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Entertaining Crisis in the Atlantic Imperium, 1770–1790

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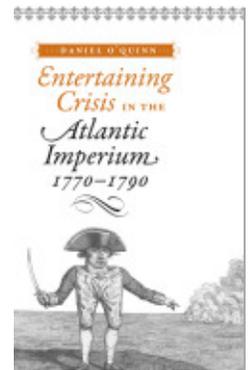
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Which Is the Man?

Remediation, Interruption, and the Celebration of Martial Masculinity

Newspapers may be considered as literary Gladiators; and an invitation to battle is to them a welcome summons: they will take care to make the contest entertaining to their readers—the only object in which they are really interested.

Gazetteer, 1 November 1779

After an unusually long court-martial of twenty-seven days, Admiral Augustus Keppel was unanimously acquitted and the charges against him were declared “malicious and ill-founded.”¹ After Palliser’s endless examination of witnesses, Keppel’s defense was comparatively short, and like his earlier performance in Parliament, an exercise in grace and resolution that turned on the assertion of his “essential” courage.² But far more interesting than Keppel’s actual remarks were the effect the acquittal had both in performance and in the press.³ As Nicholas Roger has discussed, Keppel’s acquittal generated some of the most extensive and complex crowd violence in the late eighteenth century. The celebrations took a variety of forms and very quickly swept the nation. The speed was due to the remarkably quick dissemination of the news in the papers. William Parker, the publisher of the *General Advertiser*, received the news within six hours, and thus celebrations in London occurred on the day of the acquittal. But the alacrity of the celebration was also due to a great deal of advance preparation. The strongly pro-Keppel *General Advertiser* was jubilant:

The preparations that are making in the three towns of Portsmouth, Gosport, and Common, for the celebration of the joyful occasion of Admiral Keppel's acquittal, are amazing. All the ships at Spithead, and in the harbour, to the amount of an hundred sail, are to be dressed, and intend to fire a *feu de joyé* on the instant it transpires. Every ship has prepared Sir H—— P—— in effigy, (the Formidable and the Robuste not excepted [Palliser's ships]) whose death is to crown the transport of the day. The sailors have been contriving by the most curious expedients, to get liquors on board, running all hazards of detection, that they may carouse on the happy event. By one consent the three towns are to be illuminated for three nights successively; and we hear there are to be three balls given on the occasion; one by his Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland; a second by the Admirals of the Navy; and a third by the Captains. Sir H—— P—— will be shot in every street, corner, and alley of the towns, and a most grand display of fire-works is to crown the celebration of the event.⁴

If the final sentence here exaggerated the extent of the symbolic violence, its portrayal of the action did not. Celebrations extended over multiple nights, and as Nicholas Roger demonstrates, the provincial celebrations were carefully staged, highly hierarchical events.⁵ The most important of these occurred immediately after the acquittal and the return of Keppel's sword. At about twelve o'clock, the grand procession left the court led by "A band of musick playing 'See the conquering Hero comes'" from Handel's *Judas Maccabeus*, followed by Keppel and a host of dignitaries including the Duke of Cumberland and key opposition figures such as the Duke of Portland and the Marquis of Rockingham, and an array of officers:

They all walked with their hats in their hands (in which were blue cockades, stamped in gold letters, KEPPEL) to Admiral Keppel's house, in High-street; after which, every merchant ship in the harbour, and at Spithead, gave a grand salute of nineteen guns each, the bells were set a ringing, and the evening concluded with bonfires, illuminations, guns firing, and other demonstrations of joy.

A magnificent entertainment was prepared by the Captains of the western fleet, to which the Admiral, and the Members of the Court-Martial were invited; and yesterday, they gave a ball to the ladies. The streets were all illuminated, and an universal joy and festivity reigned amongst every rank of people.⁶



Figure 5.1. Anonymous, “The Fate of Palliser and Sandwich,” etching (1779). BM 5537. Department of Prints and Drawings © Trustees of the British Museum.

The catalog of participants and events here are meant to invoke fashionable sociability: the Duke of Cumberland was a noted *bon vivant*, and the reporting on the ball is designed to convey civility. But in spite of the *Morning Chronicle*’s attempt to represent the aristocratic control over these highly choreographed events, they could not be dissociated from more violent forms of protest, especially in London. Palliser’s effigy was attacked and burned in numerous towns, and in London a violent mob completely destroyed his house and eventually made moves on Lord Sandwich’s residence. An anonymous celebratory print entitled “The Fate of Palliser and Sandwich” gives a clear indication of the tenor of these protests (fig. 5.1).⁷ Similarly, opposition papers printed a vast array of attacks on Palliser just before and immediately after the acquittal, but these were simply a byway to the more damaging attacks on Sandwich that dominated the press and Parliament for the rest of February and much of March.

The *Morning Post* argued, in defense of the government, that the opposition had been and continued to be abetting both criminal and treasonous acts: “The wanton and cruel designs of faction in their late riots, have all been defeated by the prudence and temper of Administration; who, instead of devoting the hired

mobs of opposition to the bayonet, which their employers anxiously hoped for, and expected, suffered rather the poor deluded rioters to enjoy their temporary frolic, knowing they must be convinced of their error on the return of reason.”⁸ In subsequent reporting, the same paper criminalized pro-Keppel celebration by tracking it through the “Bow Street Intelligence” and promulgated conspiracy theories alleging opposition treason. Significantly, this focused readers’ attention on events in London, where the celebrations had proved more violent and more politicized than in the provinces. The allegations of abetting treason took the form of everything from poems such as the following “Extemporare, On the Late Illuminations” to complex denunciations of the predicament of government itself:

Our Mob huzza!—with candles we must treat’em:
 The French huzza!—because we could not beat’em.
 Hail, noble Chief! Whose well-poised valour knows,
 To please at once thy *Country*,—and thy *Foes*.⁹

For one correspondent to the *Morning Post*, there was nothing the government could do that the opposition would not twist to its own ends, but the same author also recognized that “British Ministers ever [have] been more or less violent, as the spirit of the times hath been more or less depraved” and thereby argued that such depravity warranted suppression.¹⁰

With the *General Advertiser* actively promoting either celebration or demonstration and the *Morning Post* making the case for the criminalization of both the celebrants and their opposition supporters, the rest of the press navigated a middle ground that simultaneously applauded Keppel and denounced the rioting and William Parker, the editor of the *General Advertiser*, in particular. The *Morning Chronicle* is typical in this regard:

Admiral Keppel’s honourable acquittal is certainly in itself a matter highly satisfactory to every well-wisher of his country, but all who are not totally destitute of understanding, must confess that encouraging the mob to commit riots, and to exercise their licentious dispositions in defiance of law, decency, and even common humanity, is in the highest degree unwarrantable, and those who are instrumental in forwarding so bad a purpose, deserve the execration of the publick in general.¹¹

By characterizing the more politicized acts of violence as a form of “patriotick phrenzy,” the *Morning Chronicle* and other papers effectively drove a wedge between celebrants by deploying an all-too-familiar distinction between patricians

and plebeians.¹² To all accounts, this was an effective containment strategy.¹³ One could argue that the explosion of pleasure that swept across the land upon Keppel's acquittal is generated by the fulfillment of narrative desire, but to do so would be to suggest that, for at least some portion of the observing populace, Keppel's acquittal heralds the elimination of an aberrant administration. In this context, the violence of the mob, rather than simply being the outpouring of licentiousness, is an expression of God's will to harmonize the nation and the state after a period of misrule. Temporally, this releases Keppel and his public into a heavenly space somewhere in the future where the current conflict not only with America and France but also with Lord Sandwich and the government has been resolved. And that resolution is phantasmatically effected by a defeat of both the Whig "nation's" military combatants abroad and its political antagonists at home. It is a defeat that did not happen in fact, but whose very phantasmatic possibility allowed for a recuperation of Keppel and for the eventual ascendance of the Rockingham faction.

And we do not have to look too far to see this sentiment folded right into the forms of celebration that were not denounced by the press. After all, the choice of Handel's chorus "See the conquering hero comes" from *Judas Maccabaeus* is far from a neutral expression of national allegiance. I am going to be discussing the deployment of Handel's oratorio at length in chapter 6, but a brief discussion of its allegorization of both internal and external conflict is helpful for understanding the complexity of this performance of patriotism. *Judas Maccabaeus* was originally, and continued to be, understood as an allegory for George II's victory over the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, but, as Ruth Smith has argued, it is an exceedingly complex and ambivalent expression of patriotism.¹⁴ At the center of Thomas Morrell's libretto is the counterintuitive allegorical connection between the Maccabees story and the Jacobite Rebellion in Handel's oratorio. In order to understand the allegory, it is crucial to recognize that the Jacobite Rebellion was widely understood to be part of a larger French threat to English political and religious liberty. In this allegory, the Duke of Cumberland maps onto Judas, and the alliance between Scottish Jacobites and the French becomes comparable to that of the alliance between the Hellenized Jews and their Syrian rulers. So in its original context, *Judas Maccabaeus* allegorizes the Jacobite Rebellion in order to repudiate the larger threat of French aggression and to argue for the necessity of purging not only schism but also forms of political reform that threaten to make incursions on traditional notions of English political liberty. What becomes portable, therefore, in subsequent performances of the oratorio, is its ability to call forth the anxious specter of French aggression and the supposedly

dire consequences of political apostasy or reform. And it is precisely this dramatization of disaster averted that fuels the oratorio's most patriotic moments.

In its deployment in the procession from the courthouse, "See the conquering hero comes" perfectly captures the anti-Gallic sentiments of virtually all of the observers, and the implicit critique of apostasy fits the opposition representation of the divisive nature of Palliser's charges. But the affiliated argument against reform is a particularly Whig bulwark against radical pro-American factions such as those abetted by the *General Advertiser*. In other words, this selection from *Judas Maccabaeus* allegorically attacks both Tory supporters of Sandwich, Palliser, and the Ministry and radical constituencies that want to use the Keppel trial to further their reformist agenda. It is doing battle on two fronts in order to consolidate Whig resistance to threats from both the Ministry and from the radical forces of street politics. As Roger has demonstrated, this has the important political effect of placing Whig objectives and desires in an ostensibly moderate middle position, and thus this kind of construction is crucial to the legitimation of the Rockingham critique of both the Ministry and the more rebellious pro-American factions in London.¹⁵

Despite the claims of his Whig supporters, Keppel's acquittal in January 1779 did not resolve the problem of disunity in the Royal Navy; if anything, the raucous celebrations pushed the supporters of the Ministry into more firmly entrenched positions. Admiral George Bridges Rodney's defeat of the Spanish fleet under Don Juan de Langara off Cape St. Vincent in 1780 was the first major naval victory after the Keppel-Palliser affair and should have been the object of illumination and mass celebration—especially because the unexpected capture of the Spanish fleet was evidence of a crisis averted. But Rodney's victories in 1780 generated little in the way of crowd response, except among supporters of the Admiralty and the Ministry. However, they did provide the occasion for a scathing critique of past celebrations, particularly those associated with Keppel's acquittal. Indeed, everything about the circulation of Rodney's victory in the public imagination was in dialogue with Keppel's enigmatic engagement with the French fleet in the summer of 1778.

This chapter explores the relationship between topicality and patriotic celebration in order to understand Hannah Cowley's innovative response to the problem of patriotic masculinity in this era. I consider one night at the theatre when a performance of Hannah Cowley's *The Belle's Stratagem* was interrupted by celebrants of Rodney's victory. Both the mainpiece and the afterpiece were modified to speak directly both to the king and queen, who were in attendance, and to an unspecified crowd that burst into the theatre during Cowley's play.

Thus, this performance offers an occasion to explore the power of topicality to mediate between the theatrical and the political world. What I hope to demonstrate is that analysis of this single performance opens new avenues for considering important plays both from the final phase of the war and from the period in the 1780s when Britain was reimagining its place in the Atlantic imperium. I offer a brief reading of Cowley's remediation of *The Belle's Stratagem* in her remarkable comedy *Which Is the Man?* in order to bring the question of its title to bear on the general sense of defeat following the fall of Yorktown in the autumn of 1781. And I conclude this chapter with a more extensive analysis of the kind of imperial future projected by George Colman's *Inkle and Yarico* by attending to the spectral presence of Admiral Rodney in the reconsolidation of masculinity in the postwar years.

Strategic Interruptions, or the Power of the Present

The Sky at Night

With some sense of how the opposition deployed the Keppel court-martial in its attack on the Ministry, the following occasional verse from the *Morning Post* for 2 March 1780 offers an important counternarrative in which the sky speaks, this time on behalf of the Ministry:

Occasioned by the strong AURORA BOREALIS that appeared on Tuesday
night

EPIGRAM

WHEN KEPPEL triumph'd, alias *ran away*,
What fires were kindled for that noble day!
When *Spain* is crushed, there's not a single blaze!
'Tis well—our citizens know when to praise;
I view their sottishness without a sigh,
For Heav'n, more just—*illuminates the SKY!*¹⁶

The poet here is speaking of Admiral Rodney's victory at Cape St. Vincent on 16 January 1780, which had been first reported on 26 February, and which had received a full Gazette Extraordinary on 29 February.¹⁷ As the poem indicates, news of Rodney's defeat of Don Langara was met with muted response in London. Parliament did not confer honors on the admiral, and illumination was sparse. That in itself was curious because the fate of Gibraltar, which was weathering one of the most vicious sieges in British military history, was in the balance.

Without Rodney's relief, Britain would have lost Gibraltar to the combined forces of France and Spain and, with it, access to the Mediterranean.¹⁸

Into this celebratory vacuum, one poet took it upon himself to thank Rodney and indict Keppel yet again:

RODNEY we thank thee, and altho' too brave,
 You shunn'd no shore, and fear'd no angry wave
 Altho' not waiting for the coming light,
 You fought it *handsomely* that very night;
 Tho' no fat citizen should yield you praise,
 No senate thank, no flattering window blaze;
 Unenvying leave, secure of endless fame
 To KEPPEL, and his friends their burning *shame!*¹⁹

By citing the phrase "handsomely" from Keppel's dispatch, the poet demonstrates that nothing at this stage in the war escaped factionalization.²⁰ As the poem suggests, the general lack of illumination—the traditional mode of celebration for naval victory—was even more palpable in light of the extraordinary celebrations for Keppel's acquittal, and the anti-Whig *Morning Post* was quick to interpret the contradiction as a sign of a social pathology:

To the People.

Friends and Fellow Citizens,

You have now a glorious opportunity to celebrate the praise of your brave Admiral Sir George Rodney, who has obtained a signal victory over the Spanish fleet. You have lately thrown the city of London into a blaze for victories *lost*, surely then you cannot refuse the honours due to victories *won*. . . . Having thus far but superficially treated on this subject, I shall now tell you very plainly, that Sir George's behaviour exacts a very particular notice at this time from you; for between faction, luxury, timidity, your country is brought to so low an ebb, that you are not only the scorn of nations from the British spirit being lulled into a lethargy, but are on the eve of being victimized among yourselves, by your open public divisions, and private animosities. For many years you have boasted of being rulers of the seas; but within a short time behold how you have fallen. . . . till now that Sir George Rodney has rescued the British flag from infamy.²¹

The inability of the public to distinguish between "victories *lost*" and "victories *won*" is presented as a symptom of national lethargy, and all the familiar themes from the Keppel-Palliser affair are reengaged. Most importantly, the correspon-

dent to the paper emphasizes that Britons are “on the eve of being victimized by yourselves,” thus arguing that Whig critiques of the Ministry and the Admiralty during and after the Keppel trial and the lack of public support for Rodney betray a lack of true patriotism.

The next day, the same paper pushed the attack even further by using Rodney’s victory and the muted celebrations as a salutary contrast to the Mischianza’s celebration of Howe’s dubious achievements. The anonymous correspondent takes the reader to a moment just after Rodney’s smaller victory over the Spanish at Cape Finisterre on 8 January, but before his decisive battle with Don Langara on 16 January. Rodney’s orders were for the Caribbean, but on the way he was ordered to relieve Gibraltar. His two engagements near the mouth of the Mediterranean were thus vital to the British resistance during the great siege of Gibraltar and preliminary to future engagement in West Indian waters. The correspondent is being quite specific about timing in order to emphasize not only the prematurity of the Mischianza but also the fact that the public has still not adequately commemorated Rodney’s recent victory:

Mr. Editor,

I most heartily rejoice in Admiral Rodney’s success; and think he has given us the best Gazette of any we have read since the commencement of the rebellion. But suppose that Sir G. Rodney, at his arrival at Gibraltar, on the credit of his having with eighteen ships, beat a squadron of eleven, had instituted for himself or got his Officers to institute for him, a *triumph*; in which, after decorating his ships, and manning all his shrouds, he had landed under the salute of cannon, and marched with all his officers in solemn procession, along a grand avenue formed by all the colours of the King’s regiments, and lined with all the troops of the garrison, through two triumphal arches, adorned with all kinds of naval trophies;—a *Nep-tune* standing on top of one, and a *Fame* on the other, holding out from her trumpet, in letters of light, *Thy laurels are immortal*, should we not be justly concerned, that so much merit should be disgraced by such a spectacle of vanity and folly, and wonder how a man of common sense could have been led into it? Yet all this farce of a triumph, and ten times more, was [acted] by the *two* HOWES at Philadelphia, in honour of themselves, without their having done any thing for the real service of their country.

Yours, &c. A.B.²²

For this critic, something was amiss in both the content and the timing of the Mischianza: the celebration of victory lost had eclipsed the celebration of victory

won, and thus his remarks resonate with the attack on the Keppel celebrations. This is important because, as I have already argued, both the Mischianza and the Keppel celebrations constitute critiques of the Ministry's prosecution of the war. In the former case, John André was subtly deploying the tropes of aristocratic sociability to suggest that Howe was being recalled too soon and that the entire approach to the rebellion was far too bellicose. In the latter case, Keppel's supporters were anything but subtle in their critique of the Admiralty. Taking their case to the streets, opposition constituencies marked their sympathy with the American cause. In a complex act of counterperformance, the Whigs presented themselves, through processions and through oratory, as a middle road between the Tories and those who would recognize not only American sovereignty abroad but also an expansion of the franchise at home.²³

Rodney's victory over the Spanish at Cape St. Vincent, therefore, allowed conservative voices in the *Morning Post* to link together seemingly disparate events as signs of a social pathology at variance with both the interests of the nation and the dictates of providential election. According to the previously quoted epigram, the "sottishness" of those who celebrated Keppel, but ignored Rodney, implies a kind of affective disorder in which the ability to make true value judgments is impaired. This undermines the task of government, and the speaker of the epigram takes solace in the fact that heaven recognizes Rodney's valor as evidenced by the aurora borealis on the evening of 29 February.

29 February 1780

It is to that night that I now wish to turn in earnest. That evening a theatregoer was presented with two options. Drury Lane was reviving *A Maid of the Oaks* after a three-year absence from the stage with Fanny Abington as Lady Bab Lardoon. Sheridan paired the play with *The Critic*, and thus the audience would have been subject to an essay of sorts on the manipulation of public opinion in the papers. The most famous scenes in both the mainpiece and the afterpiece involve detailed critiques of how the newspapers work both sides of a story to generate both private and public scandal. If Lady Bab and Puff offer mutually supporting sites for media archaeology, it is important to recognize that the plays' patriotic gestures are often at cross-purposes. As we have seen, *The Critic* is in many ways an attack on the kind of patriotic prophecy staged in plays that have their roots in Burgoyne's spectacle of nativist election. One way of reading this particular pairing of mainpiece and afterpiece is to suggest that Sheridan was actively deploying his own play to undermine the ostensible patriotism of

Burgoyne's now obsolete generic hybrid and was thus contributing to the public attack on Burgoyne that was still raging in Parliament and the press in the aftermath of Saratoga.

Or Sheridan was simply mobilizing his biggest moneymakers—Fanny Abington was sure to generate receipts, and *The Critic* was one of the most successful plays of the era—in order to counter the theatrical juggernaut currently running at Covent Garden: Hannah Cowley's *The Belle's Stratagem*. As Russell points out, Drury Lane was running as many of Fanny Abington's "Fine Lady" roles as possible all through the month of February 1780 in order to compete with the success of Cowley's comedy.²⁴ With Sheridan's election to Parliament as the member for Stafford in 1780, Hannah Cowley became the most significant writer of comedy for the remainder of the war. With a string of hits from *The Belle's Stratagem* (1780) to *Which is the Man?* (1782) to *A Bold Stroke for a Husband* (1783), her plays were in almost constant performance in this period. Her critical and commercial success bears comparison to Sheridan's own cluster of great comedies from *The Rivals* (1775) to *The School for Scandal* (1777) to *The Critic* (1779). And yet it is only recently that we are beginning to comprehend her stature. That stature was never lost on her contemporaries: the reviews of her plays are among the most favorable in the century, and her plays had a mass audience. Cowley's comedies of the latter years of the American war not only engaged with the crisis enveloping the empire in innovative ways but also offered an important set of criteria for imagining postwar sociability and subjectivity.

Hannah Cowley's *The Belle's Stratagem* opened on 22 February 1780 to great acclaim, four days before the first news of Rodney's victory at Cape St. Vincent and seven days before the night of the aurora borealis.²⁵ That night is significant not only because their Royal Majesties commanded a performance of *The Belle's Stratagem* with Arthur Murphy's *The Upholsterer* but also because the show was interrupted by one of the only recorded instances of celebration for Rodney's victory.²⁶ In short, it is an evening when the world outside the theatre permeated the world within, and the complex amalgam of sociability and representation bears close scrutiny. Here is the *Gazetteer's* account of the interruption:

The universal joy with which the public received the news of Admiral Rodney's victory, with the material additions which appeared in the Gazette Extraordinary, was particularly conspicuous at Covent Garden theatre on Monday evening, in the presence of their Majesties: Mr. Quick, in the new comedy, amongst other instances of his prescience, affirmed,

agreeable to the humourous stile of his character, that he had *foreseen*, if Admiral Rodney came up with the Spanish fleet he would play the devil with them. This was received with tumults of applause, in clapping and huzzaing, with mingled cries of distress from those who had rushed into the theatre, though the croud without-doors was still more numerous than those within. At the conclusion of the act the audience called for Rule Britannia, which was immediately played. Their Majesties and the royal children appeared to be particularly delighted with the scene; and our amiable Queen seemed hardly able to restrain herself from joining in the chorus. The event of Prince William's receiving the sword from the Spanish Admiral was mentioned by Mr. Lee Lewes, in the character of Razor in the Upholsterer, and received with equal warmth.²⁷

Perhaps the most important aspect of this passage is its equal interest in what happens on and in front of the stage. By recording how the entire house was infused with the joy attending Rodney's victory, the paper provides a brief glimpse of the political possibility of the present moment of performance.

The first clause of the passage asserts something that by now should be clear about theatrical experience itself in this period: namely, that the play is put on by and for readers of the daily papers. In this regard, the *Gazetteer* is extremely precise because it specifies that the "joy" felt among the audience arose from the news of victory and was heightened by the publication of the *Gazette Extraordinary*, which gave the specifics of the battle, earlier that day. Aside from firmly locating the source of topical knowledge and acknowledging its ubiquity among the spectators, this detail also reminds us of the degree to which *The Belle's Stratagem* itself deals with the circulation of information in the print media. In fact, much of the play's first scene involves the rake Courtall imparting the "news" to Saville—"the representative of noble old English manners"²⁸—and he immediately declares that it would fill three *Gazettes*.²⁹ While Saville is clearly looking for political and business news, Courtall condenses the society news into a tight whorl of scandal and insinuation that resembles nothing more than the *Morning Post*. The second scene goes further to recognize how the papers influence private reputation by unleashing Crowquill, a correspondent for something like the *Town and Country*, and clearly reminiscent of Snake in *A School for Scandal* or even Pamphlet in *The Upholsterer*, on Doricourt, who has just returned from the Continent, who, much like Dupeley in *The Maid of the Oaks*, is fascinated by foreign manners and beauty. By staging Crowquill's offer to buy gossip about Doricourt or his associates, Cowley, no less than Sheridan or Bur-

goyne, thematizes the perilous relationship between commerce, truth, and reputation in the daily and monthly press.

These details help us to establish what is arguably the most important quality of *The Belle's Stratagem*. It is a play resolutely about the present that is constructed from recognizable precursor scripts. Its strict adherence to the present moment is encoded directly into the sets themselves. The set paintings of Lincoln's Inn in act 1, the auction room in act 3, and, above all, the Pantheon in act 4 were all praised for their verisimilitude. In fact, the last-named was deemed too accurate by some observers: "The Pantheon is a very fine scene though it partakes too much of that cold and correct air, inseparable from so regular a building, and is by no means so well adapted to give the joyous sensations of a scene illuminated in a more familiar stile."³⁰

The critic here is arguing that the attempt to replicate the Pantheon was doomed to fail and thus becomes a distraction.³¹ That distraction should give us pause because the impetus to document the present pleasures of the metropolis operates in tension with the pleasure of afforded by the play's reworking of its famous precursors in the field of comedy. As its title announces, it is based on George Farquhar's *The Beaux's Stratagem*; its primary plot device—the stratagem—is adapted from *She Stoops to Conquer*; and it replicates characters and situations from *The School for Scandal* and *The Maid of the Oaks*. As Lisa Freeman and others have argued, this means, at the very least, that audiences for Cowley's plays were continually negotiating the history of English comedy itself.³² And, as Erin Isikoff has argued, this negotiation is crucial for Cowley's particular style of intervention in the public sphere.³³ In her overview of the play, Russell states, "From its outset, . . . *The Belle's Stratagem* signals that it is concerned with the same social phenomena as *The School for Scandal*—the expansion and feminization of public culture, particularly through print, and the implications of this for the institutions of marriage, the family and the state—and that it will be exploring these topics through a remediation or remaking of the tropes situations and character types of Sheridan's comedy."³⁴ Put simply, Sheridan's comedies work primarily in the zone of critique, and they are aimed at the excesses of gender performance associated with the fashionable world. Cowley takes many of Sheridan's situations and reorients them to generate affirmative possibilities. As Russell, Kowaleski-Wallace, and Anderson argue, these affirmations are clearly aimed at opening up potential spaces for women's agency in the public sphere, and for that reason Cowley's plays represent the very sites of cultural opprobrium—the masquerade and the rout—as zones of sociability where women can modify the gender roles ascribed to them.³⁵

Recent scholarship has done much to further our understanding of how Cowley's work contributes to the debates surrounding women's roles in the public sphere, but far less attention has been paid to the men in her plays. Anderson carefully documents the progress of Cowley's nationalism across the full panoply of her plays, and, as she demonstrates, national character is essential to the erotic economy on stage. After all, Letitia Hardy's stratagem is aimed at correcting the fashionable Doricourt's taste for foreign women; thus the play's most patriotic moments, like those of *The Maid of the Oaks*, are all enacted in the realm of eros. What is fascinating is that Cowley, in *The Belle's Stratagem*, deploys masquerade as a site for exploring specifically nonpatriotic identities. In act 4, Letitia not only condenses exotic French and Italian femininity in her performance as the Incognita but also indicates that, in order to clinch the desire of her beloved,

then, I'd be any thing—and all!—Grave, gay, capricious—the soul of whim, the spirit of variety—live with him in the eye of fashion, or in the shade of retirement—change my country, my sex,—feast with him in an Esquimaux hut, or a Persian pavilion—join him in the victorious wardance on the borders of Lake Ontario, or sleep to the soft breathings of the flute in the cinnamon groves of Ceylon—dig with him in the mines of Golconda, or enter the dangerous precincts of the Mogul's Seraglio—cheat him of his wishes, and overturn his empire to restore the Husband of my Heart to the blessings of Liberty and Love. (4.1.59)

Beth Kowaleski-Wallace has read this passage as an important expression of late eighteenth-century cosmopolitanism, and it would seem to presage a great deal about the performativity of late eighteenth-century subjectivity. But it is important to recognize first that Letitia's stratagem and the putative malleability of her personality are persuasive devices aimed at forcing Doricourt, and, by extension, Letitia to choose true English femininity. In other words, by demonstrating that she is both willing and able to be "any thing," Letitia separates herself from the very "things" she replicates. That these things are all on the periphery of the empire and in each case under dubious control—raising Pontiac's rebellion and the least secure Indian holdings is hardly comforting—should not go unnoticed, because when we get to the final act and Letitia restages this offer to be "any thing," suddenly the question of secure ownership becomes paramount.

Because of her prior assertion that she would adopt any manner of alterity, the revelation in act 5 that Letitia and the Incognita are one and the same forces

the audience to consider the relationship between nation and empire in extraordinarily intimate terms. And it also turns the entire problem of self-other relations into a question of choice:

LET: You see I *can* be any thing; chuse then my character—your Taste shall fix it. Shall I be an *English Wife*?—or, breaking from the bonds of Nature and Education, step forth to the world in all the captivating glare of Foreign Manners?

DOR: You shall be nothing but yourself—nothing can be captivating that you are not. I will not wrong your penetration, by pretending that you won my heart at the first interview; but you have now my whole soul—your person, your face, your mind, I would not exchange for those of any other Woman breathing. (5.5.81)

Letitia accrues erotic value, first, by performing otherness in the dress of the Incognita and, then, by declaring that she will go further and cross the social, cultural, and racial distinctions that distinguish Britons from their colonial subjects. But strangely it is precisely this capacity to perform as the other that will “restore the Husband of my Heart to the blessings of Liberty and Love” (4.1.59). Her value lies not simply in the capacity for exotic performance, but rather in her capacity to restore agency to her lover. When Letitia asks Doricourt to choose her identity and he decides that he will attach himself to an English wife, he opts for an identity that subsumes all others. Because she can be “any thing,” she is now valuable to him as English. This is why he expresses his desire in such curiously negative terms: “You shall be nothing but yourself—nothing can be captivating that you are not.” In terms of national identity, this statement allegorically resolves the divergent meanings of imperium itself. As Pocock has argued, the distinction between empire as defined by the borders of the kingdom and that defined by the reach of British power across the globe was the source of recurrent anxiety throughout the century.³⁶ Although here rendered in terms of love, Cowley’s solution to the problem is as elegant as it is timely: the future of desire lies in the acquisition of the commodity that can be all commodities. The English wife is the global feminine, and Doricourt accedes to the position of possessing all. The only way for that to work is for the empire to be subsumed into the national self. It is at once a Whig fantasy of the propagation of Liberty and a Tory fantasy of national election. One could argue further that both are species of retroactive anticipation in which the present moment is linked to the era of British imperialism after 1759. As we will see, this resonates with the selection of the afterpiece for this night at the theatre.

What this reading of the stratagem and its resolution suggests is that Cowley's play is already deeply involved in the debates surrounding the American war. But her focus is less on the prosecution of the war than on the mutually constitutive relationship between styles of sociability in the metropole and visions of the imperium that might support them. As Russell concludes, "By invoking the specific contexts of the Pantheon and the cosmopolitanism associated with it, Cowley is also able to amplify this fantasy in terms of a discourse of empire, locating the masquerade woman, and implicitly fashionable sociability, as emblematic of imperialism's imaginative energies and outreach. As such, she counters representations of fashion and luxury as signs of imperial decadence."³⁷

This is why the interruption of *The Belle's Stratagem* on the evening of 29 March is so important, because suddenly a play, which allegorized the complexities of imperial rule in terms of erotic value, was directly addressing specific events and people. Now this intervention was no doubt in the hands of the players themselves, but their choice of how this intervention should be staged is startling. The first direct discussion of Rodney's victory is also the first key moment in the Masquerade scene. After a brief encounter between unnamed Masks and a Mountebank, which establishes that the Masquerade can be a place where one speaks truth to power, act 4, scene 1, opens with the play's most explicitly patriotic and topical speech:

Enter Hardy, in the Dress of Isaac Mendoza

HARDY: Why, isn't it a shame to see so many stout well-built Young Fellows, masquerading, and cutting *Couranta's* here at home—instead of making the French cut capers to the tune of your Cannon—or sweating the Spaniards with an English *Fandango*?—I foresee the end of all this. (4.1.50)

This scene was one of the most famous in the play, and this is the place where John Quick would most likely have inserted Hardy's prophecy regarding Rodney's victory over Langara.³⁸ According to the *Gazetteer*, Hardy's prophecy generated "tumults of applause, in clapping and huzzaing."³⁹ With a crowd primed by the Gazette Extraordinary earlier that day, perhaps the mere mention of Rodney was enough to set off the audience. But there is something deeply unsettling here. Hardy's character, in the words of one reviewer, "is drawn a very whimsical and comic assemblage of short-sightedness and imaginary foresight."⁴⁰ Hardy is a false prophet, rarely able to see what is before him; thus his prescience regarding Rodney, if judged by his other predictions, should be in error.

To complicate matters further, Hardy is speaking in the guise of Isaac Mendoza, a role that Quick had made his own in Sheridan's *The Duenna*. So we have an elaborate metatheatrical joke in which a character from Sheridan's comic opera speaks in the masquerade of Cowley's comedy. The joke is made possible by the casting of Quick in the part, and I think there is much to be made of his performance here. As noted previously, if this particular speech was simply spoken by Hardy, it would be mired in error and thus would signify the opposite of what it suggests: namely, that the men at this masquerade would be incapable of vanquishing their foes and that Rodney would not succeed against the Spanish fleet. But in the guise of Mendoza, Hardy makes an unabashed call for "Young Fellows" to give up social pleasures in favor of martial endeavors and then predicts their success by declaring what everyone already knows, that Rodney has been victorious. In other words, the stability of both Hardy's patriotic invocation and his encomium to Rodney relies on the adoption of the Jewish dress and mannerisms of a character from Cowley's competitor's play.

Before addressing what it means for a Jew to express patriotic prescience, we need to consider what it means for Cowley to bring Sheridan back to the stage in this remediated form. In *The School for Scandal* and *The Camp*, Sheridan had aligned the excesses of aristocratic sociability with the poor showing of Britain in the American war. Thus, to have one of his characters suddenly turn up at a masquerade in the Pantheon ventriloquizing his own position is ironic enough. It implies that only at a masquerade will the truth of Sheridan's critique be expressed. Furthermore, during the Keppel-Palliser affair, he was among the most conspicuous of Keppel's advocates. At this point, Sheridan is in Parliament, a Whig critic of both North's Ministry and the Admiralty, and as such he voted against conferring special honors for Rodney. Thus, he is one of the politicians under attack by the *Morning Post* and, I would argue, by the cast of *The Belle's Stratagem* on the evening in question. The full power of that attack relies on a recognition of what it means for Quick to be performing as Mendoza. As many critics of *The Duenna* have recognized, Mendoza practices a style of foresight all of his own. In his actions, he consistently brings about the opposite of what he intends, and in his speeches, he reveals to the audience a future about which he is completely unaware.⁴¹ As Charles Dibdin notes, "Shewing beforehand how clearly he shall himself be taken in by his different attempts to deceive others, is the most artful species of anticipation that ever was practised, and shews a judgement of theatrical effect powerful, new and extraordinary."⁴²

So what does it mean for the expression of patriotic sentiment and the certainty of victory to be coming from someone the audience associates with ironic

self-entrapment? I would simply suggest that Hardy's tendency toward false prophecy is replaced by Mendoza's propensity to reveal unwittingly the true future that he does not understand. The species of anticipation, when deployed by Cowley in *The Belle's Stratagem* allows her to lampoon Sheridan's theatrical critique of aristocratic sociability. The addition of new lines by Quick prophesying what the audience already knew to have happened was a way to attack Sheridan and, by extension, his friends' critique of the Ministry and Admiralty. The sophistication of the temporal game is notable: it is not only anticipation itself as a theatrical and political device that is being deployed in such effective ways but also the patriotic desire for a future already known that is enacted here.

This helps to explain the divided response to Quick's intervention, for, as the *Gazetteer* notes, the applause was accompanied by "mingled cries of distress from those who had rushed into the theatre, though the croud without-doors was still more numerous than those within."⁴³ It is a shame that we cannot give a more detailed account of this distressed crowd; the papers are silent on any kind of demonstration or street celebration in the environs of Covent Garden. What interests me is that this encounter between the world outside and the world within the theatre coincides with Quick's intervention, which in itself blends the theatrical and the extratheatrical in such a way that the cascade of theatrical reception trumps the world of politics. Or, to be even more biting, theatrical Sheridan is momentarily staged to attack Sheridan and his political associates. That this all results in momentary victory for Cowley, Covent Garden, and supporters of the Ministry is perhaps best indicated by the fact that the entire masquerade scene, the play's most theatrical moment, is supplemented by a call for "Rule Britannia," which was immediately played and sung, by among others, the queen.⁴⁴ There is nothing special about such a call or such a response, but the timing is significant. Quick's remark comes at the inception of the masquerade, but "Rule Britannia" is called for at the masquerade's close not at the moment in act 5 when Doricourt declares that Letitia will be an English wife, nor at the moment when the play ends and Doricourt rejects "*foreign Graces*" in favor of "the Grace of [English] Modesty" (5.5.82). This implies that it is not simply the reference to Rodney, or the implicit lampooning of Sheridan, that prompts patriotic demonstration, but rather the enactment of the masquerade scene itself. Furthermore, this substantiates Russell's claim, and my expansion on it, that Cowley's play counters representations of fashion and luxury as signs of imperial decadence by making specific scenes of fashionable sociability "emblematic of imperialism's imaginative energies and outreach."⁴⁵ Quick's supplementation of Cowley's script pushes the argument one step further by

suggesting that Cowley's style of comedy and specifically her remediation of Sheridan have the capacity to sublimate political and theatrical adversaries to such a degree that they can restore "Liberty" in its time of crisis.

We have seen this sublation before. It is effectively the same gesture that gives the "Epigram Occasioned by the strong AURORA BOREALIS that appeared on Tuesday night" its rhetorical force, only in that case it was God who remediates the illuminations of the Keppel celebration into a natural expression of approbation for Rodney. And the less-than-subtle transition from artificial illumination to the natural heavenly glow of the aurora borealis has its counterpart in the highly complex shift from theatrical utterance to political performance when Quick supplements Cowley's lines. Suddenly, Cowley's performative struggle with Sheridan, which turns on competing forms of futurity and irony, transforms into a political act whose force lies in the fact that the future has momentarily come true in this room in the present.

Staging a Gazette Extraordinary

And yet, as the *Gazetteer* and the players themselves recognize, that present is thoroughly the construct of a mediated past whose "reality" lies in the material fact of the publication of the Gazette Extraordinary that morning. As noted earlier, *The Belle's Stratagem* is deeply concerned with remediation both in print and in the theatre, but on this particular evening at Covent Garden, by command of their Royal Majesties, this issue was heightened more than usual because the afterpiece was Arthur Murphy's *The Upholsterer*. As discussed in the introduction, Murphy's farce is about a pathological relation to the news and specifically news arising from the early anxious moments of the Seven Years' War. Its main character, Quidnunc the Upholsterer, goes bankrupt because he is obsessed by political rumor and gossip pertaining to the fate of British actions on the Continent, in India at Chandernagore, and in North America. Quidnunc's obsession is abetted by Razor the barber and Pamphlet the hack journalist, but he is saved by his long lost son Rovewell, who pays down his father's debts and arranges for his friend Bellmour to marry the upholsterer's daughter. Significantly, Murphy's play postulates a form of retirement where one could simply pursue the news, without any economic and social obligations. When the play was revived, it was generally to satirize the excessive influence of the daily press, and thus the details of Razor's reports would be changed to fit the present moment. The performance of *The Upholsterer* on the night of 29 February 1780 was no different, for Mr. Lee Lewes, who had played the foppish Flutter in the mainpiece, in the

role of Razor narrated “the event of Prince William’s receiving the sword from the Spanish Admiral.”⁴⁶

The important thing about this move on Lee Lewes’s part is that the news being reported, namely the conferral of Don Langara’s sword to Prince William, which had been printed in the *Gazette Extraordinary* that morning, is fundamentally different from the kind of information passed on by Razor in Murphy’s play. Everything Razor imparts to Quidnunc is hearsay, and all of it suggests that the papists will get the better of Protestant Britain in the Seven Years’ War. This is because Razor suffers from a kind of pathological patriotism in which he is always imagining “Dear Old England” suffering at the hands of the House of Bourbon, and he is likewise certain of its demise: “Luxury will be the ruin of us all.”⁴⁷ He is hardly a reliable messenger of news of naval victory, and yet this is precisely who is called on to narrate the formal sign of Spanish defeat of Cape St. Vincent.

Again it may be that simply any reference to Rodney’s victory would generate applause, but this is a play in which the West Indies figures quite prominently. At this point, it is important to remember that Rodney was en route to the West Indies when he received orders to relieve Gibraltar. His victory over the Spanish is inextricably tied to British naval operations in the Caribbean. Quidnunc’s son Rovewell has made his fortune as a planter. His return renders his father’s financial embarrassments moot, and he persuades Quidnunc to give his daughter to Bellmour. In other words, the play’s economic and sexual complications are resolved by the injection of capital from the West Indies and by a strong assertion of the familial connection between colony and metropole. Significantly, the revelation of this stabilizing colonial influence is figured in terms of masquerade:

QUID: Why, you have my blessing Boy, I am heartily glad to see thee—I did not know you again, you’re in such a Kind of Disguise—mayhap now, you can tell—why you look very well—I’m glad to see thee, *Jack*, I am indeed—pray now—mayhap, I say, you can tell what the *Spaniards* are doing in the Bay of *Honduras*? (2.4.48)

Like Letitia in *The Belle’s Stratagem*, Rovewell is disguised as himself, for he is both Planter and Englishman, protector of the father and the father’s son, foreigner and family. In the context of its performance in February 1780, Rovewell’s stabilizing influence, with its implicit assertion of the security of the relation between Britain and its colonial holdings in the Caribbean, amounts to wishful thinking. But it is a fantasy of stability firmly linked to a past pattern of initial

setback and final victory over the French and Spanish in North America and the West Indies twenty years earlier.

It is difficult to overlook the topicality of Quidnunc's speeches in this context. The audience, like Quidnunc, had been scouring the papers in the days prior to discover how the Spaniards were doing at sea. By the time they were watching this play, they were well aware that Gibraltar had been relieved, an outcome vital not only to the security of the British Isles but also to the Caribbean theatre of the war. Rodney's victory ensured that naval operations in the Caribbean, which would play a crucial part in the closing phases of the war, would focus on the French. Rovewell keeps putting Quidnunc off and will not answer questions such as "How many ships of the Line has the Admiral with him" (2.4.48), and thus the question of the Caribbean is forestalled to a point after the events of the play, when Quidnunc will retire into a state where he does nothing but contemplate the news. This is because it is crucially the future of the war currently being fought. By staging *The Upholsterer* on this day, a different kind of prophecy from either Hardy or Mendoza's is put into gear: one that asserts naval supremacy over the Spaniards in the present, which retroactively looks back to a moment of uncertainty after the execution of Admiral Byng when the Royal Navy was about to assert its dominance, and, I would argue, which optimistically looks forward to that which cannot yet be declared, namely a new era of naval supremacy in the Caribbean.

So why not have Rovewell celebrate Rodney's victory and narrate the conferral of Don Langara's sword to Prince William? The answer has to do first with the politics of anticipation. If this declaration is made by Rovewell, the play is less able to activate the anxiety that it will then later quell. The news of Rodney's victory needs to be separated from the resolution of the marriage plot and the cancellation of Quidnunc's debts. Fortunately, the play's other business—namely, Quidnunc's interactions with Razor and Pamphlet—provide ample opportunity for a different kind of intervention. The players opted for a strategy based on the politics of mediation that this chapter has been at pains to argue is integral to this period of theatre history. By having Razor speak the news, Murphy's critique of mediation comes to the fore, except it is turned inside out. Rather than being a force eating away at the vigor of the nation, the papers, through their mediation of the news, are able to consolidate national character. But where and how this consolidation takes place is crucial. My sense is that when Lee Lewes stands before the audience and relates the events from that day's *Gazette Extraordinary* in the character of the pathological patriot, an identificatory mechanism is activated that temporarily supersedes the claims of fiction. For audience

members critical of the Ministry, he embodies the man concerned with “Dear Old England”; for audience members loyal to the Ministry, he is a source of solid information vindicating the prosecution of the war. What is crucial is that Razor’s obsession is tied to that of his audience not by anything he does or expresses, but rather by the fact that the audience itself had a preexisting affective relation to Rodney’s victory, which has its source in the print media.

The players at Covent Garden, on the evening of the aurora borealis, were able to supplement two scripts already attentive to the power of remediation in such a way as to focus the specific patriotic emotions already generated by the press. Razor’s mania for England is shared by the audience because of its mania for reading, but significantly its expression lives and dies in the performative moment where the audience recognizes its shared emotional investment in the news. The moment of performance is a nodal link that demonstrates a cohesiveness that could only ever be fleeting in print. It is here that the medial distinction between print and performance is most acute: the latter can momentarily counteract the atomizing qualities of the former, but the very autoethnographic qualities that these plays are exploring rely on the information made accessible by commercial print culture. The night of 29 February 1780 offers a particularly charged example of the recursive loop linking the present moment of political performance and representation’s historicity, and the reason why such moments of performance are recurrently necessary. They are the aesthetic moments where the public can feel, not just postulate, its cohesion.

Venus and Mars, or Our Future Needs

The Belle’s Stratagem is a play in which the future of the empire is allegorized as a question about desire. For Doricourt, the central question he must resolve is, “Which is the woman?” As we have seen, that question turns out to be highly complex not only because Cowley’s dramaturgical practice is so citational but also because the play is so attentive to the performance of subjectivity. The question, “Which is the woman?” provokes anxiety, and hence comic interest, because the object of Doricourt’s desire has the capacity to be “any thing.” That anxiety is staged in order for it to be subsumed into a fantasy of English femininity capable of sublating all difference into itself—in short, a phantasmatic construct that allows Doricourt to have everything by owning just this one thing: Englishness. In the winter of 1780, the resolution of the anxiety at the heart of the question can serve, as Russell argues, as a ground for optimism.

One year later, when Cowley staged the cognate question *Which is the Man?*, all such optimism was gone. Cowley's comedy opened at Covent Garden on 9 February 1782 shortly after news of the fall of Yorktown reached London. In a series of disastrous strategic decisions, the British military lost the advantage gained by its capture of Charleston by attempting to cut off the Continental army in Virginia. Rear Admiral Sir Thomas Graves's strategic loss to the French at the Battle of the Chesapeake in early September 1781 meant that Cornwallis's troops at Yorktown were effectively stranded. The British surrendered more than five thousand troops to the combined American and French forces on 19 October 1781. Britain would pursue no further significant military activity in the thirteen colonies, and the war was effectively lost. All that remained was the repulsion of now imminent threats to British holdings in the Caribbean. North's Ministry fell, and all attention was focused on achieving the least disadvantageous peace terms not only with the Americans but also with the French and the Spanish. In this section of the chapter, I want to briefly look at why Cowley chose to present her encomium to British military masculinity at the height of its abjection. As critics recognized at the time, Cowley's comedy was a remediation of *The Belle's Stratagem*, and thus she was bringing her citational practice to bear on her own work. The *London Courant* called her heroine, Lady Bell Bloomer, the "second part of Miss Hardy."⁴⁸ What I want to suggest is that by reactivating the character types and situations from *The Belle's Stratagem*, Cowley was not only offering an autocritique of wishful thinking but also sketching a new path for the consolidation of masculinity for the postwar years.

Misty Anderson's authoritative reading of the play carefully demonstrates that "the economic and ideological implications of this post-revolutionary but not yet postwar moment fracture Cowley's nationalism."⁴⁹ Anderson is very attentive to how the play continually points to the preferable treatment of women in France and argues that the play's marriages fail to resolve the societal tensions they allegorize. I concur with this reading but want to pursue the question posed by the title further. *Which is the Man?* is explicitly aimed at parsing martial from foppish masculinity. As the *London Courant* emphasized, the play's ostensible hero, Lord Sparkle, was "Lord Foppington modernized."⁵⁰ Sparkle styles himself the most fashionable man in London and he has designs on the widow Lady Bell Bloomer. A woman of fashion, the mourning Lady Bell is yearning to put her weeds aside and remarry. This transition from mourning widow to potential bride is staged in the fifth act in which Lady Bell throws a rout to mark her second coming into society. Lady Bell makes her availability well known, and, as one might expect, Lord Sparkle not only assumes that he is her

most obvious and valued suitor but also is assured that his acquisition of her hand will be enacted for all of society at the party.

Cowley's exploration of Sparkle's predatory narcissism is both reminiscent of myriad fop roles through the century and a highly innovative construction, because his character is carefully aligned with errant governance.⁵¹ Much is made in the early scenes of his corruption, but his suspect qualities go beyond gender insubordination and impinge on the affairs of state.⁵² Anderson notes that "his unscrupulous election procedures and sexual conduct signify a breakdown of the English political system."⁵³ The excessive gaming of Sparkle and his similarly dissipated aristocratic friends threatens the very notion of landed property and all that this entails for the stability of the British social structure. Rarely had the fop role been deployed in this way, and some papers even suggested that Cowley was satirizing the profligate Prince of Wales. Nothing in the script makes this clear—such a move clearly would not pass the Lord Chamberlain—but numerous papers commented on Sparkle's costume and declared the connection to the Prince.⁵⁴

This brings a political overtone to the entire erotic economy of the play that suddenly renders Lady Bell's widowhood quite topical. If she is Letitia Hardy continued, then she has lost her Doricourt. The dissolution of this relationship, here figured by the dead Lord Bloomer, allegorizes the loss of the American colonies for post-Yorktown Britain. When we consider how the marriage between Letitia and Doricourt resolved the conflicting claims of imperial and national sovereignty, it is revealing to discover that Lady Bell's prior marriage was not a happy one.⁵⁵ Despite the loss of her first husband, and the insinuation that the relationship would have broken her heart, Lady Bell's desire—whether we understand it in sexual or imperial terms—is not reined in, nor does Cowley stage a retroactive critique of women's fashionable sociability. Rather, it is through Lady Bell's fashionable pursuits and her erotic agency that she is able to discern the man with which she can build a future.

That man is not Lord Sparkle. He is rather Lord Sparkle's protégé Beauchamp. Full of fantasies of martial grandeur culled from the ancients, Beauchamp desires to be a soldier, and Sparkle procures a commission for him. This largesse is carefully calculated to make Beauchamp obligated to Sparkle, and even though he knows that Beauchamp is in love with Lady Bell, Sparkle torments him by making Beauchamp act as his go-between with her. Likewise, Lady Bell torments Beauchamp—both in his interview with her in act 4, scene 1, and in act 5—in order to humiliate Sparkle, but in the process discovers that she loves the earnest soldier and ultimately chooses him as her husband.

What interests me is the way that Cowley settles the marriage and the question of property, for it is a precise reversal of the closing scene of *The Belle's Stratagem* in which Letitia asks Doricourt to choose her identity from the panoply of options she represents. In *Which is the Man?*, Lady Bell first chooses Beauchamp over Sparkle, and then is presented with a second choice. Fitzherbert, the Saville character in this play, offers to make Beauchamp his heir:

FITZ: Incorrigible man!—But I have done with *you*.—Beauchamp has answered all my hopes, and the discernment of this charming woman, in rewarding him, merits the happiness that awaits her; and that I may give the fullest sanction to her choice, I declare *him* heir to my estate. This, I know, is a stroke your Lordship did not expect.

BEAUCH: And was it then to you, Sir!—The tumults of my gratitude—

FITZ: Your conduct has completely rewarded me; and in adopting you— (5.1.54)

If we understand Sparkle to be the embodiment of aristocratic dissipation and governmental corruption, then the conferral of property from Fitzherbert to the soldier Beauchamp amounts to a validation not only of Beauchamp's enactment of civic virtue but also of the military. And that validation locates the blame for the loss of the American war firmly in the realm of politics.

This is why Lady Bell's interruption of this homosocial link between "noble Old England's" representative and the meritorious young soldier is so important:

LADY BELL: (*interrupting*) Oh, I protest against that!—our union would then appear a prudent, *sober* business, and I should lose the credit of having done a mad thing for the sake of the man—my heart prefers.

FITZ: To you I resign him with pleasure: his fate is in your hands.

LADY BELL: Then he shall continue a soldier—one of those whom Love and his Country detain to guard her dearest, *last* possessions.

BEAUCH: Love and my Country! Yes, ye shall divide my heart!—Animated by such passions, our forefathers were invincible; and if we wou'd preserve the freedom and independence they obtain'd for us, we must imitate their virtues. (5.1.54)

Lady Bell, like Doricourt, determines the identity of her spouse, and her decision is complex. As Anderson recognizes, by keeping him as a soldier she places him

in a position of economic inferiority.⁵⁶ But this does not attend to Lady Bell's reason for her decision: she needs someone to guard the dearest, *last* possessions of both Love and Country, namely herself and what Pocock refers to as the limited realm of Britain itself. In other words, what is needed are soldiers, not gentry. At this point in history, when Britain has lost the Revolutionary War but is still prosecuting the global war with America's allies, the chief object is to ensure a favorable peace and protect the nation itself. As the second Letitia Hardy, Lady Bell figures for Britain, but now one severed from some portion of its empire; and thus "Love" and "Country" are mutually constitutive objects of desire. In fact, they are figures for one another. Therefore the division that appears to surface in Beauchamp's speech is actually an amplification. I would argue that it is this amplification that opens onto Beauchamp's invocation of the civic virtues of his forefathers.

In the face of Britain's uncertain position, Cowley signals the brittleness of national ideology and the disturbing uncertainty of the future of the empire. The play concludes with Sparkle still able to wreak havoc on the social fabric, and it is not at all certain that Beauchamp will be successful. But she also isolates two key styles of political agency, which must come together in order to meet the future needs of the nation and its empire. Lady Bell must retain the capacity for choice, so that she can finish her accession to political and social responsibility. And her future husband must attempt to give substance to his adoption of the tropes of civic virtue. This latter point is crucial because Beauchamp is all potential. Disconnected from the reverses sustained by the British military throughout the war, he represents simultaneously a new beginning and a wishful link to a more glorious past. For all his classical posturing, Beauchamp is untried in war, and he must prove that he can imitate the virtues of his invincible forefathers. But Cowley has established both the situation and the desire for the subsumption of soldier and politician into such a stance. In a remarkable act of restraint, she did not overstep her historical situation and precipitously bridge the gap between potential martial hero and true statesman. Rather, the play projects a very specific chronology for the future: the desire for civic virtue can be satisfied only by the enactment of martial heroism, and only then can the hero accede to the status of statesman. In the final section of this chapter, I want to follow the theatrical afterlife of this desire into the Caribbean itself by looking, first, at the representations of Rodney's West Indian career and, second, at his spectral presence in one of the most successful plays of the 1780s, George Colman's *Inkle and Yarico*. Colman not only answers Cowley's question "Which is

the Man?," but also explores precisely what must be done to fulfill the potential encapsulated in Beauchamp. As we will see, Colman's prosthetic strategies come with a number of disturbing corollaries.

West Indian Futures *Spoken from the Sky*

In the dying phases of the American war, one event was able to generate unabashed celebration in every town and city in Britain. Admiral George Bridges Rodney's spectacular victory over Admiral de Grasses at Les Saintes on 12 April 1782 was both tactically innovative and strategically crucial. Breaking the French line preserved British colonial holdings in the West Indies and thus established a breakwater of sorts against the overwhelming tide of defeat in the Atlantic. And this victory over the French navy gave the British a modicum of bargaining power in the negotiations that ended the American war. Timothy Jenks has recently discussed the importance of naval celebration to national identity in the late eighteenth century, but it is hardly an exaggeration to state that the widespread illuminations and public demonstration of loyalty for Rodney's heroism not only allowed Britons to reconfigure overall defeat as a momentary victory but also provided the groundwork for the political reconstitution of the navy in future years.⁵⁷ However, there was an ancillary development that was no less important to the recalibration of imperial identity. The preservation of the West Indies as colonies of Britain meant that Britain was in full possession of an exemplary site of political and moral shame, which would prove extraordinarily useful, if not necessarily profitable, over the next twenty years. As Christopher Leslie Brown has brilliantly argued, the struggle against the slave trade and its eventual abolition in 1807 were tied to a complex reconfiguration of Britain as a morally exemplary power.⁵⁸ By abolishing the trade, Britain could claim moral superiority over precisely the political constituency that had so forcefully called the morality of Britain's imperial rule into question. In short, the retention of the West Indian colonies provided a space for social and cultural reconstitution, a place where empire in the Atlantic can or could be imagined in a new way. These islands were revalued precisely because their history of horrific oppression offered a background from which to figure forth the future.

Admiral George Rodney's fame is inextricably tied to his service in the West Indies from 1779 to 1782. His victory at Les Saintes at the end of this period played a decisive role in how he was remembered, because the early phase of

command was marked by controversy and recrimination. A notorious gambler, Rodney spent much of the war plagued by debt, and much of his action was perceived through this lens. Although he was following orders, his capture of St. Eustatius from the Dutch at the end of 1781 was widely criticized as nothing short of avarice.⁵⁹ Fellow officers and the daily papers accused Rodney of subordinating strategic concerns to his desire for prize money:

The capture of the island and the ending of the trade had been a priority of the government. Shining success that it seemed to be, the capture quickly soured the relationships of Rodney and Hood, and Rodney was accused of losing all sense of the strategic priorities of his command in the dazzle of the wealth that had been captured. The burden of Hood's argument centred on the stationing of ships—Hood's squadron—to intercept any French reinforcement from Europe. Hood wanted to be far to windward of Martinique, Rodney wanted to keep Fort Royal blockaded to prevent any attack on the homeward convoy of booty from the island. In the event the covering of Fort Royal proved illusory for much of the wealth that Rodney acquired in the West Indies was lost to the French when the convoy on which it was shipped was intercepted by La Motte Picquet in the western approaches.⁶⁰

Critiques of Rodney's command accelerated in the ensuing months not only because the capture of St. Eustatius was ultimately fruitless but also because of three crucial errors of judgment:

While it was common practice to remove ships from the Caribbean with the approach of the hurricane season, and it was known that De Grasse intended to send a force to North America, Rodney failed to anticipate De Grasse's move or to make an informed estimate as to the force he would take. Second, there was a singular failure to send adequate and timely intelligence to Thomas Graves, the naval commander in North America. Finally, the reinforcement eventually sent was small in number and late in dispatch. Twenty-two ships of the line were potentially available but this number was dissipated to fourteen.⁶¹

These errors directly contributed to De Grasse's victory at Chesapeake, which in turn was integrally tied to the defeat of Cornwallis at Yorktown. In short, Rodney was in part responsible for two of the worst reverses of the American war.

Significantly, Rodney was in England when news of the defeat of Chesapeake Bay and the surrender of Yorktown reached London. In ill health, Rodney had

left the Caribbean theatre on 1 August 1781 and was convalescing in Bath. He was immediately enveloped in the ensuing recriminations, and as Breen notes, “His claims to ill health as the cause for his return were not well received—‘had it come about,’ wrote the *Public Advertiser*, ‘thru action then everyman would have regretted the impaired health of the Admiral; but none finds himself interested in the fate of the storekeeper’ (24 Sept 1781).”⁶² At this point in his career, the invalid admiral was associated, on the one hand, with disastrous failures of strategic judgment and, on the other, with a desire for prize money bordering on the corrupt.⁶³ Had Rodney not returned to the Caribbean later in the year, and had he not been so successful at Les Saintes, then he would likely have become of an exemplary figure for all that was wrong with the British navy during this period. But his action at Les Saintes prevented this from happening, and thus it needs to be understood as a moment of both personal and national redemption.⁶⁴ Rodney’s redemption at Les Saintes involved the erasure of his association with corruption, debt, and loss and his subsequent reconstitution as the very figure of valor and selfless patriotism.⁶⁵ As we will see in our consideration of Colman’s *Inkle and Yarico*, this substitution of a vigorous military man for the invalid merchant has immense ramifications not only for the figuration of imperial masculinity after the American war but also for the conceptualization of colonial space and imperial governance.

After his redeployment in the Caribbean in late 1781, Rodney’s command, either because of past poor judgment on his own part or through the regular politicization of naval affairs, was continually under scrutiny. His second in command, Admiral Hood, had been involved in two inconclusive conflicts with Admiral De Grasse, and everything seemed to be going the way of the earlier misadventures in the Channel in 1778 and 1779. The conflicts between Rodney and his second in command, Admiral Hood, were well known and seemed all too reminiscent of the Keppel-Palliser affair. The threat of further disunity in the officer corps of the navy, and the record of nonengagement between Hood and De Grasse was also eerily similar to the Battle of Ushant. This was explicitly indicated after Rodney had defeated the French at Les Saintes in an anonymous print from 1782 entitled “Count de Grasse delivering his sword to the gallant Admiral Rodney” in which the defeated French Admiral reiterates yet again Keppel’s infamous remark on the French intention to fight handsomely the next day, only here it is the French admiral attributing “handsomeness” to his British counterpart (fig. 5.2).⁶⁶ As one might expect, these problems and apparent repetitions generated intense criticism in Parliament from the Whig opposition. Fox and Burke quite regularly attacked Rodney and the Admiralty for

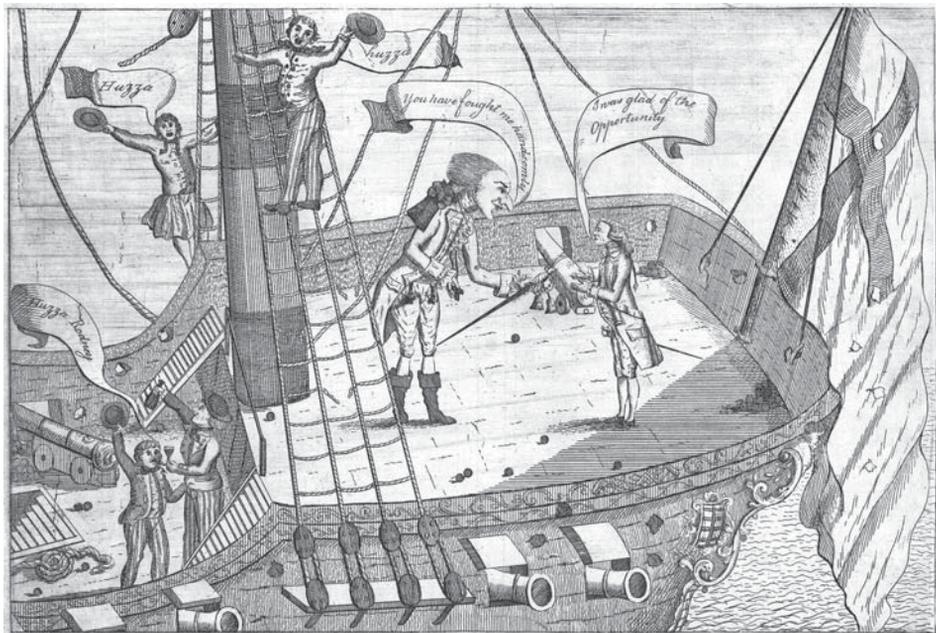


Figure 5.2. Anonymous, "Count de Grasse delivering his sword to the gallant Admiral Rodney," etching (1782). BM 5991. Department of Prints and Drawings © Trustees of the British Museum.

incompetence. After the dissolution of Lord North's Ministry in the spring of 1782, Rodney was replaced as commander of the Leeward Islands by Admiral Hugh Pigot. When news of Rodney's decisive victory came through in spring of 1782, the new Rockingham government found itself in the embarrassing situation of having replaced a hero.⁶⁷

In part because of this sudden transformation of fortunes and in part because Rodney's situation replicated elements of the Keppel affair, the celebrations that attended Rodney's return to Bristol on 22 September 1782 recalled those following Keppel's acquittal.⁶⁸ And it was not simply the pervasiveness of public approbation that linked these events. In a very real way, Rodney's victory at Les Saintes put the questions concerning not only his command but the unanimity of the navy in abeyance in much the same way that Keppel's legal victory instantiated a very useful forgetting of less decisive outcomes. And in both cases, victory served the interests of the parliamentary opposition. As one of Rodney's biographers indicates, "many cities honoured Rodney with their

freedom, including Huntingdon in which Sandwich made reference to the fact that Rodney's record was unsurpassed in that he had taken or destroyed sixteen ships of the line and captured the commanding admiral of each of the nations with which England was at war."⁶⁹ Celebrations were most intense in Bristol, but he was honoured repeatedly in the spring and summer of 1782 throughout Britain. As P. J. Marshall summarizes, news of Rodney's victory "produced frenzied celebrations throughout Britain on the scale of those in the 'year of victories' of 1759. The ambiguities of fighting the Americans had been replaced by a simple triumph over the French in which every section of British opinion could rejoice."⁷⁰ Misrecognizing 1782 for 1759 is a symptomatic gesture because it negates the fact that Rodney's victory was really a mitigation of profound loss. It prevented further disintegration of British colonialism in the Atlantic, rather than extending the nation's imperial reach. Nevertheless, celebratory songs were performed at Vauxhall Gardens, Astley's Amphitheatre replicated the action of *Les Saintes* in a shadow show, and illuminations were staged across several nights. Rodney was awarded a baronetcy and was the subject of panegyric in the House from the formerly critical Fox and Burke. And, of course, his victory was a recurring topic for verse in the newspapers.

Among the myriad poems celebrating Rodney's victory at *Les Saintes*, the following brief verse, entitled "On our late Successes in the West Indies," resonates with much of our discussion of the Keppel affair and of the experience of diffidence during the American war:

Praying that o'er my drowsy Head
 Kind Nature would his poppies shed,
 Till Britain rous'd from Grief and Shame,
 Again should wake to ancient Fame:
 I slept—But soon the Cannons Roar
 Resounds, brave Britons sleep no more!
 The Spell's dissolved—The Thunder breaks
 Thro' lowering clouds—Tis RODNEY Speaks!⁷¹

The sense of anodynal retreat, here figured by the poppies, is dissolved by a sudden utterance from the sky—this transmutation of Rodney's voice to the sky and his ability to rouse Britons from the unendurable sense of Grief and Shame. But most importantly, the sleep described here is explicitly understood to be the self-induced sleep of denial. The speaker states unequivocally that the nation's response to loss has been to step out of time into a static laudanum-induced reverie. Rodney's guns, the sound of which are conveyed by this poem, sound

across the world and jolt the nation back into a time of agency. The metaphorical link between the cannons of the *Formidable* and Rodney's voice amounts to a prosthetic device—a rhetorical device applied to mitigate or obviate a sense of loss. The operation is akin to prosopopeia: relief in the form of Rodney's voice, rather than his face, is suddenly spoken from the sky. This substitution transfers the signs of bodily agency to the sky in order for the sound of new-found confidence to be articulated with and by nature.

A similar set of tropes accrues to many of the Rodney celebrations. The final verses of "A Naval Ode" sung at Vauxhall Gardens by Mr. Barthélemon recall the nation from its trance through a metaphorical link between the roar of cannons and the active voice:

Pride is rous'd, they try their Pow'r,
 French and British Cannons roar;
 Broadfides rage for many an Hour;
 Hark! they cry they'll have no more.

In CHORUS

Scenes of Blood and Horrour rise!
 Loud Huzzas salute the Skies.

4th Stanza.

Waken, Britons, from your Trance;
 Spain ere this has felt a Blow;
 Laugh at all the Pow'r of France;
 Rodney's cool'd her Courage now.

In CHORUS

Hearts of Oak, for you we burn,
 Long to hail your safe Return!

GRAND CHORUS.

From the East and the West
 Good News, Boys, is come;
 Each Heart be at Rest;
 For Despair there's no Room.
 A Truce with all Fear;
 Let the merry Bells ring!
 Peace soon may be here,
 Sing, God save the King!⁷²

This sense of a nation roused from a trance is important because it indicates the importance not simply of Rodney's victory but, more importantly, of the Indies to the reconstitution of national and imperial purpose. The "News from East and West" alluded to in the Grand Chorus marks out what is essentially a compensatory fantasy of acquisition. Rodney's victory ensured the maintenance of British colonies in the sugar islands, but this song is also invoking similar "good news" from India. But this collocation of news from East and West is revealing because news from India that the second Mysore was not going to result in an unmitigated disaster operates in much the same way as news from the Saints. Just as news of a possible treaty with Mysore in the spring of 1782 allowed for a momentary cancellation of the humiliation of British forces at Pollilur, so too did news of peace negotiations after Rodney's victory allow for an ideological cancellation of the defeat of British forces at Yorktown. Both of these resolutions shifted attention away from the troubling conflict with the Americans onto the much less ideologically volatile global conflict with France. The reports of reverses at Pollilur and Yorktown had been almost simultaneous, so it is not surprising to see the specter of losses in both venues haunting this panegyric to impending peace.

The entire Rodney phenomenon—its cancellation of the immediate disaster of the American war, its resuscitation of the victories of 1759, and above all its redemption of the naval hero from the slur associated with the phrase "storekeeper"—was enacted on the London stage some five years later in George Colman's innovative production of *Inkle and Yarico*. What I hope to demonstrate is that the reformation of masculinity in that play, and in contemporary productions of Cumberland's *The West Indian*, not only gains new meaning in relation to the elevation of Rodney to the status of imperial hero but also relies on a cognate fantasy of whiteness. If Rodney can be understood to speak from the sky to rouse the anaesthetized nation, then we need to understand how domination can leap forth from the apparent representational blankness accorded to reconsolidated martial masculinity and normative white femininity in the performance of these two plays in the late 1780s.

Mercantile Deformities: George Colman's Inkle and Yarico

The incessant remediation of the Inkle and Yarico story in verse and in prose across the eighteenth century offers a particularly felicitous archive for a history of colonial thought in the period.⁷³ It is tempting to read the subtle modifications and elisions in the tale as one moves from version to version and from medium

to medium as signs of history. I wish to take up that temptation in relation to the most culturally significant version of the narrative after Richard Steele's version of 1711.⁷⁴ Of all the late eighteenth-century comedies set in colonial spaces, none is as important as George Colman's highly successful comic opera *Inkle and Yarico* (1787) for understanding the relationship between shifts in imperial policy and the question of racialization on the London stage. These shifts of course are fundamentally concerned with reimagining the imperial enterprise in light of the newly configured Atlantic world. Of crucial importance is the apparent contradiction between the play's supposed abolitionist gestures and its explicitly racist representations of Africans and Native Americans. In his introduction to the play, Frank Felsenstein argues that "it is specifically this supreme ineptitude of the colonizing English in differentiating one racial group from another and the simultaneous tendency, conscious or otherwise, to barbarize the native that are the targets of Colman's lighthearted satire."⁷⁵ Whether this assessment is too generous to Colman is perhaps aside from the point, for I intend to demonstrate that these ostensible political contradictions and confusions regarding racial identity are in fact part and parcel of a larger recalibration of colonial relations that is thoroughly enmeshed both in the stabilization of the white middle-class body in the metropole and in the complex engagement with the end of the American war. It is my contention that this radical reorientation of the narrative's historical function can be excavated from a certain ambivalence in the play's reception history.

The early reviews and accounts of the first runs at the Haymarket in 1787 and Covent Garden in 1788 tend to focus on the performance of affect in the character of Yarico and how the feeling elicited by her character is mobilized in a condemnation of Inkle's mercantile greed. However, these understandings of the play as a critique of mercantilism are superseded by assertions that the play is an example of abolitionism *avant la lettre*. Later introductions to Colman's play tend to focus on the morality of Colman himself by applauding his prescient concern for humanity in chains. The most interesting instance of the latter revisionist position is Inchbald's laudatory introductory remark for the *British Theatre* (1806) in which she states:

This is a drama, which might remove from Mr. Wilberforce his aversion to theatrical exhibitions, and convince him, that the teaching of moral duty is not confined to particular spots of ground; for, in those places, of all others, the doctrine is most effectually inculcated, where exhortation is the most required—the resorts of the gay, the idle, and the dissipated. . . .

[The opera] was popular before the subject of abolition of the slave trade was popular. It has the peculiar honour of preceding that great question. It was the bright forerunner of alleviation of the hardships of slavery.⁷⁶

The ascription of abolitionist intent should give us pause because at the time of the composition of Inchbald's remarks the general approbation of the moral argument against slavery is at its height, and hence Inchbald is making yet another argument for the moral value of the theatre. But this attempt to make *Inkle and Yarico* morally exemplary is strained by the critical contortions required to direct Colman's play at the African slave trade.

A fault more important, is—that the scene at the commencement of the opera, instead of Africa, is placed in America. It would undoubtedly have been a quick passage, to have a fourth part of the western globe, during the interval between the first and second acts; still, as the hero and heroine of the drama are compelled to go to sea—imagination, with but little more exertion, might have given them fair wind as well from the coast whence slaves are *really* bought, as from the shore where no such traffic is held.*

*No doubt the author would have ingenuity to argue away this objection—but that, which requires argument for its support in a dramatic work, is a subject for complaint. As slaves are imported from Africa, and never from America, the audience, in the two last acts of this play, feel as if they had been in the wrong quarter of the globe during the first act. Inkle could certainly steal a native from America, and sell her in Barbadoes, but this is not so consonant with that nice imitation of the order of things as to rank above criticism.⁷⁷

Inchbald's somewhat uncharacteristic recourse to the unities focuses attention on the "particular spots of ground" that I wish to consider in more detail.

As Inchbald notes, *Yarico* is not an African, and the first act is set in the Americas. The suggestion that this is a lapse in composition has merit only if one wants the play to be specifically about the African trade. In other words, it is Inchbald who is retroactively shifting the ground in imitation of the current order of things, and it is difficult not to read that gesture as part of a large-scale rewriting of colonial history following the American Revolution aimed at suppressing the prior relationship between the American and the Caribbean colonies. As Christopher Leslie Brown has argued, English abolitionist discourse itself constitutes a part of this historical redirection.⁷⁸ My suggestion is that Colman's *Inkle and Yarico* addresses a specific historical moment in colonial

economics that has been superseded by the time Inchbald anthologizes the play. In subtle ways, Colman is much more concerned with a critical yet exculpatory reading of mercantile ideology that paves the way for precisely the kind of arguments against the slave trade that simultaneously highlight its economic obsolescence and its moral turpitude. Colman's play performs a sort of readjustment of the colonial encounter to fit emergent forms of biological state racism and, as such, plays a crucial mediating role between the constructions of race endemic to England's mercantile economy and those which come into full hegemonic force in the early nineteenth century.

For the purposes of this chapter, the dominant discourse network of the Inkle and Yarico archive mediates between an ostensible historical source and its sentimental literary elaborations.⁷⁹ Steele's sentimental version of 1711 is based on Richard Ligon's brief rendition of the story in his *True and Exact History of the Island of Barbadoes* (1657). Ligon's text provides historical legitimation and the source material for a very particular sort of eroticization in which the focalization shifts to Yarico's subjectivity. In Steele and in all subsequent versions, Yarico becomes a noble subject and the erotic play between Inkle and Yarico follows the conventions of metropolitan courtship. The following is a brief synopsis of Steele's version:

Mr. Thomas Inkle, an ambitious young English trader cast ashore in the Americas, is saved from violent death at the hands of savages by the endearments of Yarico, a beautiful Indian maiden. Their romantic intimacy in the forest moves Inkle to pledge that, were his life to be preserved, he would return with her to England, supposedly as his wife. The lovers' tender liaison progresses over several months until she succeeds in signaling a passing English ship. They are rescued by the crew, and with vows to each other intact, they embark for Barbadoes. Yet when they reach the island Inkle's former mercantile instincts are callously revived, for he sells her into slavery, at once raising the price he demands when he learns that Yarico is carrying his child.⁸⁰

Steele's text becomes a template of sorts, and later verse is often cast in Yarico's voice to maximize the pain of betrayal. This effectively incorporates the Inkle and Yarico story into contemporary constructions of femininity and heterosexuality, but it is important to recognize that in the process Yarico's racial otherness is subsumed in the constitution of gender normativity. When the narrative makes its way onto the stage in Colman's opera, this subsumption of racial difference into normative femininity is put into crisis not only because the the-

atre demands an embodiment of this contradiction but also because femininity is itself beginning to be understood as incommensurable with nonwhite bodies. How does Sarah Kemble's performance of femininity in the role of Yarico impinge on the historical consolidation of whiteness on the late eighteenth-century stage? Is it whiteness or some vaguely defined otherness that constitutes the character's feminine desirability? Answering these two questions ultimately reveals the degree to which the twofold racialization and sexualization of the opera's characters participates in the consolidation of the emergent white middle-class body of the early nineteenth century.

Like all the post-Steele versions, Colman's *Inkle and Yarico* is suffused with sentimental affect, but the opening-night review from the *General Magazine* saw the relation to Steele as a liability: "The story as related in the *Spectator*, is universally known and is not greatly promising of dramatic incident. The genius of the author has happily supplied this deficiency."⁸¹ Jeremy Bagster-Collins's illuminating summary of the play describes Colman's alterations to the tale:

Colman's first act follows the Steele tale fairly closely: Inkle and Trudge, his pun-loving clerk-factotum, abandoned by their shipmates in the forest, find and fall in love with Yarico and her maid Wowski, respectively. The ladies are responsive; after offering protection from the other natives they join their voices with those of the men in a pair of love-duets, made possible, most fortunately, by the English they had learned from a shipwrecked sailor. The act ends on these happy notes. Thereafter, however, Colman diverges from his source in varying degrees. Inkle, Yarico, Trudge, and Wowski reach Barbadoes, but Inkle's indecision here in the matter of getting rid of Yarico is made much less mercenary by Colman's giving him a different object for his voyage—namely, marriage with Narcissa, daughter of Sir Christopher Curry, Governor of Barbadoes. Swayed by his interest, he decides at first to sell Yarico, who is *not* with child, and offers her, unknowingly, to Sir Christopher, who roundly denounces his inhumanity on learning the circumstances. Eventually, Inkle repents and marries Yarico. Thus Colman nullifies Steele's moral but substitutes one of his own.⁸²

Inkle's betrothal and the fact that Yarico is not pregnant alter the sexual economy of the play, and the introduction of Sir Christopher Curry directly impinges on how one reads the play's engagement with colonial governance.⁸³ It is my contention that the questions of sexual and political economy are folded into the

same complex allegory, but before entering this argument it is important to highlight the contextual shifts that had occurred between 1711 and 1787 that directly impinge not only on how one reads the performance of femininity on stage but also on how one understands the relationship between the generation of Yarico's affect to the history of British colonial activity.

By the mid-1780s the American colonies had seceded from British rule, Adam Smith had published *The Wealth of Nations* with its scathing critique of mercantilism, Rousseau's noble savage was fast becoming a common cultural construct, and emergent forms of middle-class sexuality were beginning to gel. But in the eyes of recent scholarship these important developments are overshadowed by the fact that the play coincides with the first major political push to abolish the slave trade. As Felsenstein emphasizes, 1787 saw the establishment of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, the publication of Clarkson's *A Summary View of the Slave Trade and of the Possible Consequences of Its Abolition*, and the initiation of the parliamentary campaign against slavery by William Pitt and William Wilberforce.⁸⁴ Arguments for the play's protoabolitionist qualities usually rest on this coincidence and on the role played by Joseph Jekyll in the play's composition.⁸⁵ However, declarations of the play's abolitionist intent, whether they come from Inchbald or from recent criticism, suggest that the emotion elicited by Yarico's betrayal "promotes the abolitionist cause by tugging at people's heartstrings."⁸⁶ This assertion characterizes the political engagement of the play too narrowly and obscures a series of interventions in the British perception of colonial relations that are coded into the very additions that figure so prominently in the *General Magazine* review. The Wowski subplot, the persistent ridicule of the working-class characters that appears in no earlier version, the frequent interludes of singing and dancing, the introduction of Inkle's betrothed Narcissa, and Captain Campley's complicating love interest constantly threaten to overwhelm the play's sentimental critique. Furthermore, whatever political force one could glean from the play is thoroughly undercut by Colman's gratuitous racial slurs—especially those attributed to the play's principal working-class characters—and by his decision to supply a happy ending to the story in which Inkle repents and Yarico grants forgiveness. In short, Colman's "genius" spins the protoabolitionist and antimercantile gestures in the play toward an audience-pleasing exculpation of British colonial rule. What I wish to demonstrate is that the abolitionist aspects of the play do not exist in contradiction with its racist gestures but rather that both elements are folded into an emergent form of imperial domination that is deeply involved in the consolidation of the middle-class body in the metropole.

Crucial to this exculpation is the intervention of the state in the person of Sir Christopher Curry at key moments in the *Inkle and Yarico* tale. Curry, like other stereotypical representations of West Indian subjects such as Belcour in *The West Indian*, exhibits “a hot-tempered bluntness.”⁸⁷ Significantly, during the period of *Inkle and Yarico*’s domination of Covent Garden’s offerings from September 1788 through the winter of 1789, Drury Lane was repeatedly staging *The West Indian*.⁸⁸ This naked attempt to capitalize on West Indian themes should come as no surprise, but it is important to consider the subtle distinctions in how West Indian subjectivity was being presented during this period, for they clearly indicate the difference between British imperial activity in the period after the Seven Years’ War and that after the American war.⁸⁹ In a sense, Drury Lane was countering Covent Garden’s theatrically innovative articulation of the West Indian future with a nostalgic rehearsal of a past moment in the political and representational history of the circum-Atlantic.

Unlike Belcour in *The West Indian*, Curry is not a man of commerce but rather a colonial administrator, and as such he retains a certain distance from the merchant class that comes under sharp scrutiny in Colman’s play. Despite his official status in the play, the only instances we are given of Curry’s governmental activities are confined to the marriage market. In a rush to marry off his daughter for profit, Curry mistakes Captain Campley for Inkle, and Narcissa is suddenly able to marry her true love. Narcissa’s desire for a military man is fulfilled through her father’s desire to marry her to a merchant. This confusion between soldier and merchant has historical resonance, for it reflects a complex transition in colonial policy as Britain replaces earlier forms of mercantile imperialism with a more militarily active acquisition of territory. All across the empire, the governance of colonial space is shifting from the hands of commercial bodies to the more direct rule of the state and its military apparatus. We should perhaps not be surprised that Drury Lane’s nostalgic investment in *The West Indian* was thoroughly outpaced by Covent Garden’s speculation on the future figured forth by Colman’s generic and thematic innovations.

It is here that Admiral Rodney’s legendary status comes into play, because the confusion between Captain Campley and Inkle is akin to the double reception of Rodney’s own exploits in the Caribbean. His capture of St. Eustatius and the widespread suggestion that strategic issues were being subordinated to his desire for self-enrichment made him the very figure of mercantile greed. His victory at Les Saintes suddenly canceled this set of associations, and he became the exemplar of selfless martial virtue. In other words, from

the spring of 1781 to the spring of 1782, Rodney is transformed from Inkle to Campley, from the epitome of corruption and loss to the emblem of British might. In a sense, by breaking the Rodney figure into two characters, Colman is simply enacting the supersession of one aspect of Rodney's history by another.

Significantly, this shift from "storekeeper" to confident warrior was accompanied by a shift from invalidism to vigorous agency. In James Gillray's caricatures from this period, such as "Rodney invested—or—Admiral Pig on a cruize" from 4 June 1782, Rodney's frame shows no signs of the decrepitude that had interrupted his service the previous year.⁹⁰ Victory at Les Saintes had not only redeemed his reputation and, by extension, the reputation of the navy but also seemed to reconstitute his body. The importance of this cannot be overemphasized because Rodney's ill health had dogged him from before his service in the Seven Years' War.

The reparation of Rodney's body is clearly articulated in Gainsborough's famous portrait that was painted during the height of Colman's success with *Inkle and Yarico* (fig. 5.3).⁹¹ Rodney's defiant pose is, in a sense, directly attached to the source of his confidence, for Gainsborough has included a précis of the breaking of De Grasse's line in the background immediately adjacent to Rodney's forward thrusting leg. A similar fetishization of Rodney's leg occurs in Reynolds's contemporaneous portrait of 1788 (fig. 5.4).⁹² If anything, the power of Rodney's leg is underscored by the visible signs of age in Rodney's face. This leg is important because physical disability is a key trope in Colman's play. The play's subordination of Inkle's mercantilism to Campley's martial masculinity not only replicates the redemption of Rodney from his earlier avaricious reputation but also turns on the same erasure of Rodney's prior invalidism in post-1782 representations of his body. It is through the careful management of the bodily expression of confidence as figured by notions of health and normativity that much of this ideological sleight of hand is secured. And this management of bodily signs, so crucial to the play's historical importance in the postwar period, is linked to the enactment of normative heterosexuality and to complex fantasies of racial distinction.

The replacement of mercantile coercion by territorial military intervention is aptly allegorized by the Narcissa marriage plot, with her body figuring as that which must be governed. Within the terms of the allegory, the hotness of the climate induces Curry to choose the military man as the most appropriate husband despite his repeated desire for an entrepreneurial connection. When Curry's "mistake" is revealed late in the final act, Colman not only marks the



Figure 5.3. Richard Josey, *George Bridges Rodney*, mezzotint (1784), after Thomas Gainsborough, *Lord Rodney* (1788), Dalmeny House, Edinburgh. NPG D4095.

© National Portrait Gallery, London.

historical moment of war in American and Caribbean waters, which so directly impinges upon British colonial policy, but also ties together the classical allusion that gives teeth to his critique:

CAMPLEY: I am a soldier, Sir Christopher; “love and war” is a soldier’s motto. Though my income is trifling to your intended son-in-law’s, still, the chance of war has enabled me to support the object of my love above indigence. Her fortune, Sir Christopher, I do not consider myself by any means entitled to.

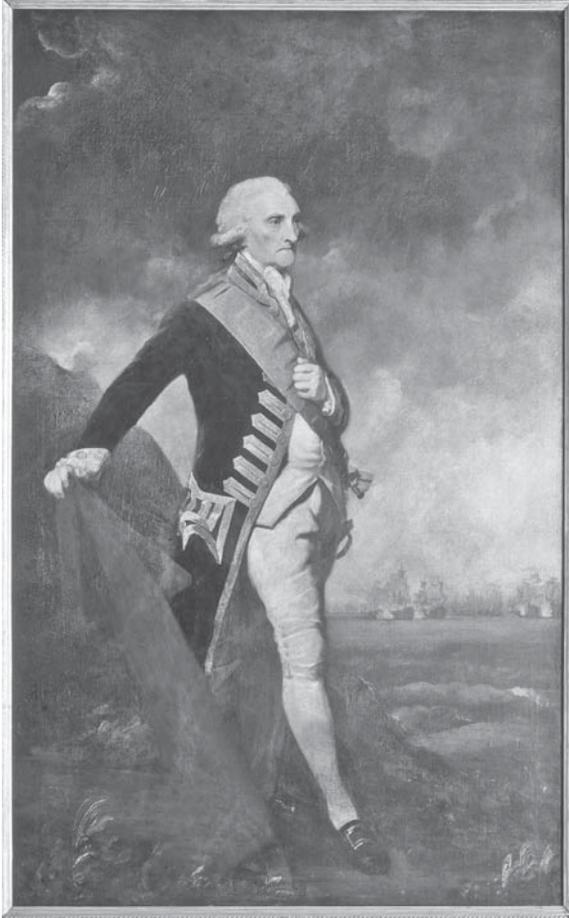


Figure 5.4. Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Lord Rodney* (1788). The Royal Collection © 2010, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

SIR CHR: 'Sblood, but you must, though! Give me your hand, my young Mars, and bless you both together! Thank you, thank you for cheating an old fellow into giving his daughter to a lad of spirit when he was going to throw her away upon one in whose breast the mean passion of avarice smothers the smallest spark of affection or humanity.⁹³

Campley's financial straits subtly recall Rodney's financial difficulties before and during his Caribbean tour of duty, but this is less important than the ensu-

ing classical reference. Casting Campley as the Mars to Narcissa's Venus effectively emphasizes Inkle's role as Vulcan. The rhetorical move is telling for it picks up on the monstrosity of the earlier representations of the Inkle figure in Jean Mocoquet, Richard Ligon, and Richard Steele but tempers it so that Inkle becomes ugly, lame, and frequently cuckolded.⁹⁴ This figural shift from monstrosity to deformity, from ungrateful and inconstant lover to cuckolded husband not only activates the Rodney allegory but also alters the terms of the critique of Inkle in culturally significant ways. Normative masculinity in the earlier versions of the tale is defined against inconstancy, whereas in Colman it is defined in terms of healthy marriageable bodies. In other words, the terms on which the question "Which is the Man?" will be adjudicated are changing, both in the realm of marriage and in the larger Atlantic world.

Intriguingly, Sir Christopher Curry's attempts to govern the marriage market do not stop with his daughter, for his role in Inkle's attempt to sell Yarico in the slave market also opens onto the marital realm. Curry is crucial to how the audience interprets the sale of Yarico and the condemnation of Inkle because, as the representative of the state, his arbitration of the play's chief sentimental scene thoroughly entwines the sexual and political registers of the play. The extent of this entanglement is evident from the beginning of the transaction in act 3, scene 2:

- INKLE: Then to the point: I have a female whom I wish to part with.
 SIR CHR: Very likely. It's a common case nowadays with many a man.
 INKLE: If you could satisfy me you would use her mildly and treat her with more kindness than is usual—for I can tell you she's of no common stamp—perhaps we might agree.
 SIR CHR: Oho a slave! Faith now I think on't, my daughter may want an attendant or two extraordinary, and as you say she's a delicate girl, above the common run, and none of your thick-lipped, flat-nosed, squabby, dumpling dowdies, I don't much care if— (3.3.103)

That Inkle's proposition is initially detached from the language of commerce leads Sir Christopher to interpret Inkle's desire as that of many a man who wishes to dispose of his mistress. The ambivalence here is one that runs throughout the play for Inkle is attempting to dispose of his mistress, but because of her racial difference and the space in which the transaction takes place, the commodification that underlies Sir Christopher's leering gibe can operate explicitly. The joke plays on the metaphorical linkage between extramarital sexual

exchange in the metropole and commodity exchange in the colony.⁹⁵ What interests me is that value in either marketplace is assessed on related grounds. Inkle stresses that she is not common, and Sir Christopher immediately interprets this to mean that she is physically delicate and hence sexually desirable. The short transit from the assertion of class difference to sexual desirability is crucial because it structures the construction of Yarico's femininity not only in Colman's play but in every version of the tale following Steele, and because the linkage is immediately and forcefully supported by an important set of bodily signs that establish the physical parameters of undesirable racial and class others. This construction of delicate femininity at the expense of "thick-lipped, flat-nosed, squabby, dumpling dowdies" immediately opens onto Sir Christopher's critique of slavery that Inchbald found so admirable:

SIR CHR: I can't help thinking the only excuse for buying our fellow creatures is to rescue 'em from the hands of those how are unfeeling enough to bring them to market. . . . Let Englishmen blush at such practices. Men who so fully feel the blessings of liberty are doubly cruel in depriving the helpless of their freedom.
(3.3.103-4)

The extraordinary speed with which the play is able to separate and maintain the process of racialization from the critique of slavery reflects the historical separation of the political drive to abolish the trade in slaves from their emancipation. Sir Christopher's protoabolitionist rebuke exhibits many key elements of the early arguments against the slave trade, most notably his construction of Africans as naturally helpless beings and his suggestion that such a contravention of individual liberty is an embarrassment to English national character.

But the sexual undertones and racial slurs of this protoabolitionist position unfold in remarkable ways when Yarico enters and finds herself between these two men. As in the scene of rebuke, everything starts with Sir Christopher's desiring gaze:

SIR CHR: Od's my life, as comely a wench as I ever saw!

(Enter YARICO, who looks for some time in INKLE's face, bursts into tears, and falls on his neck.)

INKLE: In tears my Yarico? Why this?

YARICO: Oh do not, do not leave me!

INKLE: Why, simple girl, I'm labouring for your good! My interest here is nothing. I can do nothing from myself—you are ignorant of our country's customs; I must give way to men more powerful who will not have me with you. But see, my Yarico, ever anxious for your welfare, I've found a kind, good person who will protect you. (3.3.106)

It is important to attend to temporal lag between Yarico's appearance on stage and her demonstration of emotional distress. As in the earlier scene when Inkle first meets Yarico, Colman stages a moment of looking in which the audience watches an English character overcome with Yarico's immediate desirability.⁹⁶ It is a moment verging on fetishization that gives way to the demonstration of intense emotional response. However, the moment in which Yarico looks at Inkle's face sets up a complex identificatory circuit. Because Sir Christopher's desiring gaze is a rehearsal of Inkle's earlier ascription of desire, the audience watches her sexual objectification and then passes into her subject position to feel the structure of betrayal. Her tears as much as the pastoral sentimentalism of her response to Inkle's duplicity perform crucial cultural work:

YARICO: Take me into yonder mountains, where I see no smoke from tall, high houses filled with your cruel countrymen. None of your princes, there, will come to take me from you. And should they stray that way, we'll find a lurking place, just like my own poor cave, where many a day I sat beside you and blessed the chance that brought you to it, that I might save your life. . . . Come, come, let's go. I always feared these cities. Let's fly and seek the woods, and there we'll wander hand in hand together. No cares shall vex us then. We'll let the day glide by in idleness, and you shall sit in the shade and watch the sunbeam playing on the brook while I sing the song that pleases you. No cares, love but for your good. And we'll live cheerily, I warrant. In the fresh, early morning you shall hunt down our game and I will pick you berries, and then, at night, I'll trim our bed of leaves and lie me down in peace. Oh, we shall be so happy! (3.3.106)

These are Yarico's most extended speeches, and their pastoral discourse folds this scene into a series of notable imperial scenarios, of which Pope's *Windsor Forest* is perhaps the most important predecessor. As Laura Brown has argued with regard to Pope's celebration of the Peace of Utrecht, the pastoral allows for

both subtle and explicit modes of critique.⁹⁷ In Pope's poem, the pastoral landscape is deployed to celebrate the fruits of British imperial expansion, but he also uses the figure of the hunt to emphasize the cost of imperial prosperity. The famous scene of the dying pheasant figured as an agglomeration of commodities is one of the earliest literary critiques of mercantilism.

Colman's Rousseauian vision of presocial harmony engages the same trope but much more explicitly, in part because at this point in British imperial history the nature of the hunt is changing rapidly. Inkle's mercantile response to Yarico's pastoralism is arguably the play's most historically resonant moment:

INKLE: This is mere trifling! The trifling of an unenlightened Indian! Hear me, Yarico. My countrymen and yours differ as much in minds as in complexions. We were not born to live in woods and caves. 'Tis misery to us to be reduced to seek subsistence by pursuing beasts. We Christians, girl, hunt money, a thing unknown to you. Here 'tis money which brings us ease, plenty, command, power, and everything; and, of course, happiness. You are a bar to my attaining this. (3.3.106)

Inkle's naturalization of the hunt for money is subject to rigorous critique on a number of levels. The figure itself reveals the violence at the core of the mercantile economy. Yarico's emotional speeches and the heart-rending scene of her grasping Inkle as he sells her simultaneously emphasize her constancy to Inkle and her extraordinary sacrifice for one so undeserving of her love. And these rhetorical and performative critiques of Inkle's economic view of happiness are substantially augmented by Sir Christopher's scathing condemnation. Inkle's lingering concern that her new owner adequately care for Yarico is met with nothing but scorn:

SIR CHR: I never heard of such barbarity! . . . Liar! Cheat! Rogue! Imposter! Breaking all ties you ought to keep and pretending to those which you have no right to! The Governor disowns you, the Governor disclaims you, the Governor abhors you, and, to your utter confusion, here stands the Governor to tell you so! (3.3.107)

That Inkle's condemnation comes from the agent of state cannot be overemphasized for it significantly alters the judgment of Inkle's "ingratitude." In earlier versions of the tale, Inkle's actions are primarily understood to be dishonorable. Colman stages this aspect of the tale by moving into the rhetoric of dueling.

Inkle interprets Sir Christopher's scorn as an insult to his honor and threatens to seek justice with the governor. Because Sir Christopher is the governor, the interpretation of Inkle's honor is sealed, but this narrative twist carries with it the implication that Inkle's economic defense of his actions as what Christians naturally do is as abhorrent to the state as his avaricious character. In other words, Sir Christopher's judgment is both a private and a public critique of the mercantile hunt for money that defined the first British Empire's vision of its colonial activities.

This is where Colman's play suddenly veers into the realm of colonial policy and where the play picks up on resonances of a second discourse network that haunts the Inkle and Yarico tale. The story of Dido and Aeneas lurks behind a number of eighteenth-century versions of the tale. As Peter Hulme emphasizes, the narrative parallels are extensive between the two stories. The Trojans and the English are both shipwrecked in a storm on a hostile coast. Aeneas and Inkle are separated from the other sailors and passengers. In both cases, an amorous relationship develops between the travelers and a hospitable princess of the country, and in both cases the relationship is consummated in a cave. After a period of bliss, the traveler moves on, deserting the woman he had loved or perhaps deceived. The 1736 poem "Yarico to Inkle, an Epistle" draws attention to these parallels when it quotes Dido's anguished condemnation of Aeneas in its epigraph: *Quod genus hoc hominum? quaeve hunc tam barbara morem Permittit patria?* (What manner of men are these? What land is this that allows them such barbarous ways?).⁹⁸ In Colman's play, Dido's charge of barbarism comes not from Yarico but from Sir Christopher. The significance of this subtle shift lies in part in the reception of the *Aeneid* and in part in Inkle's remarkable attempt to defend his actions. As Peter Hulme emphasizes, it was always a problem for eighteenth-century readers of the *Aeneid* that Aeneas, the founder of Rome, deserts and is ultimately responsible for the death of Dido. Hulme rightly underlines that Dido's offer of hospitality operates on both an amorous and a political level. Aeneas's decision to desert Dido is conventionally understood as a victory of duty over passion necessary for the foundation of Rome. As we shall see, Colman uses the Dido and Aeneas resonance in a manner distinct from that of his predecessors, for he ultimately offers a critique of duty that has important economic implications.

Colman addresses the question of duty to the future of empire in Inkle's attempt to defend his actions. Inkle's speech resonates with the Dido and Aeneas story in a manner that activates not only a new vision of imperialism but also a redeployment of interracial sexuality:

- INKLE: Then let me speak. Hear me defend a conduct—
- SIR CHR: Defend? Zounds! Plead guilty at once; it's the only hope left of obtaining mercy.
- INKLE: Suppose, old gentleman, you had a son—
- SIR CHR: 'Sblood, then I'd make him an honest fellow and teach him that the feeling heart never knows greater pride than when it's employed in giving succour to the unfortunate. I'd teach him to be his father's own son to a hair.
- INKLE: Even so my father tutored me from my infancy, bending my tender mind, like a young sapling, to his will. Interest was the grand prop round which he twined my pliant green affections, taught me in childhood to repeat old sayings—all tending to his own fixed principles—and the first sentence that I ever lisped was "Charity begins at home."
- SIR CHR: I shall never like a proverb again, as long as I live.
- INKLE: As I grew up, he'd prove—and by example: were I in want, I might e'en starve for what the world cared for their neighbours; why then should I care for the world? —men now lived for themselves. These were his doctrines. Then, sir, what would you say should I, in spite of habit, precept, education, fly in my father's face and spurn his counsels? (3.3.109)

The translation of charity for hospitality puts Inkle's actions in a historical frame here figured by the parent-child relation. According to Inkle, he behaves without gratitude to Yarico because he has been trained to look out only for himself. This casts his shame onto his father, and suddenly the play's critique of mercantilism takes on a more thoroughly historical register. Inkle's mistakes are really the mistaken principles of his father and, as such, they can be overcome. This familial trope figures for the complex political shift from the first to the second British Empire, and it involves an act of remarkable renunciation and exculpation.

In response to Inkle's question regarding his filial duty to the memory of his father, Sir Christopher identifies the paradox of duty and opens the door for Inkle to renounce the past:

- SIR CHR: Say? Why, that you were a damned honest, undutiful fellow! Oh, curse such principles, principles which destroy all confidence between man and man, principles which none but a rogue could instil and none but a rogue could imbibe, principles—

INKLE: Which I renounce . . . entirely. Ill-founded precept too long has steeled my breast, but still 'tis vulnerable. This trial was too much. Nature, 'gainst habit combating within me, has penetrated to my heart, a heart, I own, long callous to the feelings of sensibility. But now it bleeds, and bleeds for my poor Yarico. Oh let me clasp her to it whilst 'tis glowing, and mingle tears of love and penitence. (*embracing her*) (3.3.109)

When Inkle renounces duty and is forgiven by Yarico, it is as though Aeneas returns to Dido and ditches his plans for Rome. The renunciation here is allegorically tied to a renunciation of British imperial activities based on the obsolete principles of mercantile trade. However, this is anything but an anti-imperial gesture tout court. What we see here is a modulation from one form of imperialism to another. The play's obsession with skin color, with interracial and interclass sexuality, and with questions of bodily health and deformity points toward the emergence of biological state racisms that undergird nineteenth-century models of British imperialism and emergent forms of middle-class self-stylization.

The close ties between the emergence of a racialized classed body and the renunciation of mercantilism are coded directly into Inkle's exculpation, for his image of the sapling bent to his father's will refers to the famous engraving from *Orthopaedia; or, the Art of Correcting and Preventing Deformities in Children* (1743) (fig. 5.5). We have already noted that Inkle is figured as Vulcan throughout the play and is thus linked to deformity and failed masculinity. Helen Deutsche and Felicity Nussbaum's remarks on the sapling image allow one to build an even more incisive analysis of Inkle's tearful renunciation of duty:

In the engraving . . . a leafy curvaceous sapling . . . seems to be locked together with a rigid measure in a gentle but firm embrace. The fledgling tree thrives but requires training in order to fit itself to the standard by which it is judged. The pair exemplifies not only parent and child but also the marital couple. . . . Though the straight stake seems to represent the masculine member and crooked one the feminine, the viewer nevertheless awards aesthetic preference to the contorted trunk with its flourishing branches. Yoked together with the straight stick of wood to coax it into conformity, the healthy sapling's crooked nature will be rectified by the encircling rope. Though the engraving is intended to represent the art of correcting and preventing deformities in children . . . it also illustrates the eighteenth century attitudes toward another group of correctables,

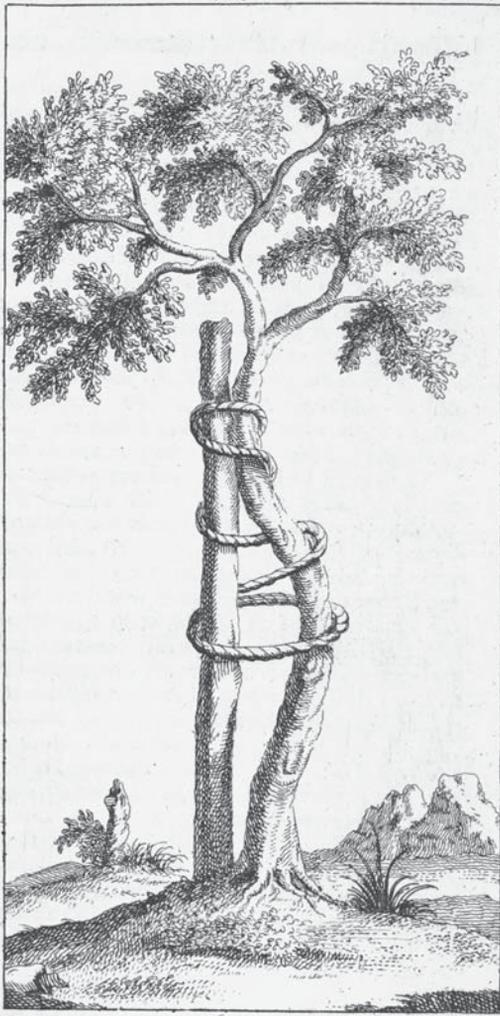


Figure 5.5. From *Orthopaedia: or, the Art of Correcting and Preventing Deformities in Children* (1743). Courtesy of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto.

women, who charm because of their defects, while it depicts masculine science as offering moral and aesthetic criteria by which women and children are to be gauged.⁹⁹

Deutsche and Nussbaum's emphasis on gender in their reading of the illustration is illuminating precisely because Colman's adoption of the image questions

the terms of normativity in a fashion that directly impinges on emergent forms of masculinity.

In Inkle's account, "Interest was the grand prop round which [his father] twined my pliant green affections." Under the gentle but firm embrace of his father's—and fatherland's—obsession with commerce, Inkle becomes an exemplar of British mercantile interest, but what should be normative turns out to be monstrous at the historical moment following the secession of the American colonies. Inkle's renunciation of these codes of masculinity is accompanied by the onset of "feelings of sensibility" and the mingling of tears of love and penitence. The reformation of Inkle, as Sir Christopher calls it, involves a certain feminization that indicates that both Inkle and colonial policy are susceptible to correction (3.3.110). As both Inkle and Sir Christopher stress, it is the principle, that is, the straight rod, that needs to be modified. What is needed therefore are new precepts of masculinity and economics from which to build a more suitable governmental relationship between metropole and colony. These precepts are to be found in the military man Captain Campley and his wife Narcissa, the only non-interracial couple in the play, for they exemplify not only the normative white masculinity and femininity, against which the audience is to judge Inkle and Yarico, but also the militarization of colonial policy. The presence of this new military couple relegates Inkle and Yarico to a quaint bower of historical obsolescence. Furthermore, the figural connections between Campley and Narcissa and Mars and Venus and between Inkle and Yarico and Aeneas and Dido perform a remarkable deification of normative white heterosexuality.

Captain Campley and Narcissa's "straightness," therefore, is more than an incidental addition to the tale. A recognition of their exemplarity allows one to read the complex hybridity of both Inkle and Yarico. Inkle's gender hybridity is matched by Yarico's racial hybridity, but full analysis of the construction of Yarico requires that we turn from figures of embodiment to the history of the body itself. In this case, we must turn to a specific body in a specific space at a specific time. Almost every contemporary account of *Inkle and Yarico* testifies to the centrality of Yarico's speeches in act 3, scene 3, to the theatrical power of the play. And that power was deeply tied to the power of emotion generated by Mrs. Stephen Kemble's physical presence on stage:

Nothing was destined to soften the obdurate more effectively than the acting of Mrs. Stephen Kemble, the original performer of Yarico, whose presentational style is described in this typical eyewitness account: "Those sweet and pathetic tones and that exquisite plaintiveness by which Mrs.

Kemble, in *Yarico*, brought tears into the eyes of the audience, defy the powers of panegyric." Shock waves of sympathetic emotion seemed to have dispossessed audiences of their self-control wherever Mrs. Kemble performed this character.¹⁰⁰

The extraordinary level of emotional response elicited by Mrs. Kemble's performance style is intriguing because it would seem that the tears that overwhelm Inkle also overwhelm the audience. The identificatory relation established through the act of crying has its counterpart in the remarkable assertion of equivalence between Mrs. Kemble and the character of *Yarico* by James Boaden:

The stage never in my time exhibited so pure, so interesting a candidate . . . her modest timidity—her innocence—the tenderness of her tones, and the unaffected alarm that sat upon her countenance—all together won for her at once a high place in the public regard. . . . I have often listened to the miserable counterfeit of what she was, and would preserve, if language could but do it, her lovely impersonation of artless truth . . . The *FANCY* may restore her, or be contented with its own creation. That of Steele, in one of its softest inspirations, first saw her about the year 1674, on the continent of America, fondly bending over a young European, whom she had preserved from her barbarous countrymen; she was banqueting him with delicious fruits, and playing with his hair. He called the vision *Yarico*.¹⁰¹

The terms of Boaden's infatuation are perhaps unsurprising. He fetishizes Kemble's performance of timidity and innocence in a manner that draws close parallels between the noble savage and the fantasy of feminine desirability. But the hyperbolic suggestion that Mrs. Kemble is *Yarico* personified or that she embodies *Yarico* makes explicit the degree to which Steele's and, by extension, Colman's *Yarico* is a phantasmatic projection of white femininity.

In terms of Colman's play, however, it is interesting that this phantasm is embodied by Mrs. Stephen Kemble and not by Mrs. Bannister, who played *Narcissa* in the first production. In other words, the fetishized white actress who plays the wronged native woman comes to embody the "engaging innocence and deep-toned pathos" of white femininity, while the ostensibly normative white woman becomes the object of neither erotic desire nor feminine identification but rather the example of "elegance, chasteness, and propriety."¹⁰² This distinction between pathetic innocence and elegant propriety may seem slight, but its difference lies in its performance. *Narcissa's* erotic desirability, unlike that of

Yarico, is not presented through the staging of the masculine gaze but rather through her conjugal conversation with Campley. In short, Yarico is eroticized as a mistress, whereas Narcissa is always already a wife. The distinction involves two forms of commodification that impinge directly on how the audience consumes the two actresses' performance.

That consumption is very much conditioned by the way that Colman parses race and sexuality in the play. We have already seen how Yarico is carefully enveloped by a shroud of pastoral sentiment, but it is important to remember that the Inkle and Yarico dyad is always already accompanied by the pairing of their servants Trudge and Wowski. Indeed, the hypersexualization of Wowski and Trudge is the condition of possibility not only for the sentimental resolution of the interracial love plot between Inkle and Yarico but also for the ascription of normativity to Campley and Narcissa. Put simply, the exaggerated performance of racial difference in the lower-class characters is linked to sexual promiscuity, so that the relationship between Inkle and Yarico can be bled of all comparable sexual meaning on stage. Their relationship will be contained in a discourse of love, not sex, and thus the potential for miscegenation is quietly set aside. In this context, it is only in the Campley-Narcissa union that a future for reproductive heterosexuality lies, not because the play explicitly says this, but precisely because so little is said about their private lives. I have written extensively about this process elsewhere, but for our purposes here it is enough to look at one example of how the play deploys working-class characters to both critique the Inkle and Yarico relationship and establish the normativity of Campley and Narcissa.¹⁰³

Late in act 3, scene 1, Trudge retells the story of the meeting of Inkle and Yarico to Patty. Patty is Sir Christopher's servant, and Colman locates the fear of interracial sexuality in her character. In response to Trudge's assertion of Yarico's beauty, Patty presses for a clarification:

PATTY: Well! And tell me, Trudge, she's pretty, you say: is she fair or brown or—?

TRUDGE: Um—she's a good comely copper.

PATTY: How? A tawny?

TRUDGE: Yes, quite dark, but very elegant. Like a Wedgwood teapot.

PATTY: Oh, the monster! The filthy fellow! Live with a black-a-moor?

TRUDGE: Why, there's no great harm in't, I hope?

PATTY: Fough, I wouldn't let him kiss me for all the world! He'd make my face all smutty.

TRUDGE: Zounds, you are mighty nice all of a sudden! But I'd have you to know, Madame Patty, that black-a-moor ladies, as you call'em, are some of the very few whose complexions never rub off! 'Sbud, if they did, Wows and I should have changed faces by this time. (3.1.98)

The trajectory of this exchange is notable, for Patty's abhorrence of interracial sexuality is countered by Trudge's invocation of one of the period's prevalent misogynist tropes. As the working-class woman asserts her racial privilege, Trudge launches into a critique of feminine artifice that is usually tied to charges of prostitution: "Pshaw, these girls are so plaguy proud of their white and red! But I won't be shamed out of Wows, that's flat. . . . After all the fine, flashy London girls, Wowski's the wench, for my money" (3.1.99). Trudge's gibe reengages the question of exchange and suggests that white working-class women don whiteness for the express purpose of increasing their value in the sexual market place. Trudge's "Black-a-moor ladies" have no recourse to artifice because they do not bring themselves to market but are rather forcibly commodified and because their value is ostensibly confined to the auction block. It is this latter point that Colman picks up on in particularly grotesque ways, first through Patty's ridicule of Inkle and then in Trudge's account of his constancy to Wowski.

Patty expressly refers to Inkle's relationship with Yarico as a "mistake" of a very particular sort. Her song in act 3, scene 1, reengages the hunting metaphor that runs through the play:

Song. PATTY.

Tho' lovers, like marksmen, all aim at the heart
 Some hit wide of the mark, as we wenches all know,
 But, of all the bad shots, he's the worst in the art
 Who shoots at a pigeon and kills a crow—oho!
 Your master has killed a crow. . . .
 Love and money thus wasted in terrible trim,
 His powder is spent and his shot running low,
 Yet the pigeon he missed, I've a notion, with him
 Will never for such a mistake pluck a crow—no, no,
 Your master may keep his crow. (3.1.98–99)

This description of Inkle as one who is "unskilled how to level at wives" raises questions about his later remarks on hunting for money. The shared metaphor

of the hunt draws attention to the fact that within the play's narrative and within British society at large the acquisition of a wife is a hunt for money. However, this understanding of marriage as a bond of familial and financial alliance is what pushes Inkle to sell Yarico in favor of Narcissa's standing. When he repents and decides to opt for love instead of duty, he is not only deviating from his mercantile duty but also from his duty to marry well. In this light, Patty's song advocates for a model of social relations that the play's sentimental plot ultimately rejects. That this advocacy comes from a working-class character is crucial, for Colman indulges in the racist discourse of the song and then, through a gesture of class containment, implies that this kind of discourse is part and parcel of subservience.

However, to stop reading the song at this point neglects the fact that the play contains two nonsentimental marriage plots. It is difficult to interpret precisely the final two lines of the song, but the pigeon in question is Narcissa, and Patty seems to be suggesting that Narcissa will not compete with Yarico for Inkle. She will instead cede Inkle to Yarico because, in "mistakenly" choosing a "crow," Inkle the merchant has shown himself to be unworthy of Narcissa's hand. It is Inkle who has lost his value—that is, spent his powder and his shot—in the middle-class marriage market. I would argue further that this devaluation is tied to the figuration of Inkle as Vulcan and emphasizes that Inkle's defect is ultimately one of class identity. This implies that interracial sexual desire constitutes an infraction against the codes of middle-class self-stylization. Foucault's prescient commentary on the racialization of classed bodies is apposite here for, as Ann Laura Stoler argues, the middle class is trying to train itself out of certain vulnerabilities.¹⁰⁴ Inkle's "defect," his sentimental interracial desire, therefore must be ejected but retained within view as an example. Interestingly, the question of what to do with Inkle at the close of the play was a fundamental problem for Colman. John Adolphus argues that "the thought of Inkle's repentance, which brings the piece to a satisfactory, if an awkward conclusion, was suggested by [Bannister]. 'But, after all,' said Colman, 'what are we to do with Inkle?' 'Oh!' said Bannister, 'let him repent'; and so it was settled."¹⁰⁵ The shaming of Inkle associated with the earlier versions of the tale has been effectively redeployed. What was earlier a moral lesson in gender propriety has become a moral and economic lesson in the cost of interracial desire and miscegenation to the emergent middle class. Inkle's exemplarity guarantees his retention in a nebulous zone of necessary counternormativity.

The argument I am presenting here gains some depth when we look at Trudge's answer to Patty's song, for it clarifies the intrication of class and inter-racial desire in the play:

A clerk I was in London gay'
 Jemmy linkum feedle
 And went in boots to see the play,
 Marry fiddlem tweedle.
 I marched the lobby, twirl'd my stick,
 Diddle, daddle, deedle;
 The girls all cried, "He's quite the kick."
 Oh, Jemmy linkum feedle. (3.1.99)

As Sutcliffe notes, Trudge is "aping the affectations of high society" (99) in the theatre lobby. Such a reference to the social milieu in which the audience finds itself lends a certain urgency to the song's humor for an explicit comparison is being made between Trudge's imitation of Inkle and the social performance of class envy. While Inkle is not described as a young buck—he is far too engaged in the hunt for money for that—it is clear that Trudge's actions in the play frequently repeat those of Inkle. As noted earlier, the wooing of Wowski rigorously restages the conversation and duet of Inkle and Yarico. However, Trudge and Wowski are far too sexually experienced to perform an exact rehearsal. Likewise, Trudge's performance in the lobby for the "English" belles engages the same discourse of prostitution discussed earlier, but as the song continues and Trudge finds himself in America, the question of exchange value is fundamentally altered by Wowski's racial difference:

Your London girls with roguish trip,
 Wheedle, wheedle, wheedle,
 May boast their pouting under-lip,
 Fiddle, faddle, feedle.
 My Wows would beat a hundred such,
 Diddle, daddle, deedle,
 Whose upper lip pouts twice as much,
 O, pretty double wheedle!

Rings I'll buy to deck her toes,
 Jemmy linkum feedle;
 A feather fine shall grace her nose,

Waving siddle seedle.
 With jealousy I ne'er shall burst,
 Who'd steal my bone of bone-a?
 A white Othello, I can trust
 A dingy Desdemona. (3.1.99–100)

Trudge counters the bodily sign of female desirability here figured as the “pouting under-lip” of the London girls with one of the emergent signs of racial difference—that is, Wowski’s full lips. It is tempting to read the facial expression of the London girls as signifying the fact that they are never happy with one such as Trudge, and I suspect the fact that Colman specifies that it is Wowski’s upper lip that pouts twice as much is tied to a racist image of mental inferiority—there is no shortage of such gestures in the play. But the tenuous ascription of meaning here is superseded by the extraordinary closing verse of the song that emphasizes that Wowski is valuable to Trudge precisely because her racially coded body makes her undesirable to other white men. The racial inversion of the Othello-Desdemona pair makes this explicit, but the allusion has complex connotations when one considers the overall trajectory of the song. Othello’s desire to accede to whiteness through the acquisition of Desdemona has its counterpart in Trudge’s desire to reap the sexual spoils of class privilege in the theatre lobby. Trudge’s class envy haunts his actions before meeting Wowski just as surely as Othello’s jealousy haunts his tragic figure. But Trudge is comically reformed by Wowski. In this light, the reversal of race in the Othello-Desdemona pair figures a negation of class envy. Trudge’s devotion to Wowski involves an explicit rejection of his earlier imitation of the whoring aristocrat in the theatre. That such a performance of class envy in the metropolitan theatre has been unsuccessful opens the door for a different imitation in the colonial realm. Trudge imitates Inkle and takes a “dingy dear,” but the vector of class imitation reverses. Trudge is no longer playing the young buck but rather increasingly embraces his position in a fashion that would have warmed the hearts of those in the audience who are threatened by the very performability of class evident in the theatre lobby. Furthermore, it is Inkle now who imitates Trudge for, as we have seen, his decision to sell Yarico *and* repent places him in a liminal position somewhere outside the middle class.

Both sets of interracial couples are consigned to the constitutive outside of the middle class, but they function in different ways. Trudge and Wowski become increasingly connected to figures of domestic bliss as in the Finale:

TRUDGE: 'Sbobs, now I'm fix'd for life!
 My fortune's fair, tho' black's my wife;
 Who fears domestic strife?
 Who cares now a souse?
 Merry cheer my dingy dear
 Shall find with her factotum here;
 Night and day I'll frisk and play
 About the house with Wows. (3.3.111)

Wowski's lack of sexual exchange value but surplus of sexual use value draw Trudge's working-class sexuality out of the public sphere and into a frisky zone of private play. In other words, Trudge and Wowski are subject to the regulatory fantasies through which the middle class consolidated first itself and then its class others. Inkle and Yarico become exemplars of conjugal love that are notably disconnected from both direct expressions of class and geographical location:

YARICO: . . . Doomed to know care and woe,
 Happy still is Yarico,
 Since her love will constant prove
 And nobly scorns to shrink.

INKLE: Love's convert here behold,
 Banished now my thirst of gold,
 Bless'd in these arms to fold
 My gentle Yarico.
 Hence all care, doubt and fear,
 Love and joy each want shall cheer,
 Happy night, pure delight,
 Shall make our bosoms glow. (3.3.111–12)

Yarico's—and Mrs. Kemble's—surplus of erotic desirability that so moved Boaden engages the sexual fantasies of the play's audience, but these same fantasies are quickly re-routed to bolster the redefinition of marriage as a site of conjugal devotion rather than economic affiliation. Inkle's final song in the finale points toward a bower of bliss beyond the reach of capital that is as ideological as the regulatory fantasies mentioned previously.

The play's normative couple, Campley and Narcissa, remain importantly undefined. They exhibit Inkle and Yarico's devotion and Trudge and Wowski's commitment to a heterosexuality confined to the domestic sphere, but they have not "taken black for white" and thus accede to normativity. What is clear, how-

ever, is that their union has the sanction of the state in the person of Narcissa's father and that the economic viability of the marriage is directly related not only to the continued growth of the military's role in British colonial affairs but also to a transference of the economic gains of mercantile hegemony to this emergent imperial vision. That this new vision is so insistently linked to the health of Campley's body—to Rodney's leg as it were—marks this play as a crucial turning point in the culture of British imperialism in the Atlantic world.