

A WRITER'S PROGRESS: THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION IN DAVID
DABYDEEN'S *A HARLOT'S PROGRESS*

By

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the thesis of STEVEN KEONI HOLMES find it satisfactory and recommend it be accepted.

Chair

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Abstract

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The difficulty in situating – let alone reading – the postcolonial novel is explicitly foregrounded in Dabydeen's *A Harlot's Progress*. Dabydeen engages with a host of eighteenth century English authors who visually and textually represented blacks. As his title suggests, there is a connection and critique being made to William Hogarth's print series of the same name published in 1732. Dabydeen writes the story from the perspective of a black boy in plate II of the series. Through Mungo, Dabydeen challenges the 'politics' of Mungo's representation in the eighteenth century. He explores Hogarth and Thomas Pringle's, the abolitionist who attempts to record Mungo's narrative, need to negotiate an overwhelming discourse of commercial that controlled not only their own pens and presses but the bodies of their textual subjects. By exposing these exterior influences, Dabydeen also makes a critique at the contemporary politics of canonicity. Even the era of the expanding literary canon, Dabydeen asks us why now we are drawn to Mungo. Is it because we want to appreciate him on an equal and human level, or is it simply a result of postcolonial critical discourses that still construe him as lacking in a self-same manner as his original inscription? My argument is simply that Dabydeen uses Mungo to expose active resistance that was evident at the time of his inscription as well as to criticize our

contemporary urge to continually figure him as passive.

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Dedication

To the Mrs.

I. Introduction

“An astonishing example of such critical oversight is to be found in Robert Cowley’s otherwise admirable dissertation on Hogarth’s Marriage a la Mode: he examines in minute, scholarly detail all the (white) characters in the work, and expounds upon the semantic significance of all its details, from the three pins stuck in the broker’s sleeve in Frame I to the cobwebs on the window [...] yet, makes no mention whatsoever of the black man serving chocolate in frame 4, not even a token acknowledgement of his presence” ~ David Dabydeen

In his novel *A Harlot’s Progress*, David Dabydeen extends his scholarly interest in visual representations of blacks in eighteenth century England from historical commentary to creative fiction. The Guyana-born, English-educated author’s scholarship focuses on the prints of William Hogarth. Dabydeen’s first academic publication, *Hogarth’s Blacks*, argues that the black is both “a key to unlocking Hogarth’s narrative” as well as “an astonishing example of critical oversight” on the behalf of eighteenth-century literary scholars and historians (9). In his most famous print series called *A Harlot’s Progress* (1732), Hogarth traces the eponymous prostitute, Moll Hackabout, on her “progress” through pimps, Jews, lovers, debtor’s prison, disease, and death. The prints were wildly popular for his readers, who seized upon the visual narrative as a moral tale of the corrupting power of the city. To an educated audience, the prints also satirized the hypocrisy of the union of upper class morality and the rhetoric of commercial progress. Contemporary political figures and clergymen who would have condemned Moll in public are implicated as participants in her corruption through a variety of sophisticated symbols and allusions. Echoing numerous critics’ interpretation of the prints over the years, Dabydeen comments that “the title of the series is ironic: ‘Progress’ is in reality degradation, physical and moral, and eventual death. It is significant that the harlot was a prominent figure in eighteenth

century literature for she was an appropriate symbol of the commercial ethos of the age” (*Hogarth’s Blacks* 101).

While Dabydeen appreciates Hogarth’s critical reception, he observes that two black presences in print series have escaped critical attention. In Plate 4, Dabydeen observes that a pregnant black woman beating hemp alongside Moll in Bridewell “serves specifically to remind us that the condition of female inmates in English goals was not far different from the condition of black slaves in the colonies” (107). She portends the “future of some white prostitutes” many of whom would be transported to the colonies to serve as sexual and economic slaves (107-8). Likewise, in Plate 2, the presence of an exotic black house-boy who waits on Moll demands similar analysis. Dabydeen observes that the boy’s “sartorial elegance, his silver collar and his polite domestic duties (English ladies employed black boys to wait at the tea-table [...] belie the sordid reality of the servitude of naked and manacled blacks in the colonies” (114). By juxtaposing Moll’s wealthy domestic surroundings and the servant boy, Hogarth links the brutal “domestic and colonial exploitation” that “underlies the polite, cultured facade of Plate 2” (114). Despite momentarily attaining a wealthy suitor, the harlot’s metonymic descent will be complete when she ends up at Bridewell awaiting either death or deportation. In establishing similarities between prostitutes and slaves, Hogarth critiques how metropolitan mercantile wealth is built upon systemic immorality and human traffic.

Despite Hogarth’s sophisticated comparisons between poor whites and blacks, Dabydeen observes that few contemporary commentators appreciated his various levels of tragedy and irony. He argues that “most people who saw black figures in Hogarth’s pictures did not appreciate them as satirical signposts being used to point our attention to white deficiencies” (131). “However contrary his intentions,” Dabydeen confirms, “Hogarth can be deemed to

have reflected or reinforced racism among his white contemporaries” (131). Despite this shortcoming in Hogarth’s readers, Dabydeen appreciates the fact that the black woman depicted at Bridewell Prison is “the earliest example of anti-slavery sentiment in English painting” (131). He also enjoys the print series’ depiction of communalism between poor whites and blacks who were equally as disenfranchised and exploited in the metropolitan environment (131).

While Dabydeen reserves his scholarly critique of racism for Hogarth’s critics, his novel seems to engage with Hogarth’s print series at a different level of understanding. Dabydeen’s title, *A Harlot’s Progress*, establishes an intertextual connection between the twenty-first century novel and the eighteenth-century print series. This connection directs the eager literary critic familiar with postcolonial “canonical counter-discourse” to plate 2 of Hogarth’s *A Harlot’s Progress* in anticipation of the latest assault via postcolonial fiction on the English literary and visual canon (Tiffin 22). Such novels have become commonplace among postcolonial authors who engage with English classics – particularly those which bear the marks of a society dependent upon colonial exploitation.¹ By writing *A Harlot’s Progress* from the black boy’s first-person perspective and by appropriating the title of the print series, the reader is set up to believe that there *must* be an unmistakable criticism of and challenge to Hogarth’s prints forthcoming; however, the immediate narrative frame is between Mungo in his advanced years and Thomas Pringle, the historical publisher of Mary Prince’s *History* and secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society. Pringle is attempting to extract a story from Mungo that will be turned into abolitionist propaganda in the form of a slave narrative. He has heard of Mungo because of Hogarth’s famous prints and he hopes that the latter’s popularity coupled with the former’s status as the oldest black man in Britain will “fill the coffers of the Abolition society” (202). Pringle is frustrated because Mungo refuses to provide him a simple, sequential story of his upbringing

in Africa, transition to England, tales of abuse, descent into mire and poverty and, as all of Pringle's slave narratives have to end, in chapter 9: the "Redemption of Mungo by the Committee for the Abolition of Slavery" (6). Mungo knows that Pringle believes him to be a "ruined archive" due to the abuse and moral taint of the slave trade (4). While Mungo acknowledges that his memory has been tainted, part of his resistance is intentional. Facts are revealed and then immediately or later contradicted by Mungo or by other characters. Other than a general geographical progress from Africa to London, the specific details from his upbringing, his history of arrival, his conversion to Christianity, and his companionship with whores and Jews are unrecoverable. Pringle wants a story of the horrors of the slave trade and Mungo's consequential descent into debauchery that can be made to fit a "simple" moral message similar to Hogarth's prints themselves, but Mungo will not or cannot provide what he wants.

The next nine sections of *A Harlot's Progress*, each marked by a select image from one of Hogarth's prints, further frustrate the title's implications of 'Progress' as a linear and stable representative framework as a host of semi-related historical characters encounter fictional characters from Hogarth's prints. We meet Captain Thomas Thistlewood, a synthesis of the notorious diary-writing plantation owner by the same name and Captain Collingswood who made eighteenth-century headlines by jettisoning sick slaves overboard the *Zong* for the insurance compensation enfeebled bodies were worthless on the market. Lord Montague, the historical patron of Ignatius Sancho, a literate eighteenth-century former slave, employs Mungo for a time as a houseboy. Magistrate Gonson, the jailer and rapist of poor white prostitutes bound for plantation labor in the colonies, is a guest at Lord Montague's dinner table. Numerous other historical characters relevant to either the eighteenth century political or economic spheres also make appearances. The character of Hogarth is only reached in section 9 and very

little space is given to the fictional Moll Hackabout, the prostitute featured in his prints who is briefly brought to life (and then death) by Dabydeen. The overwhelming bulk of textual space is given over, Pringle's lack of comprehension notwithstanding, to Mungo's self-narrated journey from Africa to England.

In refusing to make an exclusive and clear challenge to the representation of "Mungo" in *A Harlot's Progress*, Dabydeen will not validate any simple relationship between his own text and Hogarth's prints. What emerges instead is a critique of the contemporary critic's desire to locate and expose a certain type of representation in past visual and textual artifacts. This figure has alternately been referred to as the colonized "other" or the "subaltern" but both terms have a common denominator of racial and colonial alterity fixed or naturalized by the colonizer.² Most of these critical arguments can be distilled to the desire to recover a consciously or unconsciously repressed "other" whose subjectification as "other" was necessary to legitimate the colonizer's author. Critics such as Homi K. Bhabha, Edward W. Said, and the early work of Gayatri C. Spivak extended this "other-ing" function in representations to the entirety of the colonizer's discursive universe.³ In this context, the rediscovery of this repressed difference, particularity, and cultural situatedness of the "other" becomes the grounds of opposition and contestation for the postcolonial writer. The "true" subaltern or other is held to be antithetical to its original inscription and therefore its recovery— if possible — can only obtain in an antagonistic relationship. Consequently, the authorial status of postcolonial "other" is held to be the authentic and proper location from which counter-discourse originates.

While it is true that Dabydeen's national origins and his recovery of a presence of a repressed colonial figure are conducive to such a theoretical reading, he nonetheless refuses to let Hogarth's black boy, the fictional Mungo, remain this powerless, absolutely "othered"

character that critics would read his figure as portraying. Dabydeen returns to Mungo's historical scene of production instead of attacking and decentering Hogarth's original inscription. Mungo is not *the* metonymic subaltern figure that is held to exist in past representations, but a racially differentiated body who progresses from Africa to London. However, against Mungo's particular experiences in the slave trade, Dabydeen contrasts the figurative congruence of racially undifferentiated economic experience and exploitation which brought Mungo to England and sent white prostitutes from the metropolitan slums to labor in the colonies as slaves.⁴ He does not deny a racial or colonial particularity to Mungo or to the slaves, but he refuses to allow Mungo's recovery in the past accord to a binaristic, colonizer/colonized constraint. Despite that fact that Pringle wishes to write a slave narrative about Mungo, Mungo was never a plantation slave, but a metropolitan black whose function oscillated between sexual object and exotic house decoration. In comparison to the fate in the colonies that awaits his white female friends Betty and Moll, he enjoys a relative autonomy in his later years. In the spirit of Hogarth's *A Harlot's Progress*, Dabydeen argues for the spatial congruence of experience between the white harlot and the black. Congruence refers to the racially undifferentiated economic exploitation which sent both blacks and whites along apexes of the black Atlantic triangle of Africa, the West Indies (and Americas), and England. In Dabydeen's novel, their fates, locations, labors, and movements are interchangeable and congruent as each could just as easily end up as a servant of sexual abuse in an aristocratic home or as a sexual servant to a slave trader.

This congruence metaphor is intentional, as Dabydeen employs Euclidian geometry as a metaphor to represent the twinned logics of economic exploitation and enlightenment rationality that prompted the enslavement and movement of bodies in the eighteenth-century. In the Euclidean sense, "geometrical congruency" identifies similarities in triangles based upon

congruent lines and angles while allowing for different combinations. By conflating geometrical congruency to the mathematical rationality and precision of economic profit, Dabydeen suggests that profit, reason, and the movement of bodies along the transatlantic triangle of trade share a common metaphorical denominator. Rationality and commerce are staples of the enlightenment whose realization in abolition, emancipation, and free market wage economies is generally held as proof of Western “progress.” Yet, Dabydeen shows that geometrical proof is not simply the relationship between spatial representation and logic, but profit and the control of bodies in the service of profit. In a paradoxical twist of fate, Mungo construes lustful and bloodthirsty slave trader Captain Thistlewood as the most logical and rational man of the eighteenth century. By being incorporated into slavery, Mungo is not particularized but brought into congruencies of experience, movement, labor and sexual exploitation that, far from particular to blacks, were fundamental to the growth of eighteenth century England and thus empire.

All of these issues, contradictions, congruencies, and differences come to the forefront of the eighteenth century desire to represent the black, as Dabydeen explores and defines the social fabric which was conducive to Hogarth’s – and Pringle’s – need to represent Mungo. Rather than simply rendering visible the ignored black presence through the introduction of a redemptive counter-representation, Dabydeen explores the eighteenth-century relationship between writer/print-maker and the nascent commercial energies that harnessed each author’s energies for purposes of profit. By recreating the original conditions of Mungo’s textual inscription by the eighteenth century author, Dabydeen brings the historical circumstances of the production of the “other” to the forefront of his critique. He uses Mungo to defy any binary and essentialist readings of Hogarth’s prints and Pringle’s narrative. The irony for discourses of subaltern alterity is that Mungo, the most exploited and voiceless of historical

representations, refuses to declare a particularity of experience for himself that exists against a homogenous “oppressor” experience in which all whites allegedly participated and benefited in.

While arguments against identity binaries in reading past representational practices are not new, there is still a tendency to use this binary as the dominant critical lens of twentieth-century canonical counter-discourse.⁵ As originally formulated by Helen Tiffin, challenges to the canon are read in an antagonistic framework that has the unfortunate tendency of reifying the identities binaries of colonizer and colonized. In a paradoxical manner, the authorial status of the properly situated postcolonial writer is the grounds for the challenge and yet the canonized representation of the “other” – but not the canonized author’s scene of production – is the primary target. This perspective has more to do with the critic’s intentions than with the historical location of the canonized text, its author, and its objects of representation. Through Mungo, a metropolitan black, Dabydeen questions which subalterns or “others” are the authentic ones sought out by the critic and for what purpose. It is those who are in the plantations? Those subalterns who can be proven to have no recognizable voice? The passive, helpless other overwhelmed by a superior and aggressive English expansion from the metropole to the colonies guided by its will to civilize? If instead of maintaining the other as “other” and the critic is attendant to the scene of production, then canonical counter-discourse ceases to be antagonistic to the canonized representation and more attentive to the historical and material forces which sustained both authors *and* his or her subjects of representation. There were a variety of both white and black experiences and relationships to slavery and colonialism, and a more nuanced view of both will ultimately displace the rigid colonizer/colonized experiences to a more accurate and productive understanding of canonical counter-discourse.

There are then two ways in which I will argue that Dabydeen disputes canonical counter-

discourse. The first is by creating a fictional character that refuses to behave as a “passive” other within representation. In *Mungo*, Mr. Pringle wants to locate a black Christ-figure of suffering as he progresses from Africa, to plantation labor in the colonies, and finally to London; however, the only characters who see Christ in Mungo are the ones that Mungo describes because each sees not a passive “other” but a body subject to commercial forces and movements. Mungo’s descriptions refuse a moral reading of the slave trade and instead illustrate a pervasive commercial enterprise as the true culprit of the slave trade. In this sense, Mungo gives Pringle a history of suffering, but Pringle cannot locate his passive Christ-figure of abuse unless he accepts Mungo’s ability to shape his own narrative and to redeem his white friends as well as his tormenters. Conversely, by representing the original conditions of Mungo’s production, the canonized authors of “others” cannot be challenged on a Manichean binary of racial/colonial particularity. Instead, the canonized author’s scene and history of production must be historicized. Dabydeen’s second way is through connecting the congruencies in which black and white characters, slaves and harlots, metropolitan blacks and washer women, experience similar movements, labors, and abuses. There is little place in the binary antagonistic framework of counter-canonical discourse for congruencies of white and black experience. Overall, Dabydeen argues that the exploitative movement of the racially undifferentiated body is subject to commercial expediency, despite the fact that commercialism in the eighteenth-century was widely regarded as a fulfillment of human progress and the triumph of rationality.

II. The Location of Mungo

I fear that I will forever be associated with the indecencies of merchants and whores, for Mr. Hogarth's prints will last forever [... his] prints sold uncommonly well, spreading the message of me throughout the realm, that for years afterward I could not venture out of doors without being accosted by strangers ~ Mungo

Before analyzing *A Harlot's Progress* in depth, it is necessary to situate the novel within canonical counter-discourse as it will allow Dabydeen's challenge to emerge in its full complexity and significance. Over the past two decades, terms like "writing back," "counter-discourse," "oppositional literature," and "con-texts" have been used to define the relationship between a canonical English text and a postcolonial novel (Thieme 1). Such terms, to invoke American literary critic Harold Bloom's famous complaint, remain "underdetermined in meaning and overdetermined in figuration" (qtd. in Allen 2).⁶ In other words, the frequency of deployment as opposed to efforts to better define the relationship between the canon and counter-discourse is vastly disproportionate in the analysis of postcolonial fiction. The problem remains that if this locus of terms can be applied to a wide variety of representational practices then it loses its analytical relevance and critical currency. It is my intention here to use Dabydeen's novel to illustrate and refine some of the shortcomings in the current critical expectations of canonical challenges.

A brief engagement with Helen Tiffin's original and universally-cited formulation is useful since most discussions of canonical counter-discourse texts rely upon her analytical and theoretical framework.⁷ Such texts are generally held to employ a "strategy for contesting the authority of the canon of English literature" (Tiffin 1). While she does not specifically indicate what these purposes are or define in what way the canon is subverted, it is safe to assume that

she means primarily the literary canon that is taught in the English – and probably American – universities.⁸ This specific enactment of writing back occurs when “a post-colonial writer takes up a character or characters, or the basic assumptions of a British canonical text, and unveils those assumptions, subverting the text for post-colonial purposes” (22). The author’s strategy includes not only “unveiling” the canonized representation’s construction of alterity but also extending beyond literature to “the whole of the discursive field within which such a text operated and continues to operate in post-colonial worlds” (23). Her argument is still fairly all-encompassing, especially as Tiffin extends the canonical challenge to “explorers’ journals, drama, fiction, historical accounts” and any text which “enabled conquest and colonization since such texts constituted the cultural and discursive worlds of the colonizer” (22). The postcolonial writer, in this scenario, must occupy a properly situated postcolonial location or else s/he would be unable to read and expose the dominant culture’s “underlying assumptions” in order for the “dis/mantling of these assumptions from the cross-cultural stand point of the imperially subjectified ‘local’” (23). It is quite clear that the relationship that Tiffin refers to is antagonistic and predicated upon this specific understanding of the postcolonial author’s relationship the canon. Furthermore, her descriptions of the canonized text involve the “original capture” of the colonized’s “alterity and the processes of annihilation, marginalization, or naturalization” which fixed him or her as “other” (23).⁹ In a very literal sense down to her choice of descriptive verbs, it is clear that she has reified to the status of truth the antagonistic colonizer/colonized confrontation in canonized representations. The role of the colonized is simply as a passive body awaiting the totalizing inscription of the brutal colonizer who leaves the comforts and confines of the metropolitan environment to conquer and civilize the savage.

The framework, in this sense, produces the desired results regardless of the historical

evidence at hand. This theory of reading – like most readings which involve binary essentialism – is still predicated upon a colonial epistemology which was false in the first place. To re-fix this argument in an identical manner, even in the interests of exposing a contemporary critical practice, has the unfortunately tendency to reify the false binary positions of colonizer and colonized. As John Thieme has persuasively argued, Tiffin should have heeded the warnings of Richard Terdiman, whose theories she is heavily indebted to.¹⁰ Terdiman identifies “the danger of the adversarial discourse becoming locked in a complicitous relationship with the discourse under fire [by virtue of the] the lack of uniformity in the object of attack and the heterogeneous positions of the putative combatants” (4). By reifying a non-totalizing discourse to the status of discursive truth, Tiffin creates a racial and colonial totality where one never existed. My observations here do not argue against the fact that expressions – if incompletely – “fixed” the other as inferior and passive, but simply that there was no universal “other” or “subaltern” to fix. Neither was there ever a universal metanarrative of conquest, slavery, or colonialism in existence that “substitutes for the diversity of the things said a sort of great, uniform text, which has never before been articulated, and which reveals for the first time what men ‘really meant’ not only in their words and texts, their discourses and their writings, but also in the institutions, practices, techniques, and objects that they produced” (*Archaeology* 118).¹¹ Such a view not only pacifies the colonized, it precludes any sense of interiority to the representor who is equally as passive, but in an existentially – and materially – beneficial manner. However, as Foucault appropriately reminds us, “each discourse contains the power to say something other than what it actually says, and thus to embrace a plurality of meanings” (118).¹² Furthermore, this overarching discursive frame, “must not be confused with the expressive operation by which an individual formulates an idea, a desire, an image” (117). At the level of discursive analysis, it is clear that a more

nuanced epistemological and historical framework is necessary in the analysis of colonial representations.¹³

While these observations are certainly not new critiques of colonial discourse theory, the colonial binary has direct bearing on the location of the canonical counter-discursive challenge. The problem with Tiffin's account is that her reading of representational alterity, very much informed by poststructuralist and psychoanalytic theories of representation and being, is predicated both upon the total passivity of this inscribed presence as well as its – relatively – static geographical location of its “body.” Stephen Shapiro representatively remarks, colonial discourse theory “seems primarily motivated by a preference for the right kind of behavioral response by subalterns [... and] a presentist judgment on the deficiencies of past writers for various sins of crypto-essentialism” (14). All such views hold in common a preference for dialectical psychic states which are directly formed and controlled by discursive fields, fields which still inform the colonizer/colonized identities. Progress and change, or counter-discourse does not seem possible or probable under these scenarios. Awareness and illumination of these issues do not lead to change but an overwhelming sense of being within discourse. Consequently, as Shapiro argues via Benita Parry's work, the subaltern “enacts a form of textuality operating much like Marx's commodity fetish” (14).

At one level, this theory presupposes that the “fixed” canonized representation has a definite place, experience, and relationship to its circumstances of inscription that make it a “subaltern” or “other.” In other words, if Mungo were not an “imperial subjectified local” in the complete sense of the term then his representation could not constitute a challenge to Hogarth and, by extension, the eighteenth century discourses of slavery, the *telos* of enlightenment rationality, and emancipation. In conscious articulations and unconscious fetishizations,

dominant discourses should be near universal in this urge and desire to render the black presence as passive. The individual author's perspective or narrative intention is irrelevant because the dominant discourse surrounding him or her is so contaminated by alterity that it had to necessarily impinge upon the text. If Mungo were not a "true" subaltern, then a critic's analysis of Mungo's presence in Hogarth's prints would constitute just another bit of critical refinement towards a canonized text as opposed to a radical displacement of its meaning and discursive field.

However, at this second and more crucial level, not only the challenged representation, but the geographical and colonial/racial origins of the author also come into play. The author is but a passive authorial presence through which a totalizing, racialized logic guides his or her pen.¹⁴ Here, it will be useful to revisit Spivak's famous critique in "Three Women's Texts and Imperialism" of another canonical counter-discourse novel: Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Of Rhys's construction of the native, Christophine, Spivak writes:

Christophine is tangential to this narrative. She cannot be contained by a novel which rewrites a canonical English text within the European novelistic tradition in the interest of the white Creole rather than the native. No perspective *critical* of imperialism can turn the Other into a self, because the project of imperialism has always already historically refracted what might have been the absolutely Other into a domesticated Other that consolidates the imperialist self (253).

Spivak's main objection is that Antoinette, the recovered Bertha Mason of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, is not a properly located and raced subaltern. She also objects to any representation of the subaltern as anything other than a powerless, voiceless, "other," as this possibility is precluded by the discourse of imperialism. In stark contrast, Rhys's fictional Christophine,

like Dabydeen's Mungo, has a voice, consciousness of juridical and economic discourse, and can identify and challenge the intentions of Antoinette's husband. Of Spivak's reading, Parry comments that "while she does situate Antoinette/Bertha as caught between the English imperialist and the black Jamaican, her discussion does not pursue the text's representations of a creole culture that is dependent on both yet singular, or its enunciation of a distinctive settler discourse" (21). Spivak, as she has above, would have little recourse with Mungo except to comment that the exceptional "others" are simply poor representations of the true subaltern produced by colonialist discourse.

Clearly, Spivak believes "writing back" to the canon will always reproduce the other as long as the canon is intact. From this type of understanding, canonical counter-discourse has to operate along the lines of these Manichean binaries that Spivak argues displace the issue of the author's intentions. As a result, she maintains that "We cannot know Jean Rhys' feelings in the matter. We can, however, look at the scene of Christophine's inscription in the text" (253). Spivak removes the author's personal history because exterior discourses "always already" impinge upon the novel to such a great extent as to render individual intentions meaningless. By contrast, Tiffin's entire theory relies upon the *authorial* status of the post-colonial challenger – he or she must be an authentic outsider, an authentic "local" of imperial subalternity. Authors such as David Dabydeen must be discursively immune and/or geographically and nationally specific to a history of colonialism in a way that past white authors could not be. The spatial and cultural locations of the author emerge as "the element of *conscious activity* that signals the ability to make history, by grappling with the heritage of objective material conditions and social relations" in a manner that Tiffin denies to the white authorial agents of alterity (Rodney 280). Likewise, the point of view written back to must come from a properly situated subaltern

figure of passivity, non-presence, and voicelessness – hence, Spivak’s belief that Antoinette was not subaltern enough. Finally, Tiffin’s theory also presupposes that the original work did indeed “fix” or naturalize alterity. Yet, from what Hogarth’s prints show, his inscriptions are *both* racist and, because of the unmistakable pairing between harlot deportees and black plantation laborers, destabilizing of racial fixity. Even if antagonism could be demonstrated to be at some level Dabydeen’s critique, Lars Eckstein suggests that *A Harlot’s Progress*, in that case, not merely “subverts Hogarth but at the same time writes back to him in the act of ‘homage’ [which] also shows in the appropriation of the cycle’s larger thematic context of financial and sexual exploitation” (135).¹⁵

At Tiffin’s level of understanding, the critic is asked to compare Pringle’s motivations to “locate” Mungo to his or her own academic and post-modern desires. As Rey Chow reminds us, “this [academic] process of ‘inscribing’ often means not only that we ‘represent’ certain historic others because they are/were ‘oppressed’; it often means that *there is interest in representation only when what is represented can in some way be seen as lacking*” (emphasis original 23). It is telling that out of all the eighteenth-century canonized black representations, Dabydeen omits Olaudah Equiano and only obliquely gestures towards Ignatius Sancho. The former wrote, marketed, and campaigned his written narrative and the latter wrote a variety of observations from his experience as an independent merchant-grocer in London – established, of course, by Lord Montagu.¹⁶ In either’s historical circumstances, neither black writer seems to embody this “passivity” that discourses of alterity require. By only dealing with canonized blacks who are represented – namely, Mary Prince by Pringle, Dabydeen’s reference to Sancho’s patron, Lord Montague – but not his personal history, is significant. Dabydeen, like the critic, seeks out not active figures of resistance, but the most helpless and powerless figures in order to work

against and within a particular view of postcolonial race theory. However, Dabydeen does not seek to show how such figures were fixed in time and space by white authors and racist discourses, but how the locations of blacks, whites, writers, slaves, slave owners, were brought together by the congruence of experience rather than categorical imperatives. Mungo is geographically mobile, culturally and racially oppressed, and relatively independent in the metropolis – he has white friends, Jewish friends, a “Christian” tendency to absolve his tormenters, and, most importantly, an ability to understand and contest the moment of his inscription. He has lived in African villages, London brothels, slave ships and aristocrats’ manors. Such experiences circumvent the possibility of relating Mungo to a fixed theory of subaltern representation in any way that canonical counter-discourse demands.

If canonical counter-discourse reifies the binary view of colonial epistemology then it overshadows or ignores eighteenth-century influences that may have equally come into consideration in Mungo’s scene of production. Dabydeen refuses to allow a limitless critical impingement upon the canonized texts that he “writes back to” because he brings the white authors’ history and motivation to the forefront of his novel. Not only is Mungo’s particular history important, but also the historical context of his white, metropolitan representors – Hogarth needs some “recovering” as well. In this context, such historical circumstances emerge as more crucial than a reading of colonial binaries as the transcendental signifier of meaning. Through Hogarth’s economic association with the print series, Dabydeen demonstrates that the counter-balance to binary essentialism can be accomplished, or at least interrogated, through a rigorous historical examination of the scene of Mungo’s production. It is significant that Hogarth was among one of the first waves of non-patronized authors who were forced to rely strictly upon the commercial viability of their work (Williams 32). This “liberty” or

independence to sell their skills on the open market paradoxically came at the expense of each author's autonomy to produce public works reflective of self-expression.¹⁷ While autonomy was never guaranteed under patronage, writers were now forced to impress a limitless audience rather than just a single patron – a movement from a metaphorical slavery to independence, but at a certain cost. Hogarth was perhaps the most famous independent writer and painter of the early eighteenth century, as his early fame in *A Harlot's Progress* provided him with the means to develop his own work without the consideration of profit. Hogarth expresses indifference of his early work as an illustrator because it “did little more than maintain myself in the usual gaieties of life but [was] in all a punctual paymaster” (qtd. in Paulson 23). Even in his fame, Hogarth is emblematic of independent artist's need for profit, as he threatened to withhold the eagerly anticipated “sequel,” *A Rake's Progress*, until copyright laws – widely recognized as “Hogarth's Law” in 1732 – were published to prevent his materials from being pirated (*Hogarth's Blacks* 34).

Thomas Pringle's historical dependency on money from slave narratives is a similar phenomenon.¹⁸ Pringle's debt, incurred ironically enough from his travel from Africa to England, motivated his involvement with the Anti-Slavery Society rather than moral altruism. Thus, Dabydeen's use of Pringle as Mungo's “biographer” is not simply an attempt to undermine the representation of blacks (as that is what Dabydeen indirectly does in his novel), but rather to question the economic conditions of eighteenth-century authorship, commercial print, and their effects on the represented subjects. Namely, that neither Pringle nor Hogarth likely would have produced such the – now – canonized works if each hadn't needed to make money. I understand that this argument engages in counter-factual speculation, but Dabydeen's point is not to directly contest either author, but to explore the full range of possibilities informing the production

of the black representation. As a result, he does not need to engage in transhistorical speculation as to how either author's unconscious or conscious psychic state was irreparably tainted by colonial discourses of alterity. The intentions of the white author, while not necessarily redeemed, are examined and connected to Mungo's progress from Africa to London.

Perhaps anticipating his impending criticism and canonization, Mungo complains that because of the popularity of Hogarth's prints, "I fear that I will be forever associated with the indecencies of merchants and whores, for Mr. Hogarth's prints will last forever" (273). Correspondingly, even though Dabydeen concedes that Hogarth had a different understanding of blacks than his audience, the understanding of the canonical counter-discursive challenge will remain an exploration of how Mungo's alterity was fixed. It will still constitute proof that the canonized text always already inscribes and naturalizes alterity. The sole purpose of the counter-canonical challenge towards the canonized text thus re-affirms the existence of the racial/colonial alterity in the past that the critic insists is repressed. The postcolonial challenger therefore "liberates" this repressed discourse of truth. Its own counter-representation is given the status of "truth" in the antithetical sense that dominant cultural producers like Hogarth lied.

It is almost as if a sort of racialized re-inscriptive tendency can be detected in, as Chow argues, the representation that is lacking. By contrast, Mungo would have us stop peering myopically at his image in Hogarth's print and instead pay greater attention to the multiplicity of economic and racist discourse, as well as its unevenness and instability that was present *at the time of inscription*, not at the time of the critic's discovery. From Mungo's host of acquaintances – both rich and poor, white and black, Christian and Jewish – his re-location from the colonies to the metropole, and his non-plantation labor occupation, it is clear by now that Mungo was never in any way a single manifestation of the subaltern. The critic should also know this

because Mungo informs us that “Mr. Hogarth lied” in his original representation (272). Although this statement applies at many levels, one of Mungo’s complaints is that Hogarth represented him as Moll’s servant when he was really her friend and companion. From this simple realization, Mungo defies the critic’s ability to see him as yet another passive example of the “other” because if the critic cannot trust the original representation as an authentic expression of racialized difference, then where are we to turn for proof of his ‘subalternity’? Mungo is not some dormant representation awaiting activation, meaning, and redemption at the hands of the contemporary critic – he never was in actual historical production – he was only figured that way.

If there is indeed a relationship between Hogarth’s inscription, the canon, and colonialism, then I feel that Dabydeen asks us to locate as exactly as possible this repressed discourse and anti-truth. Is it perpetually always outside of the existing canonized order where only an outsider (another “other”) can bring it to light? Do canonical challenges always indicate that which remains inside the canon can only be read by an outsider whose status on the outside equates to a better understanding? Or, do we instead find delusions of utopianism – the existence of an undisturbed, pre-colonial culture? Unlikely – Mungo notes of his village that “there were chains there too” (70). What truth does Mungo’s revelation bring to our understanding of the operation of race? That the patriarchal society that he was born into is somehow “better” or more “authentic” of a background to come from because it is free from racist discourses of colonialism? My comments, I hope, should not be read as arguing that the non-English needed “civilization” – quite the contrary, as Mungo sees that both could stand a better appreciation of the social and economic discourses that legitimate forms of oppression. At the very least, it exposes notions of authenticity of a “subaltern” or repressed text

as, at best, an oversimplification, and, at worse, leaving Mungo, the “cosmopolitan” subaltern behind in the search for the “transcendental” subaltern whose antithetical realization can topple Hogarth and canon once and for all.

The significance of the critically – or discursively – resistant Mungo is that he poses a problem in the assessment of counter-canonical challenges via fiction.¹⁹ David Lloyd in *Anomalous States* reminds us that “canonization is itself a process of appropriation, abstracting works from their dialogical relation to traditions which the canon cannot accommodate” (8). It is not that institutionalized scholars who read literature are blind to the multiple ways in which an individual text was originally situated and consumed but that beyond “a collection of representations” the canon is ultimately “a collection of reading practices” (Shankar 85). While often attentive to the original processes of production and creation, these reading practices have a life and a value system that must invariably subsume a cultural artifact into a different framework from that in which it was produced. In the academy, the critical genealogy of a text becomes the primary locus in value formation as opposed to the originating circumstances of production.²⁰ Generally speaking, texts of imaginary representation are more conducive to such canonical debates precisely because the representations are fictional. Such representations have an even less direct or apprehensible relationship to historical and discursive conditions than can be asserted about other modes of expression. In other words, regardless of his original intentions, Hogarth can easily be seen as an instrument of a totalizing racist discourse because his prints are imaginary. While certainly not limitless in interpretive scope, imaginary fiction is presumed to be an extension of self-expression, detached from more clearly defined and regulated exterior social influences. As a result, fiction becomes more a tapestry for political and critical debates of the present to emerge without necessarily returning to past histories

of production.

In Dabydeen's opinion, critics have lost sight of the connective strands of the economy between individuals such as Hogarth which governed – in part – his own representations. It is not that Hogarth's brilliance as a canonized painter and engraver is overshadowed by Mungo, but more that Dabydeen wishes us to consider the *possibility* that it could be. If Hogarth is a man subjectified by commerce and not a transcendental representor of artistic and cultural "truth" for his age, then Mungo can be considered an active agent of resistance despite his enslavement and representation. In other words, by challenging Pringle's and Hogarth's canonization by exploring the limits of each author's expressive autonomy, Dabydeen effectively complicates either's canonical inscriptions of the subaltern as true. Therefore, the challenge to the canon cannot be antithetical or antagonistic if there was never any truth to be found beyond Mungo's historical presence in Britain and the forces of the economy which brought him there, placed him in contact with Moll, and left him destitute to Pringle's charity. In stark contrast to the requirements of counter canonical-discourse, Dabydeen creates white authors who wrote out of economic self-interest without the slightest regard for *any* subject of representation, and a subaltern whose representation is false. If this inscription is not true, then Mungo cannot be recovered in the sense that canonical counter-discourse would require his situation.

We can better understand Dabydeen's 'challenge' to the canon, if indeed a challenge is offered, by examining the critical observations of Stuart Hall in his essay "New Ethnicities." Hall details a shift in black cultural politics from relations of representation to the politics of representation. The first movement took "the black experience," as a "singular and unifying framework" for purposes of coalition building across different ethnic communities to the extent that it became "hegemonic' over other ethnic/racial identities" (441). It is

understandable that the initial aesthetic and cultural efforts needed a unified presence simply in order to gain *any* sort of independent legitimacy from a predominantly white cultural aesthetic and, I would add, critical attention. In other words, blacks want both the “access to the rights to representation” as well as the ability to contest their marginalization (442). Such a response was consequently antagonistic towards “the way blacks were positioned as the unspoken and invisible ‘other’ [...] by the representational and discursive spaces of English society” (442). As is a commonly held cultural analysis in postcolonial circles, blacks – as well as women and women of color – are traditionally objects but not subjects of representation. From these relations of representation – the right of self-representation acknowledged by the dominant culture – Hall correctly diagnoses that the original critique towards objectification has not changed substantially: racial objectification “positively flourishe[d] under Thatcherism” (442). Yet, this new shift is indicative of a change nonetheless, namely the “end of the innocent notion of the essential black subject” (443). The essential black subject which was required in the formation of “the black experience” to contest the dominant regimes of representation, had to acknowledge – under increasing pressure from encounters with poststructuralism, feminism, postmodern, et cetera – that black is “essentially a politically and culturally *constructed* category” (443).²¹ Construction, here, simply refers to the inability of this concept to cover the diverse range of black histories, genders, and differences in any way that promises accuracy and indifference.

More pressing for my arguments about *A Harlot's Progress* here, is the shift to the politics of representation – the identification of who has the authority/legitimacy to represent which sort of groups – which preclude the sort of antagonistic response that canonical counter-discourse is predicated upon. We cannot simply, in other words, put “in the place of the

bad old essential white subject, the new essentially good black subject” because the latter never reflected anything other than a concept of political and aesthetic expedience which succeeded on some fronts and failed on others (Hall 444). Furthermore, cultural criticism, Hall notes, cannot be conducted by a “strategy of a simple set of reversals” (444). Dabydeen’s novel therefore makes neither demons nor saints, because *none* of these understandings are conducive to a better comprehension of Mungo’s physical location and his experiences in England. In this way, canonical-counter discourse is far from self-evident as a means for challenging the canon. The canon itself cannot be the sole locus of the canonical counter-discursive text’s energies and efforts. Rather, the challenged texts themselves must be rigorously historicized and examined with particular regard to the author’s – and his subject’s – material conditions of production. The canon and, especially, critical reading practices should be among the analytical frameworks, but by no means the exclusive or even primary challenge.

At the level of cultural particularity and experience, Mungo resists discourses which would particularize his experience as truth. The arguments of many postcolonial critics suggest a basic critical impasse between particularity of experience versus the need and inevitability of cross-cultural communication and interaction.²² Satya P. Mohanty representatively queries, “how do we conceive of the other, indeed the Other, outside of our inherited concepts and beliefs so as not to replicate the patterns of repression and subjugation we notice in the traditional conceptual frameworks?” (121). This sort of attitude reflects back upon the prevailing multiculturalist tendencies which hold, roughly, that each particular culture has its own particular referents and contexts which can only be understood by dominant cultures in terms of hierarchies of oppression and power. Esha Niyogi De warns that we must avoid, the “liberal ontological faith in the extraordinary individual’s ethical capacity to rise above coercive knowledge

structures” (44); however, such a view should never rule out the possibility that the individual *recognizes* such structures and actively resists within, against and outside of them. It is equally as problematic to assert that coercive knowledge structures are totalizing and particularizing to one group without acknowledging multiple levels and locations of oppression. Mohanty argues that although “it is necessary to assert our dense particularities, our lived and imagined differences, [...] can we afford to leave untheorized the question of how our differences are intertwined and, indeed, hierarchically organized?” (130).

Rather than embark upon a lengthy argument either for or against these views, I will instead turn the debate towards *A Harlot's Progress* to illustrate the relevance of Mohanty's comments. In Dabydeen's text, critics should pay particular attention to discourses of race, but also the overarching *effects* of commerce particularly upon a variety of representational and material practices. As Mungo presses his hands to Betty, the white washerwoman, and remarks, “Our hands are congruent [...] See, we are one and yet not one,” we see that points of congruence and interconnection can comfortably – and uncomfortably – co-exist with racial particularity while not reducing either to a simple opposition (108). We need not weigh ourselves down in arguments of comparative oppression to acknowledge that Betty's fate in the colonies would likely be a harsher existence than Mungo's as a mansion servant. Conversely, Mungo is certainly an exceptional subaltern in that he never holds one fixed location, labor position, dependence, or cultural expression. One of the points of both Hogarth's prints and Dabydeen's novel is that the effects upon the body that commerce and human traffic enact are universally applicable. Indeed, Betty and Mungo can both be different and congruent – the former indicating a racial discourse that Betty is not the object of and the latter indicating a logic of commerce that objectifies each of them (indeed, there need not be a binary implied by

their difference). Simply stated, racial objectivity and stereotyping in historical texts need to be exposed and decried, but not at an expense of extending the condemnation of a single representation to the sum total of the discursive fields of the author's time period. Counter-canonical discourse, then, needs to be re-thought and extended to a variety of techniques, historical circumstances, and material and economic relationships for both the postcolonial writer and the canonized writer.

Dabydeen exploits the historical slave narrative's use of the black as a Christ-figure: a passive, sacrificial object who is redeemed by coming to accept Christianity after trials in the plantation. He suggests that this figure and its widespread employment was a narrative device more aimed towards making profits for the abolitionist movement than an accurate representation of blacks. As I will argue, Mungo is widely regarded as a Christ-like figure by all those with whom he comes in contact from a variety of commercial occupations – suggesting that Dabydeen does not wish to openly indict any particular profession. He does not call into question the nature of progress as it explicitly connects to Hogarth, nor does he disassemble notions of progress as immediately correlated with enlightenment values. Rather, he invokes a sense of spatial, temporal, and geometrical imperfection inherent to anti-enlightenment discourse, yet required by the by the absolutism of commerce.

III. Mr. Pringle and the Many Shades of Mungo

“Mungo listens intently, an avenue of escape suddenly open to him. He will seek out these rebels at the earliest opportunity, presenting himself as one worthy of their charity” (132).

There are – at the least – two concepts of Mungo that defy the contemporary critic’s desire to participate in the redemption of a previously marginalized subaltern. On the one hand, Pringle’s Mungo will be voiceless and objectified into a stereotype that reaffirms the Christian logic that participated in his enslavement: “my Christian distress at the sexual sin he financed and made me slave to” (275). This Mungo represents the passive sort of subaltern that canonical counter-discourse would seize upon. On the other hand, Mungo the historical actor and agent resists Pringle’s designs, redeems the stereotypes of Pringle’s pen and Hogarth’s press, and spreads awareness of the geometrical, spatial, and temporal congruence of experience across racial boundaries at the dominant logic of commerce. The canonized writers of social progress and enlightenment whom we would see as, then, contemporary social critics dedicated to justice and progress are turned into harlots who will unconscionably represent anyone and anything for profit. The implication of Dabydeen’s representation of these white authors demands a redefinition of canonical counter-discourse away from alterity and more towards the common discursive reference that they shared: self-interested profit.

In order to address Dabydeen’s fictional relationship between Pringle and Mungo, it is necessary to establish his historical context through a few select biographical details. To modify an antagonistic relationship between the canon and the author, Dabydeen’s fictional biographer Pringle relies upon the modern reader’s general association of the historical Pringle with progressive, enlightened thought due to his association with abolition and slave narratives. In many ways, his historical circumstances and his canonized text – Mary Prince’s history –

offer solid proof of enlightenment rationality in triumph over mindsets of slavery. In other words, since progress and consciousness generally “make rationality the *telos* of mankind, and link the whole history of thought to the preservation of this rationality” (*Archaeology* 13), there is a tendency to reify those moments and texts in which rationality constitutes a triumph over slavery, brutality, and non-rational practices. In a sense, the Western subject requires monuments of progress to mark the progression to the present. By reading against the grain of Pringle’s history, Dabydeen challenges the positive understanding of Pringle’s contributions to abolition which would understand his motivations as a product of an enlightened mind. Instead, Mungo alleges that Pringle’s true reasons for writing stem from profit and not enlightenment rationality or out of concern for humanity.

Pringle is known in British literature studies as the secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society in London, but he is more famous for publishing *The History of Mary Prince* in 1831. After a brief stay in South Africa, he had returned to face debt due to a loan incurred for passage for him and his family (Meiring 131). In an ironic inversion, Pringle did not actually seek out the Anti-Slavery Society in the manner that Dabydeen has him actively seek out Mungo. It was an article that he published on the conditions of the colony in South Africa that prompted the Anti-Slavery Society to offer him employment in 1827, which he took out of economic necessity. In a commending letter, another member named Zachary MacCaulay describes Pringle as “for years one of the most meritorious, efficient, and disinterested” of their fellow laborers (qtd. in Meiring 136). “Disinterested” is a term no doubt meant as complementary, but here it refers more to Pringle’s ability to stay above and removed from any overly emotional or inappropriate personal engagement with either his business dealings or the subjects of his writing. What is missing from the commending letter, and is reflected in Dabydeen’s characterization of him, is a

mention of his unwavering support of the anti-slavery movement. Pringle's recorded writings on slavery and colonialism are against each system's immoral effects but not their principles of purpose. Of fictional characters like Dabydeen's Captain Thistlewood, Pringle likely would have commented that, "If they have acquired many of an opposite description, it is because they have been long doubly debased by the curse of slavery and the deprivation of a good government" (qtd. in Meiring 135). Despite his involvement in abolition, Pringle's desire to represent and to write had very little to do with slavery: "in spite of his earlier resolutions [about the slave trade], he became involved in innumerable literary projects, mainly unconnected with slavery matters, hoping that these would help to augment his salary and extricate him from his pressing debts" (136). This historical picture is not of a progressive man who desired to free slaves, as we might commonly understand assume by his involvement with Mary Prince's slave narrative, but rather of an independent writer marketing his skills "disinterestedly" for profit and the Hogarthian hope of gaining creative autonomy.

While Mary Prince's history may seem slightly ancillary to *A Harlot's Progress*, there are clear references to Pringle's historical preface to Prince's *History*. Since Pringle believes Mungo to be a "ruined archive" from his trials and travails of the slave trade, he "resolves to color a people and a landscape out of his own imagination, thereby endowing Mungo with the gift of mind and eloquence" (3). In no way does he intend to credit Mungo with any actual intelligence – and, historically, nor could he. Many slave narratives contained lengthy supplements by white abolitionists to prove the narrative's authenticity. Nor will he provide Mungo an opportunity for political or social criticism as an experienced denizen of London's slums. Understanding Pringle's perception, Mungo lashes out: "Put this down in your book Mr. Pringle, properize it in your best English" (11). These sentiments reference Pringle's first

“Preface,” to the *Histories*: “It is essentially her own, without any material alteration farther than was requisite to exclude redundancies and gross grammatical errors, so as to render it clearly intelligible” (3). In comparison, Mungo’s description of Pringle’s work is “a book purporting to be a record of the Negro’s own words (understandably corrected in terms of grammar, the erasure of indelicate or infelicitous expressions, and so forth)” (3). Here, Dabydeen shifts suspicion on Pringle from a mere publisher to a more creative role – perhaps even as an author (3).

Likewise, and directly relating back to the twentieth-century critic’s desire for the subaltern, Pringle’s narrow lens conflates the authority for self-representation to grammatical competency. Dabydeen “segregates” a few non-grammatically correct expressions throughout the narratives: “Pa is far. He is never here. He is never. He is tilling field or fighting war” (11). A few paragraphs later, we hear Mungo’s internal musings expressed in “proper” English, “Now I remember, and have new word to remember” about his experiences in Africa (15). By contrasting the “voice” that Pringle expects opposed to the articulate nature of Mungo’s internal monologue, Dabydeen further questions the location of the subaltern. There is a disconnection between the Mungo’s inner discursive representation which is opposed to the limit of exterior expression that he will be allowed by Pringle’s audience. The inner Mungo has clearly become integrated into English language, English culture, and wage labor.²³ The fact that Mungo is conscious of this need to “tokenize” himself for money destabilizes the “truth” of the slave narrative for any critic a window into the slave’s soul. To the best of his memory, Mungo has never been a plantation slave, but Pringle’s narrative demands that Chapter 3 detail plantation labor and it will likely have one. He will provide Pringle with parts of the slave narrative subject that he desires (even in a roundabout fashion), but his articulate and conscious inner

monologue does not allow the critic the same sort of liberty. As Dabydeen introduces this “fiction” or lie into Pringle’s narrative, the ensuing representation is useless as a literal representation of Mungo. It is therefore impossible to draw any sorts of “universal” claims about Mungo’s truth as a subaltern or even a slave figure to a representative extent claimed. The true consciousness of the narration comes from the subaltern’s perspective, not the impatient Pringle who needs simply to confirm some facts in order to dash his propaganda off to the printing press.

By situating Mungo against the historical representation of Mary Prince, a black slave, Dabydeen undermines the conventional associations between Pringle and any sort of contribution towards “progress” which were discourses explicitly connected to abolition. Movements and shifts had to occur from darkness to lightness, from sin to redemption, from slavery to Christianity with the consequential state of being automatically associated with a positive progression. Furthermore, by interrogating the formation of the slave narrative, Dabydeen is also subtly displacing its primacy as the universal slave experience for eighteenth and early nineteenth century blacks – namely one of progression from plantation slavery to salvation at the hands of the abolitionists. A point worth observing here, as has direct bearing on Dabydeen’s critique of canonization, is that twentieth century African American critics such as Henry Louis Gates Jr., in their eagerness to celebrate the birth of black writing and self-representation in the slave narrative, have historically held the truth of Pringle’s statements. After lauding the nascent stages of black counter-discourse through the slave narrative, he comments that “Prince is a convincing narrator, one who combines a fine sense of metaphor with the compulsion to testify and indict her oppressors” (xv). Although Gates Jr. does not specifically mention Pringle’s intervention, from his remarks it would more or less be assumed that Pringle was a sympathetic agent dedicated to the emancipation of slaves. In fact, the

narrative was dictated to a member of the Pringle household and Pringle himself provided the contexts, supplements, and pretexts to justify its authenticity. A later critic, Moira Fergusson, is more critical. She points to places in the text in which Mary's narrative presence wavers and oscillates as if indicative of greater and lesser degrees of narrative intrusion.²⁴ A quick example will suffice: after describing Mr. D—'s treatment of the slave old Daniel involving throwing salt water on his freshly whipped wounds, the narrative makes the comment,

Oh the horrors of slavery! – How the thought of it pains my heart! But the truth ought to be told of it; and what my eyes have seen I think it is my duty to relate; for few people in England know what slavery is [...] I would have all the good people in England to know it too, that they may break our chains, and set us free (21).

Such condemnation of the slave trade that urges action among the English tends to be interjected at the conclusion of a non-condemnatory story of beating or harsh labor. Prince, in this sense, must remain a passive textual victim of her captors while the active agent and voice of freedom must be the English author and his audience. A sort of textual re-capture of the black occurs at the hands of the very discourses intended to grant his or her freedom. Fergusson also points out the fact that, as an employee in Pringle's household, Mary, and by extension Mungo, is dependent upon his charity and therefore upon his narrative designs (13).

A less commented upon factor in the evolution of the *Histories* which factors directly into Dabydeen's understanding of Pringle's desire to write and publish, is a "Postscript" to the second edition. Pringle claims that since the first edition was published, "Mary Prince has been afflicted with a disease in the eyes, which, it is feared, may terminate in total blindness" (4). He urges the "friends of humanity to promote the more zealously the sale of this publication, with a

view to provide a little fund for her future benefit” (4). Mary Prince’s tale, easily forgotten in the days in which plantation labor and the slave trade are “officially” abolished and subsumed into a narrative of progress, was both an object of propaganda and a commodity. Like Mary Prince, Mungo’s health is also failing when Pringle comes to visit him; however, Mungo is not deluded that the story is will recorded on his behalf and for his own benefit. He knows that the primary purpose of Pringle’s story is to “fill the coffers of the Abolition Committee” (75).

More than just an attempt to fit Mungo’s story into a story of moral progress, Pringle makes it clear that his interest is not the truth – or present circumstances – of his subject’s experience but only his embodied relationship to the slave trade which can be represented for profit. In other words, Mungo has value as a representation only in as far his body’s experience of abuse and travel can be made to represent narrow abolitionist ends, part of which include sensationalizing Mungo’s experiences at the receiving end of abuse. It is not out of concern for his damaged mind, his poverty, or his reactions to abuse which are of interest – those motivations will be provided for him. It is clearer now that Pringle’s “ruined archive” comment addresses neither Mungo’s retention of details nor the state of his consciousness. The ruined archive is more of metaphor that Dabydeen uses to satirize Pringle’s narrative designs. He seeks only records and facts not an experiential being with a consciousness of his own. This encounter is less an interview than an audit to confirm that Mungo’s presence in certain places can conform to Pringle’s pre-existing format as emphasized by the chapter titles he has already laid out: “I Africa. / 2 Voyage to the Americas in Slave Ship. / 3 Plantation Labour” (6). His true designs are exposed when he “crosses them out and begins again. I The Beloved Homeland of My Birth: Africa / 2 Paradise Lost: The Terrors of my Expulsion to the Americas in the Bowels of a Slaveship/ 3 The Pitiless Sun: My Plantation Travails” (7). Ironically, Mungo never made it

to the colonies although he did travel on a slaveship and he never served on a plantation. Such details must be provided for this unrepentant subject – if he has not experienced Christian suffering through labor, then how can he be saved? However, the subaltern, the black made worthy to be “saved” by England’s rational progression had to pass through a certain geographical arc and labor experience. In a sense, this canonized form of the slave narrative is yet another imposition of experiential universality that the critic seeks to locate in the subaltern. As a result, the form dictates the content, and the actual history or events represented are dubious.

Pringle’s detachment from the accurate historical constitution of his subject is also made clear by his fictionalized understanding of Hogarth’s prints. He needs the fact that Mungo has, in a sense, already been canonized by Hogarth as mingling with prostitutes and whores to attest to a propaganda piece. There is actual visual proof that Mungo engaged in sinful behavior upon relying in Britain. The burden of proving the rest of story becomes diminished as a result.²⁵ At another level, Pringle is also aware that evidence of an actual black body subjected to violence is the only marketable way in a country geographically removed from plantation labor with only a small city presence of blacks will be made to move; however, Mungo is determined to thwart this motive. “He wishes me to tell him that I was ripped from my mother’s breast by the evil slaver Captain Thistlewood, taken to his ship and so molested that I became a willing disciple to the ways of animals. Hence my companionship in England of whores and Jews” (70). Again, the emphasis is only on the progress of Mungo’s body and the actions that were performed on its prostrate, unthinking corporeality. In other words, what Pringle requires is a linear sequence of events and abuses without any complications in the form of Mungo’s conscious resistance and, especially, not his thoughts on the rationality of Captain Thistlewood’s actions. The only

commodifiable elements of Mungo's tale are those in which he does not exist except as a passive object of an immoral system. His representation, like his body under slavery, is the only valuable part of him and, by extension, the only manner in which his "consciousness" can be proven.

Through Pringle's example, we see that while the discourses informing the abolitionists were very racialized, his own motivations had very little to do with a conscious decision to naturalize race and much more to do with economic self-interest. He simply needs a body that can be verifiably established to a certain set of geographical and physical experiences and it is only by maintaining that subject as a body until Mungo's "discovery" of abolition, that abolitionist discourses can be demonstrated as the generator of black consciousness. As a result, the abolitionists' purposes are fulfilled and Pringle is able to stave off debt. Dabydeen's interest in elucidating this aspect of Pringle's understanding of representation deprives Pringle's association with the *Histories* and its canonized value to the "progress" of emancipation from – ironically – the rational consciousness that he denies Mungo. Considering that liberal narratives of enlightenment progress (and even their Romantic antithesis) tend to connect self-expression with freedom (Singh 34), Dabydeen complicates this notion through the depiction of allegedly progressive social propaganda that still excluded "truth" of the subjects represented for the right to sell copies. Rationality is shown to have a constitutive counterpart in commerce – and this point will be made abundantly clear in Dabydeen's characterization of Captain Thistlewood. Discourses of abolition and emancipation were as much economically motivated, Dabydeen argues, as they were out of moral indignity. Pringle also shows that despite the existence of exterior racialized discourses, these may or may not have played into Pringle's desire to represent Mary Prince, and, by extension, Mungo as an "other." The urge to objectify the

“other” has everything to do with selling prints, and very little to do with expressing Pringle, Prince, or Mungo’s respective selves. Pringle, like Thistlewood, Betty, and Moll Hackabout may just be an agent of commerce while clinging to a sense of independence through the ability to market one’s own labor power. By inverting the poles of rationality between writer and represented, progress and regression, Dabydeen argues that the moment of historical emergence for abolition had little to do with affirming a *telos* of rational progression. Indeed, the only *telos* of rationality is commercial, not moral or consciousness based.

As an aside to matters of canonization relevant to this discussion, through Hogarth and his copyright law, Dabydeen posits unmistakable parallels between Hogarth and Pringle. Hogarth “lied” in the same sense as Pringle – that neither actually cared for the subjects of his or her representation but only their commercial value as representable objects in relationship to social critique. Both men undeniably ventured progressive social critiques, but Dabydeen has blurred the contemporary reader’s ability to separate the critiques from the self-interested profit motive. It is not that profit and representation and mutually incompatible ends, but there is a definite tendency for critics to lose sight of these influences when viewing Hogarth’s prints and Mary Prince’s narrative in canonized isolation. The original conditions and contradictions are inevitably subsumed to contemporary aesthetic and critical concerns; hence, in Dabydeen’s opinion why some constitutive motives to Prince’s narrative and Hogarth’s prints remain unexamined by critics for so long.²⁶

IV. Thistlewood and Lord Montague see Jesus

“Mr. Thistlewood’s probing has forced me into consciousness, as his ancestor’s gun which murdered Rima forced me into birth”~ Mungo (46)

Pringle’s economic self-interest notwithstanding, he still affords Mungo rare opportunity for self-expression historically denied to the majority of slaves in the early eighteenth-century. Contrary to Pringle’s wishes, Mungo is reluctant to condemn Captain Thistlewood, the agent of commerce who performed exactly those actions – abduction, transportation, and sexual abuse – that Pringle wants to publish. By refusing to give Pringle a stereotypical sinful slave agent figure, Mungo begins to resist both his own objectification and Thistlewood’s in Pringle’s narrative. It is not that Mungo is opposed to telling his story, but it must be “as I wish it to be” and not according to Pringle’s designs (253). By casting Mungo as a Christ-figure, Dabydeen allows Mungo to fulfill a part of what Pringle demands from all of his slave objects. Yet, Mungo refuses to redeem himself through Christian confession by describing his acquaintance with as sinners and victims of the slave system. Instead, it is Mungo who redeems, perhaps not Thistlewood’s soul, but his awakening into consciousness about the underlying logic of slave trade. Through an encounter with Mungo, Thistlewood rejects the false “Greek” logic of commerce that has a logical and rational end in treating humans as property in the service of profit. Dabydeen uses “Greek” logic as a metaphor for the processes which justify the ordering of space, bodies, and social-economic discourses; however, it is a false monument of English progress because Mungo claims that such logic is actually Egyptian in origin and therefore cannot be attributed to Western civilization. Its appropriation by the English has resulted in a system of unpaid labor that can only be accomplished through a discourse of social justification that denies laborers consciousness and, by extension, humanity in the service of profit.

Under Mungo's narrative lens, Captain Thistlewood ceases to be the passive representation of a wayward soul lost in the sinfulness of the trade. As an agent of commerce whose actions are dependent only upon profit margins and numbers, Dabydeen suggests that he is perhaps the most rational man of the age: "a true patriot in the service of commerce" (113). Yet, Thistlewood's sexual desire for Mungo becomes a metaphor for his understanding of Mungo's consciousness despite the fact that his abuse is dependent upon denying that relationship. At the level of eighteenth century understanding, Dabydeen uses the prior objectification of the black as the "key" to understanding the dehumanizing forces of commerce and the slave trade – not sin, progress, or any other tropes – but simply the recognition of the commercial forces that brought the black presence to England. By making Mungo into a Christ figure, Dabydeen consequently is working within and against the conventions of the slave narrative. Mungo refuses to assent to a representation as passive victim of sexual abuse because this representation denies the reality of the age. He "will resist Mr. Pringle's designation of him and his brethren as Christ," because Mungo is not the Christian Christ but the Christ of commercial suffering at the hands of an unyielding rationality (156). If there is a Christ to be made, then this Christ can only be understood with attention to prevailing economic forces. Pringle does hear a history of Thistlewood's abuse upon Mungo's prostrate body, but one that ultimately deprives him of the resolution and connection to religion that he is looking for.

In the fictional Captain Thistlewood, Dabydeen synthesizes disparate historical figures, as well as the documentation of their actions, into a single character. Jamaican plantation owner Thomas Thistlewood and the notorious Captain Collingsworth of the slave ship *Zong* remain unconnected in any current history of eighteenth century England, yet Dabydeen collapses their respective historical presences into the metonymic evil agent of the slave trade. In

Part VI of *A Harlot's Progress*, Lady Montague attributes the history of Captain Collingswood to the fictional Captain Thistlewood. Captain Thistlewood shackled and threw his sick slaves overboard so “he could claim their insurance value as goods lost at sea” – an event that both fictionally and historically helped provide ample evidence of the horrors of the slave trade (193; *Hogarth's Blacks* 154). Although another guest, Magistrate Gonson is convinced, like the abolitionists, that Thistlewood “went mad, the horror of his business finally turning his brain,” Dabydeen clearly indicates that such a moral equation is firmly separate from Thistlewood’s understanding of his actions (192); or rather, he is perfecting his craft as a slaver and beacon of rationality. To impose the moral motive is to risk Pringle’s misunderstanding of the logic of slave trade.

In contrast to his seafaring counterpart, the historical Thomas Thistlewood took only one transatlantic voyage from England to Jamaica where he remained for the rest of his days. Thistlewood is well known in historical circles as the prodigious chronicler of over 10,000 diary pages.²⁷ A typical entry reads, “Tuesday, 4th September: In the evening *Cum* Egypt Susanah, *Sup. melect*. Gave her 2 bitts. Sent word by her to Phib., she might come if she would, and accordingly she did. At night *Cum* Phib” (Hall 89). All of his numerous sexual encounters with salves and punishments meted out – including his notorious “Derby’s dose” in which one slave defecated into the mouth of another slave – are recorded with the same level of emotional “indifference” as a remark on returning a copy of Adam Smith’s *A Theory of Moral Sentiments* to a friend. It is very ironic that the textual record of the diaries, with its stark lack of emotion or self-expression, would be exactly the sort of narrative absence that would allow Pringle to make the sort of reading that he would like of Thistlewood. The textual Thistlewood is a blank record of events whose originating “causes” are entirely open to interpretation as well as his

motivations for abuse (Bernard 14). His “effects” and actions are morally unconscionable, and yet Mungo seems bent upon saving him from Pringle’s pen. What becomes clear from the tension between Mungo’s Captain Thistlewood and Pringle’s desire to represent him in a certain way is less over the chronicled abuse and more over how Pringle will position him in his narrative – as a demon. Mungo is determined to show Thistlewood as both a brute capable of rape and as a man acting to the logical extremes of commerce and profit-making. By demonstrating that Pringle’s pen and Thistlewood’s behavior stem from the same economic logic, Dabydeen erodes the difference between the two.

As Mungo relates, Thistlewood keeps close track of his cargo in order to watch water supplies and count the deaths of his property (49). Thistlewood, he reflects,

was master of a slave slaveship, perhaps the most perfectly designed of sea vessels, for every inch of deck needed to be plotted to maximize the cargo, every inch of sail needed to be measured to take advantage of the cargo. When you ferry spices or rum or cloth across the seas, you can afford a little slackness here and there, but the Negro trade demands a precision, nay, a patriotism worthy of Newton’s computations that have given England such a reputation for genius (11).

The cold, calculating rationality of a “mature slaver” could see slaves only as property and, had he not met Mungo, “his was to be an uneventful life of normal trade” (112). Also, English “patriotism” here, as will come up again with later characters, is equivalent to operating along mathematical and scientific discourses designed to maximize profit. Being English is ‘sold’ to the slavers as an inherently logical affair. Thistlewood operated along the rational logic of his age that, following the merchant’s lead, was “immune to any form of reasoning that did not involve a hefty percentage in returns” (189). Even “rape” could be justified by economic

means: “rape was allowed [...] because it promised to increase the stock of slaves. But it had to be a measured act, no lasting hurt done to the females, no excessive violence to exhaust them to the point of extinction” (72).

And yet, Mungo is able to erode all of these ingrained ideologies. “All such equanimity was lost when he allowed himself to desire me beyond reason [...] I came to possess him, even as I yielded to him, and the coinage of his speech became rare, when once it dwelt only on matters of trade” (112). As property, Mungo’s only identity is a mark in Thistlewood’s ledger book to be disposed of when sick and to be “blooded” and sexually-broken in for future male English patrons (133). When Thistlewood takes Mungo as a lover, Dabydeen satirically suggests that Thistlewood’s steady relationship to commerce is broken. All of London knows that he “is famed throughout the profession for breaking” black boys for sexual consumption (107). By English moral standards, this behavior is reprehensible, and yet Thistlewood is only maximizing his profits by creating black, male receptacles for the white man’s lust to be sold on the free market; however, unlike other black slave boys, there is something about Mungo that compromises Thistlewood’s ability to limit his identity to an abstract number and market value to be “improved” for a higher return of profit.

The “love” and desire for Mungo that leads to Thistlewood’s awakening is a metaphor representing Mr. Pringle’s objectification of Mungo. Mungo tells us, that Thistlewood “[...] would not confess it, but when he beheld me at the lip of the pit, about to be sacrificed, something jolted him forever. He saved me, singled me out from the tribe as a special creature, and taught me Christianity” (112). Mungo was not singled out anymore than any other boy that removed from his village and subjected to Thistlewood’s treatment; however, “Mr. Pringle will nail him down with the nib of his pen and he will struggle to wriggle from his page, as from

Thistlewood's bed" (156). By suggesting their complicity, Dabydeen argues that both are identical in that each treated Mungo exactly to the limits of his "non-existent" consciousness as property. Mungo argues for this change in Thistlewood not to suggest that an actual transformation and humanistic catharsis occurs. It is quite the contrary, as Thistlewood has no qualms in parting with his beloved in England for the right price. The change only comes about as a result of Mungo's desire that Pringle understand that Thistlewood was entirely rational and not suffering the ill-effects of sin in his behavior. In condemning Thistlewood, Pringle condemns himself. Thistlewood's "conversion" is a metaphor for his change coming not from Christian salvation but from a rejection of the commercial logic and rationality which govern his consciousness. Mungo uses this change in a vain attempt to change Pringle's mind and purpose for representing Thistlewood.

As their "relationship" progresses, Thistlewood abandons his ledgers and the supremacy of numbers which are his only manner of relating to the slaves' identities: "When he took the boy, all thoughts of margins and returns which shaped his life disappeared [...] 'Save me,' he cried out hoarsely as if Mungo must become his blue, bleeding, and crucified God" (117). As Mungo recalls, Thistlewood's mistake was to grant him the Eucharist – by which he "came to the knowledge that our true slavery was temporary slavery to death, our true freedom the acquisition of a soul manacled eternally to the soul of God" (51). In contrast to Thistlewood a potential evangelizing force for Christianity and civilization, Pringle does not want to hear the "portrait of Captain Thistlewood as you think he is, but as I wish him to be" Mungo argues (71). Thistlewood is a "man who beat me as our Savoir was beaten, so that I could come to know the weight of the Cross of my sins" – the cross being the "TT" brand of Thistlewood and the marks of Pi that marked a "baptism into his faith" of commerce and human traffic (75). "Our native

word for it is *peia*,” Mungo tells us, “an obvious corruption of the Greek *pi*, which we also signify as TT” (31). Here, Dabydeen conflates the ancient Greek knowledge of geometrical logic to the quantitative logic of commerce. Monetary commerce, after all, is impossible without common numerical equivalents for disparate and unlike commodities and labors. In a similar vein, geometry is the abstract representation of the organization and relationship of spatial forms evidenced by logical proofs. It is the absolute ordering and manipulation of spatial forms because it assumes perfection in lines, forms, and curves – much like the dimensions of the slave ship that Mungo describes. Logic, in the economic sense of profit, is not an affirmation of man’s rational *teleology* through history that finally culminates in free market exchange, but the logical justification – or at least the convergence – of the movement and enslavement of bodies. Furthermore, the desire to find the ‘proof’ to prove the validity of the geometric shape, considered in the abstract, is what leads to the shapes’ objectification. In making the abstract concrete, a system of proofs and inferences is necessary. This inference (if a then b, if b then c) is itself conducive to “progress” as the justification for a particular manifestation of this logic is justified by the steps preceding it.

Rey Chow comments that under the combined weights of capitalism, enlightenment positivism, scientific classification and ordering, and imperialism “the increasing objectification of the world [...] can be historicized as part of an ongoing imperialist agenda for transforming the world into observable and, hence, manageable units, and the intensification of abstract theoretical processes, likewise, must be seen as inseparable from the historical conditions that repeatedly return the material benefits of such processes to European subjectivities” (*Protestant Ethnic* 2). By connecting economic logic with its spatial dimension and concrete effects, Dabydeen makes a pointed connection between rationality and the slave trade. If

human transactions are to be government by economics, by numbers, and by the efficient manipulation in time and space of human labor power, then the slave ship is the culmination of mathematical logic and rational labor practices. Ironically, Dabydeen argues that this logic is not organically English or even Greek. Mungo knows that the father of geometrical “proof” and mathematical logic, “Euclid, my forebear” who “calculated even before the birth of Jesus, that parallel lines will never meet” is not an organic English intellectual (107).²⁸ I will address the geometrical specificities of parallel lines later in connection to Mungo’s experiences in England, as it is more significant to point out Euclid’s historical relationship to the Western mathematical canon. Although uncertainty surrounds Euclid’s circumstances, his *13 Elements* establishes and organizes the basic relationships of geometrical representation such as point, line, right angles, and circles. While Euclid is generally thought to have attended Plato’s Academy in Athens circa 300 B.C.E., some scholars argue that he established a mathematical school in Alexandria (Coxeter 24). Similar to his readings of Pringle and Hogarth, Dabydeen is more interested in establishing the non-canonized relationships of the father of geometry. By invoking Euclid’s filial ties to a non-Western cradle of civilization, Dabydeen suggests that he is an Alexandrine whom the Greeks appropriated and absorbed into their cultural narratives (107).

Furthermore, Mungo’s understanding of his geometrical markings as *peia* is also a bastardization of the word *Pietà*, which references the Mantegna’s painting that his future owner Lord Montague purchased. In a hardly coincidental to both art and Christianity, the *pietà* depicts Christ’s dead body in Mary’s arms. When this connection is made in Part VI, Lord Montague is contemplating how news of Captain Thistlewood’s sensational actions is being manipulated in popular print ephemera: “each version was calculated to inflate or deflate the value of shares. Truth itself was hostage to the designs of the stockjobbers, another commodity changing

hands at a price” (199). In the newspaper, the advertisement for Mungo was “juxtaposed with the one for the sale of Mantegna’s *Pietà*” and it was the “description of Mungo as ‘unblemished’ and of ‘uncommon dignity’, in spite of ‘scars’ and the act of being ‘blooded’?” that lead him to conclude that Mungo was “the exact image of Christ, His beauty barely surviving torture at the hands of men” (189). He continues that, he had a sense “of the death of Christ not a deed of the most enormous and permanent consequence but a strategy for making quick money for a cabal of tradesmen, like the Bubble schemes hatched daily in the city” (190).

While no direct connections are made to Hogarth in this section, the genealogy of his prints are indicted here through the reference to the South Sea bubble and its exploitation by print culture. In another scholarly text entitled *Hogarth, Walpole, and Commercial England*, Dabydeen views Hogarth’s creation the print *Allegory of George, Prince of Wales* as “an attempt to exploit the optimistic mood of the Spring of 1720” when the South Sea Scheme was proposed (37). At an essential level, the Scheme entailed massive stock speculation and government investment in a slave trading company which later fell apart leaving some investors wealthy and the government in debt. A few of Hogarth’s later prints, following the whims of his popular audience, were an attempt “to make capital out of the collapse of the Scheme and the enormous popular discontent in the country” (36). In this way, Dabydeen again challenges the ability of the contemporary critic to make a purely “aesthetic” or sympathetic reading of Hogarth as an artist. Likewise, the postcolonial critic encounters difficulty arguing for racial or colonial particularity when the artist’s critical genealogy is contradictory and maintains fidelity to profit and not to his or her artistic vision. Lord Montague wonders if the sacredness of all men and things are “so vulnerable to the trademan’s calling” (190). “No,” he concludes, “it was inconceivable that the Christian order which informed England’s civilization – the result of

centuries of Progress from the Dark Ages to the present time of Light and Reason – could collapse so catastrophically because of the doing of merchants” (190). Ironically enough, Mungo is being made into a Christ – by Thistlewood’s abuse, by Pringle’s pen, by Montague’s associations between the commodification of art and the representation of suffering. Yet, the only Christ-like image he will accept is that the one that exposes each individual’s desires to single him out as Christ.

At another level, the *pietà* reference applies to both Hogarth’s canonization and Pringle’s abolitionist audience. In an inner monologue, Mungo baldly states, “I will not move you to customary guilt, gentle reader, even though you may crave that I hold up a mirror to this sins of your race. You will reward me with laurels for flagellating you thus, especially should I, with impoverished imagination, evoke for you the horror of the slave ship’s hold, the chained Negroes [...] their sentimental condition” (70). In contrast to the desired perpetual sequence of horror until the moment of redemption at the hands of Abolitionists portrayed in the slave narratives, Mungo declares, “No, they laughed, they chatted, they gossiped, they cried, they desired, as they had always done in the villages of Africa. There were chains there too. They merely exchanged their distress for yours, when you packed them into your boat” (70). In other words, there never existed any universal oppressed black slave whose sole existence and motivation in the slave narrative is to affirm Christian morality. By extension, there is no universal subaltern experience to be recovered in Hogarth’s prints or Pringle’s history but a multiplicity of black experiences forced into narrow narrative constraints. Rather than a demonstration of his discursive production and location in London, what Mungo wants from Pringle, from Abolitionist England, and from the twenty-first century critic is treatment as an “ordinary man [...] for that is what the Negro is” (273). He pleads with us that “It is your love that I greed for, not the coinage of

your guilt” (71).

As Mungo closes his narration on Captain Thistlewood, perhaps as a final indignity, he tells us that “Mr Pringle puts his hand in his pocket, as if to hide his disappointment. I notice his hand bunch around the coin in his pocket, the coin he has reserved for me but which he will not now surrender, for I have left him dissatisfied. He makes me feel like a strumpet whose performance is undeserving of his coin” (178). It is because of Pringle’s need to maintain Mungo as a harlot for Abolition and because Mungo knows that Thistlewood came into forgiveness and understanding that Pringle lacks, he will not talk “for my mouth is stopped, I will never testify, I am forever obedient to his will” (180). The irony of course is that Mungo was never a harlot until Pringle’s desire to represent came along. A harlot, following Hogarth’s prints, trades her sex for money – an “immoral” form of entrepreneurial leaning. Mungo was never paid by Thistlewood for his favors.

V. Betty is Taught to Count

“One added to one, by any rules of vulgar arithmetic, will never make three and a half; consequently, all the fictitious value must be a loss to some persons or other, first or last. The only way to prevent it to oneself must be to sell out betimes, and so let the Devil take the hindmost” ~ anonymous South Sea Bubble pamphleteer²⁹

As the narrative moves from Mungo’s trans-Atlantic passage to his arrival in England, it is clear that Pringle wants to establish a link between the horrors of the metropolitan environment and the sin of the slave trade. He knows that Mungo’s portrayal in Hogarth’s prints shows him to keep the “companionship in England of whores and Jews” to the sexual evil inflicted upon him by Thistlewood, the slave trade’s agent whose sin gives birth to a metropolitan bacchanalia (70). This sin, he knows, must have sent Mungo seeking solace with sinners as opposed to running Mary Prince-like into the arms of the Anti-slavery society. In creating such a binary, Pringle hopes to exhibit the negative influences of ‘uncivilized’ society at the very heart of civilization – the corrupting mechanisms that stand in the way of a patronizing fulfillment of Christian (and white) fulfillment. Anti-commerce writers in general, whose discourses Pringle relies upon here, saw commercial enterprises as terrible cultural force in England’s cities. The entire city, Max Byrd comments, was visually and textually depicted as a “gigantic Bedlam” whose corruption, moral degradation, and disease are almost beyond understanding and redemption – a modern day Sodom, condemned for its avarice and lust (35). It is quite clear that Hogarth’s print series rely upon this understanding in his portrayal of Moll’s company – harlots, thieves, Jews, and her premature death to disease contracted through prostitution; however, Mungo can sense the conflicts within Pringle as he is unwilling to agree wholeheartedly with the force of anti-commerce:

Common sense tells him that mercantilism underpins the welfare of the people, giving occupation to thousands and prestige to the nation. But what is crucial to the country's economy is also morally indefensible. The enslavement of blacks, which underpins England's commerce, is sinful. And it is blindness to such sin, for the sake of profit, that makes England vulnerable to foreign invasion. It is inevitable that the sin England commits overseas would visit it at home in the form of Jews and Papists and Jacobites (143).

In this revealing passage, even Pringle must contend with the twinned discourses of progress and the economy. It is also true then that he would not see the moral degradation of the metropolitan environment as a result of commerce, but of the sin of slavery. Mungo confirms yet again Pringle's failure to see that the "sin" committed overseas is not separate, nor constitutive of the sins of poverty at home. The corrupting influences of the city and the "sins" of economic drive, then, he sees as fundamentally different from the sins related to the slave trade.

Pringle has been taken in by the pro-commerce writers of the eighteenth century who generally over-romanticized the labor conditions of the poor in order to prop up the merchant as a force of "liberty" and democracy (*Hogarth's Blacks* 33). Pringle wants to separate morality from commerce without acknowledging their complicity in the current state of England. As C.A. Moore observes, "the conscience of the public was so blinded to the moral issue by the widespread participation in dividends that it was very difficult to bring independent judgment or sentiment to bear upon the subject" (29). Dabydeen challenges the rhetoric of commerce and the opportunities that it promises all of England's citizens in Part V through Mungo's interactions with the serving girl Betty. Dabydeen uses Betty both to humanize the sinful masses that Pringle refuses to connect to commerce; however, his refusal is more complicated because a more

accurate, humanizing assessment of London's poor is unprofitable in a slave narrative as it runs against the current definition of English patriotism. Patriotism, as I have previously mentioned in relationship to Captain Thistlewood, is the rhetorical displacement of the understanding and recognition of interconnections between commerce, the slave trade, nationalism, and sexual exploitation. As one writer in 1730 states, "*there is not a Man in this Kingdom, from the highest to the lowest, who does not more or less partake of the Benefits and Advantages of the Royal African Company's FORTS and CASTLES in Africa*" (qtd. in *Black Presence* 27). In this context, patriotism allows commerce and democratic impulses to override complicity in slavery as part of imperial and national identity. For many commoners, nobles, authors, and – especially – merchants, patriotism mean a firm elevation of profit over morality in the service of national interests. By using Betty to respond to what Pringle refuses to represent at the time, metropolitan concerns of white female laborers who could very easily be exported to the colonies. There is more than just one victim in the eighteenth century commercial environment, and Mungo wants us to connect his own progress from Africa to England with that of the poor whites from England to the colonies. As with Thistlewood, Mungo redeems Betty as she is born into awareness of the logic of the times.

In Part V, we meet Moll's serving girl in Plate III of the prints. As depicted by Dabydeen, Betty does not attend the fallen prostitute, but earns a living through "the meanest of occupations" as she must prepare black boys for sale as house pets (147). She is but a link in the manufacturing chain of exotic black boys for domestic display and consumption. Yet, her position in English society is extremely tenuous. After she almost drowns Mungo for his un-savage like knowledge of geometry, she complains "I could have swung for the likes of you, not even transported to Barbados [...] if you had died on me I would have got a dozen lashes

then swung. Even if I had pleaded belly and Barbados, Magistrate Gonson would have denied me life and made an example of me” (109). Through this very specific reference, Dabydeen refers here to the “spiriting” away of poor white women to the Bridewell Prison where Moll is sent in Hogarth’s fourth plate (Blumenthal 56). The reference to Barbados reflects a pernicious practice of commerce and colonization which rounded up the poor (especially women) and sent them to the colonies as both brides and laborers. The prostitute in Hogarth’s print, like the pregnant black female slave beating hemp, who is patronized by the merchant, whose own wealth relies on slave trade, will be punished by “being sentenced to the colonies to work and produce more wealth, wealth which in turn will finance more prostitution in England” (108).

Dabydeen, like Hogarth, wants to blur the distinction between common prostitute and slave in order to make a political critique of the cycle of exploitation in which “the end is prefigured in the beginning, the future contained in the present (*Hogarth’s Blacks* 108). The moment that Betty arrives in London from the country, her fate at the hands of “the Law which will banish her to a life of slavery in the Indies where men will slake their thirst by her as a by the froth of a stagnant pool” is sealed (149). Just as Mungo imagines it,

Barbados is behind God’s back, Magistrate Gonson will punish you. He’ll bang down his hammer and away you’ll go in bonds, to Bridewell jail [...] they’ll rid you on a transport ship, and in two months across the seas you’ll get sick, so many wifeless brutes in the hold with you [...] your belly will be a pit, all kinds of nameless life will crawl out of it and be born [...] and for the rest of your life, you’ll slave in canefield to feed them (emphasis original 127-28).

Betty, of course, is only blithely aware of the forces set up against her. She has not yet been baptized into the awareness of commerce and sexuality by Thistlewood or Lord Montague –

her progress is still in its nascent stages as she has yet to be ripped away from the bosom of London. Consequently, she is unable to see the parallels between herself and Mungo. He even tries expressing both her fate and their commonality in the language of logic, rationality, and commerce that the English understand: “Color divides us though we meet, as a circle curls within a triangle wanting to meet its three points but it cannot, for the three points are locked by lines that will not slacken, nor will the circle acquiesce but will round and round in stubbornness” (108). Not only does Dabydeen’s metaphor of the Atlantic Triangle of slave trade contain the circular world, but it also expresses to Betty that since the “lines that will not slacken” they will send her along one their apexes to the colonies. As a slave, Mungo “became the still point from which lines could radiate at perfect angles” (108). This reference recalls Euclid’s famous parallel postulate of geometry: “That, if a straight line falling on two straight lines makes the interior angles on the same side less than two right angles, the two straight lines, if produced indefinitely, meet on that side on which are the angles less than the two right angles” (qtd. in Coxeter 34). This proof of parallel lines is a geometrical metaphor for the equal possibilities of enslavement and movement between Betty and Mungo. As Mungo places his hand on top of Betty’s, he claims, “Our hands are congruent [...] See, are we one and yet not one?” (108).

The congruence metaphor signifies an important challenge in our ability to treat the source of canonical counter-discursive challenge as originating from the perspective of a properly situated black subject. By suggesting Mungo and Betty’s congruence, Dabydeen argues that Betty and Mungo are similar if not identical in their subjectification by commerce; however, that their congruence occurs through parallel lines allows for Betty’s racialized view of Mungo. In this sense, Mungo has a particular history and an attendant discourse of race attached to his movements and labors that cannot be equated with English discourses about London’s

metropolitan poor if for no other reason than race and location. Each possesses a racially differentiated relationship to English discourses of economic patriotism and identity, but at the same time each follows a parallel path in relationship to labor, movement, and exploitation. By allowing for racial particularity while making Betty's and Mungo's trajectories of experience congruent, Dabydeen precludes the consideration of canonical counter-discourse as operating on a binary recovery model for a racial "other." In this way, the canonical counter-discursive analysis *must* incorporate Mungo's white friends and an overarching logic of commerce into an analysis of the "other" or the eighteenth-century representation of the black.

Unfortunately, Betty seems resistant to Mungo's initial analogies and so he tries a different method of persuasion. She is troubled by the recent death of her friend Mary who had accompanied her from the country to the city and wishes to unburden her soul to Mungo. Mary and Betty had worked at the Montague manor until Lady Montague tired of her husband's sexual encounters with Mary and had accused her of theft. Mary swung at the gallows and her corpse, now a resident of "the College of Surgeons," is valuable in death in ways that even slaves' bodies are not – yet. Betty has trouble connecting Mary's fate to broader issues of commerce and human commodities which further illustrate the parallels between her economic location and Mungo's. She cannot see that Thistlewood's sexual exploitation that "mastered" Mungo and made him indifferent to her touch, is similar to Montague's exploitation of Mary who failed to receive money for his advances (106). In Betty's opinion, the problem is not the exploitation, but the lack of a wage payment. She chides Mungo for failing to understand the system of commerce that maintains English cultural superiority. "That's Africa, not here [...] here is England, and here you don't do things for free, which is how men cheated her [Mary]. They took her for nothing, from the time she was old enough for it. And she didn't know how to sell

it for a proper price. She let them do it to her” (133). Mary’s fate, unfortunately, is bound up in the same logic that drove girls like her and Betty from the country. Metaphorically speaking, once England ran out of natural resources, they turned in upon themselves to find the only resource they had to send to the Americas in exchange for exports and money – women.

Since Mary “didn’t care for money. She was no patriot” Betty concludes (133). Indeed, economic patriotism functions as one more implement of blindness for Betty. She even believes that the forces of commerce and trade that brought her to London can be used to liberate her. Mary, who never understood money, was unable to follow her advanced logic:

Mary, I says to her [...], save on the soap. We have sixteen nigger boys in our care each week and four cakes of soap. Just give them a quick rinse, save on the soap and use the brush to get the dirt off, I say to Mary, then we can squash all the pieces of soap left over that week into one bar, then with the other unused bar, we have two bars [...] If we sell what we save, each bar for a farthing, we’d make ... (115).

As Mary trails off, Mungo solves her equation: “eleven pennies [...] and if the reconstituted cake of soap is lesser in value than a new cake, say half the price, then you’d make eight pennies and two halfpennies” (116). He then tempts her, “Don’t tell Mary anything about saving soap, just do it quietly” for one hundred percent profit (116). While this tiny soap saving scheme may seem laughable in the face of the “millions” of dollars gained in the slave and sugar trades, since Betty’s “weekly wage from the Negro trade is less than the value of the four cakes of soap, the six bottles of lavender oil and the store of bread, herrings and suet puddings provided for the fattening of the body. If she could supplement her wages by half, then she would consider herself wealthy” (118). So oppressed are the white metropolitan poor that it is only by

stealing “soap shavings” that they can cling to hope of economic advancement. Wage, in this sense, functions as an inherently democratic rhetoric for poor English. Yet, it is precisely this willingness to put profit over friendship which, contrary to Betty’s earlier assertions, killed Mary. Thistlewood caught her on the soap stealing and Betty “blamed Mary” (130). The death that results over soap shavings is indicative on an entire age in which everything, from Mary’s corpse to the bag “full of slave teeth” that Betty takes from Thistlewood to the “denture-maker in Chapeside” is a commodity. Far from self-evident monuments of social critique and enlightenment progress, Pringle’s narrative and Hogarth’s prints are swept up in the same economic self-interestedness. Yet, for all of Mary’s understanding that “Money rules,” and that the only difference between her and Mungo is skin color, she still maintains that “no patriot” could “claim that niggers and Englishmen are equal” (132).

Betty denies their congruence but does decide to buy Mungo and return to Yorkshire by “profiting from the past” – she must sell the commodities, the handkerchief and silver box, obtained by theft (155). There, she and Mungo would become cloth-makers, producers of goods, not facilitators of commodities. Yet, unlike Betty, Mungo refuses her offer to “rescue him from a future of slavery” (155). Mungo is, after all, a redemptive figure yet bound by the limits of his original inscription in Hogarth’s prints. At the day of his sale, “she has become like Captain Thistlewood, once still with authority, now servile before him, disorder in her needs” and she wishes to “tell him how he has altered her life, and to suffocate him in gratitude (156). Ironically, however, “just as he will resist Mr. Pringle’s designation of him and his brethren as Christ, so now he sends Betty away from him” (156). The representation of Mungo, as the silent black figure, is the key to redeeming the images of Betty and Thistlewood, but he is not Pringle’s black Christ in the sense that Betty is Pringle’s “heartless thief, scrimping on the already

meager provisions given her for the care of hapless Negroes” (143). In contrast, Mungo wishes to claim Betty’s story: “I bid for her with Christian coinage [...] and having purchased her I free her into your care” (169). The “freed” Betty is a thief, but her justifications are logical along the lines of Thistlewood’s justifications of sexual abuse for profit. Mungo urges us to “recognize her by *my* testimony, and not by the descriptions of their and sinner that Mr. Pringle will furnish upon her” (168). Even though it is debatable whether or not Thistlewood is actually redeemed, Betty does decide to leave the cycle of prostitution and slavery by returning to the country – no longer part of Hogarth’s cycle of suffering.

VI. Closing Remarks

“Unlike Mr. Pringle he is not foolish enough to believe that a single book will alter the course of history. Not even a whole library testifying to the plight of the Negro would deflect the English from their common pursuit. Money, not ideas, is what holds the nation together, and as long as it is profitable to trade Negroes, slavery will thrive, and the state of England remain intact. Imagine what catastrophe will befall the English should his book miraculously succeed in abolishing slavery!” ~ Mungo

In his recent book of poetry, *Slave Song*, Dabydeen makes the unfortunate observation that plantation labor in the sugar fields continues into the twenty-first century for blacks in Guyana. He maintains that it is doubtful that many plantation laborers today would see much of a difference between themselves and slaves – a sentiment that I firmly share. Ironically enough, at least one English company who owns plantations in Guyana also publishes fiction in England (*Slave Song* 3). Furthermore, the English emancipation of blacks in the nineteenth century resulted in the widespread implementation of “free” and paid coolie labor through the movement of numerous Asian immigrants into the Caribbean colonies (Ho Jung 5). More “Mungos” were required and more were “produced.” In Dabydeen’s opinion, the cycle of commerce which moves the human laborer from one location to another had only suffered a discursive regime change – but not a serious productive set-back – from the efforts of abolitionists such as Pringle. The cycle of economic entrapment that Hogarth documents in his prints and that Dabydeen reproduces in his novel complicates a simple reading of rational and moral progress culminating in emancipation. If this cycle, which refuses to absolutely differentiate between white and black bodies in its relentless search for cheap labor, is his primary reason for connecting the postcolonial challenge to the canon, then an antagonistic reading of canonical counter-

discourse is unsustainable. In the assessment of canonical counter-discourse and the subalterns trapped within the canon's texts, Dabydeen urges us to avoid fetishizing the Mungos to the exclusion of the Molls, the Bettys, and the Thistlewoods. As critics, when we give into an antagonistic reading that seems so self-evident based upon Dabydeen's authorial position and the hegemonic English canon, we risk avoiding deeper congruencies and logics beyond racial/colonial particularity. If Dabydeen's personal history is to be the reason for the challenge, then he urges us to grant Pringle and Hogarth the same privilege and agency. The grounds on which the postcolonial canonical counter-discursive challenge occurs will always include the canonized text but Dabydeen argues that this reading should definitely be attentive to the author's scene of production in conjunction with the texts' internal representations.

Finally, just as Dabydeen questions Pringle's universalizing narrative aims for the "other," we must question our own motivations for locating a "subaltern" in past representations. Is it actually because we want to get to know Mungo in all of his congruencies, movements, particularities, and labors, or is it because we desire a Pringle-like confirmation of a theory of how representational discourse functions for the colonizer? Dabydeen and Mungo would hope that it is the case of the former motivation lest we repeat the colonizer's sins for another century.

¹ Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* is the first of these novels to gain widely recognized critical reception for writing back to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Although I will not attempt a comprehensive list here, other such challenges include Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* to DeFoe's *Robison Crusoe*.

² I realize that these two terms each have a complex philosophical, theoretical, gendered, and postcolonial genealogy of definition and meaning. However, as my analysis will eventually make clear, all of these deposits of meaning can be distilled to a few basic arguments stemming from a binary view of colonizer and colonized as fixed through discourse. While many recent theorists have successfully argued against this perspective because it affirms the original myths that created and sustained such views, there remains a tendency to read canonical counter-discourse in antagonistic binaries.

³ See Homi K. Bhabha, "The Other Question," *The Location of Culture*; Gayatri C. Spivak *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Methuen, 1987); and, Abdul JanMohamed's *Manichean Aesthetics: The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa* (Amherst: Univ. of Mass. Press, 1983). Each text painstakingly argues how the ambivalent construction and/or silencing of the "other" as both exotic/desirable yet powerless/inferior was and

remains an indissociable manifestation of Western discourse. Said's famous *Orientalism* argues in a similar vein but from a more historicized and Foucaultian perspective.

⁴ See Walter Blumenthal's *Brides From Brideswell* for a comprehensive historical analysis of traffic to the Americas.

⁵ In *The Rhetoric of English India*, Sara Suleri definitively argues for the recontextualization of the colonial binary as it could not possibly represent the variety of experiences, locations, and subjectivities of colonialism and imperialism. See also Benita Parry's *Postcolonial Studies: a Materialist Critique*.

⁶ This complaint has been made frequently enough, but few postcolonial scholars venture beyond criticism of Helen Tiffin's formulation in "Postcolonial and Counter-discourse" to levels of refinement and improvement. For a few recent contributions see, Zach Weir's "Reading in the Present" in *Postcolonial Text* and John Thieme's *Postcolonial Con-texts*.

⁷ Many readings of postcolonial novels make reference to this term, but to the best of my scholarly endeavors only Thieme has substantively modified Tiffin's definition. Thieme identifies the antagonistic association but does not connect it to critical practices and the canonical challenge. It is also worth noting that the term "canonical counter-discourse" has never been used in relationship to *A Harlot's Progress*.

⁸ While postcolonial critics of the canon abound, very few specifically define this canon's contents, function, location, and practice. The "canon" in postcolonial and postmodern studies has existence only in opposition to claims that it has historically excluded texts written by non-whites, non-nationals, and females. Further, its reading practices are held to universalize a consistent set of "white" dominant cultural values at the expense of the "others" that these universals rely upon for stability. Other views argue that the canon has some vague influence on national identity in a collective sense – despite the obvious lack of resonant and pervasive readership. It is definitely better to have a specific idea of the canon which, as my discussion will rely upon, has more to do with the reading practices of institutionalized critics which in turn governs the selection of texts are open to consideration. By reading practices, I mean the general critical neglect or ignorance of – especially – historical circumstances of production which should be considered in a text's meaning.

⁹ I tend to use both the terms "subaltern" and "other" interchangeably. While both have a distinct and complex philosophical, theoretical, and cultural genealogy, the postcolonial use tends to revolve around the representational and discursive "other." Spivak's summarizes her famous speech, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in this way: "The central concept in the speech was that once a woman performs an act of resistance without an infrastructure that would make us recognize resistance, her resistance is in vain" and "The subaltern is someone who has no access to social mobility" (*Conversations* 62). Although the idea of the subaltern is not strictly female in postcolonial critical practice, most scholarly uses of the term "subaltern" rely on some variation of Spivak's formulation.

¹⁰ See Richard Terdiman's *Discourse/Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France*.

¹¹ My use of Foucault is deliberate as the questions that he raises – as opposed to the non-existent answers that he often provides – about poststructuralism correctly identify the trend that I am talking about. This sort of ahistorical, teleological will to "other" is little more than the type of discursive operation that this quote refers to. Like Foucault, Dabydeen is less interested in over-reading the specific representations of man (and woman), and more the surrounding histories, technologies, and discursive formations which allow certain forms of expression and oppression. Progress, like the theory of the subaltern, is yet another teleology deriving from Nietzschean and Hegelian philosophical negativity. Besides *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, see also Foucault's definitive critique of Derrida in "My Body, This Paper, This Fire."

¹² Discourse itself is a slippery term. Here, I mean discourse in the Foucaultian sense: "Discourse is not simply that which expresses struggles or systems of domination, but that for which, and by which on struggles; it is the power which one is trying to seize" (qtd. in Terdiman 55). In other words, I use discourse to describe the negotiation between the individual speaker/writer and the structures, sites, and locations of stabilized concept systems that encourage self-subjectification. It concerns less the contents of the individual speech act and more the surrounding systems which can describe, support, and validate such statements offered by properly subjected speakers.

¹³ Thus far, I have resisted substantially engaging with Foucault's theories of institutional subjecthood and discourse. While Foucaultian thought has a number of insights into identity formation and objectification, the way in which he is often used in the postcolonial context leads to a problematic view of rational agency. The bourgeois reasoning processes which arise from relationships to modern institutions can only be disrupted and decentered from

a perspective of difference. This view is problematic because it still cannot avoid arguing that whatever is different from the dominant discourse is *de facto* true. It furthermore admits that institutions cannot be dismantled by those whose consciousness' depend upon them. Dabydeen wholly disagrees with this view. Of Mr. Gideon on the slave ship, "in attempting to succor a single life aboard the slaveship, by applying a single salve to a single wound, he begat the moment of a new history" (273). If institutional structures governing Mr. Gideon's consciousness as an agent on a slave ship were so constitutive of his ability to reason, then resistance within institutional discourses is entirely possible. This realization, of course, centers around the body – not the inscribed, Foucaultian body – but the incorporated one. Here, I rely upon Eva Cherniavsky's insightful distinction. The implications of race as an inscription "is oddly democratic, insofar as it assigns a discrete organic form to bodies across racial lines" (xiv). In other words, we have "the collapse of difference into similarity at the level of corporeal form" as the only difference between bodies is the inscription marked by race (xiv). However, if race is an incorporation that "signals the radically uneven capacity of bodies to serve as the shell (the organic container) of the subjects they embody" (xiv), then "incorporation emerges as the privileged form of embodiment for a modern social and economic order predicated upon mobility" (xv). Therefore, "incorporated embodiment represents *an articulation of bodily form for the subject at risk of dispersal*" (xv). In no other example is this distinction made apparent than in eighteenth century discourses of commerce. Enlightenment discourses held that the body was held as "inalienable property" of the individual – the body is supposed to be protected from commercial exchange so that "the 'free' person's other attributes are open to it" (xvii). Hence, the social contract must be between independent, uncoerced, and bodied subjects. The captive and propertied body, however, "is all surfaces [...] rather than incorporate the mobile subject of contractual social relationships [...] race marks the status of the body that is not one – an inorganic body, fully opened to capital" (xvii). The slave, therefore, is a crisis in the status of the body and when we look at movements of bodies, as Dabydeen does between the white prostitute and the black slave, it is little wonder that each represents such an easy reading of "passive" constructions by discourse. In a paradoxical, the harlot is the most capitalistic of the enlightenment capitalists because she has both interiority and her body is her capital to market. By contrast, the slave's body is alienable and rendered "solvent under capitalism," and s/he could have no interiority of consideration. What this somewhat long discussion has to offer, is quite simply that the recovery of past representations cannot accord to Foucault's this rationality/non-rationality binary. Rationality is conceived at a bodily level as opposed to an inscribed level – the difference, of course, is that the slave's interiority was not a passive construction of racial difference – it simply did not exist except in the minds of the slaves. This discussion is relevant to *A Harlot's Progress* because of its concern for the movements that certain bodies are eligible. Considerations of "interiority" are also reflected in Hogarth's prints – Moll and Mungo are simply bodies being guided through space while all of the conscious agents of commerce are those who exploit her and send her kind to the colonies. If rationality is held to exist independent of institutions as it was in the enlightenment, then Foucault's theories need some adjustment to be more descriptive of the colonial moment. In many ways, this idea of independence equaling wages is at the cornerstone of abolitionist discourses. Just as Pringle employed Mary Prince for wage labor in an effort to make her soul her own property, he tempts Mungo with coins to initiate him into interiority. If this paper were to turn into a larger project, then these sorts of distinctions about the eighteenth-century concept of interiority, representation, and free market commerce would play a significant role.

¹⁴ It is also telling that Spivak's original critique of *Wide Sargasso Sea* in "Three Womens' Texts and Imperialism" is that Rhys is not a properly situated subaltern and therefore can only reinscribe Christine, Rhys's "native" female presence.

¹⁵ In Eckstein's otherwise excellent and comprehensive reading of the ekphrastic dialogue between Hogarth and Dabydeen, his analysis of intertextuality is underdeveloped and relies upon these critically underdetermined terms such as "subversion" and "ambivalence."

¹⁶ The spelling difference is intentional. Lord Mongtagu is the historical figure and Lord Montague the fictional character.

¹⁷ This is certainly not to suggest that under patronage, authors had limitless freedom to produce. It is more the fact that in political and free market liberalism promised a sort of liberation and democratization of labor power which did not translate into artistic or aesthetic freedom in the Romantic sense of the term.

¹⁸ I am well aware of the fact that Thistlewood, Pringle, and Hogarth wrote about different moments and in different geographical locations. I am intentionally ignoring all dates except for the most important one – namely, that Mungo's story occurs on the "eve" of abolition in the late eighteenth century (although Pringle was not even the

secretary until the early nineteenth century). Obscuring the chronological sequence between the authors serves only to argue that the commonalities of commerce and body traffic remained consistent across the century.

¹⁹ This sort of culturalist oversight is not unique to canonical counter-discourse. Benita Parry observes that the “use of ‘diaspora’ as a synonym for a new kind of cosmopolitanism is certainly relevant to émigré writers, artists, academics, intellectuals, and professionals; but it can entail forgetfulness about that other, economically enforced dispersal of the poor from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean” (73).

²⁰ In no understanding is this tendency in criticism clearer than in the frequent citation of Roland Barthes, among others, and “death of the author” to justify meaning that resides more the in critic’s opinion than in the author’s. A way of reading, in my opinion, which is neither right nor wrong but that has consequences that should be carefully evaluated in the assessment of colonial and postcolonial texts. The overall critical trend in the last half of the twentieth-century towards New Historicism and cultural studies focused ‘external’ discourses of race, gender, production, and material relationships as constitutive of a text’s meaning. Generally speaking, the emphasis of context over text still does not view an authorial presence as a semi- autonomous presence with a unique yet congruent relationship to modes of production. In Hogarth’s example, New Historicism would read contexts like the contemporary critical eighteenth century visual-literary canon, critical reading practices, and attendant social/racial/gender discourses in the eighteenth century but not perhaps in the sense of re-centering Hogarth and his relationship to creative labor and the economy. In direct contradistinction to early twentieth century practices which looked first at biography (not economy), then at formal elements of composition to the exclusion of the outside, the last few decades of criticism are very attentive to power, instabilities, and hierarchies of value; however, Dabydeen clearly feels that the critic should not ignore but fully consider the canonized author’s history, text, *and* context.

²¹ Although Hall restricts the scope of his analysis to cultural theory and artists/creators, a similar shift from the relations of representation to the politics of representation can be detected in postcolonial theory. For example, Victor Li comments of Said’s *Orientalism*, “[...] in attempting to convey the strength and power of the Orientalist project often overemphasizes its homogeneity, its monolithic and apparently unchanging representation of the Orient. It appears as though Said’s adoption of Foucault’s theory of discourse obliges him to believe that it is the sheer material presence or weight of discourse, ‘not the originality of a given author [that] is really responsible for the texts produced out of it’” (94). Li observes that it was necessary to take such a strong – if not entirely representative or accurate – stance simply in order to gain a receptive academic audience. Once *Orientalism* “inaugurated the postcolonial field” (cited in Moore-Gilbert 35), Said’s later public and academic writings indicate a firm acceptance of the need to contest theoretical totalizations in the analysis of colonial discourse.

²² See Chandra Talpale Mohanty’s representative declaration in *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Most arguments on this topic can be distilled to the following question: how can we acknowledge cultural situatedness and particularity while still building cross-cultural alliances to challenge dominant forms and systems oppression?

²³ What is also interesting to consider in this context is the problems that the migrating cosmopolitan subaltern proposes for colonial discourse theory. Bhabha ahistorically refers to the “other” in the metropolitan as a “mimic man,” who is still a subaltern, but one in Western trappings, manner, and culture. While such a perspective, I think, helps identify a certain cultural and racial problem of assimilation and belonging, it by no means needs to retain this subaltern reinscription. The mimic man is a product of the epistemological framework that is still fixated on that original mythology of the initial colonial encounter. These “mimic men,” historically, had many predecessors in Mungo and enjoyed a variety of relationships, oppressions, and labors.

²⁴ See the “Introduction” to *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave, Related by Herself* edited by Moira Ferguson.

²⁵ Here, it is worthwhile to note the way in which Dabydeen views Hogarthian realism. Although textual legacies such as Pringle and Thistlewood are the narrative framework, Mungo’s visual presence in Hogarth’s prints is significant. Its canonized image functions differently than that of a textual representation for a few reasons. In at least one way, just as Pringle seizes upon the visual evidence of Mungo’s presence in Britain as proof for the former’s abolitionist ends, the critic will also locate Mungo in a certain manner. Without even a slight textual legacy, Mungo is the visual embodiment of both being and non-being, present yet presence-less. If Mungo’s image is isolated and Hogarth’s prints are considered autonomous and self-generating (as they would under canonical counter-discourse), then Mungo exists only as an “other” – particularly when Hogarth’s scene of production is divorced from his historical context. Writing back to a visual image is therefore a metaphor for the “blank”

subaltern that textual discourses are held to produce. If the relations of production are not considered, then Mungo's recovery in the visual image is limitlessly exploited by critics, who like Pringle, seek only an "audit" not an "interview" with Mungo.

²⁶ I will revisit this observation later on in my paper, but canonized objects of study do tend towards "truth" perhaps at the expense of remembering that both Hogarth and Pringle's representations were at least as self-interested as subject-oriented. As a brief aside, Dabydeen via Mungo is also very self-conscious about his own motivations for representation of the black experience. The spectral African villagers who haunt Mungo always demand of him to "remember us as we are" (66). In this very self-conscious gesture, Dabydeen uses Mungo to explore his own discomfort with representing those whose history he did not directly experience, but whose tainted textual legacy he has inherited.

²⁷ Although it beyond the scope of my arguments here, it is intriguing that Dabydeen chooses to make Thistlewood into a sea captain. Out of all the references to acts of representation in the text, Thistlewood's diaries are the only non-commodity. Perhaps there is an ironic suggestion to historiography that we would write off Thistlewood as an exception and Hogarth and Pringle the rule. In a strange inversion, it may seem as though Thistlewood is the most logical of capitalists. Although he only mentions one son born of the slave in his diaries, it is presumable that he fathered many others based upon his numerous exploits (Hall 35).

²⁸ Of Euclid's significance for the eighteenth-century, philosopher David Hume comments

Though there never were a circle or triangle in nature, the truths demonstrated by Euclid would forever retain their certainty and evidence [as relations of ideas]. Matters of fact, which are the second objects of human reason, are not ascertained in the same manner, nor is our evidence of their truth, however great, of a like nature with the foregoing. The contrary of every matter of fact is still possible, because it can never imply a contradiction and is conceived by the mind with the same facility and distinctness as if ever so conformable to reality (40).

While Hume believed that relations of ideas did not count as true or "substantive" knowledge of the external world (Markie 24), Dabydeen argues that these ideal truths which have "lasted forever" had definite spatial consequences and effects. Dabydeen makes a clear connection between the construction and representation of space in thought and its extension to slavery and violence. Mathematic logic is not an affirming *telos* of progress, but bound up in the administration and control of the global order. The corresponding "will to spatial conquering" bolstered by imperialism and colonialism to order space was never Greek – and by extension English – but Egyptian African. By confusing the original moment of the "birth" of geometry, Mungo denies its relationship to Western progress and rational *teleology*. Whether or not geometry is organically Western *cum* English, Dabydeen wants the possibility to exist that it is a creation by the Egyptians that the Europeans removed from its ideal manifestations for the purpose of slavery.

²⁹ Quote taken from Eric Janzen "The next bubble: Priming the market's for tomorrow's big crash." *Harpers*. Feb. 2008.

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