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ARTICLE

# Alongside Slavery's Asides: Reverberations of Edward Young's *The Revenge*

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In an 1847 lecture before the Female Anti-Slavery Society of Salem, William Wells Brown stated: "Were I about to tell you the evils of Slavery, to represent to you the Slave in his lowest degradation, I should wish to take you, one at a time, and whisper it to you. Slavery has never been represented; Slavery never can be represented."[1] In these oft-cited lines, Wells Brown makes a strong claim for the absolute impossibility of representing slavery. But I wish to pause and stay with his earlier suggestion that it might just be possible to tell about slavery in a whisper. Breaking through the fastidiousness of the audience, a whisper can bring the condition of slavery close.

Theatre, although etymologically the *seeing place,* could also whisper. Describing the soliloquy's and aside's ability to express "s*ecret* thoughts," Raymond Williams writes that these devices might be "inseparable from new conceptions of personality and new senses of the limits and contradictions of available social relations" and are linked "with the discovery, *in dramatic form,* of new and altered social relationships, perceptions of self and others, complex alternatives of private and public thought."[2] If Wells Brown suggests the whisper's ability to reconfigure the audience's sense of propriety, Williams similarly suggests the potential for devices such as the soliloquy and aside to articulate and enact social change, creating new social relations and relationships to privacy and publicness. The aside thus shares the characteristics of Williams's "structures of feeling," or "social experiences *in solution*, as distinct from other social semantic formations which have been *precipitated* and are more evidently and more immediately available."[3] A whisper, existing on the edges of semantic availability, in theatre, takes shape as an aside at the edges of a suspended scene. The whispered aside might thus privately reflect on and speculate about social relations and experiences as inflected by race and the reach of

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slavery, even if these experiences live in an official atmosphere of disavowal and silencing.

This essay sees the potential in performing introspection and tracks these performances' reverberations across the limen of the proscenium stage in the larger racially tense Atlantic world. It thus both pauses and builds on the attunement of theatre historians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries toward publicness (including publicity), visual spectacle, and realistic innovations in theatre.[4] Scholars including Amy Hughes have demonstrated the politically impactful power of the spectacle in nineteenth-century theatre, particularly looking at bodies characterized by excess and sensation scenes. Hughes emphasizes the central role that spectacle plays in provoking audiences to confront sociopolitical issues and work toward reform; she links the thrill of watching a woman perform a rescue in the midst of a suspenseful scene of an oncoming train to situating the audience in the midst of debates about women's equality and the push for suffrage.[5] Similarly, Lynn Voskuil has explored how the detailed "illusive realism" of the scene drew nineteenth-century British audiences by bringing grand terrains, speeding trains, and cascading water onstage with new degrees of verisimilitude.[6] At the same time, the proliferation and electric popularity of theatre's secretive conventions and private moments over the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, even in the midst of growing technological advancement, suggest their enduring importance in reflecting and reshaping affective experience and social relations.

Nineteenth-century playwrights and theatre critics invested in and discussed the power of staged secrecy. In her "Introductory Discourse" (1821), playwright Joanna Baillie makes a strong claim for the universal interest in concealed passion, explaining the structure of her own plays, which present the passions that characters experience "not only with their bold and prominent features, but also with those minute and delicate traits which distinguish them in an infant, growing, and repressed state."[7] For Baillie, it is theatre's incisive attention to the details of passion (rather than events themselves) that renders heroes, criminals, and warriors more receptive to the audience's sympathetic curiosity. Because such plays' primary emphasis lies in examining the contours of passion, Baillie further notes the value of the soliloquy: "Soliloquy, or those overflowings of the perturbed soul, in which it unburthens itself of those thoughts which it cannot communicate to others, and which in certain situations is the only mode that a Dramatist can employ to open to us the mind he would display, must necessarily be often, and to considerable length, introduced."[8] Baillie explains that the soliloquy has the capacity to hold affective detail and to represent otherwise incommunicable feeling. The use of the soliloquy navigates how the secret, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest, "relates . . . to certain contents. The content is *too big* for its form. . . . [S]omething must ooze from the box, something will be perceived through the box or in the half-opened box."[9] The secret perturbations of the soul exceed the linear, narrative action of the play, thus requiring a private deformation of theatre's publicly dialogic and spectacular forms. The soliloquy leaks through the contained form of the play's action and dialogue, confidentially opening itself up to the audience's perception.

This dramatic secrecy held a disorienting force in relation to the dominant societal distribution of privacy and publicness in early America. Historian Sarah Igo writes that for much of the nineteenth century, the right to privacy is understood

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as implicitly belonging to white property-holding men, and that this privacy subsumes the personal privacy of others, including white women.[10] The expansive privacy of white men has also had a central role onstage, or at least in theatre historiography. Such historiography, theatre scholar Ian Smith has argued, has tended to naturalize the link between whiteness and inwardness or evolved forms of subjectivity, often spotlighting *Hamlet* as "the iconic text of white, fractured modern subjectivity" (while forgetting the ways in which such performances materially gesture to Blackness).[11] Despite this, privacy might circulate differently if one were to cast an eye toward stage productions in early America. Eighteenth– and nineteenth-century theatre's secretive conventions offer alternative formulations of privacy. Secretive speech as in asides was prevalent among characters marginalized by race and gender and often quietly expressed insurrectionary feeling, allowing space and time to question and potentially disinterpellate from prescribed social roles; the theatricality of the aside thus troubles the performativity of the role. Following Georg Simmel's note that secrecy "secures . . . the possibility of a second world alongside of the obvious world"[12] and Sara Ahmed's explanation that moments of disorientation "throw the world up,"[13] I examine how the force of the aside can disorient the romantic amnesia of an imperial project and the system of slavery. If theatre's investment in forms of secret communication such as the aside gestures to the voices of those kept out of official, narrative, and dialogic action, a theatre historiography that moves beyond a focus on nineteenth-century theatrical action and sensation scenes and that homes in, instead, on staged secrecy may find covert and encoded unruly feelings of racialized resentment, grief, and joy. Tracking the circuit of the aside recalls the force, experience, and feeling of abjection, while interrogating the boundaries of American belonging.

## Plotting and Producing *The Revenge*

Edward Young's 1721 play, *The Revenge,* was popularly produced from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century across the Atlantic in places such as London, New York, Baltimore, and Charleston. Young's complex play tells the story of Zanga, a Moorish prince who wreaks revenge on Don Alonzo, the Spanish general who had captured him and murdered his father. At the beginning of the play, Zanga confides in his mistress that he hates Don Alonzo (though they have long seemed friends), a feeling that had crystallized further once Alonzo slapped Zanga for a minor misdemeanor. The trauma and humiliation that Zanga suffers drive his desire to find an adequate form of revenge—not the open and direct form of stabbing Alonzo, but a long and underhanded process of emotional torment. Over the course of the play, Zanga concocts his scheme for vengeance based on the knowledge that Alonzo and his best friend, Carlos, both love Leonora. Insinuating Leonora's infidelity, Zanga is able to incite Alonzo's jealousy and ultimately to contribute to the deaths of Carlos and Leonora. Finally, Zanga confesses his part in the scheme, and Alonzo orders him to be tortured on the rack before Alonzo kills himself out of guilt and shame.

The play, and particularly the figure of Zanga, loomed large in the late eighteenth– and early nineteenth-century transatlantic popular consciousness. In a Miscellanies section of the *Massachusetts Centinel,* an author relates the ills of

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early American society and its tendency toward self-interest, complaining about "*legal plunder*," wherein those who practice the law work to strip "the honest and unwary, and perhaps the widow and the orphan, of the little property they possessed, their only hopes and support."[14] The author continues:

> I know a *limb* of the law, whose name shall be *Zanga*, for like him, of all pleasures there are none he so much delights in as that of indulging to *revenge*. *Zanga* under the specious mark of frankness and independence of temper, has practised all kinds of iniquity with greediness. He privately defrauds, or he openly plunders, as the case may require.[15]

The law officer's concealed or open defrauding links to Zanga's characteristically deft and mobile enactment of revenge, with asides and soliloquies working to express, privately and openly, his rage and plans for Alonzo's ruin (in these theatre conventions' capacity for open secrets). Like Zanga, the law officer produces a veneer of frankness while carrying out diabolical machinations against a trusting and vulnerable society. Similar references to Zanga's ability to wreak social havoc occur in other articles. In one published letter to the *Freeman's Journal*, the author charges "Censor" with previously publishing works in Britain that seek to extend the havoc of the Revolutionary War, particularly bringing the conflict to Pennsylvania, noting: "[Y]ou are known to unite in your temper, the revenge of Zanga, with the treachery of Iago. . . . The people of Pennsylvania have learned to ascribe most of their disputes and misfortunes, to such strangers [as you] interfering in our public affairs."[16] The invocation of Zanga allowed for a ready reference to disloyal and diabolical scheming and the potential to rip apart an emergent sense of national unity already scarred by war and partisan faction.

As this article in *The Freeman's Journal* suggests, the figures of Zanga and Iago were linked in the cultural imagination as representing extreme malignity and immorality. Indeed, *The Revenge* clearly resembled the plot of William Shakespeare's *Othello* (as well as Aphra Behn's *Abdelazer; or, The Moor's Revenge*).[17] Yet Young departed from his predecessors by unwinding the Moorish character from his own love plot and romantic entanglements, and instead centering his focus more squarely on geopolitical issues and avenging his father's and his country's wrongs at the hands of Spain, thus giving "greater cause for the Revenge of Zanga, than Shakespeare has for that of Iago" even as "both are drawn as villains actuated by the basest motives which can disgrace mankind."[18] However, Young's decision to carve out a complex cause for Zanga's villainy also held the potential to newly ennoble his immorality. As the dramatist and theatre critic Elizabeth Inchbald notes in her remarks, which were printed in a London edition of *The Revenge*, "In one of [Young's] characters, indeed, he has surpassed the genius of Shakspeare [*sic*]—but immorally so—he has adorned malice and its kindred vices with a sentiment appropriate to the rarest virtue—scrupulous regard for unblemished honour. The high-sounding vengeance of Zanga charms every heart, whilst the malicious purposes of Iago fill every bosom with abhorrence."[19] Young's ennobling of Zanga partially through a revision of the Othello–Iago dynamic also circulated among early American audiences through political discourses and references to slavery. Alexander Wedderburn famously characterized Benjamin

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Franklin's circulation of Thomas Hutchinson's letters as an act parallel to Zanga's vengeance. (Wedderburn states to the court: "I ask, my lords, whether the revengeful temper attributed, by poetic fiction only, to the bloody African; is not surpassed by the coolness and apathy of the wily American?")[20] American newspapers, in response, published statements defending Franklin by rediverting the charge of secretive villainy, asking Wedderburn, "What fiction will furnish your equal? I will not insult Zanga by a comparison that will dishonour him; I will not compare the dignity of insulted worth with the meanness of cowardly revenge. No, no, Sir, — the exquisite villainy of Iago, in the blackest purposes of his heart, will best delineate you."[21] Such references to Young's play not only show its ability to resonate familiarly with audiences and readers across the Atlantic, but also implicitly gesture to its ability to privately reshape morality, and to contextualize and justify criminal action through the figure of the avenging Moor, marking Zanga's secrecy and revenge as similar to, but also quite different from, that of Iago's duplicitous villainy. Young's Zanga is more aligned with Behn's Abdelazer, a Moorish enslaved figure who, alongside a deceitful queen, works to wrest power from kings. As Adam Beach has pointed out, the focus of Behn's *Abdelazer* on an elite, powerful, enslaved figure reflects the complexity of slavery in the Islamic Mediterranean, where enslaved persons might have been invested with a certain degree of power when associated with the military.[22] The enslaved character's resulting conflicted sense of honor and shame through his liminal position of power resounds in Young's depiction of Zanga's resentment. As characters enmeshed in Mediterranean slavery circulated on stages in the Atlantic world, their associated thematization of honor and justice could have questioned English and American policies and attitudes toward slavery, as the volatile nature of military slavery raised the specter of revolution in plantation slavery and unfreedom in the Atlantic world. A few early American newspapers clearly linked Zanga to vengeance performed by enslaved people, as in northern newspapers' recirculation of English news reports of a vengeful incident in the West Indies:

> REVENGE—Some years since, in one of the French West-India islands, a slave was tortured for a slight offence, of which he was not even guilty. Stung with resentment—and agitated with the feelings of a Zanga, he determined to seize upon the whole family of his cruel and unfeeling oppressor. . . . [T]he tyrant master . . . beheld his youngest son dashed to pieces. . . . [T]he fall also of the last of his offspring, together with that of the revengeful negro, convinced him, that he was no longer a father, nor worthy to be one.[23]

This piece of the article pulls in *The Revenge* to quietly question the power dynamics within the system of slavery, recalling Zanga's ethical resentment to reevaluate the enslaver's right to rule (and even to question his worthiness of fatherhood). If Michel-Rolph Trouillot has crucially shown how nineteenth-century white people mentally worked to drive the acknowledgment of Black revolution into a repressed amnesia,[24] American newspapers and discourses surrounding the reception of the play also suggest Americans' ambivalent anxiety and thrill over Black revolution and its secret drive for justice.

Productions of *The Revenge,* often highlighting racial otherness through orientalized turbaned costumes and white actors' darkened skin, had a magnetic effect

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on audiences.[25] Such productions challenged the play's wonted aims and arc toward morality through the dazzling, virtuosic acting required of the role of Zanga. One Philadelphia theatre critic, covering a debutant actor's performance in the "arduous character of Zanga," notes that "[i]n the whole range of drama, we do not recollect a single part which requires more exertions in the representation."[26] Although both characters ultimately express moral feelings, with Zanga finally expressing shame over his revenge and Alonzo's regret over his jealousy, the play consistently weaves in soliloquies and asides, which hold onto immoral feelings and those "'spontaneous outpourings' of emotion" that Heather Nathans notes as increasingly appearing in plays as the eighteenth century progresses.[27] An address delivered at the opening of the Walnut Street Theatre in 1829 states clearly the moral aims of theatre: "The polish'd mirror to the careful gaze, / Each latent blemish, undisguis'd betrays, / E'en so the stage, to nature ever true, / Presents (ungrateful task) each fault to view . . . / Blame not the mirror, but reform the man."[28] Yet, despite the address's efforts to praise theatre's ability to teach audiences to look for "moral beauty in the scene," the address itself more ambiguously lingers on the "deathless heroes of the Drama . . . / Great in their virtues, in their vices great," asking audiences to imagine thrillingly how "[n]ow fierce revenge in Zanga's bosom burns."[29] If Zanga's death at the end of the play is often presented in a moral manner, here the address's linking of him to one of the "deathless heroes of the Drama" and its insistence on evoking the present "Now" of Zanga's fierce feeling suggest that theatre's investment in spectacular secrecy has a force and velocity that explodes through the dramas' own arc toward eliciting moral reformation through revelation. Several reviews spoke of the artistic labor that went into performing a role that was so demanding in its performance of suppressed feeling and subtle duplicity. Of an 1815 performance of Zanga by tragedian Thomas Cooper, the *Boston Gazette* notes that whereas Cooper ably took on roles such as the "honest, the fiery Othello," "in Zanga, no obstreperous declaiming proclaims the purpose of his soul—his smothered enmity and malignant revenge find no echo but in his own tortured bosom."[30] Newspapers further singled out performances of Zanga's soliloquies. *The Mirrour* states of Mr. P. Carrigain's performance of Zanga in New Hampshire: "[H]is Soliloquies were listened to with the most pleasing, polite Attention, by the Audience, at the Conclusion of which he had the whole applausive gallery Roar. In these he displayed his best dramatic abilities. Thro' all the Changes in Voice and Action, from Passion to Intrigue, and from Despair to Joy, he display'd true Knowledge of the Character he personated."[31] Such reviews point to how Zanga's soliloquies and asides allow for a quiet and mobile presentation of emotions, enlivening the audience through privatized performance.

*The Revenge* opens with thunder and breath, calling for the audience to move between scales of perception and to listen both to the spectacular and to the subtle.[32] Awake in the middle of a stormy night, Zanga meditates in a soliloquy: "Whether first nature, or long want of peace, / Has wrought my mind to this, I cannot tell; / But horrors now are not displeasing to me: (*Thunder*.) / I like this rocking of the battlements. / Rage on, ye winds, burst, clouds, and waters roar! / You bear a just resemblance of my fortune, / And suit the gloomy habit of my soul."[33] The play thus begins by highlighting Zanga's wakeful meditations on his current condition,

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as he poetically and metaphorically links his interior state to the tempestuous storm. In her book *In the Wake,* Christina Sharpe argues for the importance of considering Black being as a form of consciousness of the ongoing violent Black exclusion and abjection from the category of the human, and further considers how aesthetic forms stay in the wake, working to "observe and mediate this un/survival."[34] The particular aesthetic forms of the soliloquy and aside throughout *The Revenge* perform introspective consciousness of ongoing policies of abjection and dispossession. Significantly, such staged introspection unfolds upon a landscape of racist and dehumanizing taxonomies and classifications. Sensible performances within secretive conventions by the Moorish Zanga implicitly trouble scientific and political discourses of the transatlantic late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Indeed, in 1829, the *Irish Shield* newspaper, which suggested that characters such as Zanga should be expelled from New York theatre boards, rails against the reflective representation of a Black Zanga:

> [I]ndulgence would be carried too far, in any case where sentiment and language adapted to a SUPERIOR class of beings are given to another class, designated as an inferior genus of the human species, as in the case in respect of Othello and Zanga, in which the essentials of character, country, climate, and colour, are confounded. . . . Hume and Buffon concur in the opinion, that the blaze of intellect was never kindled in the mind of a Negro. . . . [S]ensation and not reflection, gives an impulse to their mental powers.[35]

The *Irish Shield* leverages scientific discourse in order to suggest the inaccuracy and impossibility of Black reflection as represented by characters such as a Black Zanga. It alludes particularly to David Hume's infamous footnote to his essay "Of National Characters," where he writes:

> I am apt to suspect the negroes, and in general all the other species of men . . . to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. . . . In JAMAICA, indeed, they talk of one negroe as a man of parts and learning; but 'tis likely he is admired for very slender accomplishments, like a parrot, who speaks a few words plainly.[36]

As Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze points out, Hume's racist statements claim that Black people possess only passive ideas and a "passive reception of impression" rather than the ability to speculate or "deduce or infer in the abstract the relations among objects, through concepts and logical demonstrations."[37] Yet as the *Irish Shield* anxiously recognized, theatrical representations that featured soliloquies by Black characters also implicitly unsettled the accuracy of scientific discourses and the political policies they supported.[38] Zanga's artful metaphorical linkage of his interior state to the storm emphasizes his ability to consider abstract relations between matter and mind. Echoing Hume's racist arguments, Thomas Jefferson writes of Black people: "Their griefs are transient. Those numberless afflictions, which render it doubtful whether heaven has given life to us in mercy or in wrath, are less felt, and sooner forgotten with them. In general, their existence appears to participate more of sensation than reflection."[39] However, Zanga's

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opening reflective declaration of the "gloomy habit of [his] soul" (as well as the consistent interruptions of the play with his asides that hold onto his grief over dispossession) refuse the sense of a grief that is transient. In the private form of the soliloquy and the secretive form of the aside, Zanga carries forth his enraged memory, transmitting the liveness of his rupturing shame and anger, and the pulse of the past. While Jefferson claimed that Black people's countenances were characterized by an "immoveable veil of black"[40] and that they were unable to have access to the same feelings that white people did (which worked in the service of policies of Black expulsion and colonization), Zanga's flexing between "first nature, or long want of peace" in this subtle soliloquy refuses ocularcentric biological determinism, foregrounding the possibility that his perverse disposition results from the trauma of Spanish conquest and oppression. Significantly, Zanga suggests the deranging effects of colonization in the form of the soliloquy, which bears an exquisite eloquence that refutes Hume's and Jefferson's claims over Black people's artistic incapacity. Through this form that allows him to reflect on his own consciousness, he implicitly refuses judgments of himself as intrinsically mad, perverse, and the automatic African foil, an opposing counterpart to the rational European subject.[41]

This contextualizing force of the performance of Zanga's soliloquy challenges J. L. Austin's famous characterization of the soliloquy as a form of "hollow or void" utterance.[42] Considering soliloquies through Deleuze and Guattari's relation of the secret to secretion, theatre historians might instead note how soliloquies and asides formally move in deeply material ways, as in their controlled volume and reflective tones.[43] Nineteenth-century theatre reviews were attuned to actors' vocal differentiation of the soliloquy from dialogue. One review of *Othello,* in which Ira Aldridge performed the title role, notes, for example, when the actor playing Iago performed his soliloquy "a little too loud," thus violating a sense of realism: "[I]n real life men do not talk so loudly when talking to themselves, as when they mean to make an impression upon others, and the wily, hypocritical villain . . . Iago, is of all characters the least likely to indulge in a violence of expression, which might possibly lead to his being overheard and detected."[44] Such an undertone and a control of breath is also central in Zanga's soliloquy, with profound implications for reconfiguring flows of power. Ashon Crawley explains that enunciation and fugitivity are linked, and that "[t]he fugitive enacts by enunciative force, by desire, by air, by breath, by breathing."[45] The soliloquy, calling attention to an actor's breath, is not hollow but, instead, holds history and anticipates freedom; far from being a void utterance, it transforms the time of the play. One review of Ira Aldridge's performance in *The Revenge* suggests the soliloquy's radical hold on time:

> His delineation of the proud, revengeful Moor was finely conceived. . . . In the soliloquies, and those passages in which the reflective powers of the mind are at work, while the material action is suspended, he possesses the rare faculty of completely abstracting and separating himself from all external objects, or of only receiving impressions from those that harmonise with the state of his mind. Zanga's opening soliloquy in the first act, during the storm, expresses this mental condition very forcibly.[46]

This review importantly points to how the soliloquy suspends the material action of the play, revealing that soliloquies had the power to reshape time and space secretly,

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reconfiguring these in order to express the character's own reflections. Instead of the "passive reception of impression" to which Eze had referred regarding Hume's racist characterization of Black people,[47] Aldridge's delivery of the soliloquy produces a sense of artful abstraction and of "receiving impressions from [external objects] that harmonise with the state of his mind." In the playscript, part of Zanga's soliloquy, as we have seen, plays out thus: "But horrors now are not displeasing to me: (*Thunder*.) / I like this rocking of the battlements." Although thunder might seem to be a wild, disruptive force, here Zanga's soliloquy holds its effects familiarly between two reflective lines mentioning his pleasurable reception of horror and chaos. His soliloquy asks audiences to stay with and spend time with his viewpoint, to hear him listening and breathing in the chaotic world around him.

The soliloquy movingly reveals Zanga's enraged grief, while inviting the audience to anticipate and align with his role as destroyer of the Spanish destroyers. His line "Rage on, ye winds, burst, clouds, and waters roar!" is propelled by a powerful, animating breath and suggests, *pace* Crawley, the mobility of breath and fugitive force of Black life. Zanga's soliloquy reflects and materializes the elements he calls upon, with the plosives of "burst," for example, stopping and releasing breath and air with its rupturing force. His soliloquy, thus conjuring his connection to the space through intimate address, implicitly denies its surrender to the Spanish.[48] The soliloquy also bears a remarkable resemblance to a speech in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, in which Lear exclaims his rage during a storm. It begins: "Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow! / You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout / Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks."[49] Zanga's soliloquy's close resemblance to Lear's speech allows the play to sharpen further the audience's focus on the sense of his disorientation and suffering in the face of dispossession and the betrayal of his sovereignty.[50] Far from a singular, intrinsically racialized irrationality, Zanga's enraged perversity gains canonical contextualization through this allusion to the fall of another sovereign figure. The private revelation of his rage again shapes the audience's perception of the scene in another soliloquy later in the play as he states: "Proud hated Spain, oft drench'd in Moorish blood! / Dost thou not feel a deadly foe within thee? / Shake not the towers where e'er I pass along, / Conscious of ruin, and their great destroyer? / Shake to the centre if Alonzo's dear."[51] Placed between Zanga's professions of loyalty to Alonzo ("In me, my lord, you hear another self") and his sudden quieting and retiring as Carlos appears ("But see, the melancholy lover comes"),[52] his soliloquy turns the audience into his confidant as he voices his rage and his enraged resistance to the dispossession of the Moors and the silencing of their trauma. Fred Moten writes: "How do sound and its reproduction allow and disturb the frame or boundary of the visual? . . . *Sound gives us back the visuality that ocularcentrism had repressed*."[53] The soliloquy reconfigures the audience's sensual apprehension beyond the ocularcentric and beyond theatre's alignment with the imperial eye of the spectator, eliciting, through Zanga's vehement exclamations, the audience's envisioning of the stage as a haunted space, drenched with blood. Through the sonic versatility required by the soliloquy (expressing forceful rage and scorn, which later blend with a reverential address to Mahomet), Zanga eloquently works against ocularcentrism and the increasing importance of the panoramic perspective so as to wrap the audience into his

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experience of abjection, inviting their participation in an imaginative dramaturgy that cocreates a melancholic and resentful orientation toward conquest and dispossession. As he refers to the towers of "[p]roud, hated Spain," the amplified tones of his hate and scorn interrupt audiences' envisioning of the towers as grand testaments to Spain's proud conquest. Audiences might not truly see the towers shake in trepidation, but Zanga's exclamations and close readings of his surroundings invest the environment with the sonic, sensuous force of his feeling, asking viewers to perceive the imperial project's violence, vulnerability, and ultimate ruin.

Zanga's eloquence held a capacity to fascinate, sometimes over and against theatrical spectacle. *The Revenge* thus worked in contrast to contemporaneous popular productions of plays such as Thomas Morton's *The Slave* (1816), which made great use of settings such as hanging bridges to effect sensational rescue scenes that ultimately celebrated England as a land of exceptional liberty.[54] The *Boston Daily Advertiser* reports of the differences between the two plays:

> [*The Slave*] . . . depends much upon the attractions of the novelty of the scene, and the personages. . . . Suppose Zanga, the hero of Young's Revenge, were to speak that beautiful speech ending with "*Do this, and tread upon the Roman glory*," [*sic*] the most perfect specimen of rhetorical passion in the language, while the stage was covered with the scenery representing the waterfall with which the *Slave* concludes, this beautiful poetry would have worse than no effect.[55]

Beyond being awed by visual spectacles of setting and scenery, reviewers of productions of *The Revenge* more often were impressed by actors' careful representation of Zanga's eloquence and deceptiveness. Thus reviewers called for actors to produce a "subtlety of expression" with voices expressing "tones of irony" as they moved between Zanga's "two natures"—"the princely when alone, and the servile when before Alonzo."[56] Similarly, as Francis Gentleman points out, the play's focus on Zanga as a "finished villain, with some greatness of mind" worked to spotlight the actor's talents, with actors demonstrating great ability in the soliloquies, but sometimes wanting "ease of insinuation."[57] Transatlantic productions of works such as *The Slave* celebrated interracial romance and liberty through cathartic spectacle, inviting immediate, affective responses (such as a sense of relief or the ecstasy of enjoying emancipation) tied to British liberty. Yet *The Revenge* necessitated subtlety and sonic eloquence, as the play saw Zanga consistently suspending the scene to insinuate his scorching tones of irony and resentment. In such ways, *The Revenge* may have sensuously carried forth the secret and lingering grief and rage that slavery wrought with greater impact than did more spectacular productions. Acting manuals printed and circulated in England and the United States in the early nineteenth century, such as *The Thespian Preceptor,* opened by reproducing lines from *The Revenge* (such as Zanga's statement to Alonzo: "Complain of grief—complain thou art a man") in order to teach actors the powerful effect of adopting lush tones of contempt (while also fully suggesting the magnetic popularity and artistic affordances of the character of Zanga).[58] *The Revenge* was performed more than ninety times in London between 1721 and 1800, and the play's soliloquies and asides, sharpened by Zanga's contemptuous tones, raised potentially discomfiting questions for the audience regarding the injustice of the slave trade,

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intimately bringing home the vengeful enslaved figure despite Britain's efforts to present itself as an exceptional space of freedom by creating physical and psychical distance from the rebellion of racial Others.[59]

Popular performances of *The Revenge,* with its focus on Zanga's concealed passion, in the early republic and antebellum periods in New York and New England also deeply affected audiences, and warned of potentially explosive intimacy and proximity between Black and white inhabitants. Numerous reviews point to the ways in which performances of Zanga cultivated a collapse between white actors and the racialized role through Moorish costumes and a passionate acting style. An account of Robert Maywood's performance in New York, for example, notes that "in that character he was passion—revenge personified. . . . The scene where the noble and revengeful Moor enters, and giving vent to his swelling breast exclaims, 'how stands the great account 'twixt me and vengeance,' &c. was inimitably fine."[60] Maywood's performance of the soliloquy psychically brought him and the audience in close proximity to racialized revenge. On the one hand, American reviews of such productions largely seem to treat blackface performances of Zanga as a testament to white actors' (and often famed and respected British actors) transcendent brilliance in performing a difficult role, which suggests the potential psychic management of thrilling racial intimacy with the knowledge that the performance was simply performance. On the other hand, however, theatre extends past the limen of the stage, reminding audiences such as those in New York that their city rested on precarious, haunted ground. As Elizabeth Maddock Dillon has shown, theatres were often capacious sites of commoning, with spectators including unpropertied white men, white women, and Black people.[61] Expressions of violent and impetuous passion might have made white members of New York audiences reflect on the ways their own city saw threats of violence by enslaved people. Historian Shane White, for example, points out that there were consistent reports of arson and food poisoning in the transitional years before slavery officially ended in New York in 1827.[62] Even after 1827, however, slavery continued to live on in New York, as visitors from other states could bring enslaved people with them for up to nine months (with New York recognizing their enslaved status); as well, in New York, fugitive enslaved people were subject to capture and return to the state from which they fled.[63] Theatre reviews also consistently gestured to the dangers of circulating Black rage within such mixed, migratory, and receptive audiences. An 1829 issue of the *Irish Shield*, attempting to expel certain works of Shakespeare and Young from stage production, notes: "On the New-York boards, *Othello, Zanga, Oroonoko* and *Gambia,* attract . . . full assemblages of the 'children of the sun,' . . . and perhaps tended to confirm and increase by their negro personation, the *native disposition* of the black and yellow community, that infest the theatres of this city, for dissimulation, fraud and treachery."[64] As this article suggests (in its own implicit performance of whiteness and patriotism), one of the fears of performing Black sovereignty (especially after the emancipation laws came into effect in New York in 1827) was that it could call up latent desires of proximal racial Others for further freedom and justice.

In Zanga's call for revenge, Black audiences might hear a call for the morality and responsibility for avenging the wrongs done unto them. In one soliloquy, he states: "Two nights ago my father's sacred shade / Thrice stalk'd around my bed,

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and smil'd upon me; / He smil'd a joy then little understood— / . . . [I]t is vengeance / Worth waking of the dead for."[65] Zanga's soliloquy, relating his father's haunting presence and repeating the detail of his smile, alters the temporal progression of the play as it rushes into a romantic plot in order to mourn loss and relish the idea of avenging his father and country. The soliloquy, suspending the action of the play, potentially clashes against the North's slow crawl toward limited emancipation as well.[66] In the midst of the production of progress narratives and the veneer of freedom in the North, Zanga's soliloquies might invite Black audiences to hold onto remembrance and resentment; recalling past and ongoing oppression as well as his responsibility to the dead, he calls for more radical forms of justice.[67]

Although early American newspapers often focused on the virtuosic performances of white actors in the role of Zanga, the specter of Black actors and spectators continuously circulated through the American consciousness. Indeed, reviews of Aldridge's performances in Britain in 1848 circulated through American newspapers in the midst of growing debates and movements in relation to abolition and racial abjection. The American *National Era* newspaper recirculated part of an *Illustrated London News* review that praises Aldridge's performance as Zanga in *The Revenge* at the Surrey Theatre: "Mr. Aldridge possesses an excellent voice, commanding figure, and expressive countenance. . . . Throughout the play he more than realized the high encomiums that had previously been pressed upon him; and many who ridiculed the idea of a native-born African successfully representing a dramatic character, retired with very different feelings."[68] The *North American and United States Gazette* reprints Douglas Jerrold's review of Aldridge's performances, similarly noting how Aldridge reworks audiences' expectations:

> Mr. Aldridge, a negro, performed the part of *Zanga,* and although the selection of such an individual looked like the parading a piece of reality by having a real black man to represent the ideal character, . . . [w]e were agreeably disappointed. Mr. Aldridge is an undoubted negro, but is gifted with an intelligence of perception, dignity of action and force of expression that not only do honor to his particular race, but to humanity. He is not a great, but he is a very good actor. He reads with much feeling and appreciation of the author; and there is a force and vigor in his passionate enunciation that is stirring, and perfectly free from imitation or rant. . . . He made as much of *Zanga* as it is possible to do of so wordy, blustering, and clumsy an *Iago.*[69]

Earlier reviews of production of the play often centered on white actors' artistry in transforming into the subtle, vengeful Moor. The ability to traverse racial difference and to move from promoting white republican virtue to Moorish vengeance was part and parcel of the measure of virtuosic and transcendent performance. Aldridge's performance, however, not only succeeds in impressing audiences with his eloquence, but his embodied surrogation of the role of Zanga confronts audiences with a challenge to dominant racist categorizations and expectations.[70] As the review in the *North American and United States Gazette* suggests, Aldridge's enunciation in numerous soliloquies and asides throughout *The Revenge* allows his artistry to shine through the structure of the role—both the theatrical role and the role of the stereotype of Black people. Phrenological materials consistently linked the trait of "Secretiveness" to that of "Acquisitiveness" and iniquity, as in antebellum phrenological analyses of thieves, the "colored servant girl,"

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seemingly lying and licentious "Hindoo" peoples, murderers, and Shakespeare's Iago.[71] Yet, Aldridge's performance manages to maintain admiration in the "dignity of action," troubling secrecy's often racialized ties to immoral criminality. His performance delinks secrecy from its biologically legible origins and arcs, and points to the artistic labor and theatricality involved in performing secrecy. While the wordiness and immorality of the role might, for some audiences, irritatingly slow down the action of the play, Aldridge's "force of expression," which is "free from . . . rant," reinvigorates the role of "so wordy, blustering, and clumsy an *Iago*." His performance enlivens long, immoral speeches, making words move with a quickstep that works to move the audience. American miscellanies such as *Holden's Dollar Magazine* also recirculated this portion of Jerrold's review of Aldridge's performances at the Surrey Theatre, carrying the affective resonances of the performances home:

> A genuine negro . . . has been astonishing the habiteus [*sic*] of the Surrey Theatre, by his performances of Zanga. . . . His name is Aldridge, . . . a native of one of the southern States. . . . Jerrold's paper, says of this black swan: ". . . He reads with much feeling and appreciation of the author; and there is a force and vigor in his enunciation that is stirring, and perfectly free from rant. . . ." As Douglas Jerrold's paper is rather of an abolition character, it is quite probable that the theatrical critic has judged more favourably of the power of your colored gentleman, than you would do in New York.[72]

Despite the opposition to Black actors in antebellum New York,[73] Aldridge's performance of Zanga worked its way into the American consciousness, invoking memories of his American origins and working to trouble dominant racial stereotypes. Although this American review of Aldridge's performances seems to frame Jerrold's review within the structure of doubt about Black artistry by beginning its statements with "[a] genuine negro" and ending by doubting the accuracy of Jerrold's review due to abolitionist tendencies, it also internally preserves the British audience's astonishment with Aldridge's performance as Zanga and their marvel at his subtle artistry in channeling forth Zanga's passionate duplicity. While holding onto doubt about the accuracy of Jerrold's review, this American miscellany nonetheless suggests the power of Black performance to foreground Black subjectivity and the enunciation of freedom.

Black performance and spectatorship thus quietly and powerfully circulated in late eighteenth– and early nineteenth-century America. In *New World Drama,* Dillon crucially points out that in eighteenth-century Charleston, South Carolina, Black people outnumbered white people, and these races related to each other through an intimate distance designed to preserve white supremacy. She further notes that this intimate distance was reflected on the stage, as a performance of *Oroonoko* was canceled, possibly due to the dangers of presenting strong models of Black sovereignty in the context of such population demographics.[74] Yet *The Revenge* nevertheless was successfully produced and circulated in cities that tried to maintain an intimate distance between Black and white populations—including Charleston.[75] Referring to a possible staging of the play in Charleston, an article in a 1785 issue of the *Columbian Herald* relates:

> [On] a day of rest and recreation for servants, &c. several negroes of superior taste and genius. . . . thought proper to treat their friends with a theatric representation of the

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> *Revenge,* with *Miss in her Teens.* The scene of action was a cellar on the Green. . . . [T]here being in this city a sort of *Killjoys*, called the watch, . . . the audience were enjoined to . . . preserve a profound silence. —. . . . [T]he curtain drew up to a crowded audience, all of whom were highly delighted by the bellowings of the princely *Zanga,* who tickled the tender hearts of the *fair sex,* they one and all declaring "dey neber saw de like." But whether *Melpomone* [*sic*] was . . . resolved upon rescuing her rites from ridicule—or from what other latent cause it is difficult to say, but alas! about the middle of the play an outcry was raised that the constables were coming in.[76]

The validity of the article and whether this exact performance truly occurred is unclear, though the article's mention of the appending of *Miss in Her Teens* to *The Revenge* (a common pairing in popular theatrical evening fare) as well as a "cellar on the Green" (which would have difficult in Charleston, where the terrain did not easily allow for the construction of underground infrastructure) suggest that the article might not be quite accurate. Yet the article at once seems to suggest the potentially volatile nature of stagings of *The Revenge* at the same time as it works to render such productions ridiculous. The article gestures to how Black people may have seen or heard of popular productions of the play and have been influenced by the insurrectionary imaginings embedded within it. It suggests the possibility that Young's *The Revenge* contained the potential to support Southern Black people's recapture of time and space, creating what historian Stephanie Camp has called a "rival geography," characterized by motion that escapes the planters' and enslavers' "geography of containment."[77] In the article's narration, the Black entertainers and audience members take control of the cellar, creating a theatre that allows them to escape the surveillance structure of Southern plantation life and crafting a charged atmosphere of controlled silence in which to hear insurrectionary thought. The article suggests that the play allowed the audiences to revel in their Black sovereignty, noting that audiences were able to listen to the speeches of a "princely Zanga," a model that the article further suggests was scarcely seen otherwise. The soliloquies and asides interspersed throughout the play allow audiences to linger with disallowed feelings such as rage, grief, and pleasure in violent vengeance. As Soyica Colbert points out, "black rage and anger express a collective feeling that organizes a social group invested in resisting quotidian forms of racial violence."[78] The production of *The Revenge,* spotlighting Zanga's rage, seems to bring together a collective that rebels against their quotidian subordination and surveillance; with Zanga, the audience feels his anger at his fall from power and his drive to reclaim it. Although the article's mention of the cellar (along with its seemingly excessive, humorous mention of enslaved people's adaptation of a theatre bill's fare) might ridicule the possibility of such a performance taking place, it also conjures the possibility that enslaved people might create secret spaces to rehearse freedom, resistance, and collectivity even in the midst of impossible circumstances and the inhabitation of an open terrain.

The *Columbian Herald* article makes great efforts to downplay the threatening force of the play. If *The Revenge* was renowned for its ability to act as a vehicle for showcasing actors' talents, the article labors to mock the artistic capacity of Black actors, suggesting that the performance is an insult to Melpomene, the Muse of Tragedy. The article links the "bellowings of the princely *Zanga*" to the

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statement of the women "declaring 'dey neber saw de like,'" thereby dissolving the play's focus geopolitics and vehement eloquence and placing it in a humorous framework of romantic spectatorship and admiration.[79] The article also works to sap the force of Zanga's geopolitically focused eloquence through the expression of this romance through marked dialect. As Douglas A. Jones Jr. has shown in careful readings of mocking "Bobalition" broadsides, the spectacularization of marked dialect served to confront and dismiss Black political culture and eloquence and claims to common humanity and citizenship.[80] In this article, Zanga's eloquent exclamations toward avenging the wrongs done unto his country devolve into romantic marked dialect, and the theatrical gathering eventually ends with the constables breaking the play up in the middle and leading the "sable coloured auditory [in] a solemn procession to the guard-house" (though it remarks on the successful flight of the actors, including that of the role of Zanga).[81] The article works to circulate a sense of white Southerners' control over the Black population in Charleston, attempting to leave its readers with an image of secret, insurrectionary Black collectivity as it is shattered and its members are led in "a solemn procession to the guard-house." Once secretly gathering together in a collective to share in Zanga's princely contempt and rage, the audience members are spectacularly physically and affectively contained and disciplined. Through its own strenuous efforts toward ridicule and containment, however, the article clearly recognizes the potential influence of this play, its circulation of secret rage, and its inspiration for insurrection for any Black audiences who might hear Zanga's whispers.

Such articles regarding performances of *The Revenge* show us how we might read early American theatre for repressed acknowledgments of the vengeful rage simmering and leaking out of policed forms of performance and sociality. Odai Johnson has invited theatre scholars to do this pivotal work, asking us to understand how the violence of slavery fundamentally shaped the production of theatre, so that Roman comedies held onto *mutae personae* (voiceless characters) and "unspeakable histories" of trauma.[82] *The Revenge,* in giving voice to the officially voiceless through asides and soliloquies, offers one way of listening to and excavating trauma, as audiences become increasingly able to hear Zanga's rage and grief even, and perhaps especially, in scenes carrying out the romance plot and working to set up an atmosphere of romantic amnesia.

## Abjection Aside

The soliloquy suspends time in a sphere of solitude, but the aside often more clearly marks a break in dialogue and a divergence in perception, since the aside, as David Bain points out, is "any utterance by either speaker not intended to be heard by the other and not in fact heard or properly heard by him."[83] As Nathalie Fournier further notes, the aside functions through concealment from the other characters onstage and "demands that one consider the effect on the aside of theatrical editing and theatrical location."[84] Throughout *The Revenge*, asides consistently wrest time and memory away from the linearly directed romance plot, pushing against romantic amnesia from the site of racial abjection. These pauses and moments of theatrical editing in the play redistribute perception and rework the audiences' absorption in love and gendered virtue—particularly virtuous white womanhood.

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The play thus fits into an eighteenth-century English tradition in which theatrical forms gained their contours through a grapple with gender biases. As Lisa Freeman has argued, eighteenth-century tragedies, such as a version of *Cato* called *Cato: A Tragedy. By Mr. Addison. Without the Love Scenes* (1764), consistently worked to center male characters as exemplars of national virtue and patriotism, while excising female characters and any effeminating love plots.[85] Like Freeman, I track how *The Revenge*'s form works to question femininity and love, while following Sara Ahmed's injunction that "[w]e need to ask what gets put aside, or put to one side, in the telling of the family story. What gets put aside, or put to one side, does not come after the event but rather shapes the line, allowing it to acquire its force."[86] How does speech spoken aside and in confidence work to shape and reshape lines of sentimental dialogue? How does such secretive communication refuse abjection and amnesia, and, through the aside, recover affective experiences and histories cast aside? If the genre of tragedy works to discipline femininity and love plots in the service of upholding national masculine virtue, I want to ask further how asides also work to discipline femininity and love plots in ways that question national ideologies and disorientingly hold onto histories of dispossession.

Whereas plays such as Thomas Southerne's *Oroonoko* begin with a comedic marriage plot scheme that excites audiences into anticipating its happy closure, *The Revenge* begins by looking backward, foregrounding the geohistory of conquest before tracing a sentimental marriage plot, into which Zanga engineers his involvement so that he may work its destruction. Thus while in both plays romance and slavery are plotted beside each other, in *The Revenge*, Zanga's asides consistently interrupt and threaten to overtake Spanish characters' plans for marriage, interjecting traumatized geohistory to ruin romantic hopes. In one scene, Alonzo, lamenting the complexities of his relationship with Leonora and Carlos (whom he had rescued from the Moors), states: "Oh, this day is mention'd for their nuptials. / But see, she comes—I'll take my leave and die."[87] Yet whereas Alonzo's line might direct the audience to here anticipate Leonora's entrance and to concern themselves with their confession of concealed love, Zanga's aside that immediately follows this line deftly redirects and recalls the audience's attention to the more pressing issue of vengeance: "Hadst thou a thousand lives, thy death would please me. / Unhappy fate! My country overcome! / My six years hope of vengeance quite expir'd!—/ Would nature were—I will not fall alone: / But others' groans shall tell the world my death."[88] Zanga's aside is what Eve Sedgwick terms a "periperformative," or an act of speech that is not a performative but is "*about* performatives and . . . cluster[s] *around* performatives," serving as a site of potential disinterpellation.[89] His aside shifts the focus from the spectacular scene and performative acts of marriage vows and, like Sedgwick's examples of periperformatives that also disinterpellate from the marriage act, it recognizes historical change and "has the property of sketching in a differential and multidirectional surround that may change and dramatize its meanings and effects."[90] The aside both contextualizes the marriage desires through a deep historicization, recalling shameful defeat and dispossession, and also suspends the marriage plot. Instead of allowing audiences to follow Alonzo's longing gaze to look forward toward Leonora and the quick confessions of love that follow, Zanga's aside asks audiences to linger in reveling in Alonzo's pain as recompense for his participation in Spanish conquest. The aside stretches

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time beyond the temporal order established by conquest. Here, Zanga's aside points to a pleasure in seeing Alonzo die or sustain some great loss, notwithstanding that political structures work to preserve his life and prosperity. And although Zanga's own life might be cut short, the aside points to how Zanga's hope for revenge stretches out his sovereignty over space and time even in death. His statement that "others' groans shall tell the world my death" confronts audiences with the widespread and lasting force of his resolve to ruin others in defiance of the precarious state of his own life. If likely uttered at a lower volume and sotto voce, the aside is amplified by the resounding force of groans elicited by Zanga's relentless revenge. Zanga's aside thus works to deform the form of the marriage plot, interrupting its linearity and enveloping it within his revenge plot, extending time and space initially denied to oppressed colonial subjects. Against the officially spoken dialogue of the marriage plot, the quiet form of the aside breaks through an atmosphere of silencing and surveillance to resound with a threatening violence. Throughout *The Revenge,* as Zanga sees his scheme for revenge break apart Alonzo and Leonora's romance, his asides create secret spaces for audiences sensuously to enjoy the reformulation of power relations. When Zanga insinuates, for example, that Don Carlos and Leonora have been having a secret affair, Alonzo cries, "Oh, Oh my heart!"—to which Zanga replies in an aside, "Groan on, and with the sound refresh my soul!" as the playwright's stage directions note "[Alonzo] sinks into a chair."[91] This is a moment that one review of Cooper's performance singles out: "[I]n the dialogue between Alonzo and Zanga, Cooper played uncommonly well; particularly after Alonzo, overcome with jealousy, had sunk into a chair, he gave this passage with great effect: '*Groan on and with the sound refresh my soul,' &c.*'"[92] Zanga's aside's imperative command is staged next to and in marked contrast to Alonzo's despair, a psychic collapse dramatically figured in production through his physical collapse into the chair. The aside inverts power relations through perception by creating a type of "spectacular opacity," to use Daphne Brooks's term, emerging to "contest the 'dominative imposition of transparency' systemically willed on to black figures."[93] Zanga's aside shields his vengeful feeling in a secrecy that is inviolable for Alonzo, whose powers of surveillance are momentarily suspended and forestalled, while Zanga simultaneously works to impose transparency upon Alonzo's groaning grief. Indeed, an engraved illustration (Fig. 1) of this moment —reproducing Zanga's aside, "Groan on, and with the sound refresh my soul," in a caption—particularly suggests how this aside works to reconfigure space and perception.

In this illustration—which becomes the frontispiece to the play when it is compiled in Elizabeth Inchbald's *The British Theatre; or, A Collection of Plays* (1808)[94]—Zanga gives a sidelong glance to Alonzo, who hides his face in his hands in grief. Alonzo is seen and yet unseeing, while Zanga seems to cast his eye over the scene and wholly control the space. Whereas Alonzo's doublet and hose give sharp definition to his body, collapsed in agony, Zanga's dress largely obscures the contours of his body while highlighting his foreignness. The folds of the textured material behind the two figures (perhaps suggesting a curtain) work to mimic and repeat the folds of Zanga's dress, highlighting how his textured and racialized hiddenness seems to infuse the entirety of the scene. The form of the aside brings the audience into Zanga's confidence, circulating pleasure in the

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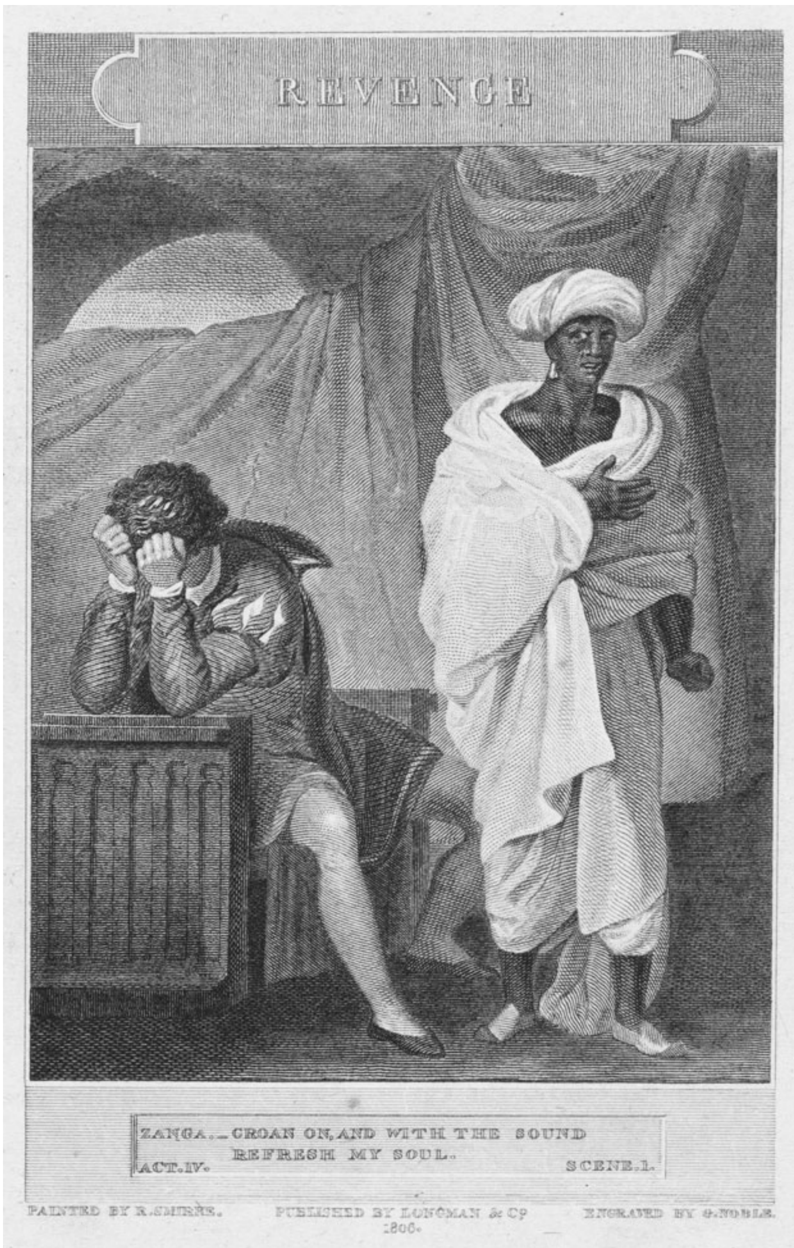


**Figure 1.** Engraved illustration of act 4, scene 1 of Edward Young's *The Revenge.* Engraved by G. Noble, 1806, after a painting by R. Smirke. [London]: Longman & Co., 1806. *Photo:* Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

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oppressor's pain, and invites them to attend to the materiality of the groan with sensuous enjoyment. *The Revenge*'s asides thus recast and remix the figures typically imbued with sanctity or shame. Focusing on the troubling inversion of audiences' proper feelings for Leonora and Zanga, the prologue, written "by a friend,"[95] circulated across several transatlantic editions of the play throughout the eighteenth century, proclaiming:

> We dread awhile lest beauty should succeed
> And almost wish ev'n virtue's self may bleed
> Mark well the black revenge, the cruel guile,
> The traitor-fiend trampling the lovely spoil
> Of beauty, truth and innocence opprest,
> Then let the rage of furies fire your breast.
> Yet may his mighty wrongs, his just disdain,
> His bleeding country, his lov'd father slain,
> His martial pride, your admiration raise
> And crown him with involuntary praise.[96]

The prologue anxiously employs interpretive imperatives to align racial, gendered, and moral legibility familiarly. Preparing audiences/readers for the play, the prologue tells them to "mark well the black revenge" and "then let the rage of furies fire your breast." Yet this effort to read with clear definitions of crime and victimization along racialized and gendered lines quickly falls apart. The prologue moves from being surprised by "almost wish[ing] e'en virtue's self may bleed" to focusing instead on the other, more significant wounds—"his bleeding country, his lov'd father slain." *The Revenge* thus suggests its hold onto the history and potential resurgence of Black sovereignty over and against the sacred veneration attached to white womanhood.

In one scene in the fifth act, Alonzo, having decided to murder Leonora for her perceived infidelity, nevertheless relents when in her live presence, and he drops his dagger. As Leonora finds the dagger, Zanga states in an aside:

> Death to my tow'ring hopes! Oh fall from high!
> My close, long-labour'd scheme at once is blasted.
> That dagger, found, will cause her to enquire;
> Enquiry will discover all.
> . . .
> Curse on the coward's heart! wither his hand,
> Which held the steel in vain! . . .
> . . . That's something still—'twill breed
> Fell rage and bitterness betwixt their souls,
> Which may, perchance, grow up to greater evil.[97]

As the prologue had warned, Zanga's aside invites the audience to share his anxiety and align with his schemes at the cost of wishing Leonora's murder. The very opening of the aside—"Death to my tow'ring hopes!"—displaces and recodes the audience's attention to death, inviting not a relieved focus on Leonora's narrowly

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missed death, but toward the greater tragedy of the death of Zanga's hopes for revenge. The aside holds onto historicity, circulating Zanga's grief and anxiety while reminding readers and audiences that this is part of his "close, long-labour'd scheme" and part of a longer quest for righteous justice in response to a long history of imperialism and racial oppression. The aside further recodes white masculine honor as it invites audiences to reenvision Alonzo's forbearance not as an act of Christian submission and as a fortunate decision to spare white virtuous womanhood but as a cowardly act. Rather than honor masculine forbearance, Zanga's aside invites the celebration of relentless and inflexible vengeance. Interrupting the play's own trajectory toward confession, resolution, and marriage, Zanga's aside carves out space for rehearsing the desire for the breeding of rage and white heterosexual fragmentation. Although American theatre reviews sometimes delineated their deep disapproval for Zanga's malignity, they were also seduced by his secrecy. One 1815 review states: "Insensible to the caresses of friendship which were intended by Alonzo as a propitiation for whatever injury he might have given, Zanga still meditates mischief, and contrives to sting the bosom of that friend who solicits his aid and friendship. How unlike to this would have been the open enmity of the true soldier. . . . Zanga's diabolical arts shock us in every scene, and make us abhor him."[98] The review's mention of friendship poses Zanga's secretive actions as deeply at odds with the tenets of homosociality, which, as the statement suggests through the repetition and syntactical frame of mentions of friendship, it weighs as a higher obligation than allegiance to a country. Furthermore, here Zanga's deceptiveness is posed as fundamentally at odds with the honorable openness of militant masculinity. Yet although Zanga's actions here are posed as shocking and repulsive, the review also calls for a close and intimate view of Zanga's malignity, stating: "The hidden malignity of Zanga, smothered in his own deadly bosom, exhausts itself in commotions within. . . . 'Tis the smothered convulsions of the mount, known only but by the earthquake which buries us in destruction. His most impressive features are exhibited while viewing the conflict of others, and tho' in the background he is still forward in our view."[99] Zanga's hidden malignity, manifesting in asides at the edges of the scene, both shocks audiences and sharpens their intrigued gaze. While the review demands that Zanga pay the debts of friendship and homosociality in an equal and open exchange of sentiment, it also lingers with admiration when limning the contours of his smothered, exhausting rage. Another 1812 review of a Boston production of *The Revenge* also admires Zanga's secretly scheming and his asides' encoding of unruly affect: "The art, with which he plays upon Alonzo, and leads him on, step by step, till he has plunged him in irretrievable ruin, is equalled only by his inimitable *by play* during the scene between Carlos and Alonzo, and the joy he expresses, when he finds his 'masterworks begin to play.'"[100] The asides throughout the play intimately attune audiences to the care and duration ("step by step"), and deep-seated rage and pleasure involved in Zanga's artful scheming. Indeed, the aside, which the review here quotes, comes directly following Alonzo's statements of gratitude and joy in response to Carlos's offer to allow him to win Leonora's hand. Zanga's perverse joy ruptures the scene's seeming homosocial and heterosexual joyous and celebratory closure. Zanga's asides show how he is out of line with the spectacular scenes of honorable masculinity and

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romance. Yet his asides structurally also create an early alienation effect, since other masculine characters such as Alonzo are unable to hear them, shared as they are only with the audience in this intimate inversion of power. Aligning with the affective community of the audience, the aside carries an intimacy that displaces questions about its moral goodness. Zanga's asides afford the actor the chance to hold onto and express the character's excessive, exhausting, and unruly feelings, momentarily reshaping the boundaries of the audience's conceptions of propriety. Productions of the play rubbed up against eighteenth-century theatre's general efforts to discipline sensibility to produce patriotic citizenry (through encouraging audiences to emulate the virtuous arc of exemplars such as Addison's Cato).[101] Zanga's asides work less toward shaping patriotic citizenry, and, following José Muñoz, more toward theatrically revealing that he is "cognizant of [his] status as an identity-in-difference," and unleashing excessive feelings such as anger in opposition to the disciplined sensibility of the Spanish.[102] Peter Lyman writes:

> If anger were to become a voice in politics, every kind of subordination—and by extension, domination itself—would become a legitimate political topic. The idea of a dialogue is usually thought to require an equal social relationship, perhaps even friendship, but anger is a form of speech that seems to threaten social peace, thus is not considered a possible ground for dialogue.[103]

Zanga's asides, letting loose smothered and perverse anger, deform the dialogue of plots revolving around Spanish homosocial friendship and heterosexual romance, and rework the associated power relations involved in such dialogue. His periperformatives emerge from the background of the scene to create new grounds for discussing and unraveling the histories of subordination smoothed over by the play's dialogue on honor and virtue. Through the aside, abjection and anger gain a voice. The fastidiousness of the audience curtails his ability to speak fully on the subject of slavery, as our opening lines from William Wells Brown suggest. Yet *The Revenge*'s asides' dramatic intimacy challenges the strictures of moral and fastidious spectatorship. An 1819 American review of Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* uses the example of Zanga to point out the possibility of entering into the feelings of others without having the sentiment of moral approbation: "Even the dark and violent passions of the malignant and revengeful . . . find somewhat kindred in our hearts. . . . [F]or a moment we lay aside our own identity, and become the being we contemplate. . . . Who does not enter deeply into the passions and fate of Macbeth, of Zanga, of the Corsair?"[104] As this article's engagement with Smith points out, Smith's seemingly impartial spectator is very much vulnerable to sympathizing contagiously with immoral characters such as Zanga, whose staged secretiveness intimately connects with the audience. Whereas Smith points out that a respect for others' spectatorship might restrain one's passions, such as that of a furious need for revenge, Zanga's asides, instead, work to reconfigure the *audience's* spectatorship to revel in the impropriety of malignity. It is not so much that he considers the possibility of experiencing abjection and the withholding of sympathy through the audience's spectatorship, and therefore draws back on his plans for revenge. Rather, his aside marks how he has *already* experienced social abjection, due to Moorish defeat and dispossession,

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and thus invites the spectating audience to join in his desires for a just vengeance. Frank B. Wilderson III writes:

> Subjective vertigo is vertigo of the event. But the sensation that one is not simply spinning in an otherwise stable environment, that one's environment is perpetually unhinged stems from a relationship to violence that cannot be analogized. This is called objective vertigo, a life constituted by disorientation rather than a life interrupted by disorientation. This is structural as opposed to performative violence. Black subjectivity is a crossroads where vertigoes meet, the intersection of performative and structural violence.[105]

The persistence of asides and soliloquies (rather than singular interruptions, or singular events such as a slap) holds onto a sense of Zanga's consistent, underlying disorientation through violence. As an orientalist character, Zanga suggests both subjective vertigo, through the vertigo of the event of war and dispossession, and the objective vertigo of racialization and perpetual abjection, through racial otherness and quiet links to Blackness. His vertigo is situational through Moorish defeat, but as the character moves through various surrogations onto Atlantic world stages, it is structural as well, linking into the Atlantic slave trade and its ongoing violent afterlives.[106] Whereas Smith argues that the consideration of others' spectatorship and fear of exile from a sympathetic community of spectators might restrain impulses of revenge, Zanga's asides and soliloquies draw together a sympathetic community attuned to his experiences of disorientation and vertigo; rather than being restrained by spectatorship, Zanga reforms the moral boundaries of the spectators. As the reviews of *The Revenge*'s production point out, it is Zanga's privately angry and aggrieved viewpoint that steals the scene from the focus on the conflicts of the other characters and their dialogues over honor, consent, and their choices in relation to spectators in a civil society. His sidelined, furious spectatorship of the romantic scenes seduces the audience spectator's own internal impartial mode of spectatorship, so that, as the prologue notes, audiences withhold sympathy usually given to virtuous white womanhood under duress or "beauty, truth and innocence opprest" while "crown[ing] him with involuntary praise."[107]

## Silence and Circulation

The staging of racialized secrecy had a powerful potentiality, as we might see when we track the circulation of its periperformatives. The author of the review in the *Boston Gazette* notes of a strange cut made in the production: "We have yet to learn why that scene in the fifth act between Zanga and Leonora, so necessary to explain subsequent events, was omitted in the representation. This tragedy is already one of the shortest within the compass of the Drama, and requires neither correction nor mutilation."[108] As we have seen, this scene in the fifth act frames itself with Zanga's asides, which channel forth a desire to watch the destruction of Leonora and Alonzo's relationship. One might speculate that one reason it was cut had to do with a wariness to show a virtuous white woman so easily manipulated by the figure of a racial Other.[109] The cutting of the scene and the crucial framing of affect through his asides attempts to keep audiences from diverging from social propriety by following Zanga's drive for revenge. Although the article

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does renounce Zanga's immorality, it nevertheless claims the right to be enthralled by a production that remains faithful to the integrity of the play and the preservation of its unruly periperformatives.

The 1806 and 1814 New York printed acting editions betray a similar ambivalence toward the immoral directions of the play. Reprinting the previously cited cautionary prologue, these editions also recycle an anxious introduction to the play that had appeared in a London edition in 1792, in the wake of the start of the Haitian Revolution:[110]

> To give treachery the strong provocation of Zanga, is to divide the mind between pity for his high wrongs, and abhorrence of the mode by which he avenges them. I know not if Zanga is hated at all. If he be not, the cause of virtue is injured by Young.—The betrayed certainly have little of our love.
>
> The Revenge is a masterly play. The sentiments are lofty, the language magnificently bold. It is yet better in the closet than upon the stage.[111]

These printed copies of the play are acting editions, and thus use quotation marks to mark off statements that were excised onstage, including the scene in which an enraged Alonzo confronts Leonora over her supposed infidelity, as well as several of Zanga's asides and soliloquies. Although these printed editions' prefatory material thus also suggests their ambivalence over the play's immorality, they also preserve more of the unruly aspects of the play than had been allowed in certain stage productions. Thus, they preserve Zanga's soliloquies (in quotation marks) such as "ye subtle daemons, which reside / In courts, and do your work with bows and smiles, . . . / . . . Teach me to look a lie; give me your maze / Of gloomy thought and intricate design, / To catch the man I hate, and then devour"[112] and "May serpents winding up the trees fall / Their hissing necks upon them from above, / And mingle kisses—such as I should give them."[113] Here an erotics of revenge lingers with and extends feelings of rage against white, heterosexual marriage (with Zanga's reference to devouring his enemies linking into Kyla Wazana Tompkins's focus on "queer alimentarity," reconfiguring the trope of the Black body as edible so that here Black vengeance desirously devours).[114] This erotics of revenge, if excised onstage in some anxious circumstances, remains enlivened and deeply embodied within the closet drama and within the quotidian spaces of home, potentially inviting private performance.[115] Privatized spaces could thus potentially preserve the unruly periperformatives disavowed within the collective space of the theatre, or what Elizabeth Maddock Dillon would call the "performative commons."[116] Attempting to keep the idea of threatening violence and revolt distant through cautionary orienting remarks, these printed plays nevertheless convey the possibility of the secret, vengeful resurgence of Black sovereignty.

The circulation of *The Revenge* in early America bodies forth the violence, grief, and terror of slavery, even in the midst of so much silence and silencing. Plays focused on convoluted romance plots, such as *The Romp* and the aforementioned *Miss in Her Teens*, were popularly appended to productions of *The Revenge* in the early republic in Philadelphia and Charleston, seeming to offer lighthearted romance as a mode of creating stable, empowered white collectivity in riotous times.[117] In Isaac Bickerstaffe's *The Romp,* Priscilla, the West Indian heiress who

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has been sent to London to be educated, states to the Black enslaved woman, Quasheba:

> Quasheba, get out; I want to talk with miss Penny alone—no, stay; come back; I will speak before her—but if I ever hear, hussy, that you mention a word of what I am going to say, to any one else in the house, I will have you horse-whipped till there is not a bit of flesh on your bones.[118]

As the play spotlights white women as they secretly conspire their way through a patriarchal marriage market, Bickerstaffe also spectacularly features Quasheba as a *muta persona* (to use Odai Johnson's term), a voiceless character with a traumatized past and facing a precarious future. Yet the preceding performances of *The Revenge* resound through and against this erasure, challenging Priscilla's violent efforts to stage Quasheba as a silent ornament and testament to a white woman's authority to control Black speech and narrative, and unsettling theatrical efforts toward comic romantic amnesia that empties out Black subjectivity.[119] In such pieces performed literally after and in the aftermath of *The Revenge*, audiences might still perceive Zanga's whispered wrath and resentment layered onto and latent within Quasheba's silence. Zanga's contemptuous and enraged tones hold onto and circulate a traumatized history, moving across theatrical preceptor manuals, transatlantic stages, newspaper reviews, and printed plays, tearing through theatre's ambivalent efforts at formal containment and suppression and demanding to be heard.

## Epilogue: Imaginings

This essay has attempted to lay the groundwork for tracing the circuits of secrecy in early American theatre, navigating the difficulties of such historiography through the intersecting challenges within the narration of the history of slavery—the recovery of which, as scholars note in a 2015 issue of *Social Text*, may be simultaneously imperative and impossible.[120] Yet following William Wells Brown's suggestion that it might be possible to tell the real conditions of slavery through a whisper, theatre's whispers, manifesting in the textured tones of asides and soliloquies and the traces of their resonances, might carry forth the affective experiences and histories of social abjection. In the early republic and antebellum periods, the circulation of asides in plays such as Edward Young's *The Revenge* consistently destabilize ocularcentric biological determinism, spectacular, sentimental romantic plots, and total conquest and control, diverting the imperial eye of the spectator and breaking down fierce efforts to distribute sensibility and degrees of humanness according to racist taxonomies. From the very margins of the scene and at the limits of representation, asides voice the grievous histories associated with systems of slavery and imperialism as well as the drive toward freedom and vengeance. They invite audiences to stay in the pause of the scene, and to see its pasts and possibilities.

## Endnotes

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2 Raymond Williams, *The Sociology of Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 140–2; emphasis in the original.
3 Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 133–4; emphasis in the original.
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5 Amy E. Hughes, *Spectacles of Reform: Theater and Activism in Nineteenth-Century America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012).
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10 Sarah E. Igo, *The Known Citizen: A History of Privacy in Modern America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 23.
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13 Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 157.
14 "Miscellanies. For the Centinel," *Massachusetts Centinel* (Boston), 5.10 (22 April 1786); emphasis in the original.
15 Ibid.; emphasis in the original.
16 "To Censor," *Freeman's Journal; or, The North-American Intelligencer* (Philadelphia), no. 44 (20 February 1782).
17 Young's Zanga may also have been influenced by Milton's Satan and works such as Thomas Dekker's *The Spanish Moor's Tragedy*. See Gerald D. Parker. "The Moor's Progress: A Study of Edward Young's Tragedy, *The Revenge*," *Theatre Research International* 6.3 (1981): 172–95.
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20 See Carla J. Mulford, *Benjamin Franklin and the Ends of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 267.
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23 "English Newspaporials," *Massachusetts Centinel* (Boston), 10.41 (4 February 1789).
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29 Ibid.
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31 "The Tragedy," *The Mirrour* 1.25 (Concord, NH), 15 April 1793.
32 Promptbook copies from the nineteenth century often highlight the way the play opens with thunder. See, for example, John B. Wright's copy from an 1838 Boston production of *The Revenge*, which has a cue written at the top of the first page of the play: "Thunder, Lightning and Rain as Curtain rises." This promptbook is based on Thomas Palmer's 1822 edition of *The Revenge.* Edward Young, *The Revenge: A Tragedy, in Five Acts* (Philadelphia: Thomas H. Palmer, 1822). The promptbook is located in the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts; NCOF (Young, E. Revenge. Philadelphia, 1822).
33 Edward Young, *The Revenge: A Tragedy. In Five Acts. As Performed at the Theatre in Boston* (Boston: West & West, [1794]), 5. All quotations from the play hereafter are from this edition.
34 Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 14.
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37 Emmanuel C. Eze, "Hume, Race, and Human Nature," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 61.4 (2000): 691–8, at 695.
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41 See La Marr Jurelle Bruce, "Mad Is a Place; or, The Slave Ship Tows the Ship of Fools," *American Quarterly* 69.2 (2017): 303–8. Bruce contends that studies of madness and modernity must confront the "deranging" experience of the Middle Passage.
42 J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words,* 2d ed., ed. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisà (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 22.
43 Deleuze and Guattari, 286–7.
44 "Theatre," *Leicestershire Mercury, and General Advertiser for the Midland Counties* 22.1089 (28 March 1857), 3.
45 Ashon Crawley, "Blackpentecostal Breath," *The New Inquiry* (blog), 19 July 2017, https://thenewinquiry.com/blackpentecostal-breath/, accessed 20 December 2017.
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47 Eze, 695.
48 See *In the Wake* for attention to how the atoms of those Africans thrown from the slave ships cycled continually in residence time. Sharpe, 41.
49 William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. Stephen Orgel (New York: Penguin, 1999), 3.2.1–3. Gerald D. Parker also notes this connection between Zanga and Lear, suggesting that both scenes draw attention to the characters' state of mind and their passions. Parker, 187.
50 As Michael Goldman points out, Lear's speech also requires energetic effort in its delivery due to "dead stopping explosions of . . . unwieldy, massively active words" (37). The effort involved in the speech's delivery mirrors Lear's grappling with his own emotional upheavals. Michael Goldman, "*King Lear:* Acting and Feeling," in *On King Lear*, ed. Lawrence Danson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981): 25–46, at 36–7.
51 Young, 20.
52 Ibid. The soliloquy turns into a prayer in which Zanga states: "Look down, Oh, holy prophet! See me torture / This Christian dog, this infidel, which dares / To smite thy votaries . . ." (20). An earlier scene also ended with his prayer to Mahomet: "Be propitious, / Oh! Mahomet . . . / And give at length my famish'd soul revenge! What is revenge, but courage to call in / Our honour's debts" (6–7). These prayers reorient

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questions about the propriety and morality of violence while highlighting a sense of Mahomet's overseeing the scene, refusing the absolute surveillance of the conquering Spanish Christians.

53 Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 235; emphasis in the original.

54 In Morton's *The Slave,* Gambia, the African enslaved character, loves Zelinda, an enslaved quadroon (who is also loved by Clifton, a captain in the English army). Although initially spurred on by vengeance, Gambia ultimately saves Clifton from a slave rebellion and imprisonment (by selling himself back into slavery). In the end, Gambia gains his freedom, all the while praising England as a land of liberty.

55 "Theatrical Journal, No. 8."

56 "The Ordeal . . . No. 17," *The Emerald; or, Miscellany of Literature* 2.43 (21 February 1807): 89–91, at 91.

57 Francis Gentleman, *The Dramatic Censor; or, Critical Companion,* vol. 2 (London: J. Bell, 1770), 333.

58 *The Thespian Preceptor; or, A Full Display of the Scenic Art* (Boston: Joshua Belcher, 1810), 9.

59 See Virginia Mason Vaughan's *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 152.

60 "The Drama," *National Advocate* (New York), 7.1862 (26 January 1819).

61 Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, *New World Drama: The Performative Commons in the Atlantic World, 1649–1849* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2014), 14.

62 Shane White, *Stories of Freedom in Black New York* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 24.

63 Due to abolitionist efforts, in 1840, New York allowed fugitive enslaved people the right to a trial by jury. In 1841, it ended the nine-month travel allowance for visiting enslavers. Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 386.

64 "Questions Arising from the Drama," *Irish Shield and Monthly Milesian* 1.1 (January 1829), 27–8, at 28.

65 Young, 17.

66 Northerners implemented cultural practices maintaining Black unfreedom in a nominally free society. See Douglas A. Jones Jr., *The Captive Stage: Performance and the Proslavery Imagination of the Antebellum North* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014), 2.

67 Zanga's soliloquy exemplifies what José Muñoz has described as a productive and militant melancholia, which works to "(re)construct identity and take our dead with us to the various battles we must wage in their names—and in our names." José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 74.

68 As other American newspapers point out, however, Aldridge was born in the United States (in New York). "From the ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS (with an engraving of the African Roscius as Zanga, in 'The Revenge,'" quoted in *Memoir and Theatrical Career*, 26. *National Era* (Washington), 2.75 (8 June 1848), 89.

69 *North American and United States Gazette* (Philadelphia), 65.16,294 (24 April 1848); italics per the original.

70 Joseph Roach defines "surrogation" as "the enactment of cultural memory by substitution" (80) and further notes that "performances so often carry within them the memory of otherwise forgotten substitutions" (5). Thus the actor's embodied performance calls up other performances and their racial contexts. Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

71 See the following articles in *American Phrenological Journal and Miscellany* (hereafter *APJM*): "Article V. Examination of a Colored Servant Girl," *APJM* 4.1 (1 January 1842): 21–3; A. E. B., "Article XLII. The Phrenology of the Hindoos," *APJM* 9.8 (1 August 1847): 247–53; L. N. F., "Article I. Application of Phrenology to Criticism, and the Analysis of Character, in a Letter to the Editor," *APJM* 1.3 (1 December 1838): 65–71; and A. Wren, "Article III. Application of Phrenology to the Analysis of the Character of Shakespeare's Iago," *APJM* 1.7 (1 April 1839): 212–28.

72 "Foreign Correspondence," *Holden's Dollar Magazine* 1.5 (May 1848), 305–6, at 306.

73 See Shane White's *Stories of Freedom in Black New York* and Marvin McAllister's *White People Do Not Know How to Behave at Entertainments Designed for Ladies and Gentlemen of Colour* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003) for descriptions of hostilities faced by Black performers in antebellum New York.

74 Dillon, 42.

75 Note late eighteenth-century performances of *The Revenge* at Harmony Hall in Charleston as well as performances in Charleston in the early nineteenth century featuring the touring actor Thomas Cooper as Zanga. "Theatre," *City Gazette* (Charleston), 6 February 1809.

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76 "American Intelligence," *Columbian Herald* (Charleston), no. 49 (19 May 1785).
77 Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 6–7.
78 Soyica Diggs Colbert, "Black Rage: On Cultivating Black National Belonging," *Theatre Survey* 57.3 (2016): 336–57, at 337.
79 *The Revenge*'s main difference from Behn's *Abdelazer* lies in its refusal to entangle its figure of the vengeful moor in a romantic plot. Here, the review's emphasis on the Black women's admiring spectatorship repositions the vengeful moor in a larger romantic framework.
80 Jones Jr., 40.
81 "American Intelligence."
82 Odai Johnson, "Unspeakable Histories: Terror, Spectacle, and Genocidal Memory," *Modern Language Quarterly* 70.1 (2009): 97–116, at 104–5.
83 David Bain, *Actors and Audience: A Study of Asides and Related Conventions in Greek Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 17. The aside might trace its roots to the parabasis in ancient Greek comedy, in which a pause in the action of the play allowed the chorus to channel the playwright's reflections on political issues. The parabasis also carries a sense of transgression and moral ambiguity. On this, see Zachary P. Biles, *Aristophanes and the Poetics of Competition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 46–9.
84 Quoted (and translated from the French) in Michael J. McGrath, "The (Ir)relevance of the Aside in Golden Age Drama," *Romance Quarterly* 61.4 (2014): 227–37, at 228.
85 See Freeman, chap. 3, "Tragedy's Tragic Flaw," 87–144.
86 Ahmed, 90.
87 Young, 11.
88 Ibid.
89 Eve Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 68; emphasis in the original.
90 Ibid., 78.
91 Young, 39.
92 "Falconer's Benefit."
93 Daphne A. Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850–1910* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 8.
94 This frontispiece was also included in the 1808 Inchbald edition cited in note 19.
95 Young, Prologue.
96 Ibid. In addition to its reproduction in the [1794] printed Boston production copy cited herein, the prologue also was reproduced in the 1806 and 1814 New York printed editions of the play (as it had been acted at theatres in Covent Garden and New York).
97 Young, 51.
98 "Theatrical," *Boston Gazette.*
99 Ibid.
100 "Boston Theatre: [January] 23," *The Polyanthos,* n.s. 1 (February 1812), 59–60; emphasis in the original.
101 Early American newspapers often referred to *The Revenge* or *Othello* as works of questionable morality, drawing comparisons between the two, as well as to *Cato,* which was celebrated for virtue and propriety. "Theatrical," *The Kaleidoscope,* 26 December 1818.
102 José Esteban Muñoz, "Feeling Brown: Ethnicity and Affect in Ricardo Bracho's *The Sweetest Hangover (and Other STDs),*" *Theatre Journal* 52.1 (2000): 67–79, at 68.
103 Peter Lyman, "The Domestication of Anger: The Use and Abuse of Anger in Politics." *European Journal of Social Theory* 7.2 (2004): 133–47, at 139.
104 Adam Smith, "Art. XIV. The Theory of Moral Sentiments," *North-American Review* 8.23 (March 1819), 371–96, at 381.
105 Frank B. Wilderson III, "The Vengeance of Vertigo: Aphasia and Abjection in the Political Trials of Black Insurgents," *InTensions* 5 (Fall/Winter 2011), 3, ¶3.
106 Adding to Hortense Spillers's conception of the Middle Passage as a project that dehumanized and ungendered captive Africans, La Marr Jurelle Bruce notes that the Middle Passage "deranged millions of Africans across continents, oceans, centuries and lifeworlds" (304).

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107 Young, Prologue.
108 "Theatrical," *Boston Gazette.*
109 Similar cuts were made to nineteenth-century productions of *Othello*. Printed acting editions show an excision of references to sexuality in Desdemona's, Iago's, and Othello's lines. See Edward Kahn, "Desdemona and the Role of Women in the Antebellum North," *Theatre Journal* 60.2 (2008): 235–55.
110 "The Revenge," in Edward Young, *The Revenge* (London: John Bell, 1792).
111 "The Revenge," in Edward Young, *The Revenge* (New York: D. Longworth, 1806).
112 Ibid., 20.
113 Ibid., 52.
114 Kyla Wazana Tompkins, *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: NYU Press, 2012), 100.
115 Eighteenth-century Britain treated private theatricals and recitations with differing degrees of social approval. While private theatricals raised questions of propriety, reading plays aloud at home could be morally improving. See Abigail Williams, *The Social Life of Books: Reading Together in the Eighteenth-Century Home* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 170.
116 Dillon, 10–11.
117 See advertisements for *The Revenge* and the afterpiece, *The Romp*: "New Theatre," *Gazette of the United States* (Philadelphia), 3 January 1798; "Theatre," *City Gazette* (Charleston), 6 February 1809.
118 [Isaac] Bickerstaff[e], *The Romp* (New York: Longworth, 1806), 9.
119 An article in the *Gazette of the United States,* notes of another pairing of an afterpiece to *The Revenge* that "The MOCK DOCTOR is considered as an excellent after-piece, abounding with genuine wit and humour, well calculated to excite the risible faculties of the audience and dispel the melancholy sensations inspired by the sanguinary vengeance of Zanga." "New-Theatre . . . From the [*Philadelphia*] *Aurora* of Saturday," *Gazette of the United States* (Philadelphia), 9.1180 (20 June 1796).
120 Laura Helton et al., "The Question of Recovery: An Introduction," *Social Text* 33.4 (2015): 1–18, at 1.

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