

## The Smell of Slavery

Offering an original contribution to the growing subfield of sensory history, Andrew Kettler uses smell as a frame of analysis for constructions and perceptions of race and the environment in the age of Atlantic slavery. Kettler recounts how proponents of slavery defined African bodies as noxious and pungent and therefore inferior and deserving of enslavement. African slaves were deemed “excremental” by their owners, and, as such, vastly inferior to their masters and trapped in a pre-modern state of being in which modern hygiene and other trappings of enlightenment remained beyond their reach. By branding African bodies as odoriferous, slave owners equated them with animals or beasts of burden: well-equipped for hard labor. Kettler vividly and effectively shows how the sense of smell was used to aesthetically define specific populations as lacking the necessary humanity to become full subjects, and in so doing demonstrates that the roots of racism transgressed intellectual and political arenas and included the realm of the senses.

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Andrew Kettler  
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**The Smell of Slavery**  
*Olfactory Racism and the Atlantic World*

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Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>Preface: Making Scents of the Middle Passage</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xxi
Introduction: <i>Pecunia non Olet</i>	I
1 The Primal Scene: Ethnographic Wonder and Aromatic Discourse	40
2 Triangle Trading on the Pungency of Race	77
3 Ephemeral Africa: Essentialized Odors and the Slave Ship	123
4 “The Sweet Scent of Vengeance”: Olfactory Resistance in the Atlantic World	155
Conclusion: Race, Nose, Truth	195
<i>Index</i>	220

Figures

1.1	Print of “Pears Soap Advertisement based on Aesop’s fable, 1884.” This advertisement appeared in <i>The Graphic</i> on December 18, 1884. Courtesy of the British Library	page 71
2.1	Print of portrait of Benjamin Rush, by Charles Willson Peale, 1818. Courtesy of the National Independence Historical Park	108
2.2	Print of “Free Labour: Or The Sunny Side of the Wall.” Included within London. Thos. McLean 26 Haymarket. 1833. June 19th. John Carter Brown Library. Political Cartoons. Accession Number: 72–149. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library	116
3.1	Print of “A Spiritual Healer, Paramaribo, Suriname, ca. 1831.” Source: Pierre Jacques Benoit, <i>Voyage a Surinam . . . cent dessins pris sur nature par l’auteur</i> (Bruxelles, 1839), plate xvii, fig. 36. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library	140
4.1	Print of “Training Bloodhounds, Saint Domingue.” Included within Marcus Rainsford, <i>An Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti</i> (London, 1805), facing, p. 423. Courtesy of the Library Company of Philadelphia	175



## Preface

### *Making Scents of the Middle Passage*

William Shakespeare was a wedded man, but occasionally the traveling playwright found respite in unwedded arms. His travels took him across his merry isle as a new form of English character, a popular celebrity who gained notoriety increasingly throughout his lifetime. Sonnet 130 portrays one of the many loves of this wayward playwright; an adoration for a historically nebulous woman who provided the narcissistic genius a reprieve, most likely in a brothel, possibly in his wandering heart.<sup>1</sup> The section, which Shakespeare composed at the end of the sixteenth century and personally devoted to the “Dark Lady,” a central character in many of his celebrated Sonnets numbered 127 to 152, describes this affection while offering substantial indications to a central argument of this book: that Anglo-Atlantic racism began in the body, emerged from the popular mind and the popular stage, and was experienced well before Enlightenment codes of racial knowing were defined within the increasingly scientific literatures of the late eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

Shakespeare’s “Dark Lady” had: “eyes . . . nothing like the sun;/ Coral is far more red than her lips’ red;/ If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;/ If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head./ I have seen roses damask’d, red and white,/ But no such roses see I in her cheeks;/ And in

<sup>1</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (New York: Norton, 2004), 233–249.

<sup>2</sup> For recent works on Atlantic racism, medicine, and the Enlightenment, see Andrew Curran, *The Anatomy of Blackness: Science & Slavery in an Age of Enlightenment* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011); Rana Hogarth, *Medicalizing Blackness: Making Racial Differences in the Atlantic World, 1780–1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

some perfumes is there more delight/ Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.”<sup>3</sup> That aromatic line, that reeking breath emerging from heaving lungs beneath breasts that were “dun,” or brown, was part of an Elizabethan conceit that African bodies and cultures smelled.<sup>4</sup>

For this study of racial consciousness in the Atlantic World, it is prudent to contrast Shakespeare’s wanton tone for fragrant otherness with the aromas of whiteness portrayed as part of John Stafford’s collected commonplace book, *The Academy of Pleasure* (1665). In the poem “The Contemplative Lover,” a similar lyrical infatuation involved the sense of smell emanating from a lover’s breath. Contrastingly for the metropolitans reading Stafford’s collection, this “baulmy incense” came from a paramour whose skin was “more pure, more white, more soft” than the allegorically portrayed furs of the ermine. The “fragrant breath” emanating from this porcelain woman as “odoriferous art” could “drive away grim death” and “transform” the infatuated poet “to a Flower Fashioned like a heart.”<sup>5</sup> Whiteness, or the breath that sprung from English female beauty, could metaphorically stop death. Darkness, or the lungful that bounded from an African woman in Shakespearean London, reeked of something much more malevolent for freshly expectant English noses.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> William Shakespeare, *Shakespeare’s Sonnets*, eds. Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009), quotes on 268–269. For this specific series of sonnets, see Dymnna Callaghan, *Shakespeare’s Sonnets* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 54–55; Kim Hall, “‘These bastard signs of fair’: Literary Whiteness in Shakespeare’s Sonnets,” in *Shakespeare and Race*, eds. Catherine Alexander and Stanley Wells (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 64–83.

<sup>4</sup> For debates on the “Dark Lady” as African, see Kim Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 66–73; Gwyn Williams, *Person and Persona: Studies in Shakespeare* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1981), 115–130; Robert Fleissner, *Shakespeare and Africa: The Dark Lady of His Sonnets Revamped and Other Africa-Related Associations* (Philadelphia: XLibris, 2005), 27–37; Leighton Brewer, *Shakespeare and the Dark Lady* (Boston: Christopher Publishing House, 1966), 21–29.

<sup>5</sup> *The Academy of Pleasure: Furnished with all Kinds of Complementall Letters, Discourses, and Dialogues; with Variety of New Songs, Sonets, and Witty Inventions* (London: John Stafford, 1665), quotes on 30–32.

<sup>6</sup> For standard introductions to olfactory racism, see Constance Classen, “The Odor of the Other: Olfactory Symbolism and Cultural Categories,” *Ethos* 20, 2 (1992): 133–166; Mark Smith, *How Race Is Made: Slavery, Segregation, and the Senses* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); William Tullett, “Grease and Sweat: Race and Smell in Eighteenth-Century English Culture,” *Cultural and Social History* 13, 3 (2016): 307–322.

The idea that Africa and her peoples were pungent mounted through the later seventeenth century to lead later European populations to believe in the desirability of increased purification, which partially arrived through rhetorically defining the African other through diverse spiritual, biological, and scientific languages about odor, miasma, contagion, and pollution.<sup>7</sup> These racialized aromatic roots of English sensory culture later informed Anglo-Atlantic slaveholders throughout the Americas, who often discussed African odors as a mark of biological inferiority. For many writers of the eighteenth century, racial definitions moved from material concerns with African cultures and a perceived lack of cleanliness among sub-Saharan Africans to biological definitions of inherent racial differences.<sup>8</sup> Among these later scholars was the lexical founder of American liberty, Thomas Jefferson, who infamously argued within his ardently racist Query XIV of *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785) that Africans “secrete less by the kidneys, and more by the glands of the skin, which gives them a very strong and disagreeable odor.”<sup>9</sup> These sensory ideals originally modified within earlier forms of English literature and, throughout the Early Modern Era, agitated within a global intelligence network that rested on ideas of progress, scientific reason, and Enlightenment.<sup>10</sup>

During the Early Modern Era, blackness and whiteness were increasingly defined upon a cultural binary, whereby whiteness often symbolized virginity, purity, and floral essences, and blackness was marked by an inherent dirtiness, sinfulness, and odor. Controlling the rhetorically

<sup>7</sup> For colonization, disease, race, and othering, see Warwick Anderson, “Excremental Colonialism: Public Health and the Poetics of Pollution,” *Critical Inquiry* 21, 3 (1995): 640–669; Alison Bashford, *Imperial Hygiene: A Critical History of Colonialism, Nationalism and Public Health* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Nélia Dias, *La Mesure des Sens: Les Anthropologues et le Corps Humain au XIXe Siècle* (Paris: Aubier, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> For the transition from monogenetic racism to polygenesis, see Richard Popkin, *The Third Force in Seventeenth-Century Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1991); Robert Sussman, *The Myth of Race: The Troubling Persistence of an Unscientific Idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 11–63.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Jefferson, “Notes on the State of Virginia,” in *The Literatures of Colonial America: An Anthology*, eds. Susan Castillo and Ivy Schweitzer (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001 [1785]), 530–536, quote on 533.

<sup>10</sup> For racism and the links between core and periphery, see Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, “Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda,” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 1–58; G. V. Scammell, “Essay and Reflection: On the Discovery of the Americas and the Spread of Intolerance, Absolutism, and Racism in Early Modern Europe,” *The International History Review* 13, 3 (1991): 502–521.

created filth of blackness through the slave trade initiated the first stage in the construction of capitalism through forms of linguistic and sensory discourse that preconditioned primitive accumulation.<sup>11</sup> As the continental philosopher Alain Badiou recently described: “After demonizing black cats, the Devil’s dark powers, crows, witches in black rags, the darkness of death, and the blackness of the soul, we so-called Whites of Western Europe had to invent the fact that the majority of Africa’s inhabitants clearly constituted an inferior ‘race,’ condemned to slavery and then to the forced labor of colonial occupation simply because this enormous population was ‘black.’” This constructed form of negative blackness positioned a commodification process that subjected African bodies into diverse states of what Frantz Fanon termed “non-being.” Through the discursive and material aspects of this exclusionary procedure, Africans became objects to be traded, rather than considered fully human. Such nefarious discourses formulated African bodies into objects within vast sensory engagements defined through an exaggerated and most absurd form of racial knowing.<sup>12</sup>

Tortured within the holds of ships upon the Middle Passage where odor situated bodies within the grinding economies of the Atlantic World, slaves felt the oppression of olfactory discourse and pungent materiality on their very bodies.<sup>13</sup> In Alexander Falconbridge’s *Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa* (1788), the reformed slave trader and surgeon described the embodied and existential threat of odor and disease beneath the decks where Africans lay “in the blood and mucus, that had

<sup>11</sup> For economic forms of primitive accumulation within the Atlantic Slave Trade, see Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492–1800* (London: Verso, 1997), 509–517; Barbara Solow, *The Economic Consequences of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), 98–109.

<sup>12</sup> Alain Badiou, *Black: The Brilliance of a Noncolor*, trans. Susan Spitzer (Cambridge: Polity, 2017), quote on 91. See also Joseph Washington, *Anti-Blackness in English Religion, 1500–1800* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1985), 90–97; Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 2004), 32–52; Calvin Warren, *Ontological Terror: Blackness, Nihilism, and Emancipation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 26–61; Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto, 2017 [1952]), 139–140, 159–160; Bénédicte Boisseron, *Afro-Dog: Blackness and the Animal Question* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 160–166.

<sup>13</sup> For experiences of the Middle Passage and commodification, see Sowande’ Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 55–75; Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 122–137.

flowed from those afflicted with the flux, which . . . is generally so violent as to prevent their being kept clean.” These souls persisted in the “excruciating” mental and physical pain of being chained below shipboards within fluid spaces filled often with the contaminated excrement of their continental brethren.<sup>14</sup>

During the abolitionist debates against the slave trade of the late eighteenth century, British politicians, Atlantic planters, and English citizens read often of these stenchful conditions from diverse sources.<sup>15</sup> The former slave trader turned preacher and abolitionist composer John Newton’s *Thoughts upon the African Slave Trade* (1788) described the “heat and smell of these rooms” below the decks of ships as “insupportable, to a person not accustomed to them.” The odors, following the miasma theories of effluvium, night air, and bad air within the medical profession at the time, were believed to cause great “fevers and fluxes” among the ill and dying slave populations, who often perished as “poor creatures” devoid of the Christian assistance Newton deemed essential to human instruction. While later penning the effusive notes for “Amazing Grace,” the Anglican cleric Newton must have thought considerably of the “noisome and noxious effluvia” that metaphorically infected the entirety of the slave trade that he once participated in and came to prominently oppose.<sup>16</sup>

It was not only in cramped cabins below deck where slaves found odor to be a detriment to their terrible familiarities and laboring lives. Throughout the Atlantic World, there were numerous cases of master’s punishments that either used odor as a part of the violent ceremonies for reprimanding slaves or created putridity as evidence of their malevolent ritual. The infamous and vile Jamaican planter Thomas Thistlewood’s illustrious “derby dose” involved the culminating act of punishment whereby a fellow slave defecated in the mouth of a captured runaway who had braved the mountainous West Indian countryside. Thistlewood applied this climaxing act many times throughout the eighteenth century on his Jamaica plantations that were known foremost for hundreds of

<sup>14</sup> Alexander Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa by Alexander Falconbridge* (London: Phillips, 1788), quotes on 27–29.

<sup>15</sup> For British abolitionism and the slave ship, see Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 308–342; Seymour Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010 [1977]), 162–187.

<sup>16</sup> John Newton, *Thoughts upon the African Slave Trade . . . The Second Edition* (London: Buckland and Johnson, 1788), quotes on 33–36.

instances of rape and repeated brutishness against slave bodies.<sup>17</sup> As described within the oft-published abolitionist collection *Mirror of Misery* (1814), the punishment of ingested excrement was not uncommon throughout the later Atlantic World, and the ritual could often involve amusement for planters and their wives rather than function solely as a vile form of punishment from all-too-commonly abhorrent masters.<sup>18</sup>

The smell of slavery also consistently emanated from sick bays on plantations due to the putrefying wounds commonly emblazoned upon the backs of slaves by the master's whip.<sup>19</sup> Akin to these countless lashings upon the productive fields of the Caribbean, on vindictive planter Arthur Hodge's estate in the British Virgin Islands of 1811 slaves would frequently be dipped in copper kettles until their skin seared off from their muscles. The disturbed Hodge also purposefully drowned and revived his slaves through a sadistic game of power, torture, and castigation. As well, the British planter often disciplined slaves through making them drink boiling water, which destroyed throats and stomach lining and led to slow, waiting, and miserable deaths. Hodge was executed for his crimes against property, but his use of torture upon slaves should never be considered a psychopathic anomaly within an Atlantic World where nearly unlimited power over black bodies led to sick bays, like Hodge's saddened dens, that were full of such pungency that those visiting the plantation avoided the slave dwellings due "to the offensive smell proceeding from the wounds occasioned by cartwhippings on Negroes therein confined."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 104, 183. For more on rape in Jamaican slavery, see Sasha Turner, *Contested Bodies: Pregnancy, Childrearing, and Slavery in Jamaica* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 215–218.

<sup>18</sup> *The Mirror of Misery, or, Tyranny Exposed* (New York: Samuel Wood, 1814), 32–33.

<sup>19</sup> For more on planter violence in the Atlantic World, see Randy Browne, *Surviving Slavery in the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 44–71; Marisa Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 100–123; Rachel Feinstein, *When Rape Was Legal: The Untold History of Sexual Violence During Slavery* (New York: Routledge, 2018); Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 63–96; Lamonte Aidoo, *Slavery Unseen: Sex, Power, and Violence in Brazilian History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018); Lisa Ze Winters, *Mulatta Concubine: Terror, Intimacy, Freedom, and Desire in the Black Transatlantic* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2018), 67–106; Thomas Foster, *Rethinking Rufus: Sexual Violations of Enslaved Men* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2019).

<sup>20</sup> *Papers relating to the West Indies; viz. Correspondence between the Earl of Liverpool and Governor Elliot: In Reference to the Trial and Execution of Arthur Hodge, for the*

## Preface

xv

Punishments became common throughout the colonial spaces of the Atlantic World, but slavery was centrally about commodified labor and keeping a profitable stock of healthy working slaves.<sup>21</sup> At the owner's whim and under the overseer's knout, slaves worked to create profit in fields and factories that were often deteriorating and pungent. Each form of labor presented odors through which slaves persevered. Specifically, slaves were often employed in the process of "heaping up dung" to fertilize the fields of West Indian islands devoted to sugar production.<sup>22</sup> Slaves also habitually hauled cane trash, which could often become quite ill-smelling when rotting in the oppressive humidity of the Caribbean Basin. Upon burning, the fumes of cane trash may also have become a sweet-scented and redolent reminder of the "damp vapours" that frequently hung above the "scalding liquid" where "skimmers" constantly worked in boiling houses – aromas that must have often reminded reticent slaves of the countless and repetitive days of labor devoted to sweetness forever lost to the master's command.<sup>23</sup>

Tortured in holds, beaten on plantations, and made to work for master's profit in the stinking cotton dens, rum distilleries, and tobacco factories of the Atlantic World, slaves never stopped resisting.<sup>24</sup>

*Murder of a Negro Slave: Ordered, by the House of Commons, to be printed, 26 June 1811* (London: House of Commons, 1811), quote on 6–7. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library.

<sup>21</sup> For centrality of labor in slavery, see Justin Roberts, *Slavery and the Enlightenment in the British Atlantic, 1750–1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Dale Tomich, *Through the Prism of Slavery: Labor, Capital, and World Economy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 32–55; Abigail Swingen, *Competing Visions of Empire: Labor, Slavery, and the Origins of the British Atlantic Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 140–171; Daina Ramey Berry, *The Price for Their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved, from Womb to Grave, in the Building of a Nation* (Boston: Beacon, 2017), 58–90.

<sup>22</sup> *An Account of Duckenfield Hall Estates Negroes, Jamaica, 1806* (Manuscript: Codex Eng.183 2-Size). Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library.

<sup>23</sup> John Dovaston, *Agricultura Americana or Improvements in West-India Husbandry Considered Wherein the Present System of Husbandry Used in England is Applied to the Cultivation or Growing of Sugar Canes to Advantage, 1774* (Manuscript: Codex Eng. 60, Volume I), 18–19, 46–48, 109–110, quotes on 158–159. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library.

<sup>24</sup> For persistent slave resistance, see D. A. Dunkley, *Agency of the Enslaved: Jamaica and the Culture of Freedom in the Atlantic World* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), 15–32; Eric Robert Taylor, *If We Must Die: Shipboard Insurrections in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 85–103. See also transgression and anticolonialism within Srinivas Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans: Colonialism and Agency, 1688–1804* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 29–70.



Abolitionists noticed these forms of resistance, many of which came from an aromatic sense of smell buried deep within different aspects of African ethnic memory. In the poem “The Worn-Out Negro Slave,” read much during the 1820s within abolitionist circles, the image of a slave in need of protection emerged again as a character suffering “midst filth and stench, in gloom and midnight shade,/ Beneath the deck, in iron fetters bound,/ In dreadful rows, close packed, we there were laid,/ Where comfort, ease, or rest, were never found.”<sup>25</sup> Later abolitionists found in these portrayals of odor and disease a way to relay suffering for a newly moralizing Anglo-Atlantic public, first through work to abolish the pestilential trade at the turn of the eighteenth century and then through applying odor within discussions of freedom and the rights of the subject stolen by the broader institution of slavery in discussions of emancipation, apprenticeship, and American forms of war-torn freedom that would only arrive decades later.<sup>26</sup>

Upon earning their emancipation from slavery, with backbreaking labor and resistance tracked over many centuries, many Africans and African Americans throughout the Atlantic World spoke from a place of profound sensory longing to return to an essentialized Africa often remembered through libidinal celebration and goals of romantic communalism. Regularly, abolitionists heard these corporeal desires and transmitted much of African sensory yearning to the pages of the growing Anglo-Atlantic public sphere.<sup>27</sup> In “The Negro’s Vigil,” written in the direct wake of the first formal stage of British abolition in 1833 by the Scottish poet James Montgomery, who had spent much of his life in Barbados living near numerous slave populations, the longing for

<sup>25</sup> “The Worn-Out Negro Slave,” in *Third Report of the Female Society, for Birmingham, West-Bromwich, Wednesbury, Walsall, and Their Respective Neighbourhoods, for the Relief of British Negro Slaves* (Birmingham: Richard Peart, 1827–1828). Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library.

<sup>26</sup> For commodification in the slave trade and debates on subject, object, and agency, see Simon Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 50–96; Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 117–188; Frank Wilderson, “The Prison Slave as Hegemony’s Silent Scandal,” *Social Justice* 30, 2 (2003): 18–27.

<sup>27</sup> For British abolitionism and the public sphere, see Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment and Slavery: 1760–1807* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); J. R. Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery: The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787–1807* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 155–184; Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 209–258.



African airs focused an emotionality that linked smell and these forms of embodied continental memory. The verse, told from the constructed perspective of the slave newly freed, portrayed a universalized and singular African trumpeting: “Climb we the mountain, and stand/ High in the mid-air to inhale,/ Fresh from our Father-land,/ Balm in the ocean-borne gale.”<sup>28</sup> For many abolitionists, Africans, and African Americans throughout the Atlantic littoral, aromatic scents infused a sensory discourse counter to the racialized economic ideology that dark bodies inherently reeked.

In Sarah Tucker’s *Abbeokuta, or Sunrise within the Tropics* (1853), the English missionary to the Yoruba and celebrated author similarly imagined what the trail from the coast to interior freedom must have been like for recolonized Africans returning from their places within the slave societies of the Atlantic World. Part of this journey involved the former slaves breathing in the air of fragrant flowers that might transport “to them instinct with life of other days, and would bring back, with increasing force, the associations of their childhood.”<sup>29</sup> Such abolitionist and missionary rhetoric expresses that the dialogues of odor within the Atlantic World took on more than simply racist connotations of the smell of African bodies. For different African ethnic groups, creolized African Americans, and many abolitionists who supported the causes of freedom, there was beauty and honor in longing for the smells of remembered African pasts.<sup>30</sup>

Despite these romantic goals, slaveholders of the American South during the Antebellum Era justified the perpetuation of their peculiar institution through an increasing intellectual exchange with freshly engaged scientific communities in Europe that continued to discuss the supposed inferiority of African peoples through the sense of smell. During this

<sup>28</sup> James Montgomery, “The Negro’s Vigil,” Publisher’s Broadside (London: Z. T. Purdy and J. Montgomery, 1834). Manuscript ZBA2572 in the Michael Graham-Stewart Collection, Royal Museums Greenwich, UK.

<sup>29</sup> Sarah Tucker, *Abbeokuta: Or, Sunrise within the Tropics: an Outline of the Origin and Progress of the Yoruba Mission* (London: J. Nisbet, 1858 [1853]), quote on 48–49. For more on the African idea of nostalgia and a desire for ethnic homelands among slaves on the Middle Passage, see Ramesh Mallipeddi, “‘A Fixed Melancholy’: Migration, Memory, and the Middle Passage,” *The Eighteenth Century* 55, 2–3 (2014): 235–253.

<sup>30</sup> For African and slave resistance within both American and British narratives of abolitionism, see Claudius Fergus, *Revolutionary Emancipation: Slavery and Abolitionism in the British West Indies* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 176–198; Ousmane Power-Greene, *Against Wind and Tide: The African American Struggle against the Colonization Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 17–45.

tumultuous and defining era for concepts of American liberty, the nose increasingly became a renewed disciplinary apparatus, freshly motivated through religious, sexual, and scientific narratives to mark black bodies through specific and aromatically informed institutions of control.<sup>31</sup> Akin to the pseudoscience of phrenology, these newly involved scientific, religious, and civilizing connotations for the nose became essential for slaveholders and scientific racists to continue justifying their beliefs regarding the inherent inferiority of African minds and bodies.<sup>32</sup>

Representing such growing ideals among the educated and aristocratic classes of the Atlantic, selected Southern publications of the early nineteenth century work of French biologist Julien-Joseph Virey were printed within *Natural History of the Negro Race* (1837). These selections categorized different African nations through their odors, increasingly tied to an objective language of science and medicine on the eve of Social Darwinism. Virey specifically noted that when all “negroes sweat, their skin is covered with an oily and blackish perspiration, which stains cloths, and generally exhales a very unpleasant porraceous smell.”<sup>33</sup> The medical nuances applied within Virey’s text regarding skin scents and stinking pores exposes the very intensity of the desire to codify African smells during the late Enlightenment as the encyclopedias and scientific methods of the elite instigated the era of Scientific Racism and provided new justifications for white dominance that warranted grander forms of conquest and colonialism in Africa and the Global South. With these global and racial motives influencing public spheres, medical fictions became scientific facts, resonating with positivist vigor, esoteric language, and

<sup>31</sup> For American proslavery rhetoric, see the religious supports of evangelicalism within John Patrick Daly, *When Slavery Was Called Freedom: Evangelicalism, Proslavery, and the Causes of the Civil War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2002), 57–72; and the transnational links within Larry Tise, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701–1840* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 75–96.

<sup>32</sup> For introduction to phrenology, see Stephen Tomlinson, *Head Masters: Phrenology, Secular Education, and Nineteenth-Century Social Thought* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2013), 286–345; Britt Rusert, *Fugitive Science: Empiricism and Freedom in Early African American Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 121–125; James Poskett, *Materials of the Mind: Phrenology, Race, and the Global History of Science, 1815–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019). See also Kenneth Greenberg, *Honor & Slavery: Lies, Duels, Noses, Masks, Dressing As a Woman, Gifts, Strangers, Humanitarianism, Death, Slave Rebellions, the Proslavery Argument, Baseball, Hunting, and Gambling in the Old South* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 3–23.

<sup>33</sup> Julien Virey, *Natural History of the Negro Race*, trans. J. H. Geunebault (Charleston, SC: D. J. Dowling, 1837), 44–54, quote on 44.

economic incentive to mark the African laborer as biologically different than those opposingly racialized economic classes grasping for control of the means of production.<sup>34</sup>

As part of these increasingly professional, racist, and scientific languages of pro-slavery and colonialist discourse, Southern academic Josiah Priest's *Slavery, As It Relates to the Negro, or African Race* (1843) used the inherent "strong odor of the negro's body" to similarly justify numerous uninhabited beliefs regarding how African slaves digested complex or raw foods easier than Europeans. With few limitations to the dreadful social constructions of racial thought during the Antebellum Era, Priest argued that slave bodies included both a pungent odor and smoother alimentary processes because African groups had frequently ingested human flesh while living as cannibals during their extraordinary biological past.<sup>35</sup> This type of distorted linking of Africans to a fabricated historical world of cannibalism and odor justified continued religious support for the nefarious economic system of the Old South.<sup>36</sup>

Priest's stretched narrative and the multinational adoption of Virey's pseudoscience portray that the popularity and success of olfactory racism rested on the viral ability of smelling to support nearly all racial discourses about the African and African American, which provided justifications for

<sup>34</sup> For the British moral mission in Africa, see Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830–1867* (Oxford: Polity, 2002), 332–338; Tim Fulford, Peter Kitson, and Debbie Lee, *Literature, Science and Exploration in the Romantic Era: Bodies of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 228–270; Alison Twells, *The Civilising Mission and the English Middle Class, 1792–1850: The "heathen" at Home and Overseas* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 125–142. See also the general understanding of what manners were to be cultivated among the others of the world in Paul Langford, *Englishness Identified: Manners and Character 1650–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 137–147, 219–225; Peter Kivy, *The Seventh Sense: Francis Hutcheson and Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 46–54, 266–282.

<sup>35</sup> Josiah Priest, *Slavery, As It Relates to the Negro, or African Race* (Louisville, KY: Brown, 1849 [1843]), quote on 228–229. See also Kyla Wazana Tompkins, *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century* (New York: New York University, 2012).

<sup>36</sup> For more on religious support for American proslavery, see Charles Irons, *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity: White and Black Evangelicals in Colonial and Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 55–96; Mitchell Snay, *Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 53–77; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

the continued dominance of white bodies in the Caribbean, the perpetuation of slavery throughout the American South, and the rise of capitalism within increasingly colonized spaces of Africa during the nineteenth century.<sup>37</sup> Following these numerous olfactory discourses, *The Smell of Slavery* specifically demonstrates that the shifting of odor upon the racialized other is a timeworn tradition that was expanded within the Atlantic World to provide narratives of disease, pollution, miasma, and labor to justify numerous reprehensible colonial and capitalist trajectories that situated and disciplined African bodies into a governable discursive and biopolitical space for commodification and political dominance during the Early Modern Era and well into the Scramble for Africa.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> For capitalism and slavery, see Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman, “Introduction: Slavery’s Capitalism,” in *Slavery’s Capitalism: a New History of American Economic Development*, eds. Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 1–28; Daniel Rood, *The Reinvention of Atlantic Slavery: Technology, Labor, Race, and Capitalism in the Greater Caribbean* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 197–202; Gerald Horne, *Apocalypse of Settler Colonialism: The Roots of Slavery, White Supremacy, and Capitalism in Seventeenth Century North America and the Caribbean* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2018); Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Knopf, 2015).

<sup>38</sup> For commodification and slavery, see Trevor Burnard, “Collecting and Accounting: Representing Slaves as Commodities in Jamaica, 1674–1784,” in *Collecting Across Cultures: Material Exchanges in the Early Modern Atlantic World*, eds. Daniela Bleichmar and Peter Mancall (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 177–191; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene Genovese, *Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

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### *Acknowledgments*

xxiii

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As well, I write today with great thanks to the Canadian healthcare system. During my time in Toronto, my life was shocked into a fresh and troublesome place by an unforeseen health crisis. There is no doubt, even



*Acknowledgments*

xxv

in this focused mind of a reasoning academic, that if this personal calamity had occurred in the United States my life would have been further shattered due to the horrible contingencies and profiteering of the American healthcare industry. Beyond the importance of an academic position at the University of Toronto, the stipulation of being in Canada, in a place that must clearly be a socialist hellscape, saved many aspects of what could have been a shattered career and a wasted life.

When you enter upon the winding paths of life, you never expect the health challenges that come. Leveling up into the test and making your way forward through the darkest of physical pains always becomes the only choice forward. Often, however, understanding that singular selection of striving onward takes time and assistance. Initially, in my case, that support came from a healthcare industry that prizes the human over the dollar, that asserts healthcare as a human right that should never destroy a family with choices between disparaging debt or debilitating disease. Leveling up, finding that next plane of living, discovering a lifeway through the discomfort, then comes from the people around you. Family and friends, colleagues and advisors, the respected and the loved, all helped me through the hurt to find spaces of peace that, when in the darkest moments of illness, we never expect to again encounter.

I therefore also write today with thanks to my siblings, close personal friends, and extended family that every note of support or opposing forms of tough love helped me through the worst moments. Likewise, I send always a message of love and gratefulness to the memories of my grandparents, who, even within the thoughts of this agnostic mind, somehow still touch me with a love of knowledge and ephemeral support from the place beyond. To my parents, whose loving care can never truly be correctly thanked, I offer that I will forever strive to be the son that you deserve. And, as always, I bestow a heartfelt thank you and love to my Amanda, who has shown me the beauty of life even in the darkest moments of catastrophe. I promise to reward you each day with my own renewed positive outlook, to provide the same wondrous support you have imparted upon me, as we look forward to our own marriage, family, and future. Two kids forever in love.

We live in a selfish time, an era of Randian ethics where healthcare profits dispense a Malthusian genocide and disaster capitalism upon ill bodies. This is structural and seemingly impenetrable, which consequently creates burdened feelings upon the sick who frequently must balance their own survival against their ability to support or exist within their families. Terms like “pre-existing condition” are thrown around to protect

a reprehensible structure that allows pharmaceutical representatives, insurance companies, finance capitalists, and doctors foregoing their Hippocratic Oath to house millions in bank accounts while children living in their same cities die without the healthcare that could be provided through a greater balance of wealth and compassion.

Because the structure of the market protects stockholders over the ill, society perpetuates with implicitly genocidal discourses against the unhealthy, creating excessive spaces of selfishness that remove natural empathy for diseased persons within the human community. A false consciousness perpetuates the idea that nothing can be done to help the ill, that there are barriers preventing the rich from providing monies to help the sick, that somehow the cash would be stolen or funnelled or wasted. Those succumbing to banality within the structure assert protocols, rules, and roadblocks between the ill and the compassion they deserve. But those bureaucratic and corporate barriers do not need to exist, and they only seem to function as a way to protect callous and greedy structures of the medical industry and government administration. These false barricades between rich and poor are dishonest discursive constructs within a self-perpetuating superstructure that justifies greed over healthcare for all.

My own life would have continued regardless of the care that was provided in either Canada or the United States. My crisis was temporary and overcome. But, for many, this is not the case. Impoverished and sick children face a life where their parents must balance supplying their overpriced medicines against eating enough food. Elderly patients similarly suffer through a healthcare industry that uses their bodies as vectors for pills to profit within a bureaucratic mess of matching funds and uncaring capitalist insatiability. Mansions rise in the countryside as evidence of an American pharmaceutical and medical industry that traps bodies into biopolitical spaces for the extraction of greater monies. Chronic disease builds wealth instead of creating greater empathy, preventing the sick citizen from ever dreaming of their full potential because they face a wall of costs.

We trumpet “research and innovation” as the reason for exorbitant prices and sing an elegy to all the drugs that never cure because they keep the chronically ill alive and pumping, while never fully understanding the costs of those pills upon the empathic structures that keep society caring. Deep into the tissue of civilization, hatred for the sick grows because they are believed to overburden the economy. The ill are believed to take money from the finite economic structure, and consequently they

*Acknowledgments*

xxvii

become another degraded class, a lesser assemblage, a threat to the pocketbooks of the avaricious. But the amount of wealth in the economic structure is not predetermined. That old mercantilist tale is simply a hegemonic invention made to trick the subaltern. We do not need to fight for a fixed amount of pennies, as wealth can be created, innovations can generate more currency, and believing otherwise is simply false consciousness educated upon the masses by those who have the majority of the existing funds and find, in disputes among the impoverished, the continuing ability to divide, conquer, and accumulate.

The failing American healthcare system that burdens the function of the economy is not the fault of the ill, just as poverty is not the fault of the poor. The more desperate a medical condition, the greedier capitalist mouths froth with the ability to profit. Greed attacks the structures of our economies much more than illness. Such a system must be destroyed. Children should not die because they lack currency, when healthcare executives, wayward physicians, and pharmaceutical representatives spend millions on little stones and shiny things. This is disaster capitalism upon the body, and it must be changed.

Let us strive for a world after 2020 in which the reasonable and compassionate can return hearts and minds to a progressive space and remove the generational stains of historically abhorrent narcissism that currently protects unfeeling and sickening discourses of healthcare, immigration, structural racism, and tainted historical memory. Overcoming the shockingly subordinate sins of 2016 that made some believe they needed performative and evil forms of criminality in the halls of power to face an uncaring world will allow society to find again persons revitalized from social occlusion, who can then rise from their illnesses with the human right of care, despite the sickening economics of sordid scions, corporations made persons, and both of their falsely conscious certainties of a cruelly unchanging world.

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