

Captains and Slaves: Aphra Behn and the Rhetoric of Republicanism

When one considers the extraordinary amount of criticism published about Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* in the last few years, it is surprising how little critical consensus there is about how that work treats the institution of slavery – whether it is pro-slavery, anti-slavery, thinks slavery is generally acceptable except when those who are enslaved happen to be heroes or kings, or, indeed, whether it simply treats slavery as a convenient metaphor. My own contribution to this debate takes its origin from the use in *Oroonoko* of language and arguments associated with classical republicanism, in some ways surprising for an author like Aphra Behn, known in her lifetime to be a staunch Tory.

Oroonoko's speech inciting his fellow slaves to revolt, in which he eloquently points out 'the miseries and ignominies of slavery', and his bitter remarks after the defeat of the rebellion, on the folly of 'endeavouring to make those free, who were by nature slaves', echo the rhetoric and the concerns of seventeenth-century republicans who regarded 'brutish Servitude' as an affront to human dignity.¹ Milton in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649) had presented the natural birthright of freedom, extending to all mankind, as a self-evident axiom:

No man who knows ought, can be so stupid to deny that all men naturally were borne free, being the image and resemblance of God himself.

Consistently, Milton also argued that the strenuous defence of liberty against powerful, entrenched forces of oppression entailed a burden of responsibility few were willing to undertake, choosing instead to 'give up thir understanding to a double tyrannie, of Custom from without, and blind affections within':

But being slaves within doors, no wonder that they strive so much to have the public State conformably govern'd to the inward vitious rule, by which they govern themselves. For indeed none can love freedom heartilie, but good men.²

Like many writers in the republican tradition, Milton combined an impassioned advocacy of liberty, as a principle universally operative, with a bitter,

contemptuous dismissal of those who preferred to ‘renounce thir own freedom’ and live in servitude – ‘worthie indeed themselves, whatsoever they be, to be for ever slaves’.³

Slave revolts, as Robin Blackburn has shown, were relatively common in the late seventeenth century in the colony of Surinam, where much of the action of *Oroonoko* takes place, because the geography of that colony, situated on the South American continent, permitted escaped slaves to live at some distance from the coast, free from possible recapture.⁴ But it is unlikely that any rebellious slave, even if he had been ‘entertained ... with the lives of the Romans, and great men’, ever addressed his troops in quite the terms used by Oroonoko. The ‘harangue’ of this ‘great captain’, aimed at motivating the hitherto passive body of slaves to heroic resistance, could be cited as an instance of Hobbes’s claim that ‘the reading of the books of policy, and histories of the ancient Greeks and Romans’ had encouraged impressionable young men, eager to perform ‘great exploits of war’, to rebel against those ruling over them:⁵

Caesar, having singled out these men from the women and children, made an harangue to ’em, of the miseries and ignominies of slavery; counting up all their toils and sufferings, under such loads, burdens and drudgeries, as were fitter for beasts than men; senseless brutes, than human souls. He told ’em, it was not for days, months or year, but for eternity; there was no end to be of their misfortunes: they suffer’d not like men, who might find a glory and fortitude in oppression; but like dogs, that lov’d the whip and bell, and fawn’d the more they were beaten; that they had lost the divine quality of men, and were becoming insensible asses, fit only to bear. (*Oroonoko and other stories*, pp. 69, 82–3)

There is of course no more intrinsic improbability in the classicizing eloquence of Oroonoko (including a reference to ‘one Hannibal, a great captain’, as role-model) than in his physical description in conformity with Western ideas of beauty (‘his nose was rising and Roman, instead of African and flat’) or the emphasis on his status as ‘great man’, akin to the exotic warrior princes of Restoration heroic drama and romance: Behn is addressing a popular audience in Restoration England, and using the conventions at her disposal.⁶ A classical Roman or European context for Oroonoko – or Caesar, as he is renamed in Surinam – is established at the outset:

The most illustrious Courts could not have produced a braver man, both for greatness of courage and mind, a judgment more solid, a wit more quick, and a conversation more sweet and diverting. He knew almost as much as if he had read much: he had heard of and admired the Romans ... He had nothing of barbarity in his nature, but at all points addressed himself as if his education had been in some European court. (*Oroonoko and other stories*, pp. 33, 84)

The intrinsic nobility of Oroonoko, as well as his status as prince, is recognized throughout the narrative, both by Europeans (especially the narrator and the well-meaning slave owner, Trefry) and by the other slaves. For

all Oroonoko's protests that they are his 'dear friends and fellow-sufferers' and that they should 'receive him as their fellow-slave; assuring them he was no better', the assembled slaves treat him with exaggerated deference:

But he no sooner came to the houses of the slaves ... but they all came forth to behold him, and found he was that Prince who had, at several times, sold most of 'em to these parts; and from a veneration they pay to great men, especially if they know 'em, and from the surprize and awe they had at the sight of him, they all cast themselves at his feet, crying out in their language, Live, O King! long live, O King! and kissing his feet, paid him even divine homage. (pp. 64, 65, 83)

When the slaves, 'with one accord', agree to follow Oroonoko in attempting to escape from captivity, they may be swayed by his powerful rhetoric about the sacredness of liberty and the importance of honour as 'the first principle in nature': even if they fail, he tells them, they would be 'esteem'd as ... men that had the courage and the bravery to attempt, at least, for liberty; and if they dy'd in the attempt, it would be more brave, than to live in perpetual slavery'. But the narrative leaves open the possibility that his followers, who 'bow'd and kiss'd his feet at this resolution', are responding not to his egalitarian rhetoric, but to his status as tribal chief and traditional leader:

They all reply'd with one accord, no, no, no; Caesar has spoken like a great captain, like a great king. (*Oroonoko and other stories*, pp. 83, 84, 85)

The paradox at the heart of *Oroonoko* is embodied in the subtitle: he is a Royal Slave, simultaneously elevated and debased. As the narrative makes clear at several points, the attitude of this 'great captain' toward the institution of slavery is far from straightforward, since in his native Africa he has been implicated in the practice of slave trading, and indeed is 'betray'd into slavery' by a treacherous master of a ship with whom he had frequently 'traffick'd for slaves':

That nation is very warlike and brave: and having a continual campaign, being always in hostility with one neighbouring prince or other, they had the fortune to take a good many captives; for all they took in battle were sold as slaves; at least those common men who cou'd not ransom themselves. Of these slaves so taken, the general only has all the profit; and of these generals our captains and masters of ships buy all their freights. (pp. 31, 56-7)

Critics, emphasizing Oroonoko's royal status and his ambivalent relationship with the slave trade, have argued that Behn's novel is 'pro-slavery' or at the very least displays a 'disturbing oscillation' toward slavery as an institution. To quote some characteristic statements:

Far from condemning slavery, however, Behn seems to take its existence for granted ... The enslavement of Oroonoko and his companions is lamented because it is based on the kind of treacherous overreaching practiced by tradesmen, but slavery itself is condoned ... The narrator (Behn) objects to the royal *class* of people being enslaved, not to the act of enslavement itself.⁷

Indeed it has been claimed that *Oroonoko* not only ‘clearly supports the nationalistic colonizing enterprise which fueled and depended upon the African slave trade’, ‘privileging plantocratic ideology ... and bolstering the colonial status quo’, but that its ideology is deeply conservative and authoritarian, endorsing the extreme position of Sir Robert Filmer that a ruler (or, in a family, a father or husband) had ‘an absolute property right in the bodies of his subjects’ which allowed him to dispose of them in any way he wished.⁸

Yet the treatment in Behn’s novel of ‘the miseries and ignominies of slavery’ as contrasted with a desired ‘freedom, and glorious liberty’ is far closer to Locke than to his antagonist Filmer. Oroonoko’s speech inciting rebellion against ‘tyrants’ is based on a series of distinctions which were widely accepted during the seventeenth century:

And why (said he) my dear friends and fellow-sufferers, should we be slaves to an unknown people? Have they vanquished us nobly in fight? Have they won us in honourable battle? And are we by the chance of war become their slaves? This would not anger a noble heart; this would not animate a soldier’s soul: no, but we are bought and sold like apes or monkeys, to be the sport of women, fools and cowards; and the support of rogues and runagades, that have abandoned their own countries for rapine, murders, thefts and villanies ... Will you, I say, suffer the lash from such hands? (*Oroonoko and other stories*, p. 83)

The distinction here is between being ‘bought and sold’, deprived of human status by being turned into a commodity, and being defeated in battle by the ‘chance of war’. Both Hobbes and Locke held the traditional view, central to the classical (essentially Roman) conception of the relationship between slave and master, that slavery is a form of ‘dominion acquired by conquest, or victory in war’.⁹ The institution of slavery in Roman times was based on the ‘very large number of slaves ... captured by Roman armies’, and the flourishing African slave trade in the late seventeenth century fed off the tribal wars within Africa, which again produced a great many captives. Yet as Robin Blackburn points out in *The Making of New World Slavery*:

The thoroughly commercial character of most New World slavery differentiates it from earlier practices of slavery ... One might say that many Roman slaves were sold because they had been captured, while many African slaves entering the Atlantic trade had been captured so that they might be sold.¹⁰

Hobbes and Locke disagreed fundamentally in their views of individual liberty and citizenship, but each associated slavery with conquest. Hobbes, with his characteristic mixture of radicalism and pugnacious conservatism, argued, like Filmer and others, that the power of master over slave was absolute, extending to the right to punish disobedience by death: as David Brion Davis puts in in *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, ‘for Hobbes, the slave’s will was so utterly subordinated to that of his master that he could only will what his master willed’. But he also held the master-slave relationship to be essentially contractual, treating individual liberty as an alienable property

right over one's own person, to be surrendered voluntarily to a conqueror in order 'to avoid the present stroke of death':

It is not therefore the victory, that giveth the right of dominion over the vanquished, but his own covenant. Nor is he obliged because he is conquered; that is to say, beaten, and taken, or put to flight; but because he cometh in, and submit-teth to the victor.¹¹

As Richard Tuck has shown, Hobbes was not alone in seeing slavery as voluntary, making the slave (as in the Hobbesian version of the social contract) the author of his own subjection.¹²

Locke's treatment of slavery is notoriously inconsistent. His chapter 'Of Slavery' in the *Second Treatise* is explicitly designed to refute the arguments put forth by Filmer as well as Hobbes that a free individual could 'by Compact, or his own Consent, *enslave himself* to any one, or put himself under the Absolute, Arbitrary Power of another, to take away his Life, when he pleases'. Locke begins his *First Treatise* with an unequivocal attack on slavery as a violation of the 'Right to natural Freedom' common to all mankind, using the arguments and rhetoric characteristic of the republican (or to use Quentin Skinner's term, neo-roman) tradition:

Slavery is so vile and miserable an Estate of Man, and so directly opposite to the generous Temper and Courage of our Nation; that 'tis hardly to be conceived, that an *Englishman*, much less a *Gentleman*, should plead for't.¹³

Far from being in any sense contractual, slavery to Locke rested on brute force alone, and was incompatible with civil society: 'Slavery ... is nothing else, but *the State of War continued, between a ... Conquerour, and a Captive*', or '*Force without Right*', subjection to an 'uncertain, unknown, Arbitrary Will of another'.¹⁴

And yet in another passage in the *Second Treatise*, Locke provides a justification for slavery in terms frequently used by apologists for slavery, as well as by those who sought to distinguish acceptable (or, as Oroonoko says to his soldiers, 'honourable') from unacceptable forms of enslavement. Locke makes a distinction between 'the *unjust Conquerour*, who forces me into Submission', and the victor in a 'just war' who has taken captives in such a war:

There is another sort of Servants, which by a peculiar Name we call *Slaves*, who being Captives taken in a just War, are by the Right of Nature subjected to the Absolute Dominion and Arbitrary Power of their Masters. These Men having, as I say, forfeited their Lives, and with it their Liberties, and lost their Estates; and being in the *State of Slavery*, not capable of any Property, cannot in that state be considered as any part of *Civil Society*.¹⁵

As several critics have pointed out, the apparent incompatibility of Locke's pronouncements excoriating and defending slavery reflects 'the curious capacity of slavery for generating or accommodating itself to dualisms in thought'. Behn's *Oroonoko* seems to me to exhibit such a dualism, characteristic of its

age. Both Hobbes and Locke were primarily interested in the origins and limits of political power rather than slavery per se, and their remarks bore little or no relation to the actual practices of the seventeenth-century slave trade: practices about which Locke, as a colonial administrator actively involved in the detailed operations of slave trading and plantations in the New World, may well have been fully aware.¹⁶ ‘Just war’ theories of slavery depended on turning a blind eye to the conditions under which slaves were compelled to live, to the unscrupulous practices of slave traders, and to the highly questionable legal and moral position of those professing themselves Christians who purchased and exploited slaves.¹⁷

Several of Behn’s contemporaries with direct experience of the conditions under which slaves lived in the New World colonies explicitly attacked the ‘just war’ theory. As one writer said in 1700, ‘an Unlawful War can’t make lawful Captives. And by Receiving, we are in danger to promote and partake in ... barbarous Cruelties’. To the Puritan divine Richard Baxter, addressing ‘Directions to those Masters in Foreign Plantations who Have Negro’s and other Slaves’ in 1673, the organized practice of capturing, transporting, and selling slaves to the New World colonies was no better than thievery:

To go as Pirat’s and catch up poor Negro’s or peoples of another Land, that never forfeited Life or Liberty, and to make them slaves, and sell them, is one of the worst kind of Thievery in the world; And they that buy them and use them as beasts, for their meer commodity ... are fitter to be called incarnate Devils than Christians, though they be no Christians whom they so abuse.¹⁸

Perhaps the strongest attack on the slave trade published during this period is Thomas Tryon’s *Friendly Advice to the Gentleman-Planters of the East and West Indies* (1684), written after an extended visit to Barbados. Tryon sees participation in the slave trade, either active or passive, as inconsistent with Christian principles: ‘And is not this a fine imployment think you, for Christians, to run into remotest Regions, to get them innocent Fellow Creatures and make Slaves of them?’ More or less the same position is argued by John Dunton in the *Athenian Oracle* of 1705, in presenting the planter who claims to have made a ‘lawful purchase’ of slaves as no less culpable than the slave trader:

For they which sell them do steal them, or take them away by Violence ... We ... call ourselves Christians, that encourage them in such Evil practices, our Law ... looks at the Accessory as bad as the Thief.¹⁹

Both Tryon and Baxter argue, as Behn does in *Oroonoko*, the ‘natural liberty’ and intrinsic equality of mankind, with black slave and white master sharing a single heritage, ‘descended from the same common Father’: ‘Remember they are as good a kind as you; that is, they are reasonable Creatures, as well as you; and born with as much natural liberty’.²⁰ Oroonoko’s impassioned oration seeks to shame his fellow slaves into action in defence of their liberty, reminding them of the suffering they are forced to endure every

day. A recurrent theme throughout *Oroonoko* is that slaves are treated routinely like ‘beasts ... senseless brutes’ by masters who fail to recognize their common humanity, ‘the divine quality of men’ in those under their power:

An ass, or dog, or horse, having done his duty, could lie down in retreat, and rise to work again, and while he did his duty, indur’d no stripes; but men, villanous, senseless men, such as they, toil’d on all the tedious week till Black Friday: and then, whether they work’d or not, whether they were faulty or meriting, they, promiscuously, the innocent with the guilty, suffer’d the infamous whip, the sordid stripes, from their fellow-slaves, till their blood trickled from all parts of their body; blood, whose every drop ought to be revenged with a life of some of those tyrants that impose it. (*Oroonoko and other stories*, pp. 82–3)

The specific practices of New World plantation slavery described here – exceptionally long hours of arduous physical labour day after day, with no opportunity to rest, the savagery of the slave-drivers, armed with whips which they wielded ‘promiscuously’ – find confirmation in other contemporary accounts and in Robin Blackburn’s recent study. Thomas Tryon’s *Friendly Advice to the Gentleman-Planters* includes ‘The Complaints of the Negro-Slaves against the hard Usages and barbarous Cruelties inflicted upon them’. (Behn knew Tryon, and addressed a commendatory poem to one of his books.) As well as a powerful account of the middle voyage, Tryon includes the following passage, appealing to ‘humane Sympathy and Compassion’ in his readers:

Certainly the merciful God never intended that any of his Creatures should be forced to labour beyond their natural strength, nor have burdens imposed on their weary Shoulders, greater than they were able to bear ... And whereas a good man is merciful even to his Beast, they extend no Compassion to us, who are of the same species with themselves, but slave us on in continual drudgery, till our Heart-strings crack ... and our Marrow is exhausted ... and our Souls in Weariness and Anguish, wish for Death rather than Life.²¹

Like Tryon, Behn attacks the hypocrisy of professing Christians who betray, exploit, and enslave their fellow men. In two separate episodes, the virtuous pagan or noble savage upbraids nominal Christians who behave towards him in dishonourable, treacherous ways. (It is worth mentioning that Behn uses the phrase ‘noble savage’ in her poem to Tryon – apparently, Dryden is the first and Behn the second author to employ the term.)²²

Oroonoko then reply’d, he was very sorry to hear that the Captain pretended to the knowledge and worship of any gods, who taught him no better principles, than not to credit as he would be credited ... You mistake, when you imagine, that he who will violate his honour, will keep his word with his gods ... But Caesar told him, there was no faith in the white men, or the gods they ador’d; who instructed them in principles so false, that honest men could not live amongst them; though no people professed so much, none performed so little ... With them, a man ought to be eternally on his guard, and never to eat and drink with Christians, without his weapon of defence in his hand. (*Oroonoko and other stories*, pp. 59, 88)

The contrast between the cruel, insensitive white man, pretending to civility and Christianity, and his innocent black victim is further brought out in the excessive physical punishment to which Oroonoko is subjected toward the end of the narrative and the stoic endurance of the courageous slave as he is tortured to death. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom*, in the most celebrated of all anti-slavery narratives, faces martyrdom in a similar fashion, as one able to 'endure death so as he should encourage them to die' (p. 98).

When Oroonoko, after the desertion of his followers, upbraids them for their cowardice, his 'fierceness and indignation' are primarily directed at the white men who have ordered 'those slaves, who a few days before ador'd him as something more than mortal', to whip him mercilessly. As several contemporary accounts show, this particular punishment for runaway slaves was common practice under the colonial system: making the slaves administer the punishment would demonstrate to them their utter subjection to their master's will, while warning them of the consequences of rebellion.²³ Oroonoko himself is unrepentant, steadfast in his principles to the last. What he comes to realize, perhaps, is that all revolutions are failed revolutions, because those who 'lov'd the whip and bell, and fawn'd the more they were beaten', those who, as Milton puts it in *Paradise Lost*, through 'fear' choose 'inglorious life with servitude', are always likely to be in the majority:

Tyranny must be,
Though to the tyrant thereby no excuse.²⁴

Like Milton's Samson or the lonely prophet of *The Readie and Easie Way*, aware that his former allies 'seem now chusing them a captain back for *Egypt*' yet unyielding in his republican faith in the most discouraging circumstances, Oroonoko is most heroic when most alone. His bitter recognition that he could never have succeeded 'in endeavouring to make those free, who were by nature slaves, poor wretched rogues, fit to be used as Christian tools', leads Oroonoko to conclude that 'he had rather die, than live upon the same earth with such dogs'.²⁵ In true Roman fashion, Oroonoko confirms his status as exemplary hero by the ultimate test of virtue, a willingness to die for one's beliefs.

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Notes

- 1 Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko and other stories*, ed. Maureen Duffy (London, Methuen, 1986), pp. 82–5, 88; J. H., *The Grounds and Reasons of Monarchy*, in *The Oceana of James Harrington, and his Other Works*, ed. John Toland (London, 1700), p. 15; as cited by Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 37. Skinner's book provides an excellent

- account of the republican (or neo-roman) tradition, as does Philip Pettit, *Republicanism* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997).
- 2 *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, in *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, gen. ed. Don M. Wolfe *et al.*, 8 vols (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1953–82), III, 190–198; subsequent references to CPW.
 - 3 *The Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth*, CPW, VII, 428. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, XII, 82–101.
 - 4 Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492–1800* (London and New York, Verso, 1997), p. 501. See also Laura Brown, 'The Romance of Empire: Oroonoko and the Trade in Slaves', *The New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics, English Literature*, eds Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown (New York and London, Methuen, 1987), pp. 53, 282.
 - 5 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Michael Oakshott (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1966), Ch. XXIX, p. 214. According to Hobbes, 'From the same books, they that live under a monarch conceive an opinion, that the subjects in a popular commonwealth enjoy liberty; But that in a monarchy they are all slaves' (*ibid.*).
 - 6 For a good account of the role in *Oroonoko* of 'sentimental identification, by which the native "other" is naturalized as a European aristocrat', within the conventions of heroic romance, see Brown, 'The Romance of Empire', pp. 47–9.
 - 7 Moira Ferguson, *Subject to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery, 1670–1834* (New York and London, Methuen, 1992), pp. 29, 36; Margaret W. Ferguson, 'Juggling the Categories of Race, Class, and Gender: Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*', in *Women, 'Race', and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, eds Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (London and New York, Routledge, 1994), p. 217; G. A. Starr, 'Aphra Behn and the Genealogy of the Man of Feeling', *Modern Philology*, 87 (1990), 364–5. Both Moira Ferguson and Starr emphasize the way in which Oroonoko 'addresses underlings in the tone of a superior', and the care with which the narrative distinguishes him 'from the majority of slaves', concluding that 'the implications of this book [are] conservative, strengthening rather than challenging slavery as the fundamental economic and social institution of England's Caribbean colonies' (Ferguson, *Subject to Others*, p. 31; Starr, 'Aphra Behn', p. 366).
 - 8 Margaret Ferguson, 'Juggling the Categories', p. 217; Moira Ferguson, *Subject to Others*, p. 49; Catherine Gallagher, 'Oroonoko's blackness', in *Aphra Behn Studies*, ed. Janet Todd (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 217. Critics emphasizing Behn's Tory politics have interpreted the character of Oroonoko as a surrogate for the deposed James II or the martyred Charles I: see George Guffey, 'Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*: Occasion and Accomplishment', *Two English Novelists* (Los Angeles, Clark Memorial Library, 1975), pp. 34–6; Maureen Duffy's introduction to *Oroonoko and other stories*, pp. 10–12; and, a more subtle discussion which sees 'the treatment of slavery in *Oroonoko* [as] neither coherent nor fully critical', Brown, 'The Romance of Empire', pp. 55–9.
 - 9 *Leviathan*, Ch. XX, p. 132.
 - 10 Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, pp. 10, 34–5. For another illuminating discussion of 'the history of servitude', examining similarities and differences between slavery in the ancient world and the system of plantation slavery established in the West Indies and America, see David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1970), pp. 44–108.

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- 11 Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, pp. 135–6; *Leviathan*, Ch. XX, pp. 132–3.
- 12 Richard Tuck, *Natural Rights Theories* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 3–4, 49, 56–7.
- 13 John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (New York, Mentor Books, 1965), Book II, Ch. IV, par. 23; Book I, Ch. I, par. 1, 3. Skinner prefers the term neo-roman to republican, in order to allow for writers within this tradition like Locke, Marvell, and Marchamont Nedham who directed their attack at unlimited arbitrary power in the hands of rulers rather than at the institution of monarchy: see *Liberty before Liberalism*, pp. 21–3, 53–7.
- 14 *Two Treatises*, Book II, Ch. III, par. 19; Ch. IV, par. 22, 24. Locke’s actual wording is ‘*Lawful Conquerour*’, and the qualifying adjective makes this passage compatible with the later discussion of slavery in Book II, Ch. VII, par. 85.
- 15 *Two Treatises*, Book II, Ch. VII, par. 85; Book II, Ch. XVI, par. 176.
- 16 See Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, pp. 137–41; and, for more recent discussions of problematical elements in Locke’s treatment of slavery, James Farr, ‘“So Vile and Miserable an Estate”: The Problem of Slavery in Locke’s Political Thought’, *Political Theory*, 14 (1986), 263–89; and Wayne Glausser, ‘Three Approaches to Locke and the Slave Trade’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 51 (1990), 199–216.
- 17 See Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, pp. 63–4, 82, 177–80, 209–10.
- 18 Samuel Sewall, *The Selling of Joseph* (Boston, 1700), reprinted in *The Diary of Samuel Sewall, 1674–1729*, ed. M. Halsey Thomas, 2 vols (New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973), II, 1120; Richard Baxter, *Chapters from a Christian Directory, or a Summ of Practical Theology and Cases of Conscience*, ed. Jeanette Tawney (London, 1925), p. 33. Baxter like Hobbes allows for the possibility that a man may voluntarily enslave himself: ‘Though poverty or necessity do make a man consent to sell himself to a life of lesser misery, to escape a greater, or death itself; yet it is not lawful for any other so to take advantage of his necessity as to bring him into a condition, that shall make him miserable’ (*ibid.*, p. 31).
- 19 Thomas Tryon, *Friendly Advice to the Gentleman-Planters of the East and West Indies* (London, 1684), pp. 83–4; [John Dunton,] *The Athenian Oracle*, 4 vols (London, 1703–4), I, 530. Tryon’s main concern, like Baxter’s, is to ameliorate the conditions under which slaves lived in the West Indies, but he is uncompromising in treating the institution of slavery as fundamentally unjust.
- 20 Tryon, *Friendly Advice*, p. 114; Baxter, *Chapters from a Christian Directory*, p. 26.
- 21 Tryon, *Friendly Advice*, p. 87. Tryon vividly contrasts the luxury of the planters’ lives with the grinding poverty of the slave who ‘goes to his sleep late, with half his Belly full’ (pp. 96–7). Similar conditions are described in Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, pp. 338–40, 466–7. For a useful commentary on Tryon, see Davies, *Problem of Slavery*, pp. 402–5.
- 22 See ‘On the Author of that Excellent Book intituled The way to Health, Long Life, and Happiness’, in *The Works of Aphra Behn*, ed. Janet Todd, 7 vols (London, William Pickering, 1992–5), I, 179: ‘Hail Learned Bard! who dost thy power dispence, / And show’st us the first State of Innocence ... / When Nature did her wond’rous dictates give, / And taught the Noble Savage how to live’ (lines 1–6). Behn’s poem was published in her *Miscellany* (1685), and refers to Tryon’s *The Way to Health, Long Life and Happiness; Or, A Discourse of Temperance* (London, 1683). Dryden used the phrase ‘noble savage’ in 1672 in *The Conquest of Granada*,

- Part I, l.i. 208–9: ‘E’re the base Laws of Servitude began, / When wild in woods the noble Savage ran’ (*The Works of John Dryden*, gen. ed. H. T. Swedenberg, Jr., 20 vols (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1956–89), XI, 30).
- 23 *Oroonoko and other stories*, p. 89; Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, pp. 345–6. Even the detail of rubbing pepper into Oroonoko’s wounds corresponds to customary practice among the planters.
- 24 *Paradise Lost*, XII, 95–6, 218–20, in *The Poems of John Milton*, ed. John Carey and Alastair Fowler (London, Longman, 1968); *Oroonoko and other stories*, p. 83.
- 25 *Readie and Easie Way*, CPW, VII, 463; *Oroonoko and other stories*, p. 88. An interesting essay by Mary Beth Rose sees *Samson Agonistes* and *Oroonoko*, both characterized by ‘anger and despair’, as proposing ‘an alternative heroics of endurance’ which ‘is shown to incur terrible costs’: see Mary Beth Rose, “‘Vigorous Most / When Most Unactive Deem’d’: Gender and the Heroics of Endurance in Milton’s *Samson Agonistes*, Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko*, and Mary Astell’s *Some Reflections upon Marriage*”, *Milton Studies*, 33 (1998), 83–109, esp. 103.

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