

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF  
BRITISH LITERATURE  
1660 – 1789

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R – Z

VOLUME III



General Editors  
Gary Day and Jack Lynch

Associate Editors  
Helen E.M. Brooks, Bonnie Latimer, Lee Morrissey,  
Adam Rounce, Norbert Schürer, Philip Smallwood,  
and Christopher Vilmar

**WILEY Blackwell**

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# R

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## Race

BRIDGET E. ORR

In 1693, Historiographer Royal Thomas Rymer's (1643–1713) *Short View of Tragedy* attacked Shakespeare's *Othello*, complaining that the hero's high status and marriage to a white woman violated probability and decorum. The denunciation of *Othello* was part of a more general excoriation of English tragedians, who were accused of neglecting home-grown historical themes in favor of plays set among "Blackamoors, Barbarians, and Monsters" (Rymer 1956, 171). Unsurprisingly, recent critics have seen Rymer's complaints as exemplary of late seventeenth-century literary racism, characteristic of a culture which denigrated, when it did not demonize, Africans and other people of color. What is less often remarked upon is the fact that over the next 50 years, Rymer's slurs were taken up and repudiated by a number of other prominent English critics. The most robust riposte was written by Charles Gildon (c. 1665–1724), a gifted and prolific dramatist, fabulist, and literary critic. Gildon was much esteemed by writers other than Alexander Pope (1688–1744) and Jonathan Swift (1667–1745) – who destroyed his posthumous reputation – and his characteristic acuity and generosity are apparent in the letter addressed to the poet and playwright John Dryden (1631–1700) in 1694:

'Tis granted, a *Negro* here does seldom rise above a Trumpeter, not often perhaps higher at *Venice*. But then that precedes from the Vice of Mankind, which is the Poets Duty as he informs us, to correct, and to represent things as they should be, not as they are. Now, 'tis certain, there is no reason in the nature of things, why a *Negro* of equal Birth and Merit, should not be on an equal bottom with a *German, Hollander, French-man*, &c. The Poet therefore, ought to do Justice to Nations, as well as Persons, and set them to rights, which the common course of things confounds... The Poet has therefore well chosen a polite People to cast off this customary Barbarity, of confining Nations, without regard to their Virtue, and Merit, to slavery, and contempt for the meer Accident of their Complexion. (Gildon 1694, 95)

Gildon's characterization of Shakespeare as an anti-racist *avant la lettre* is a useful reminder that "race" was a mutable and disputed category for much of the early modern period. Historical anthropologists and historians of ideas have generally concurred that the primary ways in which human difference was understood in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was through the categories of barbarism, paganism and heresy inherited from the classical and Christian traditions. Up until the end of the eighteenth century, the prevalence of monogenesis, the belief in a unitary origin for humankind enjoined by the Bible, held the spread of a "scientifically" based racism in

check. By the end of this period however, as Roxann Wheeler argues, the older British model for the comparison of peoples through a metropolitan/barbarism dichotomy was supplanted by a newer model based on physical typology (Wheeler 2002, 177). Andrew S. Curran has recently shown how the development of anatomical science in the eighteenth century in France was harnessed to provide increasing "evidence" of the intellectual and physical inferiority of the *nègre*, arguing that the conflict between this idea that blacks were physiologically and cognitively inferior and the equally widespread Enlightened belief in the natural law prohibition of slavery helps explain the failure of such figures as Voltaire (1694–1778) to combat the institution with more vigor (Curran 2011, 219). Warning against the tendency to see a unitary Enlightenment as the racist handmaid of empire however, Sankar Muthu has shown how Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) and Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803), following Denis Diderot (1713–84), combined the idea of a shared dignity common to all human beings with a conception of humans as cultural agents whose differing practices and institutions make our societies morally incommensurable, impossible to compare fairly (Muthu 2003, 121).

English elites (and groups beyond them) were part of the Europe-wide literary community known as the "Republic of Letters" and the issues of cultural, religious, and ethnic difference which preoccupied the *philosophes* or enlightened thinkers were important in England as it became a United Kingdom and its empire expanded. Catherine Molineux has explored popular conceptions of racial difference as evident in shop signs and ballads as well as in plays, prints, and periodical debate, and her account of an ongoing discussion over the causes of different complexion in the *Athenian Mercury* during the 1690s suggests that monogenesis continued to keep such explanations as "Lot's daughters, scorched skin, maternal impressions, materialism [and] sensationalism" in check, despite the strains on the conception of God's chosen likeness presented

by the increasing awareness of human diversity (Molineux 2012, 96). Newspapers, novels, and travel narratives along with such journals fueled curiosity about the distant locales. Such exotic places were newly important to Britons, many of whom were increasingly engaged either in trade or as consumers of tea, coffee, sugar, tobacco, silks, and muslins. Among the media representing foreign societies, as Felicity Nussbaum (2003), Joseph Roach (1996) and Mita Choudhury (2000) have documented, theater stands out as a unique venue for spectators to observe re-enactments of inter-cultural encounters and participate in imaginative explorations of alien societies.

## AFRICA

Following the model laid down many years ago in Wylie Sypher's *Guinea's Captive Kings* (1942), literary historians of race have focused on the two figures of Oronoko and Yarico, Oroonoko is a "Royal Slave" from an African nation called Coramantien and Yarico is a Caribbean princess sold into slavery by an Englishman she rescues from shipwreck. Oroonoko's story was fictionalized by Aphra Behn (1640–89) and subsequently dramatized by Thomas Southerne (1660–1746), John Hawkesworth (1720–73), Francis Gentleman (1728–84), and John Ferriar (1761–1815). These depictions serve as a shorthand for charting shifts in the conception of Africans over the course of the whole eighteenth-century. The arc begins in 1689 with the publication of Behn's novella. Here Oroonoko is conceived of as a heroic figure who makes a cogent critique of European cruelty and hypocrisy but whose ultimate significance is contested. Initially famous for its pathos, the dramatic adaptation by Thomas Southerne's depiction of an African prince sold into slavery, tortured and suicidal after leading a failed rebellion against the slave-owners was read as an allegory of the fate of the "martyred" Charles I, linking a critique of Oroonoko's fate at the hands of English planters with an attack on the emergent commercial imperium of the



Whigs (Brown 1987, 41–61). More recently, scholars have focused on Southerne's contemporaneous cultivation of Christopher Codrington (1668–1710), a wealthy West Indian philanthropist, bibliophile, and planter, and argued for the tragedy's endorsement of slavery, noting Oroonoko's strenuous defense of the slave trade within the text (Rosenthal, 1992, 25–38). Written under Codrington's patronage, Southerne's dramatic recasting of *Oroonoko* (1695, 1696) can be seen as defending the Whiggish commitment to trade, whatever its human costs. Codrington was also on a committee set up to root out corrupt governance in the West Indies and Southerne's play suggests the need for such action. Critics have also been preoccupied by Southerne's decision to "white-wash" Oroonoko's wife Imoinda, who is sold into slavery before Oroonoko himself, and whose pregnancy sparks his revolt. It has been argued that a European wife was much less disturbing than the presentation of a powerful woman of color, whom it is claimed were infrequently seen on stage in this period (Nussbaum 2003, 151–88). In fact, however, drawing as they did on the romance tradition, which privileged noble birth over ethnicity, Restoration and early eighteenth-century plays abound in cross-racial couples. Scholarly attention is now turning to the implications of the spectators' relationship to Oroonoko's suffering, possibly influenced by Marcus Wood's arguments that the pathetic images of abused slaves in abolitionist visual and literary materials served as a kind of sentimental pornography (Mallipedi 2012, 475–96).

Although Southerne's version of *Oroonoko* held the stage all through the eighteenth century, there was disquiet over its underplot, featuring a pair of sexually disreputable husband-hunters. Various rewritings by Hawkesworth, Gentleman and Ferriar eradicated the comic plot and gradually increased the pathos of Oroonoko's circumstances, downplaying his anger. The most stringent account of the sentimentalized Oroonoko is that of George Boulukos (2008), who argues that Oroonoko becomes exemplary of the "grateful slave" who estab-

lishes an emotional claim for freedom through his demonstration of sensibility. For Boulukos, the slave's access to emancipation through a shared affective bond with his master is fatally compromised by his very gratitude, a failure in proper self-regard which enabled Europeans to see Africans as "naturally" servile and hence inferior. Boulukos claims this projected nexus of gratitude/servility as the origin of modern racism. Forceful as Boulukos's account is, it fails to explain why *Oroonoko* disappeared from the London stage in the decade before the triumph of abolition in 1807, having been performed in almost every season up to that date since its first appearance a century before. It surely seems likely that, as slaves were successfully rebelling in the Caribbean, theater-managers thought it better to keep a play whose protagonist is a rebel slave, off-stage. This suggests, that the protagonist of *Oroonoko* – and the Africans for whom he served as surrogate – was never entirely reducible to an object of servile pathos. The fascination with African resistance to slavery is equally well attested by the continuing popularity of *Othello* and Edward Young's (1681–1765) *The Revenge* (performed and published 1721), the latter being a tremendously successful reworking which recasts *Othello* as a black Iago.

The other primary symbolic characterization of slavery identified by Sypher was *Yarico*, an "Indian maid" who first appears in a *Spectator* paper (No. 11, March 13, 1711) written by Richard Steele (1672–1729). After circulating widely in poetry and fiction, the story of Inkle and *Yarico* was dramatized in the last years of the eighteenth century and George Colman the Younger's (1762–1836) comic operatic version *Inkle and Yarico* (performed and published 1787) became the primary theatrical vehicle of abolition. The story shows the young English merchant Inkle saved from shipwreck and savage Indians by the native princess *Yarico*. The pair live happily in the woods until they are rescued by a passing English ship, whereupon Inkle decides to sell the pregnant *Yarico* into slavery. In Colman's version, the *Yarico* figure is doubled, with a much blacker servant

figure called Wowski who is the central character in a subplot with Inkle's servant, Trudge. Yarico's status as an implicitly paler, aristocratic Amerindian is underscored by the stress on Wowski's blackness. The opera's revised happy ending was apparently ensured by John Bannister (1760–1836), the actor cast as Inkle, who was extremely reluctant to play a protagonist heartless enough to sell his lover into slavery. Colman's text celebrates the benevolence of Sir Christopher Curry, the irascibly benevolent governor of the island on which the later action occurs, who shames Inkle out of his plan to sell Yarico. Casting abolition in notably paternalistic and patriotic terms, it is hardly surprising that this version of abolitionist action supplanted the violent slave rebellion of *Oroonoko*.

While the theatrical popularity, longevity, and adaptation of these two stories testifies to their cultural centrality, it is important to note that there were many other depictions of ethnic and racial diversity on the eighteenth-century stage. Throughout the period, dramatic depictions of North Africa, the Levant, and India appeared frequently, as did plays showing the Spanish Conquest of America. There were also plays which depicted the effects of creolization, in both the East and West Indies, suggesting ways in which the English might degenerate in exotic environments. In the first half of the century, plays offered serious portrayals of Islamic and East Asian nations but, with increased British military and political imperial success in India especially, comic representations of various "Oriental" states became more common. Theatrical attention to external differences was matched by a fascination with the depiction of the different ethnicities which made up the United Kingdom, a topic explored recently by Michael Ragussis, who detects in eighteenth-century comedy a developing taste for "multi-ethnic spectacle" in which Jewish characters played a privileged role (2010, 1–15). There were many Irish and Scottish playwrights writing for the London, Dublin, and Edinburgh stages and defenders of the Celtic fringe such as playwright and actor, Charles Macklin (1699?–1797) began to "write

back" against the demeaning stereotypes of their nationalities.

## THE EAST

With extensive trade and strategic interests in Asia, British people from a wide social spectrum were curious about North Africa, the Ottoman Empire, India, Persia, and China, quite apart from the fact that these sophisticated polities continued to serve (as they had done for over a century) as locales for plays in which sensitive domestic issues could be explored allegorically. A characteristic example of a play whose Ottoman action was understood as a comment on British politics is David Mallet's (1701/2?–1765) *Mustapha* (performed and published 1737), a text adapted from Fulke Greville's (1554–1586) and the Earl of Orrery's (1621–1679) tragedies. The play shows Solymon the Magnificent manipulated by his jealous wife Roxalana into killing his beloved son Mustapha, an action easily deciphered by the contemporary audience as a hostile commentary on George II's and Queen Charlotte's treatment of their alienated son and heir, Prince Frederick. At the same time, *Mustapha* re-enacted familiar tropes of Ottoman grandeur, brutality, and despotism. Wheeler has argued that the use of such tropes – which differentiate Turks (and others) on the basis of implicitly inferior forms of polity and religion – precede the more familiar racism based on skin color which emerges in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

*Mustapha* continued a tradition in which episodes from the histories of great ancient, Asian, and earlier European empires provided themes for the exploration of Britain's own national and imperial anxieties and desires. However, even an increasingly censored and often bombastically patriotic theater was also the location for exploring quite radical Enlightenment ideas about the importance of inter-cultural religious tolerance and anti-imperialism. In three plays written between 1719 and 1739, John Hughes (1678–1720),

Aaron Hill (1685–1750) and James Thomson (1700–48) drew from the long history of Islamic interaction with Christians to explore and criticize the demands of religious orthodoxy. At one level, these philo-Islamic texts can be seen as reiterating a conventional Whig condemnation of fanatic, implicitly Roman Catholic cruelty – for the British, intolerance was most powerfully associated with a Catholicism symbolized by the massacre of heretics and the Inquisition. The plots of all these plays suggest strongly however that universal toleration is both desirable and possible. Suggestively, in all three plays, a Muslim is the most articulate voice and enactor of rational tolerance, a characterization which negates the implicitly racist tropes of fanaticism and cruelty with which Islamists were popularly identified.

John Hughes's *The Siege of Damascus* (performed and published 1720) was written by a dissenter and probable deist who worked closely through his short career with Earl William Cowper (1665–1723), a leading Whig politician and lord chancellor. The play's depiction of the fall of Christian, Byzantine Damascus to the Saracens in the first days of Islamic conquest drew from Arabist scholar Simon Ockley's (1679–1720) pioneering work on early Islam, *The Conquest of Syria, Persia and Egypt by the Saracens* (1708). The play shows the Christians defeated by their disunity but fanaticism on both sides of the religious divide is condemned and a just resolution is only found through the cooperation of the reasonable and moderate Muslim Abudah and Christian Phocyas. The next major tolerationist play is Aaron Hill's *Zara* (performed 1735; published 1736), a translation of Voltaire's huge Parisian hit, *Zaire* (1732). In Hill's text, the heroine Zara has been raised in the harem as a Muslim, ignorant of her Christian parentage. The sultan Osman is preparing to renounce polygamy and marry her, when the sudden return of her brother from a successful ransom mission to France reveals her origins. Tormented by the conflicting claims of her new-found family and her lover, Zara dies at Osman's hand as a result of an Othello-like mistaken

jealousy. Although Osman's characterization is inflected by Othello's irrational passion and tropes of Ottoman cruelty, the play strongly suggests that he is pushed into assuming an unwelcome and unnatural persona as killer by the obdurate fanaticism of both religious parties. The center of the play is half-Syrian, half-French, Christian/Muslim Zara's sense that her identity is impossibly conflicted by elements which disparate communities will not allow her to unify: tragedy is caused by the competing demands that she reject crucial aspects of belief and inheritance to achieve a spurious purity.

The third critical treatment of Christian fanaticism was James Thomson's *Edward and Eleonora* (not performed; published 1739) now best remembered as the second victim of Walpole's Licensing Act. Like Hughes and Hill, Thomson deliberately tried to invest his action with as much pathos as possible, seeking to involve the audience with "common Passions" (Orr 2001, 15). His play drew on an episode from the Crusades, in which Eleonora supposedly sucked poison from a wound given to her husband by a fanatic Muslim assassin. The tragedy was banned by the Lord Chamberlain on the grounds that it reflected badly on George II and Walpole by suggesting England was badly governed but it also attracted adverse comment for its apparent advocacy of deism. In Thomson's treatment, the mortal threat to Edward and Eleonora is framed by a running debate between Edward's main advisers, Gloster and Theald, as to the justice and prudence of the Crusade. With Eleonora rescued from death by the noble and rational Saracen Selim, the wisdom of anti-Crusader Gloster trumps the mistaken zealotry of the Archdeacon Theald. The play closes with Selim's call for an end to religious war:

Let holy rage, let persecution cease;  
Let the Head argue, but the Heart be Peace.

(V.iv p. 64)

Although these three plays do contain some characters who conform to negative stereotypes of Islamic fanaticism, they are more than

matched by sympathetic, honorable, and rational Muslims who, in two cases, control the action. It is telling that both *The Siege of Damascus* and *Zara* were extremely popular plays through the whole of the eighteenth century; and even though *Edward and Eleonora* was suppressed, it sold well in print and was revived by actor, manager, and dramatist Thomas Hull (1728–1808) in 1775, just before the American Revolution, when its hostility to military intervention presumably had resonance. The extended success of these plays, two of which figure impressive non-European female characters as well as heroic Arabs and Turks, make it clear that Enlightened writers saw the theater as an important venue for propagating ideas of cultural and religious ecumenism and for combatting crude ethnic and racial stereotypes.

## THE NEW WORLD

Another favorite locale for eighteenth-century theatrical reflection of and on inter-cultural contact was the New World, whether represented as desert islands or as America. Spanish encounter was an especially favored theme. Dryden's *Indian Emperor* (performed 1665 and published 1667), which castigates the "cross and booty" motives of the invaders and depicts the Yncas as dignified aristocrats, retained popularity through the period. There are several theatrical treatments of noble savages visiting England, tragedies set in North America and, in the 1790s, a number of versions of August von Kotzebue's *Die Spanien in Peru* (performed and published 1796) of which the most influential was Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *Pizarro* (performed and published 1799).

John Dennis's *Liberty Asserted* (performed and published 1704) was set in Canada. Attacked by Tories as Whig propaganda, the play was defended by Dennis as a celebration of English political virtue, measured against that of the French, in the contested ground of North America. The play contrasts the domineering French and their crafty priests with the

English commander Beaufort, who seeks to ensure the Iroquois chief, Ulumar, remains in alliance with the English. Remarkably astute about the ways in which colonial contestation worked through attempts at alliance and conversion, the play ends with the Iroquois reunited with their fellow lovers of liberty, the English, and the Canadian French inspired to anticipate the Revolution by throwing off "Lewis's" (Louis XIV's) yoke. Inter-marriage, capture, and assimilation are crucial, for the hero Ulumar is the son of Huron Saskia and French commander Frontenac, although he has been brought up among Iroquois and schooled by Beaufort. In this confused environment, ethnicities, and loyalties are extremely fluid, with the competing claims of maternal love, heterosexual desire, and homosocial loyalty complicating political affiliations and commitments. An abundance of slurs against Gallic tyranny notwithstanding, the play suggests that in a colonial environment, all "national" identities, whether European or "native," are subject to contingent reshaping. Perhaps the most resistant to such change are the remarkably strong female characters, such as Ulumar's mother Saskia. Saskia is determined to force her son to join the French and her fierceness may bear out the accounts of authoritative women in Dennis's source, *Mémoires de l'Amérique septentrionale* (1703) and *Supplément aux Voyages ou dialogues avec le sauvage Adario* (1703), the famous accounts of Canadian noble savagery written by French adventurer and proto-ethnologist, Louis Armand, Comte de Lahontan (1666–1716).

Dennis's use of North America as a setting for serious drama was unusual. More frequent were tragedies depicting the Spanish Conquest of Mexican and Aztec states, in actions which rehearsed the black legend of Spanish Conquest in Latin America first popularized by Dryden. Consonant with Britain's Protestant suspicion of Catholic fanaticism and tyranny, such plays also sought to explore the contemporary fascination with non-Western societies. One of the most prominent was Aaron Hill's *Alzira* (performed 1736), an adaptation of

another of Voltaire's hits (*Alzire*, performed and published 1736). *Alzira* pits Spaniards, largely but not exclusively depicted as avaricious and tyrannical, against the technologically disadvantaged, pagan but virtuous Peruvians. Although the idea of the noble yet brutal savage is invoked to characterize the Peruvians, moral disapprobation falls heaviest on the Spaniards, who have betrayed their Christian mission. The conventional contrasts of simple virtue and sophisticated vice are supplemented by a less familiar rhetoric of ghostliness and solidity: the resistant Peruvians characterize the Spaniards as spectral "Forms of Men" (II, p. 24), "the sickly Shade of an unsolid Greatness" (IV, p. 49) while the Spanish retort that the Peruvians are over-embodied and under-cultivated, displaying, in the villainous Don Carlos's patronizing words, "A coarse Luxuriance of spontaneous Virtue /.../ Nature's wild Growth – strong, but unprov'd in Daring," so "Illiterate in the Arts of polished Life" as "hardly, in our Courts, be call'd a MAN" (IV, pp. 45–6). For each side of this cultural divide, the opponent is perceived as deficiently human, with whiteness figured as a deathly pallor. The apparent symmetry of the complaints does not recuperate the Eurocentrism of the contrast as the underlying division here is one between nature and culture, with Peruvians placed firmly on the side of the natural. Being, as the Spanish patriarch Don Alvarez says of the heroine and her homeland, "rudely sweet" (IV, p. 45) puts one further down the stadial ladder of development than the Spaniards, regardless of the latter's moral deficiencies.

At the end of Dryden's *Indian Emperor*, the first and most influential dramatization of the black legend, many of the Indian characters remain resistant to Spanish rule and religion. Seventy years later, in *Alzira*, however, the Spaniards end up, communally, much more contrite over their tyranny and avarice while the Peruvians collectively assent to conversion and conquest. *Alzira* contains a good deal of anti-imperial rhetoric and is hostile to the enslavement of Amerindians but both the per-

sistent employment of noble savage discourse and the Spanish achievement of complete political and spiritual assent to conquest signal a much greater degree of European confidence in their superiority to New World indigenes than was demonstrated on the Restoration stage.

Other Amerindians whose noble simplicity highlights the deficiencies of European society appear in John Gay's (1685–1732) *Polly* (published 1729 but not performed) and James Miller's (1704–44) *Art and Nature* (performed and published 1738). *Polly* was a sequel to *The Beggar's Opera* (performed and published 1728) and recent critics have focused on the fact that Macheath spends the entire play in blackface as "Morano," captain of a pirate band on a West Indian island. Macheath's disguise is commonly taken to be an expression of solidarity with the transgressive, plebian, and frequently non-white members of a transatlantic underclass who worked legitimately as sailors or subversively as pirates (Reed 2007, 241–58). Less frequently attended to is the opera's invocation of an alliance between the British colonial powers and the indigenous people against Morano and his men, a pact which results in Polly rescuing the son of the Indian chief Pohetohee and committing herself to a society which is presented, albeit briefly, as distinctly morally superior to the corrupt plantocracy (government composed of plantation owners) and the degraded pirates. It is significant that, alone among the characters of Gay's paired comic operas, the Indians speak in a formal register more suitable to tragedy but without any ironic effect: they are characters who, unlike the Europeans with whom they are implicitly contrasted, mean what they say.

This verbal and moral integrity is shared by the protagonist of Miller's *Art and Nature*, a play in which a naive West Indian is brought to London as a kind of ethnographic experiment by the hero Truemoore. The Carib Julio is more of a clown than a true noble savage but his ignorance of social hierarchy, property, and the European gender order enables a critique of the English class system, capitalism, and the

place of women. While Julio's comments are at points astute, his characterization as a naïf whose affiliations are plebian, literalizes the low status of the Amerindian and their image as savage within British culture. Miller's Julio is a figure who is not acculturated differently, but is depicted as being almost without culture at all and thus an inferior being. By contrast, Gay's *Polly* is unusual in that its depiction of Amerindians not only shows them to be morally superior to the various colonists with whom they must negotiate and fight but also shows them to be militarily successful. There may be a nostalgic dimension to Gay's salute to the Indian world of honor and hierarchy, contrasting with Britain's globalized realm of colonizing capital but it resides in his creation of a society governed by integrity, rather than a fetishism of Morano's outlaw negritude. Gay's noble Indians are rather sentimental than savage and, however fantastic, *Polly* projects the possibility of human decency onto "others" conceived of as cultured and formidable.

#### CRITIQUES OF COLONIALISM?

The profound pessimism about an imperial commercial society legible in Gay's work is equally visible in that of a number of other playwrights who provided highly critical perspectives on those engaged in colonial trade and settlement. Satiric portraits of East India and Levant merchants whose adoption of Chinese or Turkish clothing was matched by private tyrannies, understood as a form of domesticated Oriental despotism, first appeared in late seventeenth-century drama (Orr 2001, 212–50). Fuller characterizations of nabobs (Anglo-Indian term for East India Company servant who had become rich through corrupt trade) and creoles (West Indians of British descent) were to follow. One of the most striking dramatic depictions of the dangers of colonial contamination is provided by George Lillo (1691/3–1739), best remembered for his avowedly patriotic domestic tragedy *The Tragedy of George Barnwell; or, The London Merchant*

(performed 1731; published 1732). Lillo's *Fatal Curiosity* (performed 1736 and published 1737) is set in Cornwall during the Elizabethan period and shows a young merchant who has become wealthy in the East Indies, murdered by his impoverished parents for the diamonds with which he has returned. Driven abroad by his parents' financial imprudence, the protagonist has suffered shipwreck and slavery and become almost unrecognizable, being both deeply tanned and dressed in Oriental robes. These external markers of difference seal his fate, as his parents fail to see through what is effectively a complete disguise, erasing his previous English identity. Although the play's language is largely supportive of colonial trade, the action suggests unequivocally that such activities endanger familial and national affiliations as well as life itself.

Colonial expansion through the eighteenth century resulted in more extensive satire on the creoles and nabobs who embodied anxieties about the degeneration of Europeans living beyond the metropolis. Active during and after the great imperial victory of the Seven Years' War (1754–63), Samuel Foote (1721–77) was the great satirist of East and West India merchants and planters. In his *The Nabob* (performed 1772 and published 1778), he depicts the title character, Sir Mathew Mite, as a low-born profiteer who has arrived back in England from India hell-bent on displacing the landed gentry, appropriating cultural capital and dominating social reproduction through sexual and institutional entryism. Corrupt and aggressive in every way, Mite's unfitness for the dominant social position he seeks is figured physically by his ineradicably yellow complexion, a sign of his Indian degradation. The depiction of Britons who prospered in the Caribbean was equally hostile. In Richard Cumberland's (1732–1811) *The West Indian* (performed and published 1771), the sentimental dramatist attempted to recuperate the creole, skewered by Foote in *The Patron* (performed and published 1764), a play which presents a despotic Caribbean planter mistreating his slaves. Although *The West Indian* itself was a huge



success and mollified the crowd of creoles who gathered to cry it down on its first performance, the dramatic treatment of West Indians was generally negative. Isaac Bickerstaffe's (1733–1812?) *Love in the City* (performed and published 1767) figured a Jamaican heiress whose tyrannizing over her slave and sexual appetite were stereotypical creole qualities.

Increasing uneasiness among metropolitan Britons at the corrupting effects of empire are even more legible in the plays produced by playwrights with more radical views, such as Elizabeth Inchbald (1753–1821). In *Such Things Are* (performed and published 1787), a play first produced during the years of the trial of Warren Hastings (1732–1818), an event which focused public attention on the British misgovernance of India, almost all the Britons living in Sumatra are depicted as corrupt. Flattering, tyrannical, cowardly, or plebian in origin, the characters' residence in a despotic state is shown to heighten their inherent weaknesses. But the critique of despotism is not confined to Sumatra, or indeed to the corrupting effect of East India Company rule but extends to Britain itself, which Inchbald implies needs reform of the radical, Christian kind invoked by the character Haswell, a theatrical version of the prison advocate John Howard (1726–90). *Such Things Are* is rather scathing about race privilege but it does observe a color line in its marital alliances and equally clearly regards a recuperated, English virtue as the means to reform both metropolitan and colonial states.

The years following the American, French, and Caribbean Revolutions produced a plethora of plays which both attacked and defended these momentous political events. The growth of the illegitimate theater after 1770, consisting of playhouses without a royal patent which were forbidden to produce straight drama and focused on performances with a musical, spectacular or corporeal component, encouraged productions which implicitly addressed the increasingly ethnically heterogeneous populations of Britain's expanding cities. Contesting Felicity Nussbaum's view (2003) that the eight-

eenth-century stage both marginalized and exploited characters of color, David Worrall (2007) has argued that the harlequinade, pantomime, burletta, and spectacle often articulated a progressive agenda, promoting abolition, parodying the heroics of explorers, celebrating inter-racial marriages, justifying Indian resistance to British military campaigns and protesting British genocides of aboriginal people. His catalogue of such texts is matched by David Taylor's in-depth analysis (2012) of the way Richard Brinsley Sheridan used his triple role as theater-manager, playwright and politician to articulate opposition within the patent theater itself, most notably in the devastating critique of empire in *Pizarro*.

Both Nussbaum and Worrall focus on the question of embodiment – how were non-European characters made-up and dressed, and how did such practices reflect and shape perceptions of racial difference? Costume was not ethnographically precise but there were conventional markers of cultural difference. Actors did “black-up” for the roles of Othello, Oroonoko, and Zanga but the remaining images we have of Elkannah Settle's (1648–1724) *The Empress of Morocco* (performed and published 1673) show that the aristocratic North African characters are not “sabled,” in contrast to the figures in black-face performing a dance. Illustrations of other plays set in North Africa, the Levant, and Turkey reveal ethnically specific costuming but no suggestion of a darkened complexion. A (male) Turkish costume consisted of a turban (understood to signify circumcision); a large moustache; a scimitar and robes. Female Turks or North Africans would usually have a scarf or veil but were otherwise often in European dress. Male Amerindians were consistently presented in a variant of the standard garb of the Baroque hero, wearing sandals, a short tunic, a breastplate with an animal head and (if royal) a feathered head-dress, as we see in illustrations of Julio, the Carib who features in *Art and Nature* and in the many depictions of Rollo, hero of Sheridan's Peruvian *Pizarro*. Female Amerindians might well sport a feathered head-dress – as

Anne Bracegirdle (1671–1748) did playing the Indian Queen Semernia in Aphra Behn's *The Widdow Ranter* (performed 1689, published 1690) – as well as sandals and a tunic-like robe.

The theater's persistent reliance on costume and props to signify "race," with "blackening-up" being largely confined to African roles, suggests that even at the very end of the eighteenth century, physiological signs of difference such as skin color did not fully replace older ways of understanding and representing human variety. Although the belated appearance of African-American actor Ira Aldridge (1807–67) on the London stage has been read as a sign of increasing racial "realism," and there was a noticeable increase in attempts as a quasi-ethnographic accuracy in scenography and costume, such practices were by no means universal. At the close of the eighteenth century, although managed by men of widely varying political commitments and commercial priorities, British theater continued to represent "the great map of mankind" in varying and diverse ways.

SEE ALSO: Africa, Representations of; America (Central and South), Representations of; Caribbean, Representations of the; Empire and Colonialism; India, Representations of; Turkey and the Middle East, Representations of.

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## Radcliffe, Ann

DEBORAH MUTCH

Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823) was the bestselling author of the 1790s, and her work was the most imitated and most translated during this decade. She has been credited with formulating the Gothic of the sublime and sensibility central to the period of High Gothic at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries.

Radcliffe was very private, and few personal details are available. She was born on 9 July 1764 to haberdasher William Ward (1737–98) and his wife Ann (*née* Oates, 1726–1800). Although the Wards were deemed socially respectable, her husband, journalist and editor William Radcliffe (1763–1830), when writing her obituary, chose to emphasize distinguished though distant relations including a bishop and a physician. William Radcliffe also claimed that his wife began writing novels through an interest in literary aesthetics and not, as many female authors did at this time, from the necessity of earning money in a semi-respectable way. Radcliffe published five novels: *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789), *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), *The Romance of the Forest*

(1791), *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), and *The Italian* (1797); a travel book: *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794* (1795); and three posthumous works: her final novel, *Gaston de Blondville* (1826); the poem *St Albans's Abbey* (1826); and a treatise on aesthetics, "On the Supernatural in Poetry" (1826).

After *The Italian*, and at the height of her fame, Radcliffe ceased publishing, and rumors circulated that she had been incarcerated, driven mad by her own imagination. In her obituary, her husband explained the cessation as the result of increased personal wealth through inheritance, which contradicted his claim that she wrote for pleasure. Subsequent biographers point to the rise in negative criticism of her work by contemporary reviewers as the reason for her withdrawal from authorship. However, her work has endured, and part of her continuing popularity must be attributed to a series of critical dichotomies through which her work has been read – revolutionary and conservative, feminist and anti-feminist, aesthetic literature and literary pot-boilers – and to her raising issues surrounding female property ownership and propriety.

Radcliffe has been described as the archetypal author of Gothic novels and credited with developing "new" Gothic romances as well as galvanizing the Gothic "school" by producing works with an aesthetic quality absent from the seminal *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) by Horace Walpole (1717–97). She differed from her nearest competitor, Matthew Gregory Lewis (1775–1818), in the innovation most associated with her work: the "explained supernatural" (Miles 2005) through the art of suggestion. The psychological basis of her Gothic novels has been attributed to the influence of Edmund Burke's (1729/30–97) differentiation between terror and horror in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) and Immanuel Kant's (1724–1804) "formulation of sublimity" (Bondhus 2010, 14), which allows the character to draw strength from the landscape. Despite this association of Radcliffe's work with great