” character and perceived false sensibility of the planter figure evident in the cultural record, his self-interest and ensuing success enabled a degree of ‘benevolence’ and charity that fashioned him, however incongruously, a man of feeling—perhaps the ideal man of feeling. With this sentimental literary treatment, the loathsome planter comes to model the virtuous “new” man of sensibility whose existence threatens to disavow our rakish adventurer Inkle, but remains haunted by the family resemblance.<sup>9</sup>

English literature has a long tradition of disdaining the colonial upstart; whether directed towards the West Indian planter or the East Indian nabob, examples abound.<sup>10</sup>

As early as the Restoration period these figures embodied corruption and vice, were

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<sup>9</sup> Steele’s use of the sentimental (especially in “The Conscious Lovers”) as a disavowal of the rake was suggested by Professor Laura J. Rosenthal during the panel discussion, “Too Exquisite For Laughter: British Sentimental Comedy,” The 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (ASECS), Richmond, VA, March 26, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> The most sustained survey of the treatment of West Indians in eighteenth-century English literature is Wylie Sypher, “The West Indian as a “Character” in the Eighteenth Century,” *Studies in Philology* 36 (1939), 503-520. An extended analysis can be found in Sypher, *Guinea’s Captive Kings: British Anti-Slavery Literature of the XVIIIth Century* (New York: Octagon, 1969). Ferguson’s *Subject to Others* is also an important, broad survey of representations of colonial slavery in eighteenth-century British women’s writing.

motivated by greed, and used dishonest means to obtain marriages and fortunes (Amussen 187). Despite a general acceptance of slavery well into the 1750s (Ferguson 71), the West Indian planter commonly appeared as a stock character whose immorality served as a “foil for virtues and values presented as English” (Amussen 184). We can learn a great deal about these negotiations of identity by examining the treatment of planters in the popular literature of sensibility. In the latter third of the eighteenth century much of the discourse of sentimentalism would become known as the literature of anti-slavery—that which critiques the West Indian planter and slave owner for his *lack* of sensibility, and depicts him as an antagonist to the civilized and reform-minded metropolitan British subject. However, as in the broader dissertation, here I read the entrepreneurial planter figure less as a stock character or foil, and more as a self-interested agent of literary history, whose actions and ambiguities complicate that imagined by the writers who invoke them. In each of the three sentimental texts examined below—Sarah Robinson Scott’s *The History of Sir George Ellison* (1766), Henry Mackenzie’s *Julia de Roubigné* (1777), and Richard Cumberland’s *The West Indian* (1771)—the planter figure is constructed ambiguously as both economic man and sentimental hero; benevolent gentleman citizen and unassimilable colonial other. Rather than fit the stereotype of anti-slavery foil or pro-slavery paternalist, the sentimental planters represented in these texts are self-conscious and critical of their repellent livelihood, and actively self-interested in increasing their slave-generated profits. In this chapter it is not my claim that historical planters were actually heroic or benevolent or men of feeling in any way. Undoubtedly, many planters saw themselves in this positive light, and surely some pro-slavery depictions were written by individuals who genuinely

believed this to be true (as opposed to propaganda). Here, rather, I am interested in the ways that ambiguous representations of the planters function to destabilize and rework cultural ideologies of heroism, colonial difference and civilizing sentiment.

Before turning to the texts, I provide background in the form of three interconnected mentalities that held cultural currency in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world and underscored the view of planters as offensive outsiders: First, planters were colonial subjects and therefore inferior to the metropolitan citizen. Second, as profit-driven economic men, ambitious planters could not, by definition, be virtuous. And third, if the cult of sensibility served as a moral standard, planters exhibited a false sensibility. Against each of these mentalities, however, the planter figure reveals a self-determination that both complements and subverts the metropolitan ideal, thus representing a new character in the literature of sensibility—an economic (perhaps even “Atlantic”) man of feeling who combines capitalist interest, sentimental benevolence and upstart ambition.

### **Bad Boys, Bad Taste, Bad Whiteness**

In the late seventeenth century Richard Ligon suggested that the English settlers in Barbados might be “more valiant then other men” [sic] because of their willingness to face the risks (especially of the difficult-to-cultivate sugar crop) and hazards (the high mortality rate) of living and working on the island.<sup>11</sup> Though their lives and fortunes were in jeopardy, contemporary observers argued that the West Indian planters’

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<sup>11</sup> Richard Ligon, *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbadoes*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (1673) 121, qtd. in Jack P. Greene, “Changing Identity in the Atlantic World: Barbados as a Case Study,” in *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World: 1500-1800*, ed. Nicholas P. Canny and Anthony Pagden (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1987). “Fire, drought, death of cattle or of laborers, and losses at sea were only the most important of many misfortunes that could [ruin a planter]” (Greene 223).

“incessant Industry” and “indefatigable Labour” were unmatched (Greene 253).

Although the risks taken by these colonial entrepreneurs often led to individual and imperial economic success, with the turn of the eighteenth century the celebration of profit and adventure was complicated by the ruthless behavior of the slave-owning planters. Their cruel livelihood and profligate lifestyle made tenuous their identification with metropolitan sensibility and civility. As early as 1709 one missionary described Carolina planters as

the Vilest race of Men upon the Earth they have neither honour, nor honesty nor Religion enough to entitle them to any tolerable Character, being a perfect Medley or Hotch potch made up of Bank[r]upts, pirates, decayed Libertines, Sectaries and Enthusiasts of all sorts who have transported themselves hither from [many other British colonies] . . . and as they are of large and loose principles so they live and Act accordingly.<sup>12</sup>

This profile can easily be applied to West Indian planters, since the foundation of the North American planters’ reputation as “simpletons who accumulated riches . . . and assumed high-flown styles [was] laid mostly in the Caribbean colonies.”<sup>13</sup> Edward Long, himself the son of a wealthy Jamaican planter, describes the “characteristic deviations” of Creoles as indolence, infidelity, volatility, haughtiness, fickleness, and addiction to luxury (262-265). In part due to their perceived moral corruption, and in part to their association with African slaves, white West Indians were stereotyped as examples of “‘bad whiteness’ formulated by the English to vilify the Irish, the French, and members of their own criminal and under-classes” (Mackie, “Cultural Cross-Dressing” 255). At first the horrors of slavery were invoked only to fuel metropolitan disdain for the

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<sup>12</sup> Qtd. in J.G. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1992) 49.

<sup>13</sup> Michal J. Rozbicki, *The Complete Colonial Gentleman: Cultural Legitimacy in Plantation America* (Charlottesville: UP Virginia, 1998) 97.

planters, but as anti-slavery opinion gained momentum the planters acquired an increasingly monstrous image: “The picture of degenerate half-man vied with the vision of feudal grandeur for the dominant representation of the planter ruling class” (Wheeler 228). By 1750, there was no mincing words—one short story describes the planter as

cruel, haughty, and mercenary, without any soft sentiment of Humanity in his Breast; and his Years had laid the Fever in his Blood so much that he had no Thoughts but how to work the Value of his Money out of the Slaves, and make the most of them, without regard to their Happiness or Misery. In a Word, like most of the Tribe of Planters, he had no Appetite but for Money; nor Pleasure in any Pastime but torturing the unhappy Wretches in his Power.<sup>14</sup>

This passage not only echoes the “prudent,” money-hungry Inkle’s cold inhumanity towards Yarico, but the savage, voracious “tribal” tyrant imagined here registers with Wheeler’s Caliban-esque half-caste to highlight the way that the planters’ disrepute had larger consequences within the colonial-metropole dynamic.

Not surprisingly, by the 1770s, for a variety of political, economic and racial reasons, it had become difficult to be both English and West Indian. Instead of transplanted Englishmen, planters were increasingly seen as “deangliciz[ed]” colonials who had been corrupted by plantation life (Rozbicki 80, 84). Plantation life was also blamed for excusing the bad taste associated with *parvenu* West Indians: “the mis-use or non-use of a fortune became as much the target of popular attack as the rate of its accumulation.”<sup>15</sup> In the view of metropolitan Britons, the planter elite was unrefined and unworthy, with “illegitimate cultural ambitions” (Rozbicki 100). Although an increasing number of West Indian families were wealthy enough to send their children to school in

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<sup>14</sup>Anonymous, *The Fortunate Transport or, the secret history of the life and adventures of the celebrated Polly Haycock, the lady of the gold watch* (London: Printed for T. Taylor, 1750?) 32.

<sup>15</sup>James Raven, *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England, 1750-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992) 82.

England, the heightened visibility of the planter class only magnified popular criticism of their seemingly prideful attempts at social mobility (Sypher, “West Indian as Character” 504).<sup>16</sup> As James Raven explains, these “[n]ew ambitions provoked new hostilities” and cultural attitudes showed a growing resentment towards “arriviste” planters (221). While the planters may have been unfairly held up to idealized standards (Yeh “Enemy’s Country” 20), metropolitan approval of the colonies meant everything and was in some ways more important than sugar, slavery or colonial wealth (Rozbicki 104). Instead of approval, however, metropolitan observers questioned the virtue and morality of the West Indians in light of their self-interested capitalist ethos and decided insensibility.

West Indian plantocratic owners were indeed motivated by self-interest and were necessarily entrepreneurs, perhaps even entrepreneurial role models.<sup>17</sup> David Brion Davis has argued that “the sugar plantation was first of all the way to wealth for the self-made man. In a sense, the planter was the prototype for future speculators and industrialists.”<sup>18</sup> Many planters were wildly successful, but like their fictional counterpart Thomas Inkle, their insistence on a capitalist ethos displaced heroic virtue.<sup>19</sup> In his analysis of the colonial pursuit of legitimacy and land-owning respectability, Rozbicki explains that while profitable gain in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world typically required involvement in trade, trade was denied association with landed wealth in Britain and was therefore generally treated with disdain. Raven elaborates on this pervasive, if hypocritical, attitude:

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<sup>16</sup> “In 1750 only 300 Creole children were in English schools, but by 1770 over three-fourths of the children of West-Indian planters were being educated in England” (Sypher 504).

<sup>17</sup> Both Ferguson and Dunn often describe the planters as “entrepreneurs.”

<sup>18</sup> D.B. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (New York: Oxford UP, 1988) 157.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Frohock, *Heroes of Empire: The British Imperial Protagonist in America, 1596-1764* (Newark: U Delaware P, 2004) 143.

It was the sheer wealth of many of the returned nabobs and planters that attracted most [of the disparaging metropolitan] comment. In a society obsessed by monetary value and yet unwilling to admit that this could ensure status, huge hostility was generated by the creation of sudden overseas fortunes. Exotic descriptions appeared of the actions of men risen from the lowliest of dunghills to the heights of affluence. (231)

In other words, the West Indian planters were upstarts—representatives of the new economic order who contrasted strongly with the virtuous “old style of man” or “landed patriotic gentleman-citizen” and were judged with apprehension (Barker Benfield 86).<sup>20</sup> Even Adam Smith, despite his generally modern view of self-interest, was concerned about the “unpalatable” effect of commerce on society. Although Smith argued for the fundamental role the commercial spirit plays in human nature, he was “by no means convinced that it is an essential good, associating it also with narrow-minded, mean-spirited attention to sordid details which closes the mind to higher considerations such as courage and honour.”<sup>21</sup> Atlantic trade undoubtedly made many wealthy landed families wealthier, but culturally “this attitude reigned, for the dominant criteria by which businessmen were judged were social and ethical, and little related to perceptions of commercial and industrial achievement” (Raven 12). Thus identified as avaricious economic men, entrepreneurial planters were represented as “unadulterated villains” in the literature and culture of mid-century (Ferguson 113). Like the callous and self-interested Inkle, the planter characters’ “ethical failings” served as evidence of their lack of sensibility, “that at once affective, aesthetic and moral standard which serves as a gauge of humanness itself” (Mackie, “Cultural” 258).

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<sup>20</sup> Qtg. Pocock, *Virtue*, 48-9, and M.M. Goldsmith, *Private Vices, Public Benefits: Bernard Mandeville's Social and Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985) 133-5.

<sup>21</sup> Gillian Skinner, *Sensibility and Economics in the Novel, 1740-1800: The Price of a Tear* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999) 13.

Indeed, in the “new climate of opinion” that accompanied the sentimental revolution of the 1760s and 1770s (Langford 461), a refined sensibility was the key characteristic of those who fancied themselves living in a civilized society (Barker-Benfield 132). Emerging as a reaction against Stoicism and Hobbes’ view that humans are innately selfish and self-interested, sensibility emphasized virtue through benevolence and a moral code of conduct. In literature there emerged “a transgeneric idiom of sensibility shared by drama, poetry, fiction, and nonfictional prose throughout the eighteenth century.”<sup>22</sup> The archetypal victim of the literature of sensibility was the sensitive, benevolent man whose feelings are too exquisite for the acquisitiveness, vulgarity and selfishness of his world.<sup>23</sup> In fact, the fictional sentimentalist is typically figured as “ardently anti-capitalist, despising those who hoard and increase money and dispensing his own wealth liberally and with speed” (Todd 97). The newly-rich planters were not, as a rule, portrayed as victims, let alone sentimental heroes who opposed gambling, drinking and idleness (Barker-Benfield 247)—indulgences that were veritable West Indian pastimes. Instead, the planters’ lack of sensibility was seen as a natural condition, one that writers took for granted. Undoubtedly, as Erin Mackie argues, popular opinion held that “[i]nsensibility is the moral atrophy produced by slavery and the whole society built on its back” (“Cultural” 258). But the seeds of this moral atrophy seem to have been sown prior to the systematic use of African slaves. Richard Frohock suggests that Inkle’s willingness to sell Yarico into slavery represents “the failing of a[n] English imperialist] culture that has developed values incompatible with the expression

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<sup>22</sup> Julie Ellison, *Cato’s Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1999) 19.

<sup>23</sup> Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1986) 4.

of gratitude, sympathy, and benevolence” (143). And in 1750, the anonymous writer of “The Fortunate Transport” identifies a planter spirit—an numbing inhumanity acquired from the abuse of power: “[U]nhappily for her, she has brought Home with her too much of the Spirit of the Planter; that is, a Disposition to use her Servants with great Severity, and scarce any Sense of Humanity” (43).

Proto-abolitionists targeted this monstrous inhumanity as cause for reform. In his *Thoughts Upon Slavery* (1774), for example, John Wesley reproves captains, merchants and planters by asking, “Are you a man? then you should have a human heart. But have you indeed? What is your heart made of? Is there no sympathy, no sense of human woe, no pity for the miserable?”<sup>24</sup> In the growing body of anti-slavery fiction, planters became the “main opponent” of benevolent protagonists who sought to ameliorate the slaves’ situation, and by the 1790s, “planter” had become a “code word for a ne’er-do-well” (Ferguson 194). As the English cleric and traveler Andrew Burnaby noted in 1762, “authority over their slaves renders [the planters] vain and imperious, and [e]ntire strangers to that elegance of sentiment, which is so peculiarly characteristic of refined and polished nations” (Rozbicki 118). It made sense to Britons that the West Indian planters—outsiders to metropolitan civility in so many other ways—would also be “strangers” to the culture of sensibility so prized as a national British attribute. Moreover, the planters’ lack of sentiment was consistent with the (by then) long-held English view of North American settlers as “failed” Britons; that is, “useless to the society, ‘some never bred to labor, and others . . . unfit for it by the lazy habit of a

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<sup>24</sup> Qtd. in David Marshall, “The Business of Tragedy: Accounting for Sentiment in *Julia de Roubigné*,” in *Passionate Encounters in a Time of Sensibility*, ed. Novak and Mellor (Newark: U Delaware P, 2000) 159.

Soldier's life'" (Rozbicki 81).<sup>25</sup> Investigating this theme further, Mackie likens "the failure of empathy and loyalty" in Steele's Inkle and Yarico story to a "failure of sensibility":

The failure of sensibility produced . . . by a capitulation to the seductions of wealth, vanity, and personal advancement, becomes a standard theme in the discourse of the tropics—a zone where pleasure and prestige are pursued to the point of death, and profit is produced at any cost, even that of human life. As a defect in human feeling and as defective taste, *depraved sensibility—as much as sugar, tobacco and cocoa—comes to be seen as a product typical of the West Indies*. ("Cultural" 258, my emphasis)

And much like sugar, tobacco and cocoa, this product was widely distributed and consumed; in English literature and metropolitan culture of the eighteenth century, West Indian planters represented insensibility, depraved sensibility, failed sensibility.<sup>26</sup> Their insistence on profit and self-interest undermined their claims to sentimental feeling, and their perpetuation of slavery invalidated any ostensibly humanitarian impulse.

### **The Planter as a Man of Feeling?**

Despite the mass consumption in eighteenth-century transatlantic culture of the inhumane planter figure, there are, remarkably, a handful of atypical literary examples that attempt to incorporate the traditionally debauched and villainous planter as a benevolent, humanitarian and reforming *protagonist* within the sentimental framework. Although Wylie Sypher reminds us that this "other" kind of planter "was held to be the

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<sup>25</sup> Qtg. Sir Josiah Child, *Discourse about Trade* (1690).

<sup>26</sup> In a scathing appeal to his fellow Britons to support the abolition of the slave trade, Coleridge blamed Christian English citizens as much as (if not more than) the planters, and accused them of having "a false and bastard sensibility that prompts them to remove those evils and those evils alone, which by hideous spectacle or clamorous outcry are present to their senses, and disturb their selfish enjoyments." He then states unequivocally: "Sensibility is not Benevolence." See "On the Slave Trade" (1796) in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Vol. II: The Watchman*, ed. Lewis Patton (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970) 139.

exception, not the rule” (“West Indian” 509), between 1760 and 1780 there was a modest effort to infuse the planter with a new sensibility and represent him as a man of feeling. To be sure, some of the more sentimental portrayals were formulated by slavery apologists working to ameliorate the negative stereotype for political purposes. Long was in this camp and seems to have had a love/hate relationship with his Jamaican countrymen; he reviles their indolence and greed, but maintains that Creoles had unlimited hospitality, a “natural propensity” for benevolence, and were “tender fathers [and] humane and indulgent masters” (Long 262-3). He goes on to insist that “there are no men . . . in Great Britain, possessed of more disinterested charity, philanthropy, and clemency, than the Creole gentlemen of this island” (269). This characterization of Creole benevolence or charity as “disinterested” suggests a desire to construct planter sensibility as an a priori condition acquired in an unrelated way to the figure’s powerful economic identity. Taking an alternative approach, I argue that evidence of planter sensibility in the literary record is *directly* linked to their economic self-interest; that the planters’ profits from trading in and forcing the labor of slaves enabled (financed) their reform-minded “generosity,” and in many cases they were motivated to be charitable because of its profitable effect on their business.

I base my argument on evidence of mid-century metropolitan attitudes concerning trade and the reformation of manners, in which businessmen

recognized the value to them of cultivating refinement; it enhanced their reputation and their status. Their clubs and societies were established to encourage ‘mutual consideration,’ ‘mutual benevolence,’ and ‘friendly feeling’ between men, generating what one club called ‘principles of Benevolence, Charity, and Humanity.’ (Barker-Benfield 91)

As economic adventurers in the volatile Atlantic world, the West Indian planters embraced opportunism, and sensibility was undeniably a good business opportunity. Correspondingly, the cult of sensibility prized the mercantile virtues of frugality and industry, and some contemporary observers suggested that sensibility was heightened by business ambition (Hoppit 164).<sup>27</sup> But the opportunistic ambition that motivated the planters' success did more than heighten their sensibility—it enabled their financial commitment to charitable generosity.<sup>28</sup> The combination of moral virtue and individual triumph fashioned even the upstart planter into a sentimental hero. This notion is consistent with theories put forth by Smith and Mandeville that self-interest can lead to social good, and that the capitalist can double as a philanthropist. Shaftesbury, too, went so far as to argue that charity was the basis of morality.<sup>29</sup> As Gillian Skinner explains, “[i]n the sentimental scale of value, the ability to dispose of money charitably becomes a measure of personal worth. The more you give, the more you prove your feeling response to the sentimental stimuli of suffering and distress” (4). While many of the overconfident planters considered themselves benefactors to their slaves, they could escape neither the hypocrisy underwriting their charity nor the nature of their own upstart status: “The parvenu’s generosity after gaining wealth, even though this conformed to the ideal, was often scornfully dismissed as the insincerity of ostentation” (Raven 258). However,

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<sup>27</sup> As I will discuss, this sentimental planter is a *new character*. The more common stereotype, which I outline in the section above, is of the profligate planter flaunting his wealth. I consider the paradox suggested by the sentimental planter in my discussion of the ostentatious Belcour in Cumberland’s “The West Indian.”

<sup>28</sup> I thank Professor Daniel O’Quinn for his comments in response to my paper at the ASECS 2008 panel “Indigenous Aliens and the Literary Marketplace” The 39th Annual Meeting of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (ASECS), Portland, OR, March 27, 2008.

<sup>29</sup> Ernest Tuveson, “Shaftesbury and the Age of Sensibility” *Studies in Criticism and Aesthetics, 1660-1800; essays in honor of Samuel Holt Monk*, eds. Howard Anderson and John S. Shea (Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 1967) 78.

David Lambert shows that there was a kind of shared self-perception or “planter ideal” that worked to legitimize slavery by insisting that paternalistic slaveholders could both treat their enslaved workforces benevolently and continue to profit from their slavery.<sup>30</sup> While this discourse did nothing to mitigate the brutality of slaves’ working conditions, it did affect the way the planters saw themselves, and provides useful context with which to theorize the representation of the slaveowner as a new economic man of feeling.

Methodologically, this chapter proceeds from two scholarly conversations about the literature of sensibility in the context of the eighteenth-century Atlantic world. First, and more generally, the fusion of the sentimental hero with that quintessential enlightenment individual—rational or economic man. While there is compelling literary evidence for this relationship, only a handful of studies explore the phenomenon of an *economic* man of feeling in eighteenth-century British culture, with G.J. Barker-Benfield’s work on sensibility, gender and commerce being the most notable.<sup>31</sup> Liz Bellamy explains the irony of the critical neglect of the link between economics and sentimentalism: “[T]he novel of sentiment, with all its prioritization of individual feeling and emotion and its feminization of virtue, contains some of the most sustained accounts of the economic system and commercial morality that are to be found in eighteenth-century fiction.”<sup>32</sup> Lynn Festa’s work on sentimental fiction and empire is one of the

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<sup>30</sup> David Lambert, *White Creole Culture, Politics, and Identity during the Age of Abolition* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005) 65. As Lambert notes, the point of this is not to claim that planters were “good masters” in any real sense, but rather to examine what resulted from them imagining themselves in this way (65 nn 83).

<sup>31</sup> Other discussions of this conflation include Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans*; Mackie, *Rakes, Highwaymen and Pirates*; and Ildiko Csengei, who considers self-interest and cruelty as sensibility’s dark recesses in *Sympathy, Sensibility and the Literature of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).

<sup>32</sup> Liz Bellamy, *Commerce, Morality and the Eighteenth-century Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998) 129.

more sophisticated studies of this association, especially as she unpacks the anxiety of sentimentalism as it encounters and attempts to figure the colonial (and associated economic) experience. Festa describes the process of sentimentalism registering (or in her words, “jostling uncomfortably” in the face of) its dependence on Enlightenment rationality:

In eighteenth-century texts, feeling as much as reason designates who has value and who does not. Sentimental writings thus repeatedly confront the gap between what constitutes a ‘lyric ‘person’—emotive, subjective, individual— and a legal ‘person’—rational, rights-bearing, institutional’ . . . The sentimental self is thus the Janus face of the Enlightenment rational subject, the possessive individual, the rights-bearing citizen” (4).<sup>33</sup>

This duality can be fleshed out in the paradox that appears so often in the eighteenth century: while sentimental texts endeavor to convince readers that “the treatment of slaves repels,” the benevolent protagonists—the “heroes” of the same stories, including the ones I examine below—make their living as slave owners (Ferguson 97). While the broader concern of this chapter is to contribute to the critical conversation outlined here, its analytical goal is to unpack the paradox without reducing the planter protagonist to altogether sentimental or economic motives.

The second critical approach I employ positions the new man of feeling, the sentimental protagonist, as a kind of stimulus for the development of a transatlantic community—a figure that speaks to British identity as well as colonial-metropolitan relations. One of the primary goals of sentimentalism is to teach the reader “how to feel,” and the sentimental novel provides a space for these “newly sensitized subject[s]” to

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<sup>33</sup> Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-century Britain and France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2006) 1. Festa is quoting Barbara Johnson, “Anthropomorphism in Lyric and Law,” *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities* 10:2 (1998) 550.

explore the “bonds of sympathy.”<sup>34</sup> As Maureen Harkin explains, “community [is] reinforced by meditations on the sympathetic spectacles [readers] encounter in the pages of the sentimental text” (30). While the notion that sentimentalism creates a “community of feelings, ideas and opinions” (Skinner 12) is not new, April Alliston has more recently reconsidered Benedict Anderson’s “imagined communities” in terms of “the transnational communities catalyzed by sensibility.”<sup>35</sup> The sympathetic bonds created by writers “represent utopian imaginary communities that transgress the limits defining nations” (Alliston 133). I wish to build upon this view of transnational contact and connection and apply it to the Atlantic context, particularly as a way to theorize the colonial planter/merchant/adventurer as man of feeling whose sensibility is marked by both his British subjecthood and his colonial difference.

Laura Stevens’ suggestion that emotion, like economic currency, “circulates, transacts, and connects,” infuses a sense of fluid modernity and Atlantic commerce into the notion of a community of sensibility. In her analysis of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English missionary writings about American Indians, Stevens argues that this sentimental discourse enhanced national self-image by “reinforc[ing] a transatlantic British consciousness, teaching [. . .] readers to imagine themselves connected to distant compatriots as they shared feeling for a pitied object.”<sup>36</sup> These missionary texts tended to draw comparisons between emotional and economic discourse, and insisted that pity

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<sup>34</sup> Maureen Harkin, Introduction, *The Man of Feeling*, by Henry Mackenzie, ed. Harkin (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview, 2005) 30.

<sup>35</sup> April Alliston, “Transnational Sympathies, Imaginary Communities,” *The Literary Channel: The International Invention of the Novel*, eds. Margaret Cohen and Carolyn Dever (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2002) 145 nn 1. See also Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

<sup>36</sup> Laura Stevens, *The Poor Indians: British Missionaries, Native Americans, and Colonial Sensibility* (Philadelphia: U Penn P, 2004) 7.

would be effective if translated into prayers and funds.<sup>37</sup> The fact that these “transactions” in the sentimental Atlantic community were seldom mutually beneficial and often motivated by profit does not surprise: in the ‘purchase’ of national self-image, the currency of benevolence can erase its object (22). Indeed, such “sentimental erasure” (22) undermines the presumption that “self-interest or selfish behaviour is unknown” in the “community of feelings” motivated by sentiment (Skinner 12). Maaja Stewart also reveals this erasure, or what she calls the displacement of imperial violence by the representation of colonial wealth with generosity or charity.<sup>38</sup> In the three eighteenth-century texts I examine below, the protagonist’s expression of metropolitan sensibility—through behavior or actual contact—displaces the violence of slavery and the rough reality of trade, and instead depicts the planter as a man of feeling, comfortably dissociated from his economic pursuits. In each case, the ‘illusion’ of charity is emphasized over the conditions that fund it:

An illusion of active gift-exchange, signified by generosity, thus detaches the West Indian wealth from its production and suggests that [the planter’s] wealth in fact contrasts with the exchanges in the dominant market economy, exchanges determined not by the giving of gifts that ask nothing in return, but by a compulsion to gain in competition with others who have to lose. (Stewart 47)

Benevolence thus deceptively launders planter wealth not only of its bloodied origins but also of any self-interest or competitive motivation.

Working with and extending these critical observations, this chapter investigates the opportunities and limitations surrounding the figure of the new economic man of

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<sup>37</sup> “Missionary writings often equated financial transactions with spiritual ones, and the spiritual links they envisioned among humans offered precursors to the webs of economic interdependence that would develop with colonial trade” (Stevens 7).

<sup>38</sup> Maaja A. Stewart “Inexhaustible Generosity: The Fictions of Eighteenth-Century British Imperialism in Richard Cumberland’s *The West Indian*” *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 37 (1996) 43.

feeling as he encounters and navigates the sentimental community as both benevolent hero and unassimilable other. First, I read two characteristic novels of sensibility, Sarah Scott's *The History of Sir George Ellison* and Henry Mackenzie's *Julia de Roubigné*, as comparative examples of this navigation: how planters reject or embrace the duality of self-interest and humanitarian sensibility. Both texts are ostensibly proto-critiques of slavery that attempt to illustrate the 'benefits' of amelioration, and demonstrate the potential sensibility and civility of the West Indian planter. While Scott's benevolent reformer, Ellison, is uncomfortable with evidence of his self-interest and tries to suppress it, Mackenzie's sentimental hero, Savillon, negotiates the conflicting nature of his identity and faces the sacrifices that attend that pursuit. Though Scott attempts to uphold the ideal man of sensibility as a virtuous role model, the novel fails to separate the two worlds, suggesting a necessary dependency between sensibility and economics. Mackenzie's man of feeling is an Atlantic figure constructed along the binaries of that world, evident in his (ambitious) benevolence and (isolated) sociability. Both protagonists work to establish what Brycchan Carey calls a "sentimental economy" on their plantations (64)—still intentionally profitable but newly powered by sympathy and charitable reform. I then turn to Richard Cumberland's popular sentimental stage comedy *The West Indian*, which takes the planter out of the islands and ignores the violent conditions and exploitative relations by which he has gained his wealth. Once in the metropole, the Jamaican plantation heir Belcour is duped and made to play the fool by his supposed British confidantes, but emerges as a benevolent, sympathetic hero—the moral exemplar of the play. Cumberland positions Belcour as both a new character and a "new man," and the play illustrates how this figure gets read, received, revised and

assimilated—in other words, mediated—by a metropolitan audience. Keeping in mind the primarily metropolitan viewer/readership of these three texts, the remaining half of this chapter explores how narratives with a slave-owning colonial planter protagonist can have much to say, perhaps even to determine, about metropolitan identity and the culture of sensibility. By figuring the West Indian planter as a sentimental hero, these atypical representations explore a kind of “creolizing” of sensibility—the multiplying, complicating and unsettling of eighteenth-century British identity on the part of a colonial other.

### **Upstart Sensibility and its Discontents: *The History of Sir George Ellison***

Sarah Scott’s stated goal in writing *The History of Sir George Ellison* (1766) was to educate her readers using an inspirational role model. Scott wanted to exemplify this ideal sensibility with a life that was common enough to be within reach, and so designated the gentlemanly Ellison’s vocation as a merchant-turned-planter. The novel thus portrays the Atlantic entrepreneur as exemplar of virtue and sensibility, one who intentionally pursues “a benevolent course of life” (41).<sup>39</sup> Because Scott chose not to show failings and only virtues (3), in the novel’s utopian vision Ellison is “something of a superman amongst sentimental heroes” (Carey 51),

a benefactor who alleviates the sufferings of others . . . [and who] follows a course of action which the reader is invited to emulate. [His] superior sensibility is highlighted, [his] suffering—or [his] job at relieving suffering—is dwelt upon,

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<sup>39</sup> Sarah Scott, Preface, *The History of Sir George Ellison*, ed. Betty Rizzo (Lexington: U Kentucky P, 1996) 3. All subsequent references to the novel will be cited in the text as *Ellison*. Scott’s choice to model sensibility with the figure of the Atlantic merchant is further evident in the title of the pamphlet version of the novel published eight years later—“The Man of Real Sensibility”—the hero of which is “still George Ellison, a wealthy middle-class creole-philanthropist” (Ferguson 109).

and the audience is asked, directly or indirectly, to share in [his] feelings. (*Ellison* 41)

The novel follows Ellison as he sets out on a mercantile career across the Atlantic with the support of his benevolent father, who has invested his savings in George's endeavors. After considerable success and adventure he settles in Jamaica where he marries a widowed Creole plantation owner and assumes control of her business and her slaves. Ever virtuous, Ellison works to ameliorate slave management techniques on the plantation, insisting that all overseers maintain his commitment to benevolent mastery. After the death of his wife, Ellison puts the maintenance of his plantation and the care of his slaves in the hands of a trustworthy steward and returns to the English countryside, where he nurses his dying father and falls in love with an already-betrothed young woman. The bulk of the narrative chronicles Ellison's ongoing humanitarian efforts in England and Jamaica as he provides charity, education and opportunity to a variety of impoverished, aging, sick or indebted friends and neighbors.

Ellison clearly fits the image of a sentimental hero, but his motives and actions reveal him to be strongly representative of economic man, driven by ambition and self-interest (albeit often reluctantly and even unconsciously). The novel thus cannot easily reconcile its portrayal of Ellison as an "improbably benevolent" sentimental reformer (Carey 51). While implementing ameliorative practices on his plantation and enjoying popularity among his "happy" slaves, Ellison is, after all, a slave owner who wields his patriarchal authority and profits from slave labor. Scott works to present Ellison as model of generosity, but the character's heroic sentimentality is undermined by the plantocratic paternalist fantasy of slave ownership, which in the text registers as a kind of

self-interest.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, Ellison's *ambition* to be benevolent presents an ethical conundrum: he believes that slavery is acceptable under the mastery of a generous owner (recalling the "planter ideal"), because that owner will naturally want to reform his practices while still maintaining efficiency and profit. In addition, "Ellison's reforms represent a paternalist fantasy: as long as the paternalist can dictate all the terms and be cheerfully obeyed, there will be no problems, including violent punishment, on the plantation" (Boulukos 135). Ellison's paternalist attitude towards his slaves is evident in the narrative's use of language like "provides," "permits" and "requires;" he has considerable expectations for his slaves to "perform [their] duty" out of "gratitude" for his benevolence and for "the difference between their condition and that of any other slaves on the island" (*Ellison* 14). Despite his stated "resolve[ ] to withdraw his whole attention from commerce" to address his hatred of slavery and "devise[ ] some means of effecting this first wish of his heart [i.e. reform]" (13), Ellison later concedes that "slaves must be had to cultivate the plantation" (138). The result of reform for Ellison's commercial enterprise, in the form of slave productivity, is paradoxically what compels his attention to the problem. Literary historian Markman Ellis is neither surprised by this hypocrisy nor taken by Ellison's sentiment: "[M]any of Scott's [reformist] innovations—such as garden-plots or hospitals for slaves—were already common practice in the colonies, where, rather than reflecting a benevolent concern for the welfare of the slaves, they demonstrated the planters self-interested concern in the preservation of their

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<sup>40</sup> Rather than say that the novel is both pro- and antislavery, Carey argues "that the novel promotes an antislavery view which confines itself to what, in 1766, might have been possible to achieve" (52). Regardless of the novel's particular political stance, however, George Boulukos maintains that Scott is like many other "sentimental novelists [who] offer an account of race closer to that of slavery's defenders than its critics." See Boulukos, *The Grateful Slave: The Emergence of Race in Eighteenth-Century British and American Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008) 116.

financial investment in the bodies of their slaves.”<sup>41</sup> Within Scott’s ethical utopia, the planter Ellison is not permitted to be consciously aware of his own “self-interested concern,” but his ambition is always celebrated. The novel’s sentimental focus overlooks the fact that such ambition undermines as much as it enables Ellison’s benevolent actions.

Scott thus imagines a world very much taken with this reformist sentiment—that is, by the idealization of benevolence and power. She invokes Ellison’s authority and control in a positive way only, applying it for social improvement; Ellison is described by one of his beneficiaries as “perhaps the only man of the age, in whom the power and inclination to confer such benefits was so happily united” (153). As a result of this unity, his influence is undisputed: “The common people were convinced, that a man so benevolent and charitable to them, could have no intention to lead them into any thing that was not for their benefit” (68). Interestingly, the narrative also suggests that Ellison’s benevolence is cause for him to seek even greater power. When he declines an invitation to run for English Parliament, the representatives express their shock:

Little expecting this disappointment . . . some of them went so far as to tell him, that his declining so important and useful a trust did not well suit the benevolence and generosity of his temper, which should *naturally lead him to embrace an opportunity of becoming one of the legislature, as he might in that capacity have a power of doing more extensive good than by any other means.* (131, my emphasis)

That Ellison’s generosity should “naturally lead him to embrace [financial, or here, political] opportunity” for the good it can achieve suggests an important relationship between sensibility and opportunism. Ellison was in fact not “the only man of the age” who applied his political and financial power towards sentimental humanitarianism;

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<sup>41</sup> Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996) 104.

Langford describes the eighteenth century as “the first great age of middle-class reform” (489) which required “[a] novel kind of philanthropist . . . not great benefactors, but opinion-makers, men who sought out distress or injustice, analysed its causes, campaigned for its alleviation, co-ordinated its eradication” (483). While Ellison does offer financial support to several neighbors in need, he also provides services to the community in the form of education and assistance, particularly to debtors in prison. He champions the underclasses and cares for his ailing cousin, expending his “integrity” and “principles” as much as his money (*Ellison* 133). His ambition to influence so many lives constructs Ellison as a kind of “entrepreneur of charity”: “What such men had in common was their enthusiasm for moral as well as material improvement . . . They were truly entrepreneurs of charity, marketing philanthropy much as Wedgwood marketed porcelain” (Langford 485). But there was of course a heavy helping of paternalistic control underwriting such philanthropic enthusiasm; while we would have a hard time imagining charity without the support of financial and political power today, “[i]n the minds of some [in the eighteenth-century], including a number of those they sought to help, patronize, and ‘improve’, [these men] aroused suspicion and occasional hostility” (485). Indeed, these influential “opinion makers” were moved to action as much by the self-interested power achieved by benevolence as they were by the capacity for benevolence enabled by their financial power.

Even though Scott’s didactic moral agenda prohibits her fictional opinion maker, Ellison, from being consciously self-interested, it does allow him to intellectualize the potential for his own interest, ambition or “vanity” to interfere with his good intentions:

‘Vanity is so natural to the human heart, that, as far as possible, I wish to avoid every thing that can excite it in mine. . . . If we know we shall obtain praise, it is too probable that the desire of it will have its share in determining us to undertake whatever may produce it. Not that I entirely condemn ambition to be approved; it is inseparable from benevolence: if we love mankind, we must value their good opinion; but though frequently unblamable, it is always dangerous. Vanity grows imperceptibly; and those who would not have it become one of their chief motives to good actions, should often mortify and repress it; and always, when they can, set it aside. . . . In one case I enjoy the pleasure reflexion yields me with peace and security; in the other, I am afraid of giving way to it, and scarcely dare reflect; because the satisfaction arising from being applauded, will insinuate itself into my heart.’ (*Ellison* 129)

Despite his acknowledgment of the self-interested roots of charity—that ambition is “inseparable from benevolence”—Ellison is very uncomfortable with feeling any sort of “satisfaction . . . from being applauded.” Although he tries to limit his own conscious “reflexion” on such “pleasure,” Ellison registers noticeable anxiety when evidence of his self-interest confronts the sensibility with which he chooses to identify. While economic man is “rhetorically submerged throughout most of the novel,”<sup>42</sup> traces of this self-interested identity, as well as signs of its complicated relationship to sensibility, surface often. Though the narrative attempts to leave its sentimental hero’s West Indian experience back in Jamaica, Ellison draws attention to his Atlantic identity by overcompensating for the potential presence of his acquired Creole impulses—economic self-interest, a passionate temper, and a potentially “false” sensibility. Because these forces would render Ellison something less than heroic and benevolent in a metropolitan framework, the narrative displaces these characteristic West Indian tendencies in order to separate them from its celebrated protagonist, the man of sensibility.<sup>43</sup> References to

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<sup>42</sup> Alfred Lutz, “Commercial Capitalism, Classical Republicanism, and the Man of Sensibility in “The History of George Ellison”” *SEL* 39 (1999) 564.

<sup>43</sup> I will discuss the notion of displacement further in my analysis of Cumberland’s “The West Indian,” below.

Ellison's economic endeavors make a point of disclaiming any possible associations with vanity or self-interest. Though the novel insists that Ellison is "an exceeding good economist" (6) and "totally engaged by his business" (8), we are assured that "Mr. Ellison's close attachment to his business proceeded entirely from a desire of succeeding in a thing he had undertaken[;] . . . [he had none of] that love of money which renders people eager after every means of gain" (9). Early on in the narrative, Ellison, oblivious to the romantic advances of the wealthy Creole widow who will become his first wife, is "advi[sed]" and "persuaded" by his (presumably business-associate) friends "not to let slip so good an opportunity of improving his fortune" by marrying the widow (9). In contrast with his later, humble refusal to run for English parliament, Ellison grasps the opportunity and marries the widow "without reluctance" (9), welcoming the impact on his fortune (and his resulting power), and yet allowing the language of the exchange to displace responsibility for such a self-interested act onto his upstart West Indian friends. The scene is thus more important for what is left unsaid, for the self-interest that is made apparent by Ellison's marrying the widow.

Similarly, although Ellison often speaks of his commitment or "duty to his dependents" (*Ellison* 138), he remains a slave owner. Later in the novel, once Ellison has established himself in England, the narrator recounts his continued charitable efforts in Jamaica, specifically towards the slaves who remain on his plantation: "He . . . settled such annuities on the slaves then employed on his estate, as would render them in some degree independent, but yet insufficient to enable them to live comfortably without some labour, designing by this moderate provision to leave a spur to their industry" (138). While Ellison's efforts seem to encourage and even celebrate the "independence" and

“industry” of slaves over the (plantation) fruits of their labor, he is by no means ready to relinquish the productivity and profit that slavery provides just because he has “spur[red]” the motivation and agency of his slaves. The semantic negotiation between the actions of producing, profiting and providing calls attention to the dependency between sensibility and economics, for while Ellison’s “virtue . . . displaces the process of economic accumulation” we are also reminded that the “display of his virtue”—here, in the form of a “moderate provision” for the slaves—“necessitates the benevolent use of economic resources” (Lutz 560), none other than those profits earned using slave labor. But rather than concluding, as Alfred Lutz does, that economic man “wins out” over “civic man,”<sup>44</sup> I suggest that in the novel, as in the larger Atlantic world, economic self-interest and social collaboration are mutually constitutive.

If Ellison’s virtue often shifts the focus away from his economic self-interest, displacing his personal self-interest poses more of a challenge. Ellison tries desperately to stifle his desire for the “idealized and delicate” (Nussbaum 146) but married Miss Allin beneath his sensibility and his benevolent, neighborly efforts to assist her. All too aware that “his affection seemed invincible” (*Ellison* 78), Ellison constantly “endeavours to suppress sensations he [thinks] ungenerous and inhuman” (167) by “forcing his thoughts frequently into another train” (137). When Miss Allin’s husband Dr. Tunstall drinks himself to death, Ellison is overjoyed at the prospect of his union with the new widow, but takes “his heart severely to task for its inhumanity in feeling pleasing emotions, from

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<sup>44</sup> “[W]hile Ellison’s economy of virtue prevails at the level of character, it does not . . . prevail at the level of plot, which relies heavily on self-interest” (Lutz 563).

any circumstance that was calamitous to another” (167). True to form, Scott’s sentimental hero tries to overcome his “selfishness” with virtue:

As Mr. Ellison did not approve his sensations on this occasion, he wished to hide them from himself; but nature would exert her power, and frequently make him feel that generosity and reason have their bounds, and whatever pains he might take to extend their sway, nature could not be entirely enslaved; . . . and he was reduced to sigh over the weakness of his virtue, which he found was not strong enough to conquer the selfishness that made him hear with secret pleasure that Dr. Tunstall was given over, who in a few days after died. (167)

Ellison’s attempts are here more transparent as the character negotiates between two natures or identities, but the passage is thick with images of secrecy, battle, land claims, conquest, and, of course, slavery. The master-slave interiority of self-interest is highlighted earlier in the novel when the narrator asserts that “no one can essentially enslave us, as that which is within us; Nero or Caligula were not worse tyrants than a man’s own passions” (44). Ellison finally acknowledges the futility with which he has “deceive[d]” himself that it was possible to separate his interests from his “virtue” (167).

This interior negotiation is foreshadowed earlier in the novel when Sir William scoffs at his cousin’s sentimental and “exalted idea” that “self-love and social are the same” (51). Quite matter-of-factly, Sir William tells Ellison that “you will learn the necessity of taking care of yourself, for if you relinquish your interests, you may depend upon it no one else will take care of them. While you are providing for the happiness of others, who is to provide for yours?” (51). Sir William’s attitude is designed to be taken as the stereotypical rationalization of *unsentimental* economic man, and yet his interpretation of self-interest as personal welfare complicates the cult of sensibility invoked by Scott in the novel. Nussbaum describes Sir William as “a representative of old money and outdated values [who] opposes George’s newer commercial philosophy

and implicitly, his upstart brand of Englishness” (148). A foil for Ellison, Sir William was apparently quite generous, “[until] selfishness grew upon him by giving way to every humour” (44). The narrator discloses the root of Sir William’s misanthropy: “[T]he more indifferent he was to others, the more strongly attached he grew to himself. As he loved no one, and was entirely independent, he seldom endeavoured to please any but himself” (*Ellison* 43). That Ellison is able to avoid the same miserly fate as Sir William by trying to combine a commercial ethos with generosity and “social love” attests to the novel’s larger didactic goals, but this “upstart” identity poses a challenge to Ellison’s personal happiness, as in the case of Miss Allin, as well as to his sense of himself as a legitimate Englishman.

The consequence of self-interest underwriting Ellison’s charitable actions is for our “superman of sentimental heroes” to question his sentimental sincerity—to be faced with possible evidence of his own West Indian-influenced failed or “false” sensibility. Early on Ellison learns how easily his virtue could be subsumed by the plantation system of morals when he meets and marries his first wife, who “exemplifies the worst aspects of the islands” (Nussbaum, *Limits* 146): “[S]he had a reasonable share of compassion for a white man or woman, but had from her infancy been so accustomed to see the most shocking cruelties exercised on the blacks, that she could not conceive how one of that complexion could excite any pity” (*Ellison* 10). Unmoved by her own ruthless treatment of her slaves and servants, Mrs. Ellison pities her husband for his sentimentalism, or what she calls his “amiable weakness” (13). Mrs. Ellison, who possesses that “special inhumanity of a plantation owner’s wife” (Nussbaum, *Limits* 146), is thus used to juxtapose Ellison’s benevolence; her “false sensibility is exposed and rejected” (Carey

57) in favor of “Ellison’s authentic and sincere sentimentalism” (Ellis 110). Next to his wife’s blatant cruelty, even Ellison’s “economic motives seem less vicious” (Nussbaum, *Limits* 146). Still, the marriage poses a challenge to Ellison’s sensibility; when his wife conveniently dies from a fever, Ellison finalizes his plans to return to England. If Mrs. Ellison represents the Creole stereotype of excess and greed, her death marks the dissociation of Ellison’s sensibility from the sway of self-interest, and allows him to return to the metropole relatively unscathed by her influence or by a supposed West Indian degeneracy.<sup>45</sup>

Despite his distance from the islands, Ellison continues to project his insecurities about his association with his first wife and a possible ‘false’ sensibility onto their Jamaican-born son whose “impetuous temper, and bad qualities” compel Ellison “to educate him at home” in England (*Ellison* 64). Happily for Ellison, such instruction is a success, as his son, raised in England since childhood, exhibits very different, refined characteristics from the stereotypical West Indian youth his father feared he would become had he remained in Jamaica: “His disposition was truly noble. Generous, sincere, humane, and steady; of an active and lively temper, calm and resolute, yet gentle and docile. He had great parts and a strong understanding; polite and graceful in his manner, with true greatness of soul, but free from pride” (192). However, the authenticity of the son’s sensibility is called into question when he is imprisoned for the murder of his father-in-law. The family ultimately discovers that the son is innocent, but Ellison meanwhile is devastated and obsesses over his son’s state of mind, fearing his prior good

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<sup>45</sup> He returns to England not only unscathed by her reputation, but free to enjoy the profits yielded by the plantation and enabled by her cruelty.

behavior was a false attempt at sensibility and that his son's West Indian nature has surfaced: "He was sensible his son's temper was naturally violent, but for many years had enjoyed the satisfaction of thinking all his passions were totally subdued by reason and humanity; yet he could not but fear that nature had in some fatal instant broken forth, and baffled all the effects of education" (213). Ellison's belief that "reason and humanity" had managed to overcome the son's violent Creole nature reflects Ellison's insecurity about his own passions and self-interest, those influenced by his time in the West Indies as well as those based in romantic desire. His reasoning does not allow for the co-existence of these forces—to be virtuous, educated and civilized is to control and "subdue" one's prideful self-interest.

Ellison's satisfaction with the news of his son's innocence illustrates his own inability to embrace two identities that, as we have seen, coexisted in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world. Scott chose for her protagonist the Atlantic entrepreneur to exemplify the (middle class) attainability of virtue, but may not have realized the potential for this figure to be equally motivated by sentimental and economic interests. Much influenced by his Atlantic experience, Ellison "emerges as a man both of feeling and of reason" (Carey 55) whose dual outlook contrasts with that of other characters, particularly other masculinities, in the novel. Sir William admits that he himself may be "an odd fellow . . . but I am sure I fall far short of you; who have a head filled with such strange notions, as you will find few adopt" (*Ellison* 131). Not only does Ellison "confound [his cousin's] ideas" but Sir William goes so far as to position Ellison as an outsider whom "[t]he majority of mankind is against," suggesting that his particular sensibility sets him apart (131). As we have seen, Ellison approaches his charitable

endeavors as an entrepreneur, and likewise, his worldview is informed by such ambition and interests. The same skills developed as a slave owner are applied to more sentimental causes, and Ellison can justify his plantation business with as much impassioned ambition as he fights for the humanitarian causes in England. Perhaps Ellison would not have been as ambitiously benevolent had he pursued his economic interests in the metropole; Nussbaum suggests that “[t]he New World enables Ellison’s exploration of [an] alternative version of manliness while still protecting his vested interests” (*Limits* 149). However, while Ellison is idealized by Scott as a role model, his “upstart” ability to be an entrepreneur of charity cannot totally displace his self-interest or independence. As these traces surface within Ellison’s sentimental attitude, he is forced to confront—however uncomfortably—the economic Atlantic roots that inform his identity as a man of feeling.

**Atlantic Man of Feeling: Navigating Sentiment and Self-interest in *Julia de Roubigné***

Henry Mackenzie was a Scottish lawyer, journalist, and literary critic whose influential periodical papers *The Mirror* (1779-80) and *The Lounger* (1785-87) helped to establish Edinburgh’s cultural scene.<sup>46</sup> Due to the overwhelming success of his first novel *The Man of Feeling* (1771), Mackenzie became a kind of icon of sensibility: his contemporaries called him, in fact, ‘the Man of Feeling,’ but his modern editor Susan Manning argues that this was likely ironic, since Mackenzie’s work does not exactly

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<sup>46</sup> Mackenzie was both editor and major contributor to the two papers. Susan Manning, “Enlightenment’s Dark Dreams: Two Fictions of Henry Mackenzie and Charles Brockden Brown” *Eighteenth Century Life* 21.3 (1997) 46; Manning, Introduction, *Julia de Roubigné* by Henry Mackenzie, ed. Susan Manning (East Linton, UK: Tuckwell Press, 1999), ix.

endorse sentimentalism but rather offers “a sceptical enquiry into the conditions and effects of sentiment on human behaviour” (Introduction ix). Writing about Mackenzie, Sir Walter Scott insisted that “[n]o man is less known from his writings. We would suppose a retired, modest somewhat affected man with a white handkerchief and a sigh ready for every sentiment. No such thing. H.M. is alert as a con tailor’s needle in every sort of business—a politician and a sportsman.”<sup>47</sup> As both a savvy businessman and figurehead of sentimentalism himself, Mackenzie offers a compelling portrait of the West Indian planter in the epistolary novel *Julia de Roubigné* (1777): he distinguishes the young adventurer, Savillon, from other, more stereotypically avaricious West Indian planters, and creates a sentimental protagonist who is a benevolent hero and a self-interested entrepreneur. If Savillon’s self-interest and ambition make his benevolence possible (i.e. finance it), his colonial ‘otherness’ disconnects him from the metropolitan European homeland and relationships that once defined his identity. Benevolence and loneliness are common features of sentimentalism, but in the Atlantic context they are overwrought—as in, the charitableness between master and slave, or the separation from loved ones across an expanse of ocean. Amid this hyper-sentimentalism, Savillon is illustrative of an ‘Atlantic’ man of feeling as he navigates the sentimental world as both charitable planter and unassimilable colonial other.

Like George Ellison, Savillon’s sentimental journey begins in Europe (here, France) where his deepest bonds are created, in particular with his surrogate family the de Roubignés and their daughter, Julia. Recalling their childhood together, Julia describes

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<sup>47</sup> W. E. K. Anderson, ed., *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972) 26, cited in Maureen Harkin “Mackenzie’s *Man of Feeling*: Embalming Sensibility,” *ELH* 61:1 (1994) 320, nn 13.

Savillon as a modest, “generous,” and sympathetic “noble soul” who is admired by his friends (*Julia* 39-41). Left without an inheritance and determined to make himself worthy of the aristocratic Julia, a young Savillon leaves France to seek his fortune on the Caribbean island of Martinique where he prospers under the patronage of his uncle, a wealthy planter. Shocked by the treatment of slaves on his uncle’s plantation, Savillon successfully implements reforms, providing an early ‘critique’ of slavery and example of amelioration. Back in France, the Roubignés—unbeknownst to Savillon—encounter financial hardship and find themselves increasingly dependent on the charity of a neighbor, the wealthy but hard-edged Count Montauban, whose affection for Julia softens him and compels him to help her family. Caught between her passion for Savillon and her duty to her family, Julia agrees to marry Montauban, only to be devastated by the discovery that Savillon, her true love, remains unmarried and is “worth a power of money” (138). When Julia learns that Savillon has returned to France, she arranges to see him innocently, but news of their reunion gets distorted by a jealous Montauban, who then contrives to murder her. Through a series of letters written by the main characters to their respective confidantes, the novel follows Julia’s heartbreak and anguish over losing Savillon, and her eventual psychic dissolution; Montauban’s suspicion and paranoia; and Savillon’s own regret for ever leaving Julia—for sacrificing his relationship at the altar of self-interest.

The gentle and lovelorn Savillon clearly fits the characterization of a man of feeling, but I argue here that he is a particularly *Atlantic* man of feeling: first, in his negotiation of planter identity and the realities of the slave society, especially as it concerns benevolent reform; and second, in his experience of colonial isolation and

dissociation from trusted human relationships. In this story of the Atlantic upstart, the sentimentally-charged ideas of freedom and community are circumscribed by the realities of a slave society founded on inequality, in which commercial self-interest reigns supreme. We need only to imagine the physical reality of a mercantile port of exchange to get a sense of the obvious *unsentimentality* of the Atlantic experience. In Savillon's first letter of the novel, he recalls his last moments on the dock before departing France for Martinique, with a kind of disturbance: "[T]he bustle of the scene, the rattling of the sails, the noise of the sailors, had a mechanical effect on the mind, and stifled those tender feelings, which we indulge in solitude and silence" (*Julia* 86). After he arrives on the island and surveys his uncle's powerful domain as well as the general culture of avarice, Savillon reluctantly prepares to surrender to the Atlantic experience: "I must unlearn feelings in which I have been long accustomed to delight: I must accommodate sentiments to conveniency, pride to interest, and sometimes even virtue itself to fashion" (92).

Savillon's efforts to "stifle" and "unlearn" his "tender feelings"—that is, reconcile his sensibility with West Indian acquisitiveness—are greatly informed by conversations with his uncle, "under whose protection I am to rise into life, under whose guidance I am to [thread] the mazes of the world" (92). Their relationship serves as a kind of negotiation between virtue and commerce, between the two influences of sentiment and self-interest (Ellis 119). Committed as he is to succeeding in the West Indies, Savillon tries to embrace the upstart model provided by his steadfast, cool-headed uncle who is not easily "misled by feeling" (*Julia* 93). As a man of feeling, however, Savillon struggles to ignore his sentimental impulses. He engages in an internal monologue about

“the whole plan” of slavery being an unprofitable business since slaves are often sick and unable to work, and then abruptly realizes how much the human suffering outweighs the economic “burden on [the] master”: “I am talking only as a merchant; but as a man – Good heavens!” (101). While Savillon’s self-censoring may suggest that “the inferior motives of the merchant can be augmented by the superior motives of the sentimentalist” (Carey 67), he concedes that his uncle (and the powerful sector he represents) would only smile condescendingly at his nephew’s “romance” and tell him “that things must be so” (*Julia* 101).

Though willing to compromise on some of his sensitivities, Savillon never becomes an aggressively economic man. He is, however, like his uncle and the other planters of the island, undeniably ambitious: we see this in his determination to improve his own situation by going to Martinique to make a fortune. This determination extends beyond himself, however: Savillon is a sympathetic figure in his desire to improve the situation of others— particularly his wish “to heal the fortunes” of Julia’s family (*Julia* 88) and to improve conditions for the slaves on his uncle’s plantation (Ellis 119). However, like Ellison, Savillon has an *ambition to be benevolent* that complicates his charity with self-interest. While he claims to be “most deeply interested [in reforming the slave practices], because it touched the cause of humanity” (*Julia* 96), Savillon knows that his commitment to humanitarian sensibility must be underwritten, so to speak:

‘It is supposed that, in these wealthy islands, profit is the only medium of opinion, and that morality has nothing to do in the system; but I cannot easily imagine, that, in any latitude, the bosom is shut to those pleasures which result from the exercise of goodness, or that honesty should be always so unsuccessful as to have the sneer of the million against it. Men will not be depraved beyond the persuasion of some motive, and self-interest will often be the parent of social

obligation.’ (93)

Savillon recognizes that in the Atlantic world of fortune and risk, charity must be driven by self-interest. He channels this notion into his work on the plantation, ameliorating the working and living conditions of his uncle’s slaves, all the while convinced that he “should undoubtedly profit” (97).<sup>48</sup> Ellis describes Savillon as a “sentimental mercantilist” because he ambitiously seeks to reduce the systemic violence “without interrupting the production of sugar, nor challenging the fundamental status of slavery” (120). Indeed, as Moira Ferguson has noted, amelioration served its supporters well, as it did not pose a “threat to mercantilist values and profiteering . . . Rising profits kept abolition at bay; that was the point. . . Slavery was acceptable . . . as long as profiteers were honorable Christian gentlemen” (107).

Boulukos has compared Savillon’s slave reforms with those of Ellison, observing that they all “begin with a sympathetic or sentimental impulse, an impulse subsequently reined in by economic self-interest” (136). Savillon’s plan for amelioration is to cultivate the slaves’ *own* self-interest—a motivation, he believes, “whose impulse was more steady than those of punishment or terror” (*Julia* 97). He decides to free Yambu, one of the slaves, and promote him to overseer, and encourages the others to “chuse [to] work” for him. That choice, of course, is a theoretical one, as Savillon forewarns the slaves that if they choose *not* to work, the plantation will not be able to afford to provide them food or clothing (99). When Yambu exclaims cautiously that the model of “chuse work [is like] no work at all,” Savillon is pleased, as this misconception is “the very principle on which

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<sup>48</sup> See James D. Lilley, “Henry Mackenzie’s Ruined Feelings: Romance, Race, and the Afterlife of Sentimental Exchange,” *New Literary History* 38:4 (2007): 661.

my system was founded” (99). At one point, Savillon, exemplifying the Atlantic man of feeling, expresses satisfaction that the slaves are taking the sentimental bait: “[U]nder the feeling of good treatment, and the idea of liberty, [they] do more than almost double their number subject to the whip of an overseer. I am under no apprehension of desertion or mutiny; they work with the willingness of freedom, yet are mine with more than the obligation of slavery” (100). This is not to imply that Savillon is disingenuous, but rather that he has created a “sentimental economy” which “promotes efficiency and maintains order on [the] plantation by [establishing] personal ties of kindness, loyalty and obligation” (Carey 64). While this system does nothing to alleviate the slaves’ labor but rather increases it, exploiting them further, it proves to be productive and satisfies Savillon’s self-interested ambition to be benevolent. Savillon’s negotiation of planter self-interest, as well as his efforts to reform the slave practices on his uncle’s plantation figure him as a new kind of a sentimental businessman—an Atlantic man of feeling.

Savillon’s ambition to exist in both the sentimental and economic realms of the eighteenth-century Atlantic world can be further analyzed through one of the central metaphors of this study: distinct but dependent lands and cultures connected (and disconnected) by the ocean and its trade routes. In several instances the novel alludes to the connections between Europe and the Americas—to a transatlantic community of sentiment that developed across such an expanse. As Mackenzie portrays it, everyone seemed to have had a friend, relative, lover or business partner across the pond, and news, gossip and culture were exchanged surprisingly fast. Thus when a colonial sea captain who knows the de Roubignés brings Julia news of Savillon, we are struck by the proximity of the young lovers’ lives and sensibilities, despite their distance. And while

Julia laments the space between them, their lingering intimacy creates a kind of transatlantic magnetism: “When I think of the track of ocean which separates us, my head grows dizzy as I think!—that this little heart should have its interests extended so far! that on the other side of the Atlantic, there should exist a being, for whom it swells with imaginary hope, and trembles, alas! much oftener trembles, with imaginary fear!” (41). The imagery of Julia’s emotions and feelings—her heart—existing outside herself, connecting her with Savillon in a kind of disembodied sentimental bond, highlights the similarly disembodied nationhood of the Atlantic world. Extending Alliston’s notion of transnational sympathy, I suggest that sentiment is employed in *Julia de Roubigné* to “imagine alternatives” (144) to nation, family, race and class. In the novel the sentimental, like the Atlantic, figures as a transnational crossing-place, an alternative, hybrid space where Julia and Savillon can still be connected despite their physical distance.

Indeed, Mackenzie, alongside a group of prominent Scottish writers including Hume and Smith, understood the power of modern society to erode “sociability” and was thus invested in the project of constructing community (Harkin, “Mackenzie’s” 318).<sup>49</sup> Though Mackenzie explores the “sympathetic communion” that is so characteristic of the novel of sentiment (317), as Jeanne Britton explains, in *Julia de Roubigné* he “seems more concerned with the unraveling or instability of community.”<sup>50</sup> If the Atlantic experience provides contact, connections and opportunity, it also disconnects and unravels social bonds, all in the name of self-interest. Savillon’s profit-driven Atlantic

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<sup>49</sup> Harkin’s reference is to John Mullan’s term “sociability,” see *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988).

<sup>50</sup> Jeanne Britton, “Translating Sympathy by the Letter: Henry Mackenzie, Sophie de Condorcet, and Adam Smith,” *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 22:1 (2009) 75.

crossing forces him to sacrifice the connections he once treasured—it separates him from his beloved Julia and his French homeland (which are at times interchangeable), and figures him as a kind of unassimilable other, not only to the metropole but also to his fellow colonials.<sup>51</sup> Savillon’s ambitious pursuit of wealth in the colonies was meant to bring him closer to Julia, to make him worthy of her, but instead it jeopardizes their future together: “I am torn from her, from France, from every connection my heart had formed; cast like a shipwrecked thing on the other side of the Atlantic, amidst a desert—of all others the most dreadful—the desert of society, with which no social tie unite me!” (*Julia* 90).<sup>52</sup> Savillon holds out hope that his return to France will find him back in Julia’s arms, but when he receives news of her marriage, he despairs. Losing Julia makes Savillon feel outcast and betrayed by his homeland; he laments that “[e]very tie that bound me to this world is now broken” (148). The disconnected Atlantic man of feeling comes close to drowning in the ocean that had once provided his passage to fortune.

Not only are Savillon’s social ties to home severed, but despite his success in Martinique, he fails to connect with what he calls the “race of strangers” (152)—that is, the white West Indians he encounters there. This is partly due to his resentment of their frivolous, affected sentimentalism; he will never identify with those who mistake “mirth for happiness” (110). Savillon claims to have “scarce a friend, to whom I can entrust any thing” (153); only the English merchant Herbert, whom Savillon befriends in the colony, is described as having “a delicacy and fineness of sentiment, which something beyond the

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<sup>51</sup> Mackenzie’s decision to locate the narrative in France and Martinique creates a deeper sense of alterity in British readers’ imagination, thus exaggerating the characters’ social and psychological isolation.

<sup>52</sup> The image of society as a desert resonates with the shipwrecked experience of Robinson Crusoe, who, in contrast with Savillon, manages to *construct* a society on his “desert” island. Unlike the robust economic man Crusoe, Savillon as man of feeling is lonely even amid the thriving commercial society of colonial Martinique.

education of a trader must have inspired” (103). His letters to Herbert reveal Savillon’s craving for sociability, and in doing so emphasize his isolation. Once he loses his childhood confidante, Beauvaris, Savillon exclaims: “Gracious God! what have I done, that I should be always thus an outcast from society?” (126). Savillon’s dilemma articulates the double play performed by many sentimental novels, which emphasize “bonds of sympathy” but also “feature[ ] a sentimental protagonist whose relations to the social collective are strained and who is prevented by his extreme sensibility from participation in practical social life” (Harkin, “Introduction” 31). Savillon’s inability to assimilate and participate is further represented by the themes of contagion and death that surround him. Although he escapes death (from Montauban’s wrath) by fleeing to England and then back to the West Indies, several people close to Savillon die in the course of the narrative: Julia, Montauban, de Roubigné, Beauvaris and Savillon’s uncle. Wallowing in self-pity, Savillon thinks he should be quarantined in the West Indies so not to infect anyone else: “It is enough . . . I am fated to be miserable! but the contagion of my destiny shall spread no farther. This night I leave France for ever!” (*Julia* 152).

Despite his loneliness, Savillon remains an *Atlantic* man of feeling with the requisite ambition; “[t]hough he is deracinated and desocialised [in Martinique], his colonial isolation is no impediment to his commercial ambition” (Ellis 115). It is Savillon—the trader, the planter—who makes a connection with Yambu, the slave he frees and promotes to overseer: “Yambu shall be my friend,” Savillon tells the other slaves, “and help me to raise sugars for the good of us all: you shall have no overseer but Yambu, and shall work no more than he bids you” (*Julia* 100). Savillon bonds with Yambu to convey sincerity to the slaves, but Yambu (who was once a prince in Africa

and earns the respect of his fellow slaves) is bound to Savillon in other, limiting ways: despite being given his so-called freedom, Yambu will never leave the plantation, as he has nowhere else to go. Savillon values his “friendship” not for the human connection, but rather for the productivity and financial gains Yambu’s leadership will deliver. Like Ellison, Savillon motivates and attempts to empower his slaves but does not relinquish control. Furthermore, because we are privy only to Savillon’s feelings in his letters, Yambu’s distress is insignificant compared with the satisfaction the planter gets from their ostensible relationship. This disparity was typical; in sentimental novels, scenes of slavery were used to “focus on the reluctant colonial master and his sufferings rather than on the experience of the slave” (Harkin, “Introduction” 33).<sup>53</sup> In this way, sympathy and benevolence do not bond Savillon to Yambu but rather isolate him because they are self-interested. Within this novel of tears, tragedy and death, Savillon ironically embodies the sentimental man of feeling most fully in his role as a self-interested slave-owning planter.

Savillon’s dual preoccupation with sentiment and self-interest, his complexity as a man of feeling, is not only symbolized by his trans-oceanic movement, but is in itself a particularly Atlantic phenomenon. In spite of the harsh realities of trade and the unrefined appetites of colonial life encountered by Savillon, his extreme Atlantic experience produces a kind of overwrought sentimentality in which sacrifice, separation and suffering are par for the course. But Savillon’s negotiation also exposes the ambivalence or “darker side” of sensibility that reveals an ambitious self-interest that

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<sup>53</sup> “The kind of master we see in Sarah Scott and Mackenzie, taking a deep interest in the welfare of his slaves, presumably permitted the reader to simultaneously acknowledge slavery as a problem while showing how individual slave-owners were exempt from blame” (Harkin, “Introduction” 33). Though fairly apparent in this context, it bears repeating that “anti-slavery had not yet become specifically identified in fiction with liberty and human rights” (Ferguson 106).

serves to isolate its subject (Csengei 1-2). Indeed, Savillon is a *secondary* character, the “other man” in so many ways: his is not the main plot and his letters do not appear until the last third of the novel, and yet, rather than Montauban, he is figured as the sentimental hero. That is to say, in this formally typical novel of sentiment, the ambitious, self-interested, isolated, “othered” Atlantic upstart gets asserted as a man of feeling, destabilizing the sentimental narrative and also, perhaps, the notion of a refined, anti-commercial, metropolitan community of sensibility.

### **Our Planters, Ourselves: *The West Indian***

Another compelling example of these “rare defenses”<sup>54</sup> of the self-interested planter is Richard Cumberland’s popular sentimental comedy *The West Indian*, which was first performed at Drury Lane in 1771, and regularly throughout the remainder of the century (Harrow 78). The play was a huge success with both British and American audiences, yet struck a chord of discomfort with critics who attacked the unconventional sentimental protagonist, the Jamaican planter Belcour, for what they deemed his stereotypically West Indian immorality.<sup>55</sup> According to Cumberland, however, the creation of Belcour was intentional; the playwright went out of his way to construct a character in response to social and cultural prejudices. Cumberland designed Belcour (and the bawdy Irishman, Major O’Flaherty) as an experiment to see what would happen if he turned an otherwise denigrated subject into a sympathetic hero; in other words, Cumberland explains, if he

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<sup>54</sup> Robert Bechtold Heilman, *America in English Fiction, 1760-1800: The Influences of the American Revolution* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana UP, 1937) 58.

<sup>55</sup> Stanley T. Williams, “Richard Cumberland’s *West Indian*,” *Modern Language Notes* 35:7 (1920) 414.

introduced the characters of persons who had been usually exhibited on the stage, as the butts for ridicule and abuse, and endeavored to present them in such lights as might tend to reconcile the world to them, and them to the world. I thereupon looked into society for the purpose of discovering such as were the victims of its national, professional, or religious prejudices; in short, for those suffering characters which stood in need of an advocate, and out of these I meditated to select and form heroes for my future dramas, of which I would study to make such favorable and reconciliatory delineations, as might incline the spectators to look upon them with pity, and receive them into their good opinion and esteem.<sup>56</sup>

Cumberland's dramatic experiment is then mirrored in the play as the merchant Stockwell seeks to test Belcour's "disposition" in order to determine his sentimental worth and thus his legitimacy as his long-lost son, and a son of England. While Stockwell insists that "this can only be done by letting his spirit take its own course without restraint" (I.i.346), both Cumberland and Stockwell (and by extension, the metropolitan audience viewing/creating the play) engage in a kind of mediation of Belcour's character in their effort to "reconcile" him "to the world."

On both the narrative and meta-textual levels, then, after a series of dissociating and legitimizing strategies, the colonial other is, as Sharon Harrow explains, "valued for [his] assimilation into an idealized bourgeois identity" (81). This assimilation suggests that Belcour must be de-Caribbeanized, or, to borrow a phrase from Sean Goudie, "purged of his creole contagions."<sup>57</sup> Maaja Stewart sees this as a kind of "discursive displacement [or] erasure" that contains and denies Atlantic slavery and other forms of imperial violence (43). I wish to take up and complicate these suggestions, for despite the narrative efforts to mold him according to the terms of metropolitan sensibility,

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<sup>56</sup> Richard Cumberland, *Memoirs of Richard Cumberland* (1806), ed. Henry Flanders (1856), (New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1969) 142. A few years after the play premiered, Cumberland was made Secretary to the Board of Trade and Plantations, possibly, as some have speculated, due to his efforts to promote "the West Indian interest."

<sup>57</sup> Sean X. Goudie, *Creole America: The West Indies and the Formation of Literature and Culture in the New Republic* (Philadelphia: U Penn P, 2006) 241.

Belcour retains much of his self-interested, upstart West Indian character at the play's conclusion, and still emerges a hero—a *creolized* man of feeling whose presence in this popular cultural work questions the imperial notion of a civilizing national identity of sentiment.

Like any good eighteenth-century comedy, *The West Indian* involves innuendo, mistaken identity, and a foiled scheme. Belcour travels to England at the invitation of his trusted merchant, the aptly named Stockwell. Once arrived, Belcour quickly becomes embroiled in the various exploits and abuses of a dysfunctional circle of Britons. In the course of his first day in London, he funds a military expedition to West Africa, gets duped by jewel thieves, falls in love with a woman he mistakes for a prostitute, is challenged to a duel by her brother, and, in the most sentimentally-charged element of the play, discovers that Stockwell is really his father. Although Belcour is presented as an enigma to the cast of characters he meets in the play, before he even appears onstage the audience is introduced to him through other people's eyes—a sailor who accompanied the planter on his transatlantic journey, and Stockwell, who vouches for Belcour based on their longtime correspondence. Both describe a friendly, generous man who is adored back in his home country. He is passionate yet principled, with “a quick and ready understanding” (I.iv.348). Apparently Cumberland wanted to give Belcour a strong foundation before throwing him to the wolves:

To the West Indian I devoted a generous spirit, and a vivacious giddy dissipation; I resolved he should love pleasure much, but honor more; but as I could not keep consistency of character without a mixture of failings, when I gave him charity, I gave him that which can cover a multitude, and thus protected, thus recommended, I thought I might send him out into the world to shift for himself. (*Memoirs* 142)

While these traits suggest that Belcour is a man of feeling in his own right, throughout the play we encounter repeated efforts to mediate and reconstruct that sensibility, by dissociating him from his West Indian identity and legitimizing his British one.

Much of the characterization of Belcour is concerned with disconnecting him from the material and social conditions that construct his West Indian identity. This functions as a kind of de-territorialization, as Belcour is removed not only from the home where he acquired his intemperate “passions,” but also from the plantation system of the islands, the slave-driven economic motor of eighteenth-century imperial wealth. As Stewart notes, “[r]emarkably varied methods of erasures and denials of the activities of the market society concentrate especially around the representation of colonial wealth in *The West Indian*. Cumberland is exemplary in ignoring the ways this wealth is produced, while emphasizing instead Belcour’s generosity in spending it in London” (47). Indeed, Belcour’s wealth—once distanced from the plantation and laundered, so-to-speak—plays a starring role in the play, establishing him as an ideal metropolitan subject. Upon arriving in London, Belcour marvels at his fortune: “My happy stars have given me a good estate, and the conspiring winds have blown me hither to spend it” (I.v.349). In the multiple references to his “business,” there is never a description of *any* real economic activity or material enterprise. Belcour’s wealth provides opportunity for his first contact with the impoverished Dudley family, but no mention is made of the sugar trade and slave labor that have financed his remarkable benevolence. Much to the disbelief of Belcour’s new acquaintances, including Charles Dudley, whose father is seeking funding for a military expedition to West Africa, Belcour insists that his business is, in fact, to be charitable:

B: Is it incredible that one fellow-creature should assist another?  
 C: Do you propose this in the way of business?  
 B: I have no other business on earth.

(II.vii.362)

There is still no reference to the source of Belcour's wealth, even as he likens his financial support of Captain Dudley's expedition to a business investment, telling the Captain to "pursue your fortune, and prosper" (II.vii.362). While an audience of 1771 would have known implicitly the conditions of Belcour's success, the play obscures evidence of his slave ownership (a few black servants appear as liminal figures) and dissociates the depravity of his livelihood from his commercial power and social influence, in order for him to inhabit his role as a man of sensibility.

The play further pursues Belcour's detachment from his West Indian identity as it inverts stereotypes about the oppressive climate and questionable Creole morality. When Belcour's origins are hinted at, it is by way of the pastoral and exotic rather than slavery and profit. The typically "cursed tropical constitution" of the Creole instead gets idealized as Belcour invokes "the soil in which I grew . . . that warm sunny region, where naked nature walks without disguise" (IV.x.392). Again separating the planter from the perceived degeneracy of his homeland, Charles Dudley, upon discovering Belcour's generosity to his father, describes him as "A young West Indian, rich, and with a warmth of heart peculiar to his climate" (III.vii.379). Although Belcour's sensibility may seem unlikely, the heiress Charlotte Rusport wonders if his benevolence is not, in fact, the result of the otherwise cursed heat: "O blessed be the torrid zone for ever, whose rapid vegetation quickens nature into such benignity!" (III.vii.380). In fact, it is Belcour's benignity or charitableness that underscores this reversal of stereotypes:

“Generosity has a simple and powerful narrative function in this discourse: it transforms “excess” or luxury, attributed to colonial wealth as early as Sir Thomas More’s *Utopia*, into “abundance”” (Stewart 47). But how Belcour accumulated such abundance is accordingly skewed. In the play’s most direct reference to the plantation, Belcour introduces himself to Charlotte as an innocent West Indian import:

C: You are newly arrived in this country, sir?

B: Just landed, madam; just set ashore, with a large cargo of Muscovado sugars, rum-puncheons, mahogany-slabs, wet sweetmeats, and greet paroquets.

(III.vii.378)

The list assaults the senses; it is not (just) an accountant’s inventory but a cargo of exoticism and abundance extracted from the conditions of its production. Rather than portray Belcour as a self-interested planter whose greed demands cultivation of these products, Cumberland and Stockwell deliver Belcour onto English soil where he proves to be a valuable raw material—his feelings and his fortune ready for refinement and consumption by English social expectations (Harrow 86). Harrow describes the Creole’s situation as a kind of “flux: he is at once plantation owner and overseer of colonial production, and also commodity fetish within an economy of colonial difference” (86).

Belcour’s state of flux may also be a result of confusion over his paternity and metropolitan legitimacy—perhaps the play’s most interesting example of distancing and de-Caribbeanizing. Though raised by his Jamaican grandfather, Belcour is revealed to be the son of the merchant Stockwell, who once worked for Old Belcour and was secretly married to his daughter. Pregnant while her father was overseas, the daughter placed the infant at her door as a foundling and convinced her father to let her keep the baby. Belcour thus became his grandfather’s son and inherited his plantation, completely

unaware of his mistaken paternity. Though (unbeknownst to anyone but Stockwell) Belcour is ‘legitimately’ English all along, the play insists on his West Indian illegitimacy, first representing him as a foundling in Jamaica and then as a Creole in England.<sup>58</sup> Until the revelation of Belcour’s paternity at the end of the play, he refers to himself as “a nameless thing” (V.v.401), in part because he feels like an outsider in London, but also as a symbol of his transformation from an illegitimate Creole (with an illegitimate Creole name) into a metropolitan citizen. When the scheming Mrs. Fulmer interrogates the stranger Belcour, his identity becomes a complex matter:

B: “Upon my soul, I can’t tell you my name.”

F: “Not tell me! Why so?”

B: “Because I don’t know what it is myself; as yet I have no name.”

F: “No name!”

B: “None; a friend, indeed, lent me his; but he forbade me to use it on any unworthy occasion.”

(II.v.359)

Belcour’s hesitation might simply be an effort to protect his privacy and throw Mrs. Fulmer off her meddlesome course, but it is also suggestive of the ways that creoleness is held up to metropolitan scrutiny. Belcour is on English soil, his reputation and sensibility being judged, and he will only be granted respectability if he passes the test, part of which he fails immediately by accosting and following Louisa Dudley. Belcour is not in control of naming or asserting himself; only the metropole has the power to identify him as a hero, to claim him as one of them, and only if he is deemed to have a sufficient,

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<sup>58</sup> “Belcour’s initial status as a foundling belongs with other images that represent the breakdown of the nuclear family: images of adultery, bigamy, incest, and illegitimacy appear compulsively in the eighteenth-century narratives about the West Indies. Placed in this context, the sentimental domestic family, which becomes the staple image of the desire and resolution of conflict in metropolitan narratives, functions as a compensatory space for imperial violence and imperial sexuality” (Stewart 46). See chapter 1 of this dissertation for further discussion of West Indian illegitimacy.

“worthy” sensibility. Harrow offers that “Belcour’s lack of an identity could be read as metaphor for the colonized’s lack of subjective power,” and that as long as he is not named, he “inhabits a liminal position, symbolic of his status as a Creole” (90). When the other players begin to blame Belcour for stealing Charlotte’s jewels, he laments that he has been “branded with the name of villain” (IV.x.395). In the case of his misjudged villainy and, by extension, his mistaken paternity, the sentimental Belcour’s Caribbean identity is described by Stockwell as an “undeserved name” (V.i.396).

What, then, is Belcour’s deserved name—a “beautiful heart” (*bel coeur*) or a (*well-stocked*) “successful trader”? Harrow argues that “Stockwell’s name connotes a well-supplied and well-regulated economy; he is father and fatherland, both of which have worked industriously to secure their assets in the colonies” (85). Indeed, naming Belcour is akin to “securing” or owning him, as Stockwell announces that “I shall be proud to own him for my son” (IV.x.392). Along these lines, Harrow explains that “Belcour’s legitimacy is . . . privately underwritten by licit patriarchy and the respectable merchant class” (95). If, as his underwriter, Stockwell also supplies Belcour’s legitimate patronym, consider the layers at work: an English actor would have been playing a West Indian who is in fact the son of an Englishman. That is to say, Belcour’s Creole identity gets doubly erased: in each case, the character is the (pro)creation of Englishmen (Stockwell and Cumberland/actors)—a West Indian created and produced by English choices and attitudes. That the disclosure of Belcour’s “true” English identity happens on English soil suggests a powerful renunciation of his Caribbean mother/land.

Belcour’s legitimization as a ‘true-born’ Englishman is asserted after much doubt and confusion, but his conformation to a metropolitan man of sensibility is a more

deliberate mission. He attempts to integrate himself by reigning in his West Indian excess and containing it within the propriety of sensibility. For example, overcompensating for his coarse upbringing, Belcour exaggerates his sentimentality and generosity, claiming that “every child of sorrow is my brother; while I have hands to hold . . . I will hold them open to mankind” (I.v.349). He often scorns and renounces his Creole behavior, insisting that he is no longer “libertine” but rather “rational,” and pleads with his metropolitan acquaintances to “reform” and improve him (V.v.400). Although he warns that it will be a “toilsome” task to keep him from fault (I.v.350), Belcour eagerly becomes a “student” of sensibility when he promises to “obey” Louisa as her “ready servant,” and implores her to “mould” him into a proper English subject: “New to your country, ignorant of your manners, habits, and desires, I put myself into your hands for instruction; make me only such as you can like yourself, and I shall be happy” (IV.iii.385). The repeated references to instructing and reforming Belcour the student once again echo the colonial rhetoric of educating and civilizing the colonial subject. Belcour’s willingness and “ability to be cultivated out of his cultural context separates [him] from the slaves he owns and from the overseers and Creoles of Caribbean plantations guilty of miscegenation and rape” (Harrow 93). In other words, the metropolitan master cultivates a servant out of the West Indian planter, who is expected to obey his patriarch. In the final line of the play Belcour entreats Louisa to always correct his offensive or deviant behavior, and promises that he “will turn to reason and obey” (V.viii.406).<sup>59</sup> Indeed, while the play begins with the word “disorder,” it ends with

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<sup>59</sup> Belcour’s acquisition of Louisa is the ultimate proof that he can be claimed as Stockwell’s son: “Belcour’s legitimation is dependent upon his marital choice and is symbolic of the relationship of England

“obey.” Belcour would seem to be the ideal subject, so ideal that by curtain call the audience receives him as a son of England.<sup>60</sup> He illustrates not only that metropolitan sensibility can contain, mediate and legitimize the “disordered” colonial other—that the English know how to “manage” colonial characters (Kirkpatrick 337)—but also that such a process affirms the civilizing powers of a national British identity of sentiment.

The ‘new character’ of Cumberland’s imagination—the othered subject who becomes a sentimental hero—appears to tuck neatly into the metropolitan order of things, but subversive traces remain of Belcour’s difference that preclude a tidy, civilized outcome. Although the narrative seeks to assimilate his difference, Belcour retains enough of his Creole behavior and temperament to remain a foreigner in British society, and thus unsettle the sentimental structure of the play. Belcour confounds the Britons he meets and is often described as unconventional; “a forward, new intruder” (IV.ii.384) and a “rare one” (III.iv.376) who “does nothing like other people” (III.x.382). His benevolence is complicated by his unrestrained passions, his brazenness only slightly tempered by his modesty. Consistent with his two patronyms, Belcour is perceived by the other characters as at once callous and generous (IV.ii.384), and yet Stockwell cannot contain his fascination with such a capricious character: “What various pleasures he awakens in me! He pains, yet pleases me; affrights, offends, yet grows upon my heart” (III.i.371). Even Louisa is shocked when Belcour’s presumptuousness “that . . . should

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to her colonies: both Belcour and West Indian colonies were viewed as needing sexual and cultural regulation” (Harrow 78).

<sup>60</sup> “*The West Indian* was undoubtedly successful because it provided a neat resolution to the reintegration of West Indian wealth into English society. The resolution depended both on the depiction of Creoles as unable to manage their own financial affairs and a clear delineation of legitimate parentage.” Kathryn J. Kirkpatrick, “‘Gentlemen Have Horrors Upon This Subject’: West Indian Suitors in Maria Edgeworth’s *Belinda*,” *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 5:4 (1993): 336.

rouse resentment, only calls up love” in her own quintessential sensibility (IV.ii.384).

Belcour humbly admits his faults, but never loses his charm; he confesses that he “frequently do[es] wrong, but never with impunity” (379). Corroborating this sentiment, Mrs. Fulmer describes Belcour as “one of your conscientious sinners” (III.iii.371). In a move that undermines the rhetoric of the ideal colonial subject, the play depicts “the Creole character as both attractive and dangerous” (Harrow 84).

Buffering his countrymen’s anxiety, Stockwell assumes his position as merchant/agent and rationalizes his son’s Creole complexity: “I have discovered through the veil of some irregularities a heart beaming with benevolence, an animated nature, fallible indeed, but not incorrigible” (V.viii.405). He considers Belcour’s ambiguities and finally positions the West Indian planter as a sentimental hero, a “new character” within the play as well as the English literary landscape. Stockwell asks Louisa, and by extension the metropolitan audience, to “not be over-strict . . . in weighing Mr. Belcour’s conduct to the minutest scruple; his manners, passions and opinions are not as yet assimilated to this climate; he comes amongst you a new character, an inhabitant of a new world” (V.iii.399). Stockwell thus tries to rationalize Belcour’s new world, commercial self-interest, even if that means ignoring the violent conditions that cultivated it.<sup>61</sup>

Indeed, through this “sentimental erasure” (Stevens 22), Stockwell encourages a rethinking of capitalism by insisting that the others not be offended by Belcour’s wealth, but rather look at the generosity it enables.<sup>62</sup> Of course, “[w]hat the text represents as patriarchal generosity could [also] be read as self-interest” (Stewart 51), but in

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<sup>61</sup> Stockwell is an effective representative for Belcour and, by extension, the capitalist system he represents, as he is trusted implicitly by the other players. For example, Captain Dudley comments on how Stockwell’s “honour and discretion guard us against all danger or offence” (V.ii.398).

<sup>62</sup> Again, I thank Professor O’Quinn for his comments in response to my paper at ASECS 2008.

Cumberland's "idealized narrative of mercantilism" (43), Belcour's commercial self-interest is part of his transformation into Stockwell's legitimate son and a full-fledged Englishman. In this carefully managed way, Belcour becomes both polite and commercial (Rosenthal, ASECS). Cumberland celebrates "trade as a cordializing system that can embrace the differences between the London merchant and his West Indian son" (Stewart 54). Indeed, thanks to capitalism, the center and the periphery, like father and son, "shall all be related by and by" (V.viii.405).

After multiple attempts at dislocation, distancing, or de-Caribbeanizing, the play does not eliminate Belcour's West Indian alterity; in part because of metropolitan anxiety and in part because he does not completely "obey"—he retains what Goudie would call a "reckless economic and social conduct" (241) that prevents the Creole from fully assimilating into a refined culture of sentiment. Yet even in his inability or refusal to amend his contradictions, in "The West Indian," the Creole emerges as a "new character"—an unconventional sentimental hero whose ambivalent morality fashions him as a kind of *creolized* man of feeling. We thus begin to create a framework whereby the arriviste planter, in all his callous greed, becomes an unlikely agent in the development of a late eighteenth-century metropolitan sensibility. In this way, sensibility reveals its own capacity for creolization—that is, a localized identity of multiple meanings often created by subjected others in cultural contact zones. Theorizing a "creolization of sensibility" that can serve to alienate, unsettle or demystify a so-called civilizing national identity of sentiment, encourages a re-reading of eighteenth-century literature with a critical eye to Caribbean economic influence and subversive agency.

### The Planter Ideal

Though Belcour is a Creole born and raised in the West Indies, and Sir George Ellison and Savillon are transplanted Europeans trying to reconcile their transatlantic identities, together these three men of feeling illustrate a phenomenon in eighteenth-century literature that figures the slave-owning planter as a moral exemplar or hero at the center of the sentimental plot. While sentimental planters in later, abolitionist novels by Maria Edgeworth and Charlotte Smith, for example, were designed to serve an anti-slavery agenda, these earlier sentimental figures are, in fact, “new characters”—literary experiments with whom a political opposition to slavery or the slave trade is not easily aligned.<sup>63</sup> Scott and Cumberland wanted to hold a didactic mirror up to their metropolitan English audiences in order to exemplify moral behavior, but as Sypher notes, Ellison’s “pity for slaves is a mere throb in the pulse of this hero’s benignity” (*Guinea’s* 266).

Instead these authors contributed to a transnational community of sentiment that enacted a collective displacement of the violent conditions of wealth in the Atlantic world. From this emerged the “planter ideal” which sought to combine benevolence with ambition, and positioned the self-made West Indian entrepreneur as a new man of feeling. In contrast to a weaker, old world sentimentalism, the new world “alternative version of manliness” (Nussbaum, *Limits* 149) constructed in these three texts redefines heroic sensibility via economic self-interest. These characters’ ambition to be benevolent and transform the plantation into a sentimental economy figures them as Atlantic men of

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<sup>63</sup> “[T]he sentimental strategies of writers like Bryan Edwards, and implicit supporters of slavery like Edgeworth, show the fallacy of an assumption that sentimental humanitarianism leads to antislavery; sentimental discourse may have given an impetus to antislavery, but it could also aid slavery’s apologists” (Boulukos 24).

feeling. However, as I have illustrated throughout this chapter, “benevolence is a selfish virtue: it serves the giver’s interests” (Ellis 135). Although these three atypical texts reveal a marginally more humanitarian West Indian planter than that usually recorded by literary history, the planters’ self-interest prevents them from enacting any real reform on the slave system that enables their benevolent sensibility. That is to say, despite these “heroic” sentimental planters’ own entrepreneurial mobility and pursuit of opportunity, they do not consider extending that mobility and opportunity to the slaves through emancipation. After all, for the planters, “[a]ll this humanity pays well” (Sypher, *Guinea’s* 268), and as opportunistic businessmen they would have been fools to simply give freedom away.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Son of a Sea Cook: Individualism and Racial Uplift in the Revolutionary Black Atlantic**

In proportion to the development of his individuality, each person becomes more valuable to himself, and is therefore capable of being more valuable to others.

-J.S. Mill, "On Liberty"<sup>1</sup>

I believe in individuality, but individuals are, to the mass, like waves to the ocean. The highest order of genius is as dependent as is the lowest. It, like the loftiest waves of the sea, derives its power and greatness from the grandeur and vastness of the ocean of which it forms a part. We differ as waves, but are one as the sea.

-Frederick Douglass, "Self-Made Men"<sup>2</sup>

As Paul Langford explains and as the previous chapter explored, sensibility or "politeness was a logical consequence of commerce" (4), a maxim that sums up the eighteenth-century belief in the civilizing powers of trade—"that civilization, the market, progress, and freedom are interdependent."<sup>3</sup> Being commercial implied participation in a social exchange as much as it did the pursuit of economic self-interest. Even Adam Smith emphasized the moral propriety of the most liberal economic men to "advance the interest of the society," though this was not always a conscious social endeavor.<sup>4</sup> In this chapter I provoke the politics of this duality and consider how the collective emancipation of blacks in the nineteenth-century Atlantic world coexisted with and

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<sup>1</sup> John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty," *On Liberty and Utilitarianism* (New York: Bantam, 1993) 72.

<sup>2</sup> Frederick Douglass, "Self-Made Men: An Address Delivered in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in March 1893," *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, Ser. 1, V. 5: 1889-95, Ed. John W. Blassingame and John R. McKivigan (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992) 549. "Self-Made Men" was originally composed in 1859, but as the editors note, "the bulk of the lecture changed quite little" since its first delivery (546).

<sup>3</sup> Ross J. Pudaloff, "No Change without Purchase: Olaudah Equiano and the Economies of Self and Market" *Early American Literature* 40:3 (2005): 513.

<sup>4</sup> Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002) 215.

troubled the liberal self-interest and entrepreneurial self-making of free blacks and (former) slaves.

**“Fearless, bold and adventurous deeds of daring”**

In his 1852 treatise on the oppressed condition and desired advancement of free African Americans, Martin Robinson Delany argues for blacks to attain social and political “elevation” through “self-efforts” (*Condition* 44).<sup>5</sup> In an abolitionist antebellum context, impassioned petitions for elevation or “uplift” from slavery were not uncommon. Delany’s appeal condemned the institution of slavery, but it also denounced the “degradation” of free blacks who, he claimed, had been relegated only to consume that which whites produced (44), and who were convinced that they “contributed nothing to the general progress of man” (93). As a scientist and inventor as well as an activist,<sup>6</sup> Delany emphasized the necessity of progress, but he implored black Americans to take control of “the mode and manner” of their elevation, rather than accept that which had been “laid down to be done by our white brethren” (191). Delany’s insistence on self-help and “useful” contribution echoes and confronts the “new” liberalism of the nineteenth century—an ideological attitude that had shifted from the competitive

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<sup>5</sup> The full quote of the section title is: “We must make an issue, create an event, and establish a national position for ourselves: and never may expect to be respected as men and women, until we have undertaken some fearless, bold, and adventurous deeds of daring . . .” (215).

<sup>6</sup> Delany briefly attended medical school and later invented a way for locomotives to traverse mountainous terrain (Gilroy 21). He also happened to be a major in the Union army—the first black field officer in U.S. history (25). See also Dorothy Sterling, *The Making of an Afro-American: Martin Robinson Delany, 1812-1885* (New York: Doubleday, 1971) 139.

individualism of the propertied elite at the end of the eighteenth century, towards an emphasis on the moral progress and collective self-interest of the middle class.<sup>7</sup>

For blacks in the antebellum U.S., however, “morality” and “collectivity” were complicated notions. The plight of free blacks struggling to make their way in an expanding market culture did not quite fit with the rhetoric of middle class moral “degeneracy” that could be improved with the right dose of temperance and charity. Black “degradation” confronted the fact that the “general progress of man,” with its universalist connotation, had depended on the enslavement of black people and the racist disavowal of their human capacity. For example, Delany’s suggested mode of education for black advancement resisted the direction taken by British liberalism (and emphasized by J.S. Mill) to cultivate “original” independent thinkers whose individuality would “proportionally” contribute to the greater social good. Instead, Delany’s prescription for “uplift” questioned the usefulness of such individualism and argued for education as a collective contribution. This perspective came from personal experience, since, as Tunde Adeleke explains, Delany had received a classical education but found that while it “intellectually decolonized” him, he was left without a reliable, practical livelihood—without “economic emancipation.”<sup>8</sup> For Delany, then, racial elevation and equality depended not on an intellectual or theoretical individualism, but on a sustainable black entrepreneurialism that required “a good business practical Education” (Delany 195) involving the study of geography (to “become adventurous”) and political economy (to be “an enterprising people”) (194). Although Delany realized that practical training

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<sup>7</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: 1789-1848* (New York: Vintage, 1996) 240.

<sup>8</sup> Tunde Adeleke, “Martin R. Delany’s Philosophy of Education: A Neglected Aspect of African American Liberation Thought” *The Journal of Negro Education*, 63:2 (1994): 223.

would allow free blacks the economic independence needed to pursue collective and therefore racial uplift, his suggested curriculum highlights a problem at the heart of this chapter. The images of *adventure* and *enterprise* signify a particularly black Atlantic figure of uplift that both emerges from and resists association with an adventure-seeking, entrepreneurial Atlantic world that was built upon the injustices of slavery and racism. In other words, in the transnational black community of which Delany was a part, the ideology of black racial “uplift” functioned at once as an opportunity and an obstacle.<sup>9</sup>

This chapter takes as its central problem the complex dependencies between racial uplift and the liberal ideology of economic and social progress, an association, as I have discussed in previous chapters, that cannot be fully understood outside of the Atlantic experience of slavery and racism that created and sustained such expanding “freedoms.”<sup>10</sup> The role of the early black Atlantic experience in both constructing and critiquing black uplift ideology has become increasingly significant, with scholars acknowledging that “in the hemispheric politics of the early nineteenth century, race transcended nationality. Slavery and black oppression . . . were international and transcultural systems[.]”<sup>11</sup>

While most studies of racial uplift are framed by the period of U.S. Reconstruction and

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<sup>9</sup> The ongoing scholarly disagreement over racial uplift concerns whether, historically, preaching its importance indicated a desire on behalf of black leaders and reformers to assimilate into the white middle class, or whether “racial elevation had value to blacks irrespective of white society.” This chapter seeks to complicate both conclusions. See James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860* (New York: Oxford UP, 1997) xii.

<sup>10</sup> I cite the foundational criticism on liberalism and slavery in the Introduction. I will add here that social historians and cultural critics have begun to examine slavery and freedom in a specifically revolutionary Atlantic context. See Linebaugh and Rediker; David S. Cecelski *The Waterman's Song: Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: UNC P, 2001); Paul A. Gilge *Liberty on the Waterfront: American Maritime Culture in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia: U Penn P, 2004); and David Kazanjian *The Colonizing Trick: National Culture and Imperial Citizenship in Early America* (Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> W. Jeffrey Bolster, “An Inner Diaspora: Black Sailors Making Selves,” *Through a Glass Darkly: Reflections on Personal Identity in Early America*, eds. Ronald Hoffman, Mechal Sobel and Fredrika J. Teute (Chapel Hill: UNC P, 1997) 444.

emphasize the heated debates between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois, uplift was also a phenomenon of an earlier black Atlantic consciousness.<sup>12</sup> Leaders such as Delany and Frederick Douglass were deeply concerned with the self-improvement and community development of African Americans, and invested in the possibilities for freedom offered by the larger black Atlantic world, both as a community of resistance, and for colonization and the opportunity for self-government. I am therefore less interested in uplift as a strictly U.S. phenomenon than as an ideology of black liberation, advancement and achievement articulated throughout the Atlantic world.

In what follows, I examine narratives of black uplift in an Atlantic framework in order to read race, slavery and revolution into the ideology of liberal enterprise. I argue that studying uplift in the discourse of early black Atlantic texts reveals not only a negotiation of the limits of western liberal and economic progress, but also a destabilization and reinvention of those limits for the purposes of collective emancipation. I take as my point of departure the theoretical framework of Paul Gilroy, who, as I have shown, situates black Atlantic experience and expression as antinomies, or necessary contradictions of modernity, whereby descendents of Atlantic slavery are “simultaneously both inside and outside the western culture which has been their peculiar step-parent” (Gilroy 48). Acknowledging this position of (what DuBois called) “double consciousness” demands that we not limit our analysis to a unidirectional influence of

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<sup>12</sup> Kevin Gaines does acknowledge that there was a transnational, “pan-African” dialogue about black advancement, but his emphasis is on the twentieth-century developments. He only briefly discusses the meaning of uplift in the antebellum context (see my page 27, below). Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: UNC P, 1996). Other studies of late nineteenth-century racial uplift philosophies include August Meier, *Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915* (Ann Arbor: U Michigan P, 1963) and Jacqueline M. Moore, *Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, and the Struggle for Racial Uplift* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2003).

Enlightenment thought on black uplift ideology. Gilroy highlights the attempts of early black leaders to deconstruct a perceived opposition to this influence: Douglass, he explains, proposed a “greater Enlightenment” capable of articulating silences inherent in the so-called universalism of the western project. Such a ‘revision’ would not simply seek to oppose the ideology of the “peculiar step-parent” (59), but rather would work to locate racial violence and subordination as part of the “inner character” of modern (western) liberal struggle (71). Gilroy’s study offers evidence of this subversive reinvention—as European and American borders were erected and nationalist movements burgeoned in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, black writers and thinkers gave voice to the diasporic “blackness” (and thus the exploitation and oppression) at the heart of these increasingly ideological national identities.

Gilroy’s work attempts to recover the voice of a transnational black consciousness of liberation that speaks from within and against Enlightenment and imperialist thought. However, his critique of “an all-encompassing modernity that effects everyone in a uniform and essentially similar way” (46) would seem to suggest that a preoccupation with this inside/outside tension can deemphasize and misrepresent the historical difficulties between individuals and collective struggle. As some scholars have noted since the publication of Gilroy’s seminal work, the model of a transnational black identity can distort what Gilroy himself calls “the inescapably plural [i.e. individual/varied] nature of modern subjectivity and identity” (46).<sup>13</sup> Like Gilroy’s observation about other

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<sup>13</sup> See, for example, George Elliot Clarke on black Canadian difference, and Elizabeth DeLoughrey on black Caribbean women. *Odysseys Home: Mapping African-Canadian Literature* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2002); “Gendering the Oceanic Voyage: Trespassing the (Black) Atlantic and Caribbean” *Thamyris*, 5:2 (Autumn 1998): 205-231. I discuss the need for anti-essentialism in postcolonial criticism in my Introduction.

cultural forms of the black Atlantic, uplift ideology develops only “partly inside and not always against the grand narrative of Enlightenment and its operational principles” (48). That is to say, while calls for black elevation both reflected and opposed Anglo-American liberal attitudes, the ideological insistence of black racial uplift on self-making and entrepreneurial success proved ironically problematic in its application as a collective emancipatory project.

As the embodiment of liberal progress, the adventurous entrepreneur may be an appropriate theoretical figure to explore this problem. Since entrepreneurialism emphasizes individualism and self-reliance, it would appear to stand in opposition to the collective project of racial uplift. However, the historical emergence of the entrepreneur alongside nascent capitalism in the early modern world cannot be dissociated from a black Atlantic context of colonialism and slavery; indeed, the plantation and the slave trade were not just corollaries but in fact “platforms of economic growth” (Linebaugh and Rediker 99).<sup>14</sup> It then follows that entrepreneurial achievement is always already created from (and not necessarily against) a collective struggle against oppressive forces—a historical link that gets dissociated with the development of nineteenth-century bourgeois individualism. But a black Atlantic collective consciousness is nonetheless embedded and intervenes in the exaggerated individualism of the entrepreneur. The liberal opportunism upon which eighteenth- and nineteenth-century middle class

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<sup>14</sup> Linebaugh and Rediker highlight key developments: “English participation in the slave trade, essential to the rise of capitalism, began in 1563 [when] John Hawkyns made huge profits selling three hundred slaves in Haiti to the Spanish . . . Queen Elizabeth loaned him a ship and crew for his second slave expedition” (28). Early laborers, including indentured servants and African slaves, “were necessary to the growth of capitalism, as they did the work that could not or would not be done by artisans in workshops, manufactories, or guilds” (42). These “hewers of wood and drawers of water built the infrastructure of merchant capitalism” (49).

commercial culture was based presents obvious limitations for black uplift ideology, but these imposed limitations ironically reveal the entrepreneurial spirit of a black Atlantic consciousness—an ambitious individualism that yet imagines collective political emancipation.

Faced with this destabilizing problematic, black Atlantic writers constructed a discourse that explores the possibility of an *opportunistic collectivism*—a reinvention or reconstitution of the self-interested ideology of opportunism for the purposes of collective social or political progress.<sup>15</sup> In this chapter I analyze three examples of this reinvention—a slave narrative, a political treatise, and a romantic adventure novel—in order to examine the problems and provocations encountered by the black entrepreneur. Olaudah Equiano’s *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself* (1789) demonstrates the complexities of black invention and creativity in an Atlantic economy that both relies on and disavows black capacity. Equiano’s experience traveling throughout the Atlantic world as a slave, sailor and soldier made him an astute observer and reluctant participant in the racial injustice perpetrated around him. His dialectical experience figures him as an “entrepreneurial slave” (Fichtelberg 466). Delany’s aforementioned 1852 treatise “places the forces of science, Enlightenment, and progress in concert with the project of racial regeneration” (Gilroy 20), and explores the relationship of education and respectability as constitutive elements of this “regeneration” or uplift. Finally, rediscovered in 1980 and

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<sup>15</sup> Douglass’ “The Heroic Slave” (1853) and Melville’s “Benito Cereno” (1855) are tales of slave revolt that recover a black Atlantic embodiment of entrepreneurialism. They feature risk taking, opportunistic revenge, and organized collectives spurred on by savvy, ambitious black leaders, in a similar vein to Philip’s *Emmanuel Appadocca*.

recently claimed as the first Anglo-Caribbean novel,<sup>16</sup> Maxwell Philip's *Emmanuel Appadocca; or Blighted Life. A Tale of the Boucaneers* (Trinidad 1854) can be read as an examination of the revolutionary power of black Atlantic ambition. The plot concerns the mixed-race title character's high-seas adventure of piracy and rebellion as he seeks revenge against his white father, a wealthy sugar planter who abandoned a young Appadocca and his mother. As I will discuss, Appadocca's self-interest is complex, for he is at once a determined individual carrying out a personal vendetta, and a racialized Robin Hood figure fighting the wrongs done to his community by a larger system of slavery and oppression.

I am particularly interested in reading Equiano's and Philip's texts for their treatment of Atlantic seafaring.<sup>17</sup> Although I discussed piracy as an (il)legitimate enterprise in the first chapter of this dissertation, seafaring—that is, the career of sailors (including those who turn pirate)—is an important trope in both early American and black Atlantic writing, and functions in literary and material history as a notable space of black uplift, a space that raises questions and provokes new readings of individualism and black collective consciousness. As David Kazanjian observes, “nearly every black narrative written during [the late eighteenth century] plots labor on the deep sea or coastal waters” (*Colonizing* 38). The world of seafaring itself operates according to a negotiation of individualism and collectivity: a life aboard ship gave working class sailors the opportunity for advancement, while it simultaneously created and sustained a disciplined

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<sup>16</sup> Selwyn Cudjoe, “Preface” *Emmanuel Appadocca; or Blighted Life: A Tale of the Boucaneers* by Maxwell Philip, ed. Selwyn R. Cudjoe (Amherst: U Mass P, 1997) xiii.

<sup>17</sup> While *The Condition, Elevation* does not explicitly concern seafaring, Delany was a black nationalist thinker with a trans-Atlantic background. Indeed, his serialized novel *Blake: or, the Huts of America* (1859-1861) features a Cuban sailor-turned-slave-turned-revolutionary who crosses the Atlantic from the Americas to Africa multiple times in search of family and freedom.

collective that stressed cooperation over national or racial identity.<sup>18</sup> An abundance of available seafaring jobs helped black individuals—both slave and free—gain independence, develop skills, discover the world, and earn money to buy property. Especially for disenfranchised blacks, the occupational identity of a sailor would have “fostered a pronounced sense of self-importance” (Bolster, *Black Jacks* 139). Alongside this self-respect, and even at the height of Atlantic slavery, “maritime culture included strong egalitarian impulses that frequently confounded the strict racial etiquette of slave societies” (91). While still a young slave at sea during the Seven Years’ War, Equiano becomes a captain’s steward, earning him the respect of “all on board” and providing him the opportunity to improve his reading and writing (*IN* 57). This camaraderie and support is echoed later in a moment of confrontation with Captain Pascal, the master who threatens to sell Equiano into what he fears could be cruel plantation slavery. Equiano’s fellow crew members, however, “strove then to cheer me, and told me he could not sell me, and that they would stand by me, which revived me a little, and I still entertained hopes” (64). Though Pascal sells him to Doran anyway, Equiano’s shipmates encourage him “not to despair, for they would get me back again” (65). Such egalitarianism helped to inform a black revolutionary consciousness throughout the Atlantic world, as sailors became a mode of communication, circulating ideas and spurring black collective resistance. As a network of communication, ships were not simply “abstract embodiments of the triangular trade” but the living, moving units of cultural and political

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<sup>18</sup> As I discussed in chapter 1, historians disagree on what this “lived reality” in fact looked like. For example, Bolster argues that black seamen were indeed negotiating their individual ambition alongside (or against) a class and racial collectivity, while Rediker (along with Linebaugh) contends that the collective experience at sea took precedence over self-interest, both for blacks and for working-class whites. I thank Professor Daniel Vickers for posing this problem to me in historical terms.

influence and dissent (Gilroy 16-17). As a realm of mobility and contact, seafaring played a significant role in developing and supporting anti-slavery ideas. Indeed, as Bolster describes, “seamanship became an emblem of black accomplishment . . . and an arrow . . . of black resistance” (*Black Jacks* 132). Black mariners, fittingly, were often viewed as *agents provocateurs* (146), with its dual significance of agency (or individualism) and agitation. Seafaring thus seemed to offer both a welcome space of black individual opportunity as well as a medium for collective political action.

But insofar as black sailors and maritime laborers “shared an occupational identity with white shipmates based on mutuality and the conditions of their work” (Bolster, *Diaspora* 446), the centrality of seafaring until the mid-nineteenth century reminds us that a black Atlantic collective consciousness “emerged not so much out of blacks’ cultural separation from whites as out of cultural and political self-awareness following contact with them” (437). To examine this contact and provide background for the larger critique, I want first to examine uplift ideology in a specifically trans-Atlantic context, taking into consideration the influence of European (especially British) liberalism on an early black Atlantic culture. Indeed, the influences of liberalism must remain part of the story, since the “recollection” of individual progress begins by recovering silences from within the dominant ideology.

## Liberalism and Progress in the Anglo-Atlantic World

The ideology of individual liberty that permeated the late eighteenth-century revolutionary Atlantic world underwent a shift by the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup> Based largely on the political philosophies of Hobbes and Locke, and the economic theories of Adam Smith, “classical” British liberalism held as its basic “assumption that society was a mere aggregate or combination of its individual atoms, and that its motive force was their self-interest and competition” (Hobsbawm, *Age of Revolution* 243). Personal motivation, it was thought, would prove ‘utilitarian’ for the economy at large, and ambition would be the engine of “a self-generating order” unencumbered by institutional and government regulation.<sup>20</sup> With its insistence on freedom from absolutist regimes—both political and economic—this liberal ideology of opportunism and optimism transformed trans-Atlantic trade from a regulated mercantile system into a fluid world of economic exchange. The nineteenth-century Anglo-American industrial boom served as proof of economic man’s ‘natural’ progressive desires.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Liberalism in this context refers not to a political party or program but rather to the conception of humans and society that emphasizes the rights of the individual against the forces of tradition. Historically, the emergence of a systematic liberal outlook can be located in seventeenth-century England, but the events of the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century trans-Atlantic world ushered in a “liberal era” inspired by democratic revolution, constitutional development, and a commitment to free institutions. The major tenets of liberal ideology are individualism, egalitarianism, universalism (the moral unity of the human species) and meliorism (the improvability of politics/society). John Gray, *Liberalism* (Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 1995). See also Ernest Kohn Bramsted, and K. J. Melhuish. *Western Liberalism: A History in Documents from Locke to Croce* (New York: Longman, 1978), and Massimo Salvadori, *European Liberalism* (New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1972)

<sup>20</sup> F.A. Hayek, “Liberalism” (1973) in Hayek, *New Studies in Philosophy, Politics, Economics and the History of Ideas* (London: Routledge and Keagan Paul, 1982). Accessed online [www.angelfire.com/rebellion/oldwhig4ever](http://www.angelfire.com/rebellion/oldwhig4ever) 13 March 2005. See also Joyce Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1992) 37.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Kelley, *The Transatlantic Persuasion: the Liberal-Democratic Mind in the Age of Gladstone* (New York: Knopf, 1969) 4. The boom began with U.S. cotton production which expanded British textiles, and was stimulated by the transportation revolution of canals, railroads, and Atlantic steam vessels: “This interchange rapidly swelled into a gigantic volume of commerce, so that there emerged,

By the turn of the nineteenth century, Jeremy Bentham and his “philosophical radicals” reworked the earlier construction of economic utilitarianism. Benthamite liberalism took the principle of self-interest to its moral extreme, and saw value in both public law and personal action only insofar as they advanced or protected the interests of the individual.<sup>22</sup> While there were collectivist implications to this general “protection” or welfare, Bentham’s philosophies remained concerned with a selfish individualism and *laissez-faire* economic and political policy. It was rather John Stuart Mill who sought to repair the “moral worth” of Bentham’s egoist model and adapt utilitarianism to community and social development (Macpherson 2). Mill insisted on the larger social benefits of self-interest, and thought the individual should be a “public benefactor” whose motives would contribute to social advancement (Mill 158). Moral development was thus at the heart of Mill’s view of progress, which celebrated intellectual pursuits, originality, and self-improvement through education and political activity (73).<sup>23</sup> Critical of the tendency of state education to build conformity and mediocrity, Mill’s vision of education was the formation of individuals to produce a society of “well-developed human beings” (Mill 73). For Mill, the free market functioned in a similar non-assimilationist way—because individuals have an internal drive to realize their own capacity and desires, the choice and freedom of economic pursuit would develop human potential and an awareness of humanity itself.<sup>24</sup> Mill’s introduction of a “moderate

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in place of the two separate economies, one British and the other American, a single, transatlantic economy” (4).

<sup>22</sup> William Sweet, “Jeremy Bentham,” *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. 18 May 2005. <<http://www.iep.utm.edu/b/bentham.htm>>.

<sup>23</sup> See also Barbara Goodwin, *Using Political Ideas* (Chichester, U.K. & New York: Wiley, 1982) 38.

<sup>24</sup> Falguni Sheth, “John Stuart Mill on Race, Liberty and Markets,” in *Race, Liberalism and Economics*, ed. David Colander, Robert E. Prasch, and Falguni A. Sheth (Ann Arbor: U Michigan P, 2004) 118.

socialism” therefore suggested a necessary contradiction: though he supported the welfare of the public, he warned of the “tyranny of the majority” and saw more potential in individualism for the good of the community.<sup>25</sup>

While Mill’s collectivism recognized and worked to ameliorate the plight of minority groups, the rights of the individual remained central to his social theory. Despite the movement from classical or “old” liberalism into a newer socialist ideology, it retained its foundation in elite individualism—a basis that complicates liberalism’s ostensible goal of moral and social progress. In its earlier moment, liberalism operated according to a perceived constitutive relationship between private property and liberal freedoms (Gray 62). This ideology extended to a rejection of communal institutions for limiting innovation and restraining liberty (64). The fact that the so-called “natural rights” of classical liberalism were reserved for the propertied elite seems evident insofar as the wealthy had little need for community support or assistance in their economic affairs. But even Mill’s framework of collective (if quasi-) socialism, with its demands for non-conformist education and enlightened opportunism, was similarly rooted in an ideology of “possessive individualism.” Like all liberal democratic theory, Mill took for granted that the individual was “free inasmuch as he is the proprietor of his person and capacities” (Macpherson 3). Accordingly, to the varying degrees that self-ownership was unavailable to the lower classes, women, the colonized and the enslaved, so too was the realization of individual and collective progress.

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<sup>25</sup> L.T. Hobhouse, *Liberalism* (1911) (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood P, 1980) 61.

But this historical unavailability did not prevent non-elite, non-propertied groups from supporting and pursuing the principles of Anglo-American liberal ideology. In Britain, for example, progress in the form of self-improvement resonated with members of the lower classes; as R.J. Morris illustrates, even “the working class Chartists shared many values with the middle-class radicals, especially a faith in human rationality which implied democracy and the value of education, and a faith in improvement and individuality.”<sup>26</sup> Yet despite social reforms and a growing insistence on a general collective advancement, shared values did not translate into class-wide cooperation. Samuel Smiles was a lower-middle class journalist who had worked towards socialist reform inspired by the ideologies of the philosophical radicals, but became disillusioned with the failure of utilitarianism to actually unite the different classes. As a result of this “frustrated political ambition” (91), Smiles and other petit bourgeois reformers turned inward, convinced that as a state institution marred by class interests, even free-market capitalism was “negative and restrictive” because it had caused a narrowing of the liberal social vision (106).<sup>27</sup> Smiles’ bestselling book *Self-Help* (1859) emphasized knowledge gained for its own sake and *not* for social and political progress (Morris 107). By 1859, “the fulfillment of the rational independent man which [Smiles] had looked for since 1839, could only be gained in the isolation of self-help” (108). In this way, an individual could ideally “uplift” or “make” himself into something better—without relying on the larger social structure.

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<sup>26</sup> R.J. Morris, “Samuel Smiles and the Genesis of *Self-Help*; the Retreat to a Petit Bourgeois Utopia” *The Historical Journal* 24 (1981): 89.

<sup>27</sup> Morris likens Smiles’ text to “the philosophical individualism of . . . Mill’s “On Liberty” with its negative and mystical search for freedom” (109).

I offer this example to demonstrate that even amid the socialist political climate of nineteenth-century Britain, the discrepancies between “moral” progress and “collective” self-interest were not difficult to find. In the United States, of course, where *laissez-faire* policies had been embraced from the start, social reform took a back seat to business interest, which supported a “self-culture” that idealized independence (102). But with its moralizing rhetoric of individualism and self-help, the “new” liberalism of the trans-Atlantic world had a problematic application to the efforts of African Americans. As Saidiya Hartman explains:

Liberalism, in general, and rights discourse, in particular, assure entitlements and privileges [even] as they enable and efface elemental forms of domination, primarily because of the atomistic portrayal of social relations, *the inability to address collective interests and needs*, and the sanctioning of subordination and the free reign of prejudice in the construction of the social or private. (122, my emphasis)

According to the ideological foundations of that “self-culture” in which eighteenth- and nineteenth-century African Americans sought to participate, the so-called “natural” inferiority of black people, slave or free, meant they did not, and could not, at that historical moment, fulfill the basic requirement of autonomy and independence. Nevertheless, a belief in the empowering capacity of liberal individualism had the effect of drawing collective attention away from racial exploitation.<sup>28</sup>

### **Universalism and Potential Invention: Equiano’s *Interesting Narrative***

The tension between individual agency and collective erasure is a recurrent theme in the experiences of early black Atlantic figures who struggled to participate in a

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<sup>28</sup> Matthew J. Pethers, “Talking Books, Selling Selves: Rereading the Politics of Olaudah Equiano’s *Interesting Narrative*,” *American Studies* 48 (2007): 127.

burgeoning free market. In *Black Jacks*, Bolster tells the true stories of enterprising and inspiring black merchant men, sea captains, and writers who ultimately succeeded in the market by “capitalizing on whites’ ambivalence toward [them]” (130). But this “capitalizing” success cannot be understood according to the celebrated entrepreneurial spirit of the Enlightenment, since epistemologically, the categories of invention and progress were not clearly accessible for blacks, structured as they were by racially exclusive logic: “Seeking social equality, African Americans in the eighteenth century traced their conception of liberty to a liberal ideology which, by grounding identity in the possession of goods, unintentionally perpetuated the ontological mechanisms of slavery” (Pethers 128). Black achievement, rather, is problematically located in the “ambivalence” Bolster identifies: in the navigation of tensions between the free spirit of capitalism and the limits of invention as a racialized category.

Olaudah Equiano was one of the first black adventurers to write about these tensions. Although an analysis of his *Interesting Narrative* (1789) takes us back to the late eighteenth century, it is significant in this context for its position at a crucial, revolutionary moment when the liberal ideology central to my argument was being debated and formed. In the midst of a secular awakening that touted rationalist and humanist thought, and celebrated individual liberty and talent (Hobsbawm 21), Equiano bravely “strove to place himself on an equal footing with the best thinkers of his time.”<sup>29</sup> The *Narrative* thus demonstrates the complexities of black inventiveness and achievement in an Atlantic world that both relies on and disavows black capacity.

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<sup>29</sup> Angelo Costanzo, Introduction, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself*, ed. Angelo Costanzo (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2001) 18.

Equiano's experiences as a sailor, first as a slave and then a freeman, moving on ships throughout the Atlantic commercial system, opened his eyes to the problems embedded in an economic liberalism that depended on the injustices of slavery for its rapid progress. The core of Equiano's *Narrative* concerns his repeated attempts to assert his economic individuality and to profit in the liberal market: "I thought now of nothing but being freed, and working for myself, and thereby getting money to enable me to get a good education" (*IN* 84). While still enslaved, he decides to "commence merchant" by buying and reselling small items throughout the Caribbean islands to profit from his trade (62). Historian Barbara Bush describes the common practice of slaves participating in the weekly local "Sunday market" and accumulating a small profit, which provided opportunities to buy one's freedom.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, Kazanjian suggests that capital for Equiano really "means an expansive, social, substantial freedom" (*Colonizing* 62)—a literal and figurative manumission. While he adheres to the rules of entrepreneurialism and ambition, at each moment of asserted individuality, he finds himself disqualified from the competition and made to suffer cruel injustices. Equiano's life of risk-taking mercantile adventure undermined by relentless disappointment at the hands of the planter class figures him, in Joseph Fichtelberg's words, as an "entrepreneurial slave" (466).<sup>31</sup> Despite an Atlantic economy that profits from Equiano's accomplishments, the politics of the inventive process leave him devalued and unprotected against exploitation and injury.

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<sup>30</sup> Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1838* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990) 47.

<sup>31</sup> Other notable economic readings of Equiano, besides Fichtelberg's, include Elizabeth Jane Wall Hinds, "The Spirit of Trade: Olaudah Equiano's Conversion, Legalism, and the Merchant's Life," *African-American Review* 32 (1998): 635-47; Ross J. Pudaloff, "No Change Without Purchase: Olaudah Equiano and the Economies of Self and Market," *Early American Literature* 40 (2005): 499-527; Kazanjian; and Pethers, who argues that the impact of civic humanism and republicanism might have been stronger for Equiano than economic liberalism. All of these recent analyses are in conversation with Houston A. Baker's important study of Equiano's liberal ideology in the context of slave narratives. See *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1984).

The rhetorical strategy of inversion in the *Narrative*—in which whites are cannibals, Christians are barbarous, and the rational is irrational—resembles this ideology of invention that defines black ambition according to an inverted logic. That is to say, in order to pursue his individual ambition, Equiano is drawn to and navigates the key stages of inventive discovery—curiosity, exploration and knowledge—that invite his participation but presuppose his failure in their racially designated “freedom.”

As much as the *Narrative* is an exercise in inversions, it is also a study of dialectical conflict whereby Equiano is endlessly pulled from one extreme to another, between different worlds and identities, constantly negotiating peril. Some of Equiano’s first mercantile adventures are quite successful—particularly selling glass tumblers from island to island in the Caribbean. But when he tries to do the same with citrus fruit on Santa Cruz, he and a fellow trader are accosted and robbed of their produce/capital by two white men (85). Equiano’s thrill of profit is quickly dashed by white competitors who punish him for trying to pursue his ambition: “Thus, in the very minute of gaining more by three times than I ever did by any venture in my life before, was I deprived of every farthing I was worth” (86). But every blow to his entrepreneurial self-interest is complicated with the knowledge that he is being delimited because of his membership in the slave collective. Equiano recounts the plight of the Creole slave whose master “by strength” steals his fish (126); as well as the “wretched field-slaves” who

after toiling all day for an unfeeling owner . . . steal sometimes a few moments from rest or refreshments to gather some small portion of grass [which they] bring to town, or to the market to sell. Nothing is more common than for white people, on this occasion, to take the grass from them without paying for it; and . . .

at the same time have committed acts of violence on the poor, wretched, and helpless females. (124)<sup>32</sup>

The field slaves' story is Equiano's story; neither is 'protected' by the invisible hand, because they share a sub-human status. Equiano identifies with the injustice brought upon his race, acknowledging how they and he "suffer together" (127).<sup>33</sup>

As this chapter seeks to demonstrate, such dialectical ambivalence is the necessary mode of a black Atlantic "counter-culture." Kazanjian provides a useful theoretical model to imagine the black entrepreneur's impossible success; the injuries Equiano confronts at each moment of achievement suggest a "hierarchically codified racial-national" Anglo-American identity that was ironically produced by inviting—and quickly limiting—black mercantile activity:

[R]ather than simply being excluded from this capitalist calculation of "freedom," black merchant mariners had to be ritualistically invoked as the limit of mercantile exchange for that exchange to maintain a racial-national coherence, and for formal and abstract equality to be sustained.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> As I discussed in the Introduction, this kind of slave enterprise was not uncommon in the Caribbean. As C.L.R. James explains, slaves would use the few hours provided for rest to tend to their gardens: "Hard-working slaves cultivated vegetables and raised chickens to sell in the towns to make a little in order to buy rum and tobacco; and here and there a Napoleon of finance, by luck and industry, could make enough to purchase his freedom." Like Robert King supporting Equiano's intelligence because it profitably served the master's own interests, these slaves' "masters encouraged them in this practice of cultivation, for in years of scarcity the Negroes died in thousands . . . and plantations were ruined" (*The Black Jacobins* 11).

<sup>33</sup> Equiano was (possibly) born into the Ibo culture of the Kingdom of Benin (Nigeria), a society steeped in market culture, craftsmanship and enterprise. In the *Narrative* Equiano recalls having been apprenticed to another family in Africa before he was stolen by slave traders; this tradition emphasizes the cultural insistence on enterprise, as the apprentice would gain the skills needed to go into business and contribute to the economy. Interestingly, though, as a West African, Equiano would also have been raised in a culture in which "kinship and tribal structure inculcated the values of community cooperation and community discipline" (Dunn 236). These two experiences support my reading of Equiano's *Narrative* as an exploration of opportunistic collectivism. For a discussion of Equiano's questionable birthplace/origins, see Vincent Caretta, "Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa? New Light on an Eighteenth-Century Question of Identity" *Slavery and Abolition* 20:3 (1999) 96-105.

<sup>34</sup> David Kazanjian, "Race, Nation, Equality: Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* and a Genealogy of U.S. Mercantilism," in *Post-Nationalist American Studies*, ed. John Carlos Rowe (Berkeley: UC Press, 2000) 132.

Kazanjian’s observation of “a constitutive exclusion” (45) in the construction of national identity can be broadened to take into consideration the development of a liberal or enlightened universalism. This model also demonstrates that the universal humanism that informed so much of the Enlightenment project is a similarly structured, codified and “coherent” category—it was, as Gilroy has argued, a universalism “which was, in theory, valid for humanity as a whole even if humanity was to be rather restrictively defined” (43).<sup>35</sup> Entrepreneurial invention likewise became problematically naturalized as a universal category of human achievement in the eighteenth century since its corresponding elements—autonomy, authorship and selfhood—did not accommodate black achievement. This includes a sufficient level of autonomy or mastery to fashion a creative idea into an invention; the power to claim original or proprietary authorship over an invention; and the selfhood to respond to an outside pressure or “other” that challenges the status quo. I argue that despite these limitations, we can read Equiano’s ambition and his considerable (if often thwarted) success as a complication to this logic; a “constitutive exclusion” that subverts the impression of coherence it enables.

If we think about invention as a public act, we can begin to theorize the manner in which Equiano’s entrepreneurial participation—or at least the potentiality of it—threatens this coherence. Derek Attridge has argued that invention needs to interact with culture in order to be realized: “To be creative . . . the mind needs only the materials it

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<sup>35</sup> The genesis of this codification is described by Warren Montag as the “universalization of whiteness.” Montag illustrates that when the idea of a white race emerged in the eighteenth century, it did so in the Enlightenment discourse of universal humanism, whereby the white race became the *human* race. Thinking in a “universalist spirit” quickly deprived whiteness of its racial particularity, turning it into “the very form of human universality itself” (285). But since “[i]n its most historically effective forms, whiteness does not speak its own name” (291), that racialized particularity became normalized and “civilized” in relation to its savage, non-human others that stood outside its “universal” human limits. Warren Montag, “The Universalization of Whiteness: Racism and Enlightenment” in *Whiteness, A Critical Reader*, ed. Mike Hill. (New York: New York UP, 1997).

happens to have, whether shared or not, but invention—which is the only way in which creativity can be registered—requires a close engagement with the circumambient cultural matrix.”<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, once the invention or “new articulation becomes public . . . it may alter cognitive frameworks across a wider domain, allowing further acts of creativity in other minds” (22). The association of creative invention with revolution is consistent even within Enlightenment discourse; indeed, invention “is a mental *feat* that makes possible both the manufacture of the new entity and, perhaps, more important, new instances of inventiveness” (23, my emphasis). Those “new instances” can be discovered in “gaps in the material, strains and tensions that suggest the pressure of . . . the hitherto unthought and unthinkable” (23). The notion that inventiveness is motivated by the pressure to identify and articulate something previously “unthought and unthinkable” is a powerful tool in historicizing subaltern agency. The mere potential of black invention therefore threatens the dominant culture’s vision of the future. This idea of Equiano’s achievement as a loaded challenge to (and sometimes feat against) the (white) liberal ideology resonates in the ambivalent tone of his entrepreneurial adventures.

Equiano welcomes all opportunities for education and attains mastery of several skills, but that achievement is mediated—literally mastered—by white authorities who decide when and which skills he will learn. After his manumission from Quaker merchant Robert King, Equiano boards the *Nancy* and is chosen to temporarily succeed the dying Captain Farmer who, in his last breath, regrets not having taught Equiano how to navigate a ship (*IN* 163). Perhaps in response to his teacher’s regret, Equiano

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<sup>36</sup> Derrick Attridge, “Innovation, Literature, Ethics: Relating to the Other” *PMLA* 114:1 (1999) 23. Although Attridge’s analysis is not an explicitly colonial or historical one, much of the framework lends itself to such a reading.

experiences self-doubt and anxiety when his leadership skills are invoked. His prescient recurring dream of a shipwreck in which he “was the means of saving every one on board” (166) illustrates his pride, but when the dream comes true and he must rely on his mediated mastery of seamanship, his actions disappoint. When the *Nancy* bottoms out, Equiano’s mind is “replete with inventions and confused with schemes [for how to save the ship], though how to escape death [he] knew not” (167). Thus debilitated by the doubt that his learned skills could save those on board, he faints. After recovering, however, he can “no longer restrain [his] emotions” (168) and crosses an internal line from mastery to *self*-mastery, following his instincts and his own alternative plan to bring the lifeboat to shore. However, upon Equiano’s direction “to get the boat prepared against morning,” the white sailors, refusing to acknowledge this unofficial captain’s self-imposed leadership, “abandoned all care of the ship and themselves, and fell to drinking” (168). By reinventing the skills taught to him by his former captains, Equiano denies the delimiting mastery of his white teachers and asserts his individual ambition. But the sailors’ disregard for Equiano’s proposed plan delegitimizes his self-mastered achievement and implies the exclusion of even free blacks from the public process of invention.

If mastery in Equiano’s Atlantic world required an impossible, ideological autonomy, the claim to originality similarly depended on a politicized cultural opinion. The publication of Equiano’s *Narrative* coincides with the early moments of the Romantic movement in Britain, during which time the individual “genius” was increasingly exalted and the creative labor of writing was equated with that of mechanical

invention.<sup>37</sup> As Clare Pettitt shows, whereas in earlier periods invention was seen “in terms of political economy and mechanics” and claimed as the “‘natural’ property of the people” (11), by the time of Wordsworth and Coleridge, creativity was described as organic—grown, not made—and therefore the “original” property of the inventor (13). According to this early model of intellectual property, there could be no such thing as an inventive slave, if that slave’s every laboring faculty and the fruits it produced were the property of someone else. Furthermore, as Henry Louis Gates, Jr. explains in his influential theory of black creativity, while slave narratives like Equiano’s “document the potential for [slaves to gain] ‘culture’” and were often cited by “well-meaning abolitionists . . . as proof of the common humanity of bondsman and lord; yet these same texts also demonstrated the contrary for proponents of the antebellum world view—that the African imagination was merely derivative.”<sup>38</sup> Indeed, Equiano’s ‘cultural’ education is at the hands of his white masters and captains, as well as the refined English “Miss Guerin” sisters from whom leaving makes him “reluctant” and “uneasy” (*IN* 94). The sisters attend to his baptism and endeavor to instill in him Christian doctrine, but ultimately become missionaries of doubt, leaving him convinced that his “faculties” were only endowed to him in order “to glorify God with” (198). Like the “nominal Christians” Equiano reproves in a pointed address to his self-proclaimed enlightened readers, the sisters’ strong belief in divine agency is sharply undermined by their refusal to attribute creative human agency to their African student. So denigrated, black creativity—

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<sup>37</sup> Clare Pettitt, *Patent Inventions: Intellectual Property and the Victorian Novel* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004).

<sup>38</sup> Henry Louis Gates, Jr., “Preface to Blackness: Text and Pretext” (1979), in *African American Literary Theory: A Reader*, ed. Winston Napier (New York: NYU Press, 2000) 147.

derivative, inorganic, and purposed only for spiritual communion—simply did not fit the proto-Romantic profile of inventive originality.

Equiano's *Narrative* is thus awash in the predicament of the "entrepreneurial slave," as white fellow sailors steal his hard-earned money and foil his liberation schemes, and white masters take credit—not only financially—for even his potential entrepreneurial successes. But the perception of Equiano as inorganically creative and derivatively intelligent (and thus not deserving of the fruits of his own invention) is further complicated by the slave's inability to claim his story as original or proprietary. The slave narrative genre puts an interesting twist on the discussion of black inventiveness, since Equiano's text could only be an effective abolitionist tool if its audience believed the story to be his (a slave's) *own*, as well as the original, unmediated truth. Though each of these requirements is, as we have seen, impossible from an ideological perspective, the phenomenon of authenticating documents worked ironically to support at least the semblance of an organic creation.<sup>39</sup> To claim inventive originality also requires, according to Attridge, an organic *selfhood* from which to respond to the outside pressure that provokes creativity. If authenticating documents were required to legitimate a black writer's identity, what could possibly have legitimated the black inventor as a *self* responding to external pressure? Since the late eighteenth-century black inventor *was* outside the Eurocentric Enlightenment framework of rational, economic man, we can begin to articulate the logic behind Equiano's difficult navigation of the process of invention, that "encounter with the limits of one's powers to think and

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<sup>39</sup> In response to racist response and accusations that he "fabricated" the 1789 *Narrative*, Equiano included in subsequent editions (of which there were eight) a variety of authenticating documents. These included letters "written by reputable political, religious and social leaders attesting to the veracity of Equiano's story" (Costanzo 20).

to judge, a challenge to one's capacities as a rational agent" (Attridge 24). How does the "irrational" other find in its othered self a source of discovery and therefore agency?

Accordingly, black slaves were not believed to possess a "natural" inventive faculty, and if they did, it was claimed as their master's economic asset. For example, while still a slave, Equiano receives considerable praise from Robert King for his intelligent labor, but the master undermines and dehumanizes the compliment by declaring that such intelligence and skill have "saved him. . . . above a hundred pounds a year" (*IN* 119). Likewise, Equiano reveals that the majority of skilled artisans and mechanics in the West Indies are black slaves whose masters, loath to part with such value yet averse to concede the slaves' creative capacity, claim that they could not sell the slaves for "the first cost" (119). As Houston Baker explains, this white acknowledgment that "slave skills and labor yield surplus value" showed blacks their own worth and proved to be "a spur to individualistic, economic enterprise" (51). However, as Equiano describes, if the same profiting masters (or any white person, for that matter) find an otherwise valuable slave exercising inventiveness to his own ends, harsh punishment ensues. The best metaphor Equiano provides to illustrate the impossibly ambivalent worldview of the "entrepreneurial slave" is that of the long wooden box used to punish slaves in the West Indies. Cataloguing the many ways planters inflicted cruelty, Equiano describes an infamous "master" who would wound his slaves and then force them into the box: "It was just about the height and breadth of a man; and the poor wretches had no room, when in the case to move" (*IN* 123). As an instrument of torture, the box does not allow for transformative movement or the flexing of muscles, but only provides only enough room to subsist. As a symbolic casket the

wooden box shuts out light and life. As a containment fit for chattel and beasts it denies the slave his humanity. The literal and figurative boxed-in slaves and free blacks of Equiano's *Narrative* are thus allowed only the most limited air to breathe—just enough to keep them alive, yet preventing exploration and participation. Black invention, figured and confined according to an Enlightenment ideology of rational, propertied selfhood, was denied the space and social structures to create or invent.

An examination of the significant stages of creative inquiry—curiosity, exploration, and knowledge—illustrates the ways that Equiano internalizes the insistent ideological demand to place his inventive potential in a metaphorical box. For each stage, a corresponding example in the *Narrative* illustrates the significance of inversion that provides both the rhetorical strategy and the moral organization of Equiano's journey. By moral organization I mean that Equiano's story inverts the tone of his creative pursuits from moral or positive to detrimental or dangerous, and thus elaborates the dialectical tension of the "entrepreneurial slave."

Curiosity keeps Equiano from sinking into the depths of despair upon his capture by slave traders in Guinea. He is enormously interested in the smallest details of the slave ship, from the flying fish to the possible spirits that power the ship's mast. In a telling moment, Equiano recalls watching in awe the sailors use a quadrant, or measuring device: "[They] at last took notice of my surprise; and one of them, willing to increase it as well as to gratify my curiosity, made me one day look through it . . . This heightened my wonder" (74). The invitation to follow one's excitement at the wonders of the world is both heartening and ominous, since in his youthful innocence Equiano could hardly have been aware of the inverted logic of the white world that would allow his curiosity

but limit his participation. Even after experiencing life on a plantation and witnessing the horrors of slavery, Equiano maintains his fascination of the unknown: “I longed to engage in new adventures and see fresh wonders. I had a mind on which every thing uncommon made its full impression, and every event which I considered as marvelous” (100). Because his work is an autobiography, the narrator’s youthful outlook is mediated by the older Equiano’s hindsight that seeks to reveal the insidious ways that, even as an unprejudiced youth, his exuberance was circumscribed. His curiosity about the quadrant might have been seen by the sailors as a quaint entertainment (and not a promising sign of inventiveness) since they believed, based on contemporary travel accounts, that Africans were hardly creative but rather lazy, undisciplined, and “disdained freedom” (Fichtelberg 463-4). Consistent with his wonder at the world, Equiano’s vivid curiosity works to process and negotiate the misconceptions but continually confronts injury and contempt.

In an interesting moment, a literal injury gives way to a figurative one, when he follows his curiosity and explores an English battery on Belle-Isle of the French Bay of Biscay. He sees the process of “charging the mortars and letting off the shells” but the experience nearly costs him his life as the shells explode only ten yards from him (*IN* 104). His fascination turns to peril when he finds himself in the line of fire between the English and the French. He is caught by an English sergeant who “reprimand[s] [him] very severely” and then punishes himself for “his negligence in suffering [Equiano] to pass the lines” (104). In his older years, then, Equiano calls himself “foolhardy” for having trespassed the limitation. Thus after a lifetime of curiosity tempered by injurious warnings, Equiano finds himself suspended in a dialectical tension exemplified by his

deference to providence. Though he often dreams of possible “inventions [and] schemes” (167) to liberate him from oppression or to capitalize on a given situation, Equiano quickly pulls himself back from contact with the “unthought” or unknown which, as we have seen, provokes invention and asserts agency.

The realm of the Enlightenment that most sparks Equiano’s curiosity is exploration, which can be read as the literal manifestation of his intellectual wanderings and “roving disposition” (188). But there is of course an underbelly to exploration in the eighteenth-century Atlantic, significantly because it often took place on a slave ship. Equiano’s inspirational exclamations before setting sail on each new vessel are bitterly diluted by the conditions of the impending discovery. Like the sailors, planters and clerks who praise the beauty of female slaves and then rape them (120), the wonders and inhabitants of brave new worlds are to be patronized in preparation for exploitation. Though as a sailor he also participates in this cruel ‘exploration,’ as a black adventurer Equiano confronts injury or enslavement on nearly every venture he sails. Even after his manumission and despite his certificates of freedom and authenticity, he is continually kidnapped on board merchant ships. The narrative inversions at work in the moment of Atlantic exploration are probably the most wicked, for what is more bitterly ironic than for the entrepreneurial (former) slave than to discover the world from a slave ship? Indeed, Bolster describes the ship as “a pipeline to freedom” (*Black Jacks* 4) that gave African American seamen the privilege to see the world, but he also identifies it as a vessel of torture. As a parting wish upon Equiano’s manumission, Robert King encourages him to capitalize on his experience working on slave ships, and tells him he has what it takes to succeed and “one day have slaves of [his] own” (*IN* 180).

While Equiano does endeavor to capitalize on his experience, his interests in “commencing merchant” and in seeing the world are both rooted in his pursuit of knowledge as the ultimate form of elevation. In relation to commerce, a realm in which he is unconditionally disavowed, the prohibitions he faces in acquiring knowledge are arguably the most surprising and difficult for him to register. The dialectical tension at work in a discussion of black knowledge is considerable, and organized from the very moment the slave trade begins. Indeed, traders often claimed to prefer slaves from Benin for their superior intelligence (Costanzo 52), but Equiano attacks the hypocrisy of these same traders and merchants who “stupefy [slaves] with stripes, and think it necessary to keep them in a state of ignorance. And yet [they] assert that they are incapable of learning” (*IN* 128). While he does ultimately step beyond the bounds of proscribed black invention in order to write one of the first black autobiographies, along the way he absorbs the doctrine that learning is a sinful temptation (216). He manages to learn despite being allowed only the authorized instruction of his white masters; he continues to read the English classics despite being denigrated that he talks too much English (109); and though writing in his journal nearly causes him to burn down a ship, he goes on to a lucrative career as a writer (190). As Baker asserts, “[t]he African who successfully negotiates his way through the dread exchanges of bondage to the type of expressive posture characterizing [*The Interesting Narrative*’s] conclusion is surely a man who has repossessed himself, and thus, achieved the ability to reunite a severed African humanity” (38). Indeed, Equiano’s self-repossession comes from subverting the ideology of liberalism and asserting his literary inventiveness with a first-person slave narrative that embodies and calls for collective black emancipation. The *Narrative*’s self-made success

is ironically its ability to demonstrate the disenfranchisement of blacks in a liberal, commercial society. Insofar as Equiano's opportunistic self-interest is a collective enterprise in this way, we can see that black Atlantic individualism is inventive and positioned both uncomfortably within and actively against the master narrative of progress.

**Individualism and the Trouble with Uplift: *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States***

If a possessive liberalism provided the eighteenth-century ideological context for the successes of plantation slavery and colonial enterprise, from where does its antinomy of black uplift emerge? According to historian Kevin Gaines, “in antebellum days, uplift, rising, elevation, and advancement described the passage of blacks from slavery to freedom,” and was used by black abolitionists to affirm “enlightened ideals of inalienable rights and human progress” and to insist on freedom as “a moral right ordained by God” (31). This “liberation theology” (1) of uplift as freedom from bondage functioned to inspire self-help as a kind of “moral courage” and individual responsibility, as Douglass emphasized.<sup>40</sup> However, historicized in the context of an Anglo-American Atlantic world, the antebellum sense of black advancement reflects a broader liberal ideology that endorsed *both an economic and moral vision*. Indeed, Douglass espoused the representative black version of middle-class uplift ideology—one that promoted hard

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<sup>40</sup> Angela Ray, “Frederick Douglass on the Lyceum Circuit: Social Assimilation, Social Transformation?” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 5:4 (2002): 634.

work, thrift and self-improvement for moral ends, but often neglected the conflict between moral and economic success (634).<sup>41</sup>

Interestingly, moral reform itself “was largely conceived as a means toward economic and social well-being.”<sup>42</sup> While on the one hand this notion suggests the Puritan ethic of “earnest progress in the paths of industry” (Pease & Pease 127), such earnestness was more likely to be pursued for the social and material attainments of respectability—a complicated idea that conflates political equality with economic achievement. As Bolster has shown, at least as early as the 1790s, free black families in the northern states “aspir[ed] to middle class status” and were greatly concerned over the career plans of their sons, whose potential financial success and respectability could influence their parents’ social position (*Black Jacks* 160). In 1843, a committee report of the U.S. National Convention of Colored Citizens “urged blacks to consider careers in agriculture because the farmer was independent and would be able to acquire wealth and ‘respectability.’”<sup>43</sup> But does this preoccupation with individual progress complicate the use of uplift as a tool of collective liberty and political elevation? To consider this dilemma I examine Delany’s prescribed program for black advancement that both reveals a frustrated dependency on the dominant middle-class ideology of utilitarianism, and frames a vision of black uplift that begins to reconstruct the relationship between individual and community.

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<sup>41</sup>See also Waldo E. Martin, *The Mind of Frederick Douglass* (Chapel Hill: UNC P, 1984) x.

<sup>42</sup>Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease, *They Who Would be Free: Blacks’ Search for Freedom, 1830-1861* (New York: Atheneum, 1974) 124.

<sup>43</sup>Frederick Cooper, “Elevating the Race: The Social Thought of Black Leaders, 1827-50” *American Quarterly* 24:5 (1972): 610.

In *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*, Delany celebrates the capacity and stresses the necessity for individual blacks to be “useful” as both respectable citizens and accomplished producers or contributors. In his chapter on the “Practical Utility of Colored People . . . As Members of Society” Delany considers “a few particular instances, in which colored persons have been responsibly engaged in extensive business, or occupying useful positions, thus contributing to the general welfare of community at large” (92). Such positions are occupied by people who, rather than “depend for assistance upon God” (38), are self-reliant, value practical over classical education, are benevolent and charitable, and above all, embrace the spirit of material progress. I argue that this insistence on both entrepreneurial achievement and general welfare highlights the difficulty of Delany’s public appeal, insofar as each entrepreneurial value or call-to-action comes qualified by the potential for individual self-interest to undermine collective uplift.

Delany locates the key to advancement in self-motivation and self-reliance. He provides models of personal excellence; those highly respected men who overcame the limitations of their “degradation” and “made” themselves.<sup>44</sup> Employing these examples, Delany contends that a deep religious faith has caused free blacks to “stand still,” expecting God “to do that for them, which it is necessary they should do for themselves” (38). He calls this a “great mistake” and instead implores that “elevation must be the result of *self-efforts*, and work of our *own hands*” (45). Despite this appeal to self-determination, Delany’s illustrations reveal that in most cases, these business leaders *had*

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<sup>44</sup> In this particular chapter on business proprietors, all of Delany’s examples are men. In other chapters on politicians, writers and artists, however, he does include women as role models of achievement.

*no choice* but to look to themselves. For example, New York pickling entrepreneur Henry Scott, we are told, “had no assistance at the commencement, but by manly determination and perseverance, raised himself to what he is” (102). Likewise, both the successful Cincinnati grocer Samuel T. Wilcox and the Albany tailor William H. Topp “[s]tarted in the world without aid” but with “perseverance” educated and “qualified” themselves for business (97, 102), while the Philadelphia broker Joseph Cassey was the “architect of his own fortune” (95).

Delany idealizes these early struggles and connects such success stories with collective progress, as in the case of developer Henry M. Collins:

Raised a poor boy, thrown upon the uncertainties of chance, without example or precept, save such as the public at large presents; Mr. Collins quit his former vocation of a riverman, and without means, except one hundred and fifty dollars, and no assistance from any quarter, commenced speculating in real estate. And though only rising forty, he has done more to improve the Sixth Ward of Pittsburg, than any other individual. (104)

Delany suggests that Collins’ self-interest ultimately led to the Pittsburg district attracting “a different class of citizens entirely”—that is, “wealthy citizens”—whose presence created “one of the most fashionable quarters of the City” (104). But does this gentrification suggest a collective achievement or individual bourgeois success? Indeed, the ideal of individual self-interest embedded in the rhetoric of self-reliance—the same rhetoric that celebrates the most “useful members of society”—ironically undermines that social progress. In other words, Delany advocates a culture of self-reliance, but to achieve this, individuals must want success; without widespread individual initiative or motivation, collective progress is unsustainable. The success stories of these self-made

men begin to reveal the disconnect between individual self-reliance and a sustainable collective progress.

In Delany's view, the key to elevation is a collective commitment to education. This belief was shared by antebellum black leaders who maintained that self-improvement depended on education and moral reform above all else; education, they felt, "gave the individual concrete opportunities . . . [and] made him a better person. And it would diminish prejudice" (Cooper 611). Delany expressly admires both George T. Downing, the proprietor of a genteel resort and "a gentleman of education" (Delany 106), and the enormously wealthy Philadelphia sail manufacturer James Forten for having "raised and educated a large and respectable family of sons and daughters" (94). Delany placed great stock in the value of education to advance the race, but as Cooper observes, "[b]etween the belief that education would bring about the elevation of the race and the reality of educational opportunities lay a wide gap" (613). Informed by his own experience, Delany argued that a classical education would not sufficiently prepare blacks to be "useful" to society (Cooper 612). This sentiment is echoed in his admiration for Ohio tanner "Mr. Hill," who gave his "children a liberal business education" (Delany 101). Delany was concerned that education was ineffective if it "only liberated the mind without arming the 'liberated' individual with the means of economic survival" (Adeleke 224). A practical or business education was Delany's solution.

Another aspect of Delany's program for advancement concerns the importance of benevolent leadership and community support. In Delany's formulation, benevolence was palatable coming as it did from self-made men, since their legendary achievement served as inspiration and encouragement, helping to uplift others and thus contributing to

black progress. These community leaders inspired, funded, and organized the institutional development of free mutual aid or benevolent societies, which, starting with the African Union Society in the 1780s, made immensely significant contributions to black community development in the antebellum period and after.<sup>45</sup> The early societies emphasized charity, “encouraged thrift,” and provided benefits to widows and children (Walker 86). By the turn of the nineteenth century, new mutual aid societies were key institutions in black economic life (86). Despite this enormous contribution, the wealthy black leaders’ concern for and support of the community is complicated in Delany’s account by a tone of sentimental heroism. For instance, New York caterer Thomas Downing, who had reportedly made “three fortunes” is called “benevolent, kind, and liberal minded, his head was always willing, his heart ready, and his hands open to ‘give’” (Delany 103). The problem with this heroism lies in its individual motivation; while the assistance of benevolent philanthropists mobilized black communities to become self-reliant, their behavior recalls Mill’s individualist “public benefactor” and complicates the collectivist goals of Delany’s ideal. That the benevolent businessman reached the highest levels of respectability suggests that he may have pursued this contribution out of self-interest, as a way to boost his own social status, rather than out of any real concern for the masses (Moore 182).<sup>46</sup>

Like the motives of the paternalistic capitalist, the competitive nature of black businessmen requires a careful reading. While only three percent of antebellum free blacks ultimately became business proprietors (Walker 126), like anyone else living in

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<sup>45</sup> Juliet E. K. Walker, *The History of Black Business in America: Capitalism, Race, Entrepreneurship* (New York & London: Macmillan Library Reference USA/Prentice Hall International, 1998) 86.

<sup>46</sup> In her annotated bibliography, Moore explains that recent studies of racial uplift have emphasized the idea of self-interested disingenuousness on the part of black leaders.

“an age of ‘expectant capitalism’” black entrepreneurs were stimulated by the possibility of economic gain: “Money making was pervasive, and antebellum blacks were not immune to the attraction of business or the profits that could be earned by establishing a business enterprise” (126). As a publisher and businessman himself, Delany was no doubt inspired by the liberal vision of progress when outlining his prescription for black elevation or uplift. In his profiles of various businessmen, Delany describes each man’s degree of fortune—Stephen Smith is “decidedly the most wealthy colored man in the United States” (Delany 95)—his properties or investments, whether his business is of a “profitable character” (103), and his number of employees (the most successful ones employ both blacks and whites). These characteristics emphasize Delany’s strong belief in a liberal entrepreneurialism that forefronts ambition, wealth, and material progress.

Yet despite this celebration of black industrial achievement, even the most successful businessmen could not ignore the reality of white racism and black disenfranchisement. Juliet Walker argues that the historical record contradicts the long-standing assumption based on laissez-faire economic theories that “African-Americans lack a tradition of business participation” (xx). Rather she asserts that despite ongoing attempts to succeed, black business was obviously not a priority of a racist antebellum government that consistently supported and encouraged white industry. Furthermore, “volatile” “racial conflict . . . existed when blacks moved into competitive areas of white enterprise” such as the antebellum North, with its “aggressive spirit of industrialization” (125). It was thus an ideological misconception that Adam Smith’s fabled “invisible hand” of liberalism was universally applicable to all who embraced the spirit of material progress.

How then did even a few black capitalists manage to scale such heights as Downing's "three fortunes"? Delany's awareness of this difficulty is evident in an interesting characteristic he attributes to the most successful black entrepreneurs—invisibility. Although both Henry Boyd and Henry Scott were known as "energetic" businessman, Boyd's (Southern) buyers dealt with him at a distance and never suspected his race (Delany 98). And Delany describes matter-of-factly that there were likely "many a purser, who cashed and filed in his office the bill of a Henry Scott, without ever dreaming of his being a colored man" (102). But this invisibility is not simply a result of the refusal of white business to imagine black success; rather the black proprietors *erase themselves*, as in the case of Cincinnati grocer Samuel Wilcox. Although Wilcox's wholesale business boasted enormous profits, Delany guesses that

there are doubtless now many merchants in New York, Boston, and Baltimore cities, who have been dealing with S.T. Wilcox, and never until the reading of this notice of him, knew that he was a colored man. He has never yet been east after his goods, but pursuing a policy which he has adopted, orders them; but if deceived in an article, never deals with the same house again. (97)

Wilcox chooses not to do business in person in order to remain unidentified—that is, to remain white in the minds of his white clientele, thus retaining power and agency in the capitalist enterprise. But why did an entrepreneur who followed the program of black elevation, scaled the heights of capitalist success by the age of forty, continued to prove himself "useful" to society at large, and was "among the extraordinary men of the times" (97) still have to go to such lengths to conceal his race? Did the white acknowledgment of Wilcox's individual success depend on the repression of his racial or collective identity? While there were undoubtedly black capitalists who not only assimilated into white society but disconnected themselves from black advancement and political action,

most of Delany's celebrated businessmen were "of stern integrity and highly respected" in both their respective cities and black communities (99). Therefore the racial invisibility required to attain material success works to question and contradict the extreme social *visibility* that enabled Wilcox's respectability and made him the one "by whom the community is [most] benefited" (97).

**Robin Hood Revisited: *Emmanuel Appadocca; or, Blighted Life. A Tale of the Boucaniers***

Like Equiano and the black leaders described by Delany, the Trinidadian writer and politician Maxwell Philip lived a frustrating success story. In 1931 C.L.R. James wrote an editorial biography for the Trinidadian magazine *The Beacon*, entitled "Michel Maxwell Philip: 1829-1888." James speaks of Philip's life with an air of respect and reverence for the man who was known as "one of Trinidad's greatest sons."<sup>47</sup> Philip's mother's family was a politically active, free black "dynasty" from Grenada, whose involvement in that island's 1795 Fédon Rebellion forced some of its sons and daughters to relocate to Trinidad (Cudjoe, "Preface" x). Philip was an "illegitimate child" whose mother worked on the estate of his white father's plantation (James, "Philip" 254). But it was Philip's mother's family that supported his elite education; he studied the classics in Scotland, learned several languages, and trained to be a lawyer in England. Upon returning to Trinidad, he devoted his life to public service and held the positions of mayor and solicitor general, among others. He prided himself as a lifelong student—"merely to

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<sup>47</sup> C.L.R. James, "Michel Maxwell Philip: 1829-1888" in *From Trinidad: An Anthology of Early West Indian Writin*, ed. Reinhard Sander (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978) 267.

know [him] was a liberal education” (268), James insists—and he left an impression of “inviolable dignity” and self-respect on all who knew him (265).

As was the case with Delany’s catalogue of highly esteemed “professional colored men” of “great talents,” Philip’s pursuit of excellence served to inspire others: “He set a standard to which young men might aspire and by which older men might be judged” (268). Indeed, Philip’s achievements should have placed him in the company of the most respected and valued individuals of his time. Though he was a qualified and ambitious contender for the post of attorney general of Trinidad, Philip found that, much like Delany’s disillusionment upon his termination from Harvard medical school after a single semester due to white student protest (Adeleke 222), he was prevented from ascending the ranks of the racially-governed system that had trained and encouraged him (Cudjoe, “Preface” xii).<sup>48</sup> Philip’s success story is important in this context not only because he was disqualified from attaining his own goals, but also because his individual ambition motivated him to participate in and contribute to a system that disavowed his racial and collective identity. His successful career in colonial government is also interesting in light of the critique of liberal institutions voiced in *Emmanuel Appadocca*, written when Philip was in his mid-twenties.

Though the novel was composed early in Philip’s adult life, before he embarked on a career of institutional leadership and respectability, its tensions foreshadow the difficulties Philip would increasingly encounter as a mixed-race individual. The novel was written shortly after the U.S. Compromise of 1850 enacted a revised and severe

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<sup>48</sup> Gilroy notes that Delany reacted bitterly over “being denied the right to patent his 1852 [locomotive transportation] invention . . . because, though free, he was not formally a citizen of the United States” (21).

fugitive slave law that denied escaped slaves a jury trial and returned them to slavery.

Even freeborn blacks were in danger of (illegal) capture and enslavement, with no recourse or opportunity to prove their freedom. Philip was morally and politically outraged at this development and its fragmenting effect on free, Northern black families, and wrote the novel as a commentary on the ‘bonds’ of both family and slavery.<sup>49</sup>

Additionally, Philip locates the narrative in the world of seafaring and organized piracy—an important setting for the novel’s critique of slavery and racism. Recalling that seafaring, at least until 1850, was an important space of opportunity for both free and enslaved blacks, and in light of the representation of pirates as a motley crew of counter-heroes, Philip’s Atlantic adventure setting is a fitting one to confront the limitations and test the possibilities of black uplift and collective progress.

An epic of opportunism and pursuit, *Emmanuel Appadocca* is at once the tale of a scorned son’s vengeance on his abandoning father; a young scholar’s quest for personal excellence; a leader’s efforts for collective freedom; and a tragic hero’s fulfillment of his destiny. But all of these are played out upon the Atlantic Ocean, amid a physical pursuit of commercial merchant ships by a subversive pirate schooner. This high-seas chase frames the story of Emmanuel Appadocca, who assumes the role of the pursuer in all the ways listed above. Appadocca figures as both a character embroiled in several stories, and the author of his own larger story; indeed, although there are several episodes overlapping in the narrative, somehow Appadocca sees all—he is nowhere and everywhere at once. These multiple, overlapping episodes emphasize Appadocca’s

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<sup>49</sup> William E. Cain, “Introduction: *Emmanuel Appadocca* in Its American Context,” *Emmanuel Appadocca; or Blighted Life. A Tale of the Boucaniers*, by Maxwell Philip, ed. Selwyn R. Cudjoe (Amherst: U Mass P, 1997) xxiv.

central ‘design’ or pursuit—to capture his white father and bring him to justice for abandonment. Though the symbolic reason for this vengeance is outrage at a collective racial disavowal, Appadocca’s individual destiny is also at stake, since his initial pursuit of liberal success is financially impeded because of his father’s refusal to claim responsibility. Is Appadocca’s drive for self-realization and acknowledgement as James Willmington’s son pursued at the stake of collective racial advancement? Or is his personal and collective ambition one and the same? Despite Appadocca’s self-interested ambition to scale the heights of liberal progress, his racial (collective) identity continually confronts the limitations of the liberal ideology of individualism. I argue that these obstacles provoke Appadocca to reinvent and redefine what uplift means to him and to his community of others.

*Emmanuel Appadocca* is essentially a story about uplift. Like the genteel proprietors in Delany’s account, and like Delany himself, Appadocca is raised to value liberal ideals of genius and achievement, and seeks out an enlightened education. Though born the illegitimate child of a wealthy white sugar planter and a free mulatto woman, Appadocca does not live a degraded life, as his mother spends “all her little fortune” on her son’s classical education (*Appadocca* 99). Appadocca leaves Trinidad to study in Europe, where he gains renown as a talented astronomer. Motivated by “thoughts of a brilliant and happy career” (108), Appadocca attains enlightenment at a young age:

I fondly cherished the hope, that in Europe, the centre of the highest human civilization, I should have been able one day to bring down some truth from the stars to mankind, and should have crowned the labours of a life-time, with banishing away some of the ignorance in which the human species was

enveloped. (108)

However, once his mother passes away, Appadocca's elite progress gets thwarted when there is no one to subsidize his studies; his father, by now long estranged, refuses to take responsibility. Appadocca is thus left stranded—"intellectually decolonized" as Delany describes it—but without a practical livelihood to sustain him. Finding himself impoverished and lacking practical skills, Appadocca shudders at the thought of having to "fight in the scrambling battle for bread" and doubts his capacity to compete with the self-sufficient individuals working to "thrust themselves forward" on a path to success (99). Confronted with these obstacles and disillusioned with the power of classical education, Appadocca is forced to be self-reliant, and echoing spirit of Delany's self-made men, begins a journey of industriousness. He finds the means to sustain himself physically and secures a job as a sailor.

When Appadocca's estranged white father James Willmington rejects his appeal for financial assistance, the son undergoes an identity crisis, and is forced to reconstitute his sense of self. He exiles himself from civilized society and, partly out of cynicism, attempts to live in a way that subverts the capitalist system that has disavowed his ambition. Appadocca works his way across the Atlantic, lives temporarily with the Boucans<sup>50</sup> in Haiti, and then encounters some fellow former students, who, as aristocrats, had been banished from France during the revolution. With Appadocca as their captain they form an exiled band of pirates. Convinced that "[t]he stout heart and persevering

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<sup>50</sup> The Boucans – later "boucaniers" (not quite identical to "buccaneers") – "were a mix of English, French, and Dutch inhabitants of the islands of Tortuga and Hispaniola [Haiti] who hunted wild animals and cooked [and dried] the meat on boucans [barbecues]. [They then traded the meat as provisions to passing ships]. They were united in their hatred of Spain, because of the Spanish authorities' claim to exclusive rights in the Americas. In the 1630s, the Spanish began action to exterminate the boucaniers, who in revenge took to the sea as pirates, vowing eternal war against their Spanish foes" (Cain, editor's note, *Appadocca* 4).

hand will conquer immensities of obstacles” (167), Appadocca’s struggle reveals the problematic processes of self-making for non-white subjects in general, but as a mixed-race individual he faces a unique existentialism. That is to say, as the hereditary Willmington birthmark between his fingers indicates, Appadocca’s non-white body is yet marked by a patrilineal whiteness. This marking serves to question the legitimacy of Appadocca’s individuality, since he cannot be sure whether his heroism and self-reliance are based in any way on his white inheritance—a difficult possibility since his white father has essentially *disinherited* him.

Indeed, Appadocca is faced with the relentless fact that the “author of [his] existence”—the signature white mark on his non-white body—refuses to acknowledge him (70). When the pirate schooner captures and raids Willmington’s ship, and Appadocca prepares to murder Willmington by casting him adrift on the ocean, he is outraged at his father’s “selfish” attempts to remind the pirate captain that he is his son, and thus entreat Appadocca to spare his life (67). I argue that this interchange reflects the desire of the white liberal subject to pursue its own self-interest but refuse racial others from doing the same. However, in this case, Appadocca cannot disengage from that whiteness since it is a part of him. Nancy Bentley argues that in antebellum fiction the mulatto was an “an intellectual scandal” that “counfound[ed] racial categories,”<sup>51</sup> and the Appadocca “scandal” usefully reveals (as it confounds) the complex nature of the black Atlantic. When Willmington’s eighteen-year-old (legitimate) white son sees the “peculiar mark” on Appadocca’s fingers, his foundation crumbles:

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<sup>51</sup> Nancy Bentley, “White Slaves: The Mulatto Hero in Antebellum Fiction,” *American Literature* 65:3 (1993): 504. Appadocca is a ‘quadroon’ (one-quarter African), but faces similar perceptions.

There was no possibility of denying the well-known family mark with which Appadocca was stamped; he saw, consequently, before him his brother, by the laws which nature had made, whatever he might be by those which man had framed, and was forced to recognize in that brother the prosecutor, enemy, and almost murderer of his father. (*Appadocca* 212)

This symbol of white marking black but disavowing evidence of their interdependency, illustrates Gilroy's argument about black Atlantic subjectivity being an antinomy of Enlightenment, where non-white bodies are always already marked with whiteness and whiteness is created by its others.

In his journey of self-discovery, Appadocca maintains a deep faith in natural, universal laws, and finds solace in a version of the invisible hand—that is, the “philosophical progress of the mind” (116). His belief in this liberal doctrine stems from his philosophical education; he is convinced that self-interest, whether intellectual or industrial, is inherently useful and progressive. Even in the face of injustice, he continues to “venerate the law of nature” (117). This is illustrated in his rescue of a starving young mother about to leap to her death from a Thames River bridge. Abandoned by the father of her child, she had hoped to escape to a world in which “there were no deceivers” (103). Distraught by the episode, Appadocca wonders how “one human creature [has] any right thus to load another with misery” (103). Similarly, when he learns the full story of his own father's abandonment, Appadocca accuses Willmington of having “prostituted the law of nature” (66) and claims to judge him based on the “the right . . . of an injured man” (65). However, despite these injustices, Willmington argues accurately that “men are not punished in society” for failing to care for their ‘illegitimate’ children, particularly when they are of a mixed race (65). Appadocca's illegitimacy therefore excludes him from the system of ‘natural law,’ since, as I discussed in chapter 1, bastards are only

claimed as citizens (i.e. children of a nation) if they prove to be productive and useful to the national interest. And to the contrary, since Willmington is the proud father of three white children, his abandonment of Appadocca has not threatened or limited *his* sense of liberty, but rather affirmed it. In other words, Willmington's liberty does not get destabilized until Appadocca makes himself visible, thus revealing the *incoherence* of such a natural law and the "illegitimacy" of the codification of universalism.

In his pursuit of self-making and his ambition to assert his (albeit threatened) natural rights, Appadocca assumes the leadership of the pirate vessel *The Black Schooner*. As ship captain he is esteemed, obeyed, and has the power to "quell[ ] the most rebellious spirits" (24). Despite this honor and respectability, Appadocca is characterized as aloof, and seldom draws attention to himself. In fact, his first officer Lorenzo carries out most of Appadocca's face-to-face business. While this may be a clever Machiavellian strategy, it is also possible that the highly respected captain understands what is at stake:

[E]xcept when the schooner was under weigh, he never showed himself to his crew. . . [H]e was no doubt apprehensive, that if he exhibited himself too frequently to vulgar view, the sailors, in getting familiar with his person, should lose much of the veneration and awe which they unquestionably entertained for him, and which seemed to crush their wills to an implicit and blind obedience to his. (34)

To maintain authority and respectability, Appadocca is forced to practice invisibility. Just as the grocer Samuel Wilcox remained faceless to his white business clients to prevent from being "deceived in an article," Appadocca, who remains nameless for the first half of the narrative, is also figured as a ghost in later confrontations with Willmington and his family.

Although Appadocca is light skinned with ‘European’ features, his strategy of concealment suggests that he is fully aware of the risks of visibility, conveyed by the degraded status of other black subjects on board his ship. Bolster describes the racial stereotyping of blacks aboard ships: “Blacks frequently filled special billets as cooks, officers’ servants, or musicians, reinforcing their distinction from the seamen proper” (*Black Jacks* 32).<sup>52</sup> Indeed, these stereotypes are introduced early in the narrative: two “black boys” who serve as Appadocca’s personal chamber attendants; a mulatto master fisherman whose “mastery” of a tiny fishing boat is clearly contrasted with Appadocca’s grander dominion; and Jack Jimmy, a short, bumbling, clownish man who is captured by Lorenzo and taken aboard the pirate schooner as Appadocca’s servant. As the most prominent black character in the novel, Jimmy is depicted according to racist stereotypes which, as Leah Reade Rosenberg suggests, reveals Philip’s own discrimination against Trinidad’s black lower class.<sup>53</sup> Like a captive on a slave ship, Jimmy becomes a form of entertainment for the sailors, who prod him to sing and dance and erupt in laughter when someone burns him with a cigar (*Appadocca* 31). Jimmy functions as a kind of foil for Appadocca; like the captain, Jimmy stands on the periphery of the pirate collective, but instead of being revered like Appadocca, the sailors disrespect him. That Jack Jimmy is “less contented” with life aboard the schooner (49) serves as a constant reminder for

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<sup>52</sup> “Son of a sea cook” is an epithet derived from the world of seafaring denoting an insignificant person, or a person of little worth or meriting little consideration. It was commonly used during the mid-nineteenth century, but remained popular through the mid-twentieth. “In 1704 the Lord High Admiral directed that, in the recruiting of cooks, preference to be given to ‘. . . such cripples, and maimed persons who were pensioners . . .’” The phrase acquired a racial connotation as more and more free (poor) blacks joined ship crews. *The Ottawa Journal*, 23 October 1971, 6. <http://www.newspapers.com/newspage/46168232/> Accessed 21 September 2013. See also George Choundas, *The Pirate Primer: Mastering the Language of Washbucklers and Rogues* (Writer’s Digest, 2007).

<sup>53</sup> Leah Reade Rosenberg, *Nationalism and the Formation of Caribbean Literature* (New York: Palgrave, 2007) 24.

Appadocca to maintain an invisible leadership over those by whom he is so greatly respected.

The obstacles Appadocca confronts in his pursuit of a classical education, self-reliance, natural law, and respectability reveal the essentialism embedded in liberal ideology. Although his individual ambition is complicated by his collective identity, Appadocca ambitiously reinvents traditional strategies of uplift in order to resist the liberal ideology of progress that has disavowed him. Primarily through the world of piracy, Appadocca finds subversive success as a creative capitalist who is selflessly self-interested, a nameless leader, and a lawless hero.

Inspired by their leader, the outcast French revolutionaries he meets in the Caribbean agree to follow Appadocca in his “new plan” to pursue a life “attended with greater gain—to say nothing of the opportunity which it would afford of avenging themselves on men, and not on harmless brutes” (110). Although the naïve Charles Hamilton sees Appadocca’s life of piracy as a “perversion of natural faculties”(111), Appadocca wants nothing to do with a so-called “natural” system of interest and profit, because he recognizes the perpetrators of slavery and the slave trade as the same “acquisitive voyagers” (113) who pursue such profits. Though his life of organized piracy is necessarily one of profit and loss, Appadocca “scorns” discussion of “the state of the market” (89), and instead capitalizes on justice. The historian Juliet Walker recalls the tradition of the “creative capitalist” that can be a characteristic of black business. Based on Joseph Schumpeter’s theory, creative capitalists are “propelled as much by profit as by ‘the will to conquer, the impulse to fight, to prove oneself superior to others, to succeed for the sake, not of the fruits of success but of success itself’” (Walker xxi).

As a creative capitalist, Appadocca refuses to engage in a discussion of commerce but applies his entrepreneurial ambition to exact vengeance upon the acquisitive merchants and planters whose profit-based system he would destabilize.

Despite his disillusionment and exile from the pursuit of liberal enlightenment, there is an element of self-interest in Appadocca's existential cynicisms; his constant philosophical musings suggest that he retains an elite pride. To be fair, Appadocca does express frustration with society's selfish pursuits (*Appadocca* 106-7), and we probably cannot call his efforts to avenge his abandoned mother and childhood entirely self-interested, since he constantly deplores the plight of those forsaken by the system—especially women and children. Furthermore, in Philip's romantic representation of piracy, the communal pirate ship is decidedly—even violently—*not* a selfish space. Perhaps a distinction between self-interest and greed in the view of the pirates is evident in the example of the sailor who disingenuously seeks his dead shipmate's recompense and is duly punished (57). Indeed, it is only in the final moment of desperation, in the face of the hurricane that will ultimately sink the pirate ship, that Appadocca's loyal sailors think of saving themselves (241). And yet, within this space their captain's vengeful pursuits are not punished. Appadocca's seemingly selfish enterprise to seek justice for both the abandoned and the desperate instead illustrates a redefinition of self-interest as that which enables collective political action.

Appadocca's concern for the pirate crew is reflected in his own identity. Indeed, the most intriguing fact about his individualism is that he is not named until the second quarter of the novel; he is simply identified as "the captain" until his old college friend Charles Hamilton, who is white, recognizes him as the prisoner on Hamilton's father's

man-of-war. In the collective world of organized piracy, Appadocca's suspended naming serves to figure him not as a self-interested captain, but rather as the advocate for the well-being and success of his ship and crew. Like his strategic invisibility, Appadocca's nameless status suggests a tension between individualism and authority, where his own pursuit of power (capturing and taking revenge upon his father) ironically supports the collective achievement of the pirate ship (raiding and looting Willmington's merchant ship). Appadocca's namelessness becomes a figurative disappearance, as he manages to conceal his identity and escape imprisonment on several occasions. There is thus an ironic assertion of agency embedded in this invisibility: When Appadocca, presumed dead, suddenly reappears at his father's plantation to exact his vengeance, Willmington thinks he sees an apparition. Emphasizing the power and agency of his invisibility, Appadocca assures Willmington that he is "no ghost . . . but something worse" (209).

Appadocca's ghostliness recalls the image of a stealthy, lawless Robin Hood figure who steals from the rich and gives to the poor, and embraces the irony of his romantic heroism. While Philip's novel is in part a "quest-romance" (Cudjoe, "Afterword" 258)<sup>54</sup> and Appadocca is portrayed as a romantic adventurer, he is, of course, a pirate captain—an important detail that complicates an identification with sentimental benevolence and bourgeois heroism. But like the business leaders celebrated by Delany, Appadocca does in fact contribute to the welfare of his community—in a subversive reinvention of benevolence, Appadocca 'gives back' by organizing and commanding a pirate collective of criminals, exiles and outcasts to successfully carry out "projects of slaughter and revenge" (*Appadocca* 178). In particular, Appadocca extends

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<sup>54</sup> Qtg. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957).

his protective hand to the ridiculed Jack Jimmy, whose capacity for uplift from degradation perhaps signifies Appadocca's larger efforts. Indeed, despite the negative image of the "darkness and cruel torture of piracy" (156), we might consider Appadocca's heroic success alongside the activities of entrepreneurial blacks in the northern U.S. whose transportation businesses were used to help fugitive slaves flee the South (Walker 119). Neither the Underground Railroad nor Appadocca's revenge-seeking pirate ship are "useful" in economic terms, but instead function to uplift the collective and in doing so, destabilize the liberal ideology of progress.

Appadocca's simultaneous embodiment and rejection of economic liberalism illustrates and negotiates the opportunism evident in the collective world of seafaring. As I discussed in chapter 1, Atlantic sailors and pirates pursued advancement and ambition, but they did so beyond the limits of a national (and to some extent racial) identity. Positioned at once as an interstitial, or extra-national domain, and as the mode of commercial expansion, colonialism, and nation-building, seafaring has long been a liminal space of antinomy and paradox within and against liberal ideology. Rather than sail on the "ships of acquisitive voyagers" like his father Willmington, Appadocca's piratical pursuits illustrate an alternative opportunism that is always already revealing and reinventing the bourgeois liberal ideal.

### **Liberation / Elevation**

*Emmanuel Appadocca* provides a useful counter-narrative to Delany's and Gilroy's models of black elevation. Delany's account of black uplift reveals a tension between an insistence on black political emancipation and a respect for the liberal

ideology of progress. Gilroy emphasizes the liberation theology of a black Atlantic expressive counter-culture at the heart of the oppressive venture of colonial slavery. Both acknowledge the interdependencies of economic individualism and community, but neither articulates how the pursuit of uplift is a collective enterprise *because* it is an economic and individual one. Philip's novel, however, illustrates how black nationalism or a black Atlantic counter-culture are necessarily complicated by (black) Atlantic economic enterprise.<sup>55</sup> In this regard *Emmanuel Appadocca* shares in common the impossible dialectical subjectivity Equiano must confront as an "entrepreneurial slave." We might even consider the two narratives as bookends to an age of revolution transformed by black Atlantic agency.

*Emmanuel Appadocca*'s central concern with revealing and clarifying family bonds provides a powerful metaphor for the invisible, abandoned, or unsettling dependencies between slavery and capitalism, miscegenation and profit, political resistance and economic progress. The family metaphor also helps to explain these bonds as strained and often misunderstood ("partly inside and not always against" [Gilroy 48]). Liberal ideology stresses self-interest over group ambition, self-reliance over community development, and individualism over collective freedom. But as a "constitutive exclusion" of this self-interested progress, the black Atlantic discourse of uplift as

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<sup>55</sup> Gilroy suggests that "social self-creation through labour is not the centre-piece of emancipatory hopes" for blacks in the West: "For the descendents of slaves, work signifies only servitude, misery, and subordination. Artistic expression . . . therefore becomes the means towards both individual self-fashioning and communal liberation" (40). Perhaps this makes sense if "work" is defined only as forced and/or physical labor, but I'm not sure that black Atlantic self-making had nothing to do with commercial enterprise or capitalist expression—obviously Equiano is a good example that it did. I would complicate Gilroy's argument that non-artistic enterprise was the domain of the slave master and therefore neither an accessible nor desirable space for black self-making or collective uplift. I would also problematize the distinction between capitalist and artistic expression, both of which, I propose, are informed by a black Atlantic entrepreneurial agency.

collective emancipation works to destabilize ideological liberalism, while at the same time confronting its own ethos of entrepreneurial individualism.

As Frederick Cooper explains, despite the success of racial uplift ideology in spreading the message of education and moral reform, antebellum black leaders disagreed about whether self-improvement should be the only approach to black elevation, or whether political action and agitation should be pursued as well. In fact, “the success of self-improvement may have itself contributed to the increased emphasis on political agitation. Political action demands more than a belief that society is unjust. It requires leadership, organization and self-confidence” (619). These qualities, of course, echo the heroic, even mythic individualism of Delany’s idealized self-made men. Thus like the central image of seafaring shows, political action and revolution in the early black Atlantic required the contact, cultivation and reinvention of white liberal individualism, which in turn, as it encounters race and slavery as its constitutive exclusions, reveals its own piratical and collective designs.

## CONCLUSION

### Options, Futures, Forwards

Quien no se aventura, no pasa la mar  
(*He who will not venture, let him not cross the sea.*)  
-Spanish proverb

The eighteenth-century British Atlantic trade permeated borders, expanded communication networks, created new identities, and produced opportunities for individuals to rise economically and socially. But for all its fluidity and mobility, the Atlantic enterprise depended for its proliferation on delimiting both economic and social opportunities for colonial subjects. Entrepreneurial pirates organized illegal commercial networks that greatly profited the mercantile system, but their illegitimate status criminalized them and forced them to choose between disguise or death. The West Indian planters' slave labor and productivity made the Atlantic trade possible, but their economic and self-interested creolized sensibility threatened the ideological orthodoxy of sentiment. Slaves, former slaves and free men of color who sought to uplift themselves economically and politically faced a sadistic paradox: their labor (or that of their immediate ancestors) had literally created the conditions for economic liberalism, but for that very reason (the reason of them being *labor* rather than human) they were deemed incapable of ascending the heights of ambition and self-interest. In each case, to differing degrees, the world these colonial subjects had made ironically restricted their own self-making; their entrepreneurial efforts were ideologically foreclosed because even their

potential success undermined the coherence of the imperial and nation-forming narratives of legitimacy, sensibility and progress.

In this dissertation I have examined representations of Atlantic entrepreneurs and self-made men in order to demonstrate that the experiences of slavery, piracy, creolization and revolution are deep-seated in the ideology of economic individualism. As I have argued, in eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Anglo-Atlantic literature, the entrepreneurial activities of disavowed colonial subjects facilitate their self-making into both individual economic producer and agent of collective resistance. Like the ocean, the Atlantic entrepreneur is therefore a figure in flux; the three dissertation chapters illustrate that the entrepreneurial strategies of pirates, planters, slaves and free men of color thus both comply with and complicate the consolidation of British identity at a politically and ideologically formative time. As I will discuss in a moment, the themes of Philip's *Emmanuel Appadocca* fruitfully gather all of the texts and authors I have examined, and put them into conversation with one another in compelling and important ways.

In my analysis of Daniel Defoe and John Gay's representations of opportunistic pirates, I argued that the economic self-making of these extra-national, outcast, criminal subjects challenged the ideology of legitimacy that was so topical in the eighteenth-century British Atlantic world. The inventive, risk-taking strategies of illegitimate characters like Jack, Singleton and Macheath/Morano to participate in and undermine licit trade emphasizes their entrepreneurial agency. However, in the case of the pirates, their autonomy is delimited by their complicity with merchant trade, as we see most vividly in the way the Quaker merchant William Walker manipulates the illegal pirate

enterprise for his own gain. The imperative to create enterprising subjects out of illegitimate ones means that the authorial powers will only allow such inventiveness if it benefits the national interest; in the case of Morano, his did not, and he was thus sentenced to die. While Defoe warns and Gay flat-out condemns all “opportunistic scavengers” (Dryden 541), both writers denounce the ‘illegitimate’ moral imperialism of an acquisitive Britain that insists on legitimacy as a cultural identity and economic individualism as a civilizing process.

In my second chapter I considered a similarly entangled relationship between Britain and the West Indian planters, in which colonial and Creole identity is both constructed and disdained by the metropole. Using three examples in the literature of sensibility where the planter is (contrary to stereotype) figured as a sentimental hero, I argued that his economic self-interest finances his charitable benevolence and figures him as a man of feeling. This contradictory figure—embodied in the ‘benevolent’ and ameliorating slave owning planters George Ellison and Savillon—destabilizes the metropolitan cult of sensibility by revealing that Atlantic profit can enable virtue. This new ‘Atlantic’ man of feeling therefore threatens the cohesion and consolidation of a civilizing national narrative of sentiment. As I illustrated in Cumberland’s *The West Indian*, both the metropolitan stage players and audience mediate and work to assimilate the planter’s sensibility by disassociating him from the debased conditions of his wealth, but the Creole’s alterity continues to unsettle the sentimental structure of the play.

In my third chapter, I explored the predicament of uplift in the black Atlantic, where collective racial advancement confronts the ideology of economic individualism that is rooted in the slavery and violence that engendered it. I argued that black Atlantic

entrepreneurs engage in an opportunistic collectivism, or a reinvention of self-interest for the purposes of collective progress. Olaudah Equiano's formidable achievement and inventiveness is circumscribed by the white authorities who invite his contribution, only to take credit for his abilities and steal his profits. The free black businessmen whose antebellum lives and livelihoods Delany upholds as entrepreneurial role models, are not proscribed like Equiano, but confront a similar challenge as they employ strategies to reconcile their individual success with their racial identity. The mixed-race pirate captain Emmanuel Appadocca most clearly represents the double consciousness of the black Atlantic entrepreneur, as his ambition to exact vengeance on his white father can be read as both personal vendetta and collective racial justice.

In a fascinating way, Appadocca's character fuses together all of the colonial subjects I have discussed in this study. He is an overwrought amalgam of planter, pirate and (former) slave, the quintessentially ambitious and unjustly bounded Atlantic upstart. Furthermore, *Emmanuel Appadocca* is a meditation on questions raised in each of the previous chapters about institutional crime and corruption, heroism and benevolence, the goals of progress, and the individual entrepreneur negotiating between self-interest and collaborative advancement. Most significant, however, is the way Appadocca's struggle to be legitimized by his abandoning white father James Willmington symbolizes the "tense and tender ties" of family and colonial bonds in the Atlantic world. In their respective stories, Appadocca, Belcour (Cumberland's wealthy Creole planter), and Morano (Gay's black[face] Caribbean pirate) represent the illegitimate, mixed-race West Indies, whose white British fathers have "abandoned" them. Appadocca vows violent revenge, while Belcour's father Stockwell seeks to reunite with him, only if the son can

prove himself English enough. In the case of Morano, his alter ego Macheath's prior arrest and criminalization in London can be seen as a kind of abandonment by the fatherland who made him that way, but as a Briton *disguised* as black pirate, one might argue that the patriarch is mocking—or trying to profit from—West Indian illegitimacy.

As the illegitimate offspring of a white planter and mulatto woman, Appadocca embodies several anxieties surrounding colonial miscegenation. In addition to signifying sexual deviance and the constant threat of slave insurrection (i.e. against its intimate other), in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries miscegenation served as evidence of the Caribbean's distorted social relations and "broken families" (Yeh, "Filthiness" 67), and how its white men had "violat[ed] both the bonds of matrimony and patriarchy" (73). Appadocca makes a ruthless example out of his father for taking advantage of women and children, accusing him of having abused natural law for his own "selfish gratification" (*Emmanuel Appadocca* 66). While Belcour is not visibly racialized, his creoleness is perhaps even more cause for concern; people understood that Englishmen could change racially, but nobody could be sure whether a West Indian was white or black. And in the case of *The West Indian's* reception, there would have been the anxiety-inducing fact that theatre rarely makes a character's history available, unlike novels which take great pains to trace an individual's lineage and background. Indeed, the disguised Morano is punished by death for his own illegitimate or false representation, for racial layering or "blacking up" (Reed 250)—a self-inventive aberration that implies subversion and echoes the threat of miscegenation.

A further threat of miscegenation was the corruption of English lineage and the loss of inheritance. As an illegitimate black child renounced by his patriarch, Appadocca

is denied access to his father's wealth as well as any claim to ancestry or inheritance. While Appadocca's rage and grief suggest that he would have been satisfied to gain nothing more than his father's love, his white patriarch (and patriarchal Britain) cannot justify embracing the West Indian son for fear that he will shift (imperial) wealth and power away from whiteness (and Englishness), diluting and delegitimizing its powerful identity. Interestingly, Belcour *is* ultimately welcomed into his father's arms, but he is rich, and Stockwell, as a merchant and economic middle man, represents the national imperative to absorb colonial wealth. Stockwell also knows Belcour is white, and after experimenting with his sensibility decides that he can pass for a legitimate son of England. But Stockwell's deliberation and hesitation in acknowledging Belcour as his blood relative emphasizes the metropolitan belief that even Anglicized Creoles were illegitimate Englishmen. Evidence of the intimacies between metropole and colony thus destabilized the Anglo-Saxon mythology of British freedom, for who was a Briton if new generations—that is, the children of [British] West Indian planters—in these colonies were not usually white, and not always free?

The denial of a heritable English identity in the Caribbean and the disavowal of its intimate relations with Britain renders colonial subjects nameless. By this I mean a legal namelessness that denotes their illegitimate parentage, as well as a psychic anonymity that signifies their existential alterity. Appadocca demonstrates both of these, and perhaps as a result remains unnamed for a quarter of his own story. Belcour (to some comic effect) is convinced that he is nameless, but the more he insists, the more evident his anxiety becomes over his metropolitan assimilation. As I discussed in Chapter 2, Stockwell's patronym erases Belcour's West Indian name and underwrites his legitimacy.

Macheath/Morano's double name, like his identity, is unwieldy and unfixed; he has no clear patriarch or bloodline, and is thus deemed dangerous. Like Morano, all the pirates in the narratives I have examined, many of whom go by one name only, at some point find themselves in hiding or disguise, which function as forms of anonymity. But while these practices are employed in reaction to criminalization or abandonment, they quickly get reappropriated as strategies of self-making. As this study has demonstrated, such strategies include reinvention, invisibility and potentially violent revolution. As Celia Britton explains, invoking Edouard Glissant's theory of postcolonial "Relation,"

Caribbean societies with their extremely mixed and disrupted populations do not subscribe to the "hidden violence" of filiation. . . . the old violence of filiation is being swept aside by a new kind of "anarchical violence arising from the clash of cultures, in which . . . legitimacy . . . disintegrates."<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, in the scene where he finally captures his father, Appadocca's anonymity is figured as a monstrous, threatening, (invisible) ghost, effectively haunting the "old violence of filiation" perpetrated by his white patriarch, with its powerful, self-made vengeance. For eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century West Indian upstarts and other Atlantic entrepreneurs, legitimacy did not derive from inheritance or bloodlines. Of course, this was precisely the root of the English fear—that national identity and ideology would be demystified and demoted from a fictitious lineage of purity and autochthony, and shown to be as illegitimate and self-made as its bastard colonial child.

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Five hundred years after the Atlantic slave trade began, the world that made slavery and made a fortune from its slaves is still very much our world. The

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<sup>1</sup> Celia Britton, *Edouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory: Strategies of Language and Resistance* (Charlottesville: U Virginia P, 1999) 15. Qtg. Glissant 73-74.

entrepreneurs who took risks in the eighteenth-century global trade network are not unlike the ones who seek profit in the global economy today. Furthermore, one does not have to look very far to find examples of the continued exploitation of black and brown workforces, such as in a crumbling Bangladeshi factory where ‘voluntary’ laborers die because owners are too self-interested to ensure their safety. Like its forbearer the plantation system, global capitalism generates great wealth for a few and great misery for many. But the bigger irony, if such a thing was even possible, is that the products created by this exploited labor become the technological tools and stylish liberal signifiers<sup>2</sup> of the global ‘free agent,’ the transnational, creative capitalist who crosses borders and seizes opportunities with which to innovate and ostensibly transform the world. Does this person really exist? Given their reliance for success on third world underdevelopment, should they?

That *options*, *futures* and *forwards* are financial instruments employed in the service of global capitalism illustrates not only the way that neoliberal ideology appropriates the messages of choice, hope and aspiration, but also that these messages are underwritten—literally—by institutions and corporations whose interest is anything but radical social change. How do most citizens of the world interpret this message? What does the impoverished Bangladeshi factory worker do with such a call to creative capitalist mobility? Based on his historical analysis of Caribbean marketplaces, Sidney Mintz offers what we might read as a possible answer these questions:

[B]eneath the elaborate and complex trading systems that now typify so much of the world, one repeatedly finds the small-scale trader, usually poor and illiterate,

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<sup>2</sup> I am thinking of “creative” “lifestyle brands” like Apple, Starbucks, Abercrombie & Fitch, Nike, and anything “green.”

who, like the slaves of the Caribbean region of centuries past, looks upward and outward with the hope of achieving through individual effort, skill and intelligence what cruel economic circumstance otherwise precludes.<sup>3</sup>

While Mintz's quasi-romantic vision is not without its problems, the image of the small trader being foreclosed by "circumstance" from achieving success is important, and to it I would only add that the mythology or ideology of economic liberalism forecloses him as well. That is to say, capitalism simultaneously appropriates and illegitimizes the agents of progress—those who could invent, achieve, and perhaps even resist. The Caribbean trader "look[ing] upward and outward" at his possible future recalls not only the young Indian girl opening her eyes in Apple's "Think different" commercial, but also Captain Thomas Coram's upstart gaze towards the vast Atlantic and its open enterprise. These images of outward reach and openness illustrate how the ideology of entrepreneurial mobility reifies the conditions, conflicts and complicated discursive history of economic liberalism that have served to illegitimate and disavow both racially- and criminally-marked 'upstarts' from pursuing self-interest and profitable success. We can ask of our current moment the same questions that eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century critics of commerce and slavery might have posed: Can the open and generative Atlantic enterprise use its capacity for self-making, for innovative transformation, for building networks of communication and exchange to reach beyond the system of exploitation that created and sustains it? This study, I hope, motions towards the possibility of such a reinvention and a different kind of global contact.

Writing the final pages of this dissertation has coincided with the premieres of two major film productions concerning slavery and the Atlantic world: Steve McQueen's

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<sup>3</sup> Sidney Mintz, "Caribbean Marketplaces and Caribbean History" *Radical History Review* 27 (1983): 117.

*Twelve Years a Slave*, based on the 1853 slave narrative of kidnapped American free man Solomon Northup; and the PBS documentary *The African Americans*, produced by the intrepid Henry Louis Gates Jr. (who also served as a consultant on McQueen's film). Both films explore the unfathomable oppression of Africans in the Atlantic enterprise, and make evident that blacks had as much self-interest and opportunistic ambition as their white antagonists, but were given narrow parameters in which to assert themselves. In his review of McQueen's film, journalist Mark Robichaux analyzes Northup's cultural significance and considers the ways that his post-slavery life has been imagined:

There are a few convincing theories on Northup's final years. One is that Northup "died destitute, far from family and friends, perhaps under tragic circumstances," the historians write. There is evidence he could have even "given up, resorted to drink, or sunk below the surface."

Or he may have gone to live with his daughter in Virginia. Clues are scarce.

I choose to believe what author David Fiske and later, Prof. Brown, suggested to me – the possibility that Northup reinvented himself with a new identity. "Did he go out West to California to strike it rich?" asked Prof. Brown. "He liked the spirit of adventure. That's part of what helped him survive."<sup>4</sup>

Even as speculation, the various 'opportunities' imagined for Northup speak volumes about how the self-interest of the disenfranchised has been typically represented and underestimated as excess and over-indulgence (i.e. either Northup wasted all his money, or he drank himself to death). But this belies Northup's historically documented enterprising spirit; indeed, after regaining his freedom, he became a best-selling author, spoke on abolitionist circuits, performed in one of two stage adaptations of his life, and

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<sup>4</sup> Mark Robichaux, "What Really Became of Solomon Northup After His '12 Years a Slave'?" *Speakeasy/The Wall Street Journal Online*. 25 October 2013. <http://blogs.wsj.com/speakeasy/2013/10/23/what-really-became-of-solomon-northup-after-his-12-years-a-slave/> See also David Fiske, Clifford W. Brown and Rachel Seligman, *Solomon Northup: The Complete Story of the Author of Twelve Years a Slave* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2013).

aided other slaves in the Underground Railroad.<sup>5</sup> Northup was clearly an Atlantic entrepreneur with the skill and ambition to both “strike it rich” and “reinvent himself with a new identity.” Much like Equiano, who had also lived through unspeakable horror, and Delany’s black businessmen, Northup’s experience emphasizes enterprise and adventure not only as opportunities for individual success, but also as survival strategies in both slavery and freedom that signal (if not always enact) collective resistance. That is to say, economic self-interest (enterprise) and opportunistic mobility (adventure) can serve as tools of agency, determination and actualization, rather than legitimating practices of capitalist participation. Slavery not only historically underwrites entrepreneurial ambition but can also *rewrite* it as a strategy of survival.

My investigation of representations of the Atlantic entrepreneur thus reveals the false ideological dichotomy between capitalism and resistance. People collaborate and they compete; these are not mutually exclusive, but as I have argued, co-constitutive. Individual self-interest can complicate the character of collective resistance, but it can also strengthen it. This study has attempted to demonstrate that the human drive to compete—to seize opportunities and strive for a goal—has long been appropriated, manipulated and delimited in the interest of Western imperialism and its ideologies of liberal progress. Whether in its early modern Atlantic or twenty-first century global forms, in London, Jamaica or Bangladesh, capitalism hijacks the messages and agents of opportunity and transformation, and undermines (but does not erase) the legitimate human capacity to pursue economic self-interest in the service of social change.

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<sup>5</sup> Eliana Dockterman, “Henry Louis Gates Jr. Talks *12 Years a Slave* and *The African Americans*” *Time Magazine Online*. 25 October 2013. <http://entertainment.time.com/2013/10/22/henry-louis-gates-jr-talks-12-years-a-slave-and-the-african-americans/>

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