

being turned into consumers of British [today, American] goods. And Muslims, like others, desired those goods, though the price is still being paid” (238). This book should be read by everyone who seeks to understand—and to rectify—this history.

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CATHERINE MOLINEUX. *Faces of Perfect Ebony: Encountering Atlantic Slavery in Imperial Britain*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012. \$49.95 (cloth).  
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This ambitious book fills a gap both in kinds and in treatment of evidence. Subordinating previous studies of race that rely mainly on travel and scientific literature as well as studies of slavery, abolition, and sensibility, Molineux creatively brings to the fore other cultural areas of activity around blackness between 1680 and 1790. Situating London, the production center for print and visual materials, as a geographical frontier of the Atlantic world, Molineux investigates the varied archive of images of Africans in Britain. She recovers the texture of the ambiguous engagement of Britons with representations of Africans in shop signs, tobacco papers, textiles, ceramics, ballads, and visual satire as well as popular journals and plays. Fantasy and physical distance from the colonies both played crucial roles in metropolitan shifts of creating and recycling of images. By reinvesting the notion of encounter with several of its temporal and spatial variables, Molineux expands our notion of the contact zone. She also introduces a welcome question mark into the efficiency of the master-servant hierarchy in elite, middlebrow, and popular culture. Her conclusion is that black resistance, especially in the colonies, troubled British fantasies of mastery and any assurance of a stable racial hierarchy. Molineux reveals the way that black men were not only simply denigrated figures but also part of a process of affiliation with white Britons. This dual focus emphasizes notions of identification and attachment as much as it does the uneven attempts at a naturalization of superiority.

A historian who is also a consummate close reader, particularly of visual materials, Molineux tacks between individual images and texts, their after lives, and a more historian-like characterization of the Restoration and Georgian eras. Beginning with the way that black servants in Britain appear in elite visual media, she claims that the portraits idealize hierarchy yet disassociate Africans from slavery: “What was new to the Georgian era was the availability of these [biblical, medieval, and Renaissance] models of mastery for popular consumption and the deepening association of black servants with trade goods and domestic prosperity” (39). Other chapters chart the fissures in the discourse of mastery, particularly its slow erosion over the eighteenth century. Chapter 2 juxtaposes *Oroonoko* to a very popular ballad in which a recently punished black servant rapes his white mistress, murders the children, tricks the master into cutting off his nose, and then kills himself. Chapter 3 analyzes 1690s exchanges about black skin color and salvation between readers and editors of the *Whig Athenian Mercury*. Chapter 4 explores two quasi-fictional rebel slave figures ventriloquized in 1730s dialogues written by Englishmen.

The second half of the book is the heart of the project; the most intriguing chapter focuses on tobacco. Retrieving the ephemera of trade cards, tobacco wrappers, and advertisements, including Ignatius Sancho’s two commissioned advertisements for the tobacco that he sold at his Westminster grocery, Molineux argues that smoking, while fraught with debate, was imagined as an experience of interracial homosociality and enjoyment. She follows the iconography of these early Georgian tobacco papers to the later eighteenth century, “when the image of the benevolent British colonial became a staple of proslavery ideology while interracial

fraternity, however imperfect and hierarchical it remained, became central to antislavery thought" (176).

Chapter 6 emphasizes the crucial role of Hogarth's visual satires in debunking the myth of mastery, on the one hand, and separating blacks from exoticism, on the other hand. Despite Hogarth's not being against either slavery or the slave trade, his black figures embody a contemporary individualism and "are just like their fellow Londoners" (207). Their aesthetic role was to provide "a source of visual pleasure by adding [color] variation" (207).

Chapter 7 maps the varied cultural life of Isaac Bickerstaff's Mungo, a slave character from *The Padlock* (1768) that became a stock figure in visual print culture, including opposition satires of George III and satires of fashion: "Mungo embodied two major developments in imagined relationships between white Britons and black slaves: the sentimental image of the poor African that carried support for abolition, and the comic image of the black Londoner that expressed . . . political and social corruption in Britain" (221). Eventually, he developed into "a figure resentful of hierarchies in general" (236).

Molineux assesses Britons' changing ideas about the situation of black people: "Restoration journals primarily responded to concerns about the slave trade's legitimacy and English degeneracy in the New World rather than slave resistance. Moral questions about selling Africans or keeping them in plantation bondage did not require these journalists to confront the problems of incorporating racial others into Protestant communities" (112). In the early decades of the eighteenth century, ideas about human variety and practices of colonial slavery, which had been separate issues, became linked (128). Some of her other findings highlight the midcentury, including an underrecognized shift in the 1730s from a concern with African souls to the care of black bodies. The earlier focus on African barbarism slowly gives way to the significance of the enslaved condition. "Whether blackness was an excuse to oppress and degrade a lucrative labor force became a central question in discussions about the slave trade and slavery" (136). The 1770s ushered in a new consciousness about empire, but it was filtered through a local set of images and fantasies. Molineux's most succinct argument about race is that "[r]ather than a transition from fluid to fixed notions of racial difference, what Britons experienced was an intensification of awareness of human diversity coupled with new and, in the late eighteenth century, uncontrolled anxieties about the meanings of that diversity" (265). She continues, in more original and specific claims: "Abolitionist formulations of interracial fraternity in this context generated a satirical backlash that popularized racist fantasy, newly reinforced by appropriations (often misappropriations) of studies of physiognomy. Meanwhile, efforts to hold on to the exoticism of blackness occurred alongside new and sympathetic expressions of domestic interracial familiarity" (265).

This rich study could have distinguished more carefully the slippery relationship between blacks in Britain and slaves in the colonies. A similar problem surfaces in the difference between her assumption that "presumptions of black subordination exposed how Britons held an essentialist notion of racial difference long before they purchased slaves" (14) and the evidence which leads her to conclude that, in most respects, Britons made slender distinctions between black and white servants in Britain (11, 207). This finding is surely one worthy of changing our research agenda.

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